THE REPRESENTATION OF THE FEMALE BODY/EMBODIMENT IN SELECTED MAINSTREAM AMERICAN FILMS

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DECLARATION

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I, A.A. Jensen declare that THE REPRESENTATION OF THE FEMALE
BODY/EMBODIMENT IN SELECTED MAINSTREAM AMERICAN FILMS is
my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been
indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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NOTES

This dissertation adheres to British spelling rules. However North American spelling will be kept in direct quotes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

In her article "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema" (1975) Laura Mulvey explains how film portrays the female characters as passive sexualised objects, on display for the male (erotic) gaze. Although, Mulvey did make amendments to the original article after it was criticised, her original article is still influential and referenced in academic writing on film. This dissertation investigates how the three selected mainstream American films, namely, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Monster* and *Transamerica*, have female protagonists who deviate from Mulvey's initial standpoint and enact a new dynamic, whereby the female characters possess active bodies.

In order to explain this new dynamic, the dissertation provides an overview of relevant theory in order to establish the necessary analytical tools to investigate the representation of the female body. These tools are taken from feminist notions of the body, most importantly Mulvey's notions, in order to establish what constitutes an active female body that subverts the male gaze. This subversion is most notable when examining the iconography of the active female body. The dissertation also draws from the overview the importance of place and space, the embodiment of the characters' inner workings in specific locations, and their relationship with the locations in which they are depicted. Since all three films include a physical journey on which the respective protagonists embark the examination of borders and border crossings is included.

The dissertation shows that journeys bring with them the opportunity for the body to be active, as each female protagonist is on a journey to self-discovery. The changing settings in which the protagonists find themselves are an embodiment of their inner workings. Topographical borders mark the entering of new locations. However, concomitant symbolic and epistemological borders are also crossed. The female protagonists need to make choices concerning their lives and as a consequence alter the representations to reflect bodies that subvert the male gaze. These female bodies are active. However, they are active in different ways. Alice, from *Alice in Wonderland*, delves into her psyche to emerge a changed and independent

Victorian woman. Bree, from *Transamerica*, heals the relationships with her family and is able to have her gender reconstructive surgery to become a physical woman. These two female protagonists have positive representations of the active female body. The protagonist from *Monster*, Aileen, is represented in a constant state of abjection and her active body is portrayed in a negative light. Whether represented in a positive or negative light, these chosen films all portray an active female body that does subvert the male gaze, and hence represent a new dynamic different from the one Mulvey described.

Key words: Mulvey, female body, embodiment, active body, male gaze, place and space, borders, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Transamerica*, *Monster*

OPSOMMING

In haar artikel "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema" (1975) verduidelik Laura Mulvey hoe die vrou op die skerm uitgebeeld word as 'n passiewe seksuele objek, wat ten toon gestel word vir die manlike (erotiese) blik. Alhoewel Mulvey veranderinge aan haar oorspronklike artikel aangebring het nadat kritiek daarop gelewer is, is haar oorspronklike artikel steeds invloedryk, en word daar steeds daarna verwys in akademiese geskrifte oor film. Hierdie verhandeling ondersoek die wyse waarop vroulike protagoniste in drie geselekteerde hoofstroomfilms, naamlik *Alice in Wonderland*, *Monster* en *Transamerica,* afwyk van Mulvey se aanvanklike standpunt en 'n nuwe dinamiek vertolk ingevolge waarvan die vroulike hoofkarakters aktiewe liggame het.

Om die nuwe dinamiek te verduidelik, verskaf die verhandeling 'n oorsig van relevante teorie om noodsaaklike analitiese hulpmiddels te bied wat gebruik word om die representasie van die vroulike liggaam te ondersoek. Hierdie hulpmiddels word uit feministiese opvattings oor die liggaam geneem, meestal dié van Mulvey, om uiteindelik vas te stel wát 'n aktiewe liggaam konstitueer wat die manlike blik ondermyn. Hierdie ondermyning blyk duidelik wanneer die ikonografie van die aktiewe vroulike liggaam ondersoek word. Die verhandeling beklemtoon ook, na aanleiding van die teoretiese oorsig, die belangrikheid van ruimte en plek, die beliggaming van die karakters se innerlike werkinge in spesifieke ruimtes, sowel as die verhouding met die ruimtes waarin hulle hulself bevind. Aangesien al drie films 'n fisiese reis insluit wat elk van die protagoniste onderneem, sluit die verhandeling ook 'n ondersoek na grense en grensoorskryding in.

Daar is bevind dat reis die liggaam in die geleentheid stel om aktief te wees, aangesien elk van die vroulike protagoniste op 'n reis na selfontdekking is. Die veranderende ruimtes waarin die protagoniste hulself bevind, is terselfdertyd 'n beliggaming van hulle innerlike werkinge. Topografiese grense dui op die toetree van nuwe ruimtes, terwyl gepaardgaande simboliese en epistemologiese grense ook oorskry word. Die vroulike protagoniste moet keuses maak rakenende hulle lewens, en moet gevolglik ook hul liggaamlike

representasie verander ten einde die manlike blik te ondermyn. Hierdie vroulike liggame is aktief, maar aktief op verskillende maniere. Alice, van *Alice in Wonderland*, daal na haar onderbewussyn om uiteindelik as 'n veranderde en onafhanklike Victoriaanse vrou na vore te tree. Bree, van *Transamerica*, heel haar verhoudings met haar familie, en is in staat om haar rekonstruktiewe chirurgie te ondergaan om 'n fisiese vrou te word. Hierdie twee vroulike protagoniste gee 'n positiewe representasie van die aktiewe vroulike liggaam. Die protagonis van *Monster*, Aileen, word uitgebeeld in 'n konstante toestand van abjeksie, en haar aktiewe liggaam word in 'n negatiewe lig weergegee. Hetsy die liggaam in 'n positiewe of negatiewe lig gerepresenteer word, beeld al hierdie gekose films 'n aktiewe vroulike liggaam uit wat uiteindelik die manlike blik ondermyn en dus 'n nuwe dinamika uitbeeld, wat verskil van dié wat Mulvey beskryf het.

Sleutelwoorde: Mulvey, vroulike liggaam, beliggaming, aktiewe liggaam, manlike blik, plek en ruimte, grense, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Transamerica*, *Monster*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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1.1   CONTEXTUALISATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

One of the first and most influential feminist theorists to make contributions to how women are represented in film is Laura Mulvey. In her article "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema", she states that "patriarchal society has structured film form" (Mulvey, 1975:746), explaining how, through the gaze, the image of a woman takes the central place of visual pleasure in films. According to her theory, the male gaze has power over the manner in which the body is presented and perceived. Mulvey (1975:750) specifically says that the male spectator, as active subject, sees the woman's body as a displayed, passive and erotic object for the male gaze to project its (erotic) fantasies on the female figure. Although Mulvey's theory has been criticised and challenged, her work generated much discussion and concepts, such as the gaze and the look, are still aspects discussed in film criticism of gender. Mulvey's legacy is still prevalent and important because the critique of it is on-going and constantly shifting. The arguments presented in the dissertation are evidence of this on-going engagement with her work. Thus, her initial concepts of the male gaze and its objectification and sexualisation of the female body are terms that can act as a starting point for one to think about the alternative role the female body can assume in films. This dissertation focuses on the representation of the female body in three mainstream American films, namely: *Alice in Wonderland*, *Monster* and *Transamerica*, which represent the female body in a "non-stereotypical" manner.

Using Mulvey's initial standpoint of female bodies being objectified, sexualised and passive, one can start to examine how female bodies in film can, and do, deviate from these mentioned representations and manifest in alternative and active ways. In the first film, *Alice in Wonderland*, a fantasy film, the exaggerated forms of the female protagonists' bodies will be analysed. The analysis focuses on their physical appearances. However, the emphasis is on

Alice's body and the battle against the Jabberwocky in Wonderland. Her experience is symbolic of the fight against a society with overtly patriarchal values in her "real" world. The battle brings forward certain psychoanalytic aspects that will also be discussed. The whole examination focuses on the manner in which Alice's body deviates from the typically displayed, passive female body common in her time.

With reference to the second film, *Monster*, the concept of the *monstrous feminine* will be examined. Creed (1993:11), although not specifically referring to the actual film *Monster*, explains that the *monstrous feminine* "transgresses civilized boundaries" and does not conform to what is "socially acceptable", making her abject to society. The study will focus on the female protagonist Aileen, and how her body is monstrous and abject to society because she is a prostitute, a lesbian, and because she is a serial killer, or deadly *femme castratice*. The analysis also touches on the fact that Aileen deviates from the norm as she is not "Hollywood pretty". She has bad teeth, is overweight and wears old, ugly clothing.

In the last film, *Transamerica*, the focus is on the marginalised transsexual body of the once male and now female character. The discussion will draw upon the notion of what makes "a woman a woman", a concept introduced by Simone De Beauvoir and a characteristic of Second Wave Feminism. The focus is on the idea that "[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (De Beauvoir, 1988:295). Discussing the notion of *woman* is complex in this instance, as the woman being analysed is still a man becoming a woman.

The factor that binds these bodies together is the fact that they are all represented in an untypical fashion. At the same time, all three of them subvert the male gaze. Hence, a different dynamic than the one Mulvey postulated is at work.

Although the focus is on the female characters' physical bodies, one should note that the body is not just physical, but can manifests in other forms such as the mind. Grosz (1994:vii) says, "[b]odies have all the explanatory power of minds", therefore mind and body are relational and the one can be said to

"express" the other. The same relational aspect of mind and body can also be used in the examination of the place/space in which the characters are depicted. According to Tuan (in Cresswell, 2004:20), the term *space* is used to refer to an "open arena of movement and action" while *place* is concerned with "stopping and resting and becoming involved". This dissertation uses this distinction of place and space when either term is used in the study. The idea of *place* is a human characteristic as humans make places in order for them to create a sense of belonging. Relph (in Cresswell, 2004:23) states that for humans to be human they need to be *in place*. The concept that humans need their own places to help them to be *in place* indicates an interaction between the mental states as well as the physical states of humans. Therefore, I will use the term *embodiment* to refer to mental and physical states in relation to place. Crang and Thrift (2000:19) state that the experience of the world moves and changes so the "self can no longer be seen as just the body"; thus the notion of the body, being the centre of perception, moves to notions of embodiment, in which anything relating to the flesh interacts with other fields, such as physical place. The places/spaces that are depicted in the films can be interpreted as an extension of the characters' minds as well as their physical bodies.

The places/spaces in all three films serve to help the viewer establish certain conclusions about the protagonists and their bodies. For example, *Alice in Wonderland* takes place in an alternative fantasy world. Coombs (2007:17) states that surrealists and fantasy cinema use their invented worlds to deal with issues such as sexuality or societal changes in gender relationships, indirectly involving the body. Alice, the heroine, fights the dominant patriarchal society in her "real" world by travelling to Wonderland. Therefore, her change in place, which gives her a sense of purpose, alters her attitude and independence in her "real" world. In *Monster*, the lack of place and the changing spaces of the road, hotels and other iconographic elements of the road reflect the protagonist's unstable state of mind and sense of being alienated from society because she is "out-of-place", by being a prostitute and a murderer. Similar iconographic elements, such as the road, hotels and diners, of the road are represented in *Transamerica*. They serve to indicate

the transformation of the protagonist's attitude and mind. The main space of the road offers the protagonist an opportunity to get to know and understand her son on their journey.

Another of the factors that these films have in common is that they are all concerned with journeys. Although all three journeys are physical, the emotional or mental journeys are also important factors that need to be taken into consideration in terms of how the different characters change by the end of the respective films. The manner in which the viewer can identify the changes in the characters is through analysing the different borders in the films. The specific border planes that are encountered in the films include symbolic, topographic and epistemological borders. According to Schimanski (2009) *symbolic borders* are borders on the plane of the mental or the metaphorical and, other types of borders can be seen as sub-sets of symbolic borders. The three films have symbolic borders that are crossed while the narrative unfolds and the characters develop, even though different elements can be viewed as symbolic borders in each film. These films also have *topographic borders*; Schimanski (2009) states that these borders are found on the topographic plane. The body can also be referred to as a topographical border although the body exists on a different level of scale. All three films present physical journeys that move across topography, crossing borders and changing the places in which the characters find themselves, while the protagonists' bodies are also in a sense *crossed* in order to change along with the borders. The *epistemological border*, as Schimanski (2009) explains, is the border on the "plane of knowledge: the border between the known and the unknown". In all three journeys, the protagonists travel from the known to the unknown. There are also temporal borders crossed in *Alice in Wonderland*. The borders in the films help the viewer to conduct the analysis as the crossing of these borders help to establish the characters' attitudes and development.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Within the context discussed above, the following questions arise:

- How is the female body represented in the films, and how do the outer appearances of the female protagonists depict their personalities and behaviour?

- How does the representation of female bodies work against Mulvey's original writings?

- What is the relation between body/mind and space/place, and how is the manifestation of the body/mind influenced by the places/spaces in which the characters are depicted in the films?

- How are the borders represented, and how and why are the borders crossed, in the respective films?

1.3   RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The dissertation aims to:

- investigate how the female body is represented in the three mainstream American films and how the outer appearances of the female characters function to depict their personalities and behaviour;

- examine the manner in which the female bodies subvert the male gaze;

- investigate the relationship between body, mind and place/space;

- discuss how the films represent borders and how those borders are crossed by the female characters in the films;

1.4   THESIS STATEMENT

This dissertation will explore the manner in which the three selected mainstream American films represent the female body in alternative ways because their bodies are not passive, objectified and sexualised in the traditional sense. They are rather active and subvert the traditional male gaze. There will be a constant discourse with Mulvey's original writings, in order to

establish the manner in which the female body is represented in a post-Mulvey dynamic.

The dissertation will demonstrate that the iconography of the exaggerated female body in *Alice in Wonderland* reflects her personality and how it develops to assist her to become an independent woman. The study will prove that because Alice is in a fantastic alternative world, she is able to fight the predominant patriarchal "real-world" by being a heroine in Wonderland. She achieves her purpose by crossing topographical and epistemological borders. The discussion on *Monster* will argue that Aileen's, the protagonist's, body is abject because she is a lesbian, prostitute and a serial killer. Crossing symbolic borders makes Aileen become a monster because she is abused, and as a consequence of her revenge she starts to murder her clients. In *Transamerica*, the study focuses on the iconography of the transgender body, and the notion of what makes a woman a woman. The protagonist, Bree, must cross symbolic and topographical borders to find her son and have a relationship with him, and in a sense become a real "woman".

The female bodies in all three films are not "classically" pleasurable to look at, because they take on active roles that are not sexualised in the traditional heteronormative sense of sexuality. The dissertation will demonstrate that by the female protagonists crossing borders, they subvert the male gaze because they do not conform to objectified, sexualised and passive roles.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAME OF REFERENCE AND METHODOLOGY

The dissertation will largely be an analysis of the different ways that the female body is represented in these selected films. All three of the films were chosen because they contain female characters that are active in their representation. They move away from the passive, objectified and sexualised women, to which Mulvey refers. It uses an explanatory, descriptive as well as hermeneutic approach in the analysis of the films. The predominant focus will be on the actual films and what they portray to the spectator regarding female bodies. At the same time the study will use theories such as feminist film

theories by Laura Mulvey and Barbara Creed, which are specifically related to the male gaze, to conduct the analysis.

The dissertation will specifically analyse the outer appearances of the female characters and what their appearances directly and indirectly communicate to the spectator about their personalities and behaviour by analysing the iconography in the films.

The study will also use theories of place/space to analyse the places/spaces of the respective films and how those places/spaces communicate particular aspects of the characters' mental states which ultimately affect the characters' bodies, and vice versa. The study will also focus on the borders connected with the characters' bodies and analyse their effect on the characters, and implicitly the viewers, as a whole.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL EXPOSITION

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2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter constitutes a theoretical exposition of the key terms and theories used to analyse the chosen films. It serves to avoid repetition within the individual chapters. However, each analytical chapter will have an overview of other theories which are used in the examination of that particular film. The main concepts to be defined and discussed in this chapter relate to filmic representations of the female body/embodiment and its connection to the female spectacle and male gaze. It also discusses the body in terms of iconography, place/space in conjunction with the connection to journeys and mobility, as well as borders and liminal spaces. All these mentioned factors are the broad analytical tools that are used to examine the female body in the selected films and how they deviate from Mulvey's notions of the represented female body.

Merskin (2007:593) refers to a "powerful component of participation in modern Western societies [that] involves attention to the presentation of self". Merskin's quotation is relevant to this study on two different levels. Firstly, it points to the idea of "Western societies", which is a component for this research because it analyses mainstream American films. The reason for choosing mainstream American films is because the genre has a large number of films that represent women in the fashion to which Mulvey refers. Many of the women characters are objectified, seen as sex symbols and are on display for the male (erotic) gaze.[1] However, these three selected films were chosen because they are indirect contrast to Mulvey's notions, even

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[1] Such films include the female characters in *Indiana Jones raiders of the lost ark* (1981) and *The Hangover* (2009), but many other films can be included in this list.

though they are mainstream American films, the female characters have active bodies that are in contrast to the Mulvian notion of women. To keep the research within the scope of a Master's degree, it only analyses Caucasian, Western female bodies.[2] Secondly, the quotation points to the notion of *self* which this study discusses in terms of the physical body, the body/mind association, the body and its relation to place/space, and then the body in relation to borders. Burgin (1996:21-22) hints to the purpose of discussing the female body in film when he says:

> Contemporary visual culture [...] can no longer be seen as simply 'reflecting' or 'communicating' the world in which we live: it contributes to the making of this world. Individuals and nations act in accordance with beliefs, values, and desires that increasingly are formed and informed, inflected and refracted, through images: from television [… to] cinema.

Burgin's words link to the motivation for analysing the body as it hints at notions of what humans could perceive in terms of their bodies, which are reflected in film. There is also another, two-fold, implication in this quotation. Cinema reflects the society in which we live, but at the same time society is shaped by what it sees. As film is a product of creation and construction it can, and is, analysed and criticised from many different perspectives. Shapiro (1993:255) refers to the nature of the body in film when he states that "the flesh is intrinsic to the cinematic apparatus, at once its subject, its substance, and its limit". In order to examine the body in film one needs to select relevant theoretical standpoints on which to base the analysis. In the following chapters, there is a focus on conceptualisations of the body from different paradigms, which include feminism, place/space constructs and borders. These are common topics that will be discussed in the analytical chapters. There are also other aspects of the films that have certain commonalities.

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[2] It should be noted here that since the study only examines Caucasian women featuring in mainstream American films there are implications because it is one sided, but they fall outside the scope of this study.

One such common factor is that the chosen films are all mainstream American films which are concerned with movement. The classification of "mainstream" films is opposed to art-house films and European films. The reason for choosing mostly mainstream Hollywood films is based on what Chaudhuri (2006:8) says when she notes that many theorists view Hollywood cinema as a "popular mythology, an unconsciously-held collective patriarchal fantasy, which does not reflect any woman's 'reality' but in which her image functions as a sign". Mainstream films tend towards providing viewers with popular perceptions that reflect the societies of the times in which the films are produced. Gender, Chaudhuri (2006:16) makes clear, is a matter of culture, gained through social conditioning, rather than being simply "natural" or "innate". The main factor to note here is of a social conditioning that makes a female feminine. To link these concepts of gender and society to Burgin's quotation, the female representation in film is shaped by the represented society, but also reflects a Western society's beliefs. In a globalised twenty-first century many factors, including film, help compose the manner in which people of all races, genders and social statuses understand and experience the world. It stands to reason that the manner in which these films represent the female body plays a significant role in the manner in which the population perceives and understands, but also constructs, the female body.

A second common factor is that they are set in white, male-dominated societies. A consequence of these settings is that within these male-dominated societies there is a heteronormative view on the female body as well as feminine gender performances. It is only Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* who actively seeks to fight the dominant patriarchal order of her day. *Monster* and *Transamerica* also seem to border on the non-adherence of the patriarchal societies in which they are depicted. As all three films are set against white male patriarchy in some form, but at the same time they are mainstream films, is significant in terms of the changes that can occur in society.

Another common component is that these three films are concerned with movement and mobility in the form of journeys. The general starting point in

the study of genre is iconography which includes the investigation of props, costumes (characters' physical appearances) and settings (space). The genre of the "road movie", which is basically a film which takes place on the road and has certain generic elements that are common to the genre, has links to the notions of mobility and movement. The highlighted elements of road movies are relevant to both *Monster* and *Transamerica* as they assist in expressing thematic concerns of the films. In order to discuss the bodily representations, the focus is on the characters' appearances, as all three of the films' protagonists' appearances have strong iconographic implications.

The body cannot be depicted without the spaces around it. Therefore, the theoretical underpinnings of *place* and *space* as well as the theory of *borders* are also important. There are many theoretical concepts which refer to place as well as space, but because these two concepts are part of interdisciplinary fields there needs to be clarification as to how these terms are understood and used. Clarification needs to be made, particularly in terms of the connotations each of these terms have in the study. Since each protagonist embarks on a journey there is a constant reference to the places/spaces in which the protagonists find themselves. There is immediately a link between the body, which embarks on the journey, and the places/spaces in the films. Journeys in themselves always occur with reference to places/spaces, or between places/spaces thus borders must be considered in the analysis.

In order to conduct the analysis of the three respective films, in terms of the female body, there must be an outline of the major analytic tools which will be employed in the different chapters. This chapter is structured as follows: the first part will provide the relevant theory from certain feminist writers. It will also define and outline the terms *female body* and *female embodiment*, and how they will be used within the context of this study. Laura Mulvey's theory will also be briefly adumbrated, in order to highlight the relevant points of her work that assist to analyse the films. The second part is concerned with iconography as well as stereotypes in film. The third part discusses place/space, with specific reference to cinematic journeys, movement and mobility. The final part outlines the relevant information pertaining to borders,

border planes, border crossings, as well as liminality and its relation to spaces and borders.

2.2   FEMINISM, FEMALE BODY/EMBODIMENT AND THE MALE GAZE

The three mentioned films were chosen because they represent the female body in an untypical or non-stereotypical fashion. Brown (2004:48-49), referring to tough women in film, avers that the "fundamental appeal of these [...] female characters [...] is that they represent untypical female roles". Although she is specifically referring to "tough women in film" the essence of the statement is also true of the protagonists in these three chosen films. Since film not only creates, but also reflects the social order of a particular time it is important to examine the manner in which the female role in film has also developed and changed. Given the dynamic between film and social reality, it can be expected that the female body will be depicted differently in film. Although referring to the television series *La Femme Nikita*, Inness (2004:11) remarks on how some women in film now challenge previous stereotypes and accomplish this challenge by being aggressive and physically in control. In order to classify a woman as "tough" she generally has certain characteristics. Inness (2004:12) explains that tough women are usually muscular, but not too muscular, and they are generally independent, so they do not require any support. The analyses do not specifically focus on what makes the female characters "tough". However, the underlying concepts of "tough" women help establish certain "untypical" characteristics of female characters which assist in analysing non-stereotypical roles. Therefore, in the chosen films, the three protagonists are independent and definitely challenge the stereotypes of women in film. Inness (2004:8) also states that while there has been a major change in the representation of women, females in films do not always escape the stereotypes of, among others, gender, class, and sexual orientation. One of the objectives of this study is to examine how the female, particularly in terms of her body, is in fact represented and to reflect on the significance of this representation to patriarchy and the gaze.

2.2.1   Feminism

There are key concepts in feminist theory that serve to motivate why one would examine the representation of the female body in film, and these concepts are relevant to the analytical chapters. Since each film deals with the female body in different ways each analytical chapter will have their own additional feminist viewpoints that are explicit to that film. The only feminist theory which is directly related to all three films is that of Mulvey relating to the representation of the female body and the gaze. Her theory will be explained after the following overview of feminist writers.

Smelik (2007:491) reports how feminism, as a social movement, has had a huge effect on film theory and criticism. She further reports that feminist theorists view cinema as a "cultural practice representing myths about woman and femininity". So by examining films, one is able to uncover some of the myths concerning women and their representation. Smelik (2007:491) qualifies that early feminist criticism was directed at stereotypes of women, although it soon developed into a call for positive images of women in film. However, feminist film criticism eventually moved toward an attempt to understand the "all-pervasive power of patriarchal imagery with the help of structuralist theoretical frameworks such as semiotics and psychoanalysis" (Smelik, 2007:491).[3] In order to understand these concepts there is reference made to these mentioned theoretical frameworks and how they influence the perception of the character's bodies, in this part of the chapter. It is also clear that throughout the reading of feminist criticism there is a trend to link many feminist thoughts to psychoanalysis. Chaudhuri (2006:2) states, when referring to Mulvey, Silverman, de Lauretis and Creed, all of whom are female film theorists, that they all show "why film is a feminist issue and why feminist issues are still important in film". Using concepts established in feminism

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[3] Smelik (2007:491) also acknowledges that feminist theory has, more recently, moved away from a binary understanding of sexual difference to multiple perspectives, identities and possible spectatorships.

enables this study to indicate how these films move away from, or adhere to, the concepts that traditional feminism refers to by specifically focusing on the female body and its representation.

Chaudhuri (2009:4 & 7) explains that feminist film theory is a product of Second Wave Feminism, which started to concentrate on the hidden power structures at work in society and provide insights into woman's problems which were caused by those societies. The theorists who work in the feminist paradigm examine how women are presented in film in terms of their appearances and bodies, as well as how the societal powers influence women's representation. Smelik (2007:491), in a sense reiterates Burgin when she concedes that there has been a shift from an understanding of cinema reflecting reality, to a view of cinema constructing a "particular, ideological, view of reality". Appearances and the body are both constituents of a society. Another concept highlighted by Chaudhuri (2006:8) indicates how Hollywood cinema functions as an "unconsciously-held collective patriarchal fantasy", in which a woman's image operates rather as a sign and not a reflection of her reality. Thus, women's images were styled according to the patriarchal fantasy. A woman is then seen as different or as "the other" to a male norm. De Beauvoir (1988:290) states that patriarchal culture purveys this difference of woman through intermediaries such as "tradition, language, tales, songs, movies" all of which people use to compose a manner in which to experience and understand the world. Chaudhuri (2006:4) explains it well when she says that a concept which generally pervades the feministic movement and approaches is that it strives to analyse as well as change the power of patriarchal societies. This is a relevant aspect for all three of the films because they subvert the power of the gaze, although in different ways, and they also subvert the power of the depicted patriarchal societies. Thus, one of the aspects to which feminist theory has made a great contribution is the notion of gender.

Gender, Chaudhuri (2006:16) urges, is a matter of culture, gained through social conditioning, rather than being simply natural or innate. The main factor to note here is of a social conditioning that makes a female feminine. One

must also realise, Chaudhari (2006:16) indicates, that there is a distinction between the word *female* which assigns biological sex, and *feminine* which depicts a social gender role. Valocci (2005:752) adds another concept of *sexuality* to these distinctions, which refers to a person's choice of being heterosexual or homosexual. In a globalised twenty-first century many factors, including film, help compose the manner in which people of all races, genders and social statuses understand and experience the world; it stands to reason that the manner in which these films represent the female body plays a significant role in the manner in which the population perceives, understands and constructs the female body. Feminists question what they feel is largely made up of patriarchal ideals such as concepts of what constitutes gender and the impact that these concepts have on the roles of a specific gender in film.

Connected to the notions of gender are the ideas of the female body (and beauty) and how it is represented in visual mediums such as advertising, beauty contests and film. The focus on the body inevitably raises questions of sexual difference among the genders. Grosz (1994:vii) explains that, "...questions about which kinds of bodies, what their differences are, and what their products and consequences might be, can [...] demonstrate, problematize, and transform women's social subordination to men". Feminists are interested in the body and how it influences the lives of women. Sanders (2006:280) explains that, impelled by feminist reviews, academic interest in the body turned to a cultural study of the definitions of beauty and the impact those definitions had on women's identities as well as their actual social experiences. The representation of the female body and the impact of the represented body on the fictional lives of the protagonists is an important aspect to consider throughout the analysis of the different films. To assist in discussing the female characters and indicating how they subvert their traditional roles Mulvey's notions of the representation of women in film will be highlighted and applied to the films.

2.2.2   Laura Mulvey and spectator theory

Laura Mulvey is a well-known theorist who made a distinctive contribution to feminist film theory. As with any theory, there are many people who criticised Mulvey's ideas expressed in her 1975 article "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema". Many critics agree that what works against Mulvey is that audiences do not just passively absorb all the pre-given meanings placed upon them, but audiences can actively create their own meanings of films and their constitutive parts. Critics also provide different ways to see the female in films. (See Doane (1982); Kaplan (1983)). Mulvey herself later also changed aspects of her article to accommodate the female spectator. Mulvey (1993:126) states in her article "Afterthoughts on 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema' inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the sun*", that there is a difficulty of "sexual difference in cinema that is missing in the undifferentiated spectator of 'Visual pleasure'". She then provides a series of explanations associated with the female as spectator and the said difficulty. Mulvey also comments on the traditions of storytelling in her "Afterthoughts" article and the effect it has on aspects other than the "look". I am aware of the changes and challenges to Mulvey's initial theory; however, her first mentioned article and the concepts within it can act as a starting point to think about the position of women, their bodies and the implications of their bodies, in film.

Mulvey (1975:748) avers that Hollywood style arose, although not exclusively, from its manipulation of visual pleasure which is expressed in the language of the dominant patriarchal order. Among the possible pleasures of film is a concept, initially explored by Freud, termed *scopophilia*. Mulvey (1975:748-750) describes scopophilia as a dual circumstance in which looking itself is a pleasure, as well as derived from the pleasure of being looked at. She explicates that essentially scopophilia is active and it exists on an erotic level because there is pleasure in looking at another person or object. Although one might say that a film is being shown and is there to be seen, an illusion is created for the spectator that they are looking in on a private world. Therefore, the pleasure obtained from scopophilia comes from using another person as an "object of sexual stimulation through sight" (Mulvey, 1975:750). This

pleasure in looking can be taken a step further and develop into having a *narcissistic* aspect to it. Although this narcissistic pleasure will not be discussed any further, it does draw attention to the fact that the human form (male or female) is in fact expressed, and foregrounded, throughout a film. Mulvey (1975:749) even states that the conventions of mainstream film are all anthropomorphic, for example scale, space and story, and assist to focus attention on the human form. The concept of looking or gazing is an important aspect throughout the article.

The beginning of Mulvey's (1975:746) article is premised on psychoanalysis and the manner in which the unconscious patriarchal society has structured film form. Her theory basically concerns how "Woman" is largely defined in terms of her sexuality as well as being an object of desire in relation to, or for, "Man". This "man" includes him as both spectator and character. The meaning of these opening statements is that mainstream film is actually constructed for an active male spectator and his gaze. The male controls the image, the erotic ways of looking as well as the spectacle (Mulvey, 1975:746). Consequently, the female on screen is perceived as passive because the construction of the film caters for the male (erotic) fantasies and pleasures. The female is objectified and seen as a mere object in a sexual context. To further explain *scopophilia* one must realise that the act of looking has been split between, and classified according to Mulvey (1975:750) as, "active/male" and "passive/female", she explains:

> The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to [*sic*] the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Women displayed as sexual object is the leit-motiff of erotic spectacle [...] she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire. Mainstream film neatly combine[s] spectacle and narrative. [Italics in original.]

In the scenario above the male is in power and the female is styled and behaves according to his erotic fantasies and pleasure in looking. The manner in which the women connote "to-be-looked-at-ness" is because she is generally isolated, glamorous, sexualised (Mulvey, 1975:753) and is displayed according to the enjoyment of both the male spectator and the male protagonists in the actual film, all to meet an erotic and male fantasy end.

In other words, the woman is observed and controlled by the camera, the spectator, and the film's male protagonists. The fact that there is such a strong emphasis on the pleasure of looking at the accordingly constructed image of the women denies what the women actually lacks, a penis. Mulvey (1975:753) explains that there is a strong fantasy and erotic pleasure in the image of the women, however there is an un-pleasurable side to these women as they imply a threat of castration. She continues by saying that the manner in which the male deals with this threat of castration is by turning the image of the women into a fetish. Not only does Mulvey's theory provide a starting point for one to think about the female body in film, it also provides concepts of the gaze in film which link to the body. Waskul and Vannini (2006:5) aptly state that "when we gaze upon bodies of others we necessarily interpret what we observe". This factor of gazing and observing the different aspects of the female body is the focus of this study.

2.2.3   Female body and embodiment

This chapter deals with feminist concerns only as far as they relate to issues of the body. It is thus important to define and outline the terms *female body* and *female embodiment*, and how they will be used within the context of this study.

When faced with the terms *feminism* and *female body* one would immediately think of the female sexual or sexualised body and how it is represented in film. However, this study will take a slightly different angle to the body in terms of analysing the presentation of other bodies in the three films. These "other bodies" are namely the fantasy body, the monstrous body and the transgendered body. Elizabeth Grosz (1995:103-104) develops the idea that

the body needs to be conceived as a socio-cultural artefact, and focuses on how the body is "psychically, socially, sexually, and representationally produced". Connected to Grosz's statements this research is conducted from the assumption that the body is an extension of the mind. Therefore the mind and body should not be seen as separate entities, but rather as integral parts of the whole individual as represented through social constraints, politics and patriarchal society. Jeannette Kupfermann (1979:10&139) notes that the "physical body always reflects the social body, and is [...] used symbolically" and therefore "the bodily metaphor reigns supreme" as the whole human condition is expressed in, as well as through, the body. By analysing the physical, as well as mental, the analysis can draw many different kinds of theoretically based conclusions about the protagonists and the places/spaces in which they are depicted.

Sanders (2006:280) observes that "people communicate through the movement and relative placement of their bodies", therefore, by analysing the body, one is able to read deeper into potential meanings besides just what is communicated verbally, and even visually. Examining the body can challenge the notions of what it really means to be a woman. Sanders (2006:283) explains that the body should be seen as a process rather than merely an object. In the last few years, it would be safe to say that the body, which has become routinely shaped, adorned, and exercised, has actually lost its biological relevance. It is no longer just a vessel for survival but has become a type of product. Specifically for Merskin (2007:594) the body has become a highly ductile, socially constructed, product. It seems as though society is what "creates" a body, because society is what creates the thoughts or perceptions concerning the body. Connected to physical body is the concept of body image. Body image, Vannini and Waskul (2006:184) explain, can act as a signifier that evokes different meanings on different levels because it is the "incarnate representation of ideologies of beauty, gender, age [...] and sexual preference". According to Sanders (2006:284) these perceptions can cause one's social experience to be significantly impacted, because one's position on the scale of attractive and unattractive has much to do with their social interactions. The body is a social representation which either adheres

or deviates from that society's ideals. Many different factors such as social conditions, economic factors and culture influence the perception of the body.

Sanders (2006:281) specifies that bodies have the ability to communicate, among other aspects, personal identity, constructions of self, emotional experiences, and the attainment and display of power. Therefore it stands to reason that the body can express ideas, concepts and beliefs held in the mind. Although the physical body is important for the analysis, which forms a large portion of this study, one must also take other aspects of analysis into consideration. For example, the mind is also a component part of the body. Elizabeth Grosz (1994:vii) says in *Volatile bodies*, "[b]odies have all the explanatory power of minds" and therefore the representation of women's bodies in film can assist in the examination of the thoughts of the societies in which they are depicted. Grosz (1994:x&9) further states that how bodies are conceived is largely based on prevailing social conceptions and the body can also be seen as a mode of expression that can receive, code and translate the inputs of the world. It is through bodies and their constitutive parts, Merskin (2007:593) asserts, which act as sign vehicles as well as mechanisms, through which social class, personality, and even intent are conveyed. The body serves as a sign vehicle for the mental processes which occur. Although this is not a one-sided phenomenon, in the same way that the body expresses the mind, the mind expresses the body (particularly from a social point of view).

By interpreting the body one can deduce many aspects about the protagonists in the films. One should realise, though, that the demographics in which the characters are depicted are also open to interpretation in terms of the body. The term *embodiment* which Vivian Sobchack (2004:4) defines as a "radically material condition of human being [*sic*] that necessarily entails both the body and the consciousness, objectivity and subjectivity, in an irreducible ensemble", is a concept that will be used. The body can be a representation of the *embodiment* of other aspects besides the physical body such as the social place/space in which the body is represented. Waskul and Vannini (2006:3) put forward that the term *embodiment* refers to the process by which the

"object-body is actively experienced, produced, sustained, and transformed as a subject-body". As the subject-body includes all the different factors of our beings, it includes the personality, thoughts and emotions. However, Merskin explains (2007:598) that a human also embodies culturally shaped characteristics in order to communicate a complex conflation of appearance, identity, gender roles as well as beauty. Therefore, each protagonist is classified according to her embodiment of certain culturally charged features expressed in, among other things, place/space (the setting) of the films. At the same time, embodiment can also be analysed according to the iconography which help represent the characters. In terms of the experience of body and embodiment Waskul and Vannini (2006:2), however, warn that they are "layered, nuanced, complex, and multifaceted".

McCabe (2004:24) states that there has been a shift in psychoanalytic theory from a semiotic concern with a text to the unconscious processes of the spectator, who construct meanings from the text. There is a strong connection between feminism and psychoanalysis. The basis on which these two concepts are connected is that they both rely heavily on social conditioning and social factors in their composition. Mitchell (1974:xv) explains that generally in psychoanalysis there are claims that women are inferior and that they can only really achieve true femininity as wives and as mothers. Feminists often criticise psychoanalysis in terms of how it depicts women as inferior. In the separate chapters psychoanalytic terms will be used to indicate the manner in which the female protagonists actually go beyond being just wives or mothers. The protagonists transcend the passive and inferior roles which psychoanalysis has previously placed on them.

Psychoanalysis draws much of its foundation from the work done concerning the unconscious which is one of the important concepts that will be used when examining the films. Freud is one of the main contributors to, although not the discoverer of, the notion of the unconscious, which is the part of the mind that is beyond the consciousness. Mitchell (1974:6) explains that when unconscious thoughts are repressed they transform "normal" thoughts. The fact that a person's "normal" thoughts are transformed can have an effect on a

person's actions. Barry (2002:96) mentions that the unconscious has a strong influence upon our actions. Therefore, how one acts at certain times expresses thoughts repressed in the unconscious. Some of Freud's main ideas include the notion of "repression" which Barry (2002:97) explicates is the "forgetting or ignoring of unresolved conflicts, unadmitted desires, or traumatic past events" so that they are actually forced out of the conscious awareness and into the region of the unconscious.

The terminology Freud uses in his theory of dream work is also useful. Although, none of the female characters is in a dream or is dreaming, to analyse certain scenes this dream interpretation knowledge is important to keep in mind. The tools to consider include notions of "displacement" whereby a person or event is represented by another linked or associated symbolic substitution; and "condensation" through which a number of people, events, or meanings are merged and condensed and represented by a single image in a dream (Barry, 2002:98). How the concepts included in the dream work are connected to literature and by implication to film, is that dreams do not make explicit statements and therefore require an interpretation in order to deduce meaning. Freud (1954:96) explains that when one interprets dreams he/she is assigning a meaning to it, one only has to "undo the substitution correctly in order to arrive at this hidden meaning". For the purpose of this study, the *decoding* method is prevalent because it not only "takes into account not only the content of the dream but also the character and circumstances of the dreamer" (Freud, 1954:98). Each scene analysed using these tools, also considers the frame of mind in which the characters function. The fact that in dreams metaphors, symbols and images are "shown" to the individual, the same way that a film "shows" these same elements on a screen to a viewer; provides further motivation for dream work's information to be used in the interpretation of films. Barry (2002:98) says that both dreams and literature tend to communicate indirectly and represent meanings through "concrete embodiments of time, place, or person".

