



**POSSESSION AND LACK:  
THE PHALLUS, POST-FEMINISM AND *THE LONG KISS GOODNIGHT***

**Leighton Grist**

---

**Abstract:** *The Long Kiss Goodnight* (1996) is a high-concept Hollywood female action film, part of a generic development that has tended to address matters of gender and identity, and correspondingly to challenge and/or transgress patriarchal norms. Indeed, the film, which revolves around an amnesiac, female government agent who rediscovers her previous self, not only can be regarded as being explicitly ‘about’ identity and its gendered constitution, but its representation of the determination of identity suggests more than a little apprehension of Lacanian psychoanalysis, something that the article takes as a starting point for a primarily Lacanian reading that runs both with and against the apparent grain of the text. That noted, as *The Long Kiss Goodnight* proceeds, so there is a recuperation of its arguably transgressive representation of gender, and a correlative shift from its implication of Lacanian psychoanalysis to that of ego-psychology: the American ‘other’ against which Jacques Lacan placed his ‘return to Freud’. As much begs the question of the film's historical contextualization, regarding which the article enters the uncertain and contested realm of post-feminism. Critically and theoretically, moreover, the article elaborates upon the combination of semiotics, psychoanalysis and Marxism that, through its association with a British film journal, been dubbed ‘Screen Theory’. While this is a body of work that has of late become embattled, the article seeks, in its consideration of *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, to demonstrate that it remains a solid grounding for analysis that is both textually precise and offers illuminating reference through and beyond the specific film texts studied.

---

A high-concept Hollywood action film, *The Long Kiss Goodnight* (1996) cost \$70 million. It was financed by New Line Cinema, who paid an at the time record \$4 million for the spec script written by Shane Black, whose previous credits included the screenplays for *Lethal Weapon* (1987) and *The Last Boy Scout* (1991).<sup>1</sup> The film was not a box-office success, taking only \$30-32 million on domestic release. It was, however, a journalistic critical success, and salvaged the reputation of the (then) husband-and-wife team of director Renny Harlin and star Geena Davis after the commercial and critical shipwreck of *Cutthroat Island* (1995). The journalistic critical approbation of *The Long Kiss Goodnight* can nevertheless be regarded as somewhat contrary, being centred –

beyond a cod-auteurist reading of Black's input – upon the film's effective denigration, a delighted, even delirious, refusal to consider it in any but the most immediate and dismissive terms.<sup>2</sup> Within this critical discourse, *The Long Kiss Goodnight* is characteristically a 'state-of-the-art no brainer' (Nathan 1997: 128), a film that 'demonstrates not a flicker of interest in being anything more profound than a polished piece of genre manipulation and entertainment' (Felperin 1996: 52).

Admittedly, this might be perceived as accepting the film on its own terms. *The Long Kiss Goodnight* undeniably foregrounds its status as a piece of escapist entertainment. Witness, for instance, its glossy look, its witty, quip-laden dialogue, its moments of lachrymatory emotion or its increasingly recurrent, spectacular and excessive action sequences. Approbation through tacit denigration is, moreover, hardly uncommon within journalistic criticism of the action film. However, *The Long Kiss Goodnight* is more precisely a *female* action film, part of 'a cinematic tradition' that, as it puts 'women at the centre of the action narrative' (Tasker 1993: 3), has hardly been wanting in academic and wider cultural attention, particularly that the films almost invariably raise – and no less invariably, and usually self-consciously, play with – issues regarding gender and identity, and through this (at least apparently) challenge and/or transgress long-standing patriarchal norms. Correspondingly, *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, which focuses narratively upon an amnesiac, female government operative, a trained assassin, who has 'bought' her 'own cover', believed her own 'fantasy', and who in the course of the film rediscovers her previous self, is as foregroundedly about identity and gender as anything else, be it action, entertainment or whatever. Further, in its representation of the construction of identity and the determination of self, *The Long Kiss Goodnight* more than implicitly exhibits a certain cognizance of Lacanian psychoanalysis, albeit a somewhat 'vulgar' cognizance that parallels and intersects with the 'vulgar' Freudianism that has explicitly informed Hollywood cinema for much of its history.

Taking a lead from journalistic criticism, this article will initially accept *The Long Kiss Goodnight* on its own terms and unpack the connotations of its 'Lacanian' intimations as a starting point for a primarily Lacanian reading that will run both with and against the explicit grain of the text. For, as Michael Walker has noted with regard to Hollywood melodrama (1982: 30-35), of which *The Long Kiss Goodnight* is a (post-)

modern instance, the express involvement with the psychoanalytic can be seen frequently to generate material that the text refuses to – or cannot – confront. In turn, as *The Long Kiss Goodnight* proceeds, not only is there a recuperation of its transgressive representation of gender, but a correlative, and highly suggestive, shift from an explanatory, metadiscursive evocation of Lacanian psychoanalysis to that of ego-psychology: the American ‘other’ against which Jacques Lacan explicitly – and often vituperatively – placed his ‘return to Freud’. This unavoidably implicates the text’s historical contextualization. Specifically, the article will consider the question of why the text’s transgressiveness and its recuperations, a consideration that both confronts the largely unowned historicity of Lacanian psychoanalysis and enters the uncertain domain of post-feminism.

In pursuing its concerns, the article is indebted to the combination of semiotics, Lacanian psychoanalysis and Althusserian Marxism that, through its past association with a British film journal, has been dubbed ‘*Screen Theory*’. A more specific point of reference is presented by Stephen Heath’s two-part analysis (1975a; 1975b) of *Touch of Evil* (1958). Like Heath’s articles, this piece centres upon the close consideration of a mainstream Hollywood genre film from an anterior decade that has attained a distinct cultish reputation. True, Heath’s articles privilege the semiotic and the psychoanalytic, whereas the ensuing discussion of *The Long Kiss Goodnight* privileges the psychoanalytic and the ideological. It would besides be immodest – and inaccurate – to suggest that this article matches the detail and theoretical scope of what Heath writes. Nevertheless, what follows seeks in and through its analysis of *The Long Kiss Goodnight* to have the same wider pertinence with respect to the functioning of a particular strain of post-classical narrative cinema as that which Heath acknowledges that his analysis of *Touch of Evil* has for the functioning of ‘classic narrative cinema’ (1975a: 10). All such noted, *Screen Theory* is a body of work that has become somewhat embattled, not least before the pugnacious emergence of cognitivist approaches and the more recent Deleuzian and broader philosophical shift that has become manifest within the theorizing of film. Philosophy has also afforded the context for a certain return of psychoanalysis and Marxism within film theory and criticism through the writings of Slavoj Žižek. Purveying a highly particularized, Hegelian-Lacanian inflection of Marxism, these – and

the body of work that has emerged in their wake – nevertheless embody an approach to film that, at times asserting its correction of the ‘errors’ of *Screen Theory*, this article must needs distance itself from. On one hand, there is within the ‘Žižek school’ an inclination less to use theory to clarify the operation and connotations of films than to use films to illustrate theory.<sup>3</sup> On the other, when close attention is given to the film text, its focus is less, in Lacanian terms, upon, as within *Screen Theory*, the registers of the Imaginary and the Symbolic than upon the register of the Real. A change that reflects Lacan’s increasing engagement with the Real that occurred coincident with the development of *Screen Theory*, this has seen emphasis move from a concern with ‘the ideological dimensions of the filmic experience’ to a claimed unpacking, through a recourse to the Real, of ‘the disruptive and radical power of film’, of its ‘challenge to ideology’ (McGowan and Kunkle 2004: xvii).<sup>4</sup> It is, however, exactly the ‘ideological dimension’ of *The Long Kiss Goodnight* that is central for much of this article. In turn, not only does *Screen Theory* accordingly constitute an apposite point of reference, but it remains, for this writer, the most solid grounding available for a materialist critical practice that seeks both to be textually precise and to have larger illuminating reference via and beyond the film texts studied.

### **Anticipation/Realization**

As a way into *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, we might consider two sequences.

Samantha Caine (Davis), a schoolteacher in the small town of Honesdale, who suffers from ‘focal retrograde amnesia’, lies in hospital. This follows a car crash, in the aftermath of which she had acted seemingly out of character and snapped, in a single movement, and with her bare hands, the neck of the deer that her car had hit. Upon a visit from her fiancé, Hal (Tom Amandes), Samantha has a dream. In this, she stands on a cliff-top before a full-length mirror. At her putting her hand to a scar on her temple, its reflection in the mirror begins to bleed. Samantha’s reflection demands: ‘I want a cigarette’. Samantha replies ‘I don’t smoke’, only for a cigarette to appear in her hand. Her (unseen) reflection notes ‘You used to’, and there appears in the mirror, smoking, a figure who is subsequently revealed to be Samantha’s former self, secret agent Charly Baltimore, who had been shown briefly during the rapid montage that had accompanied

Samantha's return to consciousness after the car crash. As Samantha smokes, Charly asserts: 'See how easy it comes back. I'm coming back. You know that, don't you? Name's Charly ...'

