Dames, Darlings, and Detectives:
Women, Agency, and the Soundtrack in RKO Radio Pictures Crime Films 1939-1950

Catherine Margaret Haworth

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

1940s crime and *noir* films are noted for their frequently subversive portrayal of gendered and sexual identities, and therefore offer a challenge to the most common theorisation of female characters in classical Hollywood cinema as lacking in the agency that is typically granted to male protagonists. This thesis investigates the role of the soundtrack in the construction and containment of female agency in the crime films produced by RKO Radio Pictures between 1939 and 1950. Case studies are grouped thematically around three of the significant and recurring characterisations of women that occur in the crime film: the victim; the investigator, and the *femme fatale*. The consideration of women in the role of love interest runs throughout the thesis.

Music and sound are shown to be crucial elements of the way in which classical Hollywood cinema positions women, the strategies used within these films to create and contain female agency, and the potential for female characters to resist these positionings. The soundtrack facilitates and reinforces shifts between various roles occupied by female characters in relation to issues of crime, criminality, and romance, as well as aiding the creation of tension and suspense. The contribution of music and sound to the heightened subjectivity and ambiguity that frequently characterises the 1940s crime film is discussed, and examination of this relationship demonstrates a need to extend the dominant critical theorisation of the classical Hollywood score as an authoritative and reliable guide through the narrative.

The following films are examined in detail:
Stranger on the Third Floor (d. Ingster; c. Webb, 1940)
Suspicion (d. Hitchcock; c. Waxman, 1941)
The Leopard Man (d. Tourneur; c. Webb, 1943)
Experiment Perilous (d. Tourneur; c. Webb, 1944)
Two O'Clock Courage (d. Mann; c. Webb, 1945)
Deadline at Dawn (d. Clurman; c. Eisler, 1946)
Notorious (d. Hitchcock; c. Webb, 1946)
The Locket (d. Brahm; c. Webb, 1946)
The Spiral Staircase (d. Siodmak; c. Webb, 1946)
Out of the Past (d. Tourneur; c. Webb, 1947)
A Woman's Secret (d. Ray; c. Hollaender, 1949)

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ASCAP	American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers
FBO	Film Booking Offices of America
HUAC	House Un-American Activities Committee
KAO	Keith-Albee-Orpheum Corporation
PCA	Production Code Administration
RCA	Radio Corporation of America
RKO	RKO Radio Pictures, Inc.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The function and effect of music and sound in the cinema is established as a legitimate and significant area of research, although its precise position within the academy is often unclear. Studies of film music and sound are increasingly concentrated upon more focused and clearly defined areas, rather than the broader general discussions of film scoring typical of early work in the discipline. This project is a synthesis of these approaches: it surveys the use of music in crime films released by RKO Radio Pictures between 1939 and 1950, with a specific focus upon the role of the soundtrack in the construction and representation of female characters.[1]

This discussion focuses around the concept of "agency", which Susan Hayward succinctly defines as follows:

> [Agency] refers essentially to issues of control and operates both within and outside the film. Within the film, agency is often applied to a character in relation to desire. If that character has agency over desire it means that she or he (though predominantly in classical narrative cinema it is "he") is able to act upon that desire and fulfil it [...] Agency also functions at the level of the narrative inside and outside the film. Whose narration is it? A character in the film? A character outside the film? The director's? Hollywood's? And finally, agency also applies to the spectator. In viewing the film, the spectator has agency over the text in that she or he produces a meaning and a reading of the filmic text.[2]

Hayward notes that the viewing subject possesses agency in relation to the film text, as their perception of it is ultimately what creates its meaning: films (like other texts) can be considered as partially constructed or influenced by the spectator, and may be interpreted in different ways by different viewers. However, the viewer's agency is always tempered by the film text itself, which encourages particular readings or understandings of its content

[1] Although this project is not specifically concerned with analysing film sound, it considers music as an integral part of the "soundtrack", comprising the three (usually complementary and sometimes overlapping) strands of dialogue, sound effects, and music. Whilst music is the primary focus of the thesis, other aspects of sound design will be referred to where significant.

[2] Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* Third edn (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 17. Cinematic notions of agency are heavily influenced by the development of the concept in sociology and anthropology, where the idea of agency as the socioculturally mediated "potential for action" is significant. See, for example, Laura M. Ahearn, 'Language and Agency', *Annual Review of Anthropology,* 30 (2001), 109-137; Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 49-95.

through the interaction of various components to produce a readable and directed "narrative".[3] Although spectatorial issues will be referred to where particularly relevant, agency within the cinematic narrative is the primary focus of this research, particularly the agency of female characters. As Hayward states, female characters in classical Hollywood cinema have typically been denied access to the degree of agency that is commonly afforded to male protagonists. This project seeks to determine the extent to which female characters possess or display agency at various points of the narrative, and how the soundtrack engages with the creation or absence of this agency.

The discussion of music, gender, agency, and film engages with material and methodologies from multiple academic disciplines as well as a variety of "popular" texts, including the films themselves. As noted above, studies of film music and sound often vary in their location with regard to more established fields or disciplines of academic enquiry, such as film studies, cultural studies, and musicology. The introductory sections of many texts by film music scholars are often concerned with establishing their own position in relation to more traditional or recognised fields, and, as William H. Rosar's recent editorial essay for *The Journal of Film Music* indicates, this issue still occupies many scholars.[4] However, Rosar's emphasis on disciplinary boundaries and what might constitute "appropriate" prior expertise for those wishing to contribute to 'musicological film studies' perhaps diminishes the persuasiveness of his arguments about how a truly interdisciplinary field of enquiry might work. Studies of film music and sound necessarily draw on a wide body of scholarship from existing disciplines, ideally whilst seeking to develop an appropriately critical and informed body of research into an area that largely falls between these fields. Film music studies is arguably both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, and this should be viewed as a positive attribute, despite some of the difficulties associated with it. The precise nature of individual studies, their methodologies, and the sources they consult should be primarily generated by the text(s) under investigation, rather than concerns of classification and

[3] These components include music and sound, as well as aspects of dialogue, plot, and mise-en-scène which have tended to be more thoroughly addressed in studies of cinematic narrative. "Narrative" is used throughout the thesis to refer to the combined interaction of individual elements of the film that result in the communication of its "story". These elements can all be viewed as having different "authors" or "narrators", and the spectator also brings their own agency as narrator to bear on the film. Hayward, *Cinema Studies*, pp. 248-251.

[4] William H. Rosar, 'Film Studies in Musicology: Disciplinarity vs. Interdisciplinarity', *The Journal of Film Music*, 2.2-4 (2009), 99-125. See also Kevin Korsyn's general discussion of the 'narratives of disciplinary legitimation' that characterise many examples of musical (and other) scholarship. Kevin Korsyn, *Decentering Music: A Critique of Contemporary Musical Research* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 61-90 (p. 61).

disciplinary fidelity (although these ideals are often challenged by the practical and financial constraints applied to many academic undertakings).

Given this maxim, the precise approach or emphasis of the individual case studies examined in the thesis varies: some make use of a relatively "traditional" musicological approach to discussing the appearance and development of musical motifs, whilst others are primarily concerned with the overall placement, structure, and function of musical cues. Even in those case studies that do employ elements of traditional musical analysis, this is prompted by the desire to discuss music as part of the overall process of narrative construction and development, rather than any attempt to view the soundtrack (or its score, if available) as an independent site of musicological analysis.[5] As chapter three will discuss in more detail, classical era film music is commercial music that is generally written to order and under great pressure of time. It must communicate with a non-specialist audience quickly and effectively, and is therefore frequently reliant on cliché and stereotype. Crucially, it is not intended for consumption outside its cinematic context (or at least not without significant re-writing and editing), and "musical logic" is often subordinate to the other demands placed on these cues. Often more traditional musicological techniques can reveal interesting things about a soundtrack, whether these result from study of archival materials like scores, spotting notes, and studio correspondence, or from aural transcription and analysis. However, if the object of the analysis is (as here) to provide insight into the processes of meaning-making within the film, these are of very limited use alone. Consideration of film music needs to take place alongside consideration of other elements of cinematic narrative, and therefore its significance and contribution will vary between films and often between scenes, as will the most appropriate means of discussing it. In fact, its absence can be equally as interesting and significant as its presence, as several subsequent case studies will demonstrate.

The scope of the research

The inclusion of individual films within the present study is defined in several ways: by date of release (between 1939 and 1950), by production company (RKO Radio Pictures), and by genre (crime).[6] RKO Radio Pictures was the smallest of the major Hollywood studios and is less comprehensively addressed by academic investigation than its larger counterparts. RKO had a smaller operating budget than the other majors and low budget, or "B" pictures

[5] Similar concerns govern the use of notated musical examples: these are used sparingly, and provide additional clarification for points made in the written text.

[6] An additional consideration has been the practical availability of recordings for research purposes.

were a more significant element of its production schedules. Many of these B pictures have retrospectively been labelled as *film noir,* and the studio is particularly associated with this style of filmmaking which first emerged during the early 1940s, and continued to develop through and after World War II. *Film noir* is often theorised as reflecting the particular anxieties of American society in the 1940s, and many of these factors engage directly with issues of gender, sexuality, and identity. Not all the films discussed here are examples of *noir,* but many of these same concerns can be identified within the wider field of the crime film during this period, and a deliberately broad interpretation of this genre category has been used throughout the project. This allows the inclusion of films that feature the issue of crime or criminal activity as their central focus, and also those texts where it is of more peripheral importance. Similarly, the films selected cover a range of budgets, styles, and production values, and feature both RKO's regular contract players as well as more famous and recognisable Hollywood stars. This variety is also reflected in the films' use of music, which ranges from expansive orchestral scores in the classical Hollywood tradition, to much sparser soundtracks comprised primarily of library music. This breadth offers the opportunity to investigate a greater range of texts than those addressed in many current studies of film music, which have tended to focus upon prestige productions and their often similarly prestigious and well-known scores.[7]

Presentation and organisation of material

The thesis follows a thematic, rather than chronological, structure. Chapters two and three provide an overview of existing literature relevant to the project, focusing primarily around the representation of gender in the classical era crime film and the theorisation of classical Hollywood scoring practices and their place within the studio system of production. This discussion provides a critical context and framework for the more detailed case study analyses included in chapters four, five, and six. These case studies are organised thematically and grouped around three of the recurring roles occupied by female characters in the 1940s crime film, although the idea of woman as "love interest" is also important throughout all of these chapters. Chapter four addresses the role of the

[7] Jeff Smith notes a 'general tendency in film music studies to weight aesthetic concerns over technological, economic, or cultural mechanisms', and argues that this has led to an overvaluation of particular canonic texts – a '"masterpiece tradition"' that is not often sufficiently informed by examination of wider issues of context and reception. Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 1-5 (p. 3). See also Arthur Knight and Pamela Robertson Wojcik, 'Overture', in *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music*, ed. by Arthur Knight and Pamela Robertson Wojcik (Durham, N. C. and London: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 1-15.

soundtrack in constructing and representing the female victim, chapter five the female investigator, and chapter six the *femme fatale.* Between these sections and the final concluding chapter of the thesis is an extended case study of the film *Notorious.*[8] This provides a comprehensive analysis of a film featuring a female protagonist who contains elements of all of the previously discussed characterisations and roles for women in the 1940s crime film.

Case studies have been selected to provide individual examples of the more general strategies and recurring features of the films examined for the thesis (a full list of which is shown in Table 2.1 on p. 27). Other films are often referred to more briefly, although space constraints mean that extended discussion of these texts is not possible here. Musical examples, unless referenced otherwise, are transcribed aurally from commercial DVDs or off-air recordings. These recordings are of variable quality, and all examples are intended as a guide to the musical material of the soundtrack, rather than a fully accurate and complete transcription. Transcriptions follow the standard practice of the conductor's scores examined in avoiding the use of key signatures, and any additions or clarifications made to those musical examples taken from copies of conductor's scores have been shown in square brackets.

[8] *Notorious,* dir. Alfred Hitchcock, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1946).

