The Staging of the Bourgeois Imaginary in *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* (1990)

by Ruth D. Johnston

Against a backdrop of theorizations of the bourgeois subject and the grotesque body, abjection, and carnival, this essay analyzes the function of the "demarcating imperative" manifested in the spatial and temporal structures of The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover *(1990) and relates these to its spectacles of disgust on the one hand and to the critique of consumer society on the other.*

Central to Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* (1990) is a critique of consumer society, personified in the thief, Spica. This social criticism is carried out not only in the film's themes but also in its formal structures. The Frans Hals painting that dominates the principal setting of the film and the Dutch masters of still life "quoted" throughout it participate in the critique of consumer society as they shape the film's temporal and spatial structures. Equally important are the very disturbing scenes that evoke horror and disgust by dwelling on putrefaction, excrement, and secretion. However, existing scholarship either fails to articulate precisely the connections among these seemingly contradictory concerns or questions the existence of any such connections. This inquiry is motivated by the search for a theoretical apparatus adequate for relating the film's social criticism to its formal structures on the one hand and to its spectacles of disgust on the other.

The Politics of/as Aesthetics. In a number of interviews, Peter Greenaway has explicitly stated that a central preoccupation of *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* is the critique of consumer society during the Thatcher years: "The difference in this film is to do generally with wishing to enlarge my vocabulary and with my anger and passion about the current British political situation. Since this is a movie about consumer society, it's about greed—a society's, a man's. A man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing."[1]

Nevertheless, critics have questioned the film's political impact. For instance, Leonard Quart dismisses its politics as "too literal and facile. Viewing gross, working-class Albert as a representative of the excesses of the Thatcher ethos lets the audience off the hook by allowing it to feel superior to this barbarian and psychopath." Quart goes on to argue that although "*The Cook* . . . clearly means to have political and social implications, . . . its real distinction lies in its form."[2]

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In a similar vein, Michael Walsh characterizes the film's political critique as an ideologically fashionable liberal reaction to the excesses of the 1980s, unsupported by a historical understanding of British politics. He charges American critics with overlooking Spica's accent and manners as marks of social class and argues that "the film is symptomatic as much as analytic of Thatcherism. . . . The proletarian monster central to *The Cook* suggests that this film has joined in Thatcher's vengeance on the imagined values of the lower social orders." In a parallel move to Quart's, Walsh leaves the question of sociopolitical interpretation "to introduce some thoughts on the stylistic values of this very striking film."[3]

The problem with such analyses is that in their attempts to relate the film to British politics, Quart and Walsh, among others, fail to realize that its formal concerns and social criticism are inextricable. For this reason, Peter Wollen's reading is much more on target in that he situates Greenaway's oeuvre in a "British New Wave" that emerged during the Thatcher years and that occurred many years after the expiration of the New Wave as a concept in other European countries. Wollen's explanation for this delayed British New Wave—the absence of a modernist tradition in Britain—can be correlated with Walsh's *New Left Review*-inspired analysis of British history, which questions if Thatcherism actually represents a departure in British politics. More specifically, while Walsh maintains that the British crisis ought to be traced back to the settlement of 1688, which was promoted by an agrarian gentry whose values prevailed and were adopted by the bourgeoisie, Wollen suggests that the 1688 settlement also left its stamp on the history of the visual arts and literature in Britain. He refers to "a bloodless transfer of power to the Bloomsbury group, within the traditional intelligentsia itself," which resulted in the assimilation of British modernism "into the ongoing high culture with hardly a break."[4]

At the same time, because of his affinities with international modernism, Greenaway does not engage in a head-on confrontation with Thatcherism as a "political filmmaker"; rather, his political critique proceeds "from a less explicit artistic position."[5] The school of modernism with which Greenaway is associated subscribed to an aesthetic that subordinated content to structure. No wonder then that Greenaway's critique of Thatcherism targets especially its philistinism and vulgarity and is carried out in formal terms that relate/compare the Thatcher period in British history to the European transition to cultural modernity.[6]

In keeping with this line of argument, the film's pictorial references must be examined from this double perspective. Probably the Frans Hals painting *Banquet of the Officers of the St. George Civic Company* (1616), which dominates the principal setting of the film, Le Hollandais restaurant, most clearly links formal and sociopolitical concerns. First, this painting is actually reproduced, not merely "quoted" indirectly. Second, setting in this film does not function as mere "background"; the group portrait therefore assumes primary importance in that it associates the emergence of the bourgeoisie in Holland with the concomitant development in Dutch painting of individual and group portraiture.[7] The film sets up a structure of imitation in relation to the painting that does not function in a unidirectional way. That is to say, the feasting Haarlem corps is a representation of conspicuous consumption duplicated by Spica and his gang. At the same

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Figure 1. The Frans Hals group portrait in the restaurant is a representation of conspicuous consumption duplicated by Spica and his gang in *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* (Peter Greenaway, 1990). Courtesy of Photofest.

time, Spica's vulgarity and ruthlessness expose aspects of the emergent bourgeoisie that the group portrait of the militia club fails to represent. Spica incorporates elements that are rejected in the process of bourgeois identity formation but that return at the level of the Imaginary.[8]

More important, this structure of repetition operates not just on the thematic level; it dominates the film's spatial and temporal organization as well (i.e., the enunciation or narrative discourse). In this connection, Greenaway has acknowledged favoring painterly considerations over dramatic ones: "In some ways my films are more satisfactorily explained by the esthetic one brings to painting than to movies." Greenaway further observes the recurrence of certain painterly preoccupations in his films, "like the problems of masking that first appeared in European table paintings—arranging people around a table so that no one is obliterated by anyone else."[9] So, in addition to the historical reference, the Hals painting offers a model for the resolution of formal issues, because the figures in the painting were made separately. "Hals had the novel inspiration of grouping them casually around the table, so that it looks and even feels as if they were painted together."[10]

The linking of social and formal concerns is perhaps less obvious (though nevertheless crucial) in the many quotations of still lifes and other paintings because it is possible to overemphasize this genre's neutrality, as do some art historians who draw on Svetlana Alper's distinction between the Dutch and Renaissance (or southern) scopic regimes. Thus, Martin Jay maintains that "Dutch art savors the discrete particularity of visual existence and resists the temptation to allegorize or typologize what it sees."[11] In Norman Bryson's more balanced account, Alpers rejects only "a mechanical and exaggerated allegorizing approach to Dutch art"[12] in favor of a

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semiotic approach for which the interest resides not in the presence or absence of allegory but rather in the relation between allegory and naturalism. Bryson's reading of still lifes has the advantage of being more in keeping with Greenaway's, who explains his attraction to the painting of the Dutch golden age because of its appeal on both allegorical and literal levels: "I would like my movies to work the way Dutch painting did, on literal and metaphorical levels."[13]

