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## Returning to *Riddles*

Catherine Grant

Reflecting on the 1977 film *Riddles of the Sphinx* in 2013, Laura Mulvey explains how she and Peter Wollen imagined it as a ‘theory film’.<sup>1</sup> This might seem like a rather dry description, indicating a film to be endured rather than enjoyed. However, *Riddles of the Sphinx* (hereafter referred to as *Riddles*) is a film that utilises the riddle of its title to draw viewers in, encouraging them to join in the numerous dialogues that take place across the film: dialogues with psychoanalytic models of subjectivity, modernist traditions of poetry, dreamwork, women’s oppression and the mother-daughter relationship. This complex, feature-length experimental film highlights its own construction with a structure that refuses linear narrative. Like a riddle, it has no clear climax or resolution. Seven numbered sections draw on numerous filmic and textual strategies, which, flanked by three shorter sections, embed at its centre a fictional story of a woman’s struggle to find her identity through motherhood, work and friendship.

Made in the wake of second-wave feminist activism and theorising, as well as the development of a ‘counter-cinema’, *Riddles* remains a rich resource for continuing questions about feminist politics, communities and artistic practice in the present day. The film invites the viewer into a series of relationships that challenge conventional notions of cinematic viewing, and foregrounds relationships between women. To explore how these temporally disruptive relationships continue beyond the film’s reception in 1977, I will draw on writings and interviews by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen. Their collaboration undoes the assumption that feminist filmmakers are always women, and underlines the dialogue between men and women during this period.<sup>2</sup> In this article, I concentrate on Mulvey’s presence in *Riddles*, but the film explores their shared interests in how to represent issues around motherhood and childhood, channelled through their investment in avant-garde forms of filmmaking and in psychoanalysis.<sup>3</sup> The joint authorship of the film and the conversations that contributed to its making are reflected in its form and address, as the viewer is encouraged to continue the dialogue and questioning begun in the film.

Extending this focus on collaboration, I will draw comparisons between *Riddles* and a collaborative video entitled *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* made by Mulvey and the younger filmmaker Emma Hedditch in 2007. Their rarely seen work can also be seen as a ‘theory film’, for its performance of Mulvey’s famous manifesto-essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ (1975).<sup>4</sup> Rather than seeing the political questions and experimental structures found in *Riddles* as relegated to history, I argue that both ‘theory films’ invite the viewer to take part in a questioning that continues in the present. In my return to *Riddles*, my own experience of viewing the film over thirty years after its release will complement the rich body of feminist writing on the film, which has previously focused primarily on issues of motherhood and psychoanalysis.

Throughout *Riddles*, the figure of the Sphinx stands in for an alternative imaginary that is not structured around the patriarchal Law, with the interweaving of images, memories and quotations producing a film that is evocative rather than didactic. As Mulvey tells us, the voice of the Sphinx that is heard throughout the film is a ‘voice off’ rather than a ‘voice over’, as the Sphinx occupies a space outside of the city in the story of Oedipus, signifying the suppressed within patriarchal culture.<sup>5</sup> The Sphinx is imagined as a female voice that resists patriarchy by inviting questioning, a learning that is politicised but open-ended. At the end of ‘Louise’s story told in thirteen shots’ the ‘voice off’ becomes the voice of Louise’s daughter in the future, bringing together the Sphinx from ancient past, the interior monologue of Louise and the daughter who is pictured in the film as a child, but is now speaking as an adult from a moment in time which is beyond the film’s own making. This perspective is important when watching the film in the 2000s, as we inhabit the future proposed by the voice of the daughter.