Chapter 2

1940s Hollywood, women, and the crime film

Commercial filmmaking in Hollywood during the 1940s was an economically and aesthetically organised system. This era was at the heart of what is often regarded as the "golden age" of "classical" Hollywood cinema, developing out of the industry standardisation that followed the coming of sound in the late 1920s. At the financial and logistical centre of classical-era Hollywood was the studio system. Scholarship on 1940s Hollywood cinema has consistently emphasised the effect and interdependence of the studio system's economic, technical, and aesthetic factors on the production, distribution, and reception of its films.

Classical Hollywood cinema and the studio system

The classical style of Hollywood film is generally theorised as emerging after the coming of sound in 1927, and lasts until the dissolution of the studio system in the late 1950s. Within this general timeframe are many varying opinions as to the exact starting and ending points of the 'golden age' of Hollywood filmmaking. David Bordwell, for example, locates his discussion of the emergence and identification of classical film style between 1917 and 1960 whilst noting that the influential critic André Bazin puts the start of the classical era proper much later, at 1939.[9] More significant than the dates of the classical period, however, is its initial identification and discussion, and what this criticism itself might imply. As in other fields, the use of the term "classical" to describe this style of filmmaking points towards its status as an archetype or model, implying a progression from the earlier days of the industry and the idea that by a particular point in time Hollywood had achieved some kind of technical and aesthetic "perfection". An amount of standardisation or homogeneity is a prerequisite for the identification of a form of classicism, but (especially in a commercial field) this must also incorporate an element of freedom to allow for the differentiation of individual texts and to sustain interest and commercial viability in the marketplace.[10] Classical Hollywood's standardisation is displayed in its largely uniform

[9] David Bordwell, 'An Excessively Obvious Cinema', in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, ed. by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson (London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 3-11 (p. 3). See also André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* trans. by Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

[10] Bordwell, 'An Excessively Obvious Cinema', p. 4.

approach to "invisible" sound and picture editing and causally motivated plots and narrative structures, all designed to disguise the industrial and technical origins of the film and thereby create an "illusion of reality" for the audience.[11]

The organisation of classical Hollywood depended largely on the existence of the studio system. This provided a relatively stable and resilient structure that held together the various financial, technical, and logistical facets of filmmaking, and thereby also created an environment conducive to aesthetic and stylistic development. At the top of the studio hierarchy were the five "integrated majors": MGM, Paramount, Warner Bros., 20th Century-Fox, and RKO Radio Pictures. These were followed by Universal, Columbia, and United Artists, with other smaller companies some way behind.[12] The major studios effectively controlled American cinema throughout the classical era via a system of tacitly cooperative financial and structural practices designed to maximise profits and ensure their continued monopoly of the industry.

The majority of artistic, administrative, and technical staff were employed by the studios on a contract basis and were paid a weekly wage regardless of which (if any) projects they were working on. It was therefore in the interests of the studio to keep their staff as busy as possible, and production schedules were streamlined and organised primarily with efficiency in mind. Despite this seemingly rigid model, the studio system also allowed considerable scope for creativity and experimentation, providing that this did not put pictures behind schedule and/or over budget. The standardisation of technological and logistical processes combined resources from specialist workers at all stages of development, production, and post-production to create a working environment within the studio hierarchy that was frequently collaborative. Profitability and efficiency, whilst of course important in a commercial industry, were not automatically prioritised over artistic credibility, and the studio system essentially existed to reconcile the two.[13]

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[11] Comprehensive discussion of classical Hollywood's style, techniques, and modes of production can be found in David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1985).

[12] Several of these companies traded under other names at various points or existed as different enterprises before corporate mergers; for ease of reference their most well-known names are used here. For a detailed account of the formation of these studios see Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System: A History*, New edn (London: BFI, 2005).

[13] Janet Staiger notes, for example, that the modes of production employed by Hollywood were 'by no means the cheapest filmmaking procedure', and instead effectively represented a compromise between economics and aesthetics. Janet Staiger, 'The Hollywood Mode of Production: Its Conditions of Existence', in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, ed. by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson (London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 87-95 (p.89).

The early 1930s onwards saw the general adoption of the "unit" system of production, moving away from previous models where a single producer oversaw production of all films at a studio. Several production units, each headed by a producer, would operate simultaneously to supervise six to eight films per year. These units often focused on a particular style or genre of film, maximising efficiency (both logistical and financial), and also allowing further specialisation and creative refinement in these genres.[14] Two well-known examples of this kind of specialist unit include Arthur Freed's unit at MGM, specialising in lavish musicals, and the horror unit at RKO during the 1940s, headed by producer Val Lewton.

These logistical, technical, and artistic processes were generally found across the industry, but what set the major studios apart from smaller, less powerful, companies was their "vertically integrated" structure. In addition to their development and production businesses, all the integrated majors had subsidiaries or sister-companies involved in the distribution and exhibition of films. Theatre ownership was the key difference between the integrated majors and the smaller studios. It effectively allowed them to control not only the production of films but also their dissemination to other industry personnel and the wider public, streamlining their processes and keeping much of this business "in-house", whilst charging high prices to independent exhibitors. This created a vertically structured hierarchy of control, placing significant power in the hands of studio executives and often limiting the choices available to the consumer. One of the most controversial practices employed by the majors was known as "block booking". The studios sold their films only as packages, bundling mediocre pictures together with prestige or desirable ones, and forcing exhibitors to pay high prices for unseen product.[15]

The importance of theatre ownership to the larger studios was increased because of the system of theatre organisation in operation in America. Theatres were divided according to their position within the "run" of a film's exhibition, with new prestige releases playing initially in a "first-run" house, before possibly moving on to other, cheaper houses. In an article originally published in 1944, Mae Huettig summarises the importance of first-run theatres as follows:

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[14] See Janet Staiger, 'The Producer-Unit System: Management by Specialization after 1931', in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, ed. by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson (London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 320-330.

[15] Tino Balio, 'Surviving the Great Depression', in *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939*, ed. by Tino Balio, History of the American Cinema, 5 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), pp. 13-36. Many of these practices and structures were consolidated through the (perhaps inappropriately named) "Code of Fair Competition for the Motion Picture Industry" during 1933, and were not effectively challenged until 1948's "Paramount Decree".

> First-run theaters are important because (1) they receive the bulk of the business; (2) producers receive a substantial proportion of their total film rentals from first-run showings; (3) control of these important theaters is, in effect, control over access to the screen; (4) last, and probably least important, they provide a testing-ground for the pictures by means of which the prices to be charged for individual films may be determined.[16]

The five major studios controlled a majority of these first-run houses, which not only guaranteed them the largest profit from admissions, but also the ability to control which films were shown in these large venues.[17] They could prioritise their own product and those of the other majors, effectively forcing out independent productions and keeping the higher first-run revenues within the "group".[18] Second and third-run theatres (and those further down the chain) tended to prioritise films that had a successful first-run showing, and this therefore had far-reaching effects on the exhibition of films throughout the theatre network.

One way in which this dominance was partially challenged was through the prevalence of "double features" as an exhibition format throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Exhibitors saw these as a way that independent and "neighbourhood" theatres could attempt to compete with the first-run houses, by offering quantity and value over timely exhibition of prestige pictures. Despite the majors' understandable dislike of this practice (and ambivalence from various sectors of the public), this became the dominant mode of cinema exhibition and the majors had no choice but to adopt the practice in their own theatres.[19] The subsequent demand for more product to exhibit led the studios to concentrate production in two distinct areas: "B pictures", with a low budget that was often reflected in the quality of the production and a shorter running time, and "A pictures", which were prestige productions costing significantly more to make and cast. Exhibitors would combine A and B pictures in

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[16] Mae D. Huettig, 'The Motion Picture Industry Today', in *The American Film Industry*, ed. by Tino Balio (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), pp. 228-255 (p. 244).

[17] Huettig records the total number of first-run theatres controlled by the integrated majors (either through ownership, management, or an arrangement with another distributor) as 126, whilst independent or non-affiliated first-run houses total only 37. Huettig, 'The Motion Picture Industry Today', pp. 241-244.

[18] The exception to this might be in cases where an independent production showed signs of box-office potential, and here one of the major studios might take over distribution of the film in return for a percentage of its gross takings. See Huettig, 'The Motion Picture Industry Today', p.247.

[19] Susan Ohmer, 'Speaking for the Audience: Double Features, Public Opinion, and the Struggle for Control in 1930s Hollywood', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video,* 24.2 (2007), 143-169; Thomas Schatz, 'Duals, B's and the Industry Discourse About Its Audience', in *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s*, ed. by Thomas Schatz, History of the American Cinema, 6 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 72-78; Brian Taves, 'The B Film: Hollywood's Other Half', in *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise 1930-1939*, ed. by Tino Balio, History of the American Cinema, 5 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), pp. 313-350.

double features; the studios charged a flat fee for B pictures and a percentage for A pictures. Although B rental income was therefore quite low, it was also very predictable, and these pictures became an important part of production schedules throughout the studio system.[20] Some of the majors scaled back B production during the 1940s,[21] but overall production of cheaper pictures remained constant (to meet the demand from double feature exhibition), and they were particularly important at those studios with less financial capital at their disposal.[22]

Despite Hollywood's far-reaching and engrained structures of internal organisation and power, it was not immune to social, political, and financial influences from outside the industry. Although partially cushioned against drastic fluctuations in rental income for much of the classical era (due to the popularity of cinema-going as a relatively affordable leisure activity),[23] wider economic and social factors did impact upon the industry. These included the Great Depression, which first started to seriously affect Hollywood in the early thirties,[24] the economic and wider social aspects of the Second World War, and the far-reaching effects of the "Paramount Decree" issued by the US Supreme Court in 1948.[25] This decree, which applied to all the major studios, determined that they had an uncompetitive advantage in the marketplace and forced them to sell off their theatre chains. This ended the practice of block-booking and forced the studios to diversify their business interests in order to remain competitive. Along with changes in consumer spending and wider societal and economic shifts around the late 1940s,[26] the Paramount Decree was a significant factor

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[20] Taves, 'The B Film: Hollywood's Other Half', p. 313.

[21] By emphasising their A picture production, the majors hoped to dispel the impression that they were abusing their monopoly to turn out poor quality, cheap product that the public and exhibitors had no choice but to accept. See Schatz, 'Duals, B's and the Industry Discourse About Its Audience'.

[22] Double features, for example, were the primary reason behind the relative success of Universal, Columbia, and United Artists, whose films were regularly used to provide additional product for double features exhibited in the theatres of the majors. RKO, with its relatively small operating budget, also continued to feature a higher number of B pictures on its schedules when compared to the other integrated majors. See Huettig, 'The Motion Picture Industry Today', pp. 248-250.

[23] See *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s*, ed. by Thomas Schatz (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), p. 462.

[24] For a detailed account of the effect of the Depression on the various Hollywood studios see Balio, 'Surviving the Great Depression'. Its effect on RKO is discussed in more detail below.

[25] The full text of the decision in the Paramount case, explaining the findings behind the judgement, is available at 'The Paramount Case - Original Supreme Court Decision, 1948', ed. by J. A. Aberdeen, *Hollywood Renegades Archive: The SIMPP Research Database* <http://www.cobbles.com/simpp_archive/paramountdoc_1948supreme.htm> [accessed 24 July 2010].

[26] One of the primary threats to Hollywood's financial security came in the form of the alternative entertainment offered by television. Additionally, a decrease in the population of many big cities as people moved out to the suburbs meant that the rentals from many first-run theatres dropped even further during this period. Schatz's cited figures for weekly cinema admissions reflect this, dropping

in the gradual decline of the studio system. It allowed smaller and independent producers and distributors to break into what was previously a marketplace controlled by the major studios.[27]

These largely financial and economic factors are also closely linked to ideological movements, organisations, and pressures affecting Hollywood during this period. These include the effect of censorship bodies such as the Production Code Administration (PCA) and National Legion of Decency,[28] the role that Hollywood played in the production and dissemination of propaganda during World War II,[29] and the investigations of supposed links between Hollywood and Communism by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in the late 1930s and again throughout the period following World War II.[30]

Although most commonly appearing to be forces acting upon Hollywood, these pressures were also applied from within the industry, often via its close links with American politics and politicians. However, Hollywood was generally adept at finding ways to evade or benefit from these issues, as the ten year gap between the first suit of the antitrust cases and the eventual Paramount Decree demonstrates (followed by another long delay before the majors actually complied with its conditions). A heavily pragmatic approach to external

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sharply from 90 million in 1948 to 70 and then 60 million within two years. *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s*, ed. by Schatz, p. 462.

