Introduction: 'What's she like?'

There is a scene in Vincente Minnelli's *An American in Paris* (1951) in which two friends, Adam (Oscar Levant) and Henri (Georges Guétary), discuss the various merits of Parisienne Lise Bouvier (Leslie Caron). The attempt to describe, and in a way to categorise, the 19-year-old perfume-shop clerk begins when, over coffee and brioches at the Café Huguette, Adam asks Henri: 'What's she like?'

> HENRI: Well, she has great vitality and joie de vivre. She loves to go out, have fun and dance. She could dance all night!
> ADAM: Sounds tiresome. Kind of a wild kid, huh?
> HENRI Wild? Whatever gave you that idea? No, she is very simple. She works all day at the Maison Nicole, the perfume shop.

The camera pans away from Adam and Henri and rests on a large gilt-framed mirror in which they are now reflected, and Henri continues: 'She's an enchanting girl, Adam. Not really beautiful, and yet she has great beauty.' This shot dissolves to reveal Lise framed in the mirror. The camera tracks forward, obscuring the frame, and Lise, in a pale pink Romantic tutu with satin bodice, small wing-like sleeves, tulle-lined skirt and a matching pill-box hat, performs a graceful dance in the classical ballet style. As the dance ends, Lise looks into the camera with a beaming smile. As this fantasy interlude concludes, we return to a shot of the two men, and Adam remarks: 'A very spiritual type, huh?', to which Henri replies: 'Not at all. She's an exciting girl.' The shot again dissolves to Lise, poised seductively on a balloon-back chair, dressed in a tight-fitting purple dress split up both thighs to expose her long, sheer-stockinged legs. A sultry jazz score with a

wailing saxophone accompanies the scene. Fade back to the café, and Adam remarks: 'She seems to be a lusty young lady.' Henri insists, however, that 'she's sweet and shy'. The camera dissolves to a shot of Lise in a canary-yellow dress, holding a small posy of flowers and tentatively dancing to the accompaniment of a light orchestrated ballet score. The sequence ends with a slow, carefully developed arabesque. 'An old-fashioned girl, huh?', Adam concludes, to which Henri replies: 'Of course not, she's vivacious and modern.' We then dissolve to a shot of Lise in a white 1920s style flapper dress, dancing the Charleston against a bold red background. 'Always yakking it up, hey?', Adam remarks; to which Henri replies: 'Don't be silly! She reads incessantly!' The shot dissolves to a scene accompanied by sombre baroque music in which Lise, in simple black leggings and a black long-sleeved T-shirt with white collar and cuffs, performs a series of splits and arabesques while completely absorbed in a book. Adam asks: 'Doesn't all that reading make her moody?' to which Henri replies: 'Never! She's the gayest girl in the world.' Dissolve again to a shot of Lise in a vibrant blue Classical tutu performing a series of frenzied pirouettes to lively, carnivalesque music. The music continues as one by one the previous manifestations of Lise are superimposed onto this final image. As each image appears, Lise looks toward each incarnation of herself, demonstrating an awareness of the various representations of her. The five 'Lises' then wave coquettishly to Adam and Henri and, by extension, to the audience. As this collage shot dissolves finally to the café, Adam turns to Henri and says: 'Look. Let's start all over again. What's she like?'

The back-and-forth volleying between the two men, set off by Adam's outwardly simple question and giving rise to a series of vignettes depicting Lise in various guises, suggests the impossibility of answering the question in any definitive way, or arriving at a conclusive definition of Lise. Further, once any kind of consensus is reached concerning Lise, Henri abruptly changes tack. Rather than becoming exasperated by this process, Henri simply accepts that Lise is all these things at once. Indeed, the whole opening sequence proceeds by way of thesis/antithesis, without ever arriving at a synthesis; the 'true' Lise, her 'essential' identity, remains ambiguous and elusive. As Louis Octave Uzanne remarks in his study on *la Parisienne*: 'On a peint

ou décrit des femmes à l'infini; *la Femme* n'a jamais été strictement synthétisée' (*The Modern Parisienne* 45; original emphasis) (Women have been painted or described ad infinitum; Woman has never been strictly synthesised).