Together with the ideas of metaphors and symbols is the overt or covert meaning assigned to certain objects. The manner in which Freudian

interpretation works is through assigning sexual connotations to certain objects depending on their composition, for example objects which are long and straight are phallic symbols. Therefore through association one can deduce the meaning of many objects that a viewer sees in a film in terms of the unconscious of the characters depicted in these films. According to Barry (2002:105), objects with their "overt" content are connected with the conscious, while the "covert" meaning of an object is connected with the unconscious. In a sense the latter refers to what the object (or even the scene) is about. Iconography also works to express non-verbal aspects of a film.

2.3   ICONOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS IN FILM

Film uses coded images and it is the task of the viewer to decode these images in order to deduce meaning from the layers of visual representations on screen. In order for this decoding to take place, the viewer requires the correct tools to do so. Theories, such as visual semiotics, and the application of this theory can be used as one such tool. Although the analysis of each film does not use semiotics as such, a branch of visual semiotics, termed *iconography*, will be used to examine the female protagonists' external appearances. According to Van Leeuwen (2001:92) semiotics and iconography essentially ask the same questions in terms of what images represent, and investigate the hidden meaning behind images. However, Van Leeuwen (2001:92) differentiates that semiotics only studies the image itself and treats cultural meaning as a given, which is activated by the style and content of an image. On the other hand iconography pays attention to the context in which the image is produced.

Iconography is used within film analysis to describe, what Phillips (1999:167) refers to as "visual signifiers" of cinema which includes the *mise-en-scène*, referring to that what we actually see in the frame. Iconography, Ryall (1998:331) asserts, is concerned with the "distinctive visual qualities" of a specific film genre, and continues to explain that they include settings, details in costume, actors/characters, characteristic props, and other specifics of the setting such as modes of transport and weaponry. Phillips (1999:167) refers to

these different visual qualities as "paradigmatic options" which are available to film-makers. An example would be that in a western movie, when working in the paradigm of weaponry and transportation, you would expect to see six-guns and horses respectively. The use of iconographic elements makes it relatively easy to make meaning of certain visual elements in the films – particularly the characters' appearances.

Iconography in film is connected to genre. According to Phillips (1999:168), iconography does not provide a sufficient basis for defining a genre, but is an indicator of it. At the same time, when one is aware of a film's genre, one can expect certain visual elements to be present in the film. Phillips (1999:166) explains that genres function much like a language system in the manner in which it has a specific "vocabulary" as well as a set of "rules" which operate in its construction. If one is aware of the "vocabulary" and "rules" of a genre it can make it easier to analyse the film. Phillips (1999:167) also notes that genres can be said to be based on acts of construction and selection. He is referring to the manner in which films are composed as well as the manner the films represent specific elements. As genre is based on broad organising principles and is not always fixed, iconography is only one indicator at which to look. The three films can be classified according to specific genres, for example *Alice in Wonderland* is a fantasy film, and *Monster* and *Transamerica* can be classified as road movies. The latter two films can be classified according to other genres besides road movies. For example, *Monster* can also be classified in the crime genre. The focus however is not on the films' actual genres but rather the iconography that these films present in their composition.

One of the iconographic elements is the physical body. Waskul and Vannini (2006:10) explain that through the body we perform, express and represent subjectivity, and through these same activities others "judge our body as object by means of appearance and performance". Connected to the idea of the outer appearance is how one presents him/herself to the world, which includes the manner in which he/she dresses. Stutesman (2005:28) observes that film clothes, or costumes, indicate who someone is, how that character

feels or even where they are going in the world. By analysing a character's outer appearance many deductions concerning their inner workings can be made. Gianetti's (2005:340) statements can further emphasise the importance of costumes; he explains that "costumes […] represent another language system in movies, a symbolic form of communication that can be as complex and revealing as the other language systems filmmakers use". Iconography functions on various levels. For example, Chaudhuri (2006:27) affirms that Hollywood cinema uses iconography to build "female stereotypes".

2.3.1 Stereotypes

Lustig and Koester (2006:148) explicate the term *stereotype* as a form of a generalisation about a particular group of people according to culture or social affiliations, by making certain assertions about the characteristics of that particular group. These assertions are usually over-exaggerated and are not true for every member of a particular group. Stereotypes also, Smelik (1998:136) explains, work to create sharp opposition between social groups in order to maintain clear boundaries between them. Iconography relies on stereotyping in terms of making generalisations of some characters in terms of their appearances. Smelik (1998:137) stipulates that stereotypes can be introduced through iconography. Stereotypes work with iconography in fictions to express visual or non-verbal aspects of a particular character. These aspects can include them being part of a particular social group, nationality or sexuality. Dyer (2002:22) states that the advantage of using stereotypes in visual production is that it dispenses with the need to establish verbal expression of characteristics of a character's constitution. There are stereotypes in all three films; however, they are applied differently in each film. For example, in *Alice in Wonderland* the queens are typically stereotyped as "good" and "bad". Although Alice breaks away from the stereotypical woman of her day, the other two female protagonists rely quite heavily on stereotypes, both in terms of their physical appearance and in terms of behaviour. Stereotypes include labels such as "lesbian vampire", "dyke" (which includes the association with violence), "prostitute" and even the notion of what makes a woman a woman is stereotyped in the films.

Stereotypes generally have a negative connotation as they reduce individuals to basic, formulaic conception images. However, Dyer (2002:12) notes that "it is not stereotypes, as an aspect of human thought and representation, that are wrong, but who controls and defines them, what interests they serve". Therefore, in the instance of this study the stereotypes are not discussed to criticise the film makers, but rather to analyse the physical appearances of the characters, the places/spaces in which they are depicted, and what these different aspects communicate to the audience.

2.4   PLACE/SPACE: THEORETICAL ASPECTS

Many different definitions for the terms *place* and *space* exist. The use of either term is complicated as there are many different theorists, from different disciplines within the humanities such as cultural geography, narratology, architecture and film studies, who have different thoughts on how to distinguish between the two and on which to place an emphasis. According to Tuan (1977:3), a cultural geographer, *place* is associated with security as they are centres of felt value and where needs are met, while *space* is associated with freedom. It would seem that you need each term in order to accurately define both space and place. For example, one has to mark off spaces in order to create a place, but one needs the security of place to have a perception of space. The fact that the one term needs the other for its own definition makes it difficult to separate the two concepts. It does not necessarily matter what definitions and parameters one assigns each term, as each term is relevant and will eventually need to be used. However, this study does use the notion of *space* and *place* in specific ways. It endorses Cresswell's (2004:20) explanation of Tuan's geographical point of view expressed throughout his two books on space and place, it develops a sense that "space is an open arena of movement and action" while "place is about stopping and resting and becoming involved". Tuan (1977:6) advocates that space is more abstract than place, because what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as one gets to know it and gives it more value and meaning. In the instance of the analysis whenever the term *place* is used it refers to a secure and static location, such as a home, where a character feels

safe. While the term *space* refers to dynamic and unknown areas, where a character is unfamiliar with the surroundings and is not necessarily safe.

The notions of *place* and *space* are related to the body in the sense that bodies always exist in relation to place/space. The behaviours of human beings are also influenced by the environments in which they find themselves. An individual can be viewed as either conforming to the "rules" of a certain environment, or deviating from those particular rules or roles. Johnston (1999:81) asserts that:

> Human beings are creatures of the flesh. What we can experience and how we make sense of what we experience depend on the kinds of bodies we have and on the ways we interact with the various environments we inhabit. It is through our embodied interactions that we inhabit a world, and it is through our bodies that we are able to understand and act within this world with varying degrees of success.

This statement strengthens the idea that the body and the locations in which it is depicted are connected in terms of the place/space being a reflection, projection, as well as a product of bodies – both in an external and internal relation. Therefore the body can be seen as active in the production as well as transformation of place/space.

Waskul and Vannini (2006:11) argue in more or less the same way that "bodies' meanings are constituted in relation to the positioning of the body in a system of signification", but at the same time is a product of human interaction. Therefore the body can create meaning through its position in a particular place/space, as these terms not only imply a physical location, they also indicate a possible location for human interaction. The body, Müller-Funk (2007:85) explains, is the "medium between the individual and the space" (or place) in which they are depicted. In order to understand the body in terms of place/space one must also take into consideration Ryan's (2009:425) statement that the "most fundamental human experience consists of apprehending oneself as a body located in space". Space and place can act

as starting points of apprehending the body, in terms of how individuals experience the body in their surrounding environments. Tuan (1977:3) states that place and space are basic constituents of the lived world. By implication it can be said that place/space is therefore a basic component of a human experience because they are what constitute part of the world in which humans live. In addition, Tuan (1977:34) notes that a body is an "it" that takes up space, he also states that the posture and structure of the body, and its relation between other human beings, are principles of spatial organisation. Humans create perceptions of space through their bodies and the body's interaction with other bodies and objects. Tuan (1977:37) continues to explain that one's perception and horizons are calculated in terms of the structure and value of the body. He explains that each day we create a world by being awake and "standing", but at night we give in to the forces of the world and "take leave of the world we have created" by lying down and sleeping. Therefore, not only are units of measurement expressed in terms of the body, for example feet, but the position of the body also influences the perceptions of that body. The manner in which the body is oriented in space provides a means of analysing that body's relationship in the world; be it a social standing or even a perception of self.

As the experience of place/space is largely constructed out of human experiences, Cresswell (2004:23), referring to Edward Relph's concepts, states that for humans to be humans they need to be "in place", but at the same time these "places" are what humans create. It stands to reason that because places are a human's creation they are connected with the identity of a person; as certain social or personal parameters are satisfied before a subject feels, or perceives as if they are, "in place". By interpreting the places/spaces in which the female characters are depicted one can draw conclusions concerning the identities of the characters, as well as the social order, of those characters. Cresswell (2004:26&29) touches on the fact that places are socially constructed and therefore influence the perception of the physical body in places. This concept of places being socially constructed also assists in understanding the connection between places and the body in terms of embodiment. Crang and Thrift (2000:19) state that experience of the world

moves and changes to such an extent that the "self can no longer be seen as just the body". The notion of the body, being the centre of perception, moves to notions of embodiment, in which anything relating to the flesh interacts with other fields, such as physical place. The inclination to use the term *embodiment* of the female characters in terms of place/space is largely influenced by Michel Foucault's (1967) statement that the epoch of the present will perhaps be above anything else an "epoch of space" in all its manifestations. Therefore, places/spaces that are depicted in the films can be interpreted as an extension of the characters' minds as well as their physical bodies. Thus these places/spaces need not be just an issue of geographers, but of all schools of thought, including studying and interpreting film.

This dissertation examines the physical places/spaces depicted in the selected films. However, at the same time it also examines how the physical places/spaces embody the minds of the female characters. There is a twofold "meaning" to place/space. The terms can mean the physical or the mental/emotional place/space in which the characters find themselves. The places/spaces cannot be isolated from the other aspects but exists in a dynamic interrelationship with them.

In film the term *setting* is used to refer to the places/spaces in which the characters are depicted, and is part of the *mise-en-scène.* Giannetti (2005:323) posits that "settings are not merely backdrops for the action, but symbolic extensions of the theme and characterization". The setting, thus, acts as a non-verbal expression of possible themes of a film, as well as what the characters could possibly be like. The "look" and "feel" of the film is created by the setting as well as other factors such as costume and décor. Giannetti (2005:336) also comments on how camera shots can be used to emphasise different parts of the setting, depending on the required visual analogues for thematic and psychological ideas. There is a constant non-verbal communication that occurs between the audience and what is being shown on screen. Therefore the setting is a valuable aspect to analyse in terms of what is being expressed visually. There are many factors such as a set functioning as a microcosm, as an imitation of reality and even decoration,

to name but a few, which can be included in the examination of setting. The setting's influence includes the audiences' perception of characters and creating an emotional atmosphere or acting as a symbol. In order to adequately analyse the themes and characterisation each of these factors are examined, either in a combination of each other or as separate aspects.

Boggs and Petrie (2004:101) report that the environment in which a character lives can "provide the viewer with clues to understanding his or her character". The setting is usually used as a non-verbal determiner or reflection of character. Boggs and Petrie (2004:101) comment on how the characters' nature can be determined by factors such as their "time in history, the particular place on Earth they inhabit, their place in the social and economic structure, the customs, moral attitudes, and codes of behaviour imposed on them by society". These mentioned factors differ in the three films. For example, *Alice in Wonderland* is set in nineteenth-century England, while *Monster* and *Transamerica* are both set in modern day North America; and as mentioned in the introduction, they are all set in male-dominated societies which have a great influence on their "place" within their respective societies. Boggs and Petrie (2004:103) also suggest that a setting can also create a particular emotional atmosphere and act as a symbol. A setting can be used to represent an idea or theme that can be associated to a particular location or building. Thus the ability to analyse the setting (or in general terms, the space and place) becomes an important skill to use when examining films.

In a journey, any physical manifestation of land can be said to represent either place or space depending on the actual meaning assigned to those physical manifestations. For example, depending on if the location is secure/static or dynamic/unfamiliar the meaning assigned to the land will be place or space, respectively. The commonality in in all three films is that they are concerned with a journey. In each journey there is a strong element of self-discovery. Eleftheriotis (2010:101) aptly explains that "narratives of self-discovery are fleshed with visual explorations of the space travelled". Each character experiences places or spaces differently according to their relationship with the space travelled. Raitz (1998:364) acknowledges the fact that roads and

the countryside, or landscape, connected to them constitute a cultural landscape that is never value-free. There are many different cultural, political or social factors that can be interpreted in terms of landscape. Alice from *Alice in Wonderland* eventually becomes familiar with the unfamiliar and often strange spaces of the underworld and turns the spaces into a kind of place. She does so by becoming less afraid of her peculiar surroundings and proactive in getting back to her real-world. Bree in *Transamerica* has a home she can return to. The changing spaces in which she is depicted have a different implication to the ones in which Aileen, the protagonist from *Monster*, finds herself. *Monster*'s changing spaces indicate her complete lack of place and sense of belonging throughout the film. The ideas connected to either places/spaces depend on the character's relationship to the locations in which they find themselves.

2.4.1 Cinematic journeys: film and movement

The relationship between bodies and movement/mobility is that there is a correlation between a change in the character's psyche once they have been mobile, as well as the type of movement/mobility they have experienced. Eleftheriotis (2010:99) refers to cinematic journeys as "visual explorations of travelled space with investigations of psychological processes of change and transformation". Hence, there is always a change in a protagonist's character during as well as after they embark on a journey in film. This change can be in the form of altered beliefs or even challenges to preconceived ideas of the self, while the traveller is moving through the world and interacting with its inhabitants. Ryan (2009:425) puts forward that the "embodied nature of mind is reflected in language by families of metaphors that concretize abstract concepts in terms of bodies moving through or situated in space". A journey, Ryan (2009:426) continues, is a source of these metaphors. In this instance, analysing a journey is done by considering both the physical journey and the implications or metaphors of that journey for the protagonists. Eleftheriotis (2010:112) specifically refers to the "[p]leasures and anxieties of spatial exploration, the sensual and emotional dimensions of the travelling

experience, the intellectual and spiritual challenges of the journey, all [which] are mediated through the vision and the body of the mobile hero."

The term *cinematic journey* includes any type of journey taken in a film. This term encompasses the genre of the road movie, however many other journeys, be they physical or metaphorical, are also classified under this term. The road movie genre has many different features which constitute the narrative on the road. The traditional road movies were centred on male protagonists; however, since the release of *Thelma and Louise* (1991) the genre has changed to include female protagonists. Roberts (1997:45) uses the term "feminine road films" which essentially focus on female protagonists and feminine issues. Cohan and Hark (1997:2) list four related features of the road movie that pertain to the analysis of the two road movies. The following features are concerned with the traditional road movie, but in the respective analysis chapters the features will be discussed in relation to how the female protagonists diverge from them. Firstly, a road movie responds to the breakdown of the family unit which results in the destabilisation of male subjectivity and masculine empowerment. Secondly, events act upon the characters on the road and objects along the road are generally threatening and materially assertive. Thirdly, the protagonist readily identifies with the means of mechanised transportation, such as the motor vehicle or motorcycle. Lastly, the genre is traditionally focused on the male, in the absence of women. Thus a road movie typically promotes a male escapist fantasy which is resistant to, but ultimately contained by, the responsibilities of domesticity such as home life, marriage and employment (Cohan & Hark, 1997:2-3). Roberts (1997:63) explains that women on the road do not assume similar roles as men on the road, in terms of escaping notions of gender, but are generally attempting to flee patriarchy and its effects on their lives. It becomes clear that road movies contain similar features but differ in gender specifics. Hayward (2000:300-301) contextualises the road movie, including both the female and male gender, by saying that:

> Road movies, as the term makes clear, are movies in which
> protagonists are on the move. Generally speaking, such a movie

is iconographically marked through things such as a car, the tracking shot, wide and wild open space. The road movie is about frontiership of sorts given that one of its codes is discovery – usually self-discovery. The codes and conventions of a road movie have meant that until fairly recently the genre has been a predominantly gendered one. Generically speaking, the road movie goes from A to B in a finite chronological time. Normally the narration of a road movie follows an ordered sequence of events which lead inexorably to a good or a bad end. Genderically speaking, the traveller(s) is male and the purpose of the trajectory is to obtain self-knowledge. Recently, however, women have been portrayed as the travellers […] and in this way we can perceive a readiness to subvert or parody the genre.

Hayward includes the iconography as well as the different genders in the contextualisation. Eleftheriotis (2010:102) discusses how the road movie emphasises the journey rather than the moment of arrival, and the experience of space rather than the mere reduction of the world to destinations. The road movie genre always implies a journey. However, a journey does not necessarily imply a road movie. In this dissertation only two of the films are actual road movies but all three of the films deal with a journey which leads to self-discovery. Although originally applied in Mathematics as part of Einstein's Theory of Relativity, Bakhtin (1981:84) refers to *chronotopes*, a word created from the Greek words *topos* meaning "place" and *kronos* meaning "time"; therefore it literally means "time space", to refer to the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships". This term points to the inseparable nature of time and space. Chronotopes can be a constitutive feature in many different areas of culture and in different texts. Bakhtin's essay specifically focuses on the chronotope as it manifests in the novel. Ganser *et al.* (2006) however employ the concept of the chronotope as it applies to the road and journeys. Bakhtin (1981:84-85) refers to the fact that a chronotope has an important intrinsic generic function. Since it refers to the means of "measuring how, in a particular age, genre, or text, real historical time and space as well as fictional time and space are articulated in relation to

one another" (Ganser *et al.*, 2006:2). In this instance, the connection of all the chronotopes to a film's genre is that the genre already implies a place/space and time reference. For example the Western film genre implies a specific place/space, which is the "Wild West" of North America and a specific time period in history. Therefore, as mentioned by Ganser *et al.* (2006:2-6), chronotopes of the road include the open road, the amount of ground covered, the chance for encounter on the road by people who would normally not be associated with one another, the bonding of characters on the road, and the narrative on the road to discovery (which is both physical and symbolic).

Ryan (2009:420) says that two fundamental categories that structure human experience are time and space. Although time is not specifically dealt with in this dissertation it is difficult to separate the two concepts. Time in terms of a "period within a particular time frame" is implied when discussing the representation of the female body, in terms of the place/space distinction of a particular time frame. Tuan (1977:118) explains that time and space are largely unconscious experiences. He states that we have a sense of space because we can physically move, and of time because as biological beings, we have recurrent phases of ease and tension. The connection between time and space is quite simply a matter of distance covered means that time has been spent to make the journey. Also the viewer is made aware of the journey's implications on the protagonists at the end of their journey, because the viewer had to have witnessed the entire course of the journey over time to really understand the consequences of it. Tuan (1977:125) explains that a mental journey implies that there is movement either backwards or forwards in time. This means that both memories, a movement backwards in time, and active planning for the future, a movement forward in time, become movement in time as well as in space. Simultaneously place is connected to time in a sense that to attach meaning to a particular place you need time to make the space more familiar.

The road movie centres on the protagonists' journey, particularly their inner journey to self-discovery. Laderman (2002:79) acknowledges that "driving across an external landscape is usually a metaphor for a journey across an

internal, personal space". A journey can be considered as a personal aspect of the characters' development in films. The mode of transportation also has an influence on films, since the motor vehicle's creation altered the time spent on travel. In this study the mode of transportation, namely the motor vehicle in both *Monster* and *Transamerica*, is also an important aspect to consider. Urry (2007:55) notes that the vehicle becomes an "extension of the driver's body". This aspect of the driver's body and its connection to the vehicle is another way to examine the female body in the films. Eleftheriotis (2010:98) avers that a traveller's body becomes a "site of inscription […] of the journey and provides a physical anchor for the spatial exploration of the films". There is always a connection between the journey, the mode of transportation, and the body.

Another way that the concept of the journey, and more specifically the road, connects to the place/space concept is that while being mobile one comes into "non-places", which cannot be conceptualised as spaces. According to Cresswell (2002:17) *non-places* include "motorways, airports, [and] supermarkets" which are classified as unrooted places marked by mobility and travel. By implication diners, petrol stations (gas stations), motels and camping sites can also be classified as non-places. It is important to note that all these mentioned *non-places* are examples of iconography of the road movie. Cresswell (2002:17) explains that non-place is "essentially the space of travelers". The concept of *non-place* is particularly relevant to *Monster*, and relates to the female protagonist's sense of not belonging.

2.4.2   Mobility

Cinematic journeys imply that all three respective films deal with mobility. Hannam *et al.* (2006:1) explicate that:

> Mobilities encompasses both the large-scale movements of
> people, objects, capital and information across the world, as well
> as the more local processes of daily transportation, movement
> through public space and the travel of material things within
> everyday life. Issues of movement, of too little movement or too

much or of the wrong sort or at the wrong time, are central to many lives, organisations and governments.

All three of the female protagonists undergo movement from one destination to another. The significance of their particular movement has meaning for the female protagonists' bodies. As Adey (2010:34) states that "[m]obility is movement imbued with meaning", it is important to analyse mobility. The term *mobility* is used because it implies a deeper meaning than the term *movement*. The characters' mobility, or even their immobility, of their bodies affects their representation. In all three films the focus is on the "type" of mobility of the body in the specific spaces, but also the type of transportation that assists the protagonists to move through space. There is also a consideration of the factors or conditions that limit the character's mobility and the effects of that immobility on their lives. The main factor that influences immobility is the character's being female. Pallasmaa (2008:143) aptly puts forward that mobilities assist in examining our "embodied mode of experiencing the world through constant motion". Therefore, once again, the connection to the body and its embodiment in the specific environments in which it is depicted is created through the examination of the body in place/space.

2.5   TRAVELLING BODIES AND BORDERS

As an aspect of the new mobility paradigm of the twenty-first century the concept of borders and boundaries has received much attention in the last few years. There is a tendency in border studies to see and interpret borders everywhere. It is from this point of departure that this section provides a broad theoretical overview on the importance and relevance of borders in the context of the films. It also provides definitions and explanations of the specific borders which will be discussed and applied to the films in their individual chapters.

Barrera (2010:210) reports that women are generally seen as "on the margins, and of the marginal"; instantly there is a sense of separation and a border created around women. Therefore border theory can assist in conceptualising

and interpreting the manner in which Alice, Aileen and Bree are kept on a particular side of a border. All of the female protagonists are perceived as on the margin, not only for being women, but for other factors as well. It should also be taken into consideration that there are different ways that borders such as "race, class, sex, age" (Barrera, 2010:215) separate people and imply borders.

2.5.1 Importance and relevance of borders

Larsen (2007:98) concisely defines a border when he states that a "boundary is a meaning-producing difference between at least two domains". He further explains that a boundary is never autonomous but is determined by what is placed on either side of it. The approach to borders and border crossings falls under the theory of border poetics. The dominant contributors to the theory are Johan Schimanski and Stephan Wolfe. Schimanski (2009) observes that the purpose of the theory is to create strategies to analyse the formation of borders within modern societies. The manner in which the borders in the films are interpreted are largely influenced by Schimanski's border concepts. Although it also draws on a combination of essays from the book *Border poetics de-limited* (2007) which Schimanski co-edited with Stephen Wolfe. The concept of *borders* can be found in just about every field of life. What affects the analysis of borders is the particular context in which they are found, as the context will affect the approach to the research of the borders. In more specific terms, the context of the borders is according to the places/spaces, as well as the represented female bodies, found in the films.

The three films are concerned with the viewer's interpretation of the act of transgressing borders, known simply as "border crossings". Films can be viewed in the light of border crossings in two ways. In the first way the border between the text (the film) and whatever is outside the text (what could be termed "reality") needs to be crossed for the film to have a purpose, the purpose of being viewed. This kind of border is known as a textual border and does not need any further discussion as it will not form part of this study. In the second way certain epistemological borders need to crossed, by the person viewing the film. It stands to reason that just by watching and

interpreting a film border crossings are present. Schimanski and Wolfe (2007:10) explain that "[n]arrative establishes borders and moves across them marking differences and establishing connections". The fact that viewers are able to view borders and border crossings from an objective perspective (because they are outside the film and are often provided with more information than certain characters) allows them a privileged point-of-view, in which they are able to interpret the border in all its manifestations. Schimanski and Wolfe (2007:13) say a border is dynamic and using different interpretations makes a single border have multiple meanings. One must realise that because a border can have multiple interpretations, what could constitute a particular border for one analyst may not be in line with what another analyst may have argued. Boundaries, Larsen (2007:99) states, are never a given or are never simply there, they emerge once the conditions for producing meaning are fulfilled. Therefore the sections in the separate chapters which apply the theory of border poetics could be different in another study concerning the same films. It depends on the paradigm that is used in the approach to the examination of borders. To further argue that borders are an essential factor one cannot conceive of place/space without taking the concepts of borders into consideration.

Larsen (2007:98) explicates that borders can be classified as a boundary between, but at the same time a boundary to, different entities. This split function of a boundary is a prominent concept in the study of borders and one must be aware of the function of the specific border. To help distinguish between the two classifications Larsen (2007:98) clarifies that "between" implies a possible obstacle while "to" presents a possible opening. Standford Friedman (1996:15) states that boundaries are also an indication of a distinction between, "selves and others". One of the factors that these films have in common is that they are all concerned with journeys, thus the borders and border crossings are relevant in many ways. The interpretation of the border always depends on the perspective from which one is observing. In this instance the viewer will interpret the borders according to how they influence the different protagonists' lives. Although all three journeys are physical, the emotional or mental journeys are also important factors that

need to be taken into consideration in terms of how the different characters change by the end of the respective films. Borders and border crossing become a yardstick and analytical tool for the changes that occur within the protagonists.

One could ask how the subject of borders can be relevant in a study concerning predominantly the representation of female bodies. Schimanski and Wolfe (2007:21) report that bodies are border sites which serve to mark the distinction between inside and outside, as well as self and other. They further qualify that physical bodies are influenced by social order which indicates certain hierarchies established on boundaried systems of gender, race, class, sexuality and so forth. It should also be kept in mind that borders are merely social constructs which are habitually enforced by society in terms of what is considered correct and incorrect behaviours in terms of gender, race, class and sexuality. Therefore, when examining borders it is as if one is studying the beliefs of a certain society and these beliefs can be interpreted in the films. In all three of the films there is one or other reference to society and the influence of society on the female protagonists. David Newman (2007:27) explains that the elementary ordering of society requires compartments and categories and therefore automatically creates borders. *Monster* is the prime example of how a person should behave in order to be on a specific side of the border. Aileen is distinctly separate from her society because she is a prostitute, lesbian murderer. She does not adhere to the behaviour of a socially accepted female. This means that borders keep certain elements in, but at the same time they are also a means of keeping certain elements out. Thus, certain behaviours, appearances and classes will determine the side of the border on which you reside. However, the other two films' protagonists are also, in a sense, bordered from society because they behave in a nonconformist manner.

Newman (2007:33) states that borders naturally reflect the existing differences between various entities, in some cases borders serve to create a new set of "others" which did not exist, while in other cases they continue, rather than remove, the sense of "otherness". In a sense the fact that these protagonists

are women make them "other", even though they belong to a group namely "women". The border further serves to create their sense of "other". This separation is further needed to create the sense of individual identity and to make a single person have a form of independent existence which is imperative when discussing these three protagonists. What follows is information concerning the specific border planes.

2.5.2 Border planes

Although there could be many levels of classification concerning borders, Schimanski (2009) discusses five main classifications. They are textual borders, topographical borders, temporal borders, symbolic borders and epistemological borders. Of the five this study will only focus on four, more specifically, it will draw on temporal, symbolic, topographical and epistemological borders.

Temporal borders are simply and specifically transitions between two time periods. Schimanski (2009) also includes Bakhtin's theory of chronotopes under these borders. Symbolic borders, which can also be termed *mental* or *abstract* borders, are exactly that, abstract or part of the imaginary. Schimanski (2009) says that concepts, such as "space, time and borders are categories of perception". These borders exist on a mental or metaphorical level. Symbolic borders, Schimanski (2009) states, are "conditions of manifestations of topographic borders" which implies that topographic borders are established because of mental requirements for enclosure or separation. In a seemingly paradoxical explanation Schimanski (2009) says that symbolic borders can be conceived of as being represented borders instead of borders of the representation, when these boundaries figure as major binary opposition or limit values. What this statement means is that our mental need for borders are what create a representation of the border in terms of a person's perceptions. Other types of borders can be regarded as sub-sets of symbolic borders (Schimanski, 2009) as there are metaphorical values placed on each of the different kinds of borders. Symbolic borders are particularly important as the protagonists' actions evoke many interpretations on a mental or abstract level

In the same way that the protagonists' actions evoke interpretation, so do their respective physical journeys. When someone embarks on a journey they typically move across certain places, and therefore move topographically which in turn implies that they cross topographic borders. Schimanski (2009) explains that topographical borders are borders which are manifested on a geographical plane, therefore they concern some form of place/space. However, Schimanski (2009) also explains that these borders include boundaries of the body although they exist on a different scale, a micro-scale, thus traditional geographers do not usually focus on them. Therefore, in the instance of this study, topographical borders are considered to be any material border, be it a national boundary of states (known as macro-scale borders) or the body which has been crossed (micro-scale borders).

Epistemological borders are equally important and relevant to the study of the female body in the films. An epistemological border, Schimanski (2009) explicates, is the border on the plane of knowledge, it is the border between the known and the unknown. It can be said that if you cross a border you have never crossed before, you are crossing into the unknown. Every border has the potential to represent an epistemological border. In turn, the epistemological boundary can be referred to as a specific kind of symbolic border which Schimanski (2009) advocates in his contribution. Schimanski (2009) also states that the epistemological border is associated with fiction such as fantasy, which immediately connects this border to *Alice in Wonderland*, however the other two films also have epistemological borders which the protagonists cross. More specifically each protagonist ventures into the unknown while they are on their journeys.

2.5.3 Border crossings

Any narration in which characters move and events unfold creates a space that Schimanski and Wolfe (2007:10) call a "site of meetings, of border crossings, and cultural encounters". Any series of events which has narrative elements attached to them, has an inclination to include borders as well as border crossings, which bring with them a certain amount of change. The word *crossing* suggests there is a movement from one territory to another.

Schimanski (2009) explains the movement in terms of it being a passage to different territories, which can include important transitions in life, and is marked by the border. At the same time border crossings bring with them an occasion for that story or narration to take place. It is important to note that the development of one's identity is unthinkable without the border formations and crossings, basically without border processes (Schimanski & Wolfe, 2007:12). This concept of identity is particularly relevant because of the journeys on which the protagonists embark that ultimately change their lives and identities. The actual border which is crossed can either be, Schimanski (2009) explains, physically marked, such as a territory that is politically bordered, or it can be an impalpable line which is connected to symbolic spheres of the border. Therefore any border, no matter on which plane it manifests, has the possibility to be crossed.

The fact that any border has the potential of being crossed requires two important aspects, namely a spatial dimension and a subject, the latter is also known as the border-crosser. The spatial dimension, imaginary or otherwise, must be in place or else it cannot be crossed (Schimanski, 2009). At the same time there needs to be a subject in order for the crossing to actually take place. One needs both aspects in the study of borders and border crossings. When taking into consideration the characters' relationships with one another, borders once again play an important role. Personal relations, Müller-Funk (2007:84) specifies, always depend on spatial nearness. Spatial and local nearness have always had sensual and emotional qualities. It would seem that the closer all three of the protagonists get to the other characters the better their relationships become. Their physical bodies need to cross borders in order for the emotional borders, which each protagonist creates, to be broken down. In turn they cross emotional borders too. Schimanski (2009) states that the role of the subject in the border crossing is central to examining the border's forms of representation. The border crossing tends to complicate as well as redefine the subject (Schimanski, 2009), which is evident in all three films. At the same time crossings can also be viewed as successful or unsuccessful, on different border planes (Schimanski, 2009) which all depends on the interpretation of the specific crossing. The idea of crossing

can be connected to the idea of a threshold, since it conjures up the idea that a new experience awaits once the crosser has moved from one space to another. The crossing and the consequent new experience are aspects of liminality.

2.5.4   Liminality: spaces and borders

Aguirre *et al.* (2000:6) explain that a *limen* is a threshold between two places. There is immediately a sense of two separate spaces created by the image of a threshold. Aguirre *et al.* (2000:6) also acknowledge that a "limen constitutes a passageway across a border and that 'liminality' designates the condition ascribed to those things or persons who occupy or find themselves in the vicinity of the threshold", either permanently or temporarily. Van Gennep, and later Turner, are two theorists who have made contributions to the theory of liminality. Van Gennep, as expressed by Viljoen and van der Merwe (2007:10), attributes liminal spaces to the rites of passage process that many cultures have in place, for example, concerning initiations into a different state. There is always a different state in which the initiate will be, once the liminal process is complete. However, the initiate must first go through a process before the new state can occur. La Shure (2005) asserts that Van Gennep describes the rites of passage in a three-part structure, the first stage is known as the separation (the *preliminal*), the second stage as the liminal period, and the third and last stage as the re-assimilation (the *postliminal*). La Shure (2005) describes the process as the initiate is firstly stripped of the social status that they possess before they begin the ritual (*preliminal*), they are then "inducted into the liminal period of transition" and then finally given their new status and re-assimilated into society (*postliminal*). This is the basic structure that is followed when an individual goes through a transition, especially from a cultural point of view, for example from a boy to a man. Turner (1969:147) defines liminal individuals as neither here nor there or as "betwixt and between" positions as they are assigned by the law, custom or convention. The limen and the border are always closely related to one another. Borders are involved whenever one thinks of the liminal. For example, the initiate begins on one side of the border, for instance as a child.

They then go through the initiation process, in which they are involved in a liminal state for a period of time. The last part of the process sees the initiate emerging as a changed individual, for instance as a man, on the other side of the border and is then reincorporated into society.

Aguirre *et al.* (2000:7) observe that Turner extends the concept of liminality to areas which are not strictly sacred rituals. Any process in which a human being leaves their current reality, moves through a "neither here nor there space", and emerges into a new reality, is a liminal experience. There seems to always be a change in identity once the individual reaches the new reality. Aguirre *et al.* (2000:9) qualify that they refer to liminal texts as centring in the idea of the threshold, or with a fundamental theme of crossing-over, a transgression or entry into the Other. In the instance of the analysis of the three films the "Other" can refer to anything from Other worlds to a different sex. The protagonists in *Alice in Wonderland* and *Transamerica* have a more positive liminal experience in which their transitions indicate a new person in the end. *Monster*'s protagonist is negatively influenced by the liminal experience she has.[4]

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter was a theoretical exposition of key terms and an explanation of the analytical tools that will be used in the examination of the female body in the selected films. It provided an overview of feminist ideas concerning the approach to the body as well as a summary of Mulvey's theoretical standpoint concerning spectator theory and the male gaze, as they are used in relation to the female body on screen. Mulvey's notions act as a starting point from which to examine how the female protagonists subvert the male gaze and possess active bodies. The chapter also defined the term *embodiment* and explained how the term is connected to the physical body as well as the mind. There

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[4] The theoretical exposition set out the theory in a specific order. However, the analytical chapters do not necessarily follow this order and will be structured in the most practical and logical manner.

was also a description of iconography and how it manifests in the context of film, in terms of the costumes, characters, props and *mise-en-scéne*. It also touched on the function of stereotypes and what visual information is provided by non-verbal indicators.

This chapter also discussed the notion of place/space as well as gave a definition of how these two terms will be used within the analysis of the selected films. While on the topic of physical and mental places/spaces, reference was made to cinematic journeys and how a physical journey indicates a journey to self-discovery. Time is needed to complete the process of self-discovery, but ground needs to be covered in order for the process to take place. The time and space connection is related to chronotopes. There are specific chronotopes of the road that were provided to be used in the analysis of the two road movie films. Therefore there was also a short discussion on the road movie genre as well as the effects of mobility and immobility on the female protagonists and their bodies. The chapter also provided information about borders, their relevance, the different planes on which they exist and what a border crossing implies. It also examined the connection between borders and liminality. What follows is an application of these analytical tools on the selected films.

CHAPTER 3

THE FANTASY BODY IN *ALICE IN WONDERLAND*

3

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The focus of this dissertation is the representation of the female body in the three selected films. However, for each of the films the body manifests in different ways, so each film deals with the representation of the female body but in diverse ways. In order to discuss the portrayal of women each film is analysed and discussed individually. For specifically *Alice in Wonderland* the study will focus on the overt theme of the politics of sex. This phrase includes reference to the relative powers especially between males and females in a society and is explored throughout the film. This focus implies that the analysis will be specifically on Alice's fight against the predominant patriarchal order of her day. Together with Alice's fight she achieves independence because she is a fearless female who does not conform to the rigid society in which she is depicted. Whenever there is reference to Alice's free-thinking, independence, deviation from her society's norms, and/or being active there is an implicit dialogue that counters Mulvey's initial standpoints concerning women in film. Alice's representation is active and she moves away from the passive, objectified and sexualised representation of women, referred to by Mulvey. The analysis will concentrate on Alice's, as well as the two queens' physical bodies and personal characteristics. It will also examine the body in relation to spaces and borders in the film, to examine the manner in which Alice's body is active. It also discusses the representation of the female body which is presented in a non-stereotypical manner. In order for Alice to successfully fight the overtly patriarchal society the concept of believing in the impossible to make anything possible needs to be established by Alice, and by implication the viewer.

In the first part of this chapter there will be a short discussion on the director, Tim Burton, as well as a brief summary of the film's fabula. This is done to provide an overview of the film and to provide an indication of the relevant

themes which are prevalent when discussing the female body. This summary section is brief, yet it serves as an important section in terms of the orientation of the film and its content. The section after the summary is concerned with the theoretical underpinnings of fantasy. These underpinnings provide a point of departure to understanding the genre and will assist in the investigation of Alice's body, in a fantasy space. Tung (2004:102) explains that, "Fantasy allows women viewers to integrate the violent imagery and female embodiment in a positive fashion". This statement is particularly true for my interpretation of *Alice in Wonderland*, since I will analyse how Alice positively embodies a free and independent woman. This theoretical section constitutes a short contextualisation of fantasy in history. It also provides a definition for fantasy and establishes what constitutes fantasy in literature, as well as film. This section's content, with its various definitions and concepts, needs to be taken into consideration throughout the analysis of the film. It serves as the background to build on the information concerning fantasy, as well as the representation of the female body in the film.

