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Jonathan Rhys-Meyers as Brian Slade/Maxwell Demon in *Velvet Goldmine* (UK/US, 1998). Courtesy Miramax

Pathos and Pathology: The Cinema of Todd Haynes

Mary Ann Doane

Because infinity—for the eye—begins just a
few meters away from the retina. . . .
—*Roger Caillois, "The Image"*

There are at least two shots in Todd Haynes's work that recur so frequently one might almost call them signature shots. The first appears in *Superstar* (US, 1987) and *Poison* (US, 1991) and functions as the opening shot of *Safe* (US/UK, 1995). A long tracking shot, sometimes marked as originating from inside a car, traces row after row of classic suburban houses—all basically the same with only slight differences, all overly familiar—in a seemingly endless movement reminiscent of Jean-Luc Godard's lateral tracking shots in *Le Weekend* (*The Weekend*; France/Italy, 1967). In *Safe*, the point of view is through the windshield of the car (and here we have haute suburbia), of streets with identical lampposts and houses, trash carefully placed at the edge of driveways, of serial production, of sheer separation from the rest of the world as signified by the gate at the end of the Whites' driveway. The suburban house in its many incarnations is the site of both the famil-

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iar and its etymological kin, the family, the site of the potentially explosive repressions and power structures so carefully delineated in each of these films. It connotes the safe haven, the negation of the city with its crime, its complexities, and its uncertainties—the promise of the economically and racially homogeneous. It is so heavily laden with implicit cultural meanings—as indictment, as stereotype—that it has virtually become the stereotype of all stereotypes, a kind of metastereotype. But at the same time, Haynes's tracking shots are saturated with subjectivity, even in their quasi-documentary incarnations in *Superstar* and in the "Hero" section of *Poison*. In *Safe*, this shot is clearly marked as the point of view of the protagonist, Carol White (Julianne Moore), the one who is victimized by the restraints and repressions of suburban life, but victimized most, perhaps, by the relentlessness of that gaze (her own), the illusory promise of its movement, of its transformations.

This figure serves as an echo of the trope that most seems to epitomize the woman's film of the 1940s and 1950s (a genre that has clearly had a strong influence on Haynes)—the close shot of the woman looking through a window or waiting at a window. (Douglas Sirk's 1955 *All That Heaven Allows* [US] has an exemplary instance of this shot that Haynes repeats in *Far from Heaven* [US/France, 2002].) In the 1940s and 1950s, the window had a special import in terms of the social and symbolic positioning of the woman—the window was the interface between inside and outside, the feminine space of the family and reproduction and the masculine space of production. It facilitated a communication by means of the look between the two sexually differentiated spaces, but also acted as the site of the specific pathos associated with the woman. In Haynes's work, it is the look again, often through a car window, yet this time not necessarily sexually differentiated, but a moving look (in both senses of the term), from the exterior of the house into the dark recesses of the familial quagmires that form the basis of the pop-psychoanalytical explanation of the self. It is a striking figure because it holds in apparently contradictory conjunction the deepest secrets of subjectivity and the preeminently stereotypical suburban landscape. It is a different,

less familiar mode of relating exteriority and interiority, the superficial and the deep, seen for instance in the ubiquity of long, wide-angle shots in *Safe*, in the paradoxical insistence on a certain conjunction of distanciation and pathos in viewing.

The second signature shot is less formally consistent and centers on a child in the process of being spanked. It occurs in *Poison*, *Superstar*, and, of course, in *Dottie Gets Spanked* (US, 1993), where it is remarked by the title. It is in all cases a resolutely subjective shot, located deep within memory or dream or as the object of desire. It is directly evocative of Freud's well-known essay on masochism, " 'A Child Is Being Beaten,' " in which Freud analyzes the fantasy by breaking it down into a series of grammatical transformations: (1) My father is beating the child whom I hate; (2) I am being beaten (loved) by my father; (3) A child is being beaten. In the course of this series, the "I" of subjectivity is lost and the statement transformed into the passive voice; the subject (*a* child, *any* child) becomes indeterminate (not the child whom I hate, not myself).[1] Children are being spanked all the time in Haynes's films, and this action evokes a range of emotions: horror and pain in *Superstar*, where the female body becomes a site of culturally induced self-effacement; a mixture of libidinal pleasure and fear in *Dottie Gets Spanked* in the televisually mediated fantasies of a young boy; and pity, pathos, and pleasure in *Poison*, where it appears as one of the most subjectively marked shots in the "Hero" section (in a story otherwise associated with the anonymous voice-over of the television docudrama attempting to locate the originary and originating moment of violence in Richie Beacon's life). It is *Poison*, in fact, that intertwines most explicitly the discourses of the I with the anonymous discourses of generic conventions: the insistent though diffuse I of the "Homo" section with the voice of pseudoscience in the sci-fi horror film of the 1950s in the "Horror" section and the investigative reporting of the docudrama in the "Hero" section.