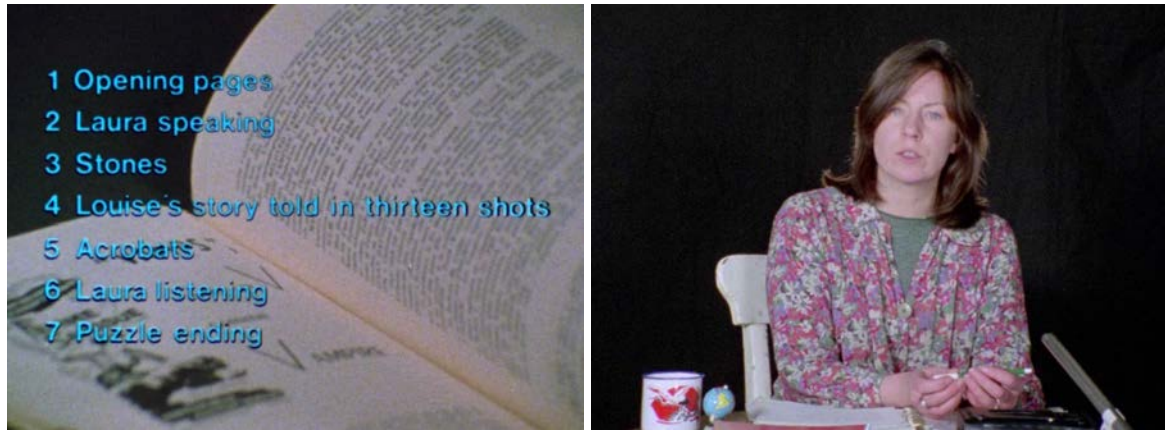
### **A Theory Film**

Mulvey’s comments that, ‘Peter and I wanted to develop what we thought of as “theory films”’ draws on Wollen’s response in an interview about their previous film *Penthesilea: Queen of the Amazons* (1974).<sup>6</sup> Wollen had replied to the contention that their film required ‘an enormous amount of work’

with a discussion of different levels of political film, insisting that ‘just as when people read a book they are prepared to do further reading or they are prepared to encounter difficulties, so they should in a film’.<sup>7</sup> His insistence is also related to the close links between filmmaking and theoretical writing, with Mulvey explaining how *Riddles* developed out of thinking around her essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ and Wollen’s ‘The Two Avant-Gardes’ (1975).<sup>8</sup> She explains how both the ‘collective perception that images of women were a political issue and site of struggle’ and the desire to ‘think practically about the possibility of an intellectual or theoretical cinema’ drove their films.<sup>9</sup> Both Mulvey and Wollen were ardent cinephiles as well as theorists, and so their approach to filmmaking was fuelled by their desire to imagine a new form of cinema that would, in Wollen’s words, ‘struggle against the fantasies, ideologies and aesthetic devices of one cinema with its own antagonistic fantasies, ideologies and aesthetic devices’.<sup>10</sup> Mulvey explains how ‘We were interested in trying to make a movie in which form and structure were clearly visible but which would also have a space for feeling and emotion.’<sup>11</sup>

### **Opening Pages**

*Riddles* begins with the pages of a French film magazine (*Midi-Minuit Fantastique*) being turned, with the heading ‘Le Mythe de la femme’ opening the sequence, followed by numerous images and articles on witches, vampires, sirens and other hybrid temptresses from film and popular culture. Over these pages the introductory panels for the film flash up: first the title, then a quote from Gertrude Stein that indicates the posing of form as much as content that will follow, the list of section headings, including the title to the section that has just been seen: ‘Opening pages’ (fig. 1). Already the interweaving of research, history and fantasy that characterise the rest of the film has been staged: the pages of the magazine prefigure the intercutting of historic images of the Sphinx with a text on her significance in popular mythology in film’s second section, ‘Laura speaking’ (fig. 2), as well as literally presenting an encounter with a book as being as one with watching the film.