This scene from Minnelli's film is significant too in that the fantasy sequence constitutes our first encounter with Lise. We are introduced to her through an imagined collage of images, generated by Henri's descriptions and Adam's imagination. Thus her first 'real' appearance on screen, that is, her entry into the 'real world' of the film's diegesis, is anticipated by this fantasy sequence. In a certain sense, this is how any Parisienne first appears to us, pre-empted or prefigured by the proliferation of images and (re)presentations which precede her.

Who or what is *la Parisienne*? Some definitions

La Parisienne has been defined as a myth or dogma, a stereotype, a cliché and a cultural icon. Ruth E. Iskin argues that the 'historical conditions for the rise of the chic Parisienne were a convergence of mass-production, consumption and the spread of a visual culture promoting consumption' (223). The origins of the term *la Parisienne* are difficult to trace: while it was in use in the late eighteenth century, it only came into frequent use in the mid-nineteenth century to describe 'a specific type of urban woman whose garments declare a self-fashioned image of position and desire' (Mancoff 145). Despite the uncertainty of the origin of the term, Debra Mancoff does provide the following definition: 'a contemporary type of frivolous, fashion-minded young woman, middle- or working-class, who used her looks as capital in an upwardly mobile society' (44). This definition touches on two essential features of the Parisienne type: fashion and social mobility. Indeed, fashionability appears as the dominant idea with which the Parisienne type is associated. Françoise Tétart-Vittu describes *la Parisienne* alternately as 'synonymous with fashion' (80), 'a woman of fashion' and 'a woman of the world' (78). Sidsel Maria Søndergaard claims the 'designation, Parisienne, was a blanket term for the well-dressed women of the metropolis, applied to both the elegant ladies of the bourgeoisie and the chic *demimonde*' and that the chic *Parisienne* 'became an *icon* for metropolitan femininity and an integral part of

the visual *culture* of Modernity' (39). Jean-Christophe Ferrari refers to her as 'an aesthetic figure' and a model 'in the pictorial sense of the word' (71), while Iskin claims the type 'played a central role in the shift from academic to modern painting led by Manet and the Impressionists, replacing nude or draped figures with modern Parisiennes in contemporary fashions' (198).

The term *la Parisienne* denotes far more than simply a female inhabitant of Paris. She is a figure of French modernity, and this can be taken in two senses, the technical/industrial and the cultural. The technical or industrial sense refers to the modernisation of Paris and its transformation into the capital of the modern world. This process included the reconstruction of Paris by Baron Haussmann and the widening of the boulevards, the extensive use of iron and glass in the construction of the arcades, the expansion of the railway system, the revolution in printing technology, the rise of the department store, the new system of capitalism and consumer culture, and increased leisure activity amongst the city's inhabitants. In the days before Haussmann, 'it was impossible to stroll about everywhere in the city. Before Haussmann, wide pavements were rare; the narrow ones afforded little protection from vehicles. Flânerie could hardly have assumed the importance it did without the arcades' (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 68). Anne Friedberg traces the appearance of the *flâneuse* to the emerging consumer culture and development of department stores in late nineteenth-century Paris which afforded women a legitimate reason to occupy public space: 'The female flâneur, the flâneuse, was not possible until she was free to roam the city on her own. And this was equated with the privilege of shopping on her own' (36).[1] With the boulevards and arcades, as well as the construction of extensive parks and gardens, women could for the first time be seen in public, on display, without being considered *filles publiques* or prostitutes.

Fashion, too, dictated the redesigning of Paris: in *The Arcades Project* Walter Benjamin writes that 'the widening of the streets, it was said, was necessitated by the crinoline' (133). This remark indicates a close relationship between the creation of the boulevards and fashionable women in their abundant crinoline dresses, parading down the wide streets of Paris, participating in the spectacle of modern life. This was the era when women began to stroll publicly in the city streets,

their emergence facilitated by the arcades and department stores which legitimated their temporary leave of the interior or private sphere and their entry into the public sphere as consumers. The expansion of the railway network, from a few disparate strands totalling 1,931 km in 1850 to an intricate network of 17,400 km in 1870, opened up Parisian industry and commerce to interregional and international competition (Harvey 109). David Harvey sums up the effect of this expansion in the following way: 'it was not only goods that moved. Tourists flooded in from all over the world … , shoppers poured in from the suburbs, and the Parisian labour market spread its tentacles into ever remoter regions in order to satisfy burgeoning demand for labor power' (111). The ease with which provincials and foreigners could now travel to Paris was also formative for *la Parisienne* who, according to Georges Montorgueil, 'est de partout, mais … ne devient qu'à Paris la Parisienne' (v) (is from everywhere but … only *becomes* the Parisienne in Paris).

