Remarriage, Reconsidered:
The evolution & cultural function of the screwball in American society

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An Allison de Fren Production
In association with the Media Arts and Culture Program at Occidental College
9 December 2012
Screwball comedies reached the height of their popularity in the mid-1930s, with the success of benchmarks such as It Happened One Night (dir. Frank Capra, 1934) and Bringing Up Baby (dir. Howard Hawks, 1939). The timing of their success coincided directly with the financial harrows of the Great Depression, and congruently the escapist themes of screwball films were never too fiscally oriented. Rather, the characters sought solace in their family or social life, and money was treated either as a ridiculous frivolity (as in It Happened One Night) or a secondary issue altogether (as in W.S. Van Dyke’s The Thin Man, 1934).

As the Great Depression began to reach its decline, so too did the popularity of screwball comedies (Harvey, 409). In light of this, it has been suggested that screwball films offered respite from the harsh reality of the Great Depression; indeed, their production declined following the economic boost brought on by America’s entrance into World War II (Ibid, 409; Sennett, 13). The timing of such films also corresponded with the enforcement of the motion pictures Production Code (hereafter referred to as the Hays’ Code), which stipulated all American-made films adhere to a morally rigorous code of conduct (Harvey, 288). Screwball films were produced in compliance with the Hays’ Code, and resultantly were notorious for their use of sexual euphemisms and allusions. In light of these two historically significant incidents, scholars agree that screwball films were outlets for commenting upon financial woes and forced sexual repression (Sennett, 14-15).
However, in the subsequent period since the demise of both the Great Depression and the Hays’ Code, several quintessential elements of screwball films have manifested themselves in contemporary films. With this in mind, I will explore the plot and historical context regarding three alleged screwball comedies, each produced at vastly different periods in America’s cinematic history: The Awful Truth (dir. Leo McCarey, 1937), What’s Up, Doc? (dir. Peter Bogdanovich, 1972) and The Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (dir. Michel Gondry, 2004). The screwball genre has transformed from its original form of nuanced structure which fuses comedic overtures with serious content (exemplified by The Awful Truth), to fully comedic pastiche sans substance (as in What’s Up, Doc?), to dark undertones with brief injections of comedic relief (à la Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind). Although each case study derives from an original screwball model, the genre is not static, as each film adapts to its given art movement and historical context, in turn proffering analysis of the society to which it caters.

Thesis
Before further analysis, it is crucial to define what exactly constitutes a screwball film. Screwball theorist Stanley Cavell, in his book Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage, claims above all else that they are comedies of remarriage. In such films, the main romantic protagonists are initially connected (either literally or symbolically), and then undertake a journey to purposefully separate themselves before eventually reconciling. Cavell distinguishes screwballs from other films featuring remarriage by referring to them "not as members of the same genre, but as members of adjacent genres" (31). Cavell also indicates that screwballs feature strong female leads who exemplify, for what was then the first time onscreen, "the consciousness of women" (16). According to James Harvey in his book Romantic Comedy: in Hollywood from Lubitsch to Sturges, another defining characteristic is the clash between the main couple and their social surroundings; regardless of their financial standing, they always seem removed and unable to mesh with a world which, Harvey says, "ritualizes its own emptiness." He continues to say "the friction that sets them apart also sustains them." (242). In other words, the ultimate appeal of the screwball couple is their sense of comedic distinction within a world largely restricted to superficial values. Screwballs also feature a series of ridiculous scenarios comparable to slapstick; as Sennett says in his book Lunatics and Lovers: A Tribute to the Giddy and Glittering Era of the Screen's "Screwball" and Romantic Comedies, many screenwriters of the period had training in the silent era, which strengthened their sense of comedic timing, while still others were "capable of turning out the bright banter, the insouciant, irreverent, tongue-in-cheek dialogue that helped keep these comedies afloat" (16). Also worth mentioning is the inclusion of singing, for as Cavell says it "seems a firm commitment of the [screwball] genre to make room for singing, for something to sing about and a world to sing in" (248).
It was no wonder the films needed to find something to sing about, since they essentially arose as a response to economic crises in America. The Great Depression had bolstered unemployment from a negligible 3.2 percent in 1929 to 8.9 percent in 1930, before peaking at 24.9 percent in 1933.