At the same time, Bryson's analysis of *vanitas*, a category of still life, suggests why critics of both Dutch painting and Greenaway's films might overlook their moral/political vision and prefer to focus on their formal appeal. The great visual appeal of *vanitas* pictures seems to compromise their credibility as warnings against the dangers of yielding to material pleasure. But Bryson proposes a reading of the *vanitas* that takes as its premise that "the *vanitas* is *deliberately* built on paradox, and that the conflict between world-rejection and worldly ensnarement is in fact its governing principle."[14] This view makes sense given the genre's historical derivation from a Calvinistic tradition that separates visibility and legibility, image and meaning. In pictorial terms, this division translates into a blocked access to the transcendental in Dutch painting, making for "agonized relations between the verbal and visual discourses" that ought not therefore be reduced to "simply a rhetorical misfortune or the work of hypocrisy."[15]

The Corporeal as the Social. An equally important aspect of the film is its insistence on the corporeal. Greenaway has commented that "there is a medieval-like feeling in *The Cook, the Thief* about this rotten, worm-infested body which is covered in an extraordinary gloss of elaborate clothing, feathered hats and that sort of thing. It is as though there is an attempt to try and hide the horror, the despair, the sense of violence and lust that's contained only just underneath."[16]

Existing scholarship analyzes such eruptions of the corporeal as representations of nature. For example, Vernon Gras reads the film as "yet another rendering of the nature/culture conflict" with Georgina representing the forces of nature. Gras's archetypal approach to Greenaway's films strips them of their historical/cultural specificity: "This tragic . . . outcome is costumed and staged with great historical variety [in different Greenaway films]. But underneath all this variety, like an archetype or musical configuration, exists the earth goddess and her dying consort."[17] Curiously, even Nita Rollins, whose discussions of fashion and Dutch portraiture are placed in a rich historical context, treats the body as a universal term—a memento mori or a reminder of the futility of consumerism to prevent the inevitable decay of the body and, ultimately, death. She compares the function of this corporeality to that of the skull in Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533), referred to in Lacan's discussion of anamorphosis. Just as Lacan's discussion ignores cultural specificity, so Rollins misses the specific medieval reference in Greenaway's comment, and her analysis consequently sets up a reductive binary opposition between the body and the fashionable cover-up, much as Gras reduces the film to a nature/culture opposition.[18]

The tendency to universalize and naturalize corporeal references has its parallel in the reading of pictorial references strictly in formal terms. If, as Bryson

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demonstrates, "Dutch still life affluence is rarely presented through a neutral inventory of goods" but is always interpreted through categories of morality drawn from the medieval past,[19] then neither does the body function only as a universal memento mori in opposition to the social. Its representation is more contradictory and unstable, in that it is tied to the depiction of social transgressions. Further, because corporeal references are as pervasive as allusions to the Dutch scopic regime, they warrant as much attention because the film suggests that both structurally and thematically these two aspects are mutually constitutive. That is, the film is built around the tension between agencies of order (e.g., setting, costume, tempo), all of which contribute to its visual appeal, and its disruption (e.g., filth, decay, excrement, violence, adultery, cannibalism), all of which mobilize agencies of disgust. This tension must be analyzed in culturally specific terms.

The Abject (and Bourgeois) Subject. What is needed is a theoretical framework that can describe more accurately the relation of body, aesthetic forms, psychic forms, geographical place, and social formation. Such is provided by Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's work on carnival as they rework the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva.

Stallybrass and White emphasize the cultural specificity of body attitudes. Their discussion of carnival draws on Bakhtin's opposition of the grotesque body and the classical body. The former is associated with precapitalist Europe and clarifies Greenaway's reference to the film's "medieval-like feeling." The grotesque body is gaping, protruding, irregular, secreting, multiple, and changing, in contrast to the classical body, which is elevated, monumental, closed, static, self-contained, symmetrical, identified with the "high" culture of the post-Renaissance, and associated with the bourgeoisie.[20] Bakhtin expresses nostalgia for precapitalist practices associated with the grotesque body, but he does not explain how these practices were transformed in industrial Europe.

Kristeva effects a synthesis of Bakhtin's opposition of the classical and grotesque body with the Lacanian symbolic/imaginary opposition in formulating a theory of abjection. In this connection, she also draws on anthropologist Mary Douglas's analysis in *Purity and Danger* of the function of social taboos and ritual practices, especially defilement, in constituting the body by establishing its boundaries. Douglas advances an idea of the body not as the antithesis of society but as its prototype, in that the social group is constituted by the exclusion of filth, which is not a quality in itself but is defined by its relation to a boundary.[21]

Kristeva's theory of abjection extends Douglas's analysis to describe the constitution of the subject as a process of exclusion. The "abject," which precedes the object, refers to elements that are originally part of identity but that, through expulsion, are constituted as alien. This is why excrementary functions, which foreground questions of inside/outside, assume such centrality in Kristeva's analysis, for one of her most important contributions is to insist on the importance of boundaries, which, insofar as they are permeable, are sites of ambiguity, where "meaning collapses." One of the most useful insights in the theory of the abject is the recognition that the expelled always haunts the subject and threatens "identity, system,

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order."[22] This insight is useful in thinking about the relation of the bourgeois classic body and the medieval grotesque body, the latter not eliminated but returning in a different form. Kristeva suggests that the theory of abjection can accommodate sociohistorical considerations, for, like incest, the "demarcating imperative, which is subjectively experienced as abjection, varies according to time and space, even though it is universal."[23]

This brings us to Stallybrass and White's project, which is precisely to foreground such sociohistorical considerations. Taking issue with social historians who tend not to concern themselves with processes of sublimation but who adopt a "naively empirical view" and posit "a simple disappearance, the elimination of carnival," Stallybrass and White are concerned with relating "the demonization and the exclusion of the carnivalesque . . . to the victorious emergence of specifically bourgeois practices and languages which reinflected and incorporated this material within a negative, individualist framework."[24] They deploy Kristeva's analysis of abjection and the process of subject formation to describe the mechanisms whereby carnival material is incorporated in the hysteric's discourse, thereby resituating hysteria from a familial to a cultural context and defining its etiology in sociohistorical rather than the universalizing psychosexual terms of Freud's interpretation.

More specifically, Stallybrass and White maintain that in the process of incorporation carnival is transformed: fragmented, marginalized, sublimated, and repressed. This incorporation process is itself double, involving both disavowal and appropriation, because hysteria is a product of repression. Consequently, the content and staging of carnival and hysteria differ. In carnival, the normally suppressed terms of the binary oppositions that organize culture are actually and actively staged in communal ritual. In hysteria, which is a process of "reactive reinforcement," what is staged in private on the conscious level is an "excessive reinforcement of the thought contrary to the one which is to be repressed [carnival]."[25]

The hysteric's rejection of carnival parallels the bourgeois rejection of carnival and the construction of its key elements—food, dirt, mess, sex, and extreme body movements—as grotesque otherness. The reinforcement of the thought contrary to these repressed contents explains why "disgust is a key category in the case histories just as it is in relation to the bourgeois rejection of carnival."[26] Disgust accompanies the exclusion of "filth" in the process of identity formation.[27] At the same time, on the level of the repressed or unconscious, "the exclusion [of other groups and classes] necessary to the formation of social identity at one level is simultaneously a *production* at the level of the Imaginary . . . of a complex hybrid fantasy emerging out of the very attempt to demarcate boundaries."[28]

This theoretical framework permits a more nuanced analysis of the representation of the bourgeoisie in *The Cook, the Thief* because, on the one hand, it accounts for the repeated scenes that mobilize the agencies of disgust as integral to the representation of this class, not merely as a generalized memento mori; and, on the other hand, it illuminates specific textual practices—the enunciation—and relates them to the film's thematic concerns, linking sociopolitical and formal considerations.