A further important development in the creation of the Parisienne type was the revolution in printing technology in the nineteenth century. This resulted in both a dramatic decrease in the production cost of print media and the considerable increase in the availability of visual material, which in turn saw not only the proliferation of illustrated journals, particularly fashion journals, but their dissemination across a wider readership, including both the working and lower-middle classes (Menon, *Evil* 7). For the first time, women across a much broader social spectrum were exposed to a single homogenising image of the fashionable woman. Iskin writes that women were able to 'acquire a certain amount of information on how to look like a chic Parisienne by reading fashion magazines, illustrated journals and ordering from department store catalogues' (192).

This revolution in printing technology took place contemporaneously with the rise of haute couture and the development of the department stores and prêt-à-porter clothing. In 1872 there were 684 couturiers in Paris compared to only 158 in 1850; by 1895 the number had increased to 1,636 (Iskin 190). Tamar Garb writes that the 'department stores and shopping arcades proffered an unprecedented array of goods aimed at seducing women and creating in them the desire to consume luxury goods indispensable to their identity as women' ('Painting' 98).

Brian Nelson argues that shopping facilitated a woman's entry into and occupation of the public sphere (xvii). This reflected a more general tendency in Paris of the nineteenth century, resulting in increased visibility and mobility in the modern city: 'The newly revitalized city gave rise to a new culture. Life became more public' (Mancoff 8). According to Nancy Rose Marshall, it was in 'the new urban spaces in which the concept of the *Parisienne* was formed' (154).

In a cultural sense, *la Parisienne* is a figure of French modernity in that she was a feature of the visual arts, literature, physiognomies and popular culture of nineteenth-century France. She appears in the novels of Balzac, Flaubert and Zola; in the short stories of Maupassant; in Henry Becque's 1885 play *La Parisienne*; and in the poems of Baudelaire. She was also the subject of many studies and physiologies, including Taxile Delord's *Physiologie de la Parisienne* (1841), Théodore de Banville's *Les Parisiennes de Paris* (1866), Arsène Houssaye's *Les Parisiennes* (1869), Georges Montorgueil's *La Parisienne* (1897), and Louis Octave Uzanne's *Parisiennes de ce temps en leurs divers milieux, états et conditions* (1910), an expanded edition of the original 1894 version, which appeared in an English-language edition entitled *The Modern Parisienne* (1912). There have also been numerous paintings, lithographs, etchings and pastels of Parisiennes: Tissot, Morisot, Stevens, Renoir, Helleu, Cassatt and Toulouse-Lautrec, among others, all sought to capture the type in their work. Visual artists, too, explicitly titled their studies *la Parisienne* or included the descriptor 'Parisienne' in the title. According to Marie Simon, the proliferation of paintings featuring *la Parisienne* demonstrates 'the individual being replaced by the abstract. Artists no longer painted a woman but a human type, a quality' (199).

The attempt to capture the Parisienne type visually continued into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in photography. Three photographic monographs in particular took the type as their primary subject matter: André Maurois's *Femmes de Paris* (1954), featuring photographs by Nico Jesse; *Parisiennes: A Celebration of French Women* (2007), a collection of photographs of Parisian women taken by celebrated as well as anonymous photographers; and Baudouin's *75 Parisiennes* (2013), which puts into play various pre-existing themes or motifs, revealing the vitality and currency of the Parisienne type.

Baudouin draws on an already existing iconography of *la Parisienne* in composing his photographs, focusing on the repetition of familiar motifs such as the Eiffel Tower, the little black dress, the feather boa, the *chevelure*, the fashion journal and the cat. The iconography of *la Parisienne* that Baudouin draws on is largely informed by nineteenth-century visual and literary representations of the type. Baudouin also provides each sitter's profession and Metro station, which serves to indicate the meta-sociological aspect of the Parisienne type, a type not restricted by economics, class, nationality, ethnicity or status, but rather transcending these limits.