In a parallel pattern, the average weekly movie attendance for the nation was 57 million in 1927, but had jumped to 90 million by 1930. Although there are other undeniable external factors, most notably the introduction of movies with sound technology (“talkies”), the fact remains that despite decreases in household income, Americans continued patronizing the cinema, and indeed as Robert Sklar says in his survey book Movie Made America: A Social History of American Movies, “The New Deal Administration was seeking to boost the morale of a confused and anxious people by fostering a spirit of patriotism, unity and commitment to national values, a political goal that coincided with similar tendencies within the movie industries” (175). Audiences, then, sought relief from harsh external realities by frequenting the cinema. Sennett attributes this to the cathartic release brought on by laughter; he says “In the 1930s, in a gray and trouble America, the laughter that bubbled up from screen comedy... poked fun at our absurdities and eased our tensions, while concealing a deep-rooted hopelessness” (13). Indeed, by 1934- after a brief but steep decline the previous year- attendance was at a strong 70 million.
Incidentally, 1934 was also the year of two other pertinent occurrences: the implementation of the Hays’ Code, and the year in which It Happened One Night (dir. Frank Capra), considered by many to be the prototype for all screwball films (Harvey 107), was released. The film’s popularity (it was the first to garner all five major Academy Awards) has been attributed to a variety of factors. It adhered to the Hays’ Code but flirted with innuendos (for example, the two main characters share a motel room throughout the film, separated by a blanket they refer to as the “Walls of Jericho”; the blanket remains intact until the film’s end, when a trumpet signals the “fall of the Walls of Jericho” a direct allusion to their conjugal consummation); it bluntly covered issues of class struggles (Harvey says the “major social tragedy reflected by the film- the dislocation and uprootedness enforced on Americans by the Great Depression- is treated with surprising matter-of-factness, even complacence” 113); and it featured a playful dynamic between two major stars, the likes of which was wholly unprecedented (as Harvey says, “There was some new kind of energy in their style: slangy, combative, humorous, unsentimental- and powerfully romantic” 108). And finally, in successfully skirting the Hays’ Code with the aforementioned innuendos, it set the standard for an entire genre featuring escapist joviality and sexual release via humor, including our first case study of The Awful Truth.
Dubbed by Cavell as “the best, or the deepest, of the comedies of remarriage,” (231) The Awful Truth tells the story of Lucy (Irene Dunne) and Jerry Warriner (Cary Grant), a married couple who stubbornly divorce each other, then adamantly remain in each other’s lives until finally admitting their separation was a mistake. As Sennett says, it was not the first time Hollywood attempted to make a film with this plot line— it had been made in 1925 and 1929 (Sennett, 53)— but the 1934 version was the first to be formatted as a screwball, and the first to reach critical success, indicating its apt timing in a receptive cultural context. Indeed, the film garnered the Academy Award for Best Director, along with nominations for Dunne and the film itself. It also brought recognition of a different sort for Grant; according to Harvey, after starring in twenty-eight films, it was The Awful Truth that finally made him a “major star” (301). While these accolades are inherently attributable to what Sennett refers to as the incomparable “ebullience and wit” (58) of the film, it also reflects the cultural function that the film served, and the audience which eagerly received its release.
This audience, for example, was evidently ready to accept social criticism of what Cavell dubs “the most notorious event of Hollywood’s film political environment in 1934, the acceptance of the motion picture Production Code” (82-3); the script is brimming with euphemisms from the very opening scene. The first part clearly implies, yet never fully states, the notion that Jerry cheated on his wife. This is clear from Jerry’s unabashed clubroom avowal of “What wives don’t know won’t hurt them,” proclaimed while getting a tan after his alleged vacation to Florida. It is compounded by his gift to Lucy of “Florida” oranges, which turn out to be California oranges, finally catching him in his lie. In turn, we witness Lucy’s showy arrival at their apartment after spending the evening with a music teacher, blaming her questionable absence on car trouble. Although both Jerry and Lucy’s introductory actions are explicit enough to indicate marital infidelity, their actions are never pointedly defined as such, in keeping with the Hays’ Code stipulation that the concept of adultery not be present in films (Arts Reformation). By portraying such disreputable allusions both in a lighthearted manner and without stating them as such, the film forays into a realm that presents the pair as a likable duo, and does so without breaking any rules, effectively pleasing both audiences and the film’s censors.