[27] Several sources discuss the impact of the decision on the major studios and smaller and independent producers and distributors. See, for example, Ernest Borneman, 'United States Versus Hollywood: The Case Study of an Antitrust Suit', in *The American Film Industry*, ed. by Tino Balio (Madison University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), pp. 332-345; Michael Conant, 'The Impact of the *Paramount* Decrees', in *The American Film Industry*, ed. by Tino Balio (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), pp. 346-370; Michael Conant, 'The Paramount Decrees Reconsidered', *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 44.4 (1981), 79-107; Timothy R. White, 'Life after Divorce: The Corporate Strategy of Paramount Pictures Corporation in the 1950s', *Film History*, 2.2 (1988), 99-119.

[28] For detailed discussions of formation of the PCA and its effect upon classical Hollywood, see Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928-1942* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Leonard J. Leff and Jerold L. Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship and the Production Code from the 1920s to the 1960s* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990); Richard Maltby, 'The Production Code and the Hays Office', in *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1930*, ed. by Tino Balio, History of the American Cinema, 5 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), pp. 37-72; Richard Maltby, '*Baby Face*, or How Joe Breen Made Barbara Stanwyck Atone for Causing the Wall Street Crash', in *The Studio System*, ed. by Janet Staiger (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995), pp. 251-278. The position of music in relation to censorship will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

[29] See Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, 'What to Show the World: The Office of War Information and Hollywood, 1942-1945', in *The Studio System*, ed. by Janet Staiger (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), pp. 279-297; Brian Neve, *Film and Politics in America: A Social Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 56-83.

[30] See, for example, John Cogley, 'The Mass Hearings', in *The American Film Industry*, ed. by Tino Balio (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), pp. 410-431; Neve, *Film and Politics in America: A Social Tradition*, pp. 84-111; John Sbardellati, 'Brassbound G-Men and Celluloid Reds: The FBI's Search for Communist Propaganda in Wartime Hollywood', *Film History*, 20.4 (2008), 412-436.

pressures can also be seen in Hollywood's creation of the Production Code and its administration,[31] and in its response to HUAC's activities and the way in which this can be considered, as Jon Lewis argues, as allowing Hollywood to 'regain control over the entertainment marketplace after the Second World War.'[32] As well as being influenced by specific organisations and concerns, the production and reception of Hollywood cinema can also be considered as representative of more general political, ideological, and societal concerns. This idea will be returned to in later discussions of the crime film during the 1940s and the representation of female characters by Hollywood during this period.

RKO Radio Pictures

Of the five integrated major studios, RKO was the smallest and least financially stable for much of the classical era. Although its finances were more precarious than those of its closest rivals, RKO's correspondingly smaller operating budget is often theorised as having stimulated creativity and artistic experimentation at the studio.

RKO was formed through the gradual merger of several business interests. In January 1928, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), under the leadership of David Sarnoff, acquired a significant share of the film company Film Booking Offices of America (FBO). Although FBO was a relatively small company that concentrated primarily on distribution rather than production, RCA was keen to acquire an outlet for its "Photophone" optical sound technology.[33] FBO films would now use Photophone, providing RCA with a base from which to showcase its technology and FBO with increased financial backing to expand its film production. The late 1920s were characterised by mergers and expansion throughout Hollywood, and one area of intense competition was the acquisition of theatres to be converted to show sound films. RCA entered into a further partnership in order to secure theatre assets for the company, and, in October 1928, gained control of both FBO and the Keith-Albee-Orpheum (KAO) chain and its theatres on the vaudeville circuit.[34] The new company, with Sarnoff as its chairman, took the name Radio-Keith-Orpheum, and its 'all-

[31] See Maltby, '*Baby Face,* or How Joe Breen Made Barbara Stanwyck Atone for Causing the Wall Street Crash'.
[32] Jon Lewis, '"We Do Not Ask You to Condone This": How the Blacklist Saved Hollywood', *Cinema Journal,* 39.2 (2000), 3-30 (p. 3).
[33] Sarnoff intended Photophone as a rival for Western Electric's "Westrex" system that was already being used by several major studios.
[34] KAO also controlled the film production operations of Cecil B. De Mille and the American sector of Pathé. Kennedy initially kept Pathé under his personal control after the merger that created RKO, but arranged for RKO to buy Pathé's operations and real estate from him in 1931.

sound' film productions carried a radio mast logo and the title of "A Radio Picture", emphasising the company's dual expertise in radio and cinema.[35] Trade announcements emphasised the size and scale of the new venture and the company continued to grow throughout 1929, with the acquisition of more theatre assets[36] and the building of the RKO Ranch for filming exteriors and housing standing sets.[37]

1929 was also the year of the stock market crash, but Hollywood did not really feel the effects of the Depression until around 1931, when RKO saw the previous year's profit of around $3.4 million drop to a deficit of $5.7million.[38] RKO's theatre admissions and ticket prices decreased and production costs more than doubled during the early 1930s, a problem increased by the previously aggressive expansion of its theatre holdings and the associated debts accrued. Despite the studio continuing to push its vaudeville circuit as a means of stimulating theatre attendance (and also perhaps to disguise problems with the quality of its film product),[39] in January 1933 RKO became the first of the majors to go into receivership. It did not emerge from this financial position until 1940, well after the rest of the industry had recovered from the effects of the Depression.

Throughout its history, RKO had frequent changes in management and creative direction, including various company presidents and executive producers with different ideas about the kinds of projects the studio should undertake.[40] The most significant of these was Howard Hughes, who bought control of the studio in 1948. Hughes' leadership of RKO was financially and artistically disastrous; large numbers of the workforce were either dismissed or resigned over Hughes' management style and the intensely conservative values he forced upon studio productions. The number of films made at the studio was dramatically reduced, and after several turbulent years[41] Hughes sold RKO to a division of the General

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[35] Early RKO films were released under the name "Radio Pictures" and briefly as "RKO Pathé", around the time of the 1931 merger. Advertising and credits featured the name "RKO Radio Pictures" from September 1932 onwards.

[36] Despite these acquisitions RKO controlled only nineteen first-run theatres, the smallest number of the major studios. Huettig, 'The Motion Picture Industry Today', p. 244.

[37] For further detail about the initial formation of the studio see Ron Haver, 'The Mighty Show Machine', *American Film,* 3.2 (1977), 56-61; Richard B. Jewell and Vernon Harbin, *The RKO Story* (London: Octopus Books, 1982); Betty Lasky, *RKO: The Biggest Little Major of Them All* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1984).

[38] Balio, 'Surviving the Great Depression', p. 15.

[39] Balio, 'Surviving the Great Depression', p. 16.

[40] See Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System: A History,* pp. 144-153; Ron Haver, 'RKO Years (Part Two)', *American Film,* 3.3 (1978), 28-34; Jewell and Harbin, *The RKO Story,* pp. 12-15. Betty Lasky's book length study of the studio is organised chronologically around discussion of the various administrations in place at the studio: see chapters 5-9 of Lasky, *RKO: The Biggest Little Major of Them All,* pp. 121-201.

[41] 'RKO: It's Only Money', *Fortune,* 47.5 (1953), 122-127.

Tire and Rubber Company (General Teleradio Inc.) in 1955. The studio ceased making films in 1957, although it continued to be involved in media broadcasting over television and radio networks under the name RKO General. More recently "RKO Pictures" has again become involved in film production, although sales derived from the original studio's back-catalogue form a significant part of the company's income.[42]

Perhaps because of these constant changes in leadership, direction, and financial stability, RKO was never particularly associated with specific styles or genres as some of the other majors were, and it did not have regular access to as many prominent performers, often "borrowing" stars from other studios to supplement its cheaper contracted actors.[43] Unlike the other majors, RKO also regularly distributed independent releases (most notably for Walt Disney in 1936 and then again from 1938, and Samuel Goldwyn from 1941 onwards), further increasing the variety of product associated with the studio (and also frequently helping to stabilise its own finances through the profits made on films such as Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs).*[44] These factors all contributed to a working environment that was constantly changing, as Richard Jewell and Vernon Harbin note:

> [...] RKO existed in a perpetual state of transition: from one regime to another, from one set of production policies to the next, from one group of filmmakers to an altogether different group [...] the company never 'settled down', never discovered its real identity. It failed to develop a singular guiding philosophy or continuity of management for any extended period.[45]

RKO's operating budget and rentals were significantly smaller than those of the other major studios, meaning that its average per-picture budget was also correspondingly less.[46] Largely because of this constant financial pressure, filmmaking also seems to have been a relatively flexible activity at RKO, where provided the budget was right, creative personnel were allowed to experiment with more frequency than was often the case at the other

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[42] See 'RKO Pictures: Company', RKO Pictures <http://www.rko.com/company.asp> [accessed 25 July 2010].

[43] Jewell and Harbin, *The RKO Story*, p. 7.

[44] *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,* dir. William Cottrell and David Hand (Walt Disney Productions, 1937).

[45] Jewell and Harbin, *The RKO Story*, p. 10.

[46] Richard Jewell's research in the Accounting Department archives of RKO has revealed the studio's own summaries of costs, offset against domestic and foreign rentals. See Richard B. Jewell, 'RKO Film Grosses, 1929-1951: The C. J. Tevlin Ledger', *Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television,* 14.1 (1994), 37-49. Further comment on this article can be found in John Sedgwick, 'Richard B. Jewell's RKO Film Grosses, 1929-1951: The C. J. Tevlin Ledger: A Comment', *Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television,* 14.1 (1994), 51-58. Although not identical, Huettig's earlier account of the studio's finances shows a similar relationship between RKO and the other majors. She records RKO's gross film rentals for 1939 as $18,190,000, over $10 million less than Paramount and Warner Bros., its nearest financial competitors in this year. Huettig, 'The Motion Picture Industry Today', p. 239.

integrated majors: 'Since it was the weakling of Hollywood's "majors", RKO welcomed a diverse group of individualistic creators and provided them, at least until the Hughes era, with an extraordinary degree of freedom to express their artistic idiosyncrasies'.[47] Less established actors and behind-camera personnel were given the chance to work on a wide variety of films at RKO, whereas the larger studios were perhaps less willing to take a risk on untried talent or expensive films without "guaranteed" success.[48] One of the important strands in this more experimental side of filmmaking at the studio during the 1940s was RKO's commitment to relatively cheap crime, thriller, and horror pictures (including those that would retrospectively become known as *film noir),* and many of these films were produced by specialist units.[49] Thomas Schatz notes the importance of the unit production system to RKO in the early 1940s, and the near-total creative control that these 'quasi-independent' units (including those of producer-directors such as Orson Welles and Alfred Hitchcock, and the later horror unit of Val Lewton) had over their style of filmmaking and the personnel used to staff these productions.[50]

RKO's history and production schedule can therefore be considered as both representative of wider trends and movements in Hollywood, but also as existing slightly at the periphery of the studio system due to its constantly shifting fortunes and somewhat precarious position on the border between the integrated majors and the smaller studios.

Hollywood and the crime film

Crime, criminals, and criminality have been popular and pervasive subjects for film throughout cinema history, whether as the single focus of a film or as part of wider-reaching stories and scenarios. The category of "the crime film" can be said to cover all of these subjects, immediately drawing attention to the breadth of its term of reference and to a vagueness in the way it is often applied. It effectively functions as an umbrella term for

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[47] Jewell and Harbin, *The RKO Story*, p. 15. See also Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System: A History*, p. 150; Staiger, 'The Producer-Unit System: Management by Specialization after 1931', p. 328.