Later, having been overpowered by CIA-associated villainy, Samantha finds herself tied, in her slip, to a water wheel and interrogated by 'munitions dealer' Daedalus (David Morse) and 'his hired enforcer' Timothy (Craig Bierko), targets of Charly, regarding what she knows about 'Operation Honeymoon'. Samantha is tortured by immersion in icy water, in which she sees the dead body of Charly's mentor, Nathan J. Waldman (Brian Cox). When Timothy leaves, Daedalus continues to probe Samantha until Charly, Samantha's preceding denials to the contrary, seems to re-emerge. Immersed again, Samantha experiences a series of flashbacks that explain her dream and her amnesia. The flashbacks reveal that Timothy had left Charly to be killed by an associate, Jack (Joseph McKenna), but that on a clifftop Jack had become diverted by Charly's body, allowing her to stab him in the eye. Fleeing, Charly had been shot in the head by Jack, resulting in her falling from the cliff into the sea. Pulled, snarling, from the water, the fully 'resurfaced' Charly threatens Daedalus and requests that she yet again be immersed. Underwater, Charly loosens a hand and retrieves a pistol secreted near Waldman's groin; then, when pulled from the water, emerges firing. Standing over the wounded Daedalus, Charly denies Samantha's existence before – as we afterwards learn – she in part completes her assignment, eight years late, by leaving him for dead.

Anticipation to realization: the sequences chart a return of the repressed scenario, centred – with psychoanalytic self-consciousness – upon a dream. In addition, not only is what returns a specific identity, a specific self, but it is a return mediated textually by the key Lacanian figure of the mirror and, through this, an evocation of the conceptualization of the mirror stage, during which Lacan locates the foundation of the ego. Before Samantha's dream, there is her early self-examination in a mirror, accompanied by her voice-over rumination concerning her age and many scars. After – following Samantha's discovery of weaponry in the false bottom of her/Charly's suitcase, and of the ability of how to wield it, as well as shots in which Samantha's mirrored reflection holds a rifle and draws and holds a knife – there is the sudden appearance in a motel-room mirror of Charly, who slashes at Samantha's throat with the knife. There is also the figure that caps

Samantha's self-transformation into Charly at Atlantic City, when a mirrored bathroom cabinet opens on the reflection of Samantha, and closes on that of Charly. However, perhaps most indicative formally of this allusive relation of mirrors to identity is the close-up of the rear-view mirror in which is reflected Waldman's face as he explains to Samantha the factitious status of 'Samantha Caine', but precisely as he states 'it was your cover'. Justified narratively by Waldman speaking to Samantha as she sits in the back seat of his car, the shot nevertheless stands out, being unfixed by any locating shot patterning. Moreover, just as Charly's re-emergence, so the mirror stage is itself predicated upon anticipation and realization, upon what Lacan describes as the 'temporal dialectic' of present and future through which 'the subject anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his power (1949: 4, 2), a temporal dialectic that further informs Lacan's account of the individual's entire subjective trajectory: 'What is realized in my history is not the past definite of what was, since it is no more, or even the present perfect of what has been in what I am, but the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming' (1956a: 56).

The same temporal dialectic of present and future is implicit in the adduction of structural linguistics through which Lacan routes his 'return to Freud', the 'formulas' of which 'Freud's discovery' could not have failed 'to anticipate' (Lacan 1958: 284) and through which it, tacitly, achieves realization.<sup>5</sup> Reciprocally, for Lacan the subject is constituted through the norms of linguistic acquisition, via a pre-existing 'structure of language' of which the individual 'becomes the material' (ibid.). In short, 'it was certainly the Word that was in the beginning, and we live in its creation' (Lacan 1956a: 61), a precept that *The Long Kiss Goodnight* would appear to take, at least initially, at its word. The film opens with three, increasingly tight close-ups of a hand and a pen writing the name 'Samantha Caine', over the second and third of which is superimposed the same signature, followed by two, increasingly tight close-ups of a hand and a pen writing 'Charlene Elizabeth Baltimore', over which is superimposed this other signature. This sets a model for the remainder of the credit sequence, which switches between images (signifiers?) of artefacts and actions redolent of Samantha's 'domestic' and Charly's 'professional' spheres of operation, which are superimposed by their respective signatures. (The shots associated with Charly also complement the temporal dialectic that

attends her return by in part comprising moments that occur in the succeeding narrative.) In turn, on learning her full real name from Waldman, Samantha at the motel practises writing ‘Charlene Elizabeth Baltimore’ prior to, and as if presaging, the reawakening of her knowledge of weaponry and the appearance of Charly in the mirror, while not only does Waldman note that ‘Samantha Caine’ was Charly’s ‘cover’ and ‘fantasy’, but that Charly ‘wrote the bloody thing’. Charly, moreover, is – with Lacanian aptness – herself represented as a ‘linguistic’ fabrication. Consider the montage of Charly’s cosmetic reconstruction in Atlantic City, that – as it combines close shots and close-ups of hair clippings, hair dye, make-up and her eyes and her lips, and is accompanied by Santana’s version of ‘She’s Not There’ – deconstructs her self in its reconstruction, renders it a collection of signifying elements. With the sequence ending with Charly’s mirrored reflection, we are once more returned, allusively, to the mirror stage, an identification that, to cite Lacan, ‘situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction’ (1949: 2).

Fundamental to classical psychoanalytic criticism is the likeness claimed between the workings of narrative and other aesthetic forms and those of dreams.<sup>6</sup> Reconsidered by Lacan from his linguistically informed perspective, dreams are posited to have ‘the structure of a sentence’, or at least ‘of a form of writing’ (1956a: 57), wherein the processes of condensation and displacement become, following the work of Roman Jakobson, analogous to the tropes of metaphor and metonymy and the relationship of latent to manifest content becomes, through Lacan’s appropriation and inversion of Ferdinand de Saussure’s relation of signified and signifier, an instance of the ‘incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier’, ‘which is always active in discourse’ (1957: 154, 160).<sup>7</sup> This is nevertheless a sliding, a separation that is punctuated by what Lacan terms *points de capiton*, or ‘anchoring points’, that, through the operation of metaphor, counterpoint the ‘horizontal’ linearity of ‘the chain of discourse’, provide a ‘vertical’ link to the repressed, unconscious signified (ibid.: 154). A parallel is suggested by the functioning of motifs in films that, as they cut across the predominantly linear progression of their embedding narratives, and perform metaphorically, generate subtextual connotations.<sup>8</sup> Not that the subtextual necessarily corresponds with the unconscious, but neither does it preclude fixation: with respect to which, motifs, which,

like symptoms, are determined as motifs through repetition, act – in an almost literal sense – symptomatically. Indeed, Lacan opines that metaphor ‘is simply the synonym for the symbolic displacement brought into play in the symptom’ (1956a: 51), that ‘the symptom *is* a metaphor whether one likes it or not’ (1957: 175).

For Sigmund Freud, dreams are instigated by an unconscious wish. For Lacan, dreams, again like all discourse, and consistent with his postulate that ‘the first object of desire is to be recognized by the other’ (1956a: 58), are ‘made for the recognition ... of desire’ (1961: 260). Correspondingly, for Peter Brooks, narratives, or – as he puts it – stories, ‘are told for purposes, to establish a claim on’ the recipient’s ‘attention’, ‘which is also an appeal to complicity, perhaps to judgment, and inevitably to interpretation and construction’ (1994: 61).<sup>9</sup> As this places the textual addressee in the position of ‘the subject who is supposed to know’, of the analyst, so a situation of transference, even outside a psychoanalytic context, ‘is established’ (Lacan 1973: 233). Transference, in turn, is predicated, clinically, upon the working through of repetition, with repetition itself being predicated, within Lacanian psychoanalysis, upon the non-recognition of desire. Transference, however, is always a dialectical, intersubjective process, a site of contestation and/or collaboration over meaning. Further informed, and complicated, especially in a lay context, by the desire of the analyst, the interpretative results of the transference situation are necessarily contingent, provisional and open to ‘interminable’ revision.

Keeping this in mind, in *The Long Kiss Goodnight* the motif of mirrors and that of the visual-verbal reference to the ‘writing’ of self can be regarded, for all their seeming ‘Lacanian’ self-awareness, as being symptomatic of a certain textual fixation to the issue of identity. Likewise symptomatic is the torture sequence, which centres on the conclusive return of Charly, the confirmation of her repressed self. Compounding this, the sequence’s overt sado-masochistic connotations invite consideration with respect to Lacan’s particular dissection of sado-masochism, which represents the masochistic subject, in a perverse refinement of the desire ‘to be recognized by the other’, making itself the object of the other (1973: 181-86). Once more, the incident’s symptomatic resonance is heightened through textual repetition. Timothy is first shown during an analogous sado-masochistic torture situation. Not only is his bare-chested hostage (Bill

MacDonald) bound in a cruciform fashion similar to that in which Samantha/Charly is tied to the water wheel, but he is interrogated about what he knows of Operation Honeymoon. Moreover, his abject, fearful self – which obtains summary exposition in his plea, which carries intimations of a perverse, obverse desire, that Timothy ‘use the gun, not the knife’ – is ‘recognized’ in his stabbing by Timothy: a killing that culminates the scene’s erotic implications as the hostage groans climactically then lays his dead head – ‘spent’ – on Timothy’s shoulder. Further indicative of the situation’s concern with identity, and its revelation, is Timothy’s later repeated boast that ‘I can tell when someone’s lying to me’. This is subsequently turned against him in another implicitly sado-masochistic situation when Charly, stripped to her vest, and kneeling in the freezer in which Timothy intends to freeze to death her and her/Samantha's daughter, Caitlin (Yvonne Zima), concludes her threat that he is ‘gonna die screaming’ by asking him, rhetorically, and in confirmation of her undiminished potency: ‘Am I telling the truth?’