These tactfully capricious interactions continue, initially serving to emphasize the separation between the protagonists. For example, in a court scene’s obvious allusion to child support, the couple bickers over who will get complete custody of their dog Mr. Smith, and we see Lucy slyly place a treat in her hand and trick the conflicted dog into choosing her over Jerry for complete custody. Such hijinks continue back and forth in this delightfully spiteful manner; after their divorce, for example, Lucy becomes engaged to a man named Dan Leeson, and Jerry undertakes a series of shenanigans designed to detrimentally affect this new relationship in a full-fledged attempt to win her back. Such pranks include bribing the orchestra to continue playing a song that will force Lucy to keep dancing in public with Dan, despite her obvious embarrassment over Dan’s unsophisticated, showy dance style. Once again, we are in on the joke with Jerry and against Lucy, emphasizing their separation. Yet as the film continues and the audience realizes, as Lucy puts it, she is still “in love with that crazy lunatic and can’t help it,” (49:19) the pranks begin to unite the pair, indicating a return to their original relationship, while simultaneously utilizing the new significant other to emphasize their inevitable reconciliation. Indeed, their eventual remarriage results from their inability to mesh with what Cavell dubs “the Other Men and Other Women figures” (242).
For Lucy, this “Other Man” is Dan, and he serves as an unsophisticated foil to Jerry’s subdued charm (Harvey describes Grant as the “only male star to spring full-blown and solo... from the screwball mode,” and “not only the greatest leading man of his time- he was different from all the others” 301) throughout the film. In one scene, Dan reads Lucy a poorly-worded love poem, completely oblivious to Jerry tickling Lucy from behind the door; his literal oblivion reflects his symbolic ignorance of Jerry and Lucy's chemistry. This notion is reinforced again when Jerry becomes engaged to a wealthy, humorless woman named Barbara Vance; Lucy pretends to be Jerry’s crazed sister in a successful attempt to shock his new fiancée and her family and win him back. Her success is due to what Harvey refers to as her ability to tell a “better kind of joke” than that to which Barbara and her family are accustomed, and which only Jerry could understand. Harvey elaborates on this superior humor phenomenon, explaining that despite the screwball couple’s continual attempts to “deny this dissidence... to escape their own intelligence and honesty... by joining the enemy,” they always fail, and it is “always because of the humor problem” (242). In other words, the couple is destined to feel unfulfilled with other potential suitors due to their unique breed of humor only enjoyed with each other. Although the screwball couple is united in their “own intelligence and honesty,” they are never set apart from others due to their superior cultural status. As Harvey says, everything “about the way [Jerry and Lucy] live... tells us that they are ‘café society,’ forerunners of the jet set and the Beautiful People. But does anyone really believe it? The Dunne and Grant characters really seem to transcend this identity, just as much as the people around them seem trapped by it” (239). Indeed, they never boast about their own affluence, and are hardly impressed by that of others; when Dan’s immense fortune is mentioned it is immediately coupled with his innate lack of wit. When Lucy is introduced to Dan, for example, her aunt mentions Dan’s business in oil, followed by the punch line “marinated, so to speak” (18:57). Dan’s boisterous laughter at this quip receives a disapproving glance from the aunt and angry barking from the dog, as if to say his wealth does not allot him much time for a sense of humor. As Harvey says, this is due to the fact that Dan and Barbara “stand for everything that matters- if nothing matters. For money, security, position, reputation, and worldly power- they stand for the wrong kind of worldliness, the kind that ritualizes its own emptiness, for the hegemony of stupidity that runs the world” (242). As this quote implies, money was a secondary value in screwball comedies. Sennett effectively summarizes this notion with the statement, “To be rich and idle was to be a target for contempt. Love was more important than a bank account” (14). Overall, such disavowals of wealth, coupled with the use of euphemisms, establishes The Awful Truth as an exemplary prototypical screwball comedy. Its complex nature, with confrontations of topical issues such as the Hays’ Code and the Great Depression, paired with a lighthearted, optimistic structure and high-energy, slapstick style of humor, is a characteristic formula for traditional screwball comedies.
Some 35 years later, this style of humor is all that remained of the original screwball form in Peter Bogdanovich’s stylistic homage *What’s Up, Doc?* The plot centers on Judy Maxwell (Barbara Streisand) and her invasive attempt to loosen up a straight-laced rock scientist Howard Bannister (Ryan O’Neal). In the process, she indirectly causes him to burn down his hotel room (see above picture), destroy his career, and end his relationship with his uptight fiancée Eunice Burns (Madeline Kahn). By the end, love triumphs and the film closes as Judy and Howard escape the stodgy world of their past to start a new future together.