[48] RKO contract director Robert Wise, interviewed by Lawrence Bassoff, highlights projected box office takings as being the most important aspect of project planning at RKO; as long as this was positive, directors and producers had relative freedom to pick their crews to suit the style they were employing on a particular film. Lawrence Bassoff, *Crime Scene: Movie Poster Art of the Film Noir* (Beverly Hills, California: Lawrence Bassoff Collection Incorporated, 1997), pp. 9-11.

[49] James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1998), p. 143; Robert Porfirio, 'Introduction', in *Film Noir Reader 3*, ed. by Robert Porfirio, Alain Silver, and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 2002), pp. 1-8.

[50] Thomas Schatz, 'The Hollywood Studio System in 1940-1941', in *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s*, ed. by Thomas Schatz, History of the American Cinema, 6 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 41-71 (pp. 55-57).

several more distinct styles and genres, although these categories frequently overlap and evolve in various ways. In this respect the crime film can be considered as reflective of broader processes in Hollywood genre (and genre systems more generally), where even established and recognisable genres must retain enough flexibility to adapt to various influences, trends, and audiences.

The position of the crime film as an overarching and relatively indistinct category is also related to the nature of crime itself, which is again both highly specific and in a state of continuous development. Crime is defined as anything outside the law, and the law itself is contextually dependent on various historical, social, and political factors. Crime therefore takes many different forms, and this helps to explain the wide range of subjects and styles explored by films in this category, its suitability for combining with other narrative devices in cross-generic texts, and the way in which many crime films can be viewed as conditioned by, and reflective of, their historical and cultural context.

In *Hollywood and Genre,* Steve Neale organises his discussion of the crime film around three distinct categories: 'detective films', 'gangster films', and 'suspense thrillers'.[51] These categories are still relatively broad and often overlap with each other in the same film, but offer a useful way to approach the major features and techniques of the crime film, as these story types usually focus upon three of the main character archetypes that recur in crime narratives: the agent of law and order, the criminal, and the victim.[52] Other discussions of the crime film adopt a more detailed model to explore these texts, such as Thomas Leitch's *Crime Films*, which is concerned to defend crime films as a genre in themselves; Leitch argues that crime film is one example of an overarching generic category that acts as a 'nest' into which more focused subgenres and cycles of the crime film can be located.[53] Carlos Clarens takes a similar approach, arguing that although the crime film lacks the 'readable iconography' and 'clarity of intent' of some other genres, its conventions regarding narrative and characterisation (which are always linked to larger structures and events in society) mean that it also functions as a generic category.[54] Clarens also emphasises the importance of character archetypes to the crime film, and argues that they

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[51] Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 71-92.
[52] Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, p. 72.
[53] Thomas Leitch, *Crime Films* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1-17.
[54] Carlos Clarens, *Crime Movies: From Griffith to the Godfather and Beyond* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1980), pp. 12-14.

function as a representation of larger ideas – 'the Criminal, the Law, and Society' – and this is what distinguishes the crime film from the psychological thriller.[55]

All three authors follow their initial remarks about the generic status of the crime film with more detailed discussion of its more focused and stylistically coherent cycles or subgenres. They agree on the centrality of detective and gangster films to the genre, and on the importance of *film noir* to the crime film's development (although Neale's discussion of *noir* is in a separate, self-contained section), but a less uniform approach emerges when examining films outside these categories. Neale and Clarens differ about the inclusion of thrillers as part of the crime genre, and although Clarens focuses primarily on the chronological development of the gangster film, he also draws attention to various strands and concerns within this development. These strands include journalism-based narratives, 'social crusading' films,[56] war and spy propaganda, caper films, and those that focus particularly on the mafia.[57] Leitch's more extensive study (organised thematically, rather than chronologically) includes chapters on the 'victim film', 'unofficial-detective film', 'private-eye film', 'police film', 'lawyer film', and 'crime comedy'.[58]

Many of these "subgenres" are represented within the selection of 1940s RKO films discussed here. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the films examined in the thesis and their major themes and influences. In addition to those categories identified by Leitch, Neale, and Clarens, two other significant themes or influences recur within this set of 1940s crime films: female gothic films, which Tania Modleski describes as featuring 'women who fall in love with or marry men they subsequently begin to fear',[59] and narratives based around the presence of a serial killer, a relatively unusual focus for crime films in the 1940s, but one that continues to be popular.[60] The table also highlights those films with a particular

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[55] Clarens, *Crime Movies*, p. 13.

[56] Clarens uses the terms 'social crusading film' and 'social commentary film' interchangeably, referring to those crime films that explore the reasons behind criminal behaviour and tie this explicitly to problems in wider society. He notes that these films have often exploited this social 'conscience' aspect in order to pacify the censor and justify the inclusion of (usually violent) scenes that might not otherwise have been acceptable. Examples include *Crossfire's* examination of postwar anti-Semitism as a motive for murder, and the presentation of the American Communist Party in *The Woman on Pier 13*. *Crossfire,* dir. Edward Dmytryk, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1947); *The Woman on Pier 13,* dir. Robert Stevenson, comp. Leigh Harline (RKO Radio Pictures, 1950).

[57] Clarens, *Crime Movies*.

[58] Leitch, *Crime Films*. Many of these critical terms are not necessarily those that would have been used to describe these films at the time of their release, where they were often described as 'chillers', 'mysteries', and 'melodramas', a term that will be addressed further in chapter four.

[59] Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), p. 57.

[60] Kirsten Moana Thompson, *Crime Films: Investigating the Scene*, Short Cuts (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), pp. 87-89.

emphasis on the psychological aspects of the crime, its perpetrators, or its victims. This focus is relatively common throughout 1940s approaches to crime, and is often tied more specifically to developments in *film noir*.[61]

	Detective	Espionage	Gangster	Female gothic	Legal drama	Police	Serial killer	Social problem	Victim film	Psych. focus
A Woman's Secret	✓					✓			✓	✓
Berlin Express		✓						✓		
Born to Kill							✓			✓
Criminal Court			✓		✓					
Crossfire						✓		✓		✓
Deadline at Dawn	✓								✓	✓
Experiment Perilous	✓			✓					✓	✓
Journey into Fear		✓							✓	
Lady Scarface	✓		✓			✓				
Murder, My Sweet	✓		✓							
Mystery in Mexico	✓		✓							
Nocturne	✓									
Notorious	✓	✓		✓					✓	
Race Street	✓		✓			✓			✓	
Out of the Past	✓									✓
Stranger on the Third Floor							✓		✓	✓
Suspicion	✓			✓					✓	✓
The Big Steal	✓									
The Body Snatcher							✓	✓		✓
The Devil Thumbs a Ride						✓	✓			
The Leopard Man	✓						✓		✓	✓
The Locket									✓	✓
The Set-Up			✓						✓	✓
The Spiral Staircase				✓			✓		✓	✓
The Truth About Murder					✓	✓				
The Woman on Pier 13			✓						✓	
They Live By Night			✓						✓	✓
They Made Her a Spy	✓	✓								
They Won't Believe Me					✓				✓	
Two O'Clock Courage	✓								✓	✓
Where Danger Lives									✓	✓

Table 2.1. Summary of major themes and categories in films discussed

[61] Almost all of the films listed here fit in some way within the various stylistic, narrative, and tonal boundaries associated with *film noir,* which was an important influence upon Hollywood crime films throughout the 1940s. It is not included as a category in Table 2.1 because of the problems associated with its definition and generic status, which subsequent discussion will highlight.

Whether considered as technically constituting a genre or not, the crime film (as well as the more focused areas or subgenres detailed in Table 2.1) can be argued to function as one. It draws specific attention to the "criminal" elements of the text whilst allowing for variation in the way these elements are presented (and often the exploration of other ideas). These variations may relate to style and setting (for example, in gaslight films), characterisation (the detective, gangster, or victim film), or less tangible issues of presentation and focus (psychological or societal aspects, for instance). As Table 2.1 shows, these concerns often co-exist within the same text, and it is usually the issue of the crime itself that helps to unite these elements around a central theme or event. The multiplicity of styles and approaches in these films can be seen as representative of the ways in which genres are able to remain specific and repetitive, whilst also exploring new ideas and themes.

1940s crime cinema and *film noir*

"Film noir" is a term with a complex history and somewhat ambiguous nature, as James Naremore notes in *More Than Night,* one of the most comprehensive recent critical texts available on *noir*:

> It has always been easier to recognize a *film noir* than to define the term [...] There is in fact no completely satisfactory way to organize the category; and despite scores of books and essays that have been written about it, nobody is sure whether the films in question constitute a period, a genre, a cycle, a style, or simply a "phenomenon".[62]

Naremore continues a long tradition within *noir* scholarship by emphasising both the recognisable nature of *film noir,* and also the difficulty in defining exactly what it is that groups these films together. The seemingly contradictory nature of *noir* has been a consistent theme in its scholarly analysis, which can be split into three main stages: the initial theorisation of *film noir* which took place in France in the 1940s and 50s; the wider adoption of this theory in the late 1960s and early 70s; and a more recent revival of scholarly interest in *film noir,* fuelled in part by the success of Hollywood "neo-*noir*" throughout the late 1980s and 1990s. Neale devotes a chapter of *Genre and Hollywood* to *film noir,* discussing the inability of scholars to agree on its classification.[63] He concludes

[62] Naremore, *More Than Night*, p. 9.

[63] See Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, pp. 151-177. Neale argues persuasively throughout *Genre and Hollywood* for a need to distinguish between genre categories that are used in academic-style criticism and those used as part of industry discourse. He demonstrates that genre categorisation

that *"film noir"* has become useful as a term only in retrospect: effectively it is a critical category that has now acquired generic status due to the continuing discourse surrounding it. Neale also notes that the insistence upon categorising and defining *noir* by the academy has had the effect of privileging some films above others in attempting to obtain a coherent set of criteria with which to work (a common feature of much genre-oriented criticism). This also has the effect of sidelining other cycles or genres (such as the 'gothic woman's film'), which have features in common with *film noir* but yet are not perceived as "belonging" fully within its confines. For Neale, problems like this are symptomatic of the general instability of *film noir* as a concept, which 'seeks to homogenize a set of distinct and heterogeneous phenomena; it thus inevitably generates contradictions, exceptions and anomalies and is doomed, in the end, to incoherence'.[64] It should be noted that the majority of the features of *noir* outlined below can also be found in other genres and cycles within and outside Hollywood cinema, although many of them are most consistently or obviously demonstrated in *film noir.* A brief overview of *noir's* critical history demonstrates the common themes in its criticism and the ways in which this scholarship has evolved, as well as the relevance of the themes and scholarship of *film noir* to the 1940s crime film.

The French critic Nino Frank was the first to use the term *"noir"* in relation to cinema, in his August 1946 article *'Un Nouveau Genre "Policièr", L'Aventure Criminelle'*.[65] Frank proposed that a new kind of crime cinema had started to develop in America in the early 1940s (a time when contemporary Hollywood film was largely unavailable in France because of the German occupation). After several early 1940s crime films had French releases following the end of the Second World War, critics began to notice marked changes in the tone, mood, and subject matter of these American films when compared with their pre-1940s counterparts. Frank's article focuses in particular on *The Maltese Falcon, Double Indemnity,* and *Murder, My Sweet* as 'typical' of this new style of Hollywood production, noting their evolution from the more conventional crime picture and a narrative shift away from the investigative aspects of the crime film to a much more character-driven and 'realistic' focus on criminal activity.[66] This is often presented through the subjective eyes of the private

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and terminology is often fluid and changeable, and can therefore be indicative of wider ideological processes at work in Hollywood or in the critical discourse surrounding its products.

[64] Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, p. 154.

[65] Nino Frank, 'A New Kind of Police Drama: The Criminal Adventure', in *Film Noir Reader 2*, trans. by Alain Silver, ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 2003), pp. 15-20.