Like the relentless tracking shot of suburbia discussed earlier, the shot of a child being spanked constitutes a curious mixture of intensified subjectivity and anonymity or voicelessness (an image that seems to come from nowhere, with no specific origin).

This tendency to merge subjectivity and anonymity reaches its apogee in *Safe*, and at least partially explains many critics' perplexity about Haynes's tone or position, about where he situates himself with respect to the subject matter. In this sense, the question desperately posed by Carol White to her husband in *Safe* (in one of the few scenes where she exhibits any explicit desperation about anything)—"Where am I?"—is resonant for Haynes's work in general and one of the reasons why space proves so crucial to his cinema. In the film, her question is asked in her own bedroom when her husband comes in to relay a phone message about carpooling, and it is "answered" by a shot of color bars on a television monitor and by the mutation of the question into the "Who are you?" of the educational video about environmentally induced illness that Carol watches in the next scene. This shot change is the microcosmic instantiation of the film's larger shift from questions of space in the first part, situated in suburbia, to questions of being/ontology in the second part, situated at Wrenwood, the New Age recovery facility that is only illusorily located closer to nature, but actually embodies the media-generated discourses of self-knowledge and self-betterment.

In *Safe*, the woman takes on the full weight of the pathos and pathology rampant in Haynes's cinema. But children are also particularly crucial figures: not yet subjects, they are nevertheless witnesses to the scandalous and sublime emergence of subjectivity. Children are central to Haynes's cinema not because they exemplify innocence or naturalness, but because of their positioning, like the title character in Henry James's *What Maisie Knew* (1897), in an epistemologically unstable relation to sexuality. What they can know, or should have known, or do know about sexuality is indeterminate and plural, yet always a refraction in some way of adult mores, insecurities, and obsessions. Their point of view seems to promise, but does not always deliver, a difference. The presence of children is also significant because emotion is so crucial to Haynes's filmmaking practice—not only as a desired effect but as an object, a topic, a content—primarily in the form of pathos. Pathos, the central emotion of melodrama, is reinforced by the disproportion between the weakness of the vic-

tim and the seriousness of the danger so that, as Northrop Frye points out, "the central figure of pathos is often a woman or a child" and "pathos is increased by the inarticulateness of the victim."[2] Pathos closely allies itself with the delineation of a lack of social power and effectivity characteristic of the cultural positioning of children and women (so frequently the protagonists of Haynes's films). Pathos is not so much used as a tactic within the films of Todd Haynes (as it is in classical Hollywood melodramas such as *Back Street* [dir. Robert Stevenson, US, 1941] or *Dark Victory* [dir. Edmund Goulding, US, 1939]) as it is signified, without cynicism. Hence the recourse to Sirkian strategies of distanciation culminating in *Far from Heaven*, a film that is, in a sense, doubly accessible, as a naive yet excessive discourse about a particular historical moment suffused with tensions drawn from the present, and as an extended quotation of a specific film, Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows*.

While *Far from Heaven*'s relationship to those earlier, seemingly naive, women's pictures is overdetermined, just as significant is its revisiting of the terrain of *Safe*. Displacing questions of class in the Sirk film onto race and homosexuality, *Far from Heaven* situates its female protagonist as the pivotal figure in addressing these issues, the figure who must negotiate the constricting and repressive social mores of small-town America in the 1950s. Like the heroines of classical Hollywood melodrama, the woman in *Far from Heaven* is overwhelmed and oppressed by the domestic space of the home, by the things and objects that surround her. And in the manner of that cinema, the mise-en-scène, music, and lighting absorb the function of signifying interiority. The film's protagonist, Cathy Whitaker, like Carol White in *Safe*, and again played by Julianne Moore, is devoted to domestic perfection, to keeping things in their allotted space, to the efficient management of the home. In Haynes's cinema, it is always women who try to hold the world and its contradictions at bay with a perfection, a seamlessness, and an embrace of a faultless naïveté (the songs of Karen Carpenter embody this in *Superstar* in contrast to the montage of Vietnam war footage and references to Watergate, protests, and demonstrations that signal another, more conflictual,

history). However, they always fail; something goes awry, and the world comes crashing in.