The remaining sections will then be an application of the theory outlined in the second chapter, as well as the theory sketched in this chapter. The majority of the chapter is concerned with the female protagonist, Alice. It examines her fight against the patriarchal order of her day. This section draws on the theory of place/space in its composition, as Alice's journey to Wonderland is what gives her the courage and ability to actually overcome the constraints of her predominantly patriarchal society. Alice's places/spaces will firstly be discussed, followed by an analysis of Alice's physical appearance. The section on Alice includes a scene analysis that will apply the concepts of the conscious and unconscious, referred to in the theoretical exposition, where Alice fights the Jabberwocky. The implications of Alice's physical fight are important in terms of her overcoming her real day society. The queens also have implications on Alice's fight against the patriarchal society of her day.

The section that follows the analysis of Alice is concerned with the physical appearances of the female characters that embody the matriarchal rule. This feminine rule is a fundamental part of Wonderland's society. In this part of the

chapter the two queens will be discussed in terms of what their physical appearances express to the viewer. This section calls for the application of iconography outlined in Chapter 2. There is also a section on the queens as the embodiment of Alice's psyche, in terms of the animus and anima as used by Jung. The discussion on the queens is done in order to indicate how their separate representations, combine to give Alice a balanced and active representation that moves away from Mulvey's initial standpoints. Alice's journey to the "Other World" means that borders have to be crossed in order for her to arrive in the fantasy world.

The last section of this chapter concerns the analysis of the borders which are crossed, not only when Alice arrives in Wonderland but also the subsequent borders that are crossed when Alice returns to the "real-world". The borders which will be discussed are symbolic, epistemological and topographical. The entire section will be discussed in order to examine the manner in which the female body is represented in the fantasy film *Alice in Wonderland*.

3.2 ALICE'S JOURNEY: CONTEXTUALISATION AND FABULA

Alice's adventures in Wonderland (2009) is originally a Lewis Carroll children's classic novel. Over the years there have been many intertextual references to the children's novel by visual artists, including directors of films, who use a wide range of references from the novel. The British Film Institute (2010) identifies at least twenty film and television adaptations of the tale, including three known silent films, a Disney animation and even a pornographic film titled *Alice in Wonderland: an X-rated musical comedy*. Each of these remakes and reinterpretations has features that make it unique. For example, the Disney animation, which is meant for children, is a predominately faithful adaptation of the children's novel. The events and their sequence, the characters as well as the play with absurd language are some of the factors which are faithfully adapted in the Disney film. A completely different approach is taken by Jan Svankmajer (1988) in his free film adaptation of the novel, which is not meant for children, titled *Něco z Alenky* (the English translation is simply *Alice*). It uses a combination of live action and stop-motion animation.

The film is a darker interpretation of the novels in terms of the characters and their interaction with Alice. The film leaves the viewer feeling uneasy because of such factors as the sound effects that are used more than dialogue, as well as the mismatched bones that make-up some of the characters' bodies.

Tim Burton has also used intertextual references in his film adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland*. His free adaptation is of both *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the looking-glass* (Carroll, 2009) in a single film. The film has the first book's title, but draws upon both novels, while adding aspects that are in neither of the novels. Burton has been described by Smith and Matthews (2002:1) as having a unique "artistic sensibility, [which is] somehow both dark and mischievous, sinister and childlike, overtly, almost distractingly visual". At the same time, a critic called He (2009:17) acknowledges that Burton can be classified as an *auteur* since a majority of his films have a distinctive style, which has been referred to, in the vernacular, as "Burtonesque". He (2009:18-19) also refers to the fact that Burton often has:

> two distinct worlds [that] exist simultaneously – whether in the mind only or in an alternate reality such as the netherworld – and only a few select characters traverse the two. The 'normal' world is exposed as claustrophobic and suffocating while the 'topsy-turvy' world is colorful, imaginative, and revelatory, and often turns out to be more logical.

Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* stays true to his film style, both visually and in terms of storyline. This film adaptation is darker than the original piece of writing, particularly in terms of the overt use of dark colours surrounding the Red Queen. However, it still remains childlike in its visual animation. It is a Disney released film, although not entirely aimed at a children's audience. The film also does have two worlds that exist at the same time, namely the real-world and Wonderland. These two worlds basically indicate Burton's adherence to his "Burtonesque" style. Since the film is an intertextual representation of the novel, many incidents occur in both texts. For example, when Alice drinks a liquid to make her shrink and eats a cake to make her

grow. Many of the characters are also in both texts such as the caterpillar, the dormouse, the Mad Hatter, and Twiddledee and Twiddledum. But many aspects from the novel have been adapted to suit the film's fabula. For example, the film has included a character called Ilosovic Stayne, the knave of hearts, into the story.

The ultimate expression of the film's themes can only be done by watching the entire film. Therefore, most of the events (scenes) in the film are important for the development of the characters, their personalities as well as, and perhaps most importantly, the themes. What follows is a brief summary of the events which will assist the reader in establishing the characters, the events, as well as the film's synopsis. Once again, similar to the novel, the fabula is set in two worlds. The beginning and the end of the film are set in the real-world. In the beginning, Alice's father has passed away and she is troubled by a strange, recurring dream. Alice (Mia Wasikowska) attends a garden party where an unattractive, soon to be Lord, Hamish asks her to marry him. She will be expected to be subservient to Hamish and perform all the duties of a proper "lady" of her time. After Hamish's proposal, Alice sees the White Rabbit and instead of replying to Hamish she says that she needs a moment. She then follows the White Rabbit, later known as McTwisp, down the rabbit hole into an alternative world.

James Walters' book *Alternative worlds in Hollywood cinema* is relevant to Wonderland as an alternative world. Walters (2008:10-11) classifies alternative worlds into three distinct categories, namely: "Imagined Worlds", "Potential Worlds" and "Other Worlds". Imagined Worlds are defined by the fact that the protagonist dreams of, or hallucinates, a world away from the world in which they live. Potential Worlds refer to a character visiting alternative version(s) of the world they inhabit. Other Worlds describe the protagonist travelling to a world which is entirely different from the world in which they live. If one is familiar with Carroll's original *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the looking glass* (2009) novels, one would classify them in the Imagined World category as it becomes clear at the end of both stories that Alice is dreaming of the worlds that she visits. However, in this film

adaptation Alice tries to convince herself that she is dreaming, but by the end of the film, it is clear that she has in fact travelled to an alternative world. Walters (2008:157) states that Other Worlds in film are completely divorced from reality when compared to the other types of mentioned worlds. Alice travels to a world which is completely different to her own; Wonderland is classified as an "Other World" based purely on the fact that Wonderland is a world disjointed from her reality.

A majority of the rest of the film is set in this Other World that Alice falls into, once she goes down the rabbit hole. For the sake of simplicity this study uses the name "Wonderland" which is part of the film's title, and is the alternative world's supposed name. However, the viewer later learns that the alternative world's name is in fact "Underland". Alice believes that she is dreaming, particularly because of the fact that the personalities that she meets in Wonderland are the same as the ones in her recurring dream. Alice learns that Wonderland is tyrannically ruled by the Red Queen (Helena Bonham Carter). The Red Queen forcibly stole the crown from her younger sister, the White Queen (Anne Hathaway). The Red Queen managed to steal the crown because she is in control of a scary monster called the Jabberwocky. The Red Queen's rule has left Wonderland destitute and all its inhabitants in constant fear of having their heads chopped off if they do not comply with her rule.

Alice also learns that a compendium predicts that she will be the one to slay the Jabberwocky and return Wonderland to its rightful queen and original state. At this point Alice believes that she is not the slayer depicted in the compendium. During a series of events, Alice meets the Hatter who attempts to remind her of her previous journey to Wonderland as a child. The Hatter and Alice are then separated, although she finally goes to the White Queen's castle, and begins to really remember her initial visit to Wonderland. Alice realises that she is in fact not dreaming and needs to find the courage, and possibility, within herself, to help restore Wonderland to what it once was. Alice finally finds the courage to fight, as well as kill, the Jabberwocky and returns Wonderland to the White Queen.

Alice then returns to the real-world with her new found courage. In her reality she declines Hamish's proposal but asks to speak to Lord Ascot, Hamish's father. She then convinces Lord Ascot of a viable trading post between England and China. The last scene shows Alice boarding a ship as an apprentice at Lord Ascot's company. At the end of the film the viewer sees that Alice does not conform to her society's belief that a woman should be married, but rather chooses to fulfil her father's dreams of expanding trading posts around the world. Alice is constantly active in her representation. She moves away from a passive and objectified woman of her time.

It is fitting that the name of "Wonderland" has been changed to "Underland" in the film as fantasy itself, Jackson (1981:16) explains, inverts the rules, and introduces the unexpected and creates a descent into a social underworld. On many levels the name could refer to the actual falling down through the rabbit hole into the alternative world, or it can refer to the "social underworld" where women are the rulers and the social constraints of Alice's real-world are absent and even fought against. It also refers to Alice's delving into her unconscious desires, this factor will be discussed in depth later in the analysis. This descent into the underworld is related to the concept of *katabasis* (or *catabasis)* – which is a concept that is defined by a journey or movement downwards. Falconer (2005:2) qualifies that the Greeks used the term *katabasis* (Latin *descensus ad infernas*) in a metaphorical sense to refer to the story of a living person whom had visited the underworld and returned reasonably unharmed to the land of the living. The myth of Orpheus is an example of a *katabasis* experience. In more modern times Freud explains that an example of a *katabasis* experience is when an individual dreams, as well as when he/she delves into the underworld of the unconscious to deal with aspects such as trauma or beliefs. In this delving the individual undergoes a process of self-understanding and inner ripening (Mulder, 1987:11). The viewer literally sees Alice descend into darkness, which can be interpreted in a literal sense the darkness of the hole, but also in a metaphorical sense, since she falls into the unknown and crosses an epistemological border. The viewer also literally observes Alice's return to the real-world in which she is basically unscathed.

3.3 THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF FANTASY AND GENRE

This section outlines fantasy in terms of what makes it unique in its composition, and the manner in which its constitution ultimately assists in expressing this particular film's themes. It is largely a theoretical section, although specific references to the film are made in it where necessary. The theory will then be applied in the analysis of the film.

By the 1920s, Manley (2009:4) explains, the fantasy genre basically comprised of, among others, *The Wonderful wizard of OZ*, the novel *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* and fairy tales such as those written by Hans Christian Andersen. In the 1940s some fantasy films were also made. Coombs (2007:15) lists, among others, *The Thief of Bagdad*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Stone Flower* and even a Nazi German film called *Münchhausen*. It is only in recent years that fantasy literature has become a popular genre, initially and most markedly by the success of Tolkien's *Lord of the rings* in the 1960s.[5] The available literature concerning fantasy and literature is limited in comparison to the theory written for other forms of literature, as a consequence the available writings on specifically fantasy films is even less. Much of the information in this section was originally applicable to literature. Since the theory which deals with fantasy literature and film are similar in many ways, the theory for the written form can be applied to fantasy in its visual representation. What should also be taken into consideration is that the film adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* is based on the novels; therefore much of the critique of them can be applied to the film in some instances.

Jackson (1981:14) defines fantasy as a "story based on and controlled by an overt violation of what is generally accepted as possibility". This "violation" of "possibility" is what makes fantasy so interesting and unique in its composition. Coombs (2007:12) states that fantasy films are often considered

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[5] The Harry Potter series is also a popular form of fantasy literature which has had an impact on the reception of fantasy more recently. Both *The Lord of the rings* and *Harry Potter* have been adapted to film.

as an opposition to realism, which is largely concerned with physical reality. However, fantasy tends to deal with internal reality such as dreams and subconscious fantasies, which are just as real as physical reality. The manner, in which the two "realities", namely physical and internal reality, mainly deviate from one another is that, Jackson (1981:2) explains, fantasy literature transcends reality, escapes the human condition and constructs superior alternate and secondary worlds. These "superior alternate and secondary worlds" are what perhaps create a space in which it is plausible for the characters to deal with their internal realities. In the physical reality there may be societal constraints which make it difficult to face one's internal reality. To a large extent Alice, in the film, deals with her unconscious desires. She has a desire to continue with her father's innovative and imaginative thinking as well as his approach to business ventures. Jackson (1981:1) explains that fantasy does not adhere to the restraints, such as time, space and character, as its more realistic counterpart. The infinite possibilities of fantasy make it easier for the characters to deal with any type of reality. The events which unfold throughout the film predominately take place in an alternative fantasy world. It is basically through this world that Alice eventually gains the insight and courage to overcome the thinking of the predominantly patriarchal society in which she lives.

Jackson (1981:4) states that fantasy has the ability to open up on disorder, as well as onto that which lies outside of the law and the dominant value system. The fantastic even traces over the unsaid and unseen of culture of that which is covered over and made absent. Fantastic narrative tells of the impossible attempt to realise desires, while it makes visible the invisible as well as discovers absence (Jackson, 1981:4). The fantastic poses the unreal while integrating the real. In *Alice in Wonderland* there is a representation of the real-world – it has a reality in which the "normal" rules of the world apply. There are depictions of real people with a language, dressed in clothing appropriate of the time, and there is nothing out of the ordinary. When Alice falls down the rabbit hole she is in a world where there is a talking rabbit, dodo bird and dormouse, there are even flowers with human faces which comment on Alice's behaviour. Here the "normal" rules of the world are broken and

there is an element of the strange, the unfamiliar and the fantastic which is created.

As fantasy uses real-world phenomena, a reader/viewer and/or character is sometimes unsure if the situation depicted being "real" or not.[6] Todorov (1975:25) explains that the person who is in, or has, the fantasy experience may experience that they are victims of their senses and imagination, or they could feel that the events indeed did take place. In *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice initially presumes that she is in a dream and is a victim of her senses, and she tries different techniques to wake herself up. By the end of the film she realises that she is in fact in a "real" Other World and the events that she experiences are in fact occurring, even if it is on a unconscious level. Coombs (2007:12) notes that a fantasy deals directly with an internal reality, or unconscious fantasy, which is just as "real" as a physical reality. It is relevant, when discussing Alice, that she is perceived as different in her society because she does not conform to what the general public usually prescribes for a young woman. At the same time, her father also nurtured the fact that she should be innovative and independent. This innovation and independence are similar to his thinking when approaching life and even business. Alice's father's thinking is also represented as different in the society of his time. Because Alice, via her father, has been taught to believe in the impossible to make it possible, it is no surprise that the events which take place are "real" in the film, since Alice believes that anything is possible.

This film version of *Alice in Wonderland* can also be classified as being between the marvellous and the uncanny. Jackson (1981:24) explains that on the one hand the "marvellous", which includes magical narratives, invests "otherness" and supernatural qualities, while on the other hand the "uncanny" is produced by the protagonist's unconscious mind. Alice needs to deal with her unconscious desire to overcome her society's mind-set and become her own powerful and independent woman. Alice's travels to Wonderland create

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[6] Coombs (2007:12) states that no film is actually real, however the viewer responds to it as if it is real.

the opportunity for her to achieve her unconscious desires. At the same time the viewer is made aware of the fact that Alice is not really in a dream as she initially suspects when she first arrives in Wonderland. Before she finally agrees to slay the Jabberwocky she acknowledges to herself that "it is real". Thus the viewer is constantly aware of the fact that there is a play between the two worlds, the real and the Other World. As a consequence this interpretation of Alice cannot simply be placed in the "marvellous" category, because although Alice is actually in a real alternative world she does acknowledge, and return to, the "real-world". At the same time, she needed to travel to the alternative world in order to fulfil her unconscious desires.

One of the reasons that this *Alice in Wonderland* adaptation was chosen for this study is because it deviates from some of the conventions of fantasy established post-Tolkien. According to Manley (2009:7) the parameters of a fantasy story are roughly: it is "set in a world different from our own [...] has a main hero, an evil Dark Lord, and a quest to destroy the Dark Lord". In this film adaptation the "main hero" is a "heroine", namely Alice, and the "Dark Lord" is specifically female, the Red Queen, although she does have possession of the Jabberwocky. The Red Queen also has her doubts as whether she should be evil or not. This doubt casts her as not that "dark" or evil in comparison to other "Dark Lords", such as Lord Voldemort in the Harry Potter series. Alice is also the embodiment of fantasy in her real-world society. She holds onto her father's adage to believe in "six impossible things before breakfast". It thus comes as no surprise to the viewer that Alice is transported to an alternative world, namely Wonderland. Throughout the film, Alice deviates from Mulvey's initial notions because she is an active female who consciously works to subvert the male gaze.

Jackson (1981:8) states that fantasy has to do with inverting elements of the "world, re-combining its constitutive features in new relations to produce something strange, unfamiliar and apparently new, absolutely 'other' and different". Contrary to Jackson, Crossley (1975:286, 297) explains that what fantasy ultimately does is restores a clear view of the familiar by displacing our habitual perceptions, specifically through presenting the familiar through

the unfamiliar, and creating fresh and poignant attention to something we have looked at but never actually seen. Therefore the marvel of fantasy is not that it is something completely new – it actually, to use Crossley's (1975:286) words, "directs the eye back to the richness of ordinary things" through the unfamiliar alternative world. Alice needed to be transported to a new world to see clearly what she needed to do in order to live her own life according to her own rules. Once she returns, she is able to "practice" her belief in the impossible. The fact that Alice is represented as different from the very beginning of the film, in terms of how she thinks and perceives the world, makes her the perfect candidate to be transported to an alternative world. Her fight subtly begins in the real-world but is intensified by her travels to Wonderland; her real-world fight is thus clearer and more poignant when she returns. When Alice gets back, she is more independent and able to express her desires. She is fearless and more capable of deviating from the social norms of her day. Alice's courage is manifested in her different bodily representations. Her fearlessness, and active representation, is expressed by the iconography. In the next section these iconographic elements will be discussed.

3.4   ALICE AS HEROINE: FIGHT AGAINST THE PATRIARCHAL ORDER

The concept of gender is an aspect which will be considered throughout the study because it is specifically the female body which will be examined. Coombs (2007:18) advises that one should consider the representation of male and female characters when studying fantasy, in terms of who is active or passive in the development of the narrative. He states that one should ask to whom the viewer is invited to identify, by use of camera angles, *mise-en-scène*, and editing. The male characters are not of much importance for this study, but mention will be made to them in relation to the female characters.

As Alice is the most prominent character in the film, and the heroine, the discussion of Alice's body is the focus of this chapter. The concepts of Alice's body, the fight she undertakes, and her relationship to the different places/spaces are linked and dependent on one another. In the first part of

this section, the analysis of Alice's physical body cannot easily be separated from the discussion of her fight of the overtly patriarchal society in the real-world. At the same time Alice's body and her fight are reflected in the places/spaces in which she is depicted. Her body is depicted in, and is linked to, Wonderland and hence the interconnected relationship it has in the real-world. All these different factors will be discussed with implicit reference to the iconography. The second part of this section will specifically examine Alice's body in terms of iconography.

3.4.1 Wonderland: an alternative fantasy world

In the beginning of the film, Alice is in a location where she is secure and where she is able to rest and become involved in her everyday life. Alice's *place* is her home. The feeling that Alice makes her home a place is reflected by the comfort of her father in the beginning of the film, and by the fact that she knows her way around London. Alice also creates a place within her home because she feels that she is "in place" when she is with her family and her surroundings. In the beginning of the film, the viewer sees the actual building of her home, but by the end of the film, the viewer realises that her family is part of her security, and are therefore directly connected to her "place" in the world. When Alice first arrives in Wonderland she struggles to stand in her own light and being. However, when she acknowledges the connection she has to her father, mother and even her sister (or her place), she truly becomes the champion for whom the citizens of Wonderland have been waiting.

At the start of the film, the place in which the viewer is first introduced to Alice will be referred to as the "real-world". The characters that are introduced are depicted as average people, shown in nineteenth-century London. They conduct their everyday lives in a rigid and uniform manner and have limited ways and means of doing specific tasks because they are closed-minded and are not open to possibilities of doing things differently. The scene in which Alice arrives at her surprise engagement party is a good example of the airs-and-graces that the citizens of her time have. The fact that Lord Ascot and Hamish have titles gives the "real-world" depiction a certain element of

formality and pretentiousness, particularly at an event such as an engagement party. The manner in which the party-goers present themselves is an important aspect of their socially accepted conduct. There are items of clothing that all females and males in that time should have worn to a formal occasion. In fact, the party-goers are all dressed in a similar fashion and basically look the same.[7] The manner in which the characters behave at the party is also uniform. This unvarying behaviour is best exemplified when the characters dance a quadrille. When Alice says to Hamish, "Do you ever tire from quadrille?" his reply is, "On the contrary. I find it invigorating." Hamish's answer reflects the perception of the upper-classes of the time. A dance which is exactly the same each time one dances it, is supposed to be viewed as "lively". There does not need to be any change in the manner in which the characters conduct a celebration because there is already a way that is accepted and used. All the characters seem quite content to do as they have always done. All the dancers are smiling and are concentrating on the dance which they have more than likely done many times before. It is only Alice who looks bored and thinks of two "impossible things" before she is scolded by Hamish for not concentrating on the dance steps. It is here that the viewer can see that Alice and Hamish embody different beliefs and are not well-suited for a good marriage. From the beginning of the film, Alice is depicted as an outsider in her real-world, she deviates from the behaviour of a Victorian lady.

It is quite clear that the real-world is a society which is predominantly patriarchal in its perceptions and beliefs. When Alice finds out that Hamish is going to ask for her hand, before he actually asks her, she has the following conversation with her sister Margaret:

Margaret: Hamish will ask you [to marry him] under the gazebo. When you say yes...

Alice: But I don't know if I want to marry Hamish.

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[7] Specific reference to this set manner of dressing will be discussed in more detail when discussing Alice's body.

Margaret:	Who, then? You won't do better than a lord. You'll soon be twenty, Alice. That pretty face won't last forever. You don't want to end up like Aunt Imogene. And you don't want to be a burden on Mother, do you?
Alice:	No.
Margaret:	So you'll marry Hamish. You will be as happy as I am with Lowell and your life will be perfect. It's already decided.

Margaret's reaction indicates that because Alice does not want to marry Hamish that there must be someone else. She cannot conceive that perhaps Alice does not want to marry at all, and reasons with Alice that if she does not get married she would be a burden on their mother and might not get another opportunity for a proposal. Margaret also hints that if Alice does not get married she will turn into a delusional spinster, like their Aunt Imogene. Margaret's thinking is dominated by the patriarchal society which dictates that a young, attractive female must be married before she is older and perceived as unattractive. As a lord is quite well respected, Margaret's own reasoning is that Alice's life will be perfect once she is married, which has already been "decided". Margaret ignorantly believes that she is happily married to Lowell; however Alice catches him kissing an unknown female behind some trees. Just because Margaret is happy it does not mean that her husband, Lowell, is happy in their marriage too. It might actually reflect the fact that Lowell was blindly following the unspoken rules of his society by marrying Margaret, instead of really wanting to get married.

There seems to be an underlying belief, in the society of the film, that the male must be the dominant, active role-player in the marriage while the woman must take a subordinate, passive role. This subordinate and passive role is emphasised by the fact that Alice is not initially aware of her own engagement party and therefore does not decide if she actually wants to marry Hamish or not. Hamish, as the male, gets the opportunity to decide if he wants to marry Alice and then to propose. Also Alice is given a lecture by Lady Ascot concerning Hamish's sensitive digestion. Lady Ascot tries to inform Alice how she should take care of her son. It is expected of Alice to do all the homely

and stereotypically female actions once she is married. There are certain behaviours and actions that are expected from a woman and a wife. Hamish is also the one who does the pursuing and makes the decisions as to where and when Alice must be. This decision-making position is reflected in his matter-of-fact tone and demand when he says, "Alice Kingsleigh, meet me under the gazebo in precisely ten minutes". Alice, as a woman, does not have an equal partnership with Hamish, and it would be expected of her to be submissive and passive when they are together.

The dominant patriarchal society is directly juxtaposed with the overtly matriarchal Wonderland, which is ruled by queens. The latter location embodies the idea of powerful and independent women because it is ruled by queens. It is the place in which Alice does not take a submissive or passive role because she is a champion and a heroine. In Wonderland she is able to invert her society's preconditions of a woman, because the normal rules of the real-world do not apply. In this matriarchal society another factor which inverts the rules of Alice's society is the Mad Hatter's tea table. When Alice arrives at the tea party the Hatter is so excited by the sight of her he walks across the table, smashing and breaking the crockery on it, in order to fetch her. He then walks across the table again, in the same manner, to sit down in his original seat. Once Alice is at the table it is apparent that there is a clear disregard for the "appropriate table manners" of a tea party. The appropriate manner for any occasion is of great importance in Victorian times. Apart from the crockery being broken, the dormouse throws, instead of passing, sugar to the March Hare, and the March Hare breaks cups. Mitchell (2009:24), although referring to the novel, comments that the "members of the tea party exercise no concept of manners that would remotely resemble those practiced on the surface [of the real-world]". It is thus fitting that Alice travels to the alternative world which does not adhere to the rules of her real-world society, in order for her to become independent and in charge by the time she leaves Wonderland for her real-world.

Alice's journey to Wonderland could be seen as reflecting a delving into the underworld of her psyche so she can return to the real-world as an active,

free-thinking, independent, young woman. A further reflection of her *katabasis* experience is this delving into her psyche. This adventure into the psyche is manifested as her physical journey. It is thus Alice's physical journey which signifies her ultimate change. Although Wonderland is initially a space because it is unfamiliar and dynamic to Alice, when she is ready to leave it, Wonderland then becomes a *place* in which certain values and meanings are assigned. Although Wonderland cannot be classified as a proper "place", according to the definition provided in Chapter 2, the familiarity of the space makes it a partial place for Alice.

The Other World is a location in which Alice can truly become who she needs to be, to function and overcome the beliefs in her real-world. It is in Wonderland that Alice undergoes a becoming. According to Sotirin (2005:98-99) a becoming does not stop to participate in the organised forms that humans create and recognise, but at the same time it offers a radical concept of what life does. A becoming is what drives life forward and creates certain aspects of ourselves at certain times. Sotirin (2005:100) refers to the fact that a *becoming* is always in the middle or in between and also comments on how important thresholds are for becoming, because they are in between zones in which becoming can occur. A becoming then needs an in between zone in order to take place and for the subject to emerge as different. At the same time a becoming, Sotirin (2005:102) explains, is not about imitating or reproducing an image of a person, it is a whole new person. By being in Wonderland Alice is removed from the organised forms that her society has in place. She is then able to become an active woman and is able to return to the real-world as a different person, or as her "own" woman.

Even though it has already been established that Wonderland is an Other World, it is not completely disjointed from the real-world. There are some similarities between Wonderland and the real-world in terms of characters corresponding to one other in the respective worlds. These representations are discussed in the following parts. Although Alice is depicted in an alternative world it is still a rational and in a sense "real" world. The Other World has its own set of rules to which it does adhere, however, Walters

(2008:157) explains that it does not have "entirely tangible connections to reality" in terms of human characters and everyday occurrences. It should not be equated that because Alice is in another world that it is an irrational one. Alice is able to return to the real-world and integrate her newly discovered courage, gained in the rational alternative fantasy world, and go against the patriarchal domination of her day.

After Hamish actually proposes to Alice, she becomes quite flustered and confused and announces that she needs "a moment". She sees the White Rabbit in his waistcoat and chases after him, accidently falling down the rabbit hole. Walters (2008:157) explains that to get to the alternative world there must be an access point which is provided to get to the realm which is distinctly different from the ordinary "real-world" created in the film. In the instance of *Alice in Wonderland* the viewer sees the character travel to another world when Alice literally falls down the rabbit hole, because that is the access point of her journey to the alternative other world. Wonderland is not imagined by Alice, or even a potential version of her real-world, but is rather a completely different world altogether. The scene where Alice runs away from Hamish and the engagement party can be interpreted as Alice running away from the real-world and her perceived responsibilities in the predominantly patriarchal society. She literally falls down a hole and finds herself in an alternative fantasy world. In this world she denies the fact that she is the Alice who the citizens of Wonderland have been seeking, in a sense she denies being a strong, independent fighter who has the ability to change the manner in which Wonderland is ruled. Once Alice finally slays the Jabberwocky and returns home, she is able to fight the order of her day and keep the strength and independence she obtained in Wonderland.

There are strong similarities between Wonderland and the real-world London, particularly concerning the characters in the two worlds. Towards the end of the film, when Alice goes back to face the engagement party guests who are left standing and waiting for her reply to Hamish's proposal, Alice makes the viewer aware of the fact that there are strong correlations between the two worlds. Firstly Alice refuses Hamish's proposal, tells Margaret that she will

decide what to do with her life and then she speaks to Lowell, thereby indicating that the conventional worldview held by, and represented by her sister, is shattered by Alice upon her return. She glares at Lowell and says, "You're lucky to have my sister as your wife, Lowell, and you be good to her", referring to the incident where she caught him kissing another woman. The fact that Lowell is quite deceitful and underhanded connects him to Ilosovic Stayne, the knave of hearts in Wonderland, which not only refers to the "Jack" in a deck of cards, but is also a "knave" which is defined as a "dishonest man" (OALD, 2005:816). Stayne is dishonest in the manner in which he makes the Red Queen believe that he is in love with her and will serve only her. However, when he sees "Um" (actually Alice after eating the cake Upelkuchen) he instantly takes a liking to her and intentionally deceives the queen. When the opportunity arises and Alice and he are alone, he pins her against a wall and says, "I like you, Um. I like largeness." A woman in the Red Queen's court hears Stayne and then tells the Red Queen what Stayne has said. When the Red Queen calls him to explain, he says, "Um forced herself on me. I told her my heart belongs to you, but she's obsessed with me." He is untruthful and blames Um for his flirtation; much in the same way that Lowell tries to blame Alice for the consequence of Margaret not trusting him, if Alice was to tell her sister of the incident.

Secondly, throughout the film the Hatter is referred to as "mad", although he is accepted in Wonderland as a "Mad Hatter". In the real-world Aunt Imogene is delusional and seen as a bit of an outcast of society because she is delusional and not married. The simple correlation between these two characters is that they are both perceived as mad. Thirdly, Lady Ascot has strong correlations to the Red Queen. She is demanding, bossy and has a mean streak in her personality: Lady Ascot reproaches Alice and her mother for being late for the party and she orders Alice to dance with Hamish once they arrive. She also prompts Hamish, in a high-and-mighty manner, when to inform Alice to meet him under the gazebo. Lady Ascot's meanness once again comes through when Alice voices the fact that she has just seen a rabbit running through the bushes. Lady Ascot's reply is, "Nasty things. I do enjoy setting the dogs on them." The same enjoyment of other's misfortune is also a characteristic of

the Red Queen, who does not think twice before beheading the subjects of Wonderland. When Lady Ascot asks Alice, in a demanding and affirmative way, to take a stroll with her, she starts telling Alice about her desire for attractive grandchildren. Midway through her sentence she shouts, "Imbeciles! The gardeners have planted white roses when I specifically asked for red." Immediately the mention of specifically "red roses" creates a connection to the Red Queen. Alice's reply is, "You could always paint the roses red." This statement is connected to the scene after Alice has spoken to Absolem, for the second time, and she starts remembering the first time she was in Wonderland, and images of her journey as a six year old swipe across the screen. One of the images is of a six year old Alice, painting white roses red, while the Red Queen stands and supervises – thus the connection between the two women and the two worlds is created.

Lastly, the Tweedle Twin brothers, Tweedledee and Tweedledum, have strong similarities to the Chattaway twin sisters, Faith and Fiona. For example, when the Red Queen is introduced to Um and has ordered her to sit with her in her throne room, she calls for her "Fat Boys". When they are almost in front of the queen she says to Um, "They have the oddest way of speaking". Although Faith and Fiona do not have an odd manner of speaking, they alternate their speech, almost as if they speak as a team. This team-like way of speaking is very much how the Tweedle brothers speak. At the same time the twin sisters' surname is "Chattaway", which has a play on the beginning of the pronunciation of the surname "chatta" which is correctly spelt "chatter" with an "er" instead of an "a". According to the Oxford Dictionary (2005:238) chatter's definition is to "talk quickly and continuously", once again each set of twins is connected by the manner in which they speak. Alice even says to the Chattaway sisters on her return, "You two remind me of some funny boys I met in a dream". The fact that Alice refers to her experience as a "dream" indicates, Mitchell (2009:16) interprets, that certain elements of her experience "must be sacrificed in order to mature and exit the Wonderland". Alice has matured enough to realise that she cannot relay her experience to the members of her society as they will not believe her. On a certain level Alice knew she would have to keep her experience to herself in order to return

to the real-world and not be judged by her society. She had to give up her place in Wonderland to return to the real-world as a mature woman. The fact that there are corresponding characters both in the real-world and in Wonderland serves to help Alice in her fight against the dominant patriarchal order of her day. Jackson (1981:21) states that in fantasy one is able to identify narrative kinds as corresponding to different tropes. Therefore the corresponding characters in the two worlds serve as metaphors that assist Alice in her fight against the dominant patriarchal order. Once she is a heroine in Wonderland she carries that power and strength into the real-world, and is able to resist the dominant order because she has already done it in another time and place. The fact that the characters are similar makes it easier for Alice to make the associations and remember the fact that she is strong and independent, and is able to make her own decisions.

She then becomes an apprentice and challenges the beliefs and perceptions which previously dominated the women of her society. Referring to *Through the looking-glass*, Gilead (1991:283) explains that Alice's return has stimulated her intellect, so that she "demonstrates a newfound ability to ask philosophical questions about reality". This clarity and ability also applies to the film. As a result of her new view on reality, she has the ability to ask why the trading company does not expand to countries previously thought impossible; and also in her denial of simply getting married to Hamish because he asks her to. Alice becomes a stronger woman as a consequence of her journey to Wonderland. She has become her own person who has chosen the constituents of her identity.

Walters (2008:211) explains that a characteristic of alternative world films is that they represent the end as a beginning. They achieve this perceived "beginning" by the character(s) re-joining their real-world, after a journey to an alternative world, and by doing so, they then start again in that world. To apply this knowledge to *Alice in Wonderland* is to recognise that Alice's return to the real-world is the beginning of her new life as an independent and strong

woman, especially reflected in her career as an apprentice.[8] Walters (2008:11) also states that the period that the characters have been away has opened up many revelations and insights into their world that they can, among other aspects, act upon the pursuit of change. Walters' statement pertains particularly to Alice as she now has the knowledge of her strengths and her unique ability to make anything possible, by believing that they are indeed possible. Alice's return marks her as a different individual who is now equipped with knowledge as well as an experience which makes her more determined and better prepared to face her reality. Walters (2008:211) eloquently states "alternative world films include departures in order to facilitate returns, and present endings that are truly beginnings". Therefore it is an important element for the viewer to know that Alice travels to an alternative world, in order to fully understand the fact that she is a different woman, who needed the journey to make her realise her true potential. She is then able to be active in her role as woman in her real-world once she returns. Mulvey's notions of a passive, sexualised, and objectified female body do not apply to Alice.

3.4.2   Alice's body

This section focuses on Alice's physical body, while concentrating on Alice's fight, and what it represents. This section also concentrates on Alice's active body and the iconographic elements which are connected to Alice's character. The first part of this section properly discusses Alice's initial defiance of the patriarchal order in which she is depicted, reflected by her not conforming to the accepted and "proper" manner in which a lady should dress. The next part is concerned with the iconographic implications of the different sizes she assumes while in Wonderland. The final part of this section concludes how Alice eventually overcomes the dominant thinking of her day. The entire

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[8] This information can also be applied to a liminal reading of Alice's experiences (which will be done later in the chapter). This transformation and return refers to liminality in the post-liminal phase or the new communitas.

section will discuss that Alice's fight is represented via her physical appearance throughout the film. At the end of this section there will also be a reference to how Alice is "active" in her role as a female character, which is linked to the iconographic elements are discussed in the section.

From the beginning of the film it is clear, through Alice's actions and speech that she is against the overtly patriarchal order of her day. It is mostly through her outward appearance that she defies what is expected by the society in which she lives. In the beginning of the film, when Alice is nineteen years old Mrs Kingsleigh, Alice's mother, tries to fuss over Alice's appearance. Alice's mother tries to fix her hair and straighten her dress. When she pats over Alice's abdomen Mrs Kingsleigh discovers that her daughter is not dressed in the "proper" fashion. She is not wearing a corset or stockings. When Mrs Kingsleigh tries to reproach Alice for not dressing properly the following conversation ensues:

Alice: I'm against them [corsets and stockings].

Mrs Kingsleigh: But you're not properly dressed.

Alice: Who's to say what is proper? What if it were agreed that "proper" was wearing a codfish on your head? Would you wear it?

Mrs Kingsleigh: Alice.

Alice: To me, a corset is like a codfish.

Mrs Kingsleigh: Please, not today.

Alice: Father would have laughed.

Although not completely visible to the naked eye, Alice is already physically defying her role as a perceived "proper lady" because she does not dress in the conventionally agreed manner. In the next scene when Alice is seen in a long shot next to her mother, even though the viewer is aware of the fact that Alice is not wearing a corset or stockings, the viewer does not see a difference between the manners in which the two women are dressed. The fact that the two women look the same indicates that society's rules on the

proper way to dress are pointless and do not actually have a useful function. Alice mocks the traditions of her society when she associates corsets with a useless and ridiculous action of wearing a codfish on your head. She obviously finds the rules of her society, concerning dress codes, a ridiculous concept. Her rationalising of her society's thinking concerning the proper and improper manner in which to dress indicates the strangeness of her society. There is no indication as to who the powers are who get to decide what is acceptable and what is not. There just seem to be rules and regulations that the characters follow to conform to society. None of the individual characters in real-world London take the initiative to decide what is proper for them. The only two characters who think for themselves are Mr Kingsleigh, who is judged from the beginning for his alternative thinking, and now Alice. However, Alice only begins feeling more confident in thinking for herself and making her own decisions, and thus being a non-conformist, once she returns from Wonderland. Alice's changed view is a consequence of her mobility.

Although Alice does not conform to what her society expects from her, she still needs to prove to herself that she can stand in her own independent light. Alice goes through a liminal process before she truly changes the manner in which she uses her innovative thinking and independence. The iconographic elements, in terms of Alice's changing physical body, plays a metaphorical role in indicating her personality size in terms of her independence and bravery. The initial fall down the rabbit hole is Alice's separation phase, which indicates that she is going to undergo a series of changes before returning to the real-world. It also marks Alice's descent into the underworld, a *katabasis* experience, after which Alice returns to the real-world reasonably unharmed. When Alice falls down the rabbit hole, she is the height of a normal teenage girl. Once she discovers the tiny key and little door through which she cannot fit she drinks a liquid called "Pishsalver" to make her shrink and become small enough to fit through the little door. But because she leaves the key on the table, which was the right size when she first discovered it, she cannot reach it any longer. Suddenly a cake appears with the words "Eat me" on it. When Alice eats this cake (called "Upelkuchen") she grows to an enormous height and is able to retrieve the key. Again she drinks the Pishsalver and shrinks to

the small size she once was. The fact that Alice changes sizes three times before she even enters Wonderland is an indication that she is unaware of her influence, and is struggling to remember the previous journey she took to "Wonderland" when she was six years old. The reason for saying that she cannot remember her previous journey is because she once had to shrink to fit through the door. However, now she goes through a series of unnecessary transformations because she cannot remember her initial visit. The other characters then doubt her identity as the "right Alice" because she does not remember how to fit through the door. But at the same time, because Alice does not want to conform to what her society has prescribed for a young woman, she too questions the identity she would have to assume if she stayed in the real-world and married Hamish. She is actually in the process of discovering an aspect of her identity as a woman. The fact that she is so small when crossing the threshold of the door leading to Wonderland indicates that she is, in both a physical and metaphorical sense, less than half the brave, unique Alice she once was when she first visited Wonderland. Her dress is far too big for her, symbolising that she is not "filling out" in the same way as she used to in Wonderland. In another sense she is "out of place" in terms of her physical body not being in the real-world, but at the same time, her true identity as an independent woman is not properly "in place" yet. Alice's liminal stage has begun from the time that her body falls down the rabbit hole, lands in the room with the doors and passes through the door.