[66] Frank, 'A New Kind of Police Drama: The Criminal Adventure', p. 15. *Double Indemnity,* dir. Billy Wilder, comp. Miklós Rózsa (Paramount Pictures, 1944); *Murder My Sweet,* dir. Edward Dmytryk, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1944); *The Maltese Falcon,* dir. John Huston, comp. Adolph

detective, a viewpoint that is frequently emphasised in voiceover narration by this character.[67] Frank also stresses the uncompromising and cruel nature of *films noirs*, aligning their 'harsh and misogynistic' style with that of contemporary American literature, here referring to the 'hardboiled' detective fiction of authors such as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, who respectively wrote the source novels for *The Maltese Falcon* and *Murder, My Sweet.*[68]

Writing three months after Frank, in *La Révue du Cinéma,* Jean-Pierre Chartier's *'Les Américains aussi font des films "noirs"'* reinforces Frank's observations about *film noir's* hardboiled, disorientating, and pessimistic narratives, and its use of first-person narration.[69] In this discussion, which centres around *Double Indemnity* and *Murder, My Sweet,* Chartier focuses more specifically upon the character archetypes and sexual content of these films, again highlighting the frequent appearance of morally ambivalent private eyes and criminals, but also the *'femme fatale'* and her counterpoint in the 'pure young girl'. Chartier uses strong and emotive language to describe these women, referring to them as 'monstrous', 'sordid', a 'calculating bitch' and as acting 'like a cheap hooker', clearly linking their supposedly deviant sexuality with the danger and evil they represent.[70] The male protagonists of these films are also "guilty" in various ways, but Chartier implies it is the women who seduce them who are really to blame, and parallels the hero's attraction to criminal activity with the sexual allure of the *femme fatale*. Chartier's article offers an extremely bleak summary of *film noir,* but his attitude towards the *femme fatale* figure is one shared by many other sources.

A year before Frank and Chartier first published about *noir* cinema, American journalist Lloyd Shearer had also noted the popularity of 'movie murder – with a psychological twist' in a piece published in the *New York Times Magazine* on August 5, 1945, which uses the examples of *Double Indemnity, Murder My Sweet, Conflict,*[71] and *Laura.*[72] His article, 'Crime

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Deutsch (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1941). Frank also draws attention to *Laura,* dir. Otto Preminger, comp. David Raksin (Twentieth Century Fox, 1944).

[67] Frank, 'A New Kind of Police Drama: The Criminal Adventure', p. 16.

[68] Raymond Chandler, *Farewell, My Lovely,* New edn (London: Penguin, 2005); Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon* (London: Orion Books, 2002). Hardboiled fiction is frequently cited as one of the antecedents of the *noir* style, and this is possibly the reason for Frank's use of the term *"noir"* to describe these films: *Série Noir* was the name of a popular series of black-bound hardboiled murder novels popular in France during the 1940s.

[69] Jean-Pierre Chartier, 'Americans Also Make "Noir" Films', in *Film Noir Reader 2,* ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 2003), pp. 21-23.

[70] Chartier, 'Americans Also Make "Noir" Films'.

[71] *Conflict,* dir. Curtis Bernhardt, comp. Friedrich Hollaender (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1945).

[72] Lloyd Shearer, 'Crime Certainly Pays on the Screen', in *Film Noir Reader 2,* ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 2003), pp. 9-14.

Certainly Pays on the Screen', does not propose the existence of a new cycle or genre, or draw particular attention to the visual and stylistic innovations cited in Frank and Chartier's writings on *film noir.* Instead, Shearer notes that 'there has been a trend in Hollywood toward the wholesale production of lusty, hard-boiled, gut-and-gore crime stories, all fashioned on a theme with a combination of plausibly motivated murder and studded with high-powered Freudian implication.'[73] The article is of particular interest because of Shearer's attempts to explain why this trend is so apparent in the crime dramas of the early 1940s. Various explanations are offered by different sources, including: audience demand for these pictures (sparked by the success of *Double Indemnity);* a potentially looser application of the Production Code; and a belated realisation that hardboiled fiction provided a compelling basis for crime films. A fourth explanation is provided by those that Shearer calls 'psychologists', who note the potential for a violent kind of escapism in these films, providing the opportunity for the cathartic release of a hardened, wartime audiences' emotions.[74] Shearer is non-committal about how seriously he takes these opinions, but it is nevertheless interesting to see a contemporaneous journalist linking films with the far-reaching effects of the Second World War so early in the critical history of *film noir.*

These short initial essays were followed in the 1950s by retrospective and more comprehensive evaluations of *film noir.* Raymond Borde and Étienne Chaumeton were primary amongst a second wave of French interest in *film noir,* publishing the first book-length study of *noir, Panorama du Film noir Américain 1941-1953* in 1955.[75] With the benefit of hindsight and the subsequent French releases of films such as *The Big Sleep, Gilda,* and *This Gun For Hire,* Borde and Chaumeton propose that these films, and others like them, formed a distinct and unique 'series' that became noted by the French public and scholars alike.[76] They again tie *noir* very specifically to its cultural and historical context.[77]

Borde and Chaumeton identify three primary features of *film noir:* crime, ambiguity, and violence. They argue that *noir* takes a uniquely psychological and sympathetic approach to the depiction of crime and the criminal, and reinforce earlier writings about the subjective

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[73] Shearer, 'Crime Certainly Pays on the Screen', p. 9.
[74] Shearer, 'Crime Certainly Pays on the Screen', pp. 9-10.
[75] Raymond Borde and Étienne Chaumeton, *Panorama Du Film Noir Américain* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1955). A translated portion of this in *Film Noir Reader* is the source for this discussion: Raymond Borde and Étienne Chaumeton, 'Towards a Definition of *Film Noir*', in *Film Noir Reader,* trans. by Alain Silver, ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 1996).
[76] *Gilda,* dir. Charles Vidor (Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1946); *The Big Sleep,* dir. Howard Hawks, comp. Max Steiner (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1946); *This Gun for Hire,* dir. Frank Tuttle, comp. David Buttolph (Paramount Pictures, 1942).
[77] Borde and Chaumeton, 'Towards a Definition of *Film Noir*', p. 19.

positioning, moral ambiguity, and pessimistic attitudes of these films.[78] *Noir's* stylistic and narrative techniques and characterisation are all designed to disorientate the viewer, who is left without many of the familiar touch points of classical Hollywood cinema. For Borde and Chaumeton, this sense of audience alienation and disorientation is the key defining feature of *film noir*, and explains its subversion of Hollywood moral conventions and focus on shadowy and pessimistic characters and narratives:

> The conclusion is simple: the moral ambivalence, the criminality, the complex contradictions in motives and events, all conspire to make the viewer co-experience the anguish and insecurity which are the true emotions of contemporary *film noir.* All the films of this cycle create a similar emotional effect: *that state of tension instilled in the spectator when the psychological reference points are removed.* The aim of *film noir* was to create a *specific alienation.*[79]

Film noir's second wave of theorisation can be summarised as the English-language assimilation and discussion of original French writings on the subject, made possible by the changing film culture in countries such as Britain, America, and Australia. Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg's 1968 book *Hollywood in the Forties* contains a chapter on *film noir* in which they outline the features of what they view as an independent genre of crime films.[80] *Hollywood in the Forties* acted as a catalyst in the debate surrounding *film noir* that began in the early 1970s, when journals and magazines such as *Sight and Sound, Screen Education, Cinema,* and *Film Comment* were bringing "serious" film criticism to a much wider audience. Amongst them were Raymond Durgnat's broad and surrealist examination of *film noir* that appeared in 1970 in the UK publication *Cinema.*[81] A version of this was later reprinted in 1974, in a special edition of *Film Comment* that also included articles on the direction, casting, screenplays, *femmes fatales* (here termed the "Bitch Goddess"), and contemporary legacy of *film noir.*[82]

Writing in *Film Comment* in 1972, Paul Schrader's 'Notes on *film noir*' introduces *film noir* through the eyes of the French critics who first theorised it, stating that they noticed 'the new mood of cynicism, pessimism and darkness which had crept into the American

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[78] Borde and Chaumeton, 'Towards a Definition of *Film Noir*', pp. 20-21.
[79] Borde and Chaumeton, 'Towards a Definition of *Film Noir*', p. 25.
[80] Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg, *Hollywood in the Forties* (London; New York: A. Zwemmer; A. S. Barnes, 1968).
[81] Raymond Durgnat, 'Paint It Black: The Family Tree of *Film Noir*', in *Film Noir Reader*, ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 1996), pp. 37-51.
[82] *Film Comment,* 10.6, ed. by Richard Corliss (1974).

cinema'.[83] Schrader argues that this mood is also apparent in films such as *Easy Rider* and *Medium Cool,* which examine the unsavoury aspects of the American dream, although in a more 'romantic' way to their counterparts in classic *film noir.*[84] Schrader links the late 1960's and early 1970's revival of interest in *film noir* with America's Vietnam-influenced political climate, in a similar way to those who link classic *noir* with the Second World War. He argues that four 'catalytic elements' define and explain the *film noir* movement: war and post-war disillusionment, post-war realism, the German influence, and the hard-boiled literary tradition, again linking these films clearly to their socio-cultural context and to stylistic influences from European cinema. For Schrader, the combination of expressionist lighting and realistic locations is one of *film noir's* defining and unique features, allowing it to weld seemingly contradictory concerns and themes together via a homogenous visual style.[85]

The visual style of *film noir* was extensively theorised during the early seventies, extending the somewhat vague descriptions of *noir's* visual iconography by earlier French scholars. Janey Place and Lowell Peterson's article 'Some Visual Motifs of *Film noir*' is the most comprehensive work in this area, and describes how *noir* cinematography, lighting and 'anti-traditional' *mise-en-scène* are used to convey its feelings of claustrophobia and paranoia.[86] Several of these techniques also resulted in lower production costs, and many *films noirs* were originally made as practical and budget-conscious films; some as B pictures, and as Naremore notes, others belonging artistically and financially to 'an ambiguous middle range of the industry'.[87] Arthur Lyons, whose *Death on the Cheap* focuses exclusively on B *noirs,* lists each studio's output of these films between 1939 and 1959.[88] He demonstrates the popularity of B picture *films noirs* at Columbia, Universal, and United Artists, and also the greater number of B *noirs* produced by RKO when compared with the other integrated majors.[89] Clarens, writing about *film noir* as part of the 1940s evolution of the crime film, notes that RKO's smaller budget (when compared to the other major

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[83] Paul Schrader, 'Notes on *Film Noir*', in *Film Noir Reader,* ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York Limelight Editions, 1996), pp. 53-64 (p. 53).

[84] *Easy Rider,* dir. Dennis Hopper (Columbia Pictures Corporation; Pando Company Inc.; Raybert Productions, 1969); *Medium Cool,* dir. Haskell Wexler, comp. Mike Bloomfield (H & J, 1969).

[85] Schrader, 'Notes on *Film Noir*', p. 58.

[86] Janey Place and Lowell Peterson, 'Some Visual Motifs of Film Noir', *Film Comment,* 10.1 (1974), 30-35. *Noir's* strong and identifiable visual style is often one of the primary reasons behind the identification of it as an independent genre, as Leitch notes. Leitch, *Crime Films,* p. 9.

[87] Naremore, *More Than Night,* p. 139.

[88] Arthur Lyons, *Death on the Cheap: The Lost B Movies of Film Noir* ([n.p.]: Da Capo Press, 2000).

[89] Of the films in this study, fifteen are listed by Lyons as B pictures. Lyons, *Death on the Cheap,* pp. 180-192.

studios) was a factor in its willingness to embrace the murky and stylised visual elements of the emerging *noir* style:

> A more modest studio like RKO-Radio was willing to experiment with dark areas to conceal the limits of a cramped set or disguise its familiarity. *Film noir* came naturally to RKO, and the first cohesive *noir* visuals were evident in early B-films such as *Stranger on the Third Floor* (1940), *Cat People* (1942), and *The Seventh Victim* (1943), whose unifying theme happens to be fear and obsession.[90]

Clarens continues his discussion of the emergence of the *noir* style at RKO with *Murder, My Sweet,* noting its 'fully realized' use of the visual techniques, characterisation, dialogue, and voiceover narration that came to epitomise the *film noir's* approach to the detective film.[91] Elements of the striking visual style associated with *film noir* run throughout almost all the films in this study, supporting the links between RKO and this style of filmmaking proposed by Clarens. The three films he mentions above all list Nicholas Musuraca as cinematographer and Albert D'Agostino as their art director (a joint credit with Walter Keller for *Cat People* and *The Seventh Victim).* Either Musuraca or D'Agostino (or sometimes both) worked on the majority of the films studied here and can be considered as an important part of the development of the *noir* visual style at RKO.