This film, like its predecessors, was well-received both by critics and in theaters. Upon its release, it became the third highest-grossing film of the year, earning $66,000,000 in box office revenue. It was ranked number 68 in the American Film Institute's list of America's Greatest Love Stories, nine rankings above The Awful Truth which came in at number 77. It is ranked as number 171 on the highest-grossing films of all time, adjusted for inflation, and is the sole film classified as "screwball" to be in the top 200 list at all (Box Office Mojo). Yet since its release, it has tapered off into relative obscurity; despite the rudimentary nature of this evaluation, the fact is that What's Up, Doc? has reviews from only 9,583 users on the International Movie Database, whereas its alleged prototype Bringing Up Baby has reviews from 30,465 users, indicating a discrepancy in the longevity of popularity favoring original screwballs. Thus, What's Up, Doc? arguably served a short-lived function of granting audiences what film critic Roger Ebert calls "food at last for we who hunger for a screwball comedy utterly lacking in redeeming social importance" (italics mine) (RogerEbert.SunTimes.com). Vincent Camby of the New York Times said, after attending the opening screening of the film, there were lots of children on hand to fall apart with laughter during the chases and the hoverings on hotel ledges seventeen floors above the street, but the real mean age of most of the others was, I'd estimate, about fifty-two and three months. With their pearl earrings and crunchy, purple-hued beehives, they didn't always laugh as much as they might, but they did feel secure in the evocation of a past remembered as innocent (italics mine) (New York Times). As evidenced by these two reviews, the film brought about a sentiment of lighthearted nostalgia and reminiscences of a past supposedly filled with gaiety. In doing so, it found a receptive audience eager to harken back to a lost genre; as Ebert says in his review, he believes Bogdanovich "gives us everything we hope for" in his revival of the genre.
Indeed, this revival draws directly and extensively from the archives of screwball. Ebert, along with other reviewers, lauds the director’s ability to revive several elements of quintessential screwball nature. Firstly, the film itself is ostensibly a direct homage to Bringing Up Baby; Bogdanovich himself acknowledges a Howard Hawksian set up of “daffy dame meets stuffy professor,” (The Hollywood Interview) and indeed in many ways Judy is the quintessential Susan Vance (Katharine Hepburn) character. For example, the initial discourse between the eventual pair in the parallel films is markedly similar. As Harvey says, in Bringing up Baby, David tells Susan “that he only wants her to go away and leave him alone,” (309) lines which are markedly similar to Bannister’s dialogue telling Maxwell’s character to “please go away,” a plea which both filmic females blatantly ignore. Similarly, the professions of each male character— a paleontologist and an archaeologist— are obviously akin, as are their socially baffled natures. And just as Sennett says Bringing Up Baby “veers from insanity into lunacy with no pause to catch its breath” (113-114), so too is What's Up, Doc? rife with farcical elements of absolute ludicrousness, culminating in an uproariously elaborate ten-minute chase-scene. Also drawn from the screwball legacy is the act of singing. Bogdanovich utilizes Streisand’s notorious singing voice throughout the film, beginning with the opening credits, which feature Judy/Streisand’s voiceover in a rendition of the 1930s classic “You’re The Top” while her hands are shown turning pages in an obvious allusion to the traditional opening featured in old films. She sings again after the aforementioned hotel room has been destroyed, and Howard has more or less accepted his loss of propriety following Judy’s arrival in his life. In this scene, Judy sings “As Time Goes By,” another early 20th century standard. These song choices are significant for two reasons; one, the songs themselves obviously raise elements of nostalgia, as both are what Cavell describes as the “persistently popular American song,” (250) (the case studies Cavell uses are “The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze” from It Happened One Night and “Home on the Range” from The Awful Truth.). In evoking nostalgia, Bogdanovich furthers the film’s status as homage. Secondly, although her manner of delivery differs from Dunne’s singing in The Awful Truth, Cavell’s description of Dunne’s scene rings true for Streisand’s as well. Cavell writes, “[Dunne] proposes herself as a field on which he may weave passion and tenderness… she reminds him of this possibility by reminding him who she is… and his exit with her means that he is taking her up on [her daring proposal]” (253). Indeed, following Judy’s singing scene, Howard accepts Judy’s own “daring proposal” and initiates their first kiss. In keeping with the genre’s confines against sexual profanity, however, the kiss does not last long and is the only one that the pair exchanges. This is in spite of the fact that the Hays’ Code was overturned in 1968, and What’s Up Doc was released four years after the fact. Evidently, What’s Up, Doc? draws freely from traditional performances and maintains a healthy dose of perceived innocence. But in doing so, Bogdanovich has misinterpreted screwball’s original intentions.
In fact, in this adamant adherence to screwball structure, Bogdanovich is performing what postmodernist philosopher Fredric Jameson in his book Postmodernism, Or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, refers to as “pastiche,” or the production of works in a wild in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum. But this means that contemporary or postmodernist art is gang to be about art itself in a new kind of way; even more, it means that one of its essential messages will involve...the failure of the new, the imprisonment in the past. (Jameson, 17)