Charly’s return is also marked by a repeated implication of rebirth. A motif that sits uneasily with the suggestion of her ‘linguistic’ determination, it is foregrounded during the water-wheel torture sequence as Charly re-emerges from beneath water: a familiar, virtually clichéd Freudian dream symbol of birth. This is foreshadowed during both the sequence of the car crash, in which the brief return of Charly visually and in terms of action occurs in association with the rather violent birth image of Samantha being thrown through the windscreen of her car and the sight of her walking, barefoot, through an icy stream, and the shoot-out at Chesterman train station. An incident during which Charly potently returns, this climaxes with Samantha/Charly and Mitch Hennessey (Samuel L. Jackson), the black private detective whom Samantha has hired to investigate her past, having jumped from three storeys up, emerging, gasping for air, from beneath an ice-covered canal.

The representation of Samantha and Charly carries contrastingly gendered connotations. Whereas Samantha, with her long, curly hair, beaded Christmas jumper, bright red coat and full, patterned skirts and dresses, is expressly, if rather unfashionably, ‘feminine’, Charly, with her short, boyish hair, white vest, (Daedalus’s) leather jacket and tight black trousers, and who complains about Samantha’s ‘inordinately large ass’, is decidedly, and modishly, ‘masculine’. Charly is likewise related to what are placed

textually as motifs of masculinity. In the early Christmas party scene, Hal proposes and, implicitly, asserts his masculinity in a ‘humorous’ toast: ‘I don’t smoke, I don’t drink, and I don’t swear. Oh shit, I do smoke and drink’. Charly not only, as in Samantha’s dream, smokes, but repeatedly drinks and swears: with respect to which, Mitch’s querying of Samantha’s cursing at the motel indexes Charly’s impending, and irrepressible, return.

Charly’s identity is in addition represented as assumed explicitly in the Name-of-the-Father. It is stated that, upon her father’s death, she was ‘adopted’/‘recruited’ by Perkins (Patrick Malahide), head of Chapter, ‘a black bag operation working from the US State Department’, and ‘trained’ by Waldman. That is, she is represented as determined as Charly by father-figures acting – with further, again almost literal, Lacanian suggestion – in the name of the *dead* father.<sup>10</sup> This also underlines the film’s purely allusive evocation of the mirror stage. In strict psychoanalytic terms, the mirrored image of Charly would make her Samantha’s ideal ego, a primary identification that is the ‘source of secondary identifications’ (Lacan 1949: 2). Moreover, whereas the latter relate to the Symbolic, are governed by the Name-of-the-Father, not only does the mirror stage instigate the Imaginary, a register normatively informed by dyadic mother-child relations, but the mother stands as an alternative mirror image, another potential figure of primary identification. However, in contrast with the numerous father-figures, including The President (G. D. Spradlin), that populate *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, maternal figures that, apart from Samantha/Charly, achieve individuated representation are few – as note the mother (Susan Henley) who is briefly shown when threatened in the church from which Timothy kidnaps Caitlin. Exacerbating matters, the re-emergent Charly refuses motherhood and maternal responsibility for Caitlin, being instead ‘(over)determined by an excess of phallic imagery’ (Tasker 1998: 87). Apart from her appropriation and handling of weaponry – of which her retrieval and use of the pistol hidden near the dead Waldman’s groin is a paradigmatically reverberant example – like phallic connotations accompany her ownership of a key to a bank deposit box that holds a briefcase containing ‘cash and IDs’, as well as her knowledge and control of technology when she attempts to rescue Caitlin at Niagara Falls. We might also look back here at Samantha/Charly having

‘lots of scars’, a detail that invites interpretation as figuring a ‘male’ symbolic castration enabling of her assumption of the phallus.

As has been oft pointed out, within Lacanian psychoanalysis the phallus is not the penis, albeit within patriarchal society the erect penis has, in its representation of sexual potency and difference, familiarly stood in for the phallus. Hence, ‘anatomy is what figures’, but ‘it *only figures*’ (Rose 1982: 44). In turn, ‘the fact that’ the phallus ‘can play its role only when veiled’ (Lacan 1958: 288) underpins its figurative mutability, the variety (and multiplicity) of available phallic symbols. Correlatively, one of Lacan’s most latently progressive arguments is that possession, or lack, of the phallus is not determined anatomically. Men and women are defined through their relation to the phallus, but the man’s position of ‘having’ and the woman’s position of ‘being’, in lieu of lacking, the phallus are available regardless of biology. This nevertheless fails to address the matter of why the representation in 1996, in *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, of a potent, masculinized, phallic woman, a representation that is in addition one of a number of more or less contemporaneous female action heroes (a term that is itself redolent of a sliding of stable sexed signification). Implicit in this failure is that of the acknowledgment of its own historicity that Lacanian psychoanalysis shares with its Freudian forbear. With entry into the Symbolic predicated upon the individual’s acquisition of/by language, that simultaneously bespeaks its acquisition of/by culture, ‘which could well be reduced to language’ (Lacan 1957: 148), so the individual, inescapably, enters history. However, despite Lacan’s attacks on the ‘cultural ahistoricism peculiar to the United States of America’ (1956b: 115), and, by extension, ego-psychology, and despite some tantalizing and typically elliptical allusions to historicization and historical reality, the chief historical reference point for the Symbolic Order within Lacan’s writing is the mythical killing of the primal father described by Freud in ‘Totem and Taboo’.<sup>11</sup> It is a lack, or, more precisely, disavowed lack, that is confronted by Louis Althusser. Noting, with respect to the societal parameters that Freud and Lacan declare as consequent upon the killing of the primal father, that it ‘is not enough to know that the Western family is patriarchal and exogamic’, Althusser asserts that ‘we must also work out’ its historically specific ‘ideological formations’ (1964: 194 n. 4). ‘This’, moreover, ‘is a task for *historical materialism*’ (ibid.). Further, just as Lacan posits that structural linguistics is

‘necessary to any articulation of analytic phenomena’ (1958: 284), so Althusser asserts that ‘*no theory of psycho-analysis can be produced without basing it on historical materialism*’ (Publisher’s Note to ‘Freud and Lacan’ 1971: 178). Correspondingly, in his essay ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’ Althusser presents a Marxist reinflection of Lacan’s account of subject formation wherein entry into the Symbolic is transcribed as interpellation, through which, it is argued, the individual becomes complicit in and subject to its ideological *méconnaissance*, and which, *post factum*, reflects back upon Lacan’s conception of the gaze, through which the self, with like *méconnaissance*, and ‘in its illusion of *seeing itself seeing itself*’ (1973: 482) becomes complicit in its subjection by the other. Much discussed, and much criticized, not least for its apparent totalizing reductiveness, and for some time academically unfashionable, Althusser’s model of interpellation yet remains at present foundational to the theoretical conjoining of the psychoanalytic and the historical. Because while the psychoanalytic is irreducible to the psychoanalytic, and vice versa, the psychoanalytic and the historical exist indivisibly, are, in Heath’s suggestive figure, ‘like the recto and verso of a piece of paper’ (1977: 126).<sup>12</sup>

Given this, an indicative parallel is offered between the implication of Charly’s ‘male’ determination and the historical context of its representation. Yvonne Tasker refers the advent of the female action hero to ‘a response of some kind to feminism, emerging from a changing political context in which images of gendered identity have been increasingly called into question’ (1993: 15). *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, however, suggests a *post-feminist* context, within which – according to one definition – gender roles and differentiation have become de-essentialized and the demands of second-wave feminism have been attained to the degree that ‘feminist theory and politics is viewed as *passé*, its relevance surpassed by real advances’ (Coppock *et al* 1995: 4-5). Certainly, if the film represents a masculinized female hero – as well as Samantha and Hal talking about a Christmas pageant in which the Three Wise Men are played by teenage girls – then it also represents a world with ‘feminized’ men. Witness Hal, who is much more comfortable in the kitchen than Samantha, and who takes over her maternal role when she leaves to discover her past, or even The President, who is first represented making a sandwich in the White House kitchen, and who notes that he has shifted money from the

‘masculine’, international realm of intelligence to the ‘feminine’, domestic realm of healthcare – although that he can do so underlines that he still has the phallus.

Likewise noteworthy is the implied ‘male’ psychosexual determination of Caitlin. Her fracturing of her wrist while skating can be seen to figure symbolic castration. This, moreover, occurs in a scene in which, under the gaze of her teddy bear, whose name, ‘Mr. Perkins’, chosen by her mother, carries paternal connotations, Caitlin is confronted by the re-emergent Charly who, after Caitlin falls, orders her to ‘Stop being a little baby and get up’ before, upon pulling Caitlin to her feet by her lapels, she threateningly says: ‘Life is pain. Get used to it’. It is an attitude replicated by Caitlin when, towards the end of the film, she revives a prone, wounded and apparently insensible Charly through a combination of frantic blows and the repetition of her mother’s earlier words: ‘stop being a little baby. Get up now ... Life is pain, you just get used to it’. The situation suggests an Oedipal conformity, but as it thus doubles Charly’s ‘male’ determination, so this conformity is rendered paradoxically radical. Further, as the cast on Caitlin’s fractured wrist marks her symbolic castration, so the shot that, at her reviving Charly, shows her cast-covered arm alongside Charly’s bloodied hands, is suggestive reciprocally of symbolic castration and phallic appropriation.<sup>13</sup>

### **Possession/Lack**

Reviewing *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, and typifying the film’s approbation through denigration, Mark Salisbury refers to a moment when a fat young man, Raymond (Dan Warry-Smith), is surprised by Charly when surreptitiously smoking a cigarette – ‘he pisses himself; and you see him soil his jeans. In close-up. Yeah, it’s that subtle’ (1996: 15).