While there is significant scholarship on *la Parisienne* in the fields of art history, fashion theory and culture and cultural histories of Paris, there is little written on the (re)appearance and function of the type in cinema. In part, this is because her presence in cinema is not always immediately discernible and frequently forms or creates a subtext to the films. The goal of this book is to outline a 'cycle' of Parisienne films; however this cycle, like the type itself, is never complete and is always in the process of evolving, due both to the plasticity of the type and to the myriad possible ways of representing her. The films under consideration are limited to narrative feature films, which is not to deny the presence of the Parisienne type in short films, documentary or experimental films.

An iconographical approach

Erwin Panofsky's theory of iconography was first developed in relation to Renaissance art and later applied to cinema. His theory of the iconographical type was developed in relation to silent cinema, and later applied to sound cinema by Stanley Cavell and Jean-Loup Bourget. *La Parisienne* constitutes what Panofsky calls a 'type' because it possesses both a fixed and fluid iconography, the fixed aspects being those necessary for any preliminary identification of the type, the fluid referring to the variations the type undergoes during its development. In his essay 'Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures', Panofsky argues that in early silent cinema we find the introduction of 'a fixed iconography which from the outset informed the spectator about the basic facts and characters … . There arose, identifiable by standardised

appearance, behaviour, and attributes, the well-remembered types … . The conduct of characters was predetermined accordingly' (254). The introduction of types into silent film was necessary in order to help the audience confronted with the new medium 'understand the meaning of the speechless action in a moving picture' (253).

For Panofsky, the 'readability' of these types 'depend on pre- or extra-cinematic knowledge' (Levin 34). The idea of the pre- and extra-cinematic is particularly pertinent to this study, which seeks to demonstrate how pre-cinematic knowledge (nineteenth-century art, literature and mass culture) and extra-cinematic knowledge (stars and intertexts) inform the Parisienne type in cinema. *La Parisienne* may not initially be a recognisable type, particularly when compared with the more easily recognisable types of the silent era such as the villain, the gangster, the vamp or the 'good woman', due in part to the moral ambiguity of the Parisienne type and to the fact that she seldom resembles herself. Thus built into the Parisienne type is an elusiveness or multiplicity which makes easy recognition more difficult than it is with the more generic types originally considered by Panofsky. Yet, *la Parisienne* is a type nonetheless and she does possess certain motifs which make her recognisable, provided these motifs are thoroughly and accurately identified.

Panofsky argues that the introduction of a fixed iconography became less important once the cinemagoing public was acclimatised to the different typological signifiers and that these signifiers were 'virtually abolished by the invention of the talking film' (254). In spite of this, however, there survives 'the remnants of a "fixed attitude and attribute"' (254) by which types can be recognised. While Cavell and Bourget agree that cinema introduces a fixed iconography, both have challenged Panofsky's claim that sound cinema effectively abolished the need for typology. Bourget remarks that he is struck by the persistence of iconography after the silent era (39). In a similar vein, Cavell writes that 'such devices persist as long as there are still Westerns and gangster films and comedies and musicals and romances. *Which* specific iconography the Villain is given will alter with the times, but that his iconography remains specific (i.e., operates according to a "fixed attitude and attribute" principle) seems undeniable' (314; original emphasis). Cavell further argues that cinema 'created new types,

or combinations or ironic reversals of types; but there they were, and stayed' (314), as well as for the 'continuing validity of a Panofskian iconographic program for the study of film' (Levin 40).

In *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Panofsky proposed a model for the analysis of Renaissance painting which corresponds to three levels or strata of meaning. The first, or pre-iconographical, level of a work of art is made up of motifs, pure forms which are the 'carriers of *primary and natural meanings*' (Panofsky 5; original emphasis). The second level involves the identification and description of the images; that is, the secondary or conventional meanings conveyed by the motifs. '*Motifs* thus recognized as carriers of a *secondary* or *conventional* meaning may be called *images*' (Panofsky 6; original emphasis). This is the stage of iconographical analysis proper. The third level consists of an iconological interpretation, that is, the interpretation of the images and their 'intrinsic meaning and content' (Panofsky 7).