Table 2.1 (on p. 27) highlights the relatively large number of films discussed here that feature a significant role for the detective or private eye figure and also emphasises the explicit psychological focus of many of these films, another key element of *film noir's* concern with the causes (as well as effects) of crime and its perpetrators. Often this psychological emphasis is reflected in the heightened subjectivity of narrative construction, for example through the use of voiceover and point of view camerawork seen in films like *Experiment Perilous* and *They Won't Believe Me,*[92] or the extensive use of flashback sequences in *Journey Into Fear* and *Race Street.*[93] Connections between heightened subjectivity and suspense are present both visually and aurally in these films, and will be returned to repeatedly throughout the study.

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[90] Clarens, *Crime Movies,* p. 195. *Cat People,* dir. Jacques Tourneur, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1942); *Stranger on the Third Floor,* dir. Boris Ingster, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1940); *The Seventh Victim,* dir. Mark Robson, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1943).

[91] Clarens, *Crime Movies,* pp. 195-197.

[92] *Experiment Perilous,* dir. Jacques Tourneur, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1944); *They Won't Believe Me,* dir. Irving Pichel, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1947).

[93] *Journey into Fear,* dir. Norman Foster, comp. Roy Webb (Mercury Productions, RKO Radio Pictures, 1943); *Race Street,* dir. Edwin L. Marin, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1948).

Gender and sexuality in Hollywood cinema and *film noir*

By the mid-1970s, *film noir* was established as a category of great interest to film scholars, historians, and filmmakers, who were drawn to the unconventional narrative structures and highly stylised visual motifs of *noir*. *Film noir* was also to prove significant to the feminist scholarship emerging in cinema studies in the late 1970s. Like the woman's film of the 1940s, *film noir* frequently features pivotal female characters, but unlike these frequently sympathetic romantic or maternal roles, the archetypal women of *film noir* are often glamorous, desirable, deceitful, and "promiscuous" *femmes fatales,* a character type that problematically collapses suggestions of criminal and sexual "immorality" together. Although significant (and sometimes morally questionable) female characters do appear in other film genres, they are frequently assigned a specific (and easily containable) role within the narrative, as E. Ann Kaplan points out in her editorial for the 1978 publication of *Women in Film Noir:*

> In the films of another genre [...] women, in their fixed roles as wives, mothers, daughters, lovers, mistresses, whores, simply provide the background for the ideological work of the film which is carried out through men [...] The *film noir* world is one in which women are central to the intrigue of the films, and are furthermore usually not placed safely in any of the familiar roles mentioned above. Defined by their sexuality, which is presented as desirable but dangerous to men, the women function as the obstacle to the male quest.[94]

Film noir's representation of gender and sexuality is usually read as an expression of anxieties surrounding the role of men and women in American society around the time of the Second World War. Janey Place, in the first edition of *Women in Film noir,* argues that cinematic 'movements' like *film noir* display a consistency in their formal and thematic elements which makes them particularly expressive of their particular socio-historic context. The expressed attitudes of *film noir* can therefore be taken as a reflection of the viewpoint of American society during much of the 1940s and 1950s.[95] For Place, and many other *noir* scholars, the most interesting and problematic attitudes of *film noir* are those concerning gender roles. This is particularly apparent in the character archetypes of the emasculated male protagonist and the threatening *femme fatale,* but is also often present in guise of the female investigative figure (who will be discussed further in chapter five).

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[94] E. Ann Kaplan, 'Introduction to 1978 Edition', in *Women in Film Noir.* New edn, ed. by E. Ann Kaplan (London: British Film Institute, 1998), pp. 15-19 (p. 16).

[95] Janey Place, 'Women in Film Noir', in *Women in Film Noir.* New edn, ed. by E. Ann Kaplan (London: British Film Institute, 1998), pp. 47-68 (p. 49).

In *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis,* Mary Ann Doane dates the emergence of the *femme fatale* as a 'central figure' in literature and art to the nineteenth century, and notes that she has been one of the most persistent figures to develop out of this period.[96] Doane theorises the nineteenth century *femme fatale* as articulating anxieties arising from changing understandings of sexual difference, and proposes that more recent incarnations of the *femme fatale* have continued to represent (often unconscious) fears and concerns about power, gender, and sexuality through the 'overrepresentation' of a feminine body which has primarily a sexual, rather than a maternal, function.[97] However, despite her position as a locus for these fears, the *femme fatale* is not usually invincible. She is portrayed as deviant, evil, and dangerous, and the fears that she articulates must therefore be contained through punishment or death. For Doane;

> Her textual eradication involves a desperate reassertion of control on the part of the threatened male subject. Hence, it would be a mistake to see her as some kind of heroine of modernity. She is not the subject of feminism but a symptom of male fears about feminism.[98]

Although Doane locates the *femme fatale* as symptomatic of fears arising from of a perceived threat to a masculine identity, the idea of this figure as representative of more general anxieties about gender, sexuality, and identity dominates literature about the *femme fatale* in *film noir*. As well as the gender anxiety implied by the presence of the *femme fatale* and her contrast with the "dutiful wife" type, other modes of gender and sexual difference are also recurring themes in *film noir.* Richard Dyer, discussing the problematic construction of the *femme fatale* in *Gilda*, suggests that in general, *film noir* is:

> [...] characterised by a certain anxiety over the existence and definition of masculinity and normality [...] This problematic can be observed in, on the one hand, the films' difficulty in constructing a positive image of masculinity and normality, which would constitute a direct assertion of their existence and definition, and, on the other hand, the films' use of images of that which is *not* masculine and normal – i.e., that which is feminine and deviant – to mark off the parameters of the categories that they are unable actually to show.[99]

This anxiety is frequently manifested in *noir's* downtrodden antiheroes: for example, the figure of the private eye is frequently represented as emasculated in some way, most often

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[96] Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p. 1.
[97] Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, pp. 1-3.
[98] Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, pp. 2-3.
[99] Richard Dyer, 'Resistance through Charisma: Rita Hayworth and *Gilda*', in *Women in Film Noir*. New edn, ed. by E. Ann Kaplan (London: British Film Institute, 1998), pp. 115-122 (p. 115).

because of his problematic relationship(s) with sexually self-aware and threatening women. Frank Krutnik's work on masculinity in Hollywood *film noir* also supports Dyer's assertion that traditional notions of masculinity are often conspicuously absent from these films.[100] Krutnik demonstrates that the *film noir*, although frequently situated in the predominantly masculine world of the detective story, is able 'to open up potentialities which are conventionally repressed within the culturally delimited regime of masculine desire and identity'.[101] He further proposes that the existence of a market for these films and their subversive representation of masculinity can perhaps be read as indicating 'some kind of crisis of confidence' in wider society's acceptance of the traditional masculine aesthetic.[102]

The problematisation of traditional gender roles is also highlighted in several *noir* narratives by the presence of characters that are constructed as homosexual or bisexual: for example Mildred, the masseuse from *In a Lonely Place;*[103] Waldo Lydecker in *Laura;* Johnny and Ballin in *Gilda;* Lindsay Marriott in *Murder, My Sweet;* and the ambiguous construction of Susan and Marian's relationship in *A Woman's Secret.*[104] The construction of characters as homosexual is, like the exposition of the *femme fatale's* "loose morals", governed by the terms of the Production Code, and is therefore implied rather than explicitly stated. This representation relies on established Hollywood stereotypes of the effeminate, sharply-dressed aesthete and the butch, "masculinised" lesbian, and Dyer notes that *film noir's* gay men are characterised as 'queens' through their privileged relationships with its glamorous, man-eating *femmes fatales,* linking this back to the emasculation of the "straight" male protagonist:

> Queers generally in *film noir* are not evil just because homosexuality is abnormal or wrong. Nor is it even only because they are 'like' women [...] Queers are also evil because the aesthetic gives them an access to women that excludes and threatens the normal male.[105]

Emasculated men, *femmes fatales,* and latent homosexuals are further highlighted as lonely and alienated victims of a corrupt society by the absence of the traditional family unit from most *films noirs*. Silvia Harvey, Jans Wager, and Elizabeth Cowie all note the ambivalence of *film noir* towards the institution of the family, arguing that this allows it to explore roles for

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[100] Frank Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).
[101] Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street*, p. 91.
[102] Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street*, p. 91.
[103] *In a Lonely Place,* dir. Nicholas Ray, comp. George Antheil (Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1950).
[104] *A Woman's Secret,* dir. Nicholas Ray, comp. Friedrich Hollaender (RKO Radio Pictures, 1949).
[105] Richard Dyer, 'Postscript: Queers and Women in Film Noir', in *Women in Film Noir.* New edn, ed. by E. Ann Kaplan (London: British Film Institute, 1998), pp. 123-129 (pp. 124-125).

women beyond the purely domestic, although often its message about these women is far from positive.[106] Harvey notes that the exclusion of the family unit from most *films noirs* is an efficient way to evoke the threat of a female sexuality which is uncontained by traditional notions of wifely fidelity and motherhood, and links this explicitly to societal fears about changes in the American labour market during the 1940s and the associated effect that this had on the organisation of the family unit. She proposes that the 'underlying sense of horror and uncertainty in *film noir* may be seen, in part, as an indirect response to this forcible assault on traditional family structures and the traditional and conservative values which they embodied'.[107]

Although the underlying message of *film noir* about the dangers of women moving outside their traditional roles as wife and mother is not positive, many scholars note that these characters can still provide pleasurable examples of female characters who are proactive, provocative, and powerful for much of the narrative. The threat of the *femme fatale* (together with that of any other transgressive characters) is always neutralised in classical era *film noir,* but this convention is arguably not enough to negate her disruptive presence in the rest of the film, or the pleasures that this can create. Many of the films discussed here display similar strategies for the containment of unruly female characters, most often involving an ending to the film in which they agree to marry, effectively containing their "threat" within a traditionally constructed religious and heterosexual institution. These endings often feel contrived and unsatisfactory, seeming to work against the construction of characters throughout the rest of the film. They highlight the anxieties that demand the containment of these characters, but also potentially allow spectators to resist or sideline these endings in favour of the more interesting and challenging characterisations earlier in the narrative.

The issue of spectatorship and its various "pleasures" is one that has generated much debate amongst feminist critics. This debate primarily focuses around the position of the female spectator in relation to a Hollywood cinema that seems much more explicitly directed towards a male viewer, reflecting its construction and dissemination by a patriarchal industry and society. Significant amongst these texts is Laura Mulvey's 1975 essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', which, although often criticised for its

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[106] See Elizabeth Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', in *Shades of Noir: A Reader*, ed. by Joan Copjec (London: Verso, 1993), pp. 121-165; Sylvia Harvey, 'Woman's Place: The Absent Family of Film Noir', in *Women in Film Noir*. New edn, ed. by E. Ann Kaplan (London: British Film Institute, 1998), pp. 35-46; Jans B. Wager, *Dangerous Dames: Women and Representation in the Weimar Street Film and Film Noir* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999).