This holds especially true in *Safe*, where the world in general becomes the problem ("Are you allergic to the twentieth century?" the educational videotape asks). *Safe* is a response to a pervasive media-generated discourse about risk (here it is specifically environmental risk, but this is nevertheless a synecdoche for all kinds of risk, indicated by the stepson's school essay on Los Angeles as the gang capital of America and the danger of African American and Chicano gangs invading San Fernando Valley). The discourse of risk generates what Kathleen Woodward has called "statistical panic" and a consequent desire for a control that, because its effectivity is questionable on any large scale, applies to an increasingly shrinking space, ultimately becoming the space of the individual person, the space of the body.[3] In the locker room after an aerobics class (itself an attempt to manage the body), the women discuss the most current ideas about exercise, diet, emotional maintenance, stress management, and a pop-psychology book entitled *How to Own Your Own Life*. The desire is to hone the body, to apply professional management techniques to the reduced sphere of the individual life in the face of oversystematization, institutionalization, and an overwhelming loss of social or political control.

Carol White is a hostage of her environment, and the mise-en-scène and framing reiterate this at every moment. Made up almost entirely of long shots with wide-angle lenses, the film depicts the space of the home as cavernous, the interior decoration as meticulous, and the exterior environments (the dry cleaners, restaurants, a parking garage) as ponderous and claustrophobic. Human figures are consistently dominated by their environments, and there is a sustained refusal to enter the space, to penetrate it by means of close-ups. Three scenes toward the beginning of the film illustrate the architecture of this space. In the first, Carol visits a friend in the course of a series of banal errands during the day. They sit in a kitchen, overwhelmed by state-of-the-art appliances, discussing the death of the friend's brother (in evasive terms that echo the empty, sanitary space of

the kitchen) and her difficulties with a contractor, moving effortlessly from one topic to the other. The next scene opens on Carol's return home. She picks up the mail, answers the phone, talks with her mother, and enters the living room only to be shocked by the delivery of new black couches—not the teal ones she had ordered. The third scene, the next morning, is shot initially from the space of the kitchen crowded with servants and painters, with glimpses of Carol and her son through the door to the next room. This is the scene first indicating Carol's health problems as she stumbles retrieving a phone book. In all of these scenes, the house emerges as a massive and relentless presence, and appliances and furniture exert a constant pressure. The things of Carol's space seem to overwhelm and isolate her.

In the first shot of this series, that of Carol at the door of her friend's house, the immense house dominates the characters, and the incongruity of the relation of soundtrack (their dialogue) to image is striking. Inside the house, the dialogue, as in most of the film, is slow and lethargic, even though it deals with a crisis, the death of the friend's brother. AIDS (the disease that is at least partially referenced by Carol's environmental hypersensitivity) is a structuring absence here, the word that cannot be said, and is quickly overshadowed by the pressing question of the redesign of the den and the suit against the contractor (presented in a shot dominated by the kitchen appliances), which together with Carol's struggle with the color of the couches testify to the heavy weight of the minutiae of everyday life, of the constant effort to keep up the home. As Carol enters the house and answers the phone, her figure is barely legible on the right side of the frame, and as the gigantic and symmetrically decorated room dominates the scene, the trivialness of her conversation with her mother is marked: "They're fine. He's fine. They're fine." The scene that initiates Carol's decline, when she falls while reaching for a phone book, similarly envelops her in a space that exceeds and dwarfs her, a space crowded with the workers required to keep the huge house functioning. The soundtrack as well is dense, with sounds that witness the existence of an outside world—planes, radio, television—without giving access to it. The extradiegetic music, which

accompanies much of the film, is ominous, vaguely alluding to a promised suspense that is never quite delivered.

In an interview, Haynes has said that he "had considered *Safe* like *Jeanne Dielman, 2300 quai du Commerce, 1080 Brusselles* [dir. Chantal Akerman, Belgium/France, 1975], but taking place in an airport. I just kept thinking that certain homes in Los Angeles have the quality of airports. All traces of human life, or natural life, have been excluded and taken over. Air is controlled and space is controlled. There's no trace of humankind, of the mess of human beings."[4] Airports are, as the anthropologist Marc Augé has pointed out, nonplaces.[5] They are places that one passes through, standardized for greater familiarity and usability, places that sustain only transient contacts with other people. Nonplaces do not allow for the functions anthropology usually associates with the concept of place—relations with other people, networks of social support and stability, community building. In *Safe*, all the spaces of suburbia are nonplaces. Emptied of human contact and of events endowed with significance, the concept of space itself becomes heavy, overpresent.