Figs 1-2: Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, *Riddles of the Sphinx*, 1977, film stills.  
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In the film the act of reading instigates a series of questions and conversations. Numerous scenes include reading, and I will discuss just a few: Mulvey reading a text about the Sphinx out loud, a lecture for the viewers; Louise reading from her friend/lover Maxine's notebook, which includes sections from H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud* (1956) and a surreal dream sequence; and the 'voice off', which appears to be Louise's daughter Anna, remembering a book passage in a fragmented fashion. The use of reading to activate a community has parallels with the reading practices Mulvey was involved with through the women's movement, as well as the debates around avant-garde film taking place in film journals such as *Screen*.<sup>12</sup> As Mandy Merck has pointed out, the early 1970s in Britain was a period in which 'feminist theoretical inquiry was largely conducted in reading groups, conferences, occasional extramural classes, and a variety of women's and Left publications.'<sup>13</sup> Mulvey has also repeatedly discussed this in relation to both women's liberation and film: 'It is sometimes forgotten that the cultural context that produced the theoretical essays and the experimental films, often themselves experimenting with theory, was not academic.'<sup>14</sup> This was because the fields of women's studies and politicised film studies were nascent or non-existent inside the university, and Mulvey was not working within academia in the early 1970s.<sup>15</sup> In *Riddles*, Mulvey and Wollen reflect their political interests in using film as a space for creating theory, for learning, for taking pleasure in joining a community that attempts to address questions without necessarily knowing the answer.

### **Laura speaking / Laura listening**

In section two, 'Laura speaking', Mulvey starts by explaining how: 'When we were planning the central section of this film, about a mother and child, we decided to use the voice of the Sphinx as an imaginary narrator', stating that the Sphinx represents 'a questioning voice, a voice asking a riddle'.<sup>16</sup> The staging of this speech is central in creating a viewer who is involved in the process of questioning, who can identify the voice of the Sphinx as one which has been used to speak of patriarchal fears around femininity and motherhood, but also as a voice that can be used to speak of women's experience under patriarchy through means of riddles and questions. Mulvey presents herself as an authorial voice, but through her presence in front of the camera, she is also the embodied voice of the film-maker, interrupting the narrative with a discussion of the thinking behind it. She has described how she is a performer in this sequence, playing the part of 'Laura' rather than simply being herself.<sup>17</sup> By presenting Mulvey reading to camera, the filmmakers explicitly present the film's premise as a proposal, resulting from their enquiry into the role of women in the present and returning to history and myth to explore the psychic, as well as political, foundations of women's oppression. Mulvey has explained how the importance of psychoanalysis came about through her involvement in a feminist study group, the History Group, part of the London Women's Liberation Workshop: 'We were reading great works by great men that were relevant to understanding the oppression of women but in which we could also find blind spots, symptomatic of misunderstandings.'<sup>18</sup> The film also enters into this questioning by refocusing attention on the Sphinx as a blind spot in Freudian models of subjectivity. As Mulvey sets out in her on-screen lecture, the Sphinx represents what has been forgotten in Freud's invocation of Oedipus, imagined in the film through a questioning voice, a feminist voice of women's experience. The scene of the woman filmmaker, reading about the myth of the Sphinx, presents the dissonance many women feel when confronted with patriarchal fantasies around femininity. 'Laura' is not a mythic creature but a calm presenter of historical fantasy, fantasies that continue into the present. Filmed against a black background, she has on the table in front of her a microphone and tape recorder as well as 'two books, a child's mug and a pencil sharpener in the form of a small globe'.<sup>19</sup> She is both lecturer and filmmaker, with the props suggesting an ironic presentation of authority, an address to the viewer that is a starting point rather than conclusion.