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Figure 2. *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* pays homage to Dutch masters of still life. Courtesy of Photofest.

"Identity, System, Order" in *The Cook, the Thief.* The film's concern with identity, system, and order verges on the obsessive. This concern is most obviously displayed in the quotations of paintings, which manifest Greenaway's interest in Renaissance perspective, framed space, and composition. William F. Van Wert, who identifies a number of these citations, argues that they indicate "a serious attempt on Greenaway's part to use cinema to discuss problems of perspective and depth in painting."[29] Thus, Andrea Mantegna's *Dead Christ* (1500) and Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Deyman* (1656) serve as models of foreshortening in the view of the dead Michael from the feet up. Andrea de Castagno's *The Last Supper* (1436) and Rembrandt's *The Syndics of the Draper's Guild* (1661), like the Hals group portrait mentioned above, offer models of group portraiture cited in the supper scenes. Jan Vermeer's *The Cook* (1657) is quoted in one of the kitchen tableaux. But as David Pascoe and Leon Steinmetz argue, *The Cook, the Thief* is above all an homage to Dutch masters of still life: "In a still-life, painted by a master, objects—a flower, a shell, a fruit, a musical instrument—and colors are imbued with metaphysical meaning. A great still life is an encyclopedia of meanings and metaphors, of which an uninitiated viewer sees only the surface. *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* is an encyclopedia of still-lives."[30]

The Cook, the Thief is an encyclopedia of still lifes in that many shots refer to different subgenres of still life. For instance, Pascoe suggests that at one point Georgina and Michael make love in the middle of fifty or more dead birds, a shot

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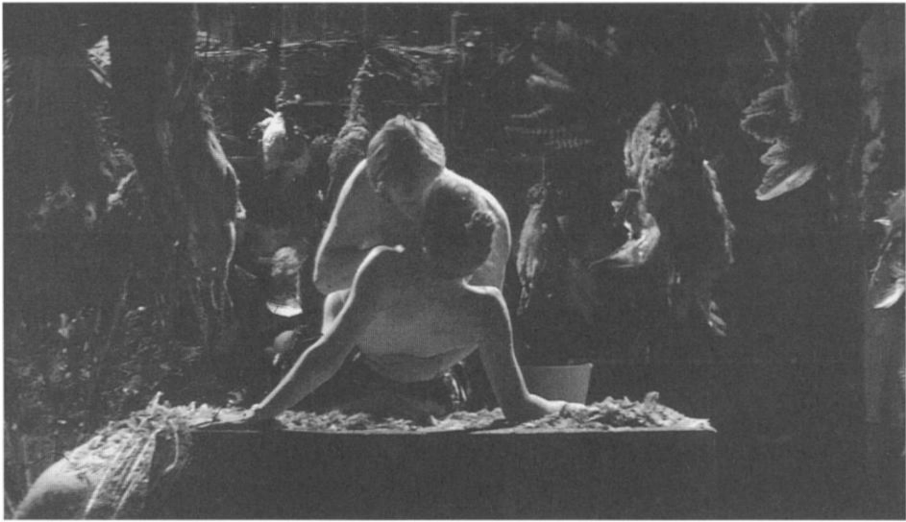

Figure 3. In a scene that refers to a subgenre of still life, Georgina and Michael make love amid dozens of birds. Courtesy of Photofest.

that may allude to Gerrit Dou's *A Poulterer's Shop* (1670). And the two vans outside the restaurant that are loaded with meat and fish may refer to Rembrandt's *Slaughtered Ox* (1655) and to the work of Abraham van Beyeren, who specialized in piscine still lifes.[31]

The work of Jan Davidsz de Heem may have inspired some of the ornate table displays created for Spica's dinner parties.[32] De Heem and Willem Kalf were famous for *pronkstilleven* or "banquet pieces." This subgenre of still life occurs at the opposite pole from the *vanitas* painting in that these paintings promote the pleasures of touch, taste, sight, and possession. These paintings are characterized by an abundance of foods available only to the wealthy because they are neither regional nor seasonal. They refuse, therefore, "natural" spatial and temporal limitations.[33]

But more important even than the foods are the artifacts represented. So much labor is lavished on the depicted objects that it produces a competition between the representation and the objects. As a result, "the paintings are subject to the paradox of 'the supplement.' If the original objects . . . truly are at the pinnacle of beauty, then there should be no room for supplementary value added by painting. That there *is* a supplement here indicates, rather than a state of completion, one of lack."[34] In short, if *vanitas* paintings warn against the dangers of ensnarement by worldly possessions, the logic of the supplement in *pronkstilleven* undermines the ontological stability of the very objects whose beauty the paintings celebrate: if the copy is better than the original, then the foundation of the copy is lost.

The logic of the supplement operates in *The Cook, the Thief* as well and is evident in its trompe l'oeil effects. The use of these effects must first be related to Greenaway's repeated rejection of realism or naturalism in the cinema and to his insistence on the use of artifice:

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> My cinema is deliberately artificial, and it's always self-reflexive. Everytime you watch a Greenaway movie, you know you are definitely and absolutely *only watching a movie*. It's not a slice of life, not a window on the world. It's by no means an exemplum of anything "natural" or "real." I do not think that naturalism or realism is even valid in the cinema. . . .
>
> *The Cook, the Thief* opens with curtains opening and closes with curtains closing. It already suggests, in quotes, this is a performance movie, this is a movie about virtuoso performances. It refers very much toward the proscenium arch.[35]

What needs explaining here is how trompe l'oeil participates in this rejection of realism, because at first blush this visual strategy would seem to subscribe to realism in that it aims to break down the boundary between the real and the represented: "In painting, the desire to join the realm of the real with that of representation engenders trompe l'oeil."[36] However, trompe l'oeil differs from conventional perspective realism in two ways. The first involves its spatial relation to the real space in which the viewer stands: "Instead of an alternative space, an elsewhere behind the picture plane explored purely through the eye, . . . [trompe l'oeil proposes] an object or figure in front of the picture plane, life-size, related to the real space in which the viewer stands."[37] This spatial aspect relates trompe l'oeil to the real. But trompe l'oeil also has a temporal dimension in that it separates the moment of perception of the image from its recognition *as* an image. The second moment exposes it as an illusion.[38]