The characters Alice meets on entering Wonderland are the White Rabbit, a dormouse named Mallymkun, the dodo bird, the Tweedle Twins and talking flowers. These characters have a dispute over the question of the White Rabbit bringing the "right" Alice to Wonderland. To resolve the dispute the characters decide to consult Absolem, a blue caterpillar. Absolem's role is to be wise, all-knowing and absolute. Thus the other characters seek his wise advice on Alice's identity. The question is not only a question about Alice's identity it is also an ontological question. When the characters reach Absolem the following conversation and events occur:

Absolem: Who are you? [Asks Absolem of Alice]

Alice:	Absolem?
Absolem:	You're not Absolem, I'm Absolem. The question is, who are you?
Alice:	Alice.
Absolem:	We shall see.
Alice:	What do you mean by that? I ought to know who I am.
Absolem:	Yes, you ought, stupid girl. Unroll the Oraculum.

The camera then moves to a medium shot of an old looking scroll which is balanced on top of two mushrooms.

White Rabbit:	The Oraculum, being a calendrical compendium of Underland.
Alice:	It's a calendar.
Absolem:	Compendium. It tells of each and every day since the Beginning.
White Rabbit:	Today being Griblig Day in the time of the Red Queen.
Absolem:	Show her the Frabjous Day.
Tweedle:	Yeah, Frabjous being the day that you slay the Jabberwocky.
Alice:	Sorry, slay the what?
Tweedle:	Oh, yeah. That being you, there, with the Vorpal Sword.

[...]

Alice:	That's not me!
Mallymkun:	I know!
White Rabbit:	Resolve this for us, Absolem. Is she the right Alice?
Absolem:	Not hardly.

The fact that Alice argues with Absolem as to who she is, again indicates that she cannot remember being in Wonderland before, when she showed a vast

amount of inherent bravery. The fact that Absolem tells the other characters to show Alice the Oraculum indicates that he is testing to see if Alice remembers Wonderland and the role she is to play when slaying the Jabberwocky. When Alice denies her role as the slayer, Absolem's answer of "Not hardly" to the White Rabbit's question of Alice being the "right Alice", refers to the fact that Alice is not yet, in terms of inherent character, the right champion she is meant to be. It can also be said that Alice also questions her own identity because she is not yet comfortable in her role as a brave slayer. As the film progresses, she will become the champion Alice who will save Wonderland from the Red Queen's rule. Hence, because Alice has shrunk and is so small, her size figuratively indicates that she is not the same Alice she once was in Wonderland. Her character is small and almost insignificant. Alice is still *becoming* and is not yet a heroine.

The Mad Hatter is the only character who recognises and believes that Alice is the "right" Alice; he is able to see her for who she truly is. To avoid her possible capture by the Red Queen the Hatter forces her to drink more Pishsalver, to make her even smaller than she already is, and stuffs her into a teapot as a convenient and suitable hiding place. When the Hatter is on his way to take Alice to the White Queen he says to Alice, "You're not the same as you were before. You were much more muchier before. You have lost your muchness." The Mad Hatter's expression of Alice's lack of "muchness" is emphasised by the fact that Alice's body is tiny and even smaller than before. She is physically not as much as she used to be. Also, because she denies that she will slay the Jabberwocky and because she does not show as much bravery, as she once did when she was younger, her small size reflects her inner character. To prove to the Hatter that Alice has not lost her "muchness", she goes to the Red Queen's castle to rescue the Hatter after he is captured by the Red Knights. It is just before Alice is about to cross the Red Queen's fort, which has the heads of all the beheaded subjects floating in it, when Alice says to herself out loud with a determined look on her face, "Lost my muchness, have I?" It is at this point that Alice is starting to become the strong and independent young woman she is destined to be at the end of the film. She walks upright and is not frightened by the dead subjects' heads floating in

the fort's water. She squeezes through a tiny crack in the castle's wall and finds herself in the Red Queen's garden. Before Alice starts to take charge, it would seem that she was being a product of her society's rationality, ideas and emotions because she argues about being the "right" Alice, and convinces herself that she is merely in a dream. She does not live according to her father's adage of believing in six impossible things before breakfast, a characteristic which makes her unique. Once she takes charge she, ironically, becomes more in touch with her innocence and childlike beliefs, which ultimately help her mature and be a woman who takes an active role in deciding her destiny.

When Alice gets through a crack in the Red Queen's castle wall the queen is in her garden playing a game of croquette. When she hits the "ball", which is in fact a tied up and still living hedgehog, into the shrubbery and it does not return she sends her page into the shrubs to fetch it. The page is the captured McTwisp, who gives Alice some Upelkuchen so that she may grow a little taller. However, Alice eats too much and grows to an enormous size. The significance of Alice growing to such a large size once she decides to prove the Mad Hatter wrong about her "muchness", and hence rescue him from the Red Queen, indicates that she is becoming the Alice who shows the character of a heroine, and who will eventually slay the Jabberwocky. The fact that she is bigger than she originally was in the beginning of the film, is an indication that she still has not found herself completely and is not yet in balance. She is only beginning to show how brave and independent she can be, but she still has not found the true bravery and belief in herself, which is only reflected once she returns to her original size.

Alice does not stay her enormous height. Towards the end of the film she eventually is given just the right amount of Pishsalver, by the White Queen, to shrink her from her large size to her normal height. Once she returns to the normal size she is able to fit into the armour which accompanies the Vorpal Sword; the only weapon that will kill the Jabberwocky. At this point in the film Alice still believes that she is in a dream and remains unwilling to slay the monster. When the time comes for a champion to set forth to slay the

Jabberwocky, many of the other characters offer to kill the beast. Nevertheless they realise that there is only one true champion, Alice, who will be able to slay the Jabberwocky. She is the only individual destined to fit into the armour, carry the Vorpal Sword and ultimately fulfil the role of a slayer, a role which is quite at odds with her real-world perception of a proper Victorian lady. But she is frightened and runs away to think about her situation. After she runs away to be alone, she finds Absolem hanging upside down from a tree, spinning his cocoon. She says to Absolem:

Alice: Absolem? Why are you upside down?

Absolem: I've come to the end of this life.

Alice: You're going to die?

Absolem: Transform. [Into a butterfly.]

Alice: Don't go. I need your help. I don't know what to do.

Absolem: I can't help you if you don't even know who you are, stupid girl.

Alice: I'm not stupid. My name is Alice. I live in London. I have a mother named Helen and a sister named Margaret. My father was Charles Kingsleigh. He had a vision that stretched halfway around the world, and nothing ever stopped him. I'm his daughter. I'm Alice Kingsleigh.

Absolem: Alice at last. You were just as dim-witted the first time you were here. You called it "Wonderland", as I recall.

Alice: Wonderland.

As soon as Alice remembers her father and the fact that he believed that he could do and accomplish anything, Alice realises that she is her father's daughter. She is then the *embodiment* of a forward-thinking and innovative woman. She is then able to *embody* a heroine, someone who is able, courageous and independent. Alice's mind and body then become one. She is now capable of achieving anything because she takes *control of her body and her mind*. She finally realises that she is not having a dream but is in an alternative world. The viewer recalls what Alice says to Hamish in the

beginning of the film about her father believed as many as "six impossible things before breakfast". The only reason she cannot slay the Jabberwocky is because she believes that she cannot. It is when she finally acknowledges her relation to her father, and the fact that she too believes in six impossible things, does she finally realise the extent of her influence in the alternative world. Mitchell (2009:28) says that Alice's "relationship to society is different with every change. Her size dictates the way in which she will interact with the world [in which she is depicted]". Once Alice is able to partake of the social order of Wonderland in terms of believing in herself and the ability to be a champion, she is back to her normal body size, indicating that she will then be able to participate in her social order in the real-world, once she returns to it. There is thus an explicit link between body and mind.

According to Cirlot (1971:35) a butterfly symbolises a rebirth. Alice speaks to Abselom while he is spinning his cocoon and this encounter reflects the idea that Alice too is going to undergo a re-birthing process. Alice similarly transforms, just like Abselom does, when she believes that nothing can stop her. She finally comes into her own being as an independent woman. Alice mirrors Abselom's transformation. She comes to the end of a life in which she believes she is incapable of doing something and is transformed into a woman who believes she can accomplish anything. In the same way that she believed that she could save the Hatter, which she did, she can also slay the Jabberwocky and free the citizens of Wonderland from the Red Queen's rule.

The fact that Alice has finally come to be the woman she was always meant to be is further reflected in her appearance when she emerges from the rabbit hole. Alice literally pulls herself up out of the rabbit hole, seen in a medium long shot to indicate how Alice emerges from a womb shaped hole. She is a new person who is "reborn" into a new way of thinking. She is now starting her reassimilation phase, or post-liminal phase, when she comes out of the rabbit hole. Her hair is loose, wild and curly which recalls the picture in the compendium of the champion slaying the Jabberwocky. Her hair no longer looks the same as the unnatural hairstyles of the other, passive female characters in the real-world, which it initially did when she arrived at the party.

Her clothing is dirty and she has cuts on her arms. She no longer fits the profile of a conventionally pretty girl of her time. She works to subvert the male gaze and be an active female woman. She has returned from an underworld however, she is reasonably unscathed by the experience. Alice then stands up against the society of her day and begins to take charge of her life in the patriarchal society. After she tells Hamish that she cannot marry him, as well as telling the other characters a few needed to be heard truths, she says to Lord Ascot, "You and I have business to discuss." Once Alice and Lord Ascot are in his office, they have the following conversation:

Alice: My father told me he planned to expand his trade route to Sumatra and Borneo, but I don't think he was looking far enough. Why not go all the way to China? [...] To be the first to trade with China, can you imagine it?

Lord Ascot: You know, if anybody else had said that to me, I'd say "You've lost your senses." But I've seen that look before. [...] perhaps you'd consider becoming an apprentice with the company?

The last scene shows Alice boarding a ship that will presumably set sail to China. Alice has challenged her society's established perspectives on the role and functions of a young woman. She does not get married but instead begins a career. One of the physical indications that Alice has challenged her society's thinking is her clothing which is different to the dress and done-up hair the audience first sees when meeting her. She is now wearing a long coat, with a floral tie around her neck and her hair is loose. She appears to be more free and independent. It is at this point that Alice has become and is doing everything she is destined to be and do. It is as if Alice needed to lose her senses, to believe in impossible occurrences, before she could truly be the woman she is destined to be. She is now an independent and fearless female who believes that anything can be done as long as you believe it will. Therefore it is through Alice's actions that she is perceived as having an active role: she is not a passive object on which the male characters can place their (erotic) fantasies. Alice's active role is predominately expressed

through her physical form and appearance. Her physical form changed in Wonderland to ultimately show how she changes and becomes who she is destined to be. Once she actually returns to her usual height, she has already undergone a vast transformation in terms of her bravery. In Wonderland, she actually wears trousers and a suit of armour, to indicate that she has now taken charge of her actions and reactions. Alice moves away from the idea that she is an object on display: although she is attractive she is not typically glamorous or even sexualised. The fact that she is starting her career as an apprentice indicates that she is not isolated but rather integrated into the traditionally male society of her time. She now moves away from her expected gender role and is a woman who is in charge of herself. At the same time Alice has created a space in which she inverts the gaze. Although she does not necessarily place the gaze on the male characters, what she does do is empower the representation of the female in her society and turn the concept of the (erotic) fantasy, represented by the gaze, around. These factors are all part of the post-Mulvey phenomenon referred to in the first two chapters.

3.4.3 Fight against the patriarchal order

Jackson (1981:6) states that fantasy deals repeatedly and blatantly with unconscious material, and that to understand its significance there must be reference to psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic readings of texts. What lies in the unconscious are social structures and norms which are reproduced within the human's conduct and day to day living. The following section analyses Alice's fight against the patriarchal order of her day. The fight is reflected by her travelling to Wonderland and slaying the Jabberwocky. By implication the analysis will again comment on Alice believing that anything is possible, since this belief is what assists her in slaying the Jabberwocky. This section incorporates the concepts underlying the journey on which she embarks, as well as comments on the consequences of Alice's mobility and of becoming an independent woman. This section draws on the theory of psychoanalysis when analysing the slaying scene. The fact that Alice fights the patriarchal order of her day indicates that there is a tension within her between the "'laws

of human society and the resistance of the unconscious mind to those laws" (Jackson, 1981:6-7).

Charles Kingsleigh (Alice's father) is an innovative thinker, although he is reproached by his peers because he thinks differently. The viewer is only introduced to Mr Kingsleigh in the beginning of the film, he dies when Alice is older. The conversation which begins the film is between Mr Kingsleigh and his work associates and it concerns his ideas about opening trading posts in the East, in places like Rangoon, Bangkok and Jakarta. The following conversation takes place after he has suggested the expanding of the trading posts:

Lord Ascot: Charles, you have finally lost your senses. This venture is impossible.

Mr Kingsleigh: For some. Gentlemen, the only way to achieve the impossible is to believe it is possible.

Peer: That kind of thinking could ruin you.

The idea that the impossible is possible if you believe it to be so is an idea which Alice uses when she faces the Jabberwocky. The adage "she [Alice] is very much her father's daughter" is prevalent in the sense that Alice is very much like her father and has taken on many of his beliefs and characteristics. It is not surprising that when she finally acknowledges the fact that she is her father's daughter, she embodies many of his positive ideals. She believes she is capable of killing the Jabberwocky.

When Alice initially arrives in Wonderland she is convinced that she is in a dream. Barry (2002:99) states that Freud believes that a dream is actually an "escape-hatch or safety valve" through which repressed desires, fears, or memories seek an outlet into the conscious mind. Alice's unconscious desire to be a strong and independent female is what guides her journey to Wonderland. Thus she initially needs to perceive herself as being in a dream to reach the level of confidence to return to the real-world with a strong-minded perception of herself. The Jabberwocky scene, to use Freud's terminology, is a condensation (as explained in Chapter 2) through which her

desire to overcome her society's beliefs is achieved. The argument for the scene being a condensation is further emphasised by the fact that Alice returns to London and associates different characters from Wonderland to the party goers in London.[9] Alice also realises that she cannot tell the members of her family about the journey, as they would think the event was highly unlikely, and therefore refers to the experience as a "dream". Alice's "dream" helps her succeed in her fight against the dominant patriarchal order of her day.

The fight against the patriarchal order is best represented by the battle scene with the Jabberwocky. This scene is strongly linked to Alice's unconscious because of the symbols which are present in it. On the Frabjous Day, the White and Red Queens are destined to do battle. They both have champions who will fight for them. The Red Queen is the first to send forth her champion. She shouts for the Jabberwocky and the camera begins to zoom in, from a relatively light scene, through bare and dying trees towards a seemingly black hill. The black hill starts to shake and then a large, bat-like wing with many veins lifts from the hill-like structure. After the initial wing lifts, the rest of the Jabberwocky's body lifts. The viewer sees, in a medium long shot, its head, tail, arms and head. The Jabberwocky is predominately black, and its form is made-up of long straight body parts; for example its neck and tail are noticeable as being long and erect. Its tail has spike-like pieces of flesh which stick out and make its tail look like club. The Jabberwocky's head is also framed by similar looking, spike-like, protruding pieces of flesh. The spikes serve to almost adorn its face and give it a scary and large appearance. Its arms and legs are also long and thin and the wings have extremely long, thin veins which can be seen through the wings. Other parts of the body such as the teeth and claws are also long and thin, which assist in making it appear more intimidating. The fact that the Jabberwocky's body is mostly made up of long straight pieces which are typically phallic symbols, links the idea that the

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[9] At the same time, the queens are a reflection of Alice's unconscious desire to balance the masculine and feminine attributes of her conscious and unconscious self. This aspect will be discussed later in the chapter.

monster represents the male-dominated world of Alice's real-world. The fact that the Jabberwocky is dark in colour, as well as enormous and intimidating in demeanour symbolises the manner in which Alice perceives her society. The citizens of the real-world do not think innovatively and can therefore be said to figuratively remain in darkness, they do not see the light in alternative thinking. The fact that many of the party goers in the real-world blindly follow the "proper" perceptions of behaviour, also indicates that an enormous part of society believe that men should have power and, in a sense, have a right to intimidate women into doing anything they perceive as proper. Thus the covert meaning of facing the Jabberwocky in a battle is that Alice is ready to challenge the perceptions of the male-dominated society in which she finds herself.

The camera then cuts to Alice and the Hatter. Once Alice sees the Jabberwocky with its fierce demeanour and sheer size, she has the following dialogue with the Hatter:

Alice: This is impossible.

Hatter: Only if you believe it is.

Alice: Sometimes I believe as many as six impossible things before breakfast.

The camera then cuts back to the Jabberwocky moving towards Alice. As it walks its wings and tail smash the concrete floors as it moves toward the battle ground. The monster seems even scarier now because it has such power in its movement. The Red Queen looks at her sister and says in a mocking voice, "Where is your champion, sister?" Before the White Queen has a chance to reply Alice answers, "Here." Alice stands in her power and is not intimidated by the Jabberwocky's force. Just before Alice actually comes face-to-face with the Jabberwocky she says the following:

Alice: Six impossible things. Count them, Alice. One, there's a potion that can make you shrink. Two, and a cake that can make you grow.

At this point in the film, Alice's changing body sizes can be interpreted as a form of strength, since they reflect the idea that Alice has the ability to adapt. Alice is able to now fit into her new role as a strong and independent woman. The Jabberwocky then addresses the Vorpal Sword as its old foe and hisses its snake-like tongue out. Alice replies, "That's enough chatter." She proceeds to cut the monster's tongue off.

When Alice cuts the Jabberwocky's tongue off, she metaphorically takes away the male voice and word. She subverts the male voice that has been known to dominate, or even quieten, the female voice. She then has the power to use her female voice when she continues to count the impossible things that she has encountered. She continues to count and says, "Three, animals can talk." The fight is now underway and the two champions are in battle. The Jabberwocky is about to trample on Alice, however, she rolls away and is safe from the stomp of its foot. She takes a swing with her sword at the Jabberwocky and says, "Four, Alice, cats can disappear." She continues, while shielding an attack of electric fire from the Jabberwocky's mouth, "Five, there's a place called Wonderland." The fact that she continually shields and protects herself from the Jabberwocky indicates that she will not be over-powered and be subordinate to the patriarchal society of her time. The last and sixth thing she counts is, "I [she] can slay the Jabberwocky." As the viewer has seen all the other "impossible things" occur, it is clear that because Alice is finally standing in her own light as a heroine, the sixth factor will come true and is possible. After a few minutes of battle Alice eventually is able to jump above the Jabberwocky's head, and as she descends with her sword in both hands, towards the Jabberwocky's neck, she shouts, "Off with your head!" As the sword comes down it cuts off the monster's head, and the body and the head fall in different directions. Classical thought has placed males at the centre of logic, thinking and rational thought. Therefore, males have always been associated with the head while females are believed to be associated with irrational thought and emotion. The fact that Alice cuts off the Jabberwocky's head, symbolises that she will change the thinking of her real-world society. She has challenged, and overcome, the perceived logical thought of her society, which is represented by the fact that she chops off the

Jabberwocky's head. Alice is then able to return to the real-world with a new perspective on the role of a woman in society. She will be able to maintain her active body on her return. In fact, it is after she slays the Jabberwocky that she receives its blood, which is the source of her return to the real-world. The consequence of her brave actions and active body are her source for her return.

Referring to Dorothy in *The Wonderful wizard of OZ*, Gilead (1991:280) makes a statement that applies to Alice, when she says to return home Dorothy must first make the fantasy world safe, "[t]hat is, she must make reality endurable by ensuring that it can sometimes be transcended". Alice transcends her reality to travel to Wonderland, and before she returns to the real-world she first literally makes the fantasy world a safe place to live by killing the Jabberwocky. The film's narrative adheres to "reality-fantasy-reality pattern" as specified in Gilead (1991:287), who explains that fantasy never becomes fully present; it is "temporary, risky, and unstable in duration and meaning". Alice must return to the real-world in order to fulfil her destiny and change the manner of thinking in her real-world.

Alice's journey to Wonderland is what causes her to challenge her society's set role for the women of her day. This direct challenge is the consequence of Alice's mobility. Alice basically needed to have the experience of travelling to an alternative fantasy world in order for her to achieve the change in herself. Jackson (1981:3) states that fantasy characteristically tries to compensate for lack resulting from cultural constraints. Thus what Alice lacked, in terms of her aspirations and belief in herself, is found and provided for in Wonderland. The fantastic also, Jackson (1981:4) expresses, "traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent'". Alice would never have overcome her feeling of constraint had she not travelled to Wonderland. She also would not have made herself "present" in the real-world, in terms of establishing the beginning of a career which would have typically been associated with a male, had she not had the experience of fighting the Jabberwocky. Alice's body needed to be active and move away from the typical passive Victorian female body for her to achieve

her purpose. *Alice in Wonderland* is an example of time connected to place/space, as not only does the narrative take place in Victorian England but the series of events in Wonderland take place in a matter of hours in the real-world. Alice experiences the "timelessness" of the fantastic world in which she is the heroine.

3.5   EXAGGERATED FORMS OF THE BODY IN FANTASY

The Red Queen and the White Queen's bodies are also relevant to creating Alice's active body because they indirectly offer the challenges she needs to overcome. These two characters are a materialisation of Alice's psyche. They are manifested as sisters but they are binary opposites of each other. Although the two queens are not the focus of the study, their analysis is done at some length because it helps strengthen the argument of Alice's represented psyche. The analysis focuses on the physical appearance of each queen as well as the castles in which they live. This section largely draws on the theory already established in Chapter 2, concerning iconography, for the interpretation of the queens. After the separate discussion of both queens, there will be a discussion on the implication of the two queens and their bodily appearances for Alice's *becoming* a woman. This latter discussion uses Jung's archetypes of the animus and anima to explain certain developments within Alice's psyche, and *katabasis* experience in reference to the queens' embodiments. The discussion includes comments on the queens' embodiment of matriarchal rule.

3.5.1   The implication of the queens' embodiment and representation for Alice

3.5.1.1   The Red Queen

Since *Alice in Wonderland* is a fantasy film, some of the iconographic elements which are discussed are unique to the fantasy genre and this film. The Red Queen's introduction, character and place are important to establishing the characteristics of Alice's animus. There is a complete comparison of the anima and animus, after the analysis of the White Queen.

The Red Queen's analysis examines the first time the viewer actually sees her, as references are made to her character before the viewer sees her. Her introduction infers what type of ruler she is. It also discusses her court as the place in which she is represented and in which she is embodied. Thus the first part of this section specifically discusses the Red Queen's inner character which is reflected in her physical appearance and actions as well as the place in which she is depicted. The following part of this section pays particular attention to the queen's castle as a place.

The introduction to the Red Queen is done by fast camera tracking from a dark, grassy land, through a barren rocky landscape and then finally to the queen's castle. The viewer briefly sees a topiary resembling the queen and then the viewer hears the queen shouting. A door opens and the voice is given a body via a long shot of the Red Queen with members of the queen's court in the background. The queen has an abnormally large head and her body is rather small. The members of her court also seem to all have some exaggerated body part. As the film progresses the viewer learns that the queen, in her insecurity, preferably and willingly accepts members into her court that have some form of abnormal appearance. Although the viewer can see the Red Queen's court in the background, they do not seem to play a dominant role as the queen takes up much of the introductory long shot. The court is merely represented as the background to the queen, thus they do not have a major influence in the queen's ruling. The fact that the queen takes up the majority of the introductory shot indicates that she is the one who must take responsibility for her actions and her ruling. There are no true dominant advisors, and she makes all of her own harsh decisions autocratically. From the long shot, the viewer can see the queen's elaborate dress and everything seems to be heart-shaped. Her enormous head and hair style, and even her puffy dress, form a heart shape. Also the front panel of her dress material has hearts printed on it. This elaborate use of hearts emphasises the fact that she is very exuberant in her choice of adornment; there is nothing subtle about the Red Queen.

The camera moves to a medium shot of the queen's head which again emphasises the fact that she has a head that is larger than the rest of her body. Her head looks out of place in this scene because it takes up so much of the medium shot. Her oversized head indicates to the viewer that the Red Queen is also figuratively big-headed, which means that she is absorbed in her ego and thinks highly of herself. Her large head also indicates that she uses her head, instead of her emotions or heart, to rule over Wonderland. One could deduce that the queen is hard in her rule and is not forgiving, in comparison to a ruler who rules from the heart. It is ironic that her castle is covered in hearts because she does not use her heart to rule. The hearts are merely used for show and for adornment. From the medium shot the viewer can observe that instead of the make-up she wears, which should typically enhance one's looks and make one look more attractive, her light-blue eye shadow, which takes up her whole eye-lid all the way up to her eye-brow, and over-powdered white face, gives her a cartoon-like appearance. Thus her make-up does not make her more attractive – it rather serves as a means to make her look ridiculous and unnatural. Her lipstick is also applied in the shape of a heart on her lips, which once again is not natural and the viewer can see the outline of the queen's actual mouth on the sides of the heart shape. Although done in an unintentional manner, the Red Queen's appearance subverts the male gaze. The only male character who takes an interest in her is Stayne. However, he only pretends to be romantically interested in the queen; when she loses power and crown he attempts to kill her because he actually has no interest in her, only her power. But at the same time, the queen's appearance reflects the forcefulness and unnatural quality which reflects in her personality. Although she is not the focus of the study, she still works in a post-Mulvey framework because she subverts the male gaze.

The queen's favourite and frequently used expression is, "Off with [his/her/their] head[s]!" She does not merely say this phrase; her soldiers actually carry out her instructions and behead any subject they have been told to execute. The queen does not just behead those that need to be severely punished; she beheads anyone for petty crimes. When the viewer is

introduced to the queen she is shouting and complaining that someone has stolen three of her tarts. She then individually asks each of her butlers, which are frogs, dressed in butlers' uniforms, and standing in a line, if they have stolen the tarts. Each butler replies, "No". The last butler she asks says no, however a close-up of his head reveals that he has a purple jam like substance on the side of his mouth. The Queen leans forward, wipes the substance from his mouth with her finger, licks her finger and whispers to him, "Squimberry juice". The butler gets a frightened look on his face and immediately starts explaining, "I was so hungry! I didn't mean to!" But the Red Queen takes no pity on him and shouts, "Off with his head!" While the butler is being dragged away by Red Knights, he begs the queen to have mercy and explains, "My family! Oh, please, please don't! No! I have little ones to look after!" However, the queen simply instructs her assistant to, "Go to his house and collect the little ones." She then says, "I love tadpoles on toast almost as much as I love caviar."

Once the butler is gone and the case of the missing tarts dealt with, the queen sits on her throne in a nonchalant manner. The viewer is immediately aware, from both the queen's dialogue and her actions, that she is a terrible and harsh ruler who is mean and feared by the members of her court. The frog butler did not hesitate to start explaining his actions to the queen, he looked worried, frightened and knew the consequences. She is simply after personal gain, as when she heartlessly orders his tadpoles to be captured and brought to the palace to make tadpoles on toast. Although the queen's name is not actually mentioned until the second last scene, her name is also an indication of the type of ruler she is. In the scene where Alice is to face the Jabberwocky, the queens first have a conversation, in which each queen addresses the other by name. The Red Queen is referred to as Iracebeth of Crims. An interpretation of the pronunciation of the name indicates that the Red Queen's name "Iracebeth" can be associated with "irascible". The term *irascible* means "becoming angry very easily", according to the Oxford Dictionary (2005:789). Therefore her name also indicates that the queen is a harsh leader who rules from intense anger and that is why she is so mean to the citizens of Wonderland. The queen embodies anger and a harsh ruler.

As the Red Queen's favourite saying is, "Off with [his/her/their] head[s]", it is ironic because many of the other characters in the film tease the Red Queen about her over-sized head, naming her "The bloody big head". There seems to always be an association to the queen's head, either in speech or in her actual appearance. Towards the end of the film, when the rest of the characters chant, "Off with her bloody big head", it reverses the role of the tormentor. The once oppressed characters get a chance to make fun of the "bloody big head" and use her favourite saying to mock her, and in a sense return the evil ways she so easily distributed to the citizens of Wonderland. The fact that the characters chant her most used expression not only means that she should physically lose her head, but also implies that her reign should be brought to an end. Therefore the queen's oversized head, from an iconographic view, signifies many aspects of her personality as a ruler of the alternative world. By interpreting the queen's bodily appearance, particularly her head, the viewer is able to deduce many aspects of the queen's personality. For example, even though she is horrible, she is not passive in her role as a ruler.

Chapter 2 established that the mind and the body should not be taken as two separate factors, but rather as integral parts, it can be deduced that the Red Queen's body (meaning her actions as well as her physical appearance) reflects her wicked and tormented mind. Her physical manifestation, her body, is the embodiment of wickedness because she is forceful and unnatural in her rule. Not only is her make-up forced but she also coerces citizens of Wonderland to perform unnatural tasks. She calls for a pig, who in the space of the alternative world would be a "normal citizen" of Wonderland, to roll over so that she may rest her feet on it. She also makes monkeys, dressed as bellboys, act as components of the furniture. They need to hold up, among other things, chairs, candle sticks and tables. When Alice and the Hatter embark on their journey Alice has already shrunk to a tiny size. The Hatter is able to carry her on his hat. While Alice is being carried there is a flashback scene of when the White Queen ruled. The *mise-en-scéne* of this scene is light and colourful. However since the Red Queen has taken over, as mentioned before, the *mise-en-scéne* is mostly dark. The Red Queen's

personality – her mind and body – have become embodied throughout Wonderland. It is as if the Red Queen's mind has seeped through the entire alternative world and infected it.

Not only the Red Queen's appearance but also the place in which the queen is depicted are significant to interpreting her active character. Her castle is called Salazen Grum. There is a play on the word "Grum" which may have been derived from the word "glum"[10] which, according to the Oxford Dictionary (2005:634) means to be "sad, quiet and unhappy". "Glum" would reflect the members of the Red Queen's court since she forcefully took over the reigning power from the White Queen. A synonym for "glum" is "gloomy" which indicates the predominant colours of the kingdom while the Red Queen is in forceful power. After the initial introduction of the queen shouting, there is an extreme long shot of the room to which she summoned her butlers. The room is huge and the wall directly behind the queen is extremely high. This oversized room and the queen's short height indicate just how small she in fact is, both in physical size and in character. The high wall that the camera shows has a painting on it which indicates how the queen reigns in her power, as well as hints to how she attained her power. On the left side of the wall is the creature called the "Jabberwocky" (a monster with a long tail and body) and on the right side of the wall is a type of bird called the "Jubjub Bird" with its claws out and mouth open. Both these creatures have helped the Red Queen gain the crown by force and have kept the subjects of Wonderland in fear of her. The overt colouring of the *mise-en-scéne* when associated with the Red Queen is dark. The walls are a dark grey, almost black in colour, the pillars are dark red and the butler's jackets are red. The members of court in the room are all wearing black or extremely dark colours. The only splash of colour comes from the green frog butlers, standing in a line on the left hand side. Although there is natural sunshine reflecting through the windows, this sunshine serves to emphasise the dullness of the room. The sunshine only illuminates the grey tones and serves to cast shadows in the room. Cirlot

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[10] It can also play on the word "grumpy", which is informal for "bad-tempered" (OALD, 2005:661).

(1971:54) distinguishes that "colour symbolises an upward-tending force in the pattern of dark (or gloom and evil) and light (or illumination, glory and good)". The overtly dark room serves to represent the queen's nature which is mostly evil and dark. The use of red is also significant since red symbolises, among the negative aspects, suffering (Cirlot, 1971:56) as well as danger. The Red Queen causes suffering in Wonderland and creates a sense of danger. The Red Queen is depicted as an active female in the film, she works to support the post-Mulvey notions set-out in Chapter 2. Her representation is negative because she is horrible, she also subverts the male gaze, but she is none-the-less an active woman. The White Queen's representation is different to that of her sister's.

3.5.1.2 The White Queen

The White Queen's analysis is significant because a comparison can then be drawn between the two queens and their influence on Alice can be deduced. The analysis will also examine much in the same way as the Red Queen, the White Queen's representation in her castle. The examination helps to establish the elements of the White Queen's personality, ruling style and also the function of her embodiment in the film. She is a reflection of Alice's anima.

The viewer learns, via a conversation between Alice and the Hatter, about how the White Queen lost her reign. Alice asks the Hatter to tell her what the Red Queen has done to gain power in Wonderland. The camera moves to a long shot of the area surrounding Alice and the Hatter. The area that is shown has the remains of burnt buildings and trees. The predominant colours are dark brown and black and there is faint sunshine which lights the shot from the top left-hand corner. The Mad Hatter does not need to explain in exact detail what the Red Queen has done – viewers can see the destruction for themselves. However, the Mad Hatter continues to explain that he was the Hatter to the White Queen. The next scene is a flashback of the time when the Hatter was in the White Queen's court. The camera shows a bird's eye-view shot of a light-hearted festival, and then zooms in to show the same location that the previous destruction was shown. This scene is immediately contrasted to the previous shot of the Red Queen's devastation. The viewer is

exposed to a *mise-en-scéne* which has rich colours of overtly green and white. The scene is bright as there is plenty of sunshine that spreads over the characters as well as the festival that is taking place. The use of the light and the colour indicates that the White Queen is a good-natured ruler, who loves and spreads joy wherever she goes. The subjects in her court have fun and are pleasant to one another because they are happy in her court. There is no dialogue used in this scene because the bright, light colours indicate that the White Queen's nature and personality is one of love, light and happiness. The other characters' demeanours are also happy and their smiles indicate that they are comfortable and content in the White Queen's court.

Apart from the above mentioned scene the White Queen is only properly introduced to the viewer fifty minutes into the film. The late introduction indicates that the White Queen does not play such a prominent role as the Red Queen since the forced take-over. She also has no role in the running of Wonderland until such a time that a champion comes forth to kill the Jabberwocky, and help her reclaim her power. In the second scene with the White Queen in it, the camera moves to a long shot of her and her court. The queen is walking among her court which indicates that she reigns as one with her followers. When the camera moves to a medium shot of the White Queen, the viewer can see three members of her court, two females and one male, in the background. They seem devoted to her as all three are turned towards her as if they are intrigued by her beauty and light and are interested in what she is saying. The three subjects and the queen are similarly dressed in predominantly white clothing and each has platinum blonde hair. Their attire is embellished with pearls and embroidery and they wear beautiful jewellery. The followers all have some form of darker colouring, for example the two female subjects both have dark mark-up on. The female on the left has a dark purple embroidered neck line, while the female follower standing on the right furthest away from the queen has a predominately dark purple dress on. The male follower has dark stripes on his white clothing. The White Queen herself, although she has no dark clothing, has extremely dark eyes, lipstick, eye-brows and nail polish. These darker aspects on all the white serve to give the white more definition and character. If the queen and her subjects were

completely white and shining their light, it would be difficult to see them, they would be rather evasive and that evasiveness would not quite reflect the same defined and direct rule. Her followers need a definite leader that they do not battle to see. Although she is mostly white and bright she still has clearly visible characteristics. Their similar clothing indicates that there is togetherness in the White Queen's court. The similar clothing also indicates that the queen is modest and does not need to be effusive to make herself feel important. When the queen walks with her court she does so in an elegant manner, with grace, which is noticeable in the manner in which she keeps her hands in the air, at about shoulder height. She speaks to the court in a kind manner, as when she says to them in a perfect accent, "Would you all excuse me for a moment? Thank you." She is respectful and kind and does not take the fact that she is the queen for granted.

The viewer learns that the White Queen has taken a vow never to harm another living creature. Consequently, she has been waiting for a champion to fight, and overthrow, the Red Queen and the Jabberwocky. Although the White Queen is a good natured ruler, she is quite helpless in any attempt to take control of Wonderland. She knows that she, as an individual, is unable to physically fight the Red Queen, and yet she does not force Alice to take on the role of the champion when she does not willingly do so. She is a selfless and understanding queen. She says, "Alice, you cannot live your life to please others. The choice must be yours, because when you step out to face that creature, you will step out alone." The queen's words are not only prevalent to the fight against the Jabberwocky, but are also reminiscent of Alice's life in the real-world. She cannot blindly follow the prescriptions of her society's patriarchal rule; she must make her own choices for her future. The White Queen's name is also significant when construing what kind of leader she is. The queen's name is Mirana. The name can be associated with the term "mirror" which indicates that the White Queen prefers to reflect on all situations. She is a wise and loving ruler because she is conscious of the effect each decision has on a person. That is the reason for giving Alice the choice to take on the Jabberwocky and not merely forcing Alice to do so.

Together with the White Queen's light, kindness and love she also displays the characteristics of wisdom, understanding and insight. These latter three characteristics come through most prominently when she meets Bayard (a hound) who comes with news of Alice. The following conversation takes place:

White Queen: What news, Bayard?

Bayard: Alice has returned to Underland.

White Queen: Where is she now?

Bayard: In Salazen Grum. Forgive me. I allowed her to divert from her destined path.[11]

White Queen: No, no, no, no. But that is exactly where she will find the Vorpul Sword. We have our champion. Rest now. You've done well.

The queen does not scold Bayard for letting Alice diverge. She sees that there is a purpose for everything that happens and shows great wisdom in her dealings with Bayard. She even explains to him that he has done well and that Alice should be at Salazen Grum. She even pats Bayard for his good work and lets him rest on her lap. The queen's actions and speech indicate once again that she is a loving and caring ruler which is also reflected in her bodily appearance. The White Queen's passive body, which acts in accordance with Mulvey's ideas, represents Alice's gentle nature. The purpose of this passive and gentle nature will be discussed later in this analysis.

Just as the space that introduced the White Queen is light and lively, the White Queen's castle is also white with sunshine lighting the castle and its immediate surroundings. There are white fluffy clouds and beautiful trees along the path leading up to the castle, with striking, small, pink flowers on

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[11] This reference to Alice's divergence is reminiscent of her non-adherence of her society's prescriptions for a woman. She will eventually become a woman who deviates from a prescribed married life and rather has an independent life in which she makes her own choices.

their branches. Everything that surrounds the White Queen portrays the sense of being truly alive. The trees sway in what seems like a soft breeze which blows around the castle. This constant movement represents the fact that the White Queen is the embodiment of life. She is a creator and brings a sense of living to her surroundings. When Alice finally meets the White Queen she learns that the queen can create potions, further emphasising the fact that the White Queen is a creator. However, when first seeing the castle, there is a slight grey tinge to the clouds above the castle which indicates that there is a possibility that a "storm" hangs over the castle. By implication this storm is the Red Queen who has taken over the White Queen's reign and figuratively hangs over the White Queen. As a result, the White Queen is not able to fully shine her light. The White Queen is an interesting character in terms of this study because she is a passive female body. She has taken an oath to remain a non-aggressive ruler. However, when the analysis discusses Alice's psyche, it will prove that Alice needs a balance in her realisation of an active body. She chooses to possess an active body in a kind and gentle manner and does not allow the Red Queen's influence to cause her to be a harsh, active body.