In section six, 'Laura listening', Mulvey is again filmed at the table, writing in her notebook. She stops writing, and starts to play her earlier speech on the tape recorder (fig. 3). She listens along with the audience, the reprised sentences foregrounding the figure of the Sphinx as a patriarchal myth. 'Laura listening' is a section that appears to be a simple repetition of 'Laura speaking' when watched through once. But when viewed with the closer attention that is possible with the publication of the script in 1977 in *Screen*, as well as the recent release of the film on DVD in 2013, a more complicated picture emerges. Like a riddle that only appears when the listener or reader returns to it repeatedly, or the embedded significance of words and phrases in dreams, the tape recorder actually plays a sentence that is not part of the first speech, although it sounds as if it could. Mulvey's voice begins by saying ' "... into a social hieroglyphic. Later on we try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret..." ' <sup>20</sup> A footnote in the script reveals this fragment to be a quotation from Karl Marx's *Capital*. Taken from the section 'The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof' by Marx, the quotation obliquely references the filmmakers' debt to a wider Marxist discourse in relation to feminism, something made explicit in the workplace politics discussed in 'Louise's story told in thirteen shots'. Here Marx's term a 'social hieroglyphic' is made to speak about women's oppression, transposing Marx's theory to a feminist reading. As Mulvey listens to herself quoting this phrase, the scene embeds the historical theories of oppression that Mulvey and Wollen invoke throughout the film. After this quotation, Mulvey's tape recorded voice is replaced by that of the Sphinx, the 'voice off', who recounts an ambiguous dream sequence. This new dream, which also does not appear in the rest of the film, tells of 'looking at an island in the glass', which is surrounded by 'a sea of blood'. <sup>21</sup> We are told that '[t]he island was an echo of the past.' <sup>22</sup>



Figs 3-4: Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, *Riddles of the Sphinx*, 1977, film still.  
Reproduced with permission of the artists.

### **Her friendship with Maxine has intervened**

This dream-image, with its ambiguous return to the past, is echoed in the way the sections of *Riddles* weave relationships between historical moments alongside relationships between (primarily) women. This framework situates section four, 'Louise's story told in thirteen shots', as a case study, with the past as both personal history and the weight of patriarchal formations. Rather than Louise being an individual to be analysed (either in a psychoanalytic or political sense), it is her interactions with others that form the narrative's shifts, beginning with scenes showing her with her daughter and husband, through to her entering the all-female workforce at a telephone exchange, losing her job through her campaign for childcare and her relationship with Maxine with whom she moves in. The 'voice off' also moves through different subject positions, with early sequences appearing to articulate the inner thoughts of Louise when engaged in everyday acts of care with her small daughter Anna. In these early scenes the 'voice off' takes the form of poems, in which phrases are repeated and modulated, such as the emphasis on time in the first shot of Louise preparing food for Anna in their kitchen: 'Time to get ready. Time to come in. / Things to forget. Things to lose. / Meal time. Story time..... No time to make amends. No time for tea. Time to worry. No time to hold. / Things to hold. Things past. / Meal time. Story time.'<sup>23</sup> Like the performance poem by Faith Wilding, *Waiting* (1972), a woman's interior voice is imagined through a repetitious list that attempts to represent the tedium and cyclical nature of much domestic labour. In *Riddles*, the dream-like lists of phrases are joined by the famous 360 degree pans that constitute each of the thirteen shots, a literal cycle that returns to the



beginning at the end, instigating a mode of viewing that does not need to look for the scene's climax, and emphasises the fragmented view that the camera captures on its way round.

Similarly, Wollen and Mulvey stage the scenes of *Riddles* so that the viewer is made aware of the process of the film's writing, which opens up various questions and chains of association. In the film political or theoretical analysis cannot be disassociated from the psychoanalysis, or what Mulvey terms 'a space for feeling and emotion'.<sup>24</sup> In a later scene, Louise's interior monologue is returned to, and opened up, through reading and discussion, as she reads from Maxine's notebook. The shared discussion of Maxine's dreams and notes from H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud* form a link between the feminist use of consciousness-raising and psychoanalysis as a technique to express a sense of self that is in dialogue with, but not defined by, Freudian structures.<sup>25</sup> H.D. was a modernist writer whose use of history and psychoanalysis, alongside formal experimentation, was an important influence for Wollen and Mulvey. H.D.'s essay recounts her experience of being analysed by Freud, but rather than a faithful account of her experience, she utilises writing to perform an act of analysis.