The Frans Hals painting offers an excellent example of both aspects of trompe l'oeil in that the "figures seem to reside within the same space as the actors" because (1) the colors of the painting harmonize with those of the restaurant; (2) the figures are as large as the diners in the restaurant; (3) the figures in the painting look straight out and are thereby transformed from spectacle into spectators; and (4) there is a curtain *in* the painting that is echoed by the use of curtains in the opening and closing shots of the film.[39]

Besides the allusions to paintings discussed above, Greenaway's interest in Renaissance perspective and composition translates into cinematic composition. That is, his interest in painting explains the predominance of tableaux vivants and slow pans over close-ups and point-of-view shots. In this connection, Van Wert contrasts Sacha Vierny's camerawork for Greenaway with his use of a mobile camera for Alain Resnais: "Vierny's camerawork for Greenaway, by contrast, almost never devolves to a character's point of view; instead it insists upon spatial configurations rather than character temporality. . . . It accentuates the artificiality and theatricality of Greenaway's narratives, and it is thus freed up . . . to do quite innovative things (like mobilize painterly tableaux and deal with issues of perspective in Dutch table paintings.)"[40]

If the camera movement remains detached from a character's point of view, it correlates with the music. When the camera pans from left to right, its movement is timed to match Pup's singing in the kitchen and Michael Nyman's stately themes when the camera enters the dining room. When the camera pans from right to left, this movement follows characters and emphasizes an event in the narrative. But again, distance from the characters is maintained by speed: the camera's pace exceeds that of the characters, as when Spica drags Georgina out to the kitchen.

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Van Wert's discussion of the camerawork and his claim that it deemphasizes the narrative also illuminate the many references in the critical literature on Greenaway to his affinity with Jacobean drama. Greenaway has stated that his attraction derives from the fact that "Jacobean theater was prepared to tackle taboos" and partakes of the tradition that "starts with Seneca and . . . picks up De Sade, Bataille, Genet, Peter Brook's Theatre of the Cruelty [sic]. And maybe goes on to Pasolini and Buñuel."[41] Nevertheless, some critics find this explanation inadequate, because Greenaway's films are said to lack the character development of Jacobean theater. Thus, Richard Combs writes, "Greenaway has mentioned Jacobean drama, and specifically *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, as the model for his assault on taboo areas of sexuality and corporeality, and most reviews have taken this up, as if simply invoking the Jacobeans sufficed to account for *The Cook*. But if one were to try to explicate the film in these terms, awkward questions would have to be asked again about character, motivation and psychology."[42]

Alan Woods suggests that Greenaway's interest in Jacobean drama has less to do with character psychology than with qualities associated with painting, specifically the condensation of narrative into a single image. Greenaway has singled out "that great moment in *'Tis Pity* when the brother comes on stage and holds up a bloody heart on a dagger—an impossible piece of theatricality, but . . . what an extraordinary, universal metaphor that is."[43] Woods compares this moment to the spectacle of "the cooked corpse of Michael in front of Spica," which "is narrative condensed into a single image, time that unfolds and stands still."

Combs is undoubtedly correct about the lack of character development. However, this feature ought not to be seen as a failure but as a deliberate strategy deriving from Greenaway's interest in pictorial composition. Thus, Greenaway complains that "cinema usually uses people as personalities rather than as bodies," whereas he is concerned with "the problem of choreographing characters in the space of a film, and the physicality of bodies."[44]

This deemphasis on the psychological motivation of characters does *not* mean that characters are presented purely in formal terms, stripped of social or political significance. Although they are conceived in terms of archetypes (as the film's title suggests through its use of typological terms rather than proper names), Woods demonstrates that "individual figures, rather than simply repeating a particular stereotypical character, can pass through a whole series of archetypes in the course of a film through their situation (the cuckold, say), or through visual quotation."[45] Thus, psychological depth is displaced by the layering of art historical, religious, and other references. For example, as mentioned above, the scene in which Michael and Georgina make love amid dozens of dead birds involves a visual quotation of a still-life painting.

At the same time, as Amy Lawrence observes, the "insistently middle-aged cast" emphasizes "the physical toll life has taken" on the body. Mirren's "voluptuous but lived-in body" is "an exemplar of mature female sexuality"[46] and offers evidence of Greenaway's interest in capturing "the physicality of an actor, the size, the bulk, the shadow they cast on the wall."[47] Furthermore, as Woods points out, the nakedness of the actor disrupts the character. However, simultaneously, the

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scene in which the naked lovers escape the restaurant in the van containing putrefying meat is yet another visual quotation, but combined with a religious reference to Adam and Eve. Van Wert identifies this shot as a quotation from Masaccio's *The Expulsion of Adam and Eve* (c. 1425-1428).[48] Finally, the scene accrues another layer of reference to the film itself, in that when the lovers arrive at the book depository, they must be hosed off (by a character significantly named Eden), which repeats the opening scene in which one of Spica's victims, stripped and smeared with excrement, must be hosed off outside the restaurant.

The presentation of characters through the use of multiple stereotypes and visual references rather than psychological delineation functions to maintain distance from them rather than soliciting identification with them, which in turn determines the spectator's relation to the text. The Renaissance perspective formally locates the spectator outside the frame or fictional world of the film, which Stallybrass and White link with a bourgeois social position. (In film theory, voyeurism usually describes a distribution of labor along sexual rather than class lines, following Laura Mulvey's elaboration.) In this way, the spectator is implicated in the film's thematic and formal concerns: "That moment, in which the subject is made the outsider to the crowd, an onlooker, compensating for exclusion through the deployment of the discriminating gaze, is at the very root of bourgeois sensibility," for carnival could be endured by the bourgeois subject only when transformed from participation in ritual to a "sentimental spectacle limited to voyeuristic glimpses."[49]

In Greenaway's film, the detachment of the spectator, or the "sense of distance and contemplation," blocks both identification with the characters and participation in their acts of voyeurism.[50] Van Wert situates voyeurism in the context of other drives distinguished by Freud and argues that "all of the vicissitude pairings [e.g., voyeurism-exhibitionism, sadism-masochism] are played out in *The Cook*," for, as in Freud's theory, these pairings are subject to reversal. Thus, "while Georgina is masochist to Albert's sadism and unwilling exhibitionist to his voyeurism, she uses Michael to turn the tables, making their love affair a sadism upon Albert's unsuspecting masochism and making their love affair an exhibitionism for Richard's voyeurism and for just about everyone else in the kitchen as well." Yet, while these pairings function *within* the diegesis, that the film refuses our identification with any character's point of view, according to Van Wert, "comes back to the camera again, whose metonymic function, by what it shows and swallows up in contiguity, is 'complete' in overall filmic terms by what the incomplete and arrested characters and surface narrative cannot complete."[51]

But what about scenes that foreground settings and objects, not characters? Norman Bryson suggests that a similar critical detachment characterizes the spectator's relation to the representation in still life: "The viewer is related to the scene not only through a general creaturely sense of hunger and appetite, or of inhabiting a body with its cocoon of nearness and routine, but through a worldly knowledge that knows what it is to live in a stratified society, where wealth nuances everything, down to the last details."[52]