Subtlety, however, is not the sole or perhaps most pertinent issue here. The shot exemplifies another significant motif: that of a recurrent, near-obsessive representation of images connotative of phallic empowerment and/or of, as in this instance, castration. Hence, once more, the shot of Caitlin’s arm and Charly’s hands, or the water-wheel torture sequence, during which we are presented with a close-up of Daedalus placing a pistol in the top of his pants; close-ups, within Samantha’s flashbacks, of Charly stabbing Jack in the eye with a hypodermic and of his head with bloodied socket; a close shot of

Charly taking Waldman's pistol from down his pants; a close-up, upon Charly emerging from the water firing, of a bloody bullet hole in Daedalus's knee; a close-up of Daedalus, drawing, vainly, his pistol from his pants before he is again shot by Charly; and a close shot of Charly's hands, the left holding Waldman's pistol as it is untied by the right. This, moreover, reflects a phallic opposition of having and not having, possession and lack, that, returning figuration to the anatomical, informs representation and incident throughout. Take the climactic fight between Charly and Timothy on the Rainbow Bridge, a scene that is structured explicitly upon images of phallic potency and of castration. After some initial, generically characteristic excessive blows, Charly picks up a pistol, which Timothy kicks from her hand. As an image of castration, it is underscored by a close-up of the pistol disappearing through a gap in the bridge, a shot that cuts, correlatively, to a close-up of a switchblade in Timothy's hand being flicked open. Charly defends herself with a chain, but Timothy slashes her stomach, creating what appears in close-up a vaginal wound. The characters grapple and fall beneath the bridge, where they proceed to struggle for the pistol, which has landed, and is shown in close-up, on a ledge. Timothy grabs the pistol, but in the continuing struggle loses it to Charly in the moment that he falls into the torrent raging beneath the bridge through an aperture.

Complementing the motif of phallic and castration imagery in *The Long Kiss Goodnight* is that of the again recurrent, near-obsessive articulation of sexualized, 'phallic' dialogue and quips. Hence when Timothy flicks open his switchblade, Charly mocks 'only four inches?', to which Timothy responds: 'You'll feel me'. Topping such is probably Charly's preceding – and, appositely, biologically defiant – 'Suck my dick' as she crashes a tanker carrying a primed chemical weapon.<sup>14</sup> The weapon, moreover, visually comprises a metal cylinder that fits into a circular receptacle.

In their repetitive, unsubtle foregroundedness, there is a self-consciousness, a knowingness about the text's multitude of phallic and castration references that implies a sense of ironic play. However, the very repetitiveness and insistence of the references, and of their knowingness, simultaneously implies a sense of disavowal, of a forcible denial of that which, in its denial, would appear to be nevertheless troubling. Symptomatic is a scene at the hotel in Atlantic City, wherein a close-up of a machine gun as Charly inspects its clip is followed, in near order, by two close-ups of her taping over,

in an evident denial of symbolic castration, a bullet hole in Daedalus's jacket, while a close-up of Mitch picking up an (itself phallic) bottle of spirits tilts down slightly to centre on a pistol. It is, moreover, an apparent compulsion to repeat that connects with the text's seeming fixation to identity, or rather, more specifically, to sexed identity.<sup>15</sup> For if *The Long Kiss Goodnight* centrally represents a potent phallic woman, and admits meditation upon her 'male' (and, to a lesser extent, Samantha's 'female') determination, then it also represents not just feminized but phallicly lacking men.

Consider the representation of Mitch. A 'low rent' private detective and convicted crooked cop, who 'never did one thing right', he is first shown – in a scene redolent of lack – masquerading as a cop to sting a pathetic, panic-stricken victim (Rex Linn) in a cheap scam. Lack, however, informs Mitch's representation throughout: this whether one considers, for instance, his dress – be it his initial, nondescript garb or, especially, the *outré* combination of green blazer, yellow sweater, grey cardigan, check pants, white socks and green furry flat cap that he wears for much of the film – or the implication of his unconvincing, overcompensatory denial of lack – be it, say, the naked woman pendant that hangs from the rear-view mirror of his heater-less car, his (textually typical) sexualized language or the address of a topless bar that Waldman finds on the same page of his notebook as a drawing of a duck that 'looks like a man's penis'. In an early scene with his son (Edwin Hodge), male potency is reduced to a fantasy figure (who is 'mean, quick' and who 'don't take no shit') and the phallus to a toy that Mitch is left holding, is unable to pass on to his son because of the injunction of his estranged wife (Sharon Washington). Authority, and tacitly the phallus, is here again possessed by a woman: with respect to which, it is suggestive that Mitch's assistant, Trin (Melina Kanakaredes), appears both to have more nous than Mitch and to do most of his successful investigating. In a similar vein, both Samantha and Charly are scathing about Mitch's phallic potency, Samantha/Charly uses his pistol in saving them at Chesterman train station (Mitch does not fire a shot) and Charly, in a sexual role reversal familiar to the female action film, rescues him at Daedalus's farm and at Niagara Falls. The latter rescue interrupts another sado-masochistic situation, one in which a bound Mitch, tormented by Timothy, who at one point throws a knife between Mitch's legs, is recognized in his garrulous impotence and from which he is saved only by Charly blasting herself and Caitlin from the freezer

and him from the lodge in which the situation is set. Further, at Atlantic City not only does Charly distract Mitch by opening her robe in order to rip a dressing from his seeping wound, which can itself be seen as a mark of castration, but she notes that her action follows the ‘Same principle as deflowering virgins’. It is, moreover, an implicit sex inversion that is presaged notably, given the text’s play with mirrors, by a dissolve from the shot of the phallic Charly reflected in the bathroom cabinet to a shot of Mitch, undressed, and lying on his back in bed, as reflected in a bordello-like ceiling mirror.

Consideration of the representation of Mitch as lacking is complicated by his blackness. On one hand, his subordination to Samantha/Charly characterizes the ‘secondary or largely supportive role’ taken by the black partner in the bi-racial buddy formula that is a not unfamiliar element of the action film, while his ‘castrated’ status not only reflects another of the genre’s ‘recurrent character types’, ‘the damaged black man’, a means ‘of making safe the black man’s fantasised hyper-sexuality’ (Tasker 1993: 43, 40), but suggests a broader tradition of racial/racist representation that finds seminal discussion in the work of Frantz Fanon (1952). On the other, the long-standing cultural and historical actuality of racism is ‘critically’ acknowledged by the text. Thus, for example, the slavery connotations of the sight of Mitch, naked, bloodied, bound and crossed by barred shadows, in a cellar at Daedalus’s farm; Mitch’s description of Charly’s calculated sexual advances as ‘white lady seducing the colored help’; or his responding to Charly with an ironic ‘Yessum, Miss Daisy’, an allusion to the liberal racial/racist accommodation of *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989). Moreover, *The Long Kiss Goodnight* represents numerous lacking white men, or certainly characters whose actions and/or representation imply phallic overcompensation. Hence Waldman’s battery of pistols – ‘One shoulder, one hip, and one right here next to Mr. Wally’ – or the pump-action shotgun through which Jack seeks recompense for his ‘castration’. Perkins/Chapter lacks funds, a position that has prompted Perkins to become ‘best friends’ with former targets, to assert his potency by killing 4,000 people in a fake terrorist attack in order to scare funds from Congress.<sup>16</sup> Further, both The President and Timothy complain about Perkins’s ‘feminine’ whining, while he is also seemingly panicked by Charly’s acquisition of Daedalus’s cache of arms. In turn, Daedalus is described by Samantha in terms that evoke symbolic castration (‘he has a pin in his leg ... he cuts his own hair’) and

feminization ('he sits down when he pees'), at which Mitch interrupts: 'That's enough, I'm getting a boner'.

With Mitch represented as heterosexual, the suggestion is of Daedalus, in Lacanian terms, being, not having, the phallus, of him being – implicitly – woman. Reciprocally, his goodly cache of arms, as revealed when laid out on a table in the Atlantic City hotel room, and the excessive arrival of Timothy by helicopter and a mass of armed men in automobiles that enable Daedalus's overcoming of Samantha, Mitch and Waldman once more suggest phallic overcompensation. A like connotation of being, not having, the phallus is generated by the text's references to male homosexuality – Mitch's projection of his sting victim being 'ass fucked'; Perkins's comment, apropos of his alliance with Timothy being discovered, 'I'm gonna be grabbing my ankles on the White House lawn' – as well as by the recognition of Timothy's hostage's abject fear – a condition that was, at least in the 1990s, as Carol J. Clover notes, 'still gendered feminine' (1992: 60). Moreover, not only is the hostage, prior to his 'orgastic' death, stabbed, penetrated by Timothy's phallic knife, in what appears to be his lower belly or groin, but Freud avers that masochism is 'an expression of the feminine nature' (1924: 161).<sup>17</sup>