There are multiple ways in which *Safe* resembles Chantal Akerman's portrait of a housewife in *Jeanne Dielman*, but preeminently, perhaps, in its tone and relation to duration. Both films have a flatness of tone leaving the central character virtually without affect. After the initial tracking shot from the car at the beginning of *Safe*, there is a scene of lovemaking, shot in an overhead, rather close shot, in which Carol displays no involvement, no emotion, no pleasure or displeasure. In *Jeanne Dielman*, the protagonist is a housewife and part-time prostitute whose relation to sex is essentially the same and whose world is completely and meticulously routinized. Just as she carefully washes the dishes, she smoothes the bedspread and lays out a towel before every client appears. The unraveling of this rigorous order of things is signaled by a single moment in which things go awry: Jeanne misses a button as she puts on her robe and the obsessive routine of her life progressively disintegrates until, after an unexpected and disruptive orgasm, she murders the client. In *Safe*, this slow

unraveling, Carol's increasing incapacity to deal with the world, is similar. *Jeanne Dielman* constructs its syntax by linking together scenes that, in the classical film, would be concealed, in effect negated, by temporal ellipses. The specificity of the film lies in the painful duration of that time in between events, the time exactly proper to the woman (in particular the housewife) in a patriarchal society. This is, in filmic terms, the time of the long take. Although *Safe* is not as rigorous in its observance of real time, the events of the film—the delivery of a couch, a baby shower, picking up the dry cleaning—have the same sense of an extensive, repetitive, and almost unendurable duration.

Carol White is caught within the pincers of two inadequate and pernicious discourses of disease. There is, on the one hand, the medical discourse of the family doctor, who assures her that there is nothing wrong with her, that she is not really ill, and of the allergist, who cannot effectively deal with the disease either. On the other hand, the New Age approach of Wrenwood and its director Peter Dunning (played by Peter Friedman and described as a "chemically sensitive person with AIDS" who applauds the growth in environmental awareness, sensitivity training, and multiculturalism) proves equally pernicious. In contrast to the medical discourse's denial of the disease, the staff at Wrenwood fully embraces it, accepting it as the identity of the person and as necessitating a complete isolation from the world. By locating the source of the disease within the individual, by situating all error, all determination within the closed space of the self, the New Age discourse accepts and extends the premise that the world is unassimilable, that one's relation to it is unmappable. As Carol learns to regurgitate the psychobabble of the center—the notion that hating herself is the origin of her disease—her isolation and inability to deal with the outside world increase to the point at which she accepts her own exile in a kind of sterile and hermetically sealed igloo. Within this space, she looks in the mirror, confronting a beaten and battered face and, in the only true close-up of the film, whispers "I love you." Although the film has finally situated her in the conventional place of interiority—the close-up—the professed

love is uncompelling, unconvincing, and the mirror scene is anything but subjectivity regained.

The term *pathos* is derived from the Greek word for *suffering* or *deep feeling*, from the aorist infinitive of *to suffer*. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, pathos is "that quality in speech, writing, music, or artistic representation (or *transferred sense*, in events, circumstances, persons, etc.) which excites a feeling of pity or sadness."[6] The existence of pathos indicates that emotion has invaded discourse or representation, and this invasion seems always to be tinged by the illicit, the slightly scandalous. The emotion of pathos is predictably excessive. Pathos is sometimes opposed to logos (speech, reason) and sometimes situated as the transient or emotional in opposition to ethos as the permanent or ideal. The protagonist of the text of pathos is of a lower social status and, in some sense, a victim: "The protagonist, in a scene involving *pathos* lacks the social and moral elevation of the tragic hero; relative passivity in the suffering is a *sine qua non*."[7] Hence pathos is associated with "lower" forms such as melodrama, forms historically associated with the feminine.