In addition to the pictorial references, the camera movements, the deemphasis on characters' psychology, and the spectatorial positioning, the setting manifests the

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film's "demarcating imperative." The chief setting, Le Hollandais restaurant, is divided into three discrete spaces: the kitchen, the dining room, and the toilets. Although all three spaces serve bodily functions, the connection with the body is set at a distance or sublimated by the aestheticization of each space.[53] The book depository is a space defined as the polar opposite of the restaurant. Michael describes it as having a "an extraordinary view" but a somewhat "primitive" kitchen and toilet. The discrete spaces are color-coded, and each color is selected to have "a meaning within the language of the movie." The blue of the car park evokes "the cold nether regions of this world." The kitchen is greenish "because it suggests safety and vegetation." The dining room is red because this is "where the thief eats, where the violence happens,"[54] but it is made up of different shades of red to draw attention to textures and surfaces.[55] At the same time, the color red is associated with the upper classes because members of the lower classes were forbidden by sixteenth-century sumptuary laws from using it.[56] The selection of dazzling white for the toilets was made "obviously with some irony," and "the book depository is golden to suggest the golden age of books, the gold color of old book bindings." Except for Michael, whose brown suit retains its hue, the colors of the characters' costumes change to conform to the setting as characters move from one space to another. Not only are the rooms associated with specific colors but they also represent different historical periods. Thus, the kitchen evokes the "pastoral and savage" qualities of the eighteenth century; the sumptuous dining room, the nineteenth century; and "the surgically sterile, futuristic Lavatory," the twentieth century.[57]

The temporal structures of the film demonstrate the same obsessive concern for order. Just as the interest in space and composition overrides the interest in the psychological delineation of character, time is organized around the succession of the days of the week. Each new day is announced by the appearance on the screen of a menu for that day. These menus function as one of two breaks with the panning patterns described above.[58] The menus are decorated with fish, meat, poultry, and herbs, except for the last, which announces "a Private Function" and which has on it a single sprig of "rosemary for remembrance—of Michael."[59] Stallybrass and White link this temporal definition specifically to "the imposition of the working week under the pressure of capitalist industrial work regimes" and to the marginalization of the carnival calendar, which in precapitalist Europe structured the whole year.[60]

This pacing overrides the more conventional regulation of tempo (via ellipsis, descriptive pause, scene, and summary)[61] in films whose narratives are organized around cause-effect plots and that foreground dramatic action. Dramatic action functions to draw the spectator into identification with the characters rather than evoking the critical detachment Greenaway seeks: "I'm determined to get away from that manipulated, emotional response that you're supposed to have to Hollywood cinema."[62] Here, "description" is not subservient to event. In fact, rather than a cause-effect sequence, the narrative traces a series of displacements, defined as shifting between domains of discourses. Such a process always has social implications because "semantic domains are hierarchically arranged."[63]

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Certainly, each domain in the film has class implications: the kitchen has its working-class staff, the dining room its upper-class clientele. The camera's pans from left to right, described above, register this social stratification: "The camera pauses during panning to pick up . . . the 'otherness' of all the sub-cooks and waiters (a Vermeer woman, a Dickens boy, a black, a Chinese, several people speaking Italian, a bare-chested butcher, a barber)." In the dining room, the camera pans over "people from a wedding party, a shoulder wrap or yarmulke from a Jewish ritual."[64] Once again, formal and social issues are inextricably intertwined.

Built into the temporal definition is a structure of repetition, for the narrative traces a number of repeated actions: every evening Spica and his associates come to dine at Le Hollandais. The meal itself is divided into courses punctuated by Georgina's repeated visits to the restroom between courses.

Finally, this concern with policing boundaries spills over into the dialogue. Spica discusses the menu and ordering of the courses with the chef; criticizes Mitchell's manners, his eating with his fingers; admonishes a dinner guest (Georgina's lover) on the impropriety of reading during dinner; and instructs Georgina to be sure to wash her hands after using the toilet. All this policing from the very emblem of transgression!

The Return of the Abject Body. This brings us to the next point: the abject, which Stallybrass and White relate to the thematics of carnival (eating, inversion, mess, dirt, and sex), also shapes, or better disrupts, the film's visual and temporal structures.

The characters may function in a painterly way as figures in space, but they also are typologically defined as figures of abjection. In the first place, the wife and her lover, insofar as they commit adultery, engage in what Tony Tanner describes as "an improper conjunction, or the bringing together of things that law decrees should remain apart," in short, "category confusion,"[65] a definition that clarifies its connection with the abject. The thief, Spica, is even more obviously a figure of abjection, for "any crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law, is abject, but premeditated crime, cunning, murder, hypocritical revenge are even more so because they heighten the display of such fragility."[66]

The spectator's formal and perspectival location outside the spectacle, which enables him/her to avoid implication in the scene, is disrupted by moments that evoke horror and disgust. Such moments involve a downward gradiant of displacement, whose "specific forms of representation are never arbitrary,"[67] for they conjure up material from those cultural domains constituted as "other" to the constructed social identity of the bourgeoisie. One instance is the early scene just outside the restaurant in which Spica brutally beats a man, strips him, urinates on him, and smears him with excrement. Also outside the restaurant are vans containing meat and fish, which Albert has offered to the chef, who rejected them. Midway through Greenaway's film, the meat and fish have begun to rot, attracting maggots and flies. Thus, whereas actual still-life paintings arrest the putrefaction by freezing life into stasis, the film registers the process of decay, explicitly linking formal/aesthetic concerns with the corporeal. (A similar literalization of *nature*

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Figure 4. One of Spica's victims is left outside the restaurant—framed by vans of rotting meat and fish—after being beaten, stripped, and smeared with excrement. Courtesy of Photofest.

morte, linking body and representation, occurs in the final scene in which the cooked Michael is presented.)[68]

Such eruptions of the abject are not confined to spaces outside the restaurant. Each interior space is also a site of transgression. For instance, the lovers make "improper" use of the lavatory, using it to conduct an adulterous sexual affair; later they move to the refrigerator in the kitchen and make love among the hanging slabs of meat. Meanwhile, back in the dining room, an irate Spica pours wine and condiments onto Georgina's plate, turning a carefully prepared dish into a mess. This scene and others that show Albert's destruction of the restaurant may have been inspired by yet another subgenre of still life—the still life of disorder. In such paintings "there is a clash between the careful attention of those who make, the craftsmen and the painter, and the negligence of those who enjoy. It is as if production were thought of as intelligent, purposive, culture-building, and consumption as stupid, anarchic, blind."[69] Furthermore, the gorgeous costumes so carefully color coordinated to match the décor cannot cover the bruises on Georgina's body, or Spica's dirty fingernails, stringy hair, and blotched complexion.

The marking of time by the days of the week, which effects a temporal marginalization of carnival, makes its occurrence unpredictable and disruptive. The carnivalesque can erupt anywhere, anytime.[70] So Spica seems to burst into a space and interrupt the otherwise stately rhythms of the film; from his invasion of the lady's room in search of Georgina, to his shattering the peace of the kitchen during the preparation of the meal, to his abrupt appearance at the book repository, his entrance is always accompanied by violence.