Through Louise's relationship with Maxine, her political consciousness grows, and their intimacy provides the space in which Louise finds the strength to create a sense of identity beyond that of wife and mother. First meeting Maxine as the nursery teacher for her daughter, Maxine presents an image of womanhood that is capable, in control and living independently. Although the nature of Louise and Maxine's relationship is left ambiguously suspended between close friends and lovers, it is a catalyst for change. As one intertitle puts it '[Her] friendship with Maxine has intervened' (fig. 4). Both the Sphinx and Maxine are representations of womanhood that are not trapped by white, heterosexual and bourgeois models of femininity, although the complex interracial dynamics and fantasies that the mythic figure and actual woman evoke are not explored. The subject positions of the Sphinx and Maxine are instructional for Louise, her daughter Anna and the viewer. Maxine's identity as a black woman is not explicitly discussed in the film, but her strength and emblematic presence draw links with the figure of the Sphinx as an 'othered' feminine identity, with Louise's position as a white, bourgeois mother brought more sharply into focus through the comparison between the two. Their

questioning of the role of women could be seen to be doing some of the work bell hooks proposes in her famous essay 'The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators'. hooks' essay critiques feminist film theory for the lack of discourse on race, and explores what it means to be a black female spectator, contending that this means to 'participate in a broad range of looking relations, contest, resist, revision, interrogate, and invent on multiple levels'.<sup>26</sup> Maxine is a less realised character than Louise, but her presence both as Louise's guide to finding a more feminist life, and the erotic relationship between the women that is implied in the film, particularly through the memory of the daughter Anna, is often left unremarked, and warrants further analysis.

### **And, in her mind, she flung herself through the air**

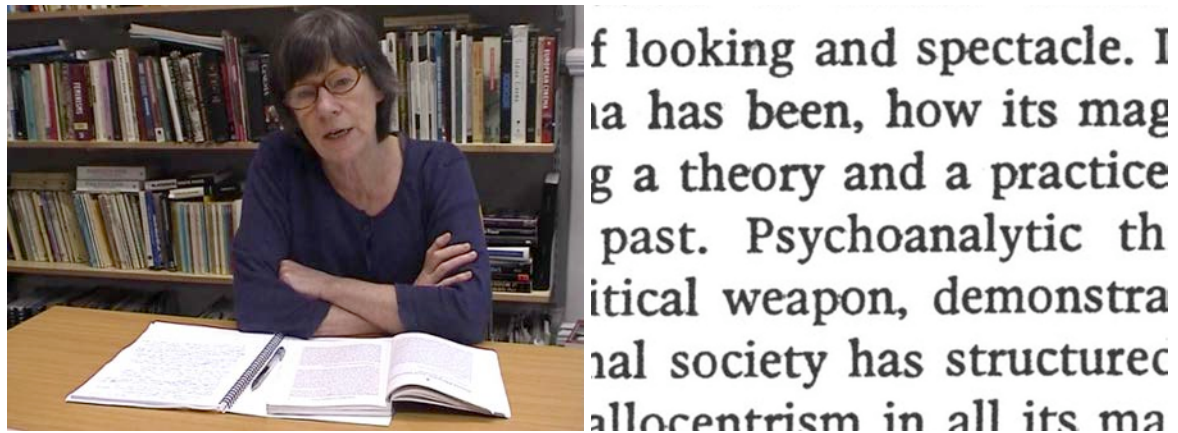
In the final scene of Louise's story, she is filmed visiting the Egyptian rooms at the British Museum with her daughter Anna. As they hold hands and walk through this patriarchal, imperialist institution, the 'voice off' reminisces about a dream she has read about in a book, a dream she tries to reconstruct but fails. For much of Louise's story, the 'voice off' appears to vocalise Louise's thoughts. In this section, however, as the voice continues with memories from the speaker's childhood, the viewer realises that this voice is now speaking from the perspective of the daughter Anna, at a point in her adult future. When I watched this film for the first time, I realised with a shock that I was, in effect, living in the future that Anna speaks from. Born in 1975, I would have been two in 1977, the age of Anna in the film. Watching the film in 2010, aged 35, and with a young daughter myself, I related in a visceral manner to the questions around motherhood, work, and how to create feminist communities and histories. Just like the cyclical links made between past and present in the film, the problem of feminist consciousness and agency looped forward from the time of the film to the time of my watching, joined by the 'voice off' that spoke from this imagined future moment. Anna's 'voice off' again focuses on the process of reading and writing, as well as the memory of drawing acrobats, symbols of 'bodies at work'.<sup>27</sup> The 'voice off' ends with her remembering another part of the passage she has read, about the voice of the Sphinx, a voice she realises that she has heard all her life. Her monologue ends with the sentence: 'The voice was so familiar yet so fatally easy to forget. She smiled and, in her mind, she flung herself through the air.'<sup>28</sup> This described image, of imagining flying