Bourget argues that Panofsky's three-stratum model can be applied to cinema. For Bourget, an analysis of cinema which draws on models or methods from art history is highly productive, primarily because it restores an imbalance in film studies, which has often focused on questions of narrative or plot derived from the history of literature, often neglecting the image or figure (38). Bourget also considers a reference to art history in the analysis of cinema fruitful in that films will often cite motifs, either intentionally or unintentionally, which come directly from the history of painting (40). For Bourget, nothing assures that the reference to painting is completely intentional, while at other times the reference is manifestly intended (40–1).

In 'Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures', Panofsky raises the idea of medium specificity to found cinema as an art form in its own right, distinct from other art forms in terms of its technicality. Yet in terms of iconography, cinema can be subjected to the same type of analysis as painting. Having established cinema as a distinct art form through its medium specificity, Panofsky emphasises not the kinetic but the photographic aspect of cinema. He de-emphasises the technical specificity of the medium in favour of its origins in pictorial rather than narrative art: cinema originally not as 'filmed theatre' but literally as 'moving pictures' (254).

In 1982, Bourget adapted Panofsky's iconographical model for cinema; however Panofsky's iconographic approach had already been used in film studies by Lawrence Alloway. Steve Neale writes that while Panofsky himself considered the application of the terms iconography and iconology to an analysis of films, it was Alloway 'who sought to apply them in a systematic way to the analysis of genres and cycles' (13). In a 1963 article for the film journal *Movie*, Alloway argues for the application of Panofsky's method to cinema: 'The meaning of a single movie is inseparable from the larger pattern of content-analysis of other movies' (17). For Alloway, iconography provides a way of 'charting the flow and the evanescence' of films which belong to a popular art which does not possess 'an unchanging significance' but is rather in a constant state of flux (18).

For Alloway, the natural subject matter of Panofsky's first stratum when applied to cinema 'consists of the physical reality of the photographed world' which includes the actor and thus relates to the star system: 'The star whose personality and status are created as a product, is, when photographed, continually present in a more powerful form than the individual roles he or she may be playing … . Thus, even the "primary or natural subject matter" is not without its iconographical potential' (16). For Alloway, the realm of iconography begins, unlike in Panofsky's tripartite model, at the first level or stratum. Alloway's reworking of Panofsky for cinema deals primarily with motifs and images and less with interpretation (Neale 14–15). What Alloway was most interested in was founding a 'descriptive aesthetic' (qtd in Whiteley 276).

Ed Buscombe's synonym for iconography is 'visual conventions' (Neale 15). While there is some merit in this definition, the term is too narrow because iconography often encompasses more than just the visual, extending to more literary motifs such as narrative and character. Furthermore, these conventions are subject to historical variability. The limits of visual conventions can be seen in the following example: in the nineteenth century the Parisienne type wears a crinoline and carries a parasol, whereas in Jean-Luc Godard's *À bout de souffle* (1960) she wears cropped trousers and has a 'pixie' haircut. The particulars change but the general – that is, the notion or concept of fashionability and style – remains the same.

Alloway extended iconography to include cycles of films: a film cycle 'explores a basic situation repeatedly, but from different angles and with accumulating references' (16), and 'provides the audience with a flexible, continuing convention and a body of expectations and knowledge on which the filmmaker can count' (18). Motifs appear repeatedly throughout certain films in different ways or from varied perspectives, each (re)appearance adding to the growing iconography of a type. When discussing cycles of films, Alloway is not interested in judgements of quality. Nor is he interested in an auteurist approach, arguing that 'treating movies as personal expression and autographic testament has led to the neglect of the iconographical approach' (16). Alloway gives the example of a cycle of films starring Frank Sinatra to demonstrate the 'necessity for considering movies in groups not necessarily dependent upon directors', and writes of Sinatra's 'iconographical profile' (17). These ideas are central when considering, for example, Jeanne Moreau's successive appearances in a number of Parisienne films which build an iconographical profile both for the actress and the characters she plays.