Aside from the fact that as a criminal he is by definition abject, Spica is aligned with the abject through his language (his scatological imagination) and his crimes.

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Vis-à-vis the language, there are several points to consider. First of all, Albert's speech blurs the boundaries between food and excrement and sex, as when he insists that "the naughty bits and the dirty bits are so close together. It just goes to show how eating and sex are related." Similarly, Albert describes one dish as resembling "catfood for constipated French rabbits." In yet another comment, he links food, urine, and racism: "Some of them Indians are well known for drinking their own pee." Second, Albert uses language, especially repetition, to bully and dominate others, as when he repeats Michael's name in every sentence: "Well, Michael? Oh, is that a Jewish name, Michael? Do you eat kosher food then, Michael? Sit down, Michael, and tell us all about kosher food, Michael." In the same scene, Albert dictates to Georgina what to say: "Tell Michael you live in a big house and you spend four hundred pounds a week on clothes." Georgina dutifully repeats his sentences verbatim, using "repetition to reflect his tyranny back at him."[71]

The crimes are linked to the language in that "Greenaway wrote a script of immense crudity which ran parallel to the violence without anesthetizing it, making it comic, or sweeping it up within the rhythms of verbal violence, as happens in any Mafia . . . film."[72] Moreover, the details of Spica's crimes emphasize the abject insofar as they involve grotesque imitations or literalizations of the central "action" of the film: dining. (So too his conversation is a grotesque mirror of polite conversation.) These crimes set up a separate structure of repetition in counterpoint to the dinners served each evening. The sequence begins with Spica trying to force the chef to accept silverware for the restaurant, which turns out not only to be stolen but also to be fake. When one of his guests tells Spica that she has seen Georgina with Michael, he stabs her cheek with a fork. The child who works in the kitchen is punished for delivering food to the lovers by being forced to swallow the buttons on his sweater one by one, ending with the excision of his own belly button. This scene formally anticipates the murder of the lover by making him consume pages torn from his books, all of which culminates in the ultimate transgression: cannibalism.

Conclusion. By way of conclusion, I want to dwell on this last instance of abjection to demonstrate how the film's central preoccupations—with formal experimentation, sociopolitical critique, and the relation of both to the representation of the body—are really impossible to disentangle, though my analysis has focused on each aspect separately. Albert's cannibalism—which I have called the ultimate transgression—is simultaneously Georgina's revenge, which, as Pascoe points out, involves reversibility and so "figures as a principle of order, a fearful symmetry."[73]

The fearful symmetry is insisted upon in a number of ways:

1. The scene has the effect of a coda in that all of Albert's victims enter from the kitchen to witness his last supper: the kitchen staff, Patricia wearing a bandage over her cheek, Pup sitting in a wheelchair, Richard, and of course, Georgina.

2. Reversal functions on a number of levels. That is, Georgina's revenge requires the use of Albert's violence to turn against him and of his language to turn his words against him by literalizing them. For upon learning of the love affair, Albert threatens to eat Michael: "I'll bloody find him, I'll kill him, and I'll eat him."

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Here, Georgina orders him, "Try the cock, Albert. It's a delicacy, and you know where it's been."[74]

3. In addition to repeating and reversing preceding scenes in the film, Georgina's revenge invokes pictorial and literary references that have functioned as a structural feature of the film as a whole. As mentioned above, the dead Michael is the ultimate still life or *nature morte* as well as a spectacle in the Jacobean style.[75] Then too there are the religious connotations of this last supper, which is a sort of eucharistic rite in reverse.[76]

4. This fearful symmetry or principle of reversibility is very appropriately presented as the *woman's* revenge. This association calls to mind Tanner's account of adultery and the function of the woman in bourgeois society (in contrast to readings of the woman as a representative of Nature, conceived in universal terms, as Gras maintains). Insofar as marriage functions in bourgeois society to stabilize social relations, the woman serves both as the guarantee of the system *and* its weak point: "Threshold of the 'public' and the 'private,' social unit and individual enclave, the family is the coherence of the division it articulates, which means that it is easily taken up in the contradictions of its position. And . . . these turn quickly on the woman."[77] The use of the word "turn" suggests that the woman is the linchpin of bourgeois society and as such is bound to the principle of reversibility, or, as Stephen Heath puts it, "If she gives, everything gives, moving from *her* right place, the adulterous woman leaves *no* place intact."[78]

Finally, the film's ending (literally and formally) "turns" on Georgina's revenge. As Albert takes his last bite, the camera traces a circular movement that ends with a shot of Georgina holding a gun pointed at the camera and at the spectator. The circular movement of the camera marks a significant departure from the prevailing pans of the film. The point at which the camera pauses is no less exceptional, for Albert is shot when the camera reaches the position behind him to represent his point of view. Van Wert describes the evacuation of the diegetic subject at this precise moment as an instance of "camera violence" comparable to the scene in Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945) "when Dr. Murchison turns the gun barrel around on himself for a suicide, and the gun is pointed at the camera and spectator as a result."[79]

At the same time, it is important to take into account the fundamental differences between these two instances of "camera violence." In *Spellbound*, the fact that the shot records a suicide means that the places of both subject and object are evacuated from the diegesis, leaving intact and therefore foregrounding the usually obscured alignment of the spectator's look with that of the camera. This acknowledgment of the cinematic apparatus, however, is apparently unrelated to any political critique. In contrast, the camera's violence in Greenaway's film echoes on the level of enunciation (or textual unconscious) Georgina's appropriation of Albert's violence within the diegesis. And as Georgina points the gun at the camera/spectator, we assume the dead Albert's position so that her confrontation extends to implicate us in the critique directed at the character. This instance of camera violence, in other words, counters the arguments of those critics who maintain that the film's critique of consumerism is compromised by having the excesses

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of the Thatcher era represented by the "monstrous" Albert, and, it does so, moreover, in terms provided by cinematic forms.[80]

Notes

I wish to thank *Cinema Journal* editor Frank P. Tomasulo and the two anonymous readers for *Cinema Journal* for their guidance and suggestions on how to clarify my argument.

1. Gavin Smith, "Food for Thought (interview)," *Film Comment* 26 (May-June 1990): 55.
2. Leonard Quart, review of *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*, *Cineaste* 18, no. 1 (1990): 46.
3. Michael Walsh, "Allegories of Thatcherism: The Films of Peter Greenaway," in Lester Friedman, ed., *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 271, 273.
4. Peter Wollen, "The Last New Wave: Modernism in the British Films of the Thatcher Era," in Friedman, *Fires Were Started*, 39.
5. Ibid., 49.
6. Greenaway is most closely associated with the cinema of Fellini, Bertolucci, Rohmer, Straub, and Resnais, whose films he screened for his crew prior to making *The Draughtman's Contract*. Wollen, "The Last New Wave," 47. Greenaway is less directly connected with Godard. As Wollen explains, a post-Godardian "political modernism" emerged at the British Film Institute in the late sixties that helped create a receptive climate for Greenaway's films, although Greenaway did not himself participate in the avant-garde debates and activities of the time (48–49).