Jameson contrasts pastiche with parody, which is a form that “capitalizes on the uniqueness of these styles and seizes on their idiosyncrasies and eccentricities to produce an imitation which mocks the original.” Like Jameson theorizes, Bogdanovich’s film practices mimesis sans commentary, rendering it pastiche rather than parody. The respectful homage is utterly devoid of uniqueness; even some of the hijinks performed during the film are drawn from preceding screwball comedies. In addition to the aforementioned similarity between their opening lines, for example, in one scene Judy accidentally tears Howard’s jacket in a routine directly reminiscent of one from Bringing Up Baby. (Interestingly, the film’s final scene contains quips referring to O’Neals prior role in the 1970 Arthur Hiller film Love Story which could be considered commentary upon contemporary culture, and thus possibly parody, but the scene itself is so out of place within the movie’s larger contextual theme that it is essentially negligible.)

In retaining key structural components but eradicating the underlying social message so quintessential to true screwball, Bogdanovich’s film exemplifies the definition of pastiche in keeping with the postmodernist movement. For example, the aforementioned critic-labeled “past remembered as innocent” is akin to what Jameson refers to as “Plato’s conception of the ‘simulacrum,’ the identical copy for which no original has ever existed” (18), for as previously established, unlike Bogdanovich’s interpretation of the genre, screwballs were not intended to depict an age of innocence, and in fact spited this notion.

The film further misses the mark, so to speak, in terms of its lack of sexual confrontation. If screwballs provided commentary upon the censoring system, then the overturning of the Hays’ Code allotted room for Bogdanovich to update his work accordingly, yet instead he retains an air of naivety, fostering this misinterpretation of the genre. The fact that audiences and critics alike praised his film across the board indicates that they were receptive of it as such.
If Bogdanovich's work exemplifies the postmodernist movement, then Michel Gondry's typifies the succeeding art movement known as metamodernism. Admittedly an obscure new avant-garde phenomenon coined by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker in the Journal of Aesthetics and Culture in November 2010, this movement admits that although the "list, indeed, of trends and movements surpassing, or attempting to surpass, the postmodern is inexhaustive," their dogma is reflective of many contemporary aesthetic works. They proclaim arts are denouncing the "plenty, pastiche, and parataxis" inherent in postmodernism and instead are moving towards a modernism which is "characterized by the oscillation between a typically modern commitment and a markedly postmodern detachment." According to the authors, Gondry's work in particular exemplifies this oscillation.

Gondry's film The Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, written by Charlie Kaufman, depicts the tumultuous relationship between Jim Carrey's character Joel and Kate Winslet's character Clementine. They are an oddball couple who instantly hit it off but run into a unique lovers' quarrel when Clementine decides to literally erase Joel from her memory with a procedure from a clinic called Lacuna, Inc. Joel, not to be outdone, decides to undergo the same treatment, but halfway through he changes his mind and attempts to escape the treatment by running away from the "eraser people" with Winslet during a surreal sequence of events occurring in his memory.