Haynes's cinema is saturated with pathos: from the detailed suffering of Karen Carpenter in *Superstar* to the disruptive force of desire (both heterosexual and homosexual) in Cathy Whitaker's life in *Far from Heaven*, and even in unexpected places in *Velvet Goldmine* (UK/US, 1998)—most notably in the scene in which the narrator, Arthur Stuart (Christian Bale), is discovered masturbating to glam-rock music by his horrified parents and subjected to the extreme humiliation occasioned by his father's ferocious moralistic response. *Far from Heaven*, in its positioning of Cathy Whitaker, the perfect white incarnation of the suburban wife and mother, and Raymond Deagan (Dennis Haysbert), the stigmatized black gardener, exemplifies the very mechanism of pathos—the disproportion between means and ends, between desires and their fulfillment. The film forcefully articulates the desirability of these two characters' relationship and its simultaneous impossibility. Quoting most explicitly another scene of intense pathos doubly lived in Max Ophuls's *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (US, 1948), the scene at the Hartford railroad sta-

tion as Raymond and his daughter leave for Baltimore maps out the geometry of pathos. There are no words spoken between Cathy and Raymond, only a sustained and intense process of looking. A classic shot–reverse shot structure initiates the gaze, and as the train whistle blows and the train starts to crawl slowly away, the morose Elmer Bernstein music, which will later swell triumphantly accompanying a crane shot over the station, begins. In Cathy's point-of-view shot, Raymond is taken farther and farther by the train's movement; in Raymond's point of view, Cathy becomes smaller and smaller, overwhelmed by the strict geometry of the station; it is she who seems to embody movement into the distance rather than the train. The scene secretes a nuanced understanding of the alliance between passion, distance, and camera movement. The shots are infused with subjectivity and, as Roland Barthes has written, "Absence can exist only as a consequence of the other; it is the other who leaves, it is I who remain. . . . It is Woman who gives shape to absence, elaborates its fiction."[8] As Cathy walks away, she parallels the yellow line on the platform and the train tracks, as well as the line of regularized pillars and the lights on the ceiling, all aiming toward the same vanishing point in what is almost a parody of linear perspective. Desire and its denial are subject to the mathematical laws of an infinitely receding distance, the inevitable separation of melodrama becoming the trauma of an expansive space.

Such scenes inscribe the historicity of cinematic pathos, and they are not rare in Haynes's work. Earlier in *Far from Heaven*, after Cathy's meeting with Raymond during which the pair recognize that their relationship has no future, she returns home and sobs, lying across the bed, in a scene with film noir lighting that blatantly echoes a scene in Ophuls's *Reckless Moment* (US, 1949)—both are punctuated by a phone call from the absent husband. Similarly the character of Sybil in *Far from Heaven* is a reinscription of the white heroine's black maid of the same name in *Reckless Moment*, and in each case it is Sybil who functions as the site of a deep knowledge of the white woman's feelings, of her suffering. When the narrator figure in *Velvet Goldmine* visits a bar to interview Brian Slade's former wife, the spectacular camera movement

Farewell at the train station in *Far from Heaven*.
Courtesy Focus Features

and mise-en-scène reiterate those of a similar scene in *Citizen Kane* (dir. Orson Welles, US, 1941). Cinema becomes an image-repertoire in the Barthesian sense, and pathos, in particular, becomes an affect fully dependent on its own iterability—figures of distance, of separation, of miscommunication are endlessly replayed.

But is it necessary to know the source in order to grasp the work of citation? Is the perfect spectator for these films the alert cinephile with a specialized and somewhat arcane knowledge? Why these scenes? The intensity of a parting scene at a railroad station, in particular, is not privileged only by these two films. Its recognition as saturated with pathos does not seem to require an original cognition; rather repetition is a part of its very structure. While pathos is without doubt a feature of narrative—it requires a temporal structure to allow for mistiming and a developmental logic to generate the effect of disproportion—a single scene, a moment, or an arrested image often seem to bear the weight of the pathetic effect. Haynes's cinema demonstrates not so much

that the image resides within a genre, but that the generic invades the image, reducing its singularity, making it available for *re*cognition. Citation hence only makes explicit a mechanism everywhere present in the cinema.