Lacan, however, contends that the notion of feminine masochism should rather be regarded 'as a masculine phantasy' (1973: 192). Further, he posits that as the masochistic subject sustains the sado-masochistic situation by making itself the object of the other, so – in the recognition of that subject's desire by the other – it is the sadist who in actuality 'occupies the place of the object', with sadism being, accordingly, 'merely the disavowal of masochism' (ibid.: 185, 186).<sup>18</sup> But as this places the masochist in a position of intersubjective dominance, so in *The Long Kiss Goodnight* the sado-masochistic situations, in their distinct perversity, contribute to an incremental edging of the near-obsessive insistence, and insistent knowingness, of the representation of possession and lack, of contingently sexed identity, of phallic women and lacking men towards what might be regarded the pathological. In turn, Charly, as the prime textual exemplar of the phallic woman, is related causatively to male lack. Responsible for Jack's soubriquet 'One-Eyed', she also shoots a guard in the eye through a peep-hole in a door at Niagara Falls. Throughout, moreover, her representation carries some febrile connotations. Note

once more the rebirth motif that attends Charly's return. This is continued by the self-transformation montage at Atlantic City, which commences with shots of Samantha/Charly taking a shower. During these, the tilt down to her feet in the shower and the close shot of her feet exiting the shower recall those of Samantha/Charly's bare feet after the car crash. The shots convey a certain phallicism, but also, and more, a reversion to the primitive: a connotation underscored following the car crash when she breaks the deer's neck, a skill repeated when Samantha/Charly kills One-Eyed Jack and when Charly kills another guard at Niagara Falls. Indeed, not only does the rebirth motif in general bear intimations of regression, but the connotation of primitive reversion is likewise implied both by Charly's snarling as she emerges from the water after Samantha's flashbacks and when, upon killing One-Eyed Jack, Samantha/Charly licks her finger of the trifle with which she had disabled him and says, with an expression of savage contempt: 'Chefs do that'. The phrase first occurs at the end of the scene in which Charly's return is signified by Samantha's sudden ability to use a kitchen knife – that is, a potential phallic weapon – speedily, and 'professionally', to chop vegetables, which concludes with her spearing a tomato to a cupboard.<sup>19</sup> Charly's return in this scene is provoked by Hal's sarcasm towards Samantha's culinary prowess, while the killing of the deer can be read metonymically as an expression of Samantha/Charly's desire regarding the drunken and lascivious Earl (Alan North), the elder friend whom Samantha drives home from the Christmas party, and who uses a nose-touching drunkenness test as an excuse, to Samantha's annoyance, to touch her breast.<sup>20</sup> It is immediately upon this that the deer unexpectedly, and symptomatically, appears before the car and, on being struck, with metonymic connotation, kicks Earl unconscious/dead (it is unclear which) with a flailing hoof.<sup>21</sup> In short, Charly's return, despite – or because of – occurring within contexts of male violence, condescension and sexual importunity, is represented as being reversional, monstrous, excessive, dangerous and deadly.

It is in terms of such representation that we might backtrack to the shot of Raymond wetting himself. This more specifically happens when he is surprised smoking by the masculinely clad, rifle-toting Charly, whom Raymond knows as 'Miss Caine', schoolteacher, and who, after asking 'What have we learned about the dangers of smoking?', and taking a drag herself, threatens: 'Tell anyone you saw me, I'll blow your

fucking head off'. Moreover, the incident recalls that during the Christmas party when Samantha, before any intimation of Charly's return, sees Raymond attempting to pick a cigarette from a pocket and, slapping his hand, says: 'Catch you smoking again and they'll never find the body'. Twice, therefore, Raymond is interrupted when trying to partake of what the text presents as a signifier of masculinity, suffers symbolic castration by Samantha/Charly. Further, unlike Caitlin, Raymond never attains the phallus.

### **Fetishism/Disavowal**

Tensions are thus apparent in the representation of sexed identity in *The Long Kiss Goodnight*. On one hand, the representation of Charly and of other phallic females, as well as the text's implicitly Lacanian account of individual determination, offers – from a broadly, if non-essentialist, feminist perspective – a positive reading. On the other, the representation of, certainly, Charly and, tacitly, the sexual contingency attributable to the Lacanian account of determination is imbricated with a textual unease that finds expression in what is – from the same broadly, non-essentialist feminist perspective – negative representational qualification. In turn, if the text's representation of feminized men implies a progressive response to its post-feminist context, then its representation of phallically lacking men transmits a reverberant anxiety. Moreover, any distinction between the diegetic and textual reference of this anxiety – that is, between its being placed *by* the text as an element of the diegetic world and its being a property *of* the text – is negligible.

Textually, it is an anxiety that further resonates in the 'masculine' representation of Charly. As this renders Charly more modish than Samantha, so it makes her not only more sexually alluring – Waldman notes that Charly reappears as Samantha 'eight years later and a good deal frumpier' – but, in her dress and her association with weaponry, fetishistically phallic. Further, as within the masquerade that Lacan terms 'the comedy' of heterosexual relations woman's sexual desirability and her being the phallus are coextensive (1958: 289), so Laura Mulvey, in her article 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', argues that in classical mainstream cinema 'the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish' was a means through which was disavowed the threat embodied in the female form, which 'in the last resort ... speaks castration and nothing else' (1975: 13-14, 6). Disavowal, moreover, finds its prime

Freudian reference in relation to fetishism, in which ‘a memorial’ to ‘the horror of castration’ is set up in the appointment of ‘a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a protection against it’ (Freud 1927: 154): a split of knowledge and belief that, definitive of disavowal, is potentially aggravated in *The Long Kiss Goodnight* by Charly being both the embodiment and a source of castration. Hence too, potentially, the implicit disavowal of the text’s repetitive, self-conscious representation of possession and lack, having and not having: with respect to which, it should be remembered that in ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’ Freud relates the compulsion to repeat to an impulse to master mental traumas.

Correspondingly, as *The Long Kiss Goodnight* is seemingly informed by an anti-essentialist, Lacanian model of sexed identity, so its representation of Charly as fetishistically phallic serves reciprocally to mitigate the threat that this poses to the male spectator. Its representation of having and not having – and, beyond this, of female possession as implicated in, and causative of, male lack – is, in addition, for all the space available for alternative appropriations, undeniably male-centred. Woman remains, to cite Lacan, ‘a symptom’ of the man (1975b: 168), albeit of threatening possession rather than, as is usual, lack. Thus, while Mitch’s wife is seen during the scene between Mitch and his son, it is the *effect* of her injunction on Mitch that is emphasized.

### **Recuperation/Familialism**

The fetishistic textual mitigation of the lack figured by the female body is paralleled diegetically when Mitch excitedly checks out the ‘form’ of a well-endowed female jogger: to wit, by a desirous focus on the breast, ‘the originary lost object’ (Stam *et al* 1992: 134), that is similarly evoked when Samantha, with reference to the trans-sexed nativity pageant, speaks of Joseph staring ‘at the wise men’s tits all night’. Moreover, upon Charly’s ‘male’ self returning, she too can be seen to appear to be infected by a fear of castration. As much is signified by her incessant smoking, drinking and swearing that, while being related textually to masculinity, mutually conveys – as with male characters’ recurrent smoking, drinking and swearing, and not least Hal’s toast – another overcompensatory denial of lack.

Somewhat undecidable is the moment when Mitch notes to Charly regarding herself as Samantha: 'I think maybe you forgot to hate yourself for a while'. The comment can be considered, metonymically, in its relation to the 'masculine' Charly, another expression of the tensions implicit to the text's representation of maleness. However, the comment also, and perhaps more manifestly, intersects with the ideological recuperation of the progressiveness of Charly's 'male' determination, a recuperation that is complemented in psychoanalytic terms by a seeming movement away from an apparent Lacanianism to a tacit adduction of ego-psychology. Accordingly, Samantha and Charly become represented less as contingent, linguistically determined selves that, by extension, implicitly reference the multiple splittings that for Lacanian psychoanalysis are constitutive of the self than as related to a single, unfissured – and essentially feminine – self. From this perspective, Charly's 'masculinity' is an unnatural, self-alienating deviation: hence, possibly, Mitch's comment. Not that either of the comment's proposed interpretations necessarily precludes the other. In its relative indeterminacy the comment exemplifies an increasing contradictoriness notable as the text's fixation to the contingencies of sexed identity continue to be suggested simultaneous to their relieving dismissal, with Mitch being the narrative's chief mouthpiece for the 'fact' of Samantha/Charly's unfissured, feminine self. When, in Atlantic City, Charly asserts that Samantha was a 'total fabrication', Mitch observes both that Samantha was a 'Pretty convincing act' and that her 'personality had to come from somebody'. He in addition explains away Charly's attempted – and 'masculinely' aggressive – seduction as an attempt 'to kill a schoolteacher, to bury her once and for all': words spoken in support of his holding up a photograph of Caitlin and Hal from which Charly has torn the figure of Samantha. The implication is of a forced refusal of her 'true', feminine self – and of stable sexed definition – that is likewise conveyed when Charly closes down discussion of her 'convincing act' by pouring a drink; that is, through reference to a motif of masculinity, albeit one that is not only associated metaphorically with an overcompensatory denial of lack but, in a suggestive metonymic slippage, is here related explicitly to a refusal of being woman.

Charly's 'unnaturalness', and her unconvincing denial of her essential, feminine self, is similarly implied when Mitch – upon Charly's failed seduction – reminds her of

her maternal responsibility and she fractiously snaps ‘Samantha had the kid, not me’ and storms out. If a rather reductive and reactionary vision of femininity as motherhood is consequently suggested, its essentiality is nevertheless ‘confirmed’ diegetically by Caitlin having been conceived before Charly’s amnesia. Indeed, not only is *The Long Kiss Goodnight* ultimately not just male- but patriarchally centred, but Charly’s recuperation is ideologically and representationally loaded to an extent that there is, in its assertion, again connoted a sense of disavowal. Witness the peremptory representation of her recuperative acceptance of her maternal, essential femininity. First, having returned to Honesdale, and frightened Raymond, she enters Samantha’s house and searches Caitlin’s room for the charm bracelet on which hangs the key to her deposit box. Hearing singing outside, she lines up Caitlin and Hal before the church in her rifle’s telescopic sight. The act is ambiguous: an ambiguity that is coextensively negated and, paradoxically, against the grain, acknowledged as it is rendered – through the combination of its bracketing by emotive tracks towards and back from Charly and its accompaniment by a yearning musical cue heard when Samantha took leave of Caitlin and Hal – a melodramatically forceful evocation of maternal and familial investment and loss. Then, after the scene is interrupted by the arrival of a car carrying three of Timothy’s men, whom Charly summarily despatches, and when driving at most an hour away from her deposit box and phallic independence, she immediately and unquestioningly accedes to Timothy’s demands upon him informing her of Caitlin’s kidnap. This is preceded by her not reacting to, and thus implicitly accepting, unlike before, Mitch’s assertion that ‘maybe Samantha Caine wasn’t an act’, a claim that further precedes his ‘hate yourself’ comment, the semantic vehemence of which, no matter how the comment is read, is in addition noteworthy.