through the air, embodies the way in which the viewer is urged to use the film as a space of learning and of possibility: an engagement with the different material at hand that moves from facts to questions to possibilities in the mind's eye. One way to imagine the sphinx's voice and its questions is that it instructs the characters in the film, and the viewer of the film, about the possibilities of feminism. For Louise, as for her daughter, and for us, the future as a potentially feminist future can be only be imagined if the past can be understood and learnt from, and its questions heard.

### **Mulvey's Manifesto**

In 2007, another film draws upon Mulvey's thinking, this time made in collaboration with the filmmaker Emma Hedditch. Like myself, Hedditch draws on the unfinished questions from second-wave feminism that continue to resonate in the present, in an art practice particularly attuned to the creation of feminist and queer communities through various strategies of collaboration and sharing. As the future of Anna points to the continuing conversations between different historical moments in *Riddles*, the film *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* returns to Mulvey's famous essay, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. Thirty years after she reads a theoretical text in *Riddles*, Mulvey again performs to camera, filmed by Hedditch in her office at Birkbeck, University of London. Hedditch explained that initially she wanted to film Mulvey teaching the essay, but then discovered Mulvey never did this. She has described making the film as 'a way of learning about the essay'.<sup>29</sup> As in *Riddles*, the process of reading is paired with memories, as Mulvey stops between sections to give an explanation of the ideas and political context that informed her writing the essay in the early 1970s (fig. 5). Her comments were intriguing to me, and began these thoughts about how films can imagine and instigate the process of learning just as much as theoretical texts or critical analysis. This short film reflects on, and brings to life, the ways in which Mulvey's classic feminist text had come into being. In the film, Mulvey presents her essay as a necessary intervention in a moment in time, but what also becomes clear is that her strategies are still applicable to the present. As an artist, rather than a scholar, Hedditch worked with Mulvey to create a collage of textual fragments, memories and film clips through which the viewer hears and sees the original essay's text, alongside its political and

filmic inspirations. Hedditch ensures that this essay can be listened to and read afresh, as an act of creative research and filmmaking that brings Mulvey's theory out of the textbook and onto the screen.



Figs 5-6: Laura Mulvey with Emma Hedditch, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, 2007, video stills. Reproduced with permission of the artists.

Mulvey has commented on how the essay was designed to work visually on the page, something that Hedditch stages for the viewer (fig. 6).<sup>30</sup> Mulvey's embodied commentary on her own words gives specificity to her 'manifesto', as Mandy Merck has so aptly called it, when, for example, the close-ups of the text draw the eye to phrases such as 'Psychoanalysis is thus appropriated here as a political weapon'.<sup>31</sup> The clips from Hollywood movies, chosen by Mulvey, form another layer of visualisation, giving the viewer instances of the fetishistic and sadistic gaze upon the female body that Mulvey has been so famous in theorising. Like the interplay of shots in *Riddles*, of filmic sirens in the opening pages of the magazine and Mulvey reading, here Mulvey's straightforward address to the camera provides an implicit contrast to the plethora of seductive fantasies found in the clips. The echo of Mulvey's earlier address to camera in *Riddles* provides an extra-filmic point of departure, so that the two films sit alongside each other as complementary discussions, with the later film focused on the essay that was begun before *Riddles*, and partly inspired it, again creating a circularity that refuses a linear notion of historical progression. Hedditch does not replace Mulvey as the filmmaker now in control of discourse, but instead remains behind the camera, taking up the position of listener and interlocutor, just as in 'Laura listening' in the earlier film, or the 'voice off' articulating Anna in the future (which is Hedditch's present).