Perhaps Haynes's predilection for genre can be explained by an acknowledgment that a certain obviousness or banality is crucial to his project. The force of the image, its legibility, and even its radicality are dependent on its recognizability and its effect of immediacy. In a discussion of the impact of the poetic image, Roger Caillois has written that it is not enough for the image to surprise by exploiting the extreme disjunction of its terms. Instead the image

> must fulfill two nearly incompatible duties: to present what is evident and to surprise. If surprise is sacrificed, then the image is weak; if obviousness is sacrificed, the image is absurd, that is, meaningless and even weaker in the end. The terms it connects must summon each other on one level, and repel each other on another. . . . Because infinity—for the eye—begins just a few meters away from the retina, it is possible to reject as arbitrary any relation that is not immediately apparent . . . the only thing that endows an image with efficacy is a striking similarity that everything around it denies. The distance must be great and the obviousness beyond dispute: the shock stems from this.[9]

Melodrama is an especially appropriate genre for sustaining a sense of the obvious, the always already known. For the evident to become surprising it must be, in effect, seen again. But the shock comes from the fact that, in Haynes's cinema, genre itself is cited and displaced, and the accessible is infiltrated by distance. His images are, indeed, both obvious and surprising.

Pathos is a textual effect that implies a closeness, an immediacy, and hence an uncritical spectator—one who is taken in, often to the point of tears. It entails a loss or fading of subjectivity in the process of signification, full immersion in a discourse. Mikhail Bakhtin claims that "a discourse of pathos is fully sufficient to itself and to its object. Indeed, the speaker completely immerses himself [*sic*] in such a discourse, there is no distance,

there are no reservations."[10] One might add that the situation of the receiver of the discourse mimics that of the speaker—immersion and loss of a well-defined subjectivity. Yet this definition is contradicted by Haynes's films where the spectator is simultaneously overly involved and disconnected, where the obvious, as in Caillois's discussion of the efficacious image, is invaded by the foreign, harboring a shock. Nietzsche's oxymoron—the pathos of distance—seems strikingly appropriate for Haynes's cinema, which not only reconciles these two effects but reveals them as mutually sustaining.[11]

The etymology of pathos insists that suffering is its critical emotion, that it concerns not just an excess emotion but one that hurts, that is inextricable from pain. Pathos names a condition in which the feelings have gone awry: to feel too intensely is to suffer. Lacking the nobility of the suffering associated with tragedy, melodrama's pathos is of a lower order, a deviant form, its impotent protagonists socially marginalized and abjected. The etymological affinity of pathos and pathology indicates a semiotic slippage among intense affect, suffering, and disease—a slippage clearly evident across Haynes's films. *Poison*, *Superstar*, and *Safe* all focus on the pathological, and *Velvet Goldmine* explores the acting out of social stigmatization, deviance, and heterodoxy. Pathology as a theme bears within it the structuring contradiction of its lexical history—the tension between pathos and logos, feeling and the word. Pathology opens up the possibility of speaking suffering, an entanglement of the body and the word. Yet it also strikes one as oxymoronic because suffering is generally thought to be mute, a corporeal phenomenon, a feeling rather than an idea, and ultimately inarticulate. Like the pathos of distance evident in Haynes's work, the yoking together of the apparently incompatible pain and speech, body and logos, seems to challenge the heavily entrenched opposition of emotion and intellect. And, in a sense, all of Haynes's films can be seen as striving for that effect.

In *Velvet Goldmine*, the complicity of feeling and intelligence is located in glam rock, music that is emotionally powerful, moving, and knowingly cynical or ironic, undercutting its own

seriousness. In an interview, Haynes claims that "the early Roxy Music records that Eno was a part of, and the few that followed, sum up the most interesting dualities between this highly referenced, ironic, tongue-in-cheek kind of musical presentation and, *somehow*, this incredibly emotional quality at the same time. That combination still baffles me, and it's something that I tried with all my gumption to bring to the film itself."[12] A film concerned with the imbrication of fantasy and history, *Velvet Goldmine* explores the quandaries of an identity that is never stabilized as anything other than performance (at one point, Mandy tries to relate Brian Slade's history: "He became someone else. Then again, he always was."). The film's rejection of the usual cause-and-effect logic of historical discourse is instantiated by the significance of Slade's alter ego, Maxwell Demon, the figure in physics who bears witness to a shift from the classical determination of Newtonian physics to the regime of probability. Maxwell's Demon represents the possibility of the improbable, the unexpected. In tying Slade's favored persona to improbability, the film further pressures the concepts of authenticity, identity, and realism, presenting genre as a costume that the characters don and discard. The historical moment of glam rock was, for Haynes, a moment of possibility, perhaps unrealized or without duration, but possibility nevertheless. If "anything can happen," the conventions of genre are no longer constraints but fields of possibility.