In adopting an iconographical approach to cinema, Alloway does not privilege only those films created by an auteur and considered masterpieces of cinema by some critics; rather, his selection of films is more encompassing and wide-ranging. Andrew Sarris, a proponent of auteur theory, criticised Alloway's approach, remarking that 'he transforms what is too frequently a dismal fact into a visionary ideal. Badness and banality become sociological virtues; familiarity breeds contentment' (69). Sarris attacked Alloway for implicitly endorsing 'bad' films. However, Alloway wanted to avoid evaluation because he wanted to found his descriptive aesthetic not so much on quality as on repetition or enumeration. Discussing the debate between Sarris and Alloway, Nigel Whiteley remarks that far from privileging only so-called 'bad' films at the expense of quality cinema, Alloway 'took a far wider view of creativity', seeing culture as a continuum which 'ranged from individual masterworks to depersonalized, expendable, commercial products of consumer society' (276). In Alloway's judgement, Sarris 'mistook one end of the continuum as its only edifice' (Whiteley 276). The films set for discussion in this book are chosen from this continuum, ranging from celebrated masterpieces by auteurs

like Carné and Godard, to more 'lightweight' films like Jules Dassin's *Reunion in France* (1942) and Michel Boisrond's's *Une Parisienne* (1957), and lesser-known French romantic comedies such as Yvan Attal's *Ma Femme est une actrice* (2001). Critical reception is of less interest than the way these films employ certain motifs. Taking the notion of cultural continuum into account, there then appears a vast cycle of Parisienne films and a limited space in which to discuss them. Chance and availability have played their part in the selection process as well, and there are certainly films which might take their place in the cycle of Parisienne films which receive no mention in this study.

While this book confines itself to an iconographical approach to the Parisienne type, the relevance of critical approaches such as feminism and feminist film theory must also be noted. While a sustained feminist engagement is outside the scope of this book, such engagement seems an obvious omission from any detailed consideration of the type. There are two reasons, however, why this is not the place for such an engagement. First, this book, intended as an introduction to *la Parisienne* and her iconography in cinema, deals predominantly with visual and narrative conventions, derived primarily from nineteenth-century art, literature and visual culture. Thus it lays the groundwork for further scholarship which may take into account concepts such as gender, race and ethnicity, all of which are relevant to the study of the Parisienne type. Secondly, a feminist or gender studies approach may appear too polemical for a work intended as an introduction or overview.

Beyond the iconographical approach, however, the Parisienne type in cinema could and should be critically examined through an engagement with feminist film theory, reception studies and theories of spectatorship. Laura Mulvey's seminal essay 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema' (1989), for example, might be a useful starting point for a discussion of identification and spectatorship practices in relation to the Parisienne type in cinema. In particular, Mulvey's claim that the visual pleasure in cinema is 'split between active/male and passive/female' (19) appears relevant to the films discussed here. Indeed, the following lines appear to describe well the way this heterosexual matrix functions, particularly in mainstream films featuring *la Parisienne*:

> Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen. For instance, the device of the showgirl allows the two looks to be unified technically without any apparent break in the diegesis. A woman performs within the narrative, the gaze of the spectator and that of the male characters in the film are neatly combined without breaking narrative verisimilitude (19).

While it can certainly be argued that Parisienne films, particularly those of 1950s Hollywood, conform to this notion of what Mulvey calls "neatly combined spectacle and narrative" (19), there are certain traits of the Parisienne type which in fact work against this. As we shall see, the self-fashioning aspect of *la Parisienne*, alongside her role as active rather than merely passive muse, in some ways undermines the description of her as a purely male fantasy. In the representation of *la Parisienne*, one also frequently finds the comingling of life and art, the presence of 'real-life' women behind, or blended with, fictional characters. This is the case whether it is a historical personage overdetermining the representation, or the actress herself. Thus it is argued here that feminist critiques of *la Parisienne* would have limited purchase, in spite of the visual pleasure and spectacle these films offer. *La Parisienne* is a fascinating figure precisely because she continually escapes representation, and as we shall see, more than one theorist of *la Parisienne* has noted the difficulty of capturing her essence.[2]