The film collaboration *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* is a very modest production compared to the BFI funded, feature-length *Riddles*. However, the later film articulates present desires to continue the political projects and questions embarked on in the earlier ‘theory film’. Rather than being an act of reverence or nostalgia, Hedditch’s collaboration with Mulvey stages the younger filmmaker’s process of learning about ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, as well as her affinity with the historical and political situation from which it emerged. Whilst this might seem a small gesture, I would propose that this process of learning through close reading, listening and discussion is one that is key to feminist theorising and practice across the decades. Hedditch does not try to update Mulvey’s work, but instead pays close attention to it, to hear and see its specificity, and keep it alive as an important statement within a particular moment in feminist history. Hedditch has been committed to keeping the history of feminist activism and art alive by re-energising collaborative modes of art practice as well as being the one of the working group running the women’s film and video collection Cinenova, after its future seemed highly vulnerable in the early 2000s. Whilst they speak to each other from different historical moments, Mulvey does not take the position of all-knowing elder, or exasperated pioneer. Instead the film extends the feminist community imagined in *Riddles* and continues it in the present. The film also represents a wider practice that Mulvey has consistently and patiently adhered to following the success of her theoretical and film work in the 1970s, of making her words and memories available in interviews and essays, continually questioning and responding to their importance to the changing contemporary moment, something that Wollen has also been attentive to.<sup>32</sup> This is the archive that this essay has drawn on, aware that in this practice of remembering and questioning, these essays, interviews and films continues to produce a space of learning about feminism and its relationships to identity, history, community and creative practice. For Mulvey in particular, her attention to speaking, to writing, and letting herself be read, and conversed with, like the voice of the Sphinx, shows that she is aware of how it is ‘so fatally easy to forget’ the questioning that took place during the 1970s. In spite of this, she still encourages us to fling ourselves through the air.

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<sup>1</sup> Laura Mulvey, ‘Riddles of the Sphinx’, essay in *Riddles of the Sphinx* DVD booklet (London: BFI, 2013), p. 11

<sup>2</sup> See Siona Wilson’s book *Art Labor, Sex Politics: Feminist Effects in 1970s British Art and Performance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015) for more mixed gender collaborations during this period. Peter Wollen also contributed an essay ‘Thirteen Paragraphs’ to Judith Mastai ed., *Social Process/Collaborative Action: Mary Kelly 1970-1975* (Vancouver: Charles H. Scott Gallery, 1997), pp. 25-31, which gives more evidence of the intricate dialogue between artists and writers at this period.

<sup>3</sup> See Peter Wollen, ‘Thirteen Paragraphs’.

<sup>4</sup> Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ (1975), in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, second edition).

<sup>5</sup> Mulvey, Laura and Peter Wollen, ‘Riddles of the Sphinx: A Film by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen’ (Script), *Screen*, vol. 18, issue 2 (1977), pp. 61-78; pp. 61-2.

<sup>6</sup> Mulvey, ‘Riddles of the Sphinx’, (2013), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Wollen, in Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, interviewed by Clare Johnston and Paul Willemen, ‘Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons’, *Screen*, vol. 15, issue 3 (1974), pp. 120-134; p. 131. See also Wollen in Friedman, Lester D., ‘An Interview with Peter Wollen and Laura Mulvey on Riddles of the Sphinx’, *Millenium Film Journal*, 4/5 (Summer 1979), pp. 14-32.