[107] Harvey, 'Woman's Place: The Absent Family of Film Noir', p. 38.

pessimistic outlook, acted as a catalyst to encourage further work in the area, and has continued to engage scholars with the questions it poses about gender, identity, spectatorship, pleasure, and power relations in Hollywood cinema.[108] Mulvey defines three "looks" in the cinematic process – those of the production process and its techniques, the characters within the narrative, and the cinema audience – and argues that all three of them are explicitly positioned as male, creating a dichotomy between the active, powerful 'male gaze', and its recipient in the passive, fetishised female.[109]

Mulvey's raises significant points here, but also sidelines the possibility of the pleasures associated with looking at men on screen, and she does not explain the place in her model of any spectator outside the position of the heterosexual male. These last two objections have encouraged various other models of spectatorship that focus primarily on the relationship of female audiences to the cinema, and how this might mirror the internal female gaze found within the film itself. Some of the most influential theorisations in this area are those of Mary Ann Doane, Jackie Stacey, and Mulvey herself, who revises her original position somewhat in 'Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" Inspired by *Duel in the Sun'.* [110] In this article, Mulvey supports a model of female spectatorship that oscillates between active masculine and passive feminine narrative identifications.[111] Despite the increased mobility of the female spectator here, there is still little room for a purely "feminine" notion of erotically pleasurable, rather than masochistic, desire.

Mary Ann Doane's 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator' interrogates the concept of the "feminine" in order to problematise the notion of the female spectator further.[112] Drawing upon complex Freudian theories of sexual difference, she argues that the feminine is incapable of looking at itself in a voyeuristic or fetishistic way, as it cannot attain the prerequisite distance from itself to achieve this (the opposite of

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[108] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, ed. by Laura Mulvey (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 14-26.

[109] Mulvey argues that there are two main types of pleasure associated with cinematic viewing; either through erotic enjoyment of the act of looking/being looked at, or through identification between viewer and the (active male) character on screen. She also discusses the various ways in which cinema creates both pleasure and 'unpleasure', noting both the threat implicit to the male gaze by the presence of the female, and the way in which this threat can be neutralised through voyeuristic investigation or fetishisation of her. See Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', pp. 16-22.

[110] Laura Mulvey, 'Afterthoughts On "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" Inspired by *Duel in the Sun*', in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, ed. by Laura Mulvey (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 29-38.

[111] Mulvey, 'Afterthoughts'.

[112] Mary Ann Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator', in *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality*, ed. by John Caughie, et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 227-243.

the way in which the masculine works in Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure', for example).[113] Doane argues that issues of proximity and distance are crucial to spectatorship, and this creates a problem for the female spectator, as she herself is the object to be viewed: 'she *is* the image'.[114] Desire in relation to the image is therefore either very narcissistic or, if it is the result of 'overidentification' (common in the case of female-oriented genres such as the woman's film), very masochistic.

However, Doane argues that, via an understanding of femininity as 'masquerade', it *is* possible for the female spectator to create a pleasure-enabling distance between herself and her image. Drawing on the work of Joan Riviere and on the concept of the 'mobile' female spectator of Mulvey's 'Afterthoughts', Doane explains the notion of the feminine masquerade as facilitating the acknowledgment by woman that her femininity itself is merely a surface layer. It becomes an excess to be flaunted, and this in itself implies knowledge, which helps to manufacture the 'distance' previously lacking in the feminine subject position.[115] In achieving a distance from her own image, the over-femininity of the masquerade therefore allows the female viewer to subvert and resist dominant constructs of the feminine. *Film noir's femmes fatales* provide an obvious diegetic example to support Doane's notion of femininity as masquerade – their womanliness exaggerated by make-up, costume, posture and lighting, they are literally "dressed to kill", often displaying a self-awareness and willingness to make use of their bodies and sexuality to get what they want.[116] However, like any female character who openly takes over the active "masculine" look and position, they are almost always punished for this masquerade in classical Hollywood cinema.

Whilst the theories discussed above all differ in their readings of the level and means of female spectator pleasures available in narrative film, they are all essentially underpinned by the same psychoanalytic focus. As Jackie Stacey points out, none of the above approaches to the female spectator consider how female homosexuality might impact upon theories of desire and identification in the cinema, due to their reliance on the idea of the active, desiring look as masculine.[117] The notion of "bisexuality" in the debates outlined above generally refers to an oscillation between masculine and feminine identification processes, not to desires that might be for both male and female. Stacey argues that this is

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[113] Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade', pp. 230-233.
[114] Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade', p. 231.
[115] Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade', p. 235.
[116] Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade', p. 235.
[117] Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 27.

partly a result of the use of Freudian binarisms in the construction of these arguments, and the emphasis this gives to masculine modes of desire: either from a masculine spectator position, or a feminine desire that is only possible to conceptualise in terms of masculine identification. There is little room in such models for any kind of homoerotic female desire or a queering of these perspectives more generally.[118]

In *Star Gazing,* Stacey explores the possible effect that the presence of a recognisable female star might have on the potential relationship between female spectator and the cinematic image. Through ethnographic work with (primarily) female British filmgoers of the 1940s and 1950s, she demonstrates that the interpretation of the glamorous images of these stars has a high degree of cultural, historical, and gender specificity, and that the multiple identification processes possible between spectator and star image are active and powerful. *Star Gazing* successfully extends discussion beyond the primarily psychoanalytic analyses of other scholars, which, as Stacey argues, largely ignore 'the question of how female spectators make sense of such representations'.[119] Whilst she appears to accept theories of the masculinisation of the spectator at a textual level, Stacey proposes that different subjectivities are brought to the cinema auditorium by the spectators themselves, and therefore they may well respond differently to the text.[120] This idea of multiple readings of the various pleasures offered by a film is also supported in E. Ann Kaplan's introduction to the 1998 edition of *Women in Film Noir,* where, in discussing the problematic figure of the *femme fatale* as either a male or female fantasy figure, she argues that 'film noir offers a space for the playing out of *various* gender fantasies'.[121] Fantasies are spectator specific, and therefore the place occupied by the spectator in relation to the film text cannot be entirely fixed, even if the film aims to control this as far as possible. This idea of individual, subjective response is also an important facet of more recent work in gender and queer studies. Scholars such as Judith Butler have problematised traditional biologically-based accounts of masculine and feminine identity, proposing new, more flexible ways to conceptualise ideas of gender and sexuality. Butler outlines the concept of 'gender performativity' as key to her model of how gendered and sexual identities are constructed and circulate within cultures; gender is something we *do* (and may do differently in various situations), rather than something we *are,* that is fixed and

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[118] Stacey, *Star Gazing*, pp. 27-28.
[119] Stacey, *Star Gazing*, pp. 22-24.
[120] Stacey, *Star Gazing*, pp. 28-30.
[121] E. Ann Kaplan, 'Introduction to New Edition', in *Women in Film Noir*. New edn, ed. by E. Ann Kaplan (London: British Film Institute, 1998), pp. 1-14 (p.10).

unchanging.[122] Understandings of gendered identities are based upon the repeated performance of various concepts, for example, "masculinity", and these performances must be constantly repeated in order to maintain the illusion that they belong to stable, fixed, and valid categories – thereby constructing social "norms" through which gender and identity are read and understood. Butler's ideas, and those of queer theory more generally, have provided an increasing challenge to more traditional feminist critiques of cinema and other cultural texts by exposing the often rigid definitions of identity upon which their dense theoretical constructions are based (although this theoretical density is also a feature of Butler's writing).

As demonstrated above, much of the scholarship surrounding the representation of women in classical Hollywood cinema highlights the regular fetishisation of, and hierarchical discourse surrounding, representations of difference in Hollywood cinema (whether this difference is located in markers of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, class, or other personal or cultural fields).[123] However, many authors also argue that it is possible for spectators (female or otherwise) to resist these dominant ideologies or to harness them for their own ends. "Difference" is a crucial part of creating and sustaining interest and tension in any narrative, and although this does not render harmless the potentially negative connections between modes of representation and wider hegemonic structures, it is possible to resist this positioning and construct difference as positive. Several scholars find that particular opportunities for active, and potentially resistant, modes of engagement in classical Hollywood cinema are provided in *film noir.* As for Stacey, star persona and 'charisma' are at the heart of the moments of resistance that both Richard Dyer and Adrienne McLean find in some of Rita Hayworth's performances as a *femme fatale,* and their work will be referred to more extensively in chapter six.[124] For Jans Wager, *films noirs* provide particular opportunities to engage in this resistance because of their ambiguous narratives, which potentially allow the space for greater spectatorial involvement in "reading" their plots and characterisations in an environment that is slightly less 'controlled'.[125] These ambiguities

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[122] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006).

[123] Like much classical cinema, *film noir* is characterised by tensions and anxieties about all modes of difference. This study concentrates primarily on ideas of gender and sexuality, although racial, ethnic, and class difference will also be referred to where pertinent (often the portrayal of "difference" collapses several of these categories together). For more on the construction of race and ethnicity in *film noir,* see E. Lott, 'The Whiteness of Film Noir', *American Literary History,* 9.3 (1997), 542-566; Naremore, *More Than Night,* pp. 224-253.

[124] Dyer, 'Resistance through Charisma'; Adrienne L. McLean, '"It's Only That I Do What I Love and Love What I Do": Film Noir and the Musical Woman', *Cinema Journal,* 33.1 (1993), 3-16.

[125] Wager, *Dangerous Dames,* p. 8.

and opportunities for resistance are also a characteristic of many *film noir* soundtracks, as subsequent chapters will explore in greater detail.

Although *film noir* is particularly noted for its subversive approach to the portrayal of gender and sexuality, many of these ideas can be found throughout 1940s crime cinema, alongside more traditional representations of women. Many crime films, in common with much crime fiction, focus on institutions that are traditionally "masculinised": the gang or mob, law enforcement, and the amateur or professional detective. In relation to these traditionally masculine roles, women most often occupy the position of love interest (either to the investigative male or in a "gangster's moll" role) or victim of the crime or its perpetrators. Often these roles, particularly in classical Hollywood cinema, are constructed as lacking in agency, partially because they frequently rely on the representation of female characters as an addition to another, more "significant" male: their partner in the case of the female love interest, or the criminal or investigator for the female victim.

The position of love interest in the 1940s crime film is, in common with its use in many other genres of Hollywood cinema, often a very limited one for women. With the exception of the particular traits of predatory sexuality that are used to distinguish the *femme fatale,* the 1940s female love interest in the crime film (and elsewhere) is usually depicted as innocent, trusting, and subservient. As noted below, these characters may also occupy other roles within the narrative which can offer contrasting representations of female sexuality and agency, but in its "purest" form, the role of female love interest is often used as a means of emphasising or reasserting a more traditional, patriarchal order.

Similar problems can also be found in women occupying the role of victim, a position which seems to be absolutely lacking in agency as it is defined by the imposition of crime, and therefore power, onto a (usually unwilling) person. The archetypal female victim is present in some of the films discussed here, but they are not particularly prevalent. This may be to do with the particular emphasis placed by 1940s crime films, especially *films noirs,* on the pervasiveness of crime throughout society (thereby rendering everyone a victim to a certain extent), or perhaps on the ability of many of these female characters to resist traditional positionings of the helpless and fetishised victim in favour of more individualised and interesting approaches to this role. Additionally, Carol Clover has influentially argued that the position of female victim is not automatically lacking in power and agency.[126] In her

[126] Carol Clover, 'Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film', *Representations,* 20 (1987), 187-228; Carol Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992).

analysis of the contemporary horror film, Clover demonstrates that the 'Final Girl' of many horror narratives is often resourceful and tough despite her victimisation, and usually outwits the killer (or is resilient enough to evade capture until she is rescued). Clover identifies elements of androgyny in the Final Girl that result from her construction as both appropriating typically "masculine" characteristics of heroism and violence needed for survival, and simultaneously acting as the site of male objectification and victimisation at the hands of the killer.[127] Clover does not argue that these are feminist representations of women, but that these characters can often occupy or offer a site of resistance to more traditional (and patriarchal) positionings of woman as victim. This idea of the resistant victim, although unsurprisingly much more limited in 1940s cinema, is explored in chapter four.

Alternatives to the roles of victim and love interest are found in female characters on both sides of the law and, like their more traditional counterparts, have their origins in literary crime narratives. The first of these alternatives has already been introduced as the *femme fatale,* which (alongside "vamp") is often used as a catch-all term for any female character who combines sexual allure with romantic or criminal deviance or danger. The second of these alternative character types is that of the female investigative figure, who most often (at least in the 1940s) takes the form of an amateur, rather than professional, sleuth. The female detective and *femme fatale* can effectively act to challenge the dominance of victim and love interest roles for women in the crime film, but (as chapters five and six will discuss in more detail) this challenge is often only partially successful and usually exacts a high price from these characters.