   Nevertheless, affinities exist, most obviously in that the cinema of both Greenaway and Godard derives from the modernist tradition established by Brecht and Artaud. (See n. 41.) Thus, for example, both filmmakers subordinate narrative to rhetorical organization; both subvert conventional mechanisms of identification in the interest of foregrounding cinematic devices that implicate the spectator in the production of meaning; both use quotation (of other films and of paintings) as a structural feature of their films. And, most relevant to my argument, both subscribe to the notion of a "progressive cinema" that conducts its social and political critique in terms provided by cinematic forms. On Godard's political cinema, see Colin MacCabe, Mick Eaton, and Laura Mulvey, *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).
7. Nita Rollins, "Greenaway-Gaultier: Old Masters, Fashion Slaves," *Cinema Journal* 35, no. 1 (fall 1995): 75.
8. Even the costumes—the military sashes and ruffled shirts—echo the cavalier style adopted by the men in the painting. Nita Rollins offers a rich analysis of the class implications of this costume, in particular the neckwear. The white-collar ruffs were initially a Spanish fashion, hence Catholic and aristocratic. But the Dutch adopted and transformed this fashion into a "Protestant, bourgeois, and urban style." Valerie Steele, quoted in Rollins, "Greenaway-Gaultier," 74. But Rollins offers a different reading of the relationship between the painting and Spica's gang. In her view, the group portrait represents a model of bourgeois respectability and social standing that Spica and his gang try, but fail, to emulate (75). Other critics as well, including Quart and Walsh, read Spica and his gang as proletariat arrivistes who have taken over a more traditionally bourgeois setting. However, Amy Lawrence quotes correspondence with Greenaway that contests Rollins's reading and emphasizes the similarities between the pictorial model and the thief: "The Militia Clubs were . . . an excuse to dress up and get drunk

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with the boys. . . . The giant reproduction of the painting in the restaurant is a template for bad behavior—not good." Greenaway correspondence, quoted in Amy Lawrence, *The Films of Peter Greenaway* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 170. See also David Pascoe, *Peter Greenaway: Museums and Moving Images* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 175. Pascoe's interpretation echoes Lawrence's. Furthermore, in my discussion of the corporeal below, I argue that the abject, which never ceases to haunt the bourgeois subject, is integral to its representation. Therefore, it is rather Quart's reading of Spica as working class that is "too literal and facile."

9. Marcia Pally, "Cinema as the Total Art Form (interview)," *Cineaste* 18, no. 3 (1991): 8, 45.
10. Stewart Klawans, quoted in Nicholas O. Pagan, "*The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*: Making Sense of Postmodernism," *South Atlantic Review* 60, no. 1 (January 1995): 51.
11. Quoted in Rollins, "Greenaway-Gaultier," 74.
12. Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 120, 187 n.39.
13. Pally, "Cinema as the Total Art Form," 7.
14. Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked,* 117.
15. Ibid., 120, 121. Bryson observes that, in contrast, the vanishing point in Albertian painting does suggest access to the signified.
16. Brian McFarlane, "Peter Greenaway (interview)," *Cinema Papers* 78 (March 1990): 41.
17. Vernon Gras, "Dramatizing the Failure to Jump the Culture/Nature Gap: The Films of Peter Greenaway," *New Literary History* 26, no. 1 (winter 1995): 135, 127.
18. Rollins, "Greenaway-Gaultier," 72. Part of the problem relates to Rollins's use of a theoretical framework based on Thorsten Veblen's Darwinian sociological critique of the leisure class and conspicuous consumption, an approach that is not concerned with describing the psychic processes through which precapitalist culture is incorporated and transformed in bourgeois culture. At the same time, in all fairness, it should be added that Rollins's essay, one of the best discussions of the film, is primarily concerned with the collaboration/conflict between the artistic agendas of Jean-Paul Gaultier, the costume designer, and Greenaway, and the use of Veblen's theory serves her critical purposes very well.
19. Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked,* 131.
20. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 21–22. See also Mary Russo's discussion of this opposition in *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 8.
21. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 65–67, 69.
22. Ibid., 2, 4.
23. Ibid., 68.
24. Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression,* 176, 178. I am indebted to their entire chapter "Bourgeois Hysteria and the Carnivalesque" for the description of the process whereby carnival is incorporated into the bourgeois Imaginary.
25. Freud, quoted in ibid., 189.
26. Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression,* 187.
27. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror,* 68.
28. Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression,* 193.

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29. William F. Van Wert, review of *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*, *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (winter 1990–91): 47. I am indebted to Van Wert for the identification of most of the pictorial references.
30. Leon Steinmetz and Peter Greenaway, *The World of Peter Greenaway* (Boston: Journey Editions, 1995), 99.
31. Pascoe, *Peter Greenaway,* 178, 175.
32. Ibid., 176.
33. Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked,* 123–24.
34. Ibid., 126.
35. Smith, "Food for Thought," 59; see also Pally, "Cinema as the Total Art Form," 8.
36. Brigitte Peucker, *Incorporating Images: Film and the Rival Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 105.
37. Alan Woods, *Being Naked—Playing Dead: The Art of Peter Greenaway* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 72.
38. Mary Ann Doane, "'When the Direction of the Force Acting on the Body Is Changed': The Moving Image," *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 193–94. Jacques Lacan also emphasizes the moment when we recognize trompe l'oeil as such in "What Is a Picture?" in Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978), 112.
39. I am indebted to Peucker (*Incorporating Images*, 163) and Woods (*Being Naked*, 72) for their discussions of this painting in terms of trompe l'oeil. It should be noted too that the curtain alludes to Pliny's anecdote about trompe l'oeil in which Zeuxis asks Parrhasius to remove the curtain to reveal his painting only to discover that the curtain *is* the painting. See Woods, *Being Naked*, 73.

    Another instance of self-reflexivity that partakes of this trompe l'oeil effect occurs when Michael describes to Georgina a film he saw in which the main character remained silent for a long time, but when he spoke, Michael lost interest in the film. However, Michael reassures Georgina that this does not mean that now that they have broken their silence he will lose interest in her. He explains, "It was only a film." The trompe l'oeil effect kicks in because "the character's insistence that his situation has nothing to do with film reminds us that he is part of a film and that we (an audience) are watching a film." Pagan, "*The Cook, the Thief*," 50.