In the nineteenth century in particular (and continuing in cinema with a few exceptions), *la Parisienne* remains in part at least a male construction, but in part only. If, as Janet Wolff has argued, the "literature of modernity describes the experiences of men" (37), women must appear coloured by this experience, as objects rather than subjects of the modern world. Deborah L. Parsons, however, questions the notion that Baudelaire's depiction of women occurs within what Wolff calls a "classic misogynist duality" (cited in Parsons 24). Rather, according to Parsons, Baudelaire's poetry in particular raises the question of 'the place of women in the city and art of modernity that goes beyond personal prejudice' (24). Of particular interest for Parsons is

the woman who appears fleetingly in the poem 'À une passante', the 'unknown woman who cannot be easily defined and thus controlled' (24). Parsons also notes that 'all the women common to Baudelaire's work are observers, and through them it is possible to question the assumption of the masculinity of public space and to formulate the beginnings of the conceptual idea of a *flâneuse*' (24). Indeed, the figure of *la Parisienne* was one of the first *flâneuses* in a time when women were liberated from the interior space of the home, primarily through changes in the configuration of social space through the introduction of arcades, parks and gardens. The image of the *flâneuse*, first captured in Baudelaire's poetry, is that of the liberated, autonomous woman. A more contemporary example of the way *la Parisienne* might circumvent the standard feminist critique of male fantasy is in the figure of Brigitte Bardot. According to Ginette Vincendeau, Simone de Beauvoir praised Bardot's new form of sexuality in *Et Dieu … créa la femme* as 'progressive' and a 'welcome change from what she saw as the passivity of the *femme fatale*' (94). Vincendeau herself notes a 'tension between the Bardot character [in *Et Dieu*] as subject (agent) of the narrative, initiating action and expressing her own desire without guilt, and as object, both of male desire and the camera' (94). However, elsewhere she admits a 'paradox' which makes Bardot fascinating: 'rather than being either pure male fantasy, or affirmation of women's desire, she is both. The force of her star persona is to reconcile these two antagonistic aspects' ('Brigitte Bardot' 115).

In confining this study to the development of a descriptive aesthetics and establishing the Parisienne as a type in cinema through developing an iconography of the Parisienne type based on the recognition of various motifs, the foundations are laid for future scholarship that will deploy other approaches to the subject such as feminism, gender studies, or indeed, other more critical or evaluative approaches, such as ethno-criticism, that could not be pursued here. Indeed, the Parisienne type contains a kind of in-built critique of ethnic/national identities, and is supposed to transcend national/ethnic borders towards a more cosmopolitan identity. It is important to remember that *la Parisienne* is not a stereotype (e.g. white, middle class, European) but a type in the iconographical sense; that is, recognisable through certain recurring motifs, yet also constantly being reinvented. That *la Parisienne*

is 'from anywhere and everywhere' is one of the main arguments put forward in this book. This definition leaves room for Parisiennes from any number of national or ethnic backgrounds, as such films as Céline Sciamma's *Bande de filles* (2014) demonstrate. Indeed, the main character of Sciamma's film, Vic (Karidja Touré), rather than presenting a challenge to the Parisienne as a type, may actually reinforce it, by demonstrating both its fixed and mutable nature. Further, contemporary popular images of *la Parisienne* such as one finds in recent style guides or magazines like *Vogue*, as well as in photography such as in Baudouin's work, go well beyond any Eurocentric stereotype.

Iconography of *la Parisienne*

The iconography of *la Parisienne* can be categorised according to the following concepts: visibility and mobility (both social and spatial); style and fashionability, including self-fashioning; artist and muse; cosmopolitanism; prostitution; danger; consumption (the consumer and the consumed); and transformation. Central to the iconography is the city of Paris, its streets and monuments, and its overall signification as the capital of modernity. The nature of the project, however, is such that it is constantly expanding, shifting ground and overlapping, and indeed one of the main problems is the question of containment, of how to set limits and bring content under complete control of the proposed form. This is partly due to the nature of *la Parisienne* as a type, a figure who never resembles herself. What constitutes a chapter of this book, then, is really a limit set on the Parisienne type itself, a limit that is continuously exceeded. This excess will take the form of an overflow from one chapter to the next; however it is difficult to avoid damming the flow with definitive statements. Thus a more open-ended approach is taken, bringing the categories to bear on the films only to indicate certain fixed attributes or motifs while at the same time allowing the more mutable aspects of the type to emerge.