Tasker points out that the use of the maternal as ‘a motivating factor’ (1998: 69) is a repeated means through which is extenuated in the female action film that which from a patriarchal position is the sexed transgression of the female action hero. Concordantly, the sight of Charly at Niagara Falls firing a machine gun held by her right arm while cradling Caitlin in her left calls forth that of Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) holding a taped-together rifle and flame-thrower and her surrogate daughter Newt (Carrie Henn) in *Aliens* (1986). In turn, while Charly’s embrace of motherhood makes her, in a

pellucid demonstration of ideological efficacy, more sympathetic, then it is also, in a virtual correlate to its feminizing imperative, represented as compromising and weakening. Apart from curtailing her independence, and returning her to danger, it makes her increasingly dependent upon Mitch, who inversely and with narrative illogic, and in a heightening of textual contradiction, intermittently becomes phallicly potent. He is thus instrumental in their locating and temporarily turning the tables on Timothy through a phone tap, entrusted by Charly to lay down ‘cover fire’ when she attempts to rescue Caitlin and, on being blown from captivity, able instantly to throw Timothy’s knife into a guard’s throat. Similarly noteworthy with respect to Charly’s increased vulnerability and her changed relation to and dependence upon Mitch is the tender situation the characters share just before she attempts to rescue Caitlin, which ends with Charly gently kissing Mitch, and during which she says, with sad disdain: ‘They’re gonna blow my head off ... This is the last time I’ll ever be pretty’. However, although this suggests a concern with appearance of a different order to her earlier complaint about Samantha’s ass, and although her kiss contrasts with the sexualized kisses with which she tries to seduce Mitch, both the situation at hand, in its apparent finality, and the seduction scene serve, in different ways, to uphold ‘the recurrent taboo on miscegenation’ (ibid.: 85). Moreover, as Charly is subject to reactionary representational recuperation, so the representation of Mitch, despite the text’s seeming ‘critical’ awareness, and as he acts both to the benefit of Charly and Caitlin and as Charly’s maternal conscience, conforms to Donald Bogle’s contention that in the bi-racial buddy pairing ‘black men are a cross between toms and mummies’ (1991: 276).<sup>22</sup>

The image of Charly holding a machine gun and Caitlin can be seen further, in its fusion of the professional and the personal, the masculine and the maternal, to underline Samantha/Charly as a unified ego. If this likewise clarifies, retrospectively, Samantha and Charly’s shared threatening of Raymond, then the fusion of the professional and the personal, the masculine and the maternal, is foregrounded when Charly and Caitlin are imprisoned in the freezer. Not only does Charly use Caitlin’s baby doll as a source and her tooth brace as a conduit for the kerosene that, enabling their escape, is lit by one of the matches that Caitlin carries to light a candle in a vigil for her mother, but Charly’s ‘masculine’ physical efforts are fused with maternal embraces and her imprecations with

endearments: ‘Oh no, baby. No, you’re not gonna die. They are.... Hey, should we get a dog?’

Problematizing the revelation of Charly’s essential femininity that occasions these representational fusions is the relation of Caitlin’s cast, which is shown in close-up, and in which she keeps the matches with which she lights what are, as instanced at Niagara Falls, phallic candles, to the text’s contrary suggestion of contingent sexual determination. The lit kerosene and the explosion nevertheless result in a golden glow that, with further representational fusion, reflects that which lights ‘domestic’ situations throughout: be it even the shots of the interior of Waldman’s house, the scene in which the kidnapped Caitlin is shown sleeping or Charly’s lining-up of Caitlin and Hal in her telescopic sight. In turn, just as the explosion stands in visual contrast to the blue-grey coldness of the freezer, so the film’s domestic lighting stands in contradistinction to the wintry exteriors in which much of the film’s action occurs, being a contrast presaged by the credit sequence, in which the images associative of Samantha are ‘warm’ and golden, whereas those associative of Charly are ‘cold’ and bleached-out. As the sequence in addition introduces the culturally conventional, reciprocal oppositions of private and public, feminine and masculine to which *The Long Kiss Goodnight* – whatever its representational contortions – unswervingly conforms, so the related visual opposition carries evaluative connotations that are made literal in the credit sequence’s ‘domestic’ and ‘professional’ images being in, respectively, positive and negative. With the domestic thus privileged visually, not only is it, inescapably, privileged ideologically, but its representation yet further underpins the ‘desirability’ of Charly’s maternal, feminine recuperation. Moreover, with Charly’s ideological recuperation accompanied by a seeming explanatory switch from Lacanian psychoanalysis to ego-psychology, so it is suggestive that Lacan, among his many attacks on ego-psychology, berates its taking ‘as its criterion of “success” a successful adaptation to society’ (1960: 306). More particularly, Lacan elsewhere describes ego-psychology as reducing psychoanalysis ideologically to ‘the propagation of a style that calls itself the *American way of life*’ (1973: 127).

As Charly’s anti-familialism is represented negatively, so Chapter’s villainy is underscored by its desecration of familial norms. Apart from Charly’s various and, from

the text's recuperative perspective, 'aberrant' father-figures, consider Operation Honeymoon, which centres upon the fabled honeymoon location of Niagara Falls, or the euphemisms 'Uncle Max' and 'engaged', code for the CIA and 'locked onto target'. By contrast, Mitch seeks redemption, to do 'one thing right', through his suicidal attempt to rescue Caitlin, to restore her to her mother, when upon escaping from the freezer she hides in the tool box of the tanker carrying the chemical weapon. Against this, and in a further contrast to Perkins, whose paternal gesture of the gift of the baby doll to Caitlin ironically results, through its appropriation by Charly, both in his downfall and a final restitution of family, Timothy's smirking evil is capped by his anti-familial callousness. Not only does he plan that Charly and Caitlin's deaths be 'written off' as 'some crazy mommy' who 'kidnapped her own kid, died with her in a blizzard', and threatens, with due accord to the text's castration references, and further implication of Caitlin's 'male' determination, to 'blind' her and 'shoot out her knees', but he refuses to spare Caitlin in the face of both Charly's claim regarding his paternity and his own confirmation that Caitlin has his eyes.

Yet that, in a text marked by male-centred, near-pathological fixation to the phallus and castration, possession and lack, the narrative's most potent male figure is thus demonized itself invites consideration. We would here appear to be returned to the context of post-feminism: with respect to which it is nevertheless telling that in his 'unacceptable' masculinity Timothy is, towards the end of the film, formally paired with Charly. Specifically, upon the climactic fight with Charly, and his falling from the Rainbow Bridge, not only is Timothy symbolically 'reborn' via a circular drain, but the shot of him climbing from the water cuts, in almost a matching of action, to that of Charly climbing from beneath the bridge. As this would seem to compound the contradictions apparent in the film's representation of gender and sexed identity, so it must needs be noted that post-feminism is in its meaning unfixed, and invites as a concept-cum-term once more reflection upon the 'incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier'. Simplifying, 'post-feminism' shifts variously from signifying positively the notion of feminist redundancy to signifying, uncannily, its seeming opposite, that we have been living, as Susan Faludi (1992) puts it, in a time of backlash, of patriarchal reassertion *après* feminism, to signifying the conception, informed by feminism's de-

essentializing crossing with the discourses of post-structuralism and postmodernism, that feminism is but one cause and gender but one – and contingent – determinant in the matrix of demands and differences that constitute identity.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, for all its seeming or potential progressiveness, the latter notion of the contingency and contingent significance of gender can yet be regarded as being complicit, through default, in the sustained patriarchal dominance that has been a practically invariable concomitant of postmodernity. That said, if, at the risk of stretching matters, *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, in its acknowledgment and essayed recuperation of the contingency of sexed identity, might be claimed to track the terms and contours of this sustained dominance, then its continuing textual contradictions hint at unresolved, and possibly unresolvable, strains within the same.

### **Resolution/Irresolution**

Recuperations and tensions resound through the film's closing scenes. Charly's representation continues to imply her unified self, to fuse the professional and the personal, the masculine and the maternal, as she draws the machine gun fire of the 'reborn' Timothy away from Caitlin before, raising herself acrobatically by a cable, shooting him screaming from his helicopter. Mitch's redemption is completed as he returns ostensibly from the dead to save Charly and Caitlin by driving them from the massed forces of Perkins and Timothy and the exploding tanker.<sup>25</sup> He is last seen having his heroism aired publicly by an appearance on *Larry King Live*, during which the host notes that Mitch has been 'singled out' for praise 'by The President of the United States'. Mitch, however, cracks a lame sexual joke that suggests his undiminished lack. In addition, his appearance on television – which is shown as being watched by his son and, with open-mouthed amazement, his wife – is implicitly set up by Samantha/Charly through The President. In short, Mitch is finally recuperated back into the ranks of 'castrated' black male characters. It is, moreover, indicative of the text's residual racism that Mitch only survives *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, and the film only escapes an adherence to what Tasker (hopefully ironically) terms 'an unproblematic assumption' of the action film, 'that the black man is willing to sacrifice himself for the white hero' (1993: 36), because of the responses of test audiences, who were 'so distraught' at

Mitch's death in the previewed cut that 'the film had to be reshot to keep him alive' (Felperin 1996: 53).