<sup>8</sup> Laura Mulvey interviewed by Scott Macdonald, November 1990, in *A Critical Cinema 2: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1992), p. 334. She looks at the importance of other essays by Wollen in her ‘Riddles of the Sphinx’ essay in the BFI DVD booklet.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Mulvey, ‘Riddles of the Sphinx’, (2013), p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Wollen, ‘Godard and Counter Cinema: *Vent d’Est*’ (1972), in *Readings and Writings: Semiotic Counter-strategies* (London: Verso, 1982), pp. 79-91; p. 91.

<sup>11</sup> Mulvey interviewed by Macdonald, p. 334. Sophie Mayer explores similar issues: ‘“A narrative of what wishes”: Laura Mulvey’s and Peter Wollen’s adventures in the essay film’, *Riddles of the Sphinx* DVD booklet, pp. 1-5.

<sup>12</sup> See Peter Wollen, ‘Knight’s Move’, *Public 25* (2002), pp. 54-67. Available at <http://public.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/public/article/view/30199/27735> (accessed 24 April 2016) and Mulvey, ‘Riddles of the Sphinx’, (2013). Both Mulvey and Wollen discuss this context in the numerous interviews cited here.

<sup>13</sup> Mandy Merck, ‘Mulvey’s Manifesto’, *Camera Obscura* 66, vol. 22, no. 3 (2007), pp. 1-21; 3.

<sup>14</sup> Laura Mulvey, ‘Introduction: 1970s Feminist Film Theory and the Obsolescent Object’, in *Feminisms Diversity, Difference, and Multiplicity in Contemporary Film Cultures*, ed. Laura Mulvey and Anna Backman Rogers (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press: 2015), pp. 17-26; p. 17. There is a very detailed video interview with Mulvey that also covers this historical context: Catherine Grant (b. 1964), ‘Fieldnotes: Laura Mulvey interviewed by Catherine Grant’, *The Society for Cinema and Media Studies: Fieldnotes*, University of Sussex, Brighton, 13 October 2015. Available at <https://vimeo.com/151814726> (accessed 22 April 2016).

<sup>15</sup> See Wilson, *Art Labor Sex Politics* for more on the British context.

<sup>16</sup> Mulvey, Laura and Peter Wollen, ‘Riddles of the Sphinx: A Film by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen’ (Script), *Screen*, vol. 18, issue 2 (1977), pp. 61-78; pp. 61-2.

<sup>17</sup> Laura Mulvey, video interview, on *Riddles of the Sphinx* DVD.

<sup>18</sup> Mulvey, ‘Introduction to second edition’, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, p. xv. For more information on the History Group see Mignon Nixon, ‘“Why Freud?” asked the *Shrew*: Psychoanalysis and Feminism, Post-Partum Document, and the History Group’, *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, vol. 20, issue 2 (June 2015), pp. 131-140. <https://doi.org/10.1057/pcs.2015.2> (accessed 1 July 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Mulvey and Wollen, ‘Riddles of the Sphinx’ (Script), p. 61.

<sup>20</sup> Mulvey and Wollen, ‘Riddles of the Sphinx’ (Script), p. 77.



<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 63-4.

<sup>24</sup> Mulvey interviewed by Macdonald, p. 334

<sup>25</sup> H.D., *Tribute to Freud* (1956), (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1985).

<sup>26</sup> bell hooks, 'The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators', *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), pp. 115-31; p. 128.

<sup>27</sup> Mulvey and Wollen, 'Riddles of the Sphinx' (Script), p. 76.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Emma Hedditch, discussion after screening of *Riddles of the Sphinx* at Goldsmiths, University of London, 31 March 2010. I discuss this film and Hedditch's comments in 'Fans of Feminism: re-writing histories of second-wave feminism in contemporary art', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 34, no. 2, (2011), pp. 265-86.

<sup>30</sup> Mulvey, in 'Fieldnotes: Laura Mulvey interviewed by Catherine Grant'.

<sup>31</sup> Merck, 'Mulvey's Manifesto'.

<sup>32</sup> See particularly, Wollen, 'Knight's Move'.