The two queens embody different characteristics which reflect in the manner in which each queen rules. Firstly, the two queens' physical appearances indicate what types of rulers they are. Secondly the relationships that the separate queens have with their subjects are very different. These relationships are reflected in the manner in which each queen is introduced with their court. Thirdly, the space in which the queens are depicted, which is also related to their physical appearances, is also an important aspect to take into consideration when discussing the iconographic elements of the film. All these discussed elements are significant to discussing Alice's journey into the psyche.

3.5.2 The implication of the body on the mind

The two queens serve as participants in Alice's *katabasis* experience. They can be interpreted as embodiments of Alice's psyche in terms of the *anima* and *animus* as used in Jungian psychology.

Alice's *katabasis* is not only represented by the physical falling down the rabbit hole into "Underland", but it also includes the delving into the underworld of her own psyche. In this delving process Alice needs to become conscious of certain aspects of her psyche in order to become an independent, free-thinking woman. Part of Alice's process includes getting in touch with both her masculine and feminine archetypes which are a part of her psyche. Jacobi (1942:39-40) stipulates that Jung initially referred to *archetypes* as "primordial images" or "dominants of the collective unconscious" because they are determining influences on the psychic life of an individual. The two queens can be said to represent two archetypes of Alice's psyche, namely the anima and animus. An interview with Jung (1957) he explains that the animus is a masculine image in a woman's mind, and the anima is a feminine image in a man's mind. He also explains that men and women often have these opposite images of themselves without knowing it. These are aspects of the unconscious mind.

Within every individual's psyche these two archetypes, along with many others, exist. Jacobi (1942:116) qualifies that although the respective archetypes represent feminine and masculine traits, there are a variety of forms in which they can manifest. The manifestation just needs traits that belong to or are typical of the other sex. However, the embodiment of these traits can have many contradictions. Therefore, the forms in which these traits embody are generally ambiguous and complicated in structure. The reason Alice has to have the *katabasis* experience is to actualise these two archetypes, in order for them to come into her conscious so that she can change her perception of herself, and ultimately become an independent woman.

The two queens are matriarchal rulers who have two very different styles of reign. The Red Queen is a tough and harsh ruler. She is always associated with the head, since she physically has a big head and she beheads her subjects. As the head is associated with logic, or the stereotyped notion of left-side brain, it is considered a masculine trait, the Red Queen is the embodiment of Alice's *animus*. The Red Queen also deviates from the

stereotypical feminine sovereignty that is generally placed on female rulers. She does not conform to the soft, loving "girly" femininity associated with the White Queen. The Red Queen can also be said to represent the patriarchal real-world because she does not give the citizens of Wonderland a choice, in the same way that women in the real-world do not have much choice either. She rather forces citizens to adhere to her prescriptions of what is acceptable and unacceptable. Alice needs to be aware of these kinds of prescriptions in order to fight against them. However, at the same time, the Red Queen is an example of an active female who takes control, and although it is negative, the queen still serves as an example of an active female. It is Alice's choice to embody a positive, active female when she returns to the real-world. It is her choice to follow the good, instead of the negative embodied by the Red Queen.

The White Queen, on the other hand, is associated with a life-giving force and is associated with everything stereotypically feminine. This queen is also able to create potions; her creative ability links her to the stereotype of the right-side brain. She is also kind, loving, understanding but at the same time she is a passive female. She is the representation of Alice's *anima*. Alice retains her femininity via the White Queen. She is then able to admire her feminine attributes and realise that they are still important as a female, although she needs to be an active one. The reason Alice needs to be exposed to both these aspects of her psyche, in the extreme, is because she eventually needs to balance the two aspects to become a more rounded person, who will be comfortable with going against her society's beliefs and perceptions of women. This balance that Alice needs to attain is reflected in the scene before the battle against the Jabberwocky takes place. The two queens meet at the centre of a field structured as a chess board with white and black squares. When they meet, the Red Queen is on the left-hand side of the screen while the White Queen is on the right-hand side of the screen. This placement of the queens is symbolic of Alice's need to balance the animus and anima based traits of her psyche. She needs to take control of her psyche in order for her to make her own decisions. Thus, if Alice makes the right choice, and chooses to

be a balanced individual, she can return to the real-world with a positively fashioned active body.

3.6   BORDERS AND ALICE'S JOURNEY

Alice crosses various borders in the film. A topographical border crossing is made by Alice embarking on her journey to an alternative world. However, all four of the mentioned borders, namely temporal, symbolic, epistemological and topographical, are relevant to Alice's journey. The border concepts in this film are very closely related. It makes it difficult to discuss each border plane separately without touching on aspects that relate to the other border planes. For the sake of simplicity the different worlds which constitute the interpretation of borders are analysed, instead of attempting to discuss each border separately. Thus the real-world London and all the limitations it places upon the women of that time are included as one part of the discussion. London is only represented right in the beginning of the film and again only at the end. The other area of discussion is the obvious implications of Alice's journey and entry into Wonderland and then by implication her adventures in Wonderland.

The fact that Alice belongs to the upper class of her time already suggests social borders, within her social group as well as outside her social group. Newman (2007:35) states that borders and what determines the entry or exit of these borders are determined by "social elites as part of the process of societal ordering and compartmentalization". Alice happens to be part of the social elite of her time and is therefore a prime example of how the societal ordering of her day has been divided by the elite of her society. Whenever there is a divide, the concept of borders is already evoked because a divide keeps entities in, as well as out. These social borders fall under the concept of symbolic borders as they are borders which are created on a mental level. A societal belief is then classified as a mental occurrence and is seemingly followed by the masses. Alice is unwillingly placed on the side of the upper class's border because of her family's standing in their society. By being a non-conformist she pushes, and in a sense crosses, the boundary of her class. Not only are there certain limitations on Alice because she was born

into the upper social class, there are also boundaries placed on her because she is a young, Caucasian woman. Her society determines that she wants to, and should, be married to a lord because of his social standing, age and gender and not because she is well-suited to the lord. Alice's defiance in her behaviour and actions form part of the manner in which she crosses the boundaries that her society places on her. However, Alice only truly achieves this defiance and crosses the symbolic borders once she returns from her journey to Wonderland.

Görner (2007:61) says there is a "thrilling moment of experiencing what is different beyond the [...] threshold". It can be deduced that there is a desire to transgress borders or forms of separation because it creates a feeling of excitement from the actual border crosser. Alice's inquisitive nature and feelings of excitement are what make her fall down the rabbit hole, because she wants to catch the white rabbit. The most relevant and obvious border crossings are when Alice accidently falls down the rabbit hole. She crosses an epistemological border, a temporal border as well as a more obvious topographical border. She moves from her real-world to a space that is unknown, dangerous and has infinite possibilities, thus an epistemological border is crossed. At the same time she also crosses a clear macro-scale topographical, but also a temporal, border because she moves to a different geographical location as well as time zone. However, to walk into this unknown space Alice first has to shrink to fit through the door. Alice also crosses a micro-scale topographical border because the boundaries of her body have to change. She first shrinks, then grows to an enormous size and then shrinks again. This concept of finding something thrilling by transgressing borders is further reflected in Alice's actions of determinately finding the key to get through the tiny door.

Once Alice has crossed the physical border and is through the tiny door and in Wonderland, she is then in a space in which she is able to cross mental borders, a subset of symbolic borders, which have influenced her actions in the real-world. The border between the two worlds initially acts as an obstacle between the concept of reality and fantasy for Alice. In the beginning she

believes that she is dreaming that she is in Wonderland. She even accepts Mallymkun's proposal to jab her with a sword to wake her from her dream because her usual pinch does not seem to work to awaken her. It is only when she finally crosses the epistemological border and remembers that she has had a previous experience in Wonderland, does she move from the unknown to the known. The border between reality and fantasy is also overcome because Alice finally acknowledges that she is in a fantastical reality. When she knows about the alternative reality she gains the courage to fight for what she believes is right. She finally realises her power to make decisions and create the life that she wants; she even says "I create the path" when she scolds Bayard. She is able to become a strong and independent woman, because she believes in her power in this alternative world, which she crossed borders to enter.

Absolem, like Alice, is present both in the real-world and Wonderland. He acts as an indication of Alice's inner thoughts and characteristics in the real-world. When Hamish proposes to Alice he has a blue caterpillar on his shoulder to which Alice alerts him. She takes it off and safely places it in the garden. The fact that there is a caterpillar of which Alice is aware, indicates that she is still in a possible transitional stage in her life. She is in a form that is restricting and inhibits her from moving freely on her own. Alice is like a caterpillar which can only move along the ground on its legs, reflected by Absolem as a caterpillar. In the scene when Alice acknowledges her experience in Wonderland she encounters Absolem spinning his cocoon. Absolem is both physically and symbolically moving into a new life and era. On a physical level he is transforming from a caterpillar to a butterfly. On a symbolic level he represents Alice's change from an inhibited woman to a woman who will make her own decisions and move freely in the choices she makes. When Alice returns from Wonderland her appearance is notably different – it distinctly diverges from the proper manner of dressing because her hair is loose, curly and wild and her dress is torn and a bit muddy. Her physical appearance indicates that she is now free and unafraid of being who she wants to be. The last encounter with Absolem is when Alice has boarded the ship sailing to China. Absolem has now transformed into a beautiful blue butterfly which flies

onto Alice's shoulder. Absolem, at this point, reflects Alice's independence and beauty she achieves by making her own decisions. They have both crossed symbolic borders which act as openings to make the transformation into the next life. Alice's transformation manifests as an active female body which is able to overcome the prescriptions of the patriarchal society of her day. She is an example of a post-Mulvey woman in film.

3.7　　　CONCLUSION

This chapter started with a brief synopsis to create a context of *Alice in Wonderland* before analysing the representation of Alice's body as the prominent factor in the film. Alice is an active female protagonist who represents the most change in the film. The analysis discussed her physical appearance and personality. It established that from the beginning of the film, she was actively defiant of the society in which she was depicted. It also discussed how Alice needed to go through the transformation from her real-world to Wonderland to truly overcome the patriarchal society of her day. In the examination of the protagonist's body it was deduced that she possesses an active body. Her active body is represented in the journey into her psyche and the subsequent battle against the Jabberwocky, which gave her the independence and the realisation of her power that she could carry back to the real-world upon her return to it. Her journey also represents her courage and insight to fight the patriarchal society. The body represented through the physical appearance also expresses the personalities of the characters and their inner workings. It indicates that the places/spaces in which the characters are depicted also express information about the minds of the characters. The position of the bodies of the characters in those places/spaces is also a determining factor when analysing the characters' bodies. The surroundings reflect the characters' mind-sets and show their relationships with their outside worlds. There were multiple borders within the film which also work to indicate factors about the female character's body. She needed to cross topographical, temporal, epistemological and symbolic borders in order to reach her full potential as an independent, free-thinking

woman. Alice deviates from Mulvey's passive, sexualised and objectified female body.

CHAPTER 4

THE ABJECT MONSTROUS BODY IN *MONSTER*

4

4.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses and analyses the film *Monster* by Patty Jenkins in terms of its representation of Aileen's, the female protagonist's, body and abjection. Abjection manifests in many different forms, from her body to the space in which she is depicted. Abjection or being in an abject space immediately places the protagonists in a post-Mulvey dynamic. As will be discussed, abjection repulses and turns away rather than connotes "to-be-looked-at-ness". Therefore, while discussing and examining abjection, the reader should keep in mind that the characters are working in a way that subverts the male gaze and their bodies are far removed from the sexualised, objectified bodies specified by Mulvey. The first section of the chapter serves as a brief introduction to the background of the making of the film. It includes the particulars of the film's inspiration from real-life events and information on the actress who plays Aileen. This information on the background serves as an indication of what ultimately makes the protagonist abject. The background also gives a synopsis of the film.

The second section is the analysis of the two characters, Aileen and Selby. It focuses on their representation in terms of their physical appearances and how the physical appearances of their bodies deviate from the stereotypical physical presentation of women in film. Whereas the focus is on Aileen, Selby is also analysed for the purpose of comparison. The analysis is largely concerned with the physical bodily presentation and what it communicates regarding emotional states and mental workings of the characters. It analyses the characters in terms of physical attractiveness in terms of facial features and symmetry. It also comments on the intentional masculine gender performance of the two female characters which is predominately communicated through clothing, gestures and expressions. This entire section

works to explain how these two female characters subvert the male gaze and work against Mulvey's initial standpoint of the erotic male gaze.

The third section explains the notion of the abject as defined by Julia Kristeva. It touches on what comprises abjection and is split into different parts, but focuses on those elements that are relevant to the analysis. It includes information on how abjection deviates from what is considered a clean and proper body. It also outlines factors such as how abjection repels and attracts, is a border experience, concerns the mother and the pre-Oedipal condition, and bodily deviations. In addition, it outlines two facets of being in a process or state of abjection. This section includes information on the deadly *femme castratrice,* a concept taken from Creed (1993). Following this section, the focus is on the four areas of Aileen's life that make her abject. These areas are her work as a prostitute, her sexuality as a lesbian, becoming a monstrous serial killer, as well as the rape and its consequences. Abjection is relevant to Aileen's bodily expression in these four areas. The analysis also applies the two facts of abjection throughout each area. This section also has a brief analysis on the motivation for the murders.

Aileen's abjection is intensified by the places she frequents, but also by her lack of place and the setting of the road as the predominant space in which she is depicted. This fifth section uses the concepts of the chronotopes of the road to discuss space in relation to Aileen. It also examines the consequences of mobility and immobility as there are many for the female protagonist. This section uses concepts that have already been established in Chapter 2 and touches on how Aileen is depicted in spaces of abjection.

The last section is concerned with symbolic borders and their crossing. This section briefly draws on the concept of topographical borders, because the crossing of physical spaces is important, particularly in terms of the road. However, this section is largely concerned with symbolic borders and their crossing in relation to the body. It comments on Aileen's abuse and rape and examines how she is in a state of abjection.

4.2   BACKGROUND AND FABULA OF *MONSTER*

Before the actual film starts there is an intertitle that states that the film is based on a true story. Aileen Wuornos[12], a prostitute, was the first female serial killer in the United States of America. In her killing spree she killed seven of her clients by shooting them. When the police caught her, her story became an instant sensation because of her gender. Nick Broomfield, one of the only journalists the real Aileen would talk to, chronicles many of the elements of her life and trial in his documentary compilation titled *Aileen: life and death of a serial killer/the selling of a serial killer* (2004). In the documentary, Broomfield highlights some of the complications surrounding Wournos's case. These complications include the police unethically selling her story to Hollywood film makers before she was even arrested and the governor elections in Florida.[13] The documentary also indicates that many of the elements in the film *Monster* did in fact occur. Also after the real Aileen's execution in 2002, Dawn Botkins, one of Aileen's only friends, allowed the director of the film, Patty Jenkins, access to letters written by the real Aileen to Dawn (London, 2003). However, there are elements in the narrative which are part of the scriptwriter's interpretation of Wuornos's story. This study focuses specifically on the elements of the film and in no way makes comments on the life of the real Aileen Wuornos.

Charlize Theron, a beautiful former model, is the actress who plays Aileen Wuornos. Before Theron accepted the role in *Monster* she was usually cast, according to Blackwelder (2003), as girlfriends and temptresses, particularly because of her debut in *2 Days in the valley*. At the end of the *Monster* DVD there is an added bonus section on the making of the film which is directed by Gabriel London (2003). In this short section the viewer sees some of the

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[12] In the rest of the contextual background the Aileen on which the film *Monster* is based will be referred to as the "real Aileen" while the character which is presented in the film will be referred to as "Aileen".

[13] Voting for a new governor in Florida coincided with Wuornos's death penalty sentencing. Many believed that she was put on death row as a ploy for then Governor Jeb Bush, to gain more votes and be re-elected.

changes that Theron had to undergo. The viewer gets a close-up of the list, which has fifteen items on it, which she has to change in her bodily appearance. These changes relate to the iconography that is examined. The changes include having black eye contact lenses and prosthetic teeth inserted; she also needs to have sealer over her skin to give it a certain blotchy texture, and her blonde hair would be made to look stringy, dull and have its roots showing. This untypical female appearance already moves away from Mulvey's ideas of the objectified female body, because she is [urposefully made unattractive.

The overarching theme in *Monster* is concerned with the desire to be loved, to be believed in, and to be accepted for who and what you are in the world. Together with these desires is another aspiration to protect the innocence of the world, represented by Selby, Aileen's young lover. The latter desire manifests in the form of Aileen, the protagonist prostitute, murdering her male clients and justifying her actions by saying that she is protecting innocent, young women. What follows is a summary of the film. This summary should serve to give the reader a very brief background of the film's fabula. The arrangement of the main events in this summary is not necessarily in the same order in which they are presented in the film.

The film begins with images, accompanied by a voice-over, which briefly chronicles Aileen's history of abuse and prostitution from childhood to young adulthood respectively. The film is then predominately concerned with her story as an adult. As an adult, Aileen meets Selby (Christina Ricci), a tomboyish lesbian who has been sent to live with a family friend Donna, and her family, because she tried to kiss a girl in her church. Aileen and Selby begin a romantic relationship. Donna is against the union of the two and tries to stop Selby from leaving the house to live with Aileen. Donna is unsuccessful and the pair begins a rocky relationship with Aileen attempting to take on the role of provider. Aileen believes that Selby is her second chance at life and tries to stop prostitution, but she is unable to get any other kind of job as she has only ever been a prostitute. While she is with a client he gets aggressive with her. He beats her up and rapes her. She shoots and kills him

in self-defence; however she does not stop at that single self-defence killing. In my interpretation of the film, Aileen's history of violence in her childhood sparks a reaction to many of her clients and she embarks on a killing spree. The viewer is witness to three additional murders but there is an implication that there were more killings.

Eventually Selby and Aileen's relationship comes to an end when police sketches of them appear on the news because they were in possession of a stolen car, belonging to one of Aileen's victims. Selby then returns to her parents in Ohio. Since the police do not have actual evidence of Aileen being a murderer, they convince Selby to phone Aileen and get her to confess to the murder while the conversation is being recorded. The film ends with Aileen being sentenced and taken to death row.

4.3 AILEEN AND SELBY – PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

4.3.1 Aileen's physical bodily representation

Burgin (1996:29) notes that as humans we inhabit two separate and distinct worlds, one which is external, public and physical and the other is internal, private and mental. Aileen is the epitome of this duality of worlds; her whole bodily make-up is what reflects the notion of these separate worlds. Her physical structure, that includes her facial features as well as her entire physical body, reflects the external and public world. But at the same time, her physical presentation in terms of her manner of dressing, her posture and even her behaviour are what reflect her internal, mental and private world. This section discusses these two aspects of Aileen's representation, while proving how she subverts the male gaze and moves away from Mulvey's notions of women in film. It additionally uses selected aspects of attractiveness to compare Aileen and Selby's level of physical attractiveness, which is an aspect of their external worlds. The section also comments on, and classifies, the gender performance of the female characters. This analysis is done to indicate how the characters, particularly Aileen, deviate from the traditional and stereotypical representation of women in film and subvert the male gaze.

Various studies have been conducted to determine what constitutes beauty and these studies use many different methods to collect data. Among these methods are questionnaires, spontaneous approaches in which participants are asked to describe their attitude to certain aspects of physical appearance, and machine learning analysis. The second mentioned method is used in Bybee and Wells' research article titled "Body themes in descriptions of possible selves: diverse perspectives across the life span" (2006). The manner in which these two researchers indicate their findings is through dividing the participants into racial, gender, socio-economic and age groups. Once the participants are placed in their specific groups, and the results are finalised, the researchers can draw certain conclusions about what aspects of the body are important at different points in an individual's life span. Bybee and Wells (2006:96) mention that "research indicates that hopes and fears surrounding physical attractiveness are widespread among children and young adults." The factors that constitute physical attractiveness range from being models to being attractive to the opposite sex. In the beginning of the film Aileen's voice-over tells how she would dream about becoming beautiful and rich one day when she grows up. This desire is expressed amid a series of images that show how Aileen was abused both sexually and physically as a child, and how her male peers use her to gratify their inquisitive sexual desires. These shots portray Aileen as an object used by the boys and men who pay her for sexual favours. However, she is not (erotically) displayed for the male characters to look at, but is rather represented as an object that they are using for sexual favours and then dismissing. Since prostitution is how Aileen creates a living for herself, she could be said to be active in her role as a sexual object. She subverts the male gaze as her body is considered abject both by the characters and the viewers, because of the abuse. This abjection, as already explained, is what places Aileen's body in a post-Mulvian representation.

The fact that humans have many different stages in their lives which influence the discernment of beauty creates the idea that the perception of beauty is influenced by cultural factors. Barnard (2006:106) refers to matters of taste and ways of discernment that form part of cultural differences of perceptions

of beauty. However, many studies, such as one done by Eisenthal *et al.* (2006: 124), have used the hypothesis that generally people from differing cultures do agree on what makes a face attractive. To create an even more complicated view of beauty there are also factors such as sexual attractiveness, personality, scarring and even aspects such as bodily piercing and tattooing that can influence the perception of beauty and attractiveness. Generally, Eisenthal *et al.* (2006:121) argue that "facial attributes like good skin quality, bone structure, and symmetry, for example, are associated with good health and therefore contribute to attractiveness". This study draws from the mentioned, generalised factors and uses chosen aesthetic aspects with which to compare the female characters. These selected factors include: skin quality, facial proportion, defining features, such as facial traits and hair quality, clothing and body shape. What follows is an analysis of the introduction to adult Aileen and what her body communicates to the viewer in terms of all these factors.

At the beginning of the film, when the viewer actually sees the adult Aileen, there is a long shot of a woman sitting under a bridge while rain pours down the sides of it. The relational space of this person sitting under a bridge already creates the impression that Aileen is a homeless person. The viewer then makes the connection from the opening shots that she "works the streets", meaning that she is a prostitute. The rain also indicates that she is in a state of extreme emotion. She is a lonely figure, darkened by the shadows that fall on her. She is sitting in a hunched position, out of the rain. The camera then moves to a close-up of Aileen's face. This close-up enables the viewer to see Aileen's entire face, and it shows a woman who has typically unattractive features. The combination of freckles and facial skin that has been overly exposed to the sun, gives her facial skin a blotchy and rough texture. The hair that forms a type of frame around her face is blonde, straggly and has made clump-like strands that enhance a rough and hard facial appearance. The close-up also makes her nose seem quite large in proportion to the rest of her face. Her teeth are large, discoloured and skew. The fact that she has blonde, almost non-existent, eye-brows serves to further make her appear unattractive, because her facial features seem to lack the same

definition as darker eye-brows would provide. She has been crying and her eyes are moist with the tears that still need to fall down her cheeks. As a result of her crying her extremely dark-brown, almost black eyes, are blood-shot. Aileen's lack of facial symmetry and deviation from traditionally attractive facial features makes her unattractive. Her face reflects the idea of a hard life in which she has been exposed to the elements and in which she has not looked after herself very well. The viewer is aware of the fact that Aileen has not had a good childhood. Her facial features and expression indicates that she is miserable and has been unable to overcome hardships. Her external appearance also indicates that internally she carries many hurtful emotions and a low self-esteem which manifests in her willingness to let men use her in a sexual sense. Her appearance does not entice many men or women to look at her from an appealed point of view. She subverts the gaze since her external appearance indicates that she is toughened to the outside world.

Aileen can be classified, from a heteronormative perspective, as a masculine woman in terms of her gender performance. She places little importance on her (unflattering) external appearance, and her gestures and expressions can typically be associated with masculine traits. She is judged by the other characters for this gender performance. In the film, the first bar scene sets forth the idea that her body is always judged by the people around her. In the gay bar, one of the patrons says, "Look what the cat drug [*sic*] in", and the camera moves to a medium shot of a drenched Aileen. From this shot the viewer is able to see that she is tummy-heavy. Her trousers are slightly too tight and reach up to about her bellybutton, causing an uncomfortable looking bump. She is wearing old and faded clothing. The bar's other patrons are better dressed and Aileen stands in contrast to the rest of them. Her gestures and movements are more masculine, for example she wipes the water dripping from her nose with her sleeve. She also holds her cigarette's filter between her pointer finger and thumb, with the cigarette pointing toward her palm. This manner of holding the cigarette is reminiscent of a typical cowboy. She is also quite rough in her mannerisms and her interaction with the barman is casual, familiar and in a sense masculine. She asks the barman, "Man, you got a towel?" The barman condescendingly replies, "Ma'am our services are

for patrons only." He is implying that she is not welcome at the bar and does not belong there. In one location Aileen is judged[14] many times because of her bodily appearance. She does not escape judgements throughout the film. Dyer (2002:1) states that the way in which "social groups are treated in cultural representation is part and parcel of how they are treated in life". He sums up this premise when he says that "how we are seen determines in part how we are treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation". Another instance of judgement includes when Aileen is walking down the road with her arm around Selby's shoulders; she pushes past a man on the sidewalk and he asks her, "How much?" The man does not know Aileen and she is clearly more interested in Selby. However, the man still asks a question that implies that Aileen seems like a prostitute. She represents herself as a sex worker and it seems as though Aileen is unable to go beyond this label placed on her body. Since Aileen generally has very little self-belief she exudes the idea of being for sale. Although she does try to find another way to make an income, after she fails to find something else, she tells Selby, "Who'm I kiddin', I'm a hooker". Clearly her inner workings are reflected in the perception of her outer appearance. The manner in which she presents herself to the world is unattractive and once again serves to subvert the male gaze as Mulvey describes it. Selby's physical bodily representation also subverts the male gaze.

4.3.2 Selby's physical representation

This analysis of Selby predominately serves as a comparison of the two female characters in order to cast light on the manner in which these female characters move away from Mulvey's initial stand points. In a similar fashion to Aileen, Selby's external appearance communicates many aspects of her internal world. Burgin's two notions, discussed in this part's introduction, are also applicable to Selby's representation. The factors that are discussed

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[14] In the section concerning abjection the reasons for the judgments on Aileen will be explored in greater detail.

include her inner world, indicated by her separation from other people in her introduction, and her weak personality. Other factors include her external world which is reflected in her facial features, and the manner in which she dresses.

Selby's introduction is in a medium shot of her having a drink in the gay bar. It is clear that she is still quite young, but is old enough to be served alcohol. The way in which the camera pans from her face to another table that has four females sitting at it, makes it seem as though she is part of their table and conversation. But she is actually sitting at a different table listening to the other ladies' conversation as an outsider. Her inner world is portrayed as being alone and separate from other people, which is also reflected in her external world. Her reasons for being alone are different to those of Aileen's. As the film progresses the viewer learns that Selby is just beginning to explore her lesbian sexuality. Her sexuality deviates from the heteronormative ideals placed on a young woman in her society. The fact that she was accused of trying to kiss a girl in her church, and is sent to live with Donna, creates the idea that Selby is alone because she is shy, uncomfortable and has been made to believe that she is a problem because of her desire to explore a lesbian sexuality. She is still very much controlled by her father and has not broken away from his authority. The fact that she buys Aileen a drink so that she at least has someone to talk to, shows that she lacks self-confidence and does not have a strong personality.

In the opening medium shot of Selby the viewer sees her dark hair which is cut in a short, boyish type of style. Her forehead is accentuated and seems to be large in proportion to the rest of her face because of the short hair that hangs to the sides of her forehead. Although Selby's skin and hair are in better condition in comparison to Aileen's, she is not portrayed as an attractive woman. The fact that her eyes and forehead are so large and are disproportionate, creates the impression that she is, figuratively, in an awkward time in her life. Selby has big, innocent brown eyes and although she is in a bar she sips her drink through a straw, creating the idea that she is still young and childlike in this world of adults. Her big eyes represent naivety

and innocence. She is "wide-eyed" to the world and does not seem to understand the ways of the world. This innocence is further indicated by the fact that she asks Aileen if she is a prostitute, a factor that seems to be obvious to all the other characters. In the bar she wears an off-green coloured blazer. The blazer is not fitted but is slightly too big for her, so it does not exude a feminine quality. Her boyish hair-cut and blazer indicates that she is not a typical feminine young woman and she intentionally subverts the Mulvian male gaze.

Taking the above mentioned aspects into consideration it can be concluded that both these female characters are represented in an untypical feminine fashion. It can be said that neither of the female characters are styled according to the "patriarchal fantasy" which carry the connotation of "to-be-looked-at-ness". They both have features and mannerisms which would usually be associated, even though stereotypically, with masculine characters in film. These aspects are especially prevalent in the way these characters hold their cigarettes, dress in non-revealing, masculine type clothing and are homosexually orientated. The fact that they are lesbian and have butch mannerisms results in them moving away from the erotic fantasies and pleasure in looking once created for the male characters and spectators. These two characters do not display themselves for the male spectators or the male characters. They do not need or require the male erotic attention. Although it could be argued that Aileen is viewed as a sexual object she is, however, not passive in her role. She works as a prostitute and uses the fact that she can be viewed as an object to make an income for herself. Therefore Aileen is an object by choice. She also chooses how she displays herself to the male characters, which is in the manner of a sex worker. It is not the males who have the power over Aileen, they only have the money she desires. She is active in her representation, thus, her representation works against Mulvey's initial framework.

4.4 ABJECTION AND THE BODY

4.4.1 Introduction

This section provides more information on the ideas and constitution of abjection within the human subject and its relation to the body. There are different theorists who have worked on the abject. Mary Douglas in her book *Purity and danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo* (1966) and Elizabeth Grosz in her book *Time and perversion: essays on the politics of bodies* (1995), are just two such examples. However, the focus is on Julia Kristeva's notions of abjection. It is not within the scope of this chapter to comprehensively discuss her notions, but only the concepts that relate to the film's analysis. Kristeva is one of the most important, and most referred to, theorists to have written on the concept of *abjection.* Her collection of writings titled *Powers of horror: an essay on abjection* (1982) provides information on the creation of abjection and the influence of horror. She mainly focuses on the construction of abjection in the human subject in relation to the notion of the clean and proper body, the border, and the mother-child relationship.[15] Again it should be mentioned that the abject is in opposition to the Mulvian concepts of female bodies that are sexualised, objectified and connote "to-be-looked-at-ness".

4.4.2 Abjection and the "clean and proper body"

Abjection can be experienced in various ways – one of which relates to biological bodily functions and the clean and proper body. It would seem that both on an individual and a social level there is a tension between pure and impure. The reason abjection occurs is because it divides, and in a sense protects, the pure from the impure. Kristeva (1982:4) includes the idea that it is not the "lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order." This loss of distinction is represented by elements

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[15] This mother-child relationship, and its influence on abjection, is not going to be discussed in this analysis. However, there is some reference to it later in the chapter since it forms part of abjection.

such as vomit, menstrual blood, sewage, the skin on top of cooled-down milk, and its ultimate form, the corpse. In a sense these elements just mentioned are in some way related to contamination. Kristeva (1982:3) further notes that aspects such as refuse, including human waste, and the corpse show one what one must constantly thrust aside in order to exist, and these aspects disturb the notions of purity.

Sexual deviations can also be seen as impure and abject. There is a border that is created, according to Creed (1993:11), between normal and abnormal sexual desire particularly in terms of a society's perception. A society's perception influences what is considered abject. Sjöholm (2005:96) explains that contamination is concerned with the breaking down between inside and outside, meaning that the separation limit between inside and outside is thin. Tyler (2009:87) expands on this aspect when she argues that abjection is, however, not just a psychic process but also a social experience. What she means is that hate speech, disgusted reactions, physical violence and crimes are all examples of abjection on a social level. Sjöholm (2005:99) expresses the process of abjection at a political level as a reminder to reject those elements which are a threat to the body's concept of being pure. What this reaction does is places the person, who reacts as such, literally beside himself/herself because the abject is what a person rejects in order to be or exist. Kristeva (1982:1) explains that when a person is set upon by abjection it does not have a definable object. It can be related to the object in that it has the quality of an object in the manner in which it is opposed to the "I", the "I" can also be termed the "subject" or "society". The abject is not a subject, not an object, but it is also not nothing either. Kristeva (1982:9) notes that the abject both fascinates and horrifies: it thrives on ambiguity and the transgression of taboos and boundaries. At the same time bodily deviations such as "freaks" and the "grotesque" are also seen as abject. Russo (1994:1) explains that the grotesque has to do with the cave – the grotto-esque, however as a bodily metaphor the cave would resemble a female body. A grotesque body, Russo (1994:62-63) further explains, is the body of deviation; it is characterised by being "open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process, and change." The grotesque body is sometimes

perceived as abject because of its deviations. It is also opposed to the classical body which is, Russo (1994:63) elaborates, "monumental, static, closed, and sleek".

4.4.3 Abjection and the border experience

As abjection occurs in a space in which meaning is broken down; there is a connection to the notion of borders. Abjection, states Chanter (2008:3), makes any assumption of the stability of borders problematic because it does not mark off the boundaries of subject and object clearly. Hence abjection is a concept that is largely concerned with the border in its composition.

To discuss the concept of the border further, it is important to realise that abjection is largely a phenomenon that is concerned with the improper or the unclean and the reaction these perceived unclean aspects have on a subject and/or society. Therefore there is immediately a border created between the notion of what is clean/pure on one side and that which is unclean/impure on the other side. Kristeva (1982:4) includes the idea that it is not the "lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, [and] rules." If an aspect does not respect the concept of being clean and pure it disturbs one's identity and is then abject. There is this notion that what one is abject to is what assists that being in living, as they can see what they are not. The corpse is the ultimate example of abjection because one will see what he/she is not in order for them to exist. Once the subject acknowledges what they are constantly moving aside to exist, they are, as Kristeva (1982:3) mentions, at the border of the condition of a living being by seeing what they are not and what they have to expel to exist.

In abjection there is an imaginary border that separates the self from whatever threatens the self (Creed, 1993:9). Borders are also connected to the notion of the body in that they can physically and/or emotionally include or exclude bodies. Tyler (2009:79) expands on the notion of the border and the concept of abjection when she says "abjection can explain the structural and political acts of inclusion/exclusion which establish the foundations of social

existence". Therefore abjection and the border exist on many levels. Together with abjection on a structural and a political level, Tyler (2009:79) puts forward that abjection has the ability to generate borders on an individual level as well as a social level. One aspect of abjection that creates the idea of borders on the structural, political, individual and social level is crime. Kristeva (1982:4) specifically states that any crime is an example of abjection, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law. These crimes are heightened in their abjection when they are immoral, sinister, conniving and unscrupulous. Therefore being a premeditative, prostitute murderer would qualify on many levels as being a form of the abject. Although any form of transgression can be viewed as abject, for example a transgression from a perceived social norm such being homosexual, a sex worker or being incestuous are seen by some people and cultures as being abject.

The abject and grotesque also exists on a societal level and is conditioned by social groupings. Chanter (2008:2) delves into the notion of social groupings and states that these groups are exposed through processes, acts and states of abjection. How these last three factors are connected to boundaries is further explained by Chanter (2008:2) when she says that subjects that strive to maintain integrity abandon others to abject states often in an attempt to "consolidate boundaries that are threatened". The ideas of expulsion or inclusion are also connected to the idea that societies/communities/individuals have a role to play in the notion of what is acceptable and unacceptable. It once again makes the notion of abjection and what constitutes it, a personal, place/space, time and also a culturally specific process.

Although Herbst (1999) bases his ideas on Hal Foster's facets of abjection, Herbst's explanation gives the facets a clearer definition to use in the analysis of abjection and the poetics of the border. Herbst (1999:16) describes two aspects of abjection: one is the "process of abjection" and the other is "state of being abject". The former facet implies an active role by a subject who rejects, banishes or even degrades another subject or party, while maintaining a position of power. While the latter aspect is concerned with what follows the

act of abjection which situates the abject in the place of exclusion and robs the subject or party of societal inclusion.

4.4.4 Bodily deviations – Monstrous feminine

Barbara Creed writes on the monstrous and abjection in her book *The Monstrous feminine: film, feminism, psychoanalysis* (1993) with specific application for film. According to Creed, abjection in the horror film illustrates in three ways the work of abjection. Firstly, it abounds in images of abjection – mutilated bodies and bodily wastes. Secondly, the concept of the border is central to the construction of the monstrous in the horror film: that which crosses or threatens to cross the border is abject. Thirdly, it illustrates the work of abjection in the construction of the maternal mother figure as abject.[16] Creed's book is divided into two sections: the first deals with the maternal abject[17] and the second part of the book includes the notion of woman as castrator, or deadly *femme castratrice*. A woman as castrator is a horrific concept and this horror is what connects it to the abject. To make the idea of abjection clearer it is important to note, as Creed (1993:9) has done, that abjection is grounded in certain "abominations" such as "sexual immorality and perversion [...] decay and death [...] murder, the corpse, bodily wastes, the feminine body and incest". Creed works specifically on the idea that the feminine body in certain horror films represents abjection, or are abject, as they either physically or metaphorically create the reaction caused when a subject is abject to something. Creed specifically concentrates on the horror film genre, and although *Monster* is not a horror film the link to the monstrous feminine is that Aileen is the horror of the film since she is abject by being a

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[16] As it has already been stated, the mother figure will not be used for the purpose of this analysis.

[17] Kristeva (1980:10) in her explanation of abjection and birth, states that it is found in the "immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be". Therefore, abjection is concerned with the maternal because in order to be born you have to be separated from the mother's body in order to exist autonomously. So the mother is the first interaction with the abject. The concept of the "maternal abject" is what forms the basis of theories such as the monstrous feminine.

lesbian, prostitute and murderer. A woman becomes monstrous, according to Creed (1993:122), usually because she is unable to live a "normal" life, in which she has family or friends. She then transforms into a monster because she is unfulfilled sexually and emotionally. Creed draws on psychoanalysis in her discussions of the monstrous feminine. The connection between castration and Aileen is that she murders men and she can thus be seen as a *deadly femme castratrice*.

4.4.5 *Femme* castratrice

From a psychoanalytic perspective the monstrous feminine, Creed (1993:122) explains, develops from male castration anxiety, both in terms of the female being the castrator and the castrated. These two notions can be separated into the castrator and castrated in terms of the deviant woman and the proper woman, respectively (Creed, 1993:136). By analysing the female character's representation one can deduce which female character corresponds to which aspect of the *femme castratrice*. This study is predominately focused on Aileen as the murderer of male clients but she can also be said to represent the female as castrator. Creed (1993:129) states that "Woman is monstrous because she castrates, or kills, the male during coition." However, *Monster* depicts Aileen as a monster in a slightly different manner. She lures the men to her and then, before they have intercourse which they pay for, she murders them. Creed (1993:123) distinguishes between two types of female castrator: one is the female psychotic while the other is the woman who seeks revenge on sexual abusers. These sexual abusers can either be hers or someone close to her and she wants revenge on some kind of male exploitation. Creed (1993:123) indicates that generally the female castrator is seen in a sympathetic light and is rarely punished for her actions.

4.5 APPLICATION OF ABJECTION

In a way societies generalise and categorise certain representations in order to make sense of the world around them. These classifications are the cause of divides within a society and are the root of abjection. Aileen is classified as a prostitute, a lesbian and a murderer of more than three men. Through her

physical representation she is seen as abject. This physical representation includes a range of different factors such as being unattractive, possessing a body that is misused and abused, using her body as a commodity as a prostitute, her sexual orientation which does not fit into the heteronormative ideas of a society because she is a lesbian, and the fact that she is a monstrous serial killer (in Creed's terms she is an example of the monstrous feminine). These aspects need to be discussed separately in order to bring to the fore the manner in which Aileen is abject. The analysis, discussion and application are structured mostly according to the film's sequence of events. The analysis and discussion are done to create a better understanding of Aileen and the reasons for her different representations. It also serves to illustrate how Aileen's representation moves away from Mulvey's initial interpretation of the represented female body.