Samantha/Charly sets up Mitch's television appearance while speaking to The President on a mobile phone as she drives a red convertible through emphatically golden countryside: images that but further intimate, in their combination of elements connotative of the public and the private, the phallic and the domestic, Samantha/Charly as a unified ego. Moreover, Samantha/Charly, who again answers to the name of 'Miss Caine', would appear to have embraced what the text represents as her essential feminine self: when The President enquires whether she would consider returning to the State Department, she responds that she has 'a stack of papers to grade'. Indeed, her respectful deference to The President implies a restoration of 'proper' patriarchal order. However, when The President holds out the offer of 'substantial' remuneration, Samantha/Charly's reply, that he would 'be surprised how much a good teacher can earn', is accompanied by a tilt down to a metal briefcase, presumably recovered from her deposit box, that contains money, passports and credit cards. Samantha/Charly, then, still symbolically *has* the phallus. She also has Mitch's naked woman pendant hanging from her rear-view mirror, an object that sits somewhat inexplicably in relation to her revealed, undiminished phallic potency. Is its purpose somehow, through its association with Mitch's lack, to mitigate this potency? Or is its presence, perhaps, another indication, given its overcompensatory connotations, of the text's obsessive relation of masculinity with feared castration? Or does it signify something else entirely?

The scene's contradictions are less resolved than left resonating by the scene that ends the film. As Samantha/Charly sits, eating, beside Hal amid more emphatically golden countryside, her appearance implies not only a conclusive fusion of her two selves – she is still blonde, but her hair is a compromise shoulder-length; her white dress contrasts with the clothes worn by Charly, but is less frumpy than the clothes worn by Samantha – but a conclusive excision of Charly's 'masculinity'. With Caitlin, meanwhile, shown stroking some small animals, the scene presents, quite self-consciously, a familial/pastoral idyll. However, when Hal notes, 'I could just sit out here forever. Couldn't you?', the also barefoot Samantha/Charly does not reply verbally, but toys with a knife before throwing it, forcefully, into a tree stump. An act that recalls Charly's

earlier, destructive return, and, thus, apparently admits remaining, unresolved tensions in the film's representation of sexed identity, it is nevertheless informed by an ironic self-consciousness that – underlined diegetically by the smiling, amused responses of Hal and Samantha/Charly – would seem to seek to erase these tensions in their admission. Yet as an analogous knowingness attends the represented, (over-)explicit pastoral idyll, so the scene effects unconvincing closure. Moreover, in such knowingness there is, as before, evoked a sense of disavowal. The text, at the last, would thus appear to suggest in its very assertion the insufficiency of the comforting, essentialist normativity (ideologically) of the patriarchal order and (metadiscursively) of ego-psychology before the seemingly undeniable, biologically contingent, 'Lacanian' model of sexed determination that, first apparently implied, then recuperatively denied, reverberates throughout – and not least in the text's representational investment in phallic empowerment and castration, in possession and lack.

Such, at least, is the interpretation offered by this particular reading, this particular transference situation involving text and analyst. There remains, however, the question of the text's desire. Underpinning all would appear to be a desire for a reassuring recognition, for a shared and tempering – or even empowering – acknowledgment of that which is avowedly threatening. This, in turn, raises the issue of the desire of the analyst. According to Lacan, while 'desire becomes bound up with the desire of the Other', 'in this loop lies the desire to know' (1960: 301). Unpacking this with reference to textual analysis, Jane Gallop posits that we 'read to learn what the Other ... knows', to learn what are the text's desires, 'in the hope of understanding and satisfying our own' (1985: 185). Nevertheless, although it can but be conceded that the writer of this piece shares a broad cultural – if not institutional – context with the text analysed, the desire that drives this interpretation of *The Long Kiss Goodnight* demands another analysis, the establishment of another situation of transference, the results of which would be neither more nor less contingent, provisional and open to revision than those presented by this article. Analysis remains, that is, as always, interminable.

---

#### Notes

1. Prior to *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, Black's other screenwriting credits comprised a joint story credit (with Warren Murphy) for *Lethal Weapon 2* (1989) and joint screenplay credits (with Fred

- Dekker) for *The Monster Squad* (1987) and (with David Arnott) for *The Last Action Hero* (1993). Subsequent to *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, Black has attained a screenplay and directing credit for *Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang* (2005), directing credits for *Iron Man Three* (2013), the television movie *Edge* (2015) and *The Nice Guys* (2016) as well as joint screenplay credits for the last three films (with, respectively, Drew Pearce, Dekker and Anthony Bagarozzi). A spec script is a complete script – as opposed to, say, a treatment – sent to a producer for consideration. For discussion of the emergence, development and contours of high-concept filmmaking, see Wyatt (1994).
2. With regard to ‘auteurist’ readings of Black’s scripting, Benedict Carver, for example lists as ‘familiar ingredients’ ‘interracial pairing, family life disrupted by external forces, and heroes that perform outlandish, often ridiculous stunts’ (1996: 41), while Mark Salisbury writes that ‘as befits the writer of *Lethal Weapon* and *The Last Boy Scout*, there’s action for starters, crude buddy banter and a story that’s just sublimely ridiculous’ (1996: 15).
  3. As Heath has observed that, within Žižek’s work, films become ‘the material with which to explicate psychoanalysis’ (1999: 36), so Matthew Flisfeder contends, in a monograph that revolves around Žižek’s ideas: ‘Rather than theorizing film ... film theory must focus on theorizing ideology by way of film criticism’ (2012: 5).
  4. There is a deal about this critical approach, as it has tended to be evidenced, that gives pause – such as its apparent installation of an (un-Lacanian) transcendent subject; its uncertain politics, and political use-value; and its questionable, domesticated conception of the key Lacanian notions of *jouissance* and the Real. This article is, even so, not the space further to address these issues.
  5. The point is indebted to Gallop (1985: 91).
  6. Sigmund Freud makes note of a ‘path’ leading ‘from the investigation of dreams to the analysis of works of imagination’ (1914: 36).
  7. For Jakobson on metaphor and metonymy, see Jakobson (1956). For Saussure on the relationship of signified to signifier, see Saussure (1916).
  8. Arguably the most influential recent consideration of the *point de capiton* is that of Žižek, who places it as that which ‘creates and sustains the *identity* of a given ideological field’ (1989: 87). Specifically, ‘the multitude of “floating signifiers”, of proto-ideological elements, is structured into a unified field through the intervention of a certain “nodal point” (the Lacanian *point de capiton*) which “quilts” them, stops their sliding and fixes their meaning’ (ibid.: 87). This does not necessarily contest what is proposed by this article, for the *point de capiton* as described by Žižek can – switching perspective – well be considered the punctuating motif of a particular ideological discourse.
  9. Brooks is writing specifically about verbal storytelling, but his points hold for all narrative.
  10. Lacan, in his conception of the Name-of-the-Father, refers implicitly to the slaying of the primal father that Freud describes as the founding moment of patriarchal society:
 

the necessity of [Freud’s] reflexion led him to link the appearance of the signifier of the Father, as author of the Law, with death, even to the murder of the Father – thus showing that if this murder is the fruitful moment of debt through which the subject binds himself for life to the Law, the symbolic Father is, in so far as he signifies this Law, the dead Father (1959: 199).

Regarding the death of the primal father, see Freud (1913: 132-61).
  11. Not that the man ‘has’ the phallus, as he no less than the woman partakes of the lack that attends symbolic castration. Man’s having and woman’s being the phallus are, rather, ‘brought about by the intervention of a “to seem”’ (Lacan, 1958: 289). Further, while the opposition of having and being the phallus undergirds Lacan’s conception of sexual difference, the latter underwent elaboration and complication, as witness his discussion of his formulas of sexuation in his seminar of 1972-73 (1975a: 78-89).
  12. Markedly, in arguing, contra ego-psychology, that psychoanalysis presupposes ‘history in its very principle’, Lacan claims that it is the ‘discipline’ that ‘had re-established the bridge linking modern man to the ancient myths’ (1956b: 115).
  13. The claims made in the paragraph demand some substantiation. With respect to the apparent totalizing reductiveness of Althusser’s model of interpellation, there are – simplifying – two main criticisms. First, that his account of the subject’s interpellation is, in Terry Eagleton’s words, ‘a good deal too monistic’ and passes over ‘the discrepant, contradictory ways in which subjects may be ideologically accosted – partially, wholly, or hardly at all – by discourses which themselves