In one sense, the notion of pathology is entirely foreign to *Velvet Goldmine* since aberration and deviance are the norm. Any hint of the pathological is confined to the character of the investigative reporter, Arthur Stuart, with his memories of intense adolescent sexual anxiety, of difference and deception, of the shame of his parents' discovery of his masturbation and the condensed melodrama of the subsequent scene in which he leaves home on a bus, a scene markedly silent in contrast to the rest of the film. Pathology is only possible, in Haynes's cinema, when viewed by those who cling to their status as normal. It is called into being by a look. This is nowhere more evident than in the "Horror" section of *Poison*, where the scientist who isolates the essence of the sex-

ual drive, Dr. Thomas Graves, becomes a spectacle of disease and contagion, his excess marked by the oozing pustules on his face.

What is at stake here is the forceful inscription of subjectivity as a function of its availability to vision. This is why the delineation of subjectivity in point-of-view shots, special effects, an incessantly moving camera, and music is so crucial in these films. In *Poison*, the horror of Dr. Graves's condition is marked by the consistent return to tropes of distorted subjectivity from the classical era of Hollywood: canted frames and black-and-white spirals emerging from the center of the screen. Emotion is writ large, as it were. The logic of conjoining pathos and logos, intense affect and distanciation, is embedded in the signature shots discussed at the beginning of this essay. The long tracking shots combining the pathos and frustrated longing of suburbia, with its heightened status as stereotype, perform a function similar to that of the repeated spanking scenes and their curious mixture of intense subjectivity and anonymity. In *Poison*, the spanking scene follows the scene in which Richie discovers his mother in bed with the gardener (shot with rear projection of the sexual scene), punctuated by the mother's interview for the television exposé. Richie's mother describes the similarity between his look in the first instance and his look during the spanking: "I swear he looked at me with the exact same expression. It was like some oath in some other language. His face was so weird. It made me feel ashamed." The scene of the spanking also features a rear projection image of the mother watching in the background as Richie is spanked by his father in the foreground, lending an eerie quality to the line of vision, which crosses two entirely different spaces. The image is shattered from within. What we are given to believe is the most extraordinary image—the boy's face with its weird and shaming expression—is withheld from the spectator, merely a function of the mother's awed return look, from an alien space. That face, the privileged site for the expression of affect, does not occupy the space to which it is the response and, furthermore, it is described not as a visual but as a verbal event: "It was like some oath in some other language." Pathos, a suffering that is simultaneously *jouissance*, becomes logos, the oath that shames.

The pathological does not necessarily evoke pathos, but both deal with marginality, that which is on the edge. For Haynes, this site is either the woman—the figure who becomes the placeholder of the most intense social contradictions, the marker of the paralysis of convention—or the queer—incarnating aberration, exemplary of the impossibility of "being oneself."[13] *Safe* is the hinge text in this regard since its female protagonist is at once the conflicted woman of melodrama and the infected, aberrant, diseased other, evidence of the inevitable failure of the contemporary obsession with the self. Haynes's cinema oscillates between these two figures that are, for him, figures of a certain fascination, symptoms of a pervasive social panic.

Critical reviews of Haynes's work often evince a nervous anxiety about what they refer to as the Brown-educated filmmaker's status as an intellectual. This is undoubtedly at least partially due to a pervasive anti-intellectualism in American public discourse, but it is also connected to the recalcitrance of the binary opposition between intellect and emotion. Even in relation to highly accessible films such as *Safe* and *Far from Heaven*, the charge that the films are cold, cynical, or overwrought is present. In Stuart Klawans's review of *Far from Heaven* in the *Nation*, for instance, intellectuality clearly gets in the way of a genuine depiction of human emotions. While Klawans points out that "Haynes has consistently used pathology as an organizing metaphor," he nevertheless accuses the filmmaker of assuming the position of the pathologist, dissecting and mocking the pervasive social attempts to medicalize dissatisfaction. As the doctor/intellectual, Haynes has no empathy with his characters, but treats them with a "cold, meticulous irony." He belongs to "the Camp of the misfit academics," and *Far from Heaven* is a "corpse," a lifeless "idea about melodrama." What is lacking is credible emotion ("the characters are no more than fancy signboards"), and all that remains is an insistence on an empty visual style as an end in itself.[14]

What Klawans neglects here is the extent to which Haynes invests in pathos as well as pathology. The assumption underlying his review is that of a gnawing incompatibility between ideas