4.5.1   Prostitute

There are socially acceptable modes of using the body as a commodity, for example being a professional athlete, joining the police force, the fire brigade, the military, or being an actor, actress or model. These mentioned careers all use the body as a means to make a profit and a living. Aileen uses her body by selling it sexually, which is viewed as a socially unacceptable method of using a body for a living in her society. The difference in Aileen's body as commodity is that she is perceived as being immoral because she sleeps with (some married) men for money. She also has no protection from the law in her occupation. She is beaten up and raped and feels that she cannot report her abuse to the police because she is a sex worker.

Since prostitution violates, according to D'Cunha (1992:34), moral sensibilities and is undesirable within a society, it has the association that it must be eradicated. In many societies the law does not recognise prostitution as an occupation. The law therefore does not afford sex workers the same protection and rights provided to other occupations. Prostitution is generally

seen as a reflection of disintegrating social structures.[18] D'Cunha (1992:34) states that in modern times prostitution "tends to be associated with promiscuity, crime and social condemnation". Thus sex workers are generally viewed in a negative light and are not considered to be a part of a well-functioning society. Holmes (1994:36) notes that prostitutes are often "socially condemned and positioned as outsiders who undermine the fabric of social organisation". Since prostitutes are condemned, they are typically placed outside of society, both physically and emotionally. In *Monster* there is definite discrimination against Aileen because she is a sex worker. Many of the characters, who view her as abject because her body is seen as impure, treat her badly. For example, the lady at the recruitment agency is in a process of abjection when she dismisses the fact that Aileen wants to get out of prostitution. She discounts Aileen's desperation and tells her, in an uncaring manner, that there is absolutely no work for her. As prostitutes are considered as separate from society they are isolated from it and the normal rules of a functioning structure do not seem to apply. This isolation is reflected in the recruitment lady's attitude towards Aileen. In a sense the recruitment lady discredits Aileen's desire to reclaim ownership of her body and work in "normal" society. D'Cunha (1992:34) also states that prostitutes are exposed to various forms of exploitation. In the film Aileen is raped by one of her clients, but because she is a sex worker and because she has a criminal record for it, she feels that she cannot report the incident to the police. She knows that she is not protected by the laws of the state like other citizens are. Aileen is in a state of abjection and is consequently not given the same protection as other citizens in her society are.

At the start of the film, it is clear that Aileen has had a difficult life. There are a series of short scenes in the start of the film which serve as an indication of Aileen's upbringing. The scenes show a little girl that has a black eye, indicating that she has been beaten up by her father. There is also a scene of

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[18] The sex worker industry has labour and economic implications which are beyond the scope of this study.

a little girl that is being watched by an older man's eyes – towards the end of the film it is confirmed that Aileen was sexually abused at eight years old. Aileen begins her adult life in a state of abjection because she was molested by her father's friend. She is the victim of a crime because of a man who did not respect the societal borders in place, which morally protect children from perverse sexual predators. From the beginning it is clear that Aileen has a certain naivety in the manner in which she thinks. As a young woman, she believed in a fantasy world that would yield her a glamorous life in which she would not have to be who she was. This fantasy could largely be attributed to the fact that she was abused by the adult men in her life. As a young girl the only way she could protect herself was to fantasise about another life because there was no way she could get away physically. The opening scenes of the film indicate that Aileen is an insecure woman, even from a teenager she was perceived as an outsider to, and excluded by, her peers. This exclusion could be a possible consequence of beginning her life in a state of abjection.

The fact that she starts performing sexual favours, and eventually becoming a prostitute, could be attributed to a two-fold consequence. Firstly, she wanted to find a man who would accept her and believe in her. The only way she knew how to do this was by performing these sexual acts. In her mind she believed that she would be discovered by these men that were actually using her body as a sexual object. Secondly, she was then able to leave her father's house and take care of herself. Aileen also later tells Selby that she helped look after her brothers and sisters by being a prostitute, particularly after their father committed suicide. She had to oppose society, and remain in an abject state, so that she could survive. Although not referring to this film, Holmes (1994:41) states that one falls into prostitution "out of the need to balance necessity with survival". Aileen was being abused and therefore needed to make a living in order to get away from the abuse. When Aileen goes for a series of interviews it is clear that she is uneducated and is unable to get a job. The only way she could make some money was to become a sex worker. After Aileen returns to the motel to see Selby, after unsuccessfully trying to find a socially acceptable occupation, she has a fight with Selby concerning money. She then tells Selby that she is returning to prostitution. She even

says to Selby, "Who the fuck am I kiddin'? I'm a hooker." Aileen does not view herself in a positive fashion. She does not euphemise the term "hooker". She chooses to refer to herself in a vulgar manner which does not work toward easing the negative perception and representation that is already attached to her. Dyer (2002:8) explains that there is a limited degree to which a person can make words feel to everyone how one would like them to feel. However, in this scene Aileen feels vulgar and her self-esteem has been brought down by everyday society. She is behaving in accordance with the same society which perceives her as unclean and keeps her on the side of the border, which is abject. Her actions and thinking indicate how helpless she was as a young girl and now as an older woman. She subverts the male gaze, as specified by Mulvey, because she is unclean and abject.

4.5.2   Lesbian

In the beginning of the film Aileen is not actually a lesbian. She goes into a bar to get out of the rain, to have a beer and spend her last five dollars. Only once she is in the bar does she discover that it is a "gay bar". When Selby initially goes and speaks to Aileen, Aileen tries to leave and Selby touches her arm. Aileen is irate by the fact that Selby touches her and she shouts, "Get your fuckin' hands off me you dumb dyke!" As the film progresses, Aileen becomes emotionally attached to Selby and they begin a romantic relationship. In the opening sequence, while Aileen is sitting under the bridge with the gun in her hand, she says to G-d that she is going to spend her last five dollars, and that if there is something more for her then he better send it. In the next scene she meets Selby. Aileen engages in the lesbian relationship because, as she narrates, the day that she wanted to kill herself she met Selby. She even narrates that, "For me, all I had left was love". So she decides that she should get involved in the relationship because she had nothing to lose. To Aileen Selby embodies her second chance at life and love.

The viewer is made aware of the fact that Aileen is in a lesbian relationship by her bodily appearance and acquired gender role. She begins to act more masculine and is seen as a more stereotypical butch lesbian. When Aileen and Selby become partners they go out in public together. Aileen then starts

dressing in a more typically masculine manner. She wears baggy pants and shirts with a baseball cap. The viewer no longer sees her stomach-heavy upper body. She starts walking in a more butch manner with her chest inflated and her shoulders slightly further back than in the beginning of the film. It is almost as if she is ready for a fight should anybody be looking for one. She, at times, also holds the cigarette between her teeth, again reminiscent of a typically masculine cowboy. When she walks into the bar she often patronises, she slaps a hand shake with the bartender imitating a typical male greeting. Aileen is also the one who orders and pays for the drinks. She also assures Selby that she will earn the money. In fact she even tells Selby not to get a job because she will take care of her. It can be deduced that Aileen has taken on the stereotypical "masculine" gender role in the relationship. Selby, on the other hand, just stands back and lets Aileen take the lead and take charge. She is definitely the more subordinate one of the two. She is depicted as being under Aileen's wing represented by the way that Aileen almost envelopes her, when putting her arm around her. Selby even asks Aileen, "You can take care of me, right?" Therefore Selby wants to take on a more stereotypically feminine gender role in the relationship. Although Kessler (2003:17) is referring specifically to the film *Bound*, she notes that the "roles of butch and *femme* are known and recognizable in both heterosexual and lesbian culture". Kessler means that the "butch" is generally more dominant and aggressive, while the *femme* is more passive in her role in a relationship. Aileen can be classified as the butch lesbian and Selby the more *femme* of the two. Kessler (2003:13) notes that lesbians are generally seen, specifically by men, as "deviant threats to the social order". In the paradigm of a white, heterosexual, male-dominated society these two females being lesbians are considered as sexually deviant. This sexual deviance is what places them in a state of abjection according to their society's ideals.

Aileen is also very protective of Selby. She seems threatening, and is actually quite dangerous, in the manner in which she stands and guards Selby. Dyer (2002:22) provides the explanation that there are "formulaic gay plots: the tussle between the lesbian and heterosexual man for a sexually unformed woman, a plot often ending in violence, murder or suicide." Although Aileen

does not murder the male clients because of Selby, the prospect of gaining money from the dead clients to support Selby is appealing to her. Therefore, the "tussle" in which Aileen is engaged is a figurative one, in which she needs to support Selby in order to prevent her from going back to a heterosexual man, in the form of her father's house. The relationship between Selby and Aileen is based on the fact that they share an acceptance and love for one another. Selby touches Aileen's face and says, "You are so pretty", something that no other person had ever said to her before. As a result of Selby's words Aileen is prepared to be protective and fight for her relationship with Selby. Nuttall (2006:23) refers to the cultural context as well as the place of the observer when referring to what constitutes "beautiful". By the same token the previously two mentioned aspects are also used to analyse what constitutes "ugly". These two aspects are used to discern if places, objects or people are attractive or unattractive. Selby's words are then pitted against the above analysis concerning Aileen's appearance. However, Selby's position as observer allows her to create her own definitions of beauty. Aileen not only wants to take care of Selby, she also justifies her murders by saying that she wants to protect the innocence, in the form of Selby and other young women, in the world. Both these female characters appearances and behaviours intentionally subvert the male gaze and work against the (heteronormative) sexualised bodies as specified by Mulvey.

4.5.3   The monstrous serial killer

Generally when one mentions the term *monster* it conjures up images of werewolves, vampires or any other such mythical creatures. With the emergence of horror films, monsters can take on other forms too, from psychological manifestations to real humans. Some of the examples of these other monsters in horror films include Freddy Krueger from *Nightmare on Elm Street* or Carrie White from *Carrie*. The point is that monsters can reveal themselves in many different forms. One of the definitions of a monster from the Oxford Dictionary (2005:950) is "a person who is very cruel and evil". Aileen's murders are seen as monstrous acts, not only because she takes lives but also because she begins to premeditate her murders. According to

Briefel (2005:20) female monsters "tend to commit acts of violence out of revenge for earlier abuse by parents, partners, rapists, and other offenders". This statement is true for Aileen because she becomes a murderer after a long history of abuse and she believes that she is protecting the innocent in the world. The reasons behind a female becoming a monster are taken into consideration, but they do not exempt the female from being considered monstrous. The connection to the film's title *Monster* is created by Aileen's abjection as well as her monstrous actions.

In the opening sequence the viewer is aware of the fact that Aileen is in possession of a gun in order to kill herself. The gun is not represented in the hands of a typical powerful male character, such as a policeman or even a gangster. The latter mentioned characters are predominately seen as heroic because they are able to use the gun to serve and protect a society. However, both these character types are generally depicted as possessing some of their power through the ownership of the gun. Since Aileen is introduced with the gun with the intention to commit suicide, it does not represent her in a heroic light, but rather shows that she is a lost woman who has not had an easy life. The gun, which is a phallic symbol of power, initially seems out-of-place in Aileen's hand, because she holds it limply, indicating that she does not have full control of the gun and does not figuratively "own" it. However, the implications of Aileen being shown with the revolver can indicate that she has a form of violent power. Aileen does not use the gun to kill herself, but eventually uses it, originally, as a form of self-defence after she is raped. There is a definite change in Aileen's demeanour from when she is first represented as not having power over the gun and when she starts killing regularly. When she begins murdering, she holds the gun with both hands in a tighter grip and she seems to take control of the gun's power.

In criminology there are specific terms for different types of murders. A serial murder, defined by Fox and Levin (1998:410), is classified by a "string of four or more homicides committed by one or a few perpetrators that spans a period of days, weeks, months, or even years". A serial murder, which takes place over an extended period of time, is also a form of multiple murders and

is different to mass murder and even a killing spree in terms of the time span. A mass murder occurs at one time while a killing spree occurs over a short period of time. There are many different attributes which contribute to the profile of a serial killer.[19] These attributes are outlined and discussed in Fox and Levin (1998:413-414): firstly, serial killers are typically white males who look for victims around their place of residence or work. Secondly, male serial killers commit murders that are generally "stranger-perpetrated crime[s]", with many crimes against prostitutes. The reason prostitutes so easily become victims is because their occupation provides an income which makes them easy targets to lure to a stranger's car as well as to secluded places. However, Aileen uses this factor of being in the car and going to a secluded area as an advantage to kill her victims. Thirdly, female serial killers generally kill victims who they have had some sort of relationship with and the victim is generally dependant on them (Fox & Levin, 1998:414). Fourthly, there are different components to every individual, however on one end of the spectrum there is a commonality of "high school dropouts and some who are quite unattractive by conventional standards"[20] (Fox & Levin, 1998:413). Aileen largely fits into the profile of a male serial killer in that she is white; her murders are stranger-perpetrated; she is a high school dropout and is unattractive. However, she also inverts the typical profile of a serial killer. In the first instance, she is a woman, specifically a prostitute, who murders her clients who are strangers. Fox and Levin (1998:414-415) state, although they are referring to the real Aileen Wuornos, that through her victim selection and modus operandi, her "style of killing closely resembled that of a predatory male serial killer". In the second instance, she is a prostitute killer who kills her clients and not a prostitute murder victim which is generally the case. The fact that Aileen is a prostitute murderer makes her socially abject. She is thrust out

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[19] Although there are always exceptions to a general profile, these attributes provide a typical outline of a serial killer.

[20] The reference was made in comparison to Ted Bundy who was well educated and was considered attractive.

of society and placed on the streets and outskirts of a well-functioning society, because she is considered unclean, impure and violent. Görling (2007:149) states that "The street is the stage of the man, the house is the one room of the woman. When a woman tries to break with this rule, she must pay for it." Therefore, Aileen's rejection from society is the consequence of her "breaking the rule" by being on the streets.

4.5.4   Rape

The rape scene is a good example to analyse in terms of abjection. The rapist is the last client she sees before she is supposed to meet Selby for their second meeting. His actions prevent her from keeping to her arrangements with Selby. Initially, he seems quite kind, charming and just wants Aileen's services. When she is in the car with him, he drives into the woods and reasons that he does not want to be caught by the police having a prostitute in his car. He offers Aileen some alcohol from his hip flask, he tries to make conversation, and seems to be just another regular client. When Aileen starts getting impatient with him, because she has arrangements with Selby, he starts showing another side of his personality. He condescendingly refers to "hookers" and women in general as "girls". He tells Aileen how he feels about "girls" and repeatedly says, "I love 'em and I hate 'em.", but he says that any woman is better than his actual wife. From his speech it is clear that this man has misogynistic tendencies because he specifically states that he "hates" women. He then stops his explanation and tells Aileen that they should get "started". The client and Aileen get into an argument when he wants her to, "suck it [his penis] a little bit first", and he will give her, "ten more dollars". But Aileen is already impatient and says, "No, it's not part of the deal". He shouts at her, "Ten more fucking dollars, you fucking bitch!" and punches her in the face, knocking her unconscious. When Aileen regains consciousness she has blood running down the side of her face. She is also tied-up, inside the car, to the inside door-handle with a piece of rope and her trousers are off. When her aggressor appears he asks her if she is awake, but she does not answer him. Her aggressor then takes a piece of metal piping and forcibly shoves it up her vagina and kicks her. He then goes to his boot to get something and Aileen

manages to get her hands free. She is able to get her gun out of her bag, turns around and shoots the rapist eight times. It is clear that this murder is done in self-defence and the viewer feels a sense of justice being served in the killing.

A prostitute who is picked up by strange men and paid to perform sexual acts is in a process of abjection. This process means that Aileen and to a lesser extent her clients are banished, rejected and degraded by society, because of what they engage in is seen as against the law. When the rapist picks up Aileen on the side of the road, she has to step over the boundary from the road-side into the vehicle. Already there is a reference to the abject. Aileen is socially abject and that is why she is thrust aside by her society, which is physically manifested by her standing on the side of a random highway. She is not depicted in a safe environment which is protected by the law and is in an abject space. The road creates a boundary between Aileen and the other members of her society. Also when Aileen and her rapist are in the secluded area, the two of them once again have to be away from their society because what they are engaging in is seen as immoral and deviant. Once they are away from society, the rapist shows the ambiguous nature of the abject in that he is attracted to the thought of intercourse with Aileen; however he is also repelled by the very notion of the female. Not only does his ambiguous attraction to and repulsion by women indicate abjection, but also the fact that he uses hate speech to inform Aileen of his views also indicates abject behaviour.

A further example of abjection is indicated when the client rapes and abuses Aileen with the metal pole. This sexually perverse act is the epitome of abjection because it shows the fragility of the country's law, and its failure to keep women's bodies safe and sacred. The fact that Aileen is a prostitute and men pay for her services still implies some form of consent by the prostitute. She has the choice to charge a certain amount of money and to decide if she will perform specific sexual acts. One could ask if it is possible for a prostitute to be raped since they willingly perform sexual acts for money. Since the film is set in the United States of America, I attained a definition of rape according

to their law. The Uniform Crime Reporting Program's definition of rape, according to the information reported by the FBI (2012) website, is: "Penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim." Aileen was beaten and did not consent to the client's acts, thus she was in fact raped by this client and this act is part of the abject. Aileen is in a state of abjection when she shoots and kills the rapist. After Aileen has fired two shots, the camera pans to a close-up of her face, which is covered in blood; there is also blood in her mouth that is covering her teeth. The fact that her mouth is open makes her look like a monster-like creature. This incident marks the beginning of Aileen's monstrous behaviour, as it serves as the catalyst for Aileen to take revenge on all the men who have abused her in her life. It is clear that Aileen becomes monstrous because she has been unable to lead a "normal" life, and is unfulfilled sexually and emotionally. Her occupation, her behaviour and her monstrous appearance in this scene are all in a state of abjection. This state of abjection is far removed from the sexualised, objectified and passive female object to which Mulvey refers.

4.5.5   Monstrous murders and their motivation

The motivation for the rest of the murders is basically due to the fact that Aileen is determined to get revenge. The film deviates from the typical woman's revenge film in that Aileen is psychotic when she begins to murder. She has been mentally disturbed by the abuse she has endured for most of her life. The rape is the final form of abuse that turns her into the psychotic killer. She starts to believe that she is justified in her killings because she is protecting the innocent, namely women and children, of the world. She even validates her murders to Selby when she says that she kills and does everything so that Selby, "can go on thinking that people are good and kind." Aileen's second murder is a good example of Aileen killing because she thinks she is warranted in her actions. When this particular client picks up Aileen her demeanour seems uneasy and nervous, not at all like the once confident, know-how prostitute who was previously shown to the viewer. The client tries

to speak dirty to her but she seems unable and too uncomfortable to answer. Aileen is uneasy because she has not had any clients since her first murder. Her mind is restless and is reflected in her uneasy body language. She is unsure as to what to expect and does not know how to act. The client finally says to her, "You gonna call me daddy while I fuck you?", and she answers in a shaky voice, "Will try. Why, you like [*sic*] to fuck your kids?" Her client is shocked by the reply, but Aileen recovers from her blunder and seems to calm down. However, the musical score is erratic and expectant of something. When the client says, "You gonna suck it for me?" Aileen's demeanour changes again to one that is uneasy and scared. It would seem that once the client says similar words as her rapist, it triggers the memory of her rape. The anticipation from the musical score is realised when Aileen physically reacts by taking out her gun and shooting the client. It is as if she is stuck in her mind and memory and not in her physical reality. After he falls out of the car Aileen gasps for air, as if assisting her body to return to reality. She then says, "You fucking child molester." Since Aileen thinks that the man is a child molester, she believes she is justified in her killing to ensure he does not molest another child. The scene is shot in such a manner that the viewer still identifies with Aileen. This murder does not affect the viewer in the same manner as the murders of the next two victims.

Aileen seeks revenge on all the men who have abused her. She reclaims her body by murdering men because then she does not have to perform the sexual acts. Aileen feels power once she shoots her second victim. Her gun becomes a symbol of how she will get back at men for all the wrong they have done to her. Since she is a prostitute she would always be overpowered by her clients' bodies and minds because they pay her for a service. When she has the gun and uses it, she finally has the power over powerless men's bodies. From a psychoanalytic view she finally takes control of the men through using a phallic symbol to put the men at her mercy. All her repressed desires to take charge of her life and the men that abused her are released once she takes control and violently kills a man that has caused her harm. Hence, if any client has a hint of perverseness she will feel that she needs to hurt that person before they hurt her or another woman. This power she

receives from the gun is further emphasised when she pushes over the manager in a restaurant. She does this because the manager tells Selby that she cannot smoke in the restaurant and that she needs to put out the cigarette. When he leans forward to take the cigarette from her, Aileen jumps up and tells him to keep his hands off her. This scene reflects Aileen's belief that her body is her power. The very next scene is one where Aileen is looking at herself in the mirrors of a bathroom. She loads the gun and then she takes a series of aims at the mirror looking very serious and self-important. The fact that Aileen is looking in the mirror aiming her loaded gun represents the fact that she feels powerful with the gun. It also indicates that she has a double personality of a female psychotic who thinks she is an avenger, contrasted to a woman who has suffered abuse her whole life. This gun in the mirror sequence is an intertextual commentary on the film *Taxi Driver* (1976), in which the aggressive masculine behaviour of the male protagonist, Travis Bickle, is imitated by this female protagonist. It is also interesting to observe that both protagonists believe that they are justified in their displays of aggressive behaviour.[21]

As already discussed, Creed outlines two types of woman castrator: one as an avenger female and the other a psychotic female. Aileen's situation does not fit neatly into either category. Aileen is delusional in her belief that she is ridding the world of men who are potentially harmful to women. She has had such a difficult life and her sense of reality has been distorted. So in a sense she becomes a revenge killer/castrator. She attempts to avenge herself, in Creed's (1993:128) words, against the whole male sex. However, there are many aspects of Aileen's role as avenger which are untypical and fall more in the psychotic female category. For example, unlike the female castrator in revenge films, outlined by Creed (1993:123), who are not punished for their actions, Aileen is punished for her actions and is sentenced to death. Also

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[21] Halberstam's concepts of *Female masculinity* (1998) could be yet another tool to anaylse Aileen's body.

Aileen is not seen as a heroine in the film, which is generally a characteristic of woman's revenge films.

Aileen is monstrous and abject because she begins killing innocent men. The second murder is shot in a manner that it is almost rationalised that Aileen kills him because the client seems to have a perverse mind. The third and fourth murders are the ultimate forms of abjection. The third murder takes place in a wood away from the car because the client has a gun in his vehicle. One of the reasons Aileen probably wants to be away from the car is because she believes that all men have ulterior motives. She assumes that this client wants to rape and murder her. Aileen has already decided this motive when she has the following conversation with the client while he gets undressed:

Aileen: So, um, you married, right? You see I don't get that fucking shit. Wanna come out here with strange girls, do dirty things with them. Instead of just fuckin' your wife. Why, man, so you can rape 'em?

Client: No. God lord.

Aileen has a perception that she cannot change because she has been abused all her life.

Aileen: Fuckin' men. I fuckin' hate 'em.

Client: Then why are you a hooker?

Aileen: I'm not a hooker, see, I don't fuck men. Used to, mostly against my will though. There's this old guy used to rape me when I was eight. Real good friend of my dad's, you know. So I go to my dad, tell him what's going on. My dad don't fuckin' believe me, so his friend keep raping me for years. [...] My dad fuckin' beats me up for it.

Eventually Aileen kills her third client although he was no direct threat to her. The anger in Aileen is far too strong to contain. It is at the point when Aileen goes back to the client's car that the viewer realises that Aileen's murders are not justified because she has been abused. When Aileen rummages through

the car she finds the victim's wallet; in it there is a picture of an older woman, presumably his wife, in a wheelchair. The audience realises that this client is unable to have any sexual intercourse with his own wife because of her disability. The viewer has a form of empathy as well as sympathy for this murder victim because he seems less perverse than the other victims. It is when the audience starts identifying with the victims that they lose sympathy for Aileen and realise that Aileen needs to pay for what she has done to her victims. Aileen's initial words of, "Fuckin' men. I fuckin' hate 'em." are reminiscent of her rapist's similar words concerning women. She has a similar form of hatred and perverse thinking that her rapist had. It is indicative of her eventual downfall. Aileen herself realises that you cannot continue doing the wrong thing before you get caught. Her voice-over even says:

> Victor Borne. That was his name. My dad's friend. Some friend. [As Aileen goes through the wallet the narrative voice says] Years later I found out he died in a car accident I was overjoyed. It was like God finally struck him down for all his evil. I loved it. [As Aileen finds his police badge and wife's photograph the narrative voice says] Knowing you can't get away with your shit forever. Sooner or later, it's gonna catch up with ya.

The viewer realises that just as Aileen says her father's friend could not get away with his wrong doings forever, she will eventually be caught for her misdeeds on her clients.

4.6 AILEEN'S LACK OF PLACE AND THE SETTING OF THE ROAD

Monster is basically concerned with a mental and physical journey on which Aileen embarks. The main setting of the film is the road, and as set out in the theoretical chapter, the chronotopes of the road for this film include: firstly the open road, secondly chance encounters, thirdly the bonding of characters and fourthly the narrative on the road to discovery. This order is the manner in which they will be discussed in the analysis that follows. This section largely

examines these chronotopes and what they imply in terms of Aileen's journey and her body. It also discusses the concepts of place/space and their implications on expressing Aileen's state of mind, while discussing the chronotopes. The consequences of Aileen's mobility as well as immobility will also be analysed.

4.6.1 Chronotopes and space

The chronotope of the open road and its implications, as well as Aileen's lack of place, and the depiction of her body will be specifically discussed in this section. Since many deductions can be made about a person depending on the place/space in which they are depicted, the open road on which Aileen lives and works expresses many elements about her character.

Aileen does not have a place, implying a stable, secure and comforting location, to stay or even to return to on a daily basis. Pallasmaa (2008:144) refers to the *urban nomad* which is a "contemporary metropolitan nomadism, a novel life style without a home altogether, without a fixed point of reference and return". From the time the audience sees Aileen as a teenager she is out on the streets, working as a prostitute. The fact that Aileen only has a physical relationship with her customers suggests that there is no comfort in a mental or personal relationship that is established. To reiterate Sanders' (2006:280) statement "people communicate through the movement and relative placement of their bodies". The fact that she gets dropped off at no place in particular on the open road indicates that she has no form of stability or comfort. She has an infinite amount of possibilities, be they negative or positive, on the road. Aileen *embodies* the idea of the urban nomad. The only time she is depicted in a house with a family is when she is a little girl; however this house is not a stable place because she is physically and sexually abused. The idea of the home and all it represents in terms of safety, security and privacy is complicated for Aileen because she does not have a home. She does not have a sense of judgement and choice which comes with having a home. For instance, in the safety of a home one may generally control and choose if he/she wants someone in his/her personal place. Aileen is always in a space that she does not fully control. She is either on the street

or in a strange man's car and always with a different man. To some extent she has control over her decision to get into the car with these men, however, once she is in the vehicle she cannot be sure what will happen to her. So to some extent she does have the opportunity for chance encounters, since all the men she meets are different. Among the men she meets: her rapist, a perceived child molester, a policeman, a retired policeman and even a kind-hearted man who wants to give her a place to stay. The chance encounters that she has on the road also serve to show how erratic her life is. Also connected to the home is privacy. In one's own home one is able to be protected from the outside world and have time to bath and use the bathroom at leisure. Aileen does not have that sense of privacy, as she is always on the road, and she has to use a petrol station's ladies' toilet to get herself clean. In one scene she is stripped down to her underwear and uses paper towel to wash her armpits. Aileen's abject body is exposed in this public space during a cleansing process, which is usually perceived as private, is done in a public space. Aileen also has to fight for the space and tell other patrons to, "hang-on a sec.", while they bang on the door while she is in her underwear. It is via the ever changing spaces in which Aileen is always found that the embodiment of her own lack of mental stability is expressed to the viewer.

The above discussion may suggest that there are only negative connotations to Aileen not having a home. But, as Pallasmaa (2008:147) suggests, when an individual is detached from the place, he/she will be able to experience the freedom brought about by mobility. After Aileen fetches Selby they drive over train-tracks separating two areas. The train tracks symbolise journeys and going from one point to another, they represent a form of escape and freedom. Aileen has escaped killing herself, even though she is on the way to becoming a serial killer. Selby has defied her father's wishes and is having her first lesbian experience. Although Aileen has this freedom, she is once again not integrated into the society because of her circumstances. She does not have a proper place, represented by either a stable home or even a typical work location. Instead she lives, and is always depicted, on the edges of society; a no-man's land on the side of the highway. Cresswell (2002:17) goes as far as to say that highways are actually considered as non-places. It could

be said that because Aileen is depicted in these non-places her society sees her as a worthless "non-entity". This idea of being a "non-entity" is reiterated by Aileen when she says that, "people always looked down their noses at hookers." As a bodily manifestation of her society's belief, she is depicted in places where society does not settle, such as the side of the highway. Aileen is also portrayed as being out-of-place many times. Two of the prominent instances in which she is out-of-place are firstly, in the gay bar before she becomes lesbian. Secondly when she goes to a job interview at a lawyers' firm and she does not have a résumé.

Selby is the only character with whom Aileen actually forms an intimate relationship and bond. Although they do not specifically stay on the road throughout the film, their connection to the road is that they bond on the road in iconographic places such as bars, diners and motel rooms. According to Sönderblom (2008:189), "The process of mobility is connected to uncountable dreams and hopes for adventure, changes to a better life, experience of the exotic and a break from daily routines." The couple's relationship and living together are marked by the two women getting inside a car and driving through the night to get to a motel room. The couple are then mobile, reflecting all the aspects connected to Sönderblom's ideas of mobility. But the fact that their relationship develops on the road in places alongside the road is a reflection of the fact that Aileen is incapable of settling down in a specific place. At the same time, the positive consequence of Aileen's mobility is finding an intimate relationship. But Aileen's constant mobility could be another defence mechanism that she uses to protect herself against members of society because she perceives them as harmful. Moving around holds the advantage that she does not have a place in which people can enter, get to know her and then possibly hurt her physically or emotionally.

Monster does not have a happy ending, like *Transamerica* in which the protagonists use their hardships on the road to better themselves and their relationships. The journey to self-discovery that Aileen embarks on does not help her to become a better person by the end of the film. She actually becomes cynical by the end of the film. Aileen's story begins in a dismal

fashion with her life beginning in abuse and then her attempt to kill herself. When she meets Selby she has a renewed belief in the world and she feels like she can conquer the world because she has found love. However, the murders always create a tension between Aileen's happiness and the consequences she will ultimately have to face when she is caught. In the end, she is unable to retain that fresh outlook and when she is going into death row she says:

> Love conquers all. Every cloud has a silver-lining. Faith can move mountains. Love will always find a way. Everything happens for a reason. Where there's light there's hope... They've gotta tell you somethin'.

These statements are generally perceived as positive statements that are used to inspire hope. However, in Aileen's case they are sad, empty and superficial given the context in which they are used. She has finally suffered the consequences of her actions and has lost her innocence, her hope in the world and the fact that she believes in Selby and love. She will now have nothing. Aileen is caught by the police when she is in the bar that she often frequents. At this point Aileen is immobile. The consequence of Aileen's immobility is her being arrested by the police. Thus, there are consequences to being mobile but also immobile. Borders are a constituent of all factors relating to both mobility and immobility. What follows is a discussion on the borders present in the film.

4.7 BORDERS AND ABJECT SPACES

The abject is also concerned with space, and the term *space of abjection* is sometimes used. This term refers to a space that abjected things occur or inhabit. Kristeva (1982:8) explains that the one by whom the abject exists is crucially concerned about the question "Where?" She states that:

> Instead of sounding himself as to his 'being', he does so concerning his place. '*Where* am I?' instead of '*Who* am I?' For the space that engrosses the deject, the excluded, is never *one,*

not *homogenous*, nor *totalizable,* but essentially devisable, foldable, and catastrophic." (Kristeva's emphasis)

Whenever one conceives of place/space borders are instantly a part of whatever constitutes the place/space. At the same time the place of the abject is where meaning collapses, as it was referred to in section 4.4.3 of this chapter.

The concept of bordered societies is particularly relevant for Aileen because she is a prostitute. Her "profession" is what automatically makes her bound off from the rest of society. The bodily actions that occur, or aspects of her identity that are created after her introduction, further emphasise her alienation and "borderedness". Müller-Funk (2007:76) posits that our "doors of perceptions are the borders/limits of our world". Therefore Aileen seems unable to ever cross the borders of the perceptions of the individuals with whom she comes into contact. They all seem to consider her to be of a lower standing than themselves. One of the characters who represents the borders of Aileen's society is Donna. She is a symbol of the society's puritanical views and morals. She judges Aileen for all the choices that she makes in her life and justifies Aileen's state of abjection. When Selby meets Donna at a diner they have a conversation which includes the following speech:

Donna: The point is people make bad choices. You know, 'en they pay for 'em. As you can see all these miserable street people... and we see you choosing this life, this "gay life". And, ya know, even more than that an easy life with this woman...

Selby: No, no, no she's had a real hard life.

Donna: Oh honey. Lotsa people have bad lives and they still choose to walk towards the light. Otherwise we'd all be hookers and druggies because somebody yelled at us or we had a mean mom, ya know?

Donna possesses an active role in the process of abjection to keep Aileen in a state of abjection. Aileen is unable to cross the symbolic border, since Donna

identifies all the impure, improper and unclean aspects of Aileen's life. She does not allow Aileen's past to exempt her from having a choice to not be abject to her society. Aileen is aware of the process of abjection that she is in. She states that:

> People always looked down their noses at hookers. Never give you a chance 'cause they think you took the easy way out. When no-one could imagine the will-power it took to do what we do. Walkin' the streets night after night, takin' the hits and still gettin' back up.

This quotation is another perspective of her marginal existence. She depicts herself as a strong woman; however the other characters do not see her strength but rather keep her abject. The fact that Aileen becomes a butch lesbian creates a sense of the border between womanliness and masculinity as well as normal and abnormal, in terms of heterosexual norms. Her society has the ability and power to decide if she should be included in society or not. The most noticeable border which is crossed is physical and is known as a topographical border. Yet what the border crossing figuratively represents is far more significant, making the symbolic borders the more prominent borders that are considered. Aileen is a prostitute who works on the streets as opposed to working for a brothel which would usually provide a room in which the women can work. The fact that Aileen works in her client's cars and because prostitution is illegal, Aileen and her clients usually go to an abject secluded area in order to prevent them from being caught by the police. The vehicle then has to leave the road for Aileen and her clients to be alone. The crossing of the topographical border is when the car's tyres cross the edges of the road, in order to get off the road, to these secluded and highly unsafe areas.

Not only are symbolic and topographical borders crossed, but once Aileen crosses the border from the open streets into the clients' cars epistemological borders are also crossed. Vehicles leaving the road indicate that the passengers leave the "civilised" world of laws and propriety to be in areas where the laws become what the paying customer wants. There is no longer a

set way of conducting business and there is a risk for both parties involved. In general, the unwritten rule is that there is a service provided by the prostitute and the service is paid for by the client. There is a sense of trust that needs to be established by the two parties involved. Aileen's sense of trust is destroyed when she is raped, and this abject act takes place in one of the abject spaces in which Aileen works.

Schimanski (2009) observes that "border studies are implicated at some point in a politics of power". In the instance of Aileen's rape, there is a forced sense of power created by the rapist. He violates and crosses the symbolic borders of the body. It is one thing to consent to sexual intercourse for money, but it is another thing to get a prostitute into the car under a false pretence and then beat her and rape her. Aileen's body is violated and the borders of her body are crossed when she is raped as a child and as an adult. At the same time Aileen transgresses borders when she takes out her anger and revenge on her clients when she murders them. Görner (2007:62) specifically states that respecting borders is an ethical as well as political necessity. It is a basic human right that one's body be respected in terms of it being a border. Rape and murder are prime examples of a body's border not being respected when it is transgressed in the manner of forceful behaviour. These actions demonstrate abjection at work. Görner (2007:63) further explains that the "body of laws must protect the body of the individual", but because Aileen is almost going against the body laws by being a prostitute makes it difficult for the law to protect her in the same sense as an office worker. It would seem that borders are two-fold in the sense that at times they are clear cut but at other times they seem to be rather blurred.

4.8   CONCLUSION

This chapter analysed the film *Monster* in terms of the female protagonist's, Aileen's, body, place/space and borders. The chapter came to the conclusion that Aileen's bodily representation subverts the male gaze because her appearance is repulsive and she is active in her role as a woman throughout the film. Aileen's physical unattractiveness, her abuse, her lesbian sexuality and masculine gender performance, and her murders work to make her

repulsive and abject. Selby's appearance and behaviour was analysed as a point of comparison. The comparison showed that both these characters intentionally subvert the gaze. Aileen's subversion was also discussed in relation to the changing spaces of the road, on which she lives and works. The chapter analysed how the ever changing abject spaces, a consequence of her mobility, are a manifestation and reflection of her mental instability. It also discussed the consequences of borders and bodily border crossings in terms of Aileen's rape, murders and abuse. The discussion found that symbolic borders are the predominant border in the film. These symbolic borders of the body as well as of society keep Aileen in an abject state.

CHAPTER 5

THE (TRANS)SEXUAL BODY IN *TRANSAMERICA*

5

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The focus throughout the previous chapters is on how the female bodies in the selected films are represented in a non-stereotypical and active manner. What is interesting in *Transamerica* is it seems that the transsexual protagonist uses traditional stereotypes consciously and deliberately to represent herself as a woman. However, this study aims to discuss how her female body is still represented in a non-stereotypical way because her body transforms throughout the film. This chapter uses notions of sex and gender, and their implications for the body, in the analysis of the film. Although not referring specifically to *Transamerica*, Mirzoeff (2002:594) asserts that in modern times notions of sex and gender are "historically constructed rather than eternal expressions of stable truth". Since the protagonist Stanley/Bree,[22] is undergoing a physical and deliberate transformation from a male to a female, her body draws attention to the fact that sex and gender are constructed by an individual on various levels.

This chapter consists of five parts. The first part of this chapter provides a brief synopsis of the film; it gives information about the plot, the protagonists and about major themes.

The second part of the chapter is divided into two sections, although both sections deal with the concepts concerning borders. The first section deals specifically with the road movie genre, and the influence of borders on the road as they are present throughout the film. This section draws heavily on the theory of the road movie and already applies the theory to the film. The

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[22] The rest of the chapter will refer to the protagonist as Bree as well as use the female pronouns when referring to her transsexual character.

second section deals with the elements of the body which are concerned with the borders that are found in the film. This section analyses Bree's use of stereotypes in terms of borders and also discusses how, by the end of the film, she is now a biological woman.

The third part of the chapter is concerned with relating notions of gender articulated in the film to everyday society, as it comes to the fore that society plays a major role in the shaping of gender. In this part the idea that bodies are, in the words of Diprose (1994:21), "made, not given, and they are made to fit properly within a certain social structure" is true throughout the study. This section uses the idea, which has been developed by theorists such as Judith Butler (1990), that gender is a social construction which is not necessarily natural. This section defines terms as well as provides a general overview of gender and its formation in society. It also touches on elements concerning stereotypes of gender and the roles of women. The notion of what "makes a woman a woman" is also discussed.