In her discussion of contemporary crime films, Yvonne Tasker notes that a key element in the genre's presentation of women is their shifting position within the text:

> Female protagonists and characters can be understood as located across three sites or realms within crime genres: the active, knowledgeable (or at least inquiring) space of the investigator, that of the criminal/object of investigation, and that of the victim of crime. Whilst it is the first that might be held to have arrived only recently, it is nonetheless the case that female characters and protagonists frequently exist across or move between these three textual realms or positions.[128]

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[127] Clover, 'Her Body, Himself', pp. 214-221.

[128] Yvonne Tasker, *Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 92.

Tasker's three 'realms', although she views the investigative role as being a relatively recent one, correspond closely to the 1940s roles for women outlined above: the female investigator; the *femme fatale* and love interest as 'objects of investigation' (either criminal, sexual, or both); and the victim. Her ideas about the flexibility and mobility of these three categories are also highly applicable to the films discussed here, where women are frequently repositioned in terms of their relationship to the crime (and to other characters) throughout the narrative. The frequent collapse of the criminal and sexual together that takes place in this repositioning is alluded to by Tasker, who notes that the occupation of, and moves between, these realms are 'bound up with the articulation of sexuality'.[129] The most obvious example of this collapse is found in the *femme fatale,* as discussion of this character in the *film noir* has already noted, but it is also a feature of the other roles for women discussed here. It is often an important element of strategies that are used within the narrative to contain and neutralise any potential "threat" implicit in the presence of female characters.

This containment is most often achieved via the repositioning of threatening *femmes fatales* or female investigative figures into the more traditional, and arguably often less disruptive and powerful, roles of the love interest or victim. The closer that female characters are to the issue of the crime (unless they are presented as the powerless kind of victim), the more threatening they are to the masculinised order of the traditional crime film, and care is therefore usually taken to move women out of criminal and/or investigative roles before the close of the narrative. As mentioned previously, this often leads to problematic and unsatisfactory endings that feel "tacked on" in some way. Most often these endings feature marriage or an engagement, presenting previously feisty and independent women as suddenly much more subservient and domesticated, and highlighting the power of the shift into a role as love interest. Christine (Bonita Granville) in *The Truth About Murder* is a particularly clear example of this. After her hard-won career as a Deputy District Attorney lands her in a series of dangerous situations from which her boss and lover, Lester (Morgan Conway), has to rescue her, she declares her immediate resignation and desire to marry Lester: 'I don't want to prosecute anything ever, except maybe a pan of bride's biscuits!'[130] However, the lack of credibility in endings such as this perhaps helps to make them more easily sidelined, and they do not usually seem powerful enough to negate the more interesting presentation of female characters earlier on in many of these films, either for a present-day audience, or a 1940s one that would

[129] Tasker, *Working Girls*, p. 93.
[130] *The Truth About Murder,* dir. Lew Landers, comp. Leigh Harline (RKO Radio Pictures, 1946).

presumably be much more familiar with these conventions. Whether "successful" or not, these endings clearly represent some of the strategies used to reposition and contain women within the crime film, despite offering many of them offering earlier moments of potential interest and resistance to dominant ideologies of representation. Chapters four, five, and six examine these ideas of containment and resistance in the 1940s crime film in more detail, drawing particular attention to the role of music in the representation of female victims, investigators, and *femmes fatales.*

Chapter 3

Classical Hollywood scoring and the crime film

Despite its increasing diversity, scholarship on film music has tended to emphasise the role of classical-era orchestral scoring in establishing the conventions that most often govern the placement, function, and effect of music in the cinema. Many of these conventions have their roots in "silent" film practices and, although Hollywood film scoring has continued to develop and diversify, "classical scoring" continues to exert a large influence over many contemporary scoring practices in Hollywood and other cinemas. This chapter does not aim to provide a comprehensive history of film music or its literature, but rather a contextualisation of the industrial and aesthetic practices that influenced the production of the film scores discussed here. It will survey the main components of the classical style of scoring, the way in which the music department functioned as part of the studio system, and literature about these practices. The role of the soundtrack in Hollywood's politics of representation and the crime film will then be discussed in more detail.

Classical Hollywood scoring: industrial practices, aesthetics, and theorisation

In his recent study *Film Music,* Peter Larsen summarises some of the most challenging questions about the function and effect of film music that confront and provoke researchers in this area:

> Film music [...] raises a number of basic questions, for example, about the meaning and significance of music and the relationship between music and emotion [...] questions about the narrative potential of music, a theme that has been a key issue over the past 15-20 years within so-called *new musicology.* Music also forces film researchers and narratologists to take up fundamental concepts for discussion and revision: It problematizes the very idea of what a "film" is. Where does the boundary go between film as textual *object* and film as *performance?* What is a film narrative? Who is the narrator? What does music narrate? And who "narrates" the music?[131]

Issues of narrative and narrativity are problematic ones in the fields of both film studies and musicology, and they occupy similarly difficult terrain within interdisciplinary scholarship on film music itself. Music's contribution to cinematic narrative is the starting point for many

[131] Peter Larsen, *Film Music* (London: Reaktion, 2007), p. 8.

academic discussions of film music, and the idea of film music as contributing to narrative construction frequently runs through more popular texts on the subject as well. Narration, communication, and meaning are therefore key elements in understanding not only the way in which film music might work, but also the discourse surrounding it. These themes underpin theoretical models of classical scoring and more specific research into the ideologies of representation found within these practices.

Film music, like music more generally, can be understood as a semiotic system. It signifies "meaning" to the listener via an understanding of the "codes" operating within its discourse.[132] This meaning is not implicit in the "music itself",[133] but in the reception and processing of it by the listener: it is therefore subjective, although specific readings are often encouraged by the context in which the music appears. This context is always historically and culturally specific, as Philip Tagg states in his 'Introductory Notes to the Semiotics of Music': 'In short, the same set of musical sounds does not "mean" the same thing in different cultures or at different times in the history of the same culture'.[134] In film music, the historical and cultural specificity of musical meaning is given an additional dimension by its context within the film. Claudia Gorbman, for example, discusses three sets of codes through which the signifying potential of film music is mediated: 'pure musical codes' which apply to the musical material itself (structure, tonality, pitch etc.), regardless of context; 'cultural musical codes' which are dependent upon the culturally specific understanding of musical signifiers such as genre and style; and 'cinematic musical codes', arising from the interaction of music with other elements of the film itself.[135] Although the concept of any kind of "pure" code is a problematic one (all codes are conditioned by their context), Gorbman stresses that musical codes by themselves are not an adequate or

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[132] Writers on film music do not necessarily use the same terminology, but the majority of them discuss the communicative properties of the film score and its ability to create "meaning", although many of them also note the problematic nature of theorising these properties. See, for example, Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 12-37; Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 6-8; Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (London: BFI Publishing, 1987), pp. 2-4; Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), pp. 3-16; Russell Lack, *Twenty Four Frames Under: A Buried History of Film Music* (London: Quartet Books, 1997), pp. 174-187; Larsen, *Film Music*, pp. 66-75; Roy M. Prendergast, *Film Music: A Neglected Art: A Critical Study of Music in Films*, Second edn (New York and London: Norton, 1992), pp. 213-217.

[133] Although some properties of music can engender particular physiological responses in the listener (discussed by Kathryn Kalinak as 'musical affect'), music is a nonrepresentational system that signifies, but in a somewhat arbitrary way. See Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, pp. 7-12.

[134] Philip Tagg, 'Introductory Notes to the Semiotics of Music', Version 3, Liverpool and Brisbane (1999) <http://www.tagg.org/xpdfs/semiotug.pdf> [accessed 13 August 2010] p. 7.

[135] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, p. 13. See also Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, pp. 12-16.

accurate basis on which to examine the role of music in film: 'To judge film music as one judges "pure" music is to ignore its status as a part of the collaboration that is the film. Ultimately it is the narrative context, the interrelations between music and the rest of the film's system, which determines the effectiveness of film music'.[136] Caryl Flinn notes that studies of film music have often fallen into the trap of focusing too narrowly on 'pure musical patterns and structures' and the output of *auteur* figures – the "great" directors, films, and composers. She argues that film music studies has perhaps partially been influenced by similar tendencies in traditional musicology to neglect the socio-cultural context of music and promote its status as "high art" by elevating particular works and composers as especially worthy of study.[137]

The nature of film music, which requires communication with a wide audience in a very short space of time, means that its musical units of meaning (or "signs") must be easily recognisable and able to quickly promote application of the correct musical, cultural, or cinematic code. For Gorbman, this explains the prevalence of late Romantic musical style in film scoring. It demonstrates the reliance of orchestral scoring upon established codes from genres such as opera and programme music, which link musical material and particular types of emotion, character, or event (although the conservatoire training and European background of many early film composers is also clearly a factor).[138] It also helps to explain the frequent reliance of film music upon cliché and stereotype, which, although often problematic, can be an efficient way to encourage an audience to infer particular musical meanings.[139] In the films discussed here, these stereotypes often take the form of cues that connote ideas about exoticism and otherness (which may relate to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or class, for example).[140] Clear examples of this strategy include the "Scottish"

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[136] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, p. 12.
[137] Flinn, *Strains of Utopia*, pp. 4-5.
[138] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, p. 4. In her doctoral dissertation on Max Steiner's film scores, Kate Daubney persuasively argues that influences from outside musical Romanticism (for example twentieth century art music techniques or Broadway-style scoring) have tended to be overlooked in scholarship on film music. Katherine Sarah Daubney, 'The View from the Piano: A Critical Examination and Contextualisation of the Film Scores of Max Steiner, 1939-1945' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 1996).
[139] Prendergast, *Film Music*, pp. 213-214.
[140] This use of musical clichés corresponds to Tagg's concept of 'genre synechdoche', or the reference to styles outside the "norm" (itself established by the use of 'style indicators'), via the incorporation of a few musical elements that are seen as 'typical' of that style. Tagg's 'Sign Typology of Music' in his 'Introductory Notes to the Semiotics of Music' contains further discussion of these (and other) terms and their related concepts. David Cooper distinguishes between musical stereotypes that can be understood across cultures ('cultural referents') and those where full comprehension of their signification is generally only accessible to those within a particular culture ('intracultural semantics'). Chapter six discusses musical stereotyping and cliché in relation to the communication of ideas about race and ethnicity in more detail. David Cooper, *Bernard Herrmann's "The Ghost and*

and "historical" signifiers (traditional folk melodies, small-scale harp and string orchestration, and modal harmony) included in Roy Webb's score for *The Body Snatcher,*[141] and the brief references to popular melodies associated with various nationalities at the end of the World War II espionage drama *Berlin Express.*[142] In this musical cue by Friedrich Hollaender the melody moves quickly between snatches of 'The British Grenadiers' (orchestrated for clarinets), the Russian song 'Polyushko Polye' (muted brass), and 'America' (full strings with heavy vibrato), as the various British, Russian, and American characters are featured. In terms of musical structure this cue makes little sense, but its use of melodic quotation to act as an indicator of nationality gives it a logic and meaning beyond the "purely" musical.

In addition to the issue of if, and how, film music communicates meaning, researchers have also considered the question of its authorship – effectively examining the "narrator" behind musical meaning. Although the composer would seem to be an obvious answer to this question, the idea of the composer as the sole musical "author" within the studio system is a problematic one, as subsequent discussion will demonstrate. The role of the audience is significant here; musical meaning is largely subjective and, despite the homogenous, Western-centric approach and assumptions of most Hollywood film music, cues are potentially open to readings that do not necessarily reflect or support those intended by their creators.[143] "Authorship" of musical meaning, like film music itself, can be understood as a process with multiple influences and the potential for multiple outcomes. In this respect, issues of meaning in film music can be seen to parallel some of the broader issues of spectatorship and cinematic address, and the possibility of music facilitating alternative character