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind
For all its use of futuristic technology, the structure of the film is remarkably traditionalist. Says New York Magazine critic Peter Rainer,

“Kaufman, despite his avant-garde ambitions, draws on a full catalogue of screwball-comedy conventions: For all his gloom, Joel... is a spiritual cousin to Cary Grant in Bringing Up Baby, or Henry Fonda in The Lady Eve—straight-arrow guys flummoxed by scattershot dames. The inevitability of romance was the theme of those comedies, and it's the theme of Eternal Sunshine, too, but with a difference. This time, the love itself, when it's finally won, isn't glamorously appealing. It's not even likely to last. But being in love is the only way these characters feel alive, and no void in their brains can triumph over that.” (New York Magazine)

There are, indeed, multifaceted elements of screwball throughout the film. The concept of remarriage, for example, is subtly referenced, enhancing the obvious reconciliation between Joel and Clementine. Clementine says to Joel, “You said I do, I guess that means we’re married,” after their first date. There are also elements of class discrepancy amongst the pair (a motif best exemplified in It Happened One Night), aesthetically indicated by Clementine’s dark, dilapidated apartment contrasting with Joel’s bright and well-kept home. The climactic scenes depicting Joel and Clementine’s escape are also of a screwball nature, with their high-speed chase scenes. Finally, the act of singing is present; upon their introduction, Clementine briefly sings the classic ballad “Oh My Darling Clementine.”
But in updating this traditional format to an unapologetically contemporary setting, Gondry’s work offers a far more relevant and reworked revival of the genre than is possible when done with rote pastiche. For example, the protagonists discuss sexual desires frankly and openly in Gondry’s film, and thus although like original screwballs it is not necessarily visually explicit, it is dealt with directly. During Joel's adventure, for example, he fuses a memory of Clementine with a memory of his childhood; while hysterically crying, he alternates between his child and adult self with the line “I really want her to pick me up. It’s weird how strong that desire is,” regarding his mother, followed soon by the consecutive lines “I want my mommy” and “I don’t want to lose you, Clem.” This opens up an Oedipal reading of his journey, a potentially interesting interpretation for modern viewers. Furthermore, the depiction of remarriage is a rather haunting one; the eventual reconciliation between the pair is undoubtedly tainted by its unwitting nature, that is to say, the fact that Joel and Clementine re-meet and decide to date after having erased each other from their brain, as if to say remarriage is more the result of blind happenstance than the voluntary will of older screwballs.

In fact, William Day in his essay “I Don’t Know, Just Wait”: Remembering Remarriage in Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind proposes that the remarriage occurs “not in Joel’s hallway at the end of the movie,” but rather “in the scenes that take place inside Joel’s head” (135). According to Day, this allows for the film to be “a tale of the principal pair’s coming to learn how to travel together through memory-which is to say, to discover what it means to have memories, and to have them together. Learning this is nothing less than their learning how to be together again. It is Eternal Sunshine’s innovation of the remarriage conversation” (139). In other words, Kaufman and Gondry take the possibility of remarriage a step further than its predecessors; Day elaborates, “If the trick to remarriage were merely an openness to communicating, then all members of happy couples would be interchangeable…[s]omething else, something more than a mutual openness about their respective feelings, is needed to change the conversation” (140). That something, contends Day, is understanding each other’s experiences of a shared past- and in creating this work, Gondry and Kaufman have rekindled hope for the remarriage genre but made it possible for a modern context, one which considers love with cautious optimism. In the film, then, Gondry returns to the classic mainstay of screwball but incorporates oscillating twists, effectively updating traditional structures with metamodernist elements. With this in mind, a reading of Eternal Sunshine as a screwball may very well reflect an emerging movement in general aesthetics- that of metamodernism.
Conclusion

Overall, although they are few in number, when screwballs do emerge within the American cinematic canon, they offer reflections both of their intended audience and of the corresponding overarching aesthetic movements. An inspection of What's Up, Doc? shows that it reflects a postmodern misinterpretation of screwball's complex nature, coupled by its society's misremembering of its own cinematic past. And though it seems a far less obvious rendition, Eternal Sunshine exemplifies a more thoughtful reworking of the screwball prototype, because its renunciation of pastiche, as evidenced by its metamodernist workings, allots more room for the genre to grow and thrive. As evidenced by this paper, this small subset of romantic comedy is indicative of many greater schemes, and one can only assume its future manifestations will continue to offer societal insight.