The fourth part of this chapter is a brief overview of transgender studies. This concise part serves to render an overview of the terminology in transgender studies. It only includes information that is imperative to know when reading the analysis section. Once the theory has been developed, the actual analysis follows and discusses how Bree challenges the general ideas of gender through her physical, transsexual body.

The final section is the analysis of the protagonist's rejection and acceptance of her transsexual body. It also comments on Bree's transformation into womanhood. The last section draws on all the theoretical aspects already discussed and applies them to the film. The overall aim of the chapter is to comment on the representation of the transgender female body in this mainstream American film.

5.2 FABULA: TRANSAMERICA

The title *Transamerica* gives the first indication of what the film is about. Morgenstern (2005:viii) explains that the title has a double meaning when he

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says that it includes the "transit from one gender to another", as well as a "transcontinental journey" that the protagonists undertake. Therefore from the outset the viewer is aware of the subject matter of the film. However, the film is actually not one which aims to comment on gender, although it deals with transsexuality, but is more concerned with commenting on the efforts and value of self-discovery and the consequences of accepting oneself. At the same time, this self-discovery is connected to the acceptance of the body. In fact, the director and writer of the film, Duncan Tucker (2005), states in his comments available on the DVD, that the film is not actually about transsexuality but rather "It's about growing. It's about finding yourself and learning to love yourself; and about accepting yourself [...] and through that, being able to love others."

Sabrina Claire Osborne (Bree), or formerly Stanley Chupak, finally receives the news that she has been approved for the male-to-female sexual reassignment surgery for which she has been waiting. However, before her therapist, Margaret, will give her final permission for the surgery, scheduled in a week's time, Bree has to find out more details about an unknown son. He is a teenage boy, named Toby Wilkins, who is in a New York jail because of a petty crime. His one telephone call is to Bree looking for Stanley, who he claims is his biological father.

Since Bree is desperate to have her surgery, she does as Margaret instructs her and she goes to New York to meet Toby. However, she does not disclose her true identity or the fact that she is a transsexual woman. Instead, she poses as a Christian social worker and learns about Toby's life via her masquerade as a social worker. Again prompted by Margaret, Bree embarks on a road journey by car with Toby from New York to Los Angeles. Bree's initial intention is to drop Toby off at his stepfather in Callicoon so that she will not have to take responsibility for him. As with all road movies, there are many obstacles that the pair faces on the road. From Bree's discovery that Toby's stepfather is abusive, to Toby discovering Bree's transsexual status, to their vehicle being stolen and Bree being forced to make contact with her estranged parents, and even Toby running away from Bree's parent's house.

By the end of the film, Bree undergoes her surgery and eventually Toby reunites with her at her home.

Transamerica is basically concerned with how Bree, on a physical journey with her recently discovered son, is also on an emotional and mental journey of self-discovery. A prominent film theorist, Vivian Sobchack writes extensively on the lived body and film. Sobchack (2004:184) explains that she used to keep a postcard in her wallet that had the words: "Help! I'm trapped in a human body!" written on it. Sobchack (2004:6) comments on how she finds "being a body" strange as well as relative. She also expresses how she experiences her body as a "prison house" because of her physical disability. She had to have her left leg amputated because of cancer and now has a prosthetic leg, although similar feelings of entrapment can be created by aspects such as aging, racism and even gender. It is quite alike in Bree's case since she feels that she is trapped inside a male body and therefore has to undergo surgery to physically become a woman. From the viewer's perspective, she first has to mend the relationships with the other characters before her transformation can truly be complete. The manner in which the protagonist begins to accept herself is ultimately connected to her journey, and the experiences she has across America. Toby is also on his own journey of self-discovery, although Toby's journey is not the focus of the film or this study.

5.3   THE JOURNEY: THE ROAD MOVIE GENRE AND BORDERS

The following section examines the different elements that make-up the journey on which Bree embarks. This section follows the synopsis because the fabula connects specifically with the borders and border crossings present in the film. It also broadly touches on the road movie genre while discussing the protagonists' border crossings on their road journey. Chapter 2 has already contextualised the road movie; refer to section 2.4.1.

When the viewer is first introduced to Bree in the sequence in which she leaves her home, she seems very uncomfortable in her own body. The eye-

level camera angle and predominantly long shots constantly show Bree's body and her interaction within her environment. She does not seem relaxed and walks in an almost forced upright manner indicating that she needs to be conscious of her body. She does not know how to behave naturally as a woman and the viewer gets the impression that Bree is always aware of her behaviour in public. In the beginning of the film, Bree seems only to care about her gender reconstructive surgery. However, Bree's life changes when Toby becomes a priority before she can have her surgery. When she actually goes to the prison in New York an epistemological border has been crossed from the known, meaning the safe place of Los Angeles, to the unknown, the meeting with Toby in the New York prison. From the very beginning of the film the notion of borders is prevalent.

Bree uses the pretence of being a Christian social worker sent to help Toby rehabilitate. Part of his rehabilitation entails an agreement that Toby can travel with her, across states, from New York to Los Angeles. From this point and for a large portion of the beginning of the film Toby believes that Bree is a biological woman. Toby does not give Bree the exact details of his life either. From the beginning their relationship is not based on honesty since neither character tells the complete truth about their lives. This dishonesty creates a symbolic border between them, in terms of keeping each other at a distance by not providing too many details to the other. A sense of "keeping the other out" while "keeping myself in" on an emotional level is established by the lack of providing each other with specific details.

Bree is convinced, by one of Toby's friends, to purchase an old vehicle for their road journey and eventually earn back some of the money she is spending for the journey, since she is told that she can resell the vehicle when she returns home. Their journey by road begins in New York with the final destination of Los Angeles. To recall the words of Hayward (2000, 300-301) the iconography of the vehicle and open spaces is already prevalent in the film. At the same time there is an immediate sense of topographical borders conjured up since the pair needs to travel across states – therefore many physical geographic borders will need to be crossed. In each of the states the

border that has been crossed also brings with it many symbolic emotional borders, in terms of emotions that need to be dealt with and hence crossed. Hayward's reference to the traveller's self-discovery essentially begins once the pair is on the road.

Since Bree's actual intention is never to take Toby to Los Angeles, their first stop is Callicoon. However, when Bree initiates the reunion between Toby and his stepfather, she learns that Toby was sexually abused by him. Toby then leaves the house and camps out for the evening. The following morning he sets off walking to get out of Callicoon. Bree, in an attempt to win over his forgiveness, gets him back into the car so that they can continue their original journey. It is at this point that she realises that she has a responsibility to her son and she then decides to become more active in his life. On a metaphoric level it would seem that Bree wants to let Toby cross her once reluctant boundary, which is proven by the fact that she makes the effort to get him back into the vehicle. In the beginning of the film, when they set off on their journey, the shots used in the vehicle are predominately close-ups and medium shots of them. When Toby is in the vehicle he is seated towards Bree when they converse with one another. The predominant use of the close shots indicates that there is a well-mannered sense of getting acquainted with one another, there is an intimate atmosphere created. However, after Bree gets Toby back into the vehicle the shots of the characters are predominantly medium and long. When Toby is in the vehicle he is either seated with his body leaning in the opposite direction to Bree, or he is sits on the back seat of the vehicle. The seats between the two characters form a physical boundary between them, creating the idea that there is a distance between the two characters. Again Bree attempts to, metaphorically, bring Toby closer to her and get to know him by stretching over the border the seat makes to offer Toby a sweet.

As the journey by road is extremely long the pair has to make frequent stops along the road. There are a series of sequences along the road in places such as diners, motels and even a lake – these stops are topoi of the road movie genre. As mentioned in the theoretical chapter, these iconographies of the

road can be seen as non-places. In this film the purpose of these stops is for the protagonists to get to know each other better. The fact that when these two characters are constantly depicted together, they even share motel rooms, indicates that a bond, and a familiarity, is slowly forming between them. The use of overtly medium and close-up shots in these stop sequences along the road further emphasises this bond that is forming between the protagonists. These typical diners and motels function differently to those which are depicted in *Monster*, since these "non-places" actually do serve the function of providing Bree with more information which will assist her in creating a better relationship with Toby, which ultimately leads to Bree's acceptance of herself.

The American states in which they stop include (in order) Arkansas, Dallas, where the pair stay with a transsexual woman; New Mexico, where they find themselves after their car is stolen; Phoenix, where Bree is forced to reunite with her parents and Toby runs away, and lastly Los Angeles, where Bree has her surgery and ultimately reunites with Toby. The concept of Bakhtin's (1981) chronotopes of the road, discussed in the theoretical chapter, apply to the pair's journey. For example, while the pair travels on the open road through the different states, they have a bonding experience. Factors such as obstacles on the road, such as their vehicle being stolen, are not only chronotopes of the road but they also work towards the characters' bonding experience. Immediately the sense of temporal borders being crossed is created because of the chronotopes of the road. At the same time, topographical borders are crossed with the consequence of symbolic borders also being crossed. An example of a symbolic border that is crossed is when Bree is left with no choice but to return to her parents' house, and ask for financial assistance after the vehicle and all their belongings are stolen. When the pair arrives at the parents' house, Toby says to her, "I thought you said your parents were dead." Bree replies, "Wishful thinking." Bree resents her parents,[23] particularly her mother, Elizabeth. When Bree goes to the door

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[23] Another possible theme of the film is the dysfunctional family unit.

Elizabeth pulls her inside the house in an attempt to hide her away from the neighbours. Bree literally crosses a border, and threshold, into the house. But there are symbolic implications to this physical border crossing too. Bree and Elizabeth have conflict while she is at her parent's house. Elizabeth will not accept Bree's decision to undergo the transformation, but by the end of Bree's stay they have healed their relationship. This healing is reflected in the fact that after Toby runs away, Elizabeth says to Bree, "What do you want to do, Stan – [she pauses then says] Bree." Elizabeth has now started to accept and love Bree. Therefore the emotional borders that Bree put up between her mother and herself have begun to break down. The occurrence of these symbolic borders being crossed is largely due to the fact that topographic borders are crossed during the physical journey.

On the road Bree and Toby only have each other to rely on throughout their journey. The amount of ground covered and the borders crossed actually work to make the bond between the two more profound, because they are able to overcome the challenges of the road. The viewer is made aware of the fact that the amount of ground covered by the protagonists is time that they have spent together in the vehicle. Therefore, it is through their journey that they begin to form a bond while moving into a place of self-discovery. Their relationship actually strengthens through the many incidents which occur on the road. Such incidents force Bree out of her comfort zone. Examples of these uncomfortable situations, in order, are: she is forced to camp out because she tries to win back Toby's favour after the Callicoon incident. They then stay over in Dallas at the home of a transsexual woman, who has invited her transgender friends over to her house to discuss a gender pride cruise. Toby does not know at this point that Bree is a transsexual woman. Eventually, Toby accidently finds out that Bree is actually a transsexual woman when he sees her urinating next to the car. Toby then embarrasses her in front of a strange man. After the pair reconcile, Bree meets a man and they really seem to like each other. He gives the pair a lift to Bree's parents' house, where she is forced to reunite with her parents and her sister; and they inadvertently heal their estranged relationship because of Toby. While the pair is with Bree's parents, Toby finally learns the truth about his father. He reacts

badly to the news and, as a consequence, he runs away. Lastly, the protagonist has her surgery and finally admits that she is hurt by Toby running away. The fact that Bree is hurt by Toby's absence creates the impression that she has gained a parental (motherly) instinct and would like to have a relationship with her son. Although all these factors are outside of her comfort zone, they all serve as incidents which work to assist her to find the woman within herself.

At the end of the film, when Toby visits Bree in Los Angeles, she is a changed woman. She appears more comfortable in her own body and wears clothing which is more loosely fitted and casual. She finally accepts herself and is even trying to finish a teaching course. Toby and Bree finally resolve their differences, after they each played a role in the other's self-discovery and self-acceptance. Bree inviting Toby into her house, and him crossing that last physical border created by the threshold, indicates that the previous symbolic borders have been crossed and changed. Again the reference to the chronotope of the road can be made in terms of the entire film being a "narrative on the road to discovery" (Ganser *et al.*, 2006:6). One of Duncan Tucker's (2006:138), the director's, comments on the film is that:

> At heart it's an old-fashioned movie about family, self-acceptance, and the longing to be loved. Their lives haven't been easy. They're different, misunderstood, and alone. It's strange how we all want the same things – family, love, home – and yet there's no such thing as normal.

5.3.1 The body: stereotypes and borders

Müller-Funk (2007:82) states that very clear ideas of the border in personal spheres particularly in the sphere of our gendered bodies are present. Many individuals base what and who they allow to cross their personal boundaries based on gender. Borders are also automatically created when certain associations are made. For example, what makes a woman blush might not necessarily make a man blush or what would socially make a woman scared would not make a man scared in the same terms. Borders are present

throughout our everyday lives because they are what indirectly influence our behaviours and social conduct, particularly in terms of what is acceptable and unacceptable gender behaviour. Thus these terms correspond to social borders. These social borders are generally based on stereotypes.

Bree follows stereotyped feminine attributes when she behaves, for example, in the following ways, she does not sit with Toby when he belches at the table and she is scared of bugs and snakes. These are all characteristics which are stereotypically female and Bree adheres to these conventions, which may make feminists cringe. The fact that she attempts to behave as a typical woman throughout the film, creates the idea that she tries to remain on the side of the border which will classify her as a woman. She does not want to remain in an in between or liminal state, which indicates that she is a transsexual woman. In the beginning of the film Bree seems to only care about checking into the hospital where she is to have her reconstructive surgery. A hospital, Müller-Funk (2007:75) states, is traditionally classified as a restriction of the patients who are in a hospital. It is ironic that Bree so urgently wants to be in an institution that generally provides restrictions, in a time when she wants to break away from the sex, which she views as a restriction, with which she was born. The reference to the hospital, and implicitly the medical profession, indicates that the medical profession in the words of Cahill (2006:75) has little respect for the boundaries of the body. The fact that the medical profession can change the sex of an individual shows that nothing with which one is born is permanent; it can all be changed with surgery.

Symbolic borders, Lamont and Molnár (2002:168) stipulate, separate people and create feelings of similarity and belonging. The fact that, before the surgery, Bree is in a liminal state creates the idea that she has not yet crossed the symbolic border in order to belong to a group. Bree first has to cross biological body borders in order to become a woman before she can start to have a sense of belonging. When Bree actually has the surgery and is a woman, she crosses the symbolic gendered or symbolic body border. There is a scene in which the viewer sees Bree in the bath from a bird's eye view shot.

The viewer can see that she now has a physiological body of a woman. She is initially shown with her head under the water but then emerges from the water with her hair wet. This emerging from the bathtub water is a classic symbol of life. Cirlot (1971:364) stipulates that the Vedas would refer to water as *mâtritamâh*, meaning the "most maternal", because, in the beginning of creation everything was like a sea with no light. The maternal is what provides life. Bree has started a new life as an individual who would normally bear life. At the same time the image is reminiscent of Botticelli's painting, "Birth of Venus", in which Venus' naked body is exposed to the viewer and the sea, as a symbol of life, is in the background. The concept of identity creation is conjured up by Bree's body border crossing. She finally becomes a more secure and confident person once she has had her operation. This confidence is reflected at the end of the film when Bree is dressed in looser, lighter and more revealing clothing than she has worn throughout the film. Bree no longer just identifies with being a woman, but she is now across the threshold and *is* a physiological woman. By the end of the film Bree has not only crossed her physical boundaries but also the emotional borders she created between herself and her family.

5.4   GENDER, WOMEN AND THE BODY

This section on gender and society serves as a background to the concepts used in gender studies. It serves to establish terminology and clarify these concepts to be used in the analysis. It also provides some ideas about the rationale of different societies and their attitudes towards gender.

5.4.1   Gender, society and the body

The body expresses many aspects of an individual. There are many terms and conceptions in place to assist one in defining and describing the body, such as the terms *sex* and *gender*. This section extends the brief distinction between the two terms made in Chapter 2. The terms *sex* and *gender* seem to refer to similar ideas. Chaudhuri (2006:16) explicates that the word *female*, indicates biological *sex*, while the word *feminine* portrays a social *gender* role. These two terms are often used interchangeably; however, there are specifics

which make them different. For example, Namaste (2006:180) provides the explanation that sex is generally defined by the genitals; it is also understood in terms of the function of hormones in the different sexes. Tauches's (2006:173) explanation can add to the notion of understanding sex by taking chromosomes, XX chromosomes for females and XY chromosomes for males, into consideration. The term *sex* is based on a physical manifestation more than gender. Interestingly enough in research conducted by Kessler and McKenna (2006:167) the predominant idea is that gender is synonymous with genitals (sex). During an experiment, researchers required participants to ask gender specific questions to ultimately guess a sex. However, the researchers did have a specific gender in mind. The researchers found that participants associated genitals with gender specifics and so would not ask questions about the genitals when attempting to guess a non-specified gender. In other words, in terms of the study, if one knows a person's genitals, one will automatically assume they are male or female. The physicality of genitals is more important than other information such as role behaviour.

The notion of *gender*, Tauches (2006:174) explains, "is a social construction that arises from biological sex; it consists of socially defined behaviors and traits that are considered normal for each sex". Therefore according to one's sex there are certain conventions and characteristics that one uses to express their gender according to societal specifications. Waskul and Vannini (2006:6) state that the "body is fashioned, crafted, negotiated, manipulated and largely ritualized by social and cultural conventions". These conventions are also expressed through the physical body that is shown to the public. Kessler and McKenna's (2006:167) research suggests that certain information such as facts about biology and physical features (sex) play a more important role in gender attribution than that of other information such as role behaviour. The physical aspects which a person wishes to display in public, play more of a role in gender attribution than the manner in which a person acts. Kessler and McKenna (2006:179) posit that "biology is a crucial part of the construction of Western reality" thus in a Western society one is always aware of the body and the gender/sex distinction. The idea that the body is socially and culturally

structured comes through in this line of argument and in this study. In a sense, the film shows that not only gender, but also sex is constructed.

Besides gender being a highly socialised aspect, it also operates on different planes within a society. Tauches (2006:174) concisely formulates that gender operates on different levels, such as on a personal, interactional and even an institutional level. All these different levels are connected to the social underpinnings of a society, and influence one another. On a personal level, society dictates what is considered "normal" in terms of gender identity. An individual will, on a personal level, take on specific roles to fit into those specified norms. According to Tauches (2006:174), individuals use aspects such as hair-styles, clothing, mannerisms and even ways of communicating to express their appropriate gender on a personal level. There is a certain amount of choice in the manner in which an individual chooses to express their gender on this plane. Although Waskul and Vannini (2006:6) do not use the term "personal level" as Tauches does, they develop the notion of the personal level and the choice one has when they state that "people do not merely 'have' a body – people actively do a body". Therefore, it is an active process in which an individual has relative choice; however, it seems that the power is still largely influenced by society. On the interactional level, or interpersonal as Tauches (2006:174) also refers to it, appearance, behaviour and social norms combine to create a gender attribution. Thus, two people need to interact, and within the interaction each participant is placed into a gender category. The interaction level can be seen as a gender in performance. This statement is supported by Brown (2004:69) when she puts forward that "gender is primarily a performance of culturally determined traits and conventions". These cultural conventions are what ultimately teach the participants involved in an interaction to place the other in a particular gender category. This "categorising" is a sociocultural phenomenon, in which the one player uses rules and attributions to place the other into a category. This category creation immediately links to the notion of symbolic borders that are in place to keep an individual in the category. Kessler and McKenna (2006:175) aver that the different role players learn about these rules through the process of socialisation, and that is the reason for it being a sociocultural

phenomenon. Kessler and McKenna (2006:175) also note that Western culture includes signs such as "genitals, secondary gender characters, such as dress and accessories, and nonverbal and paralinguistic behaviors". These categories are then placed on a hierarchy, particularly at an institutional level. Tauches (2006:174) explains that at an institutional level, genders are organised according to a hierarchy of men and their masculine traits being seen above that of a woman and her feminine traits. Thus, there are many different aspects which influence our perception of gender as well as different planes on which individuals have and perform their bodies.

5.4.2   Society and the politics of the body

The following section briefly discusses how society determines the beliefs about the body to which the majority of people within a society adhere. The concept of what aspects make a woman a woman, draws on de Beauvoir's writings to discuss the idea that many societies place preconceived ideals of the human body, particularly the female body. Although all societies and their ideals are not the same, the point is to bring to the fore that all societies have gender paragons in place.

The notion of "what makes a woman a woman" was first mentioned by Simone de Beauvoir in 1955 and is a factor which is investigated throughout Second Wave Feminism. The Second Wave brought with it an entirely new domain as well as way of fighting for women's rights. The fight, Chaudhuri (2006:4) qualifies, no longer centred itself specifically on equal rights in the political arena but started to re-examine other non-political female domains such as appearance, the home and family, as well as reproduction. The Second Wave also seems to concentrate more on the bodies of women in all sections of society, even in entertainment. Chaudhuri (2006:4&7) confirms that feminist film theory stems from the Second Wave, which started to focus on women's bodies and issues of feminine appearance. Although the initial fight and voice from feminist contributors was first heard in the late twentieth-century the fight still lingers on in a new form in the twenty-first century. With the increase in globalisation and technology the representation of the body

and questions of gender is different to the way it used to be, and film is one contributor to the change in view of women's bodies.

One of the most famous axioms taken from de Beauvoir's (1988:295) book *The Second sex* is "[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman". This notion implies that being born a female does not automatically make one a woman, but rather interactions with the social world, and lived experience, make one become a woman. Therefore, the ideas that are created concerning "woman" and "femininity" are socially, culturally and economically created, they are not innate or natural. Lips (2006:135) discusses many theories concerning how gender shapes who we are; one such theory is social learning theory. She outlines how an individual internalises cultural messages about acceptable behaviour. According to this theory a child's gender identity and role are learnt via modelling, imitation and reinforcement. Children observe and learn these three aspects from their parents and peers. A child is rewarded, punished or ignored by displaying certain behaviours. Therefore, the desired reaction is provided by certain gendered behaviour (Lips, 2006:135). Parents that are the same sex as the child serve as models for a child on which to base their behaviour, and eventually a child is shaped and formed to conform to their gender role (Lips, 2006:135). Andrew (2003:38) uses a well-suited term when she says that everything we know and experience about ourselves is filtered through our "situatedness". A person's situation can include his/her physical, mental and even emotional states. Connected to this idea of becoming a woman through social interaction and society, is the idea that femininity is also a developed aspect of an individual and congenital. Andrew (2003:38) simplifies de Beauvoir's overall thesis when she stipulates that de Beauvoir considers what it means to be a gendered human and also what it means to create a gendered reality. Therefore, a woman undergoes a *becoming* before she is a woman; refer back to section 3.4.1.

De Lauretis (1987:2&5) focuses on the notion of gender, both as representation and self-representation, as the product of various social technologies and is a social relation. Gender exists in a context and that is the

reason for it being a social aspect. De Lauretis (1987:3) develops that gender paradoxically is affected by deconstruction within its construction. Hence, the notions of gender change depending on the culture or paradigm in which it is found. In a Western society there is an indication or distinction made between two genders, male/men and female/women. Thus, de Lauretis (1987:3-4) notes, that gender is mostly a classificatory term, which represents that you belong to a class, group or category. This classification is linked to bodily attributes. Lips (2006:11) specifies that femaleness is relevant in a sense that an "individual's body provides possibilities and limits to such attributes as strength, size, voice quality, and reproductive capacity". However, in many cultures, when they think of a "woman" there are many different "feminine" traits which they place on that idea of "women". This notion of gender leads de Lauretis (1987:9-10) to make the distinction between "woman" who are the "real, historical beings and social subjects" and "Woman" (with a capital letter) which refers to an imaginary representation of the "essence" inherent in all woman. This essence is largely prevalent in expected "feminine" behaviour of women. Therefore, stereotypical behaviours, attitudes and positions are prevalent in femininity and gender.

Lips (2006:6) asserts that there are some overlapping themes in terms of ideas of femininity that run throughout many cultures; she discusses numerous cultures, in places such as North America, China and even the Hima people of Uganda. The overlapping themes of gender that Lips (2006:6) discusses, include among others, the cultivation of beauty on different levels. For example, in North America alone there are thousands of women who pay for cosmetic surgery to help shape their appearances into the "cultural standards of beauty". Although the Chinese do not adhere to the same beauty ideals, their culture has its own beauty ideals which they place on the women in their society. Lips (2006:6-7) states that "each society, to some extent, makes up its own set of rules to define what it means to be a woman or a man". What is interesting about Lips's statement is that once a society has its rules or notions of beauty in place, the notions become a marker by which individuals generally attempt to abide. "Traditionally, women have been judged on their ability to display their femininity in appearance and in

personality" (Christopher, 2004:259). Therefore, many women perceive themselves in terms of these mentioned factors. The question arises about the transgender individual's place within a society.

5.4.3 The transsexual body

Transgendered individuals challenge the notions of gender in society. Stryker (2006:3) states that "transgender" calls attention to the fact that "gender" as it is lived, experienced, performed and embodied, is far more complex and variegated than the dominant binary sex – gender ideology can account for. The concept draws attention to the underlying effects of society and its power over gender and sex, in both a physical and mental form. Whittle (2006:xii) posits that the scheme of classification of sex and gender seems to have become disordered; these two concepts themselves no longer appear stable but rather "embedded in the individuals who experience them". Therefore one needs to have knowledge of the theoretical notions behind gender and sex before one can start to examine how transsexuals, and even the transgendered, challenge those ideas. The previous section was concerned with gender in society and it established specific terms and concepts, this section will now discuss the theory of transgender studies.

At times, there is confusion about nomenclature terminology when dealing with transgender bodies; for example, it is initially difficult to be sure of which pronouns to use and if one is using them correctly. When Bree is reunited with her family her mother, Elizabeth, largely reflects the uncertainty that one feels when dealing with the transsexual body. She says to her husband, after she grabs at Bree's crotch, "He's still a boy." It is probably the fact that for many years citizens of a society, who are "strongly socialized", to use Fischer's (2006:53) phrase, are generally taught to think, and make judgements, in a dualistic manner. In this dualistic thinking someone is either male or female, and right or wrong; one is on a particular side, but never really in an in between state or liminal space.

The time period that makes a transgender man or woman live in a liminal space is the period from the initial stages of undergoing the first treatments

(such as hormone replacement therapy) to the actual gender reconstruction surgery. When one steps into the liminal space, the one making the judgement becomes ill at ease with the individual in the in between space. For example, the viewer has the knowledge that Bree is a man becoming a woman. She very much looks and acts as a stereotypical woman, but she is not completely a man or a woman but rather reflects the in between state. It becomes easy to claim that a transsexual's body is marginalised in a "strongly socialised" society because they represent the liminal or in between state. The three-part liminal process, as discussed in Chapter 2, can be applied to the film, since Bree is a transsexual female who goes through a type of "initiation process", before she can truly become a woman. Bree is in a pre-liminal phase before she begins her treatments. A large part of the film is a reflection of her liminal state. By the end of the film she reassimilates into society as a woman, she is then in the post-liminal phase.

The subject of identity has many different facets in which one can work. Transsexuals and their representation within society, has very specific aspects which influence the perception of their identity. Whittle (2006:xi) states that "trans-identities were one of the most written about subjects of the late twentieth century". It is in modern times that there is greater access to the concepts behind trans-identities. Tauches (2006:176) defines "transgendered" as an umbrella term used to describe many groups of people, such as transsexuals, cross-dressers, drag kings or queens, transvestites, intersexed individuals and even people who do not identify with the categories "male" or "female". There are different aspects to these terms which make the individuals, to which they refer, different in many ways. Tauches (2006:176) mentions that transsexuals seek to change their sex;[24] while those that identify as transgendered means that their sex and gender do not "match" with social norms. Tauches (2006:176) further explains that the common thread or characteristic that all these groups share is that their gender roles do not match the sex category in which they were placed at birth. Connected to these

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[24] The term includes both female-to-male and male-to-female changes.

ideas is the shift in belief that transgender phenomena are expressions of a mental illness.

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) (1994:532) qualify that there are two components to Gender Identity Disorder, the first being that there must be a strong as well as persistent cross-gender identification,[25] and there must also be evidence of persistent discomfort concerning one's assigned sex or gender role (APA, 1994:532-533). Schrock and Boyd (2006:53) explicate that those who undergo sexual reassignment surgery have to first be diagnosed with a mental illness and even submit to a "regimen of regulation". Although, since the rise in attention to transgender studies in the twenty-first century, there have been marked shifts in the perception of transgendered people in various fields of study. Stryker (2006:2) refers to this shift in the various fields as a movement from the clinics to the streets, as well as from a representation to a reality. The transgendered deal with notions of the body, both as a physical as well as a social manifestation, and how many set notions of the body can be disrupted by choices made by an individual. Stryker (2006:3) qualifies that the field of transgender studies is concerned with anything that:

> disrupts, denaturalises, rearticulates, and makes visible any normative linkages that we generally assume to exist between the biological specificity of the sexually differentiated human body, the social roles and statuses that a particular form of body is expected to occupy, the subjectively experienced relationship between a gendered sense of self and social expectations of gender-role performance, and the cultural mechanisms that work to sustain or thwart specific configurations of gendered personhood.

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[25] It must not be just a desire for perceived cultural advantages of being the opposite sex (DSM-IV, 2005:533).

Individuals accommodate and express this "disruption" in multiple ways. For instance, there are cross-dressers and transvestites, to only name two transgender "categories". Bree is in the "category" of a "transsexual".[26]

The predominantly Western and heteronormative binary social construction of gender, based on sex, classifies one's behaviour as either masculine or feminine.[27] A society establishes certain proper behaviours for a gender. In order to conform to and "fit into" a society one generally follows these heterosexual binary norms. As already established in the previous theoretical section, in Western culture, there are two genders, namely male and female. This distinction is largely influenced by one's sex (male or female). However, the world is not as simple as it may appear: there are grey areas associated with sex. Namaste (2006:180) adds to the previous statement by saying that everyone produces male and female hormones, testosterone and oestrogen; but some individuals were born men, live as men but have an XXY chromosome (meaning they have an extra X chromosome in their genetic make-up); and some individuals are born intersexed.[28] Hence there is not a clear definition in terms of hormones and chromosomes when discussing sex. It is thus not a purely biological phenomenon. To some extent, all individuals have a choice in terms of their gender representation and performance in a society. Tauches (2006:176) differentiates that being a transsexual or transgender person places much of the power in the hands of the individual as the person's gender is then "based on how an individual wishes to express himself/herself" regardless of their "sex". The transgendered challenge the

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[26] Namaste (2006:181) specifies that transsexuals increasingly object to being placed under the term "transgender" as they state that their healthcare and social service is quite specific; and this specificity is lost under the vague latter term.

[27] Halberstam (2005:1) notes that queer theory developed, in part, as an opposition to heterosexuality. By implication queer theory also goes against heteronormative ideals. Queer theory is not used as such in this study though, but it is interesting to note.

[28] Namaste (2006:180) provides the example of individuals who are born with a genital organ that is too short to classify as a penis but too long to classify as a clitoris.

notion of gender in terms of the binary definition of gender. Lips (2006:152) explicates that many individuals who undergo a transition from their born gender to their better identified gender "claim an identity as transgendered". The fact that transgendered people would like to claim an identity which is different to the heteronormative Western norm often causes them to be marginalised in conservative societies.

In order to avoid verbal and physical harassment transsexuals need to adhere to binary oppositions and behave and live as one or the other gender. Namaste (2006:590) refers to the "need to pass" among transsexual men and women. Transsexuals often feel the need to pass within their communities in order to avoid harassment. Passing is about presenting oneself as a "real" man or women whose original sex is never questioned or suspected (Namaste, 2006:590). The implication of "passing" is that transsexuals, and what they have chosen to become, is perceived as inadequate and unaccepted because they almost have to fit into heteronormative ideals to avoid harassment. In Barrera's (2010:213) article she specifically discusses the film *Lone star*, and posits that the protagonists choose which aspects of their pasts they will actively engage to create their present identities. This active engagement in identity creation is also relevant to Bree in *Transamerica*. For example, Bree chooses to portray herself as an orphan because she does not want to explain her dishevelled relationship with her parents. Bree then lies and says that her parents are dead. An important part of passing is influenced by the identities the transgendered person wishes to show to the world. Whittle (2006:xiii) notes that transpeople also confront challenges to others' identities, particularly when others "place their confidence in the binary rules of sexed lives". There is a challenge to the very notion of gender and the Western binary because "identities are negotiated in interaction with others" (Bamberg, 2009:132). Thus transgender studies are more attuned in "questions of embodiment and identity than those of desire and sexuality" (Stryker, 2006:7).

Transsexuals actively seek to alter their bodies and identities over a period of time in order to be seen and affirmed as the opposite sex in society. A

transsexual's desire to be a member of the opposite sex is so profound that they are willing to risk losing family, friends, and even employment (Schrock & Boyd, 2006:51). There are different reflections from transsexuals as to their experiences in coming out to friends and family in reality. This study focuses on Bree's experience as related in the film. Schrock and Boyd (2006:51) put forward the idea that a transsexual must treat his/her body as an object in order to make the necessary modifications to successfully make the transition. There is a belief among many people that transsexuals actually mutilate their bodies (Stryker, 2006:1). However, this concept of "body as object" is reminiscent of many individuals in the twenty-first century who have plastic surgery and modify their bodies at will. O'Reilly (2009:8) points to the fact that "the body has become more visible as a challenge to constricting social codes, through the adoption of piercings, tattoos and other modifications". The only difference is that transsexuals first have to be diagnosed with a mental illness before they can undergo their surgery. Schrock and Boyd (2006:51) refer to the transgendered as being "deeply attached" to the identity in which they would like to be affirmed.

A society, in which individuals or groups of people live, can marginalise or oppress them, because of their difference from social norms of gendered embodiment. There are many different schools of thought that work together to fight for the rights of the marginalised and form theories in which the oppression is exposed, discussed and analysed. These theories include feminist theory, gay and lesbian theory and queer theory. All of these schools of thought form due to a long standing marginalisation within their societies. Within these theories there are theorists, such as Sandy Stone,[29] who further marginalise transsexuals. As Stryker (2006:4) explains, in Stone's marginalising thoughts, transsexuals are seen as conforming to, and internalising, outmoded gendered stereotypes and do harm to their bodies so that they pass as the desired sex. One possible reason for saying that transsexuals believe in oppressive gender stereotypes is because, in order for

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[29] Stone's remarks are discussed by Stryker in terms of a talk that Stone gave at a conference.

a transsexual to pass in a society, they have to adhere to gender ideals, expressed as stereotypes. These stereotypes can be attributed to the perceived proper behaviour of a lady, which Bree so desperately holds onto when she conducts her life as a transsexual woman. She always tries to blend in or "live stealth". Transsexuals do not have the same confidence and surety that a biologically sexed person has in their gender roles. The reasons for this confidence and surety will be discussed in the next section.

5.5 ANALYSIS: THE (MARGINALISED) TRANSSEXUAL BODY

This section of the chapter is divided into two separate parts for analysis purposes. The first part is concerned with the notion of "making a woman". It draws on information on stereotypes as well as the physiology of a woman, and more specifically Bree, in society. The second part analyses the psychological aspects of Bree's body, her identity creation and the relationship with her mother.

5.5.1 Physical aspects of Bree's body

One part of what makes this film so interesting to analyse, in terms of gender, is the fact that Bree is played by an actress (Felicity Huffman)[30], who is playing a man becoming a transsexual woman. Huffman (2006:132) expresses her uncertainty concerning her role when she says "How does a woman go about becoming a man who is becoming a woman? Did I become a man first and then figure out how, as a man, I should let my inner woman out?" Therefore, even before the actual film begins there are questions concerning gender and gender roles which are present in a society. These questions are reflected by the actress's words but also by the audiences, since some audiences are aware of the fact that there are definitions and norms to which a society prescribes to a gender. When situations are

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[30] Huffman won six best actress awards for her role as Bree, one of the awards includes a Golden Globe (IMDB, 2013).

presented when these gender roles are brought to the attention of the audience, there may be an inclination to examine what those gender roles are and what they mean to a society. For example, many women and girls adhere to cultural definitions of femininity to varying degrees, depending on how strongly they identify with their culture's views of femininity and of women. Lips (2006:145) posits that many women may have a firm gender identity while still not conforming to the rules and restrictions for a woman's behaviour in her society. In some cases the members of her society may state that she is acting in an unfeminine manner. However, Lips (2006:145) states, a particular woman may feel no conflict between her gender identity and her behaviour. A woman knows that she is a woman and does not need to conform to societal specifications. This certainty is reflected when Huffman (2006:133) tells how that part of her transformation was training to be "more feminine" in terms of her behaviour. Huffman (2006:133) reports that she actively had to ask herself how a woman would sit, stand, walk and gesture. As a born woman in a Western society Huffman does not feel that her womanhood is questioned and is therefore not conscious of her behaviour being feminine or not.

Bree's transformation is the converse of normal social behaviour; for instance, she first has to adhere to the gender conventions of her society before she is allowed access to the physical sex of the desired gender. Under normal circumstances, it is usually the physical sex that is first and then one can choose to adhere to the social gender conventions or not. There is evidence of definite double standards in society when it comes to the adherence of social conventions where transsexuals are concerned. On the one hand, individuals who are born a certain gender have the choice to conform to the gender traits set out by their societies. However, a transsexual in a sense has to adhere to the socially created gender conventions in order for them to be allowed to have genital reassignment surgery. Bree is very conscious of her gender reality and creation in order to pass in society. Her gender reality includes biological properties such as voice.

When one refers to "voice" you can either refer to the physiological attribute that allows sounds to leave one's speech organs, or you can refer to "voice" in a metaphorical sense which implies that a person has the right to an opinion. Transsexuals, as it stands at the present moment, have problems with "voice" on both levels. Bree represents these problems and expresses them via her actions. She needs to train and discipline her body in order for her to pass in her community. There are numerous aspects that she has to actively and consciously change about herself. For instance, in the beginning of the film there is a video tape playing of a voice coach presenting a voice training lesson for transsexuals to use for voice training. The voice coach says "I am going to say our mantra 'This is the voice I want to use' over and over again but with different inflections." The viewer of the actual film then sees Bree finishing the voice training session by doing one of the activities on the recording. The viewer is instantly reminded of one of the distinctive characteristics between men and women, namely, the pitch of their voices. The protagonist wants to sound like a woman when she speaks, as this is one of the characteristics which will convince strangers that she is a woman. The mantra can also be interpreted in a metaphorical sense in terms of Bree wanting to be a woman. She therefore wants to "use the voice of a woman" in terms of having rights and a say in the manner in which she conducts her life, a right for which First Wave Feminism fought, and can therefore be said to be prevalent in the life of Western women, and in the lives of transsexuals too. A voice is a valuable tool within a society because it is what expresses, along with the physical body, oneself within that society.