The six chapters set down in this book reflect the notions or categories associated with the Parisienne type and explore each of them in turn, building up an overall iconography from the motifs associated with them. The titles of the chapters take not the categories themselves, but their associated figuration (not 'Cosmopolitanism' but

'Cosmopolite'; not 'Danger' but 'Femme fatale'), to shift the emphasis away from concepts which tend to fix the Parisienne toward the figure itself, which is far more mutable. The precondition for *la Parisienne* as a type is that she generally fulfils all the categories at once, but some more prominently than others within the films set for discussion. How she appears in each film also sets the tone and focus of the discussion in each chapter. Often visual considerations are paramount, while at other times the narrative function of the type is more evident. At other times again it might be a question of reference, of the relation between cinema and other media such as painting, literature or advertising.

Chapter 1 argues that *la Parisienne* is a type which exists between art and life, and who exists on the boundary between representation and reality. The figure that emerges from this blurring of art and life is *la Parisienne* as muse. Chapter 2 considers the cosmopolitanism of the Parisienne type, in the sense of 'anyone' and 'anywhere', and argues that *la Parisienne* was conceived not only as a figure of French femininity but of femininity as such. Chapter 3 explores the relationship between *la Parisienne*, fashion and film. Chapter 4 looks at *la Parisienne* as femme fatale within the context of French film noir. Tracing her development in nineteenth-century art and literature, Chapter 5 examines the way the Parisienne as courtesan is (re)presented in cinema. Finally, Chapter 6 investigates the contribution particular actresses' star personae have made to the Parisienne type in cinema and, reciprocally, how the type has inscribed itself on the personae of these stars.

Geographically speaking, the films come primarily from France and America because the Parisienne type is most ubiquitous in these national cinemas. Of particular interest for the development of the Parisienne type is what Vanessa Schwartz in *It's So French!* describes as the transatlantic cultural exchange between French and American cinema in the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, the development of the Parisienne type owes much to the rapport between French and American cinema of this period, because in order for *la Parisienne* to develop as a type, or even a stereotype, a global or cosmopolitan perspective was necessary. Indeed, this transatlantic cultural exchange figures as the culmination point in the development of the Parisienne type and it is therefore not surprising to find a concentration of films featuring *la Parisienne* made by Hollywood during the 1950s and 1960s. There

are earlier cinematic incarnations, including silent cinema, but they have become more recognisable in light of this cycle of so-called Hollywood 'Frenchness' films. Thus, when approaching the Parisienne type in cinema (and this is something that can be said of any type in an iconographical sense), there is frequently a retrospective elaboration at work, insofar as much of what leads to recognising the type in earlier films derives from exposure to later films, particularly from what Schwartz calls the cycle of 'Frenchness films' (*It's So French!* 19). Chronology is not a necessary consideration for charting the iconography of a type.

The films included in this book were chosen for both for their affirmation and interesting treatment of the Parisienne type. There is certainly no claim to exhaustiveness in coverage of the field, nor does this book offer a comprehensive portrait or visual history of *la Parisienne* in cinema. Attempts to include a large number of examples in order to demonstrate the ubiquity of the type in cinema, as well as the richness of variations of the type, have been tempered by the desire to provide more meaningful and sustained engagement with individual films.

A final note

Lastly, I want to briefly draw attention to the slippage in the terms 'she' and 'it', and 'her' and 'its' when referring to the Parisienne type. This slippage is due to *la Parisienne* being at once a concept and a material reality; an idea and – at least for the films discussed in this book – a woman; and both the subject and object of narrative and discourse. All translations from the French, unless otherwise stated, are my own.

Notes

1 Indeed, the figure of *la Parisienne* as flâneuse appears frequently in cinema, for example Cléo (Corinne Marchand) in Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962).
2 It must be noted that Mulvey herself revised her essay some years later to consider both the 'women in the audience issue' and the issue of 'how the text and its attendant identifications are affected by a *female* character occupying the centre of the narrative arena' (68).