    Finally, the film's trompe l'oeil effects may have the additional function of enhancing the film's violence. In this connection, Jeanne Silverthorne observes that the insistence on artifice, which is part of the trompe l'oeil effect, "makes an even less absorbent surface for the extreme violence [of the film] than naturalism would." Silverthorne, review of *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*, *Art Forum* 28, no. 8 (April 1990): 23.
40. Van Wert, "*The Cook, the Thief*," 45. Van Wert offers the best discussion of the camerawork, and I rely on his precise descriptions of it as well as of its correlation with the music, discussed below.
41. Smith, "Food for Thought," 56; see also Pally, "Cinema as the Total Art Form," 45. Critics have cited Antonin Artaud's influence in connection not only with Jacobean drama but also more generally with Greenaway's representation of the body. Affinities with Artaud include the saturated sensory impact; the rejection of psychological motivation; the use of noncontemporary costume; the insistence on the physicality of bodies, evident in their choreographed deployment; and the recourse to violence, terror, and excess. However, as Bridget Elliott and Anthony Purdy note, there are fundamental

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differences impossible to overlook, namely Artaud's conception of theater as sacred or curative, which he described as a plague or a delirium whose aim is to induce a trance-like state in the audience; also Artaud's rejection of text and language in favor of noise and gesture. Elliott and Purdy, *Peter Greenaway: Architecture and Allegory* (Chichester, West Sussex: Academy Editions, 1997), 67. Elliott and Purdy argue that Greenaway's "insistence on critical difference" indicates that Brecht's epic theater offers "a more adequate theatrical model" and they cite in particular Brecht's notion of the "separation of elements," as elaborated in his notes to the opera *Aufsteig und Fall Der Stadt Mahagonny*: "Words, music and setting must become more independent of one another" (70). (This affinity with Brecht, specifically with the creation of a critical difference through the separation of elements, also explains Greenaway's link with Godard—that is, the latter's refusal to match voice to character. See n. 6 above.)

42. Richard Combs, review of *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*, *Monthly Film Bulletin* (November 1989): 323.
43. Greenaway, quoted in Woods, *Being Naked*, 167.
44. Pally, "Cinema as the Total Art Form," 45.
45. Woods, *Being Naked*, 184.
46. Lawrence, *The Films of Peter Greenaway*, 187.
47. Pally, "Cinema as the Total Art Form," 45.
48. Van Wert, "*The Cook, the Thief*," 47.
49. Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 187, 183.
50. Pally, "Cinema as the Total Art Form," 8. Some critics may object to my understanding of identification as a question of optical point of view and argue that viewers identify with the wife and the lover and take sides against the thief and his gang even though the film withholds optical points of view. In the first place, I would maintain that sympathy is not equivalent to identification based on optical point of view because the latter informs the enunciation as the former does not. (For example, in Hitchcock's *Psycho,* surely it is significant that however we sympathize with Marion, she remains the object of vision, whereas our identification with Norman's point of view affords him a narrative function that is denied to her.) Second, Greenaway's film for the most part maintains both an optical and an emotional distance from *all* the characters. One exception is the scene of Georgina's monologue to the dead Michael in which she describes the humiliations to which Albert has subjected her. Although some viewers might interpret the scene as a welcome attempt to humanize characters' behavior by psychologizing, Elliott and Purdy argue, compellingly, that this departure from Brechtian principles "is an uncharacteristic lapse into the relative banality of psychological explanation that compromises the film's structural integrity." Elliott and Purdy, *Peter Greenaway*, 78, n.11.
51. Van Wert, "*The Cook, the Thief*," 46.
52. Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*, 135.
53. Pascoe, however, argues that the distance from the body is never that great because the spaces of the restaurant are arranged to suggest "the peristaltic movements of the body's digestive tract." Thus, the kitchen is separated from the dining room by "a swing door which opens and closes like a mouth" and from the toilets by "a narrow corridor, the connecting tube between two orifices, top and bottom." Pascoe, *Peter Greenaway*, 182–83.
54. All descriptions of color choices, unless otherwise noted, are Greenaway's, as cited in Pally, "Cinema as the Total Art Form," 8.
55. McFarlane "Peter Greenaway," 44.
56. Rollins, "Greenaway-Gaultier," 69.

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57. Steinmetz, *The World of Peter Greenaway*, 100. Nicholas O. Pagan makes a similar observation. Pagan, "*The Cook, the Thief*," 52.
58. William F. Van Wert identifies the other as the last scene, also discussed below. Van Wert, "*The Cook, the Thief*," 46.
59. Greenaway correspondence, quoted in Lawrence, *The Films of Peter Greenaway*, 214 n.31.
60. Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 181.
61. These techniques for regulating the tempo of narrative are identified and described in Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay on Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 87–88.
62. Pally, "Cinema as the Total Art Form," 8.
63. Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 196.
64. Van Wert, "*The Cook, the Thief*," 45, 46.
65. Tony Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 179, 12. I am indebted to Stephen Heath's elucidation of the implications of Tanner's work in "Family Plots: A Review of *Adultery in the Novel* by Tony Tanner, *Balzac* by Christopher Prendergast, and *Origins of the Novel* by Marthe Robert," in E. S. Shaffer, ed., *Comparative Criticism* 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 317–23.
66. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 4.
67. Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 196.
68. Pascoe, *Peter Greenaway*, 179; see also Steinmetz, *The World of Peter Greenaway*, 101.
69. Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*, 122–23.
70. Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 181.
71. Lawrence, *The Films of Peter Greenaway*, 181. I am indebted to Lawrence's entire discussion of language (175–81). She also points out that at the end of the scene Georgina exposes all of Albert's prejudices by describing her gynecologist as "a man. He's Jewish and he's from Ethiopia. His mother is a Roman Catholic. He's been in prison in South Africa—he's black as an ace of spades—and he probably drinks his own pee."
72. Woods, *Being Naked*, 188–89.
73. Pascoe, *Peter Greenaway*, 188.
74. Woods observes that this literalization rhymes with earlier scenes. In the first, Albert explains the meaning of prairie oysters to Mitchell, adding, "One day I'll be expecting you to chew somebody's bollocks off." Later, at the scene of Michael's murder, Mitchell takes literally Albert's injunction to "eat bollocks" and refuses because Michael "must have been with Georgina last night," to which Albert replies, "You are an idiot. . . . I meant it metaphorically." The scene of the last supper also rhymes with Georgina's earlier acts of resistance to Albert's tyranny in that, as noted above, in each case her resistance takes the form of reversal, for example, her use of repetition of Albert's words to mock him and her turning Richard and the kitchen staff into voyeurs of her affair with Michael. Woods, *Being Naked*, 98–99.
75. Pascoe, *Peter Greenaway*, 188. As Pascoe notes, Jacobean tragedy frequently contains scenes of cannibalism. In Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, the villain eats a pie made from his own son's flesh, and in John Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*, the hero is served a dish containing his son's limbs.
76. The dialogue insists on the absence of transubstantiation: When the sheet is pulled off Michael's cooked body, Albert exclaims, "Jesus, God!" Georgina calmly replies, "It's not God, Albert. It's Michael."

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77. Heath, "Family Plots," 321.
78. Ibid., 318.
79. Van Wert, "*The Cook, the Thief*," 46.
80. The fact that Albert's displacement by the spectator occurs at the level of enunciation or textual unconscious further supports my argument that it is reductive to read Albert simply as working class. Rather, as Stallybrass and White's theory suggests, he represents a complex hybrid fantasy produced at the level of the Imaginary and is integral to the formation of the bourgeois social identity.

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