(indeed representation itself) and affect. The question that strikes me as most insistent, however, is how, in fact, *Far from Heaven* is able to elicit pathos despite its irony—why the two are not only not mutually exclusive but inseparable for Haynes. A fear of intellectuality as excluding the emotions is a fear of the pathological as it yokes together pathos and logos, suffering and its analysis, feeling and its articulation, the body and speech. It harbors a suspicion that the "norm" and the "normal" demand the mutual exclusivity of these terms. The strength of Haynes's cinema resides in a rejection of that fear, in its project of articulating affect and analysis.[15]

But what form does this anxiety-producing intellectuality take in Haynes's films? Where does it reside? Most frequently it seems to be perceived by critics not in the references to high literature (Jean Genet or Rimbaud) that are, anyway, quite localizable in Haynes's work, but in the plethora of film citations or references to film history—to *Citizen Kane* in *Velvet Goldmine*, *Jeanne Dielman* in *Safe*, *All That Heaven Allows* in *Far from Heaven*, and most especially to a variety of genres: film noir, melodrama, the musical, the science fiction film. What is resisted in much of the critical writing on Haynes seems to be the strong and explicit acknowledgment of genre not simply as classification but as essential and constitutive framework, as generator of cinema. In Haynes's work, the intelligence is a specifically filmic intelligence that does not exclude the possibility of emotion (or its semiotics), but nevertheless demands that the cinema be actively thought as well as felt. The focus on the pathological is not simply an elaboration of the processes of social marginalization but a challenge to the persistent denial of the inextricability of the sensible and the intelligible.

Notes

For general reference of the films discussed here, see Todd Haynes, *Far From Heaven, Safe, and Superstar: Three Screenplays* (New York: Grove Press, 2003). Additionally, it is worth noting that Zeitgeist has recently released *Dottie Gets Spanked* on DVD, see Zeitgeistfilms.com for more information.

1. Sigmund Freud, " 'A Child Is Being Beaten': A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversions," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1955), 17:5–204.

2. Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 38–39. See also Jacques Goimard, "Le mélodrame: Le mot et la chose" ("The Melodrama: The Word and the Thing"), *Cahiers de la Cinémathèque: Pour une histoire du mélodrame au cinéma*, no. 28 (1979): 51.

3. Kathleen Woodward, "Statistical Panic," *differences* 11 (1999): 181.

4. Larry Gross, "Antibodies: Larry Gross Talks with *Safe*'s Todd Haynes," *Filmmaker Magazine*, Summer 1995, www.filmmaker magazine.com/summer1995/antibodies.php.

5. Marc Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (New York: Verso, 1995).

6. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "Pathos," dictionary.oed.com (accessed 24 May 2004).

7. *Dictionnaire international des termes littéraires* (*International Dictionary of Literary Terms*), s.v. "Pathos," www.ditl.info/art/definition.php?term=389 (accessed 21 March 2004).

8. Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 13–14.

9. Roger Caillois, "The Image," in *The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader*, ed. and trans. Claudine Frank (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 317–18.

10. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 394.

11. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), 25–26, and *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966), 201. Nietzsche's use of the phrase *the pathos of distance* is quite different and involves a distance of social rank or class and a different inflection of the concept of pathos. I invoke it here only as a striking oxymoron that seems particularly apt to describe Haynes's films, with the understanding that there is no claim to fidelity to Nietzsche's text.

12. Todd Haynes, "All That Glitter Allows," interview by Rob Nelson, *City Pages*, 14 November 1998, citypages.com/databank/19/935/article6475.asp; emphasis in original.

13. For an astute analysis of the figure of the queer and the reenactment of scenes of originary homophobic persecution, see Norman Bryson, "Todd Haynes's *Poison* and Queer Cinema," *InVisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Studies*, no. 1 (1998), www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/issue1/bryson/bryson.html (accessed 10 April 2003).

14. Stuart Klawans, "Heaven Can Wait: *Far from Heaven*," *Nation*, 11 November 2002, 36–37.

15. Haynes has stated, with reference to *Far from Heaven*, that "the term irony has become too worn out to be useful. It's become bastardized into an easy cultural catchphrase that doesn't really apply to this film, although a certain distance does. When we think about distance we think about the cutting off of emotion, and it's not that. It's a distance that brings with it a greater emotional reservoir of feeling." Todd Haynes, "Interview with Todd Haynes," by Nick James, *Sight and Sound*, March 2003, 14.

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Julie Halston as Dottie Frank in *Dottie Gets Spanked.*
Courtesy Killer Films