- form no obvious cohesive unity' (1991: 145). Second, and, given Althusser's 'Lacanian' methodology, perhaps more seriously, that his model of interpellation fails to acknowledge what Žižek terms 'a certain leftover' (1989: 111), the insatiable and disruptive desire that, within the Lacanian schema, attends every identification-cum-interpellation, and that it thus precludes even the possibility of the subject refusing or rebelling against its interpellation. However, such totalizing reductiveness is maybe more apparent than actual. On one hand, Althusser describes the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) through which the subject is interpellated as being far from 'monistic' in form and effect, as being rather 'multiple, distinct, "relatively autonomous" and capable of providing an objective field to contradictions' (1969-70: 141-42). On the other, not only do Althusser's references to "bad subjects" and to the ideology 'that a ruled class manages to defend in and against' the ISAs suggest both the refusal of and a resistance to interpellation, but he stipulates that both the ideology "realized" in the ISAs and that which contests the same 'goes beyond them', 'comes from elsewhere', are, with due Marxist emphasis, generated by the class struggle, by classes' 'conditions of existence, their practices, their experience of the struggle' (ibid.: 169, 172, 173), by, implicitly, their desire. With respect to the long-standing academic unfashionability of Althusser's model of interpellation, and of Althusserian Marxism in general, Žižek in the late 1980s noted the already existent, if 'enigmatic', eclipse and repression of 'the Althusserian school' (1989: 1), a situation that has worsened in the interim. But what is repressed always returns, and not only is Althusser's model still an intermittent, if too often unreflected upon, point of reference within Film, Media and Cultural Studies, but even its contestation requires its negotiation.
14. Writing of 'male sexual symbols', Freud ponders 'whether the replacement of the male limb by another limb, the foot or the hand, should be described as symbolic', concluding that: 'We are, I think, compelled to do so' (1916: 189).
  15. For a further, and largely complementary, discussion of Charly's comment and its connotations, see Brown (2004: 56-57).
  16. Freud defines the 'compulsion to repeat' as a return of the repressed 'which over-rides the pleasure principle' (1922: 22).
  17. In this, *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, while produced before 9/11, suggestively foreshadows certain theories regarding American governmental and/or agential involvement in or responsibility for the events of 9/11. With respect to such theories, see, for example, Tarpley (2007).
  18. Interestingly, in Black's original spec script the hostage was written as a woman; see Pace (1996: 43).
  19. Consistent with Lacan's 'return to Freud', his account of the masochistic subject develops Freud's argument that 'masochism is actually sadism turned round upon the subject's own ego', a situation in which the 'person as object' whom the subject exercises 'violence or power upon' is 'given up and replaced by the subject's self', and in which an 'extraneous person is once more sought as object' to 'take over the role of the subject' (1915: 127).
  20. The knife's potential as a weapon is confirmed when it is picked up as such by One-Eyed Jack when he attacks Samantha/Charly.
  21. According to Lacan, as 'the symptom is a metaphor', so 'desire is a metonymy' (1957: 175).
  22. See similarly, with respect to this incident, Neroni (2005: 155).
  23. A like point is made by King (2000: 112).
  24. For respectively summary and more developed consideration of writing on and the meanings of post-feminism, see Gamble (2001) and Genz and Brabon (2009).
  25. For a detailed stylistic analysis of this incident, see King (2000: 91-95).

## References

- Althusser, L. (1964/1971) Freud and Lacan. In: *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*. Trans. B. Brewster. London: New Left Books: 181-202.
- Althusser, L. (1969-70/1971) Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation). In: *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*. Trans. B. Brewster. London: New Left Books: 121-73.
- Bogle, D. (1991) *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*. New York: Continuum.

- Brooks, P. (1994) *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Brown, J. A. (2004) Gender, Sexuality, and Toughness: The Bad Girls of Action Film and Comic Books. In: S. A. Inness (ed.) *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 47-74.
- Carver, B. (1996) The Long Kiss Goodnight. *Screen International* 1080, 18-24 October: 41.
- Clover, C. J. (1992) *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. London: BFI.
- Coppock, V., Hayden, D. and Richter, I. (1995) *The Illusions of 'Post-Feminism': New Women, Old Myths*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Eagleton, T. (1991) *Ideology: An Introduction*. London: Verso.
- Faludi, S. (1992) *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Fanon, F. (1952/1986) *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. C. L. Markmann. London: Pluto Press.
- Felperin, L. (1996) The Long Kiss Goodnight. *Sight and Sound* 6 (12): 52-53.
- Flisfeder, M. (2012) *The Symbolic, the Sublime, and Slavoj Žižek's Theory of Film*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Freud, S. (1913/1955) Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics. *Standard Edition 13*. London: Hogarth Press: 1-161.
- Freud, S. (1914/1955) On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement. *Standard Edition 14*. London: Hogarth Press: 1-66.
- Freud, S. (1915/1955) Instincts and their Vicissitudes. *Standard Edition 14*. London: Hogarth Press: 109-40.
- Freud, S. (1916/1955) Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (Parts I and II). *Standard Edition 15*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1920/1955) Beyond the Pleasure Principle. *Standard Edition 18*. London: Hogarth Press: 1-64.
- Freud, S. (1924/1955) The Economic Problem of Masochism. *Standard Edition 19*. London: Hogarth Press: 155-70.
- Gallop, J. (1985) *Reading Lacan*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Gamble, S. (2001) Postfeminism. In: S. Gamble (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*. London: Routledge: 43-54.
- Genz, S. and Brabon, B. A. (2009) *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Heath, S. (1975a) Film and System: Terms of Analysis, Part I. *Screen* 16 (1): 7-77.
- Heath, S. (1975b) Film and System: Terms of Analysis, Part II. *Screen* 16 (2): 91-113.
- Heath, S. (1977/1981) Film Performance. In: *Questions of Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 113-30.
- Heath, S. (1999) Cinema and Psychoanalysis: Parallel Histories. In: J. Bergstrom (ed.) *Endless Night: Cinema and Psychoanalysis, Parallel Histories*. Berkeley: University of California Press: 25-56.
- Jakobson, R. (1956) Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbance. In: R. Jakobson and M. Halle, *Fundamentals of Language*. The Hague: Mouton: 53-82.
- King, G. (2000) *Spectacular Narratives: Hollywood in the Age of the Blockbuster*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Lacan, J. (1949/1977) The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience. In: *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London: Tavistock: 1-7.
- Lacan, J. (1956a/1977) The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis. In: *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London: Tavistock: 30-113.
- Lacan, J. (1956b/1977) The Freudian thing, or the meaning of the return to Freud in psychoanalysis. In: *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London: Tavistock: 114-45.

- Lacan, J. (1957/1977) The agency of the letter in the unconscious or reason since Freud. In: *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London: Tavistock: 146-78.
- Lacan, J. (1958/1977) The signification of the phallus. In: *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London: Tavistock: 281-91.
- Lacan, J. (1959/1977) On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis. In: *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London: Tavistock: 179-225.
- Lacan, J. (1960/1977) The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious. In: *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London: Tavistock: 292-325.
- Lacan, J. (1961/1977) The direction of the treatment and the principles of its power. In: *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London: Tavistock: 226-80.
- Lacan, J. (1973/1994) *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. Ed. J.-A. Miller. Trans. A. Sheridan. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Lacan, J. (1975a/1999) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge, Encore 1972-1973*. Ed. J.-A. Miller. Trans. B. Fink. New York: Norton.
- Lacan, J. (1975b/1982) Seminar of 21 January 1975. In: J. Mitchell and J. Rose (eds.) *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the 'école freudienne'*. Trans. J. Rose. Basingstoke: Macmillan: 162-71.
- McGowan, T. and Kunkle, S. (2004) Introduction: Lacanian Psychoanalysis in Film Theory. In: T. McGowan and S. Kunkle (eds) *Lacan and Contemporary Film*. New York: Other Press: xi-xxix.
- Mulvey, L. (1975) Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Screen* 16 (3): 6-18.
- Nathan, I. (1997) The Long Kiss Goodnight. *Empire* 96: 128.
- Neroni, H. (2005) *The Violent Woman: Femininity, Narrative, and Violence in Contemporary American Cinema*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Pace, W. R. (1996) *The Long Kiss Goodnight*. *Creative Screenwriting* 3 (3): 38-53.
- Publisher's Note to 'Freud and Lacan' (1971) In: L. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*. Trans. B. Brewster. London: New Left Books: 177-80.
- Rose, J. (1982) Introduction – II. In: J. Mitchell and J. Rose (eds.) *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan & the 'école freudienne'*. Trans. J. Rose. Basingstoke: Macmillan: 27-57.
- Salisbury, M. (1996). The Long Kiss Goodnight. *Premiere* (UK) 4 (11): 15.
- Saussure, F. de (1916/1974) *Course in General Linguistics*. Ed. C. Bally and A. Sechehaye in collaboration with A. Reidlinger. Trans. W. Baskin. London: Fontana.
- Stam, R., Burgoyne, R. and Flitterman-Lewis, S. (1992) *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, post-structuralism and beyond*. London: Routledge.
- Tarpley, W. (2007) *9/11 Synthetic Terror: Made in USA*. Joshua Tree: Progressive Press.
- Tasker, Y. (1993) *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, genre and the action cinema*. London: Routledge.
- Tasker, Y. (1998) *Working Girls: Gender and sexuality in popular cinema*. London: Routledge.
- Walker, M. (1982) Melodrama and the American Cinema. *Movie* 29/30: 2-38.
- Wyatt, J. (1994) *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood*. Austin: University of Texas Press
- Žižek, S. (1989) *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso.

### Films Cited

- Aliens* (USA/UK, James Cameron, 1986)
- CutThroat Island* (USA/France/Italy/Germany, Renny Harlin, 1995)
- Driving Miss Daisy* (USA, Bruce Beresford, 1989)
- Edge* (TVM, USA, Shane Black, 2015)
- Iron Man Three* (USA/China, Shane Black, 2013)
- Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang* (USA, Shane Black, 2005)
- The Last Action Hero* (USA, John McTiernan, 1993)

*The Last Boy Scout* (USA, Tony Scott, 1991)  
*Lethal Weapon* (USA, Richard Donner, 1987)  
*Lethal Weapon 2* (USA, Richard Donner, 1989)  
*The Long Kiss Goodnight* (USA, Renny Harlin, 1996)  
*The Monster Squad* (USA, Fred Dekker, 1987)  
*The Nice Guys* (USA, Shane Black, 2016)  
*Touch of Evil* (USA, Orson Welles, 1958)