Apart from the pitch of a voice, a transsexual's physical appearance is also a determining factor concerning the perception of them passing as a woman or man. In the beginning of the film, Bree assumes attire which is almost at a point of being overly feminine, in the colour choices and clothing items. She puts on stockings, a bra in which she places breast prostheses, and pulls on control underwear in order for her to tuck her penis away, and dresses herself in a conservative pink skirt suit. She conforms to the cliché of a genteel lady in the nineteen fifties and not really a modern woman who has fought for the right to wear trousers and comfortable clothing. This conformity is especially

apparent in her predominant choice of pink clothing and house décor – pink is stereotypically associated with the iconography of "girly" femininity. Once she is dressed she reapplies pastel pink nail polish on her long nails, she brushes her hair and applies her make-up in the mirror. Her hair is thin and reflects the idea that it has not always been long and she has difficultly looking after it because it does not move in a natural manner. She carefully applies foundation, powder, eye-shadow and lipstick. The mirror motif in classical Hollywood cinema often represents the unconscious desires of the protagonist. The fact that Bree's reflection is seen through the mirror creates the idea that she needs the mirror to constitute herself as a woman, but also reflects her desire to be a female. At the same time, she wants the world to see what she has created through being able to see herself in the mirror. Although she has applied the make-up, she still appears masculine in her facial features. Her facial features look bony and bleak. The foundation that she wears is also a shade lighter than should be used on her complexion. This make-up and her facial features serve to indicate that Bree is still not completely comfortable in her role as a woman. Make-up can actually be used to conceal or accentuate certain facial features, but Bree does not have that experience with applying make-up. She still has much to learn about these feminine products. She also keeps checking her make-up throughout the beginning of the film. This constant rechecking reflects the idea that she is insecure of her appearance, and needs to reaffirm that her appearance is in line with the ideals that she has in place. Merskin (2007:598) explicates that when a woman "puts on her face", she is among other things "acting in line with social prescriptions of feminine beauty". Metaphorically Bree puts on her female indicators to be seen as a woman, she puts on the mask of a woman.

Externally, through the ritual of dressing and make-up, Bree presents herself as a woman to the rest of the world. When the audience is first introduced to her, she has already had electrolysis, hormone therapy for three years, facial feminisation surgery, a brow lift, a forehead reduction, jaw re-contouring and a tracheal shave. These operations have been done with the intention of making Bree appear more feminine. It is not just transsexuals who are concerned with their physical appearances: women (and even men) in many countries all over

the world are concerned with their bodies. Lips (2006:79) even formulates that girls and women all over the world have been taught to focus on their bodies and appearance.[31] It seems as though is it is not just transsexuals who delve into painful and dangerous interventions into the body, but women all over the world. Therefore, Bree has the same concerns as many biologically born women. The psychiatrist that she visits, right in the beginning of the film, even comments on how "authentic" she looks. All the traditionally female visual indications are in place. Bree's actions and manner of dressing are in line with the social expectations based on what her society believes a woman should look like when they leave their house. Lips (2006:118) develops the idea that women, in many times and places, have been "pulled, squeezed, bleached, painted and starved (or force-fed)" to meet a beauty ideal. These "adjustments" to the body largely reflect Vannini's notion that individuals manipulate their bodies according to cultural conventions. By just observing the type of popular programmes that are aired on North American television, programmes such as *Extreme Makeover* and *The Swan*, it can be deduced that North American society is largely concerned with bodily modifications. Both the mentioned programmes are concerned with women going on national television for a period of time and undergoing numerous surgeries to make the participants "better" on different levels. Wegenstein and Ruck (2011:28) even use the term "cosmetic gaze" to refer to a manner of looking which sees bodies as "awaiting improvement, physical and spiritual, that is already present in the body's structure", to refer to the "gaze" of a large portion of North American society. On a personal level, Bree adheres to these social conditions dictated by the North American society in which she lives. She also largely supports the notion of "becoming a woman" every time she gets dressed.

The use of stereotypes of physical appearance is essential for the analysis of Bree and her embodiment as a woman. Bree models her perception of what a

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[31] Lips (2006:117) states that 87% of the 244 370 facelifts performed in the US, in 2000, were on women.

woman should be like, and uses stereotypes of a lady to become and pass as a woman. Although the characteristics that will now be mentioned may not be completely relevant in today's society, it is still important to mention that Bree plays on the stereotypes of a genteel lady. She mainly dresses in pinks, lavender and pastels and even decorates her house in the same colours. She constantly checks the mirror to ensure that her appearance is immaculate. Lips (2006:111) specifies that beauty is commonly a feminine attribute, while "preoccupation with appearance is one aspect of stereotypical femininity in many cultural groups". Bree tries her utmost not to use foul language and corrects herself when she does. In the beginning of the film when she sees a bulge in the mirror under her control underwear she says, "Shit. I mean darn." She then repeats "darn, darn, darn, darn" to almost force herself to use a less offensive word and rather use a, stereotypically, more "feminine" word. When Toby and the hitchhiker they pick up go for a swim in the nude, Bree turns her head away so as not to see the two boys undressing. It is ironic because she has a penis and would not be imposing on the boys. In Bree's mind this is the manner in which she experiences the gender that she is becoming. She turns her head away to appear more lady-like in her approach to the two boys.

Bree constantly attempts to match her physical appearance and her behaviour. She invariably makes an effort to look and act as a lady so that all the different elements work together to help her pass as a woman. Apart from Bree adhering to societal conventions of her gender on a personal level, the interactional level also plays a role in her gender identification. The interaction level of socialised behaviour is reflected in many instances in the film. One particular instance is when Bree goes back to her parents' house and rings the doorbell. Her father opens the door and says, "May I help you young lady?" Bree's father takes one look at her attire and face, does not recognise his son, and then calls her a lady. This reflects the automatic response that a person has when an individual has stereotypical gender specific facial features and assumes gender specific attire. Bree's gender performance is one that reflects a feminine attitude and appearance. She is then viewed as a Woman, with a capital letter, because she represents the "essence" inherent in all women in her behaviour and attire.

All these factors are physical attributes that Bree has attained to some degree. Even her behaviour reflects a more feminine attitude, although it is constructed on very strict ideals of what a woman should be like. Although she passes in public, and even her father does not recognise her, she is very aware of the fact that she is not yet physically a woman, as she still has a penis. Dyer (2002:90) states that the "symbolism of male sexuality is [...] overwhelmingly centred on the genitals, especially the penis". It is as if the penis is what empowers the man, it is what gives the male his legitimate power. Bree feels that only by undergoing genital reconstruction will she truly be whole as a woman.

Kessler and McKenna conducted research on gender attribution, and published their findings in 2006. Their research has two main sections. In the first part of their research they "play a game" with forty participants in which the participants need to ask a series of questions, that require a "yes/no" answer, and then guess the gender of which the researchers are thinking. The only rule is that you may not ask the researcher specifically "Is the person male or female?" The researchers also do not actually keep a gender in mind, but rather randomly state "yes/no". What the researchers found is that the majority of the players in the study equate asking about genitals with asking about the gender/sex of the person when playing the game. In the words of Kessler and McKenna (2006:168), "gender attribution is essentially genital attribution. If you 'know' the genital then you know the gender". This concept of having a penis and it making you a man is largely reflected in Bree's desire to have the reconstructive surgery, to fully become a woman. She even states that, "After [her] operation not even a gynaecologist will be able to detect anything out of the ordinary about my body. I will be a woman." Not only does Bree believe that she will finally be a woman when she physically assimilates heteronormative ideals of the body, she also believes that she will have an "ordinary body".

5.5.2 Psychological impact of the transsexual body

When Bree goes back to her parent's house, her mother is ashamed of her and tries to ignore her at the door, but relents and lets her into the house.

Once they are inside the house Bree's mother is shocked, but leans forward and touches Bree's crotch and announces to her husband, "He's still a boy." However, Bree takes her mother's hand and forces her to touch her breast. The mother's reaction is of shock and she then leaves the room in tears. The whole idea that because Bree has a penis she must be a boy and behave like a boy, makes it very clear that the society in which she is depicted dictates certain behaviours according to genital orientation. The concept of what makes a woman a woman comes through very strongly in this perception. When Bree goes out with her family for supper, her mother forces her to take her chair out for her. She is required to behave as the son that they once had. Bree and her mother then have the following conversation:

Elizabeth: Look at your life. You've never been able to stick to a decision. I mean ten years of college and not a single degree. How do you know you won't change your mind about this too?

Bree: Because, I know.

Elizabeth: Don't do this awful thing to yourself, please. I miss my son.

Bree: Oh, mom, you never had a son.

They then proceed to have an argument and raise their voices at one another. Eventually the fight comes to an end with the following conversation:

Bree: God, my cycles are all out of whack.

Elizabeth: You don't have cycles!

Bree: Hormones are hormones. Yours and mine just happen to come in little purple pills.

One could not say that hormones make a woman a woman because once a female reaches menopause, she no longer has the same cycles and she loses the rate of production of hormones. Hence an older woman has to take pills to assist her in producing hormones, so even a woman who is biologically female needs assistance in having typical female characteristics. In Bree's instance, just because her body does not produce female hormones, and the

fact that she needs to take pills to assist her in this regard, does not make her "becoming a woman" less relevant. Elizabeth's body is sexed as a female, and Bree's body is initially sexed as a male, however they both need hormone replacement pills to conform to what they outwardly project to the society in which they live. Both of the women need assistance in regard to producing female hormones, even though one was born an actual woman. Therefore becoming a woman or even staying a woman requires similar steps to be employed. In terms of genital identification this means that just because Bree was born a male does not mean that she was in fact a son. She even states that her mother never had a son because she never *identified* with being a male. This concept of not identifying with being male is probably what made Stanley so indecisive about his studies. He was actually searching for himself in terms of his gender more than his intellect.[32]

When Bree goes home she is standing in the kitchen making a sandwich. Her father (Murray) keeps calling her Stanley when the following conversation takes place:

Bree: It's Bree, Sabrina Clair Osborne, I changed it.

Murray: Look, we gonna need more time with that. Your mother
            and I both love you...

Elizabeth: But we don't respect you.

When Bree finally tells them about Toby, their grandson, Elizabeth runs outside to fetch Toby and bring him inside. They are sitting at the table when Elizabeth says to Toby that he should go watch television in the spare bedroom. Then Bree and her mother have the following conversation:

Elizabeth: Stanley, what are you planning to do with that poor boy?

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[32] The discussion on Bree's self-discovery will be done in more detail later in the chapter.

Bree: Well first of all, I'm going to make sure he knows that he's encouraged and supported. And that he's respected. And maybe even – Well at least that he's respected.

Up until the moment Bree is forced to see her parents, to ask them for assistance to get back to Los Angeles, the viewer and the other characters believe that Bree's parents are dead. The fact that she never feels respected by her mother gives the viewer a clearer indication as to why she tells the other characters that her parents are dead. She is not fully accepted by her mother who is emotional about her decision to have a sex change operation. Bree's father; who seems to be controlled by his wife, is more accepting of his son's decisions. He expresses concern for Bree and asks how she has been. Even Bree's sister, Sydney, is supportive of her decision and calls her by her changed female name. It is Elizabeth who shouts and screams at Bree and will not accept her for who she is and wants to become. To use the critic Lips' ideas, Bree models her appearance, behaviour and mannerisms on her mother instead of her father, even though she was a boy she did not use her father as a role model. This statement is proven by the fact that Bree is very much like her mother in appearance. She dresses in similar pastel colours and in matching suits much like her mother. Her mother also paints her nails and ensures that her hair is styled in a certain way. Bree is the same in the manner in which she dresses and she even borrows one of her mother's dresses when they go out for dinner. The two women even take the same hormone replacement pills in order for them to produce hormones. It is thus ironic that she is not accepted by her mother.

It could also be that Stanley, as a young man, was influenced by his mother's perception of sex and sexuality. Elizabeth sees sexual undertones in many natural and normal everyday occurrences, such as when their dog, Lucky, is cleaning his crotch like any dog does, Elizabeth shouts at him: "Lucky, no! That dog is a sex maniac. Just like your father." The father always sees the humour in her over-the-top remarks. He simply says, "At least he gets more action than I do." At another point, while Bree is at her parents' house, Elizabeth says to her husband, "Murray, I just hate the way you had Lucky's tail clipped. It stands straight up like that, just like a penis." Murray looks at her

and says, "Black and hairy?", and Elizabeth replies, "Well. It does." Murray and Sydney laugh at her and eventually Sydney says, "Not like any penis I've ever seen." Although the family view Elizabeth's perceptions on sexuality as a joke and see the humour in it, her perceptions could influence her children's perceptions.

In the beginning of the film Bree answers Doctor Spikowsky's (the psychiatrist's) series of questions. One of the questions is, "How do you feel about your penis?", to which Bree replies, "It disgusts me. I don't even like looking at it." From the very beginning it is clear that she does not like her body in male form. She is rather disgusted by the fact that she still has a part of her that is masculine. She even states that she will be a happier person once she has had her genital reconstruction operation. The doctor tells her that The American Psychiatric Association does categorise gender dysphoria as a very serious mental disorder. Tauches (2006:178) acknowledges that, "Many in the field of psychology still view transgendered individuals as mentally ill, diagnosing those who seek help as having 'gender dysphoria' or a gender identity disorder." Many psychologists recommend a sex change through sexual reassignment as the main way to "fix" transgendered individuals, to realign sex and gender in a normal order. However, Bree responds to the doctor's latter remark by saying, "Don't you find it odd that plastic surgery can cure a mental disorder?", because she feels that after she has had surgery she will be a better and happier person. Bree refers to her body as a work in progress. It could also be that her mother's irrational emphasis on the penis is a possible contributing factor to Bree's decision not to be a male anymore.

It seems that Bree is actually, in another sense, scared of her penis and "maleness". She is extremely scared of snakes and more than once she asks about snakes while outdoors. This fear of snakes, from a psychoanalytical point of view, represents the fear of a phallic symbol. This fear could be linked to her own penis fears. In this context, Dyer (2002:91) states, "At best the man is seen as the possessor or owner of this object [his penis] but it is an object over which he does not have full control. It is the beast below." Bree does not

have control over the fact that she was born with a penis and while having the penis she is not in control. The fact that Bree has this fear, which is linked to not having control, could stem from the fact that her mother is so repressive and wants to be in control. After Elizabeth's overreaction at the initial meeting at the door, Bree goes into the kitchen to make herself something to eat. While Bree is putting mayonnaise on bread, Elizabeth watches her do it and says, "Are you trying to give yourself a heart attack? Let me do that." Elizabeth then continues to make the sandwiches. Elizabeth seems to need to be in control of her family as well as her husband. Bree's desire to control her sex could be a control mechanism to actually control her own life. This idea that Bree can finally control her own life is reflected in the fact that she finally finishes something, and in the end even goes back to college to finish other aspects in her life. She finally decides that she wants to be a teacher and enrols for the course, studies and intends to finish the course.

The film makes definite remarks on the concept of what makes a woman a woman. Is it as simple as Sydney's analogy when she says, "This is so bizarre. I can still see Stanley in you, but it's like you put yourself through a strainer and got rid of all the boy pulp." Or is it something more complicated than that? The fact that the film tells the story of a transgender woman provides insight into the manner in which the characters, as well as the heteronormative society in which the film takes place, perceive the way a woman should be. These perceptions can largely be based on the physical aspects of a woman. Throughout the film Bree struggles to come to terms with herself and her body. It is only once she has had her surgery that she actually becomes more comfortable in herself.

5.6   REJECTION AND ACCEPTANCE OF BREE'S BODY

This section provides more information about Bree's perception of her own body. It firstly discusses how she rejects her body, as she does not identify with her body as a male. It provides information from throughout the film on how Bree attempts to discard her body and hide who she really is. The second section focuses on her acceptance of her body. This acceptance is not only reflected in the fact that Bree's attitude has changed, but also in the

fact that her family are now aware that she is far into the transition; her family also begin to be more accepting of her.

5.6.1　　　Rejection of her body

When Bree goes to see Margaret she refers to "Stanley" in the third person. She is reprimanded by Margaret who says to her, "No third person"; she also tells Bree that, "Stanley's life is your life." The fact that Bree refers to Stanley in the third person indicates that she is dissatisfied with her life as a man and in every way possible tries to disconnect herself from Stanley, even though they are the same person. Bree also casually mentions the fact that a young boy has phoned her claiming that Stanley (Bree) is his father. She does not really want to acknowledge that she has a son, but Margaret says to her, "Bree, this is a part of your body that cannot be discarded. I don't want you to go through this metamorphosis only to find you're still incomplete." What Margaret says indicates that Bree is able to discard parts of her body because she does not want to acknowledge them. But a child is something that comes from the body, obviously the female's body, although it also requires a man to be produced. In a sense Margaret wants Bree to experience her child and to be ready to go through her change knowing all aspects of herself and her body, in both a male and female form.

Bree has an example of transgender men and women who are happy in their skins and who keep the company of friends who support one another. This example is in the form of Mary Ellen's party in Dallas where Mary Ellen is hosting a "Gender Pride President's Day Weekend Caribbean Cruise Planning Committee" get together. Bree is shocked and says to Mary Ellen, "Margaret said you were stealth" (meaning that you blend into everyday society and no one knows that you are a transgendered individual). Mary Ellen replies, "I am. In public, but this is the privacy of my own home". This incident indicates that Bree should not feel ashamed of who she is becoming. Mary Ellen shows that there is a time and a place for one to express one's true identities. When Mary Ellen is talking casually to Bree, she says that Margaret has told her about Bree's operation. However Bree replies, "Toby doesn't know about me." Mary Ellen looks at her in disbelief and says, "You're stealth to him? Don't worry,

honey, we've all been there. I'll pass the word." This conversation indicates that Bree is battling to come to terms with her relationship with Toby, as well her expression of who and what she is becoming, as well as who she is. She even hides behind a disapproving mask when she says to Toby, "Listen, I'm sorry about those ersatz women." When Toby does not understand the term "ersatz", Bree explains that it means "phoney. Something pretending to be something it's not." Bree is actually behaving in the exact same manner, however she is less honest about herself and does not expose her true being. Another way of perceiving the experience of being transgender is reflected in David's (a party attendee) words, "We're not gender challenged. We're gender gifted. I've been woman and I've been man, and I know more things than you single sex people can even imagine." Therefore one example of being a transgender individual can be viewed as having different experiences, and not as a mental illness that should be viewed as a challenge, but rather as a gift.

Perhaps the reason for not wanting Toby to know that Bree is a transgender is uncovered when Bree needs to go to the bathroom on the side of the road, and Toby accidently sees Bree's penis. He is extremely angry the next day and behaves in a spoilt-child fashion and gives Bree the silent treatment. In an attempt to get Toby to speak to her, she agrees to stop at a place called "Sammy's Wigwam". While they are at the wigwam Toby starts acting out and misbehaving. When Bree tries to reprimand him he shouts at her. The gentleman who works at the wigwam then says that Toby should watch his mouth around his mother. The following conversation ensues:

Toby: She is not my mother. She isn't anybody's mother. She's
             not even a real woman. She's got a dick. Don't you?

[Bree decides to walk to the car, away from Toby's abusive remarks. However he still manages to say]

         You're a fuckin' lying freak.

[He then follows Bree]

         What do you want out of me?

Bree: Just because a person doesn't go around blabbing her entire biological history to everyone she meets, doesn't make her a liar.

Toby: But why didn't you just tell me the truth?

Bree: So you could humiliate me in public even sooner?

[Bree gets into the car.]

[Toby says she must drop him off at the nearest town and before he gets into the car says]

Toby: I've never even heard of a trannie church lady.

Bree: So you don't think I have the right to belong to a church? My body may be a work in progress, but there is nothing wrong with my soul. Jesus made me this way for a reason. So I could suffer and be reborn the way he was.

What comes out in this conversation is that Bree is petrified of being humiliated in public. This intense fear can also be linked to the ritual she performs each day in order to pass. Schrock and Boyd (2006:51) explain that, unlike female-to-male transsexuals the male-to-female transsexual body is actually seen as more deviant. As a consequence they are more strategic in their presentation to others. She is rather sensitive and that is the reason she is secretive about being a transsexual. She is also deeply hurt by the fact that Toby perceives her as a "freak", and even questions his remark about being a "church lady". She challenges Toby and attempts to protect her rights as a transsexual woman.

5.6.2 Acceptance of her body

Toby is the cause of Bree finally reuniting with her parents and for the emotional healing to take place within her family. The fact that Bree had to go fetch him from New York and then travel with him cross country on the road is what causes, and forces, her to make contact with her parents. So not only does she get to know her son, but she is afforded the opportunity to heal the

relationship with her family. The fact that Elizabeth is hostile and rude to Bree when she first arrives indicates that her mother does not accept her and is having trouble being supportive of Bree's decisions. When Toby finds out that Bree is in fact his father, he walks out of the room while Bree follows him, trying to convince him that she is sorry that she did not tell him earlier. When she tries to take hold of his arm he turns around and slaps her in the face, causing her to fall. By the time Toby has slapped her, Elizabeth and Sydney are standing near them. When Bree falls her mother runs to her and holds her in her arms and says, "There, there. He didn't mean it, honey. He's just a little upset." It is at this point, when Elizabeth holds Bree in her arms and comforts her, that the viewer witnesses how Elizabeth is beginning to both literally and figuratively support Bree. The fact that Elizabeth can finally accept Bree makes it easier for Bree to undergo her operation, knowing that she has the support of her family.

This support and acceptance is further exemplified the next day when Elizabeth and Sydney inform Bree that Toby is missing. As Bree does not answer them immediately, her mother says, "What do you want to do, Sta..." but stops her sentence when she is about to call her Stanley. Sydney looks at her mother and corrects her by saying "Bree." To which the mother replies "Yes." By Bree going home to her parents and showing them that she is serious about becoming a woman, they are able to start accepting her. Bree is also taught the lesson of standing up for herself and for the decisions that she makes in her life. Thus the recognition from her parents shows that she is comfortable in herself and wants to be respected. The change in her mother's attitude and the manner in which she comforts Bree, shows that her mother wants to re-establish a relationship with her. When Elizabeth informs Bree about Toby, it is in the morning and she has no make-up on and her hair seems to be looser than the day before. Her appearance is more natural and not forced any more. In Elizabeth's natural state she does not worry about what the neighbours or anybody else thinks, thus she can accept Bree for the woman she has become. It is almost as if Bree is becoming whole in the sense that she has better relationships with her immediate family. There is acceptance on all sides of Bree's relationships.

Bree's connection to Mulvey's concepts is that she is an active participant within the film. She does not represent sexuality or become an object of desire. Throughout the film, Bree dresses in a conservative manner. Her dress sense reflects the idea that she wants to conceal her body. For most of the film she wears long and loose jackets to hide her body, but also long skirts to hide her legs. She also wears scarves or turtle-necks to conceal her neck. It seems as though Bree is actually aiming for no one to look at her, but rather to direct the gaze away from her physical body. The fact that Bree does not want anyone to look at her supports the idea that she subverts the gaze; she tries to avoid the to-be-looked-at-ness. Stryker (2006:7) puts forward that transgender studies are more focused on questions of "embodiment and identity than those of desire and sexuality". Although the film concentrates on the female body, it does so from a non-sexual manner. Bree's body is represented in a conservative manner which intentionally subverts the male gaze. To use Halberstam's (2005:92) ideas[33], the film "opens the door to a nonfetishistic mode of seeing the transgender body – a mode that looks with, rather than at, the transgender body", while subverting the heteronormative male gaze. Bree's representation rather makes comments on what it means to become a woman, than what it is to embody a woman. At the same time, Bree's yearning for her operation poses a challenge to the male characters as well as the male spectators, in that she actively seeks to be castrated. She views her penis as undesirable and is thus not turned into a fetish by the characters or viewers.

5.7 BREE'S TRANSFORMATION INTO WOMANHOOD

Bree's journey is conducted on a physical as well as metaphorical level. In one sense she literally travels across North America. In another sense she makes the journey, or transformation, from one gender to the other. The following section discusses the places/spaces in the film. The first section

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[33] She is referring to a film called *By hook or by crook*, however, her reference can be applied to *Transamerica*.

analyses the places in which Bree is depicted. It notes how Bree has to be continuously conscious of how she is creating herself in the space in which she finds herself. It also focuses on her relationship with Toby at the end of the film. The second section examines the journey on the road. This second section focuses on the actual physical journey and how it influences Bree's mental and emotion state. It also analyses how Bree's physical journey works to make her transition to becoming a woman more complete.

5.7.1   Bree's body within space/place

In the beginning of the film, Bree gets ready to go to an appointment. She has a series of actions that she completes before she leaves the house.[34] The fact that Bree is depicted as being so comfortable in her home, exemplifies the idea that her home is a safe place for her to create the identity she wants to show the outside world. She can take her time and methodically conduct the series of actions that represent her as a woman, before she leaves the safety of her home. These routine actions she has to perform daily before she is able to go into public. She needs to reflect the idea that she is a woman, therefore the "bulge" needs to be tucked away, she needs her breasts prosthesis and she has to be dressed. The idea that Bree creates her identity every time she leaves the house is reflected in her routine series of actions. Namaste (2006:589) states that public spaces are generally "male gendered" because many societies place the emphasis on males and their power. Bree needs to transform herself in order to avoid being judged or abused in public, and she therefore needs a safe place, such as her own home or her mother's dressing room, to produce her woman's identity. Bree is aware of the possible experiences she could have in the spaces in which she finds herself. She knows that she has to create and exude the feeling of being a woman in order to negotiate the public spaces along the road.

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[34] This scene has already been described in section 5.5.1.

Bree and Toby are also depicted in "non-spaces" because they are travelling towards Los Angeles. They stay in the iconographic motels and they even camp out in the open. This study posits that a "place" concerns the "stopping, resting and becoming involved". There are impersonal spaces such as the diners and camping sites on the road, therefore the car becomes a "place" for the two characters. Having a relationship with someone can also be classified as being in a particular place. This "place" that one finds in a relationship is shown in Bree and Toby's relationship. There are times that the physical space around them is constantly changing so they, inadvertently, create a place with one another in the vehicle and whenever they are together. They have a bond and a connection with one another which is proven by the fact that Toby goes to visit Bree once she has had her operation. He acts like he does not care but by the mere fact that he visits Bree, after he was so angry with her, shows that he feels as if he is secure with her. This security is further reflected in the fact that the film ends with the pair sitting in Bree's house. Her house is a symbol of security, since it is the same house that she found security in before she had her operation. Toby also comments on the fact that Bree's parents' house is "nicer", indicating that he possibly wants to live with Bree.[35] The pair can live safely together in the familiar place.

Bree's journey has specific identifiable spaces. She lives in Los Angeles, travels to New York to bail Toby out of prison and then travels by road in a vehicle. Thus most of the film takes place on the open road. The pair stops at a few diners, petrol stations, motels, as well as camp along the road and then they travel, as a detour, to Callicoon. It should be noted that all four mentioned spaces are liminal spaces, further reflecting Bree's liminal process. Although there are certain locations in the film that the viewer is unsure where the pair is located exactly, the majority of the time the viewer is aware of their exact location. The viewer's awareness of the pair's location creates the impression that the journey is quite stable, even when obstacles occur on the road. The journey's stability also reflects the idea of the pair not being threatened by the

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[35] When Bree and Toby are at her parents' house, Elizabeth offers Toby a chance to live with them.

unfamiliar spaces. Thus the pair then has the opportunity to acquaint themselves with one another, especially in the vehicle, since they do not waste time by attempting to settle in the spaces along the road. The viewer is also shown the picturesque scenery which is viewed by the characters on their journey. In this film, seeing the scenery works to allow the viewer to be a part of the journey and not separate (as one would be if he/she just observed the characters). This constant "knowing" of the characters' location reflects that Bree actually knows, in a metaphorical sense, where she is going in terms of her decision to become a woman. Bree has carefully planned her strategy on how and when she will fully become a physical woman. The space of the road acts as a means to self-discovery (Mirzoeff 2002:597 & Hayward, 2000:300-301). The notion of self-discovery is relevant to Bree, who does eventually discover the true and whole woman she is. Bree ensures that she plans for the future and that she moves forward in time and space to make certain that she gets to her surgery.

On the road Bree meets and interacts with her son. They have their ups and downs but essentially have a fun, relaxed and ultimately good relationship. Bree feels how it is to be a parent in a relationship with a child, which is definitely something that teaches her about herself. In a sense, because Bree has embarked on this journey with Toby, he is the cause for her accepting herself, which is shown when she stands up to her mother. Therefore Toby helps Bree transform into a strong, independent woman. Toby also shows her that she can be strong when times are difficult, as when their vehicle is stolen by the hitchhiker and she manages to get them a lift to her parent's house. The journey also gives Bree a sense of confidence, particularly when Calvin, an Indian man in New Mexico, shows a romantic interest in her. The viewer definitely sees this progression in Bree's personality and perception of herself. The ultimate destination of Bree's personal journey is clearly indicated at the end of the film when, after her surgery, she cries and is hurt over Toby leaving. She feels the pain of a parent when she loses a child. Since Bree is still in pain after her surgery she holds onto her lower abdominal area. This action imitates the same action of a woman who has just given birth. Therefore Bree feels that she has lost a child that she carried with her for a

short time. She seems to feel the physical pain that a pregnant woman would feel. She can now be said to represent and embody a woman more. At this point Bree is actually not alone as much as she used to be. She has mended her relationships with her immediate family. The journey, and transformation, has brought her to a point in which she is more "whole". She is no longer in the liminal space, as she has crossed the threshold and become a woman. This wholeness is reflected in her attitude.

After the surgery Bree begins to settle back into her "life", but now she is different. She becomes a noticeable waitress at the restaurant where she once was a hidden away dishwasher. She walks around the restaurant in a more relaxed manner, no longer in an overly upright way. It shows how she is no longer avoiding people, she is more comfortable in herself. When Toby goes to see Bree her appearance is more feminine, her facial features seemed to have softened to a degree that she does not look as though she is really trying to appear as a woman would. She tells Toby that she has gone back to her studies because she is thinking of taking up teaching. When Bree was a man she studied for ten years and did not finish one degree. The fact that she is now doing something more with her life indicates that she has changed and truly transformed. She even seems to relax in her outlook on life. For example, when Toby lights a cigarette in her house she fetches a side-plate for him to ash on; she even relents and says that she will give him a beer, even though he is under-aged. However, she is not so relaxed that she will not have her boundaries, which is exemplified by the fact that she says to Toby, when he puts his feet up on the coffee table, "Young man, if you think you can put your dirty tennis shoes on my brand new coffee table, you're going to have to think again." Toby then takes his shoes off the coffee table. The last scene indicates that mother and son are now connected, and with compromise they will have a happy life knowing the other is there. Bree is more complete now as a woman.

5.8   CONCLUSION

The above chapter introduced the film's main events and fabula. It also provided information concerning sex, gender and notions concerning the

transgender body. The analysis used these concepts in conjunction with Bree's physical and emotional journey. From the comments made on Bree's body and her emotional and physical transformation to become a woman, one can draw the conclusion that the protagonist is active in her representation and ownership of her body. This active body concept moves away from Mulvey's initial standpoints and shows that women in film can and do subvert the male gaze. The analysis of Bree's body concerns notions of what makes a woman a woman. This analysis referred to specifications of feminine behaviour that societies place on women and to which many transsexuals willingly adhere. The examination touched on Bree's active and intentional adherence to the gender stereotypes of a lady in order for her to metaphorically remain on the side of the border that indicates that she is a woman. The discussion also analysed the ironic influence of Elizabeth's role as mother on Bree's active modelling of a woman. The analysis also took into consideration Bree's rejection of her physical biological body which is specifically represented by her desire for genital reconstructive surgery. Bree's connection to space and place was likewise examined. The analysis explored the different locations in which the pair found themselves on the road. It specifically looked at Bree's comfort in her home as it is the location in which she is able to construct her gender and identity as a woman. But it also examined the ever changing spaces on the road and borders crossed, both literally and symbolically.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6

This dissertation set out to investigate the manner in which the alternative body is represented in film, using an explanatory, descriptive and hermeneutic approach. As such, it focused on the representation of the female body/embodiment in three mainstream American films, namely *Alice in Wonderland*, *Monster* and *Transamerica*. Mulvey's notions of the male (erotic) gaze and its power over the passive (sexualised) female body/object provided a point of departure for this exploration. It is from counter arguing Mulvey's initial standpoints that the idea of the active female body could be developed. However, other analytical tools needed to be used in conjunction with the notion of the active female body. Chapter 2 provided an overview of the other film concepts and analytical tools, such as iconography, place/space and borders. Iconography was specified as the distinctive visual attributes of a film that belongs to a specific genre. The analytical chapters examined the iconography in terms of the protagonists' costumes, physical appearances and the locations in which they were depicted. This dissertation associated place with stopping, becoming involved and being familiar with the surroundings, while space was linked to movement, unfamiliarity and activity. The places/spaces in the films all had very marked and definite borders. Borders were defined on various planes, but can be simplified as any physical or symbolic boundary that is in place. These aspects were used throughout the analytical chapters to examine the protagonists' physical body representations. It can be concluded that the three female protagonists move away from the passive, sexualised body and all three possess active, non-sexualised and non-stereotypical female bodies in film. Each character has an alternative representation of the body, they move away from the typical sex symbol, passive beautiful body. However, they achieve this untypical, alternative body in different ways.

Alice is seen as possessing an active female body because she moves away from the ideals set out for women in her time. She is actively involved in the

choice to delve into her psyche to face, and balance, the animus and anima to come forth as an independent woman. Her altering body size in Wonderland reflects the idea that becoming an independent woman is not easy. Although, when she returns to her normal size she is able to overcome her fears and be the woman she was destined to be. She is then able to emerge from her journey as an independent woman, who is well balanced because she is aware of these different factors of her psyche, and is comfortable enough in herself to become an apprentice in her father's old company. She is far removed from the stereotypical women of her day and is able to stand in her own independent light. She does not need a man to assist her in becoming more than her society prescribes. Her active body is represented in a positive fashion because she benefits from her choice to become independent.

On the other hand, *Monster* represents an active female body that is represented in a negative and monstrous fashion. Aileen's body deviates from her society's ideals of a clean and pure body and she is seen as abject. Abjection is a manifestation of borders since it is based on the premise that whatever is considered impure and unclean must stay on one side of a border. The abject must be kept away from the pure and clean. The fact that she was abused causes her to behave in a deviant fashion according to the heteronormative ideals of her society. She becomes a prostitute to support herself and leaves home. She then attempts to find love as a lesbian, is raped and as a consequence and justification she begins to murder male clients. These factors work together to keep her in an abject state. Her body moves away from a sexualised object because she is unattractive, dangerous and she sells her body for money. Aileen's and Selby's unattractive physical appearances intentionally subvert the male gaze. Aileen in particular, does not meet up to the ideals of a stereotypical woman in film, because her bodily appearance is far from appealing. Her choices in having an active body are negative because she is in a constant state and process of abjection.

In *Transamerica* the protagonist, Bree, attempts to stick to the clichéd ideals of a genteel woman in her bodily appearance and behaviours. Although, in the film, Bree is not actually a biological woman, she is still active in her choice to

subvert the male gaze. She spends her energy on attempting to become a comfortable woman. This comfortable feeling is reflected at the end of the film when she goes back to finish her degree. Her body subverts the male gaze because she intentionally presents herself in a non-sexualised manner. Chapter 5 comments on the ideals of women placed on them by perceptions of themselves as well as by the society in which they live. Bree's body is active because it brings to the fore the underlying ideals of some woman in the creation of their identities. Bree's active body is represented in a positive fashion, as it comments on the manner in which a woman has the choice of how to represent her body once she is comfortable in herself.

The ideas created in this study also touched on the fact that the body is not the only factor which indicates that the females are active, but moves to concepts of embodiment too. There are different factors that show that the female characters have changed. These factors include the placement of the body in place/space, while the protagonists embark on their separate journeys. The investigation of these mentioned factors established the connection between the embodiment of the mind and body and their manifestation in the places/spaces in which the characters are depicted, as well as the consequences of the journey and/or mobility on the protagonists' characters. Each setting in which the characters are presented serves as an extension of the protagonists' inner workings. As all three films are concerned with journeys, the conceptions of borders played a significant role in the examination of the moving body. Borders appear throughout all three films, although they manifest in many different forms. In all three analyses the placement of the body is discussed in relation to borders.

In Chapter 3 it has been argued that the Other fantasy world of Wonderland, which is ruled by matriarchs, is a representation of Alice's psyche. Alice's border crossing is manifested as a topographic one because she falls down the rabbit hole. She moves from one place to another as well as a different time, therefore implying a temporal border crossing. However, the topographic border crossing is actually a symbolic border crossing. She is now crossing the borders of her psyche. The White and the Red Queens are embodiments

of Alice's anima and animus respectively. She actively delves into her psyche in order to return to her real-world as an independent woman. She has to cross topographical, epistemological as well as symbolic borders on her journey. All these border crossings are in place to assist her in her return to the real-world. Her battle in Wonderland gives her the courage and the insight to be able to go against what her patriarchal real-world has generally placed on women of her time. She is then physically able to start a career as an apprentice as a well-balanced woman who has returned, reasonably unscathed, from her *katabasis* experience. Alice is once again able to cross symbolic borders, although this time these borders are created by the patriarchal society in which she lives and not her psyche. Whereas Alice's return marks her stability because she is now standing in her own independent light, the places/spaces depicted in *Monster* serve a different purpose in terms of Aileen's characterisation.

In Chapter 4 the constant changing spaces of the road are an embodiment of Aileen's instability and lack of belonging; they also function as spaces of abjection. Her body is in a constant state of abjection because of her abuse, rape, sexuality and the fact that she is a prostitute and a murderer. The changing spaces are also a reflection of the fact that she is always "out of place", meaning that she is not integrated into society and that she is unable to settle in a place. The main symbolic borders that are crossed are the ones created by her society in terms of pure/clean and impure/dirty. Aileen is represented in the latter and this concept keeps her in a constant state of abjection. There are also topographical borders that are crossed, particularly from acceptable, public places to secluded and dangerous spaces in which Aileen is taken to perform sexual acts for her clients. Aileen is constantly depicted as separate from other characters. There are symbolic borders in place between her and the rest of society. This analysis in terms of the road is only one interpretation of the function of the road, in *Transamerica* the road functions differently to the one in *Monster*.

In Chapter 5, the road functions as a means for Bree to develop her relationship with her new found son. Their journey figuratively functions as a

means for her to cross the symbolic borders she erected between her family and herself. Once she crosses these borders she is able to mend the relationship with her family. Bree is depicted in many changing spaces for a short time. These spaces function as a means to indicate that Bree is moving forward and is not stagnant or lost, such as the spaces in which Aileen is represented. The fact that Bree is represented in these spaces indicates that she is on her own journey to self-discovery on the road. She had to cross many topographical borders in order to eventually get to her surgery and for her to feel that she has finally truly become a woman. Since she returns to her home or place, indicates that she is able to settle back into her life as a physical woman. The body creates symbolic borders that had to be crossed at the end of the journey, in order for her to have the gender reconstructive surgery.

In closing, the manner in which the body interacts, and embodies itself, within its setting is an important relationship. What constitutes a setting would include the places/spaces in which characters are depicted, the relationships they have with one another and the journeys they choose to undertake, thus creating, and crossing, borders. The external, in the form of societies' and the location of the body, influences processes of body formation for the female characters. There is a constant dialogue between the body as a body and the surroundings. The analytical tools examined the manner in which the female body has moved away from Mulvey's initial standpoints. The female bodies have become active and are *not* just stylised to have the connotation of "to-be-looked-at-ness", thus the bodies are non-stereotypical. Areas for possible further research would include investigating other races of female bodies, as this study only focused on Caucasian bodies. However, one could also look at different bodies, such as male and other transgender bodies. There is also a possibility to look at the manner in which the body is represented in different spaces, for example the body in the city, or even the static, instead of mobile, body. There is also an opportunity to look at different types of cinema, beside mainstream Hollywood films, for example art house films, independent films, and Bollywood films, and how they choose to represent the body.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter is to certify that the undersigned has done the language editing for the following candidate:

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DEGREE: MA dissertation

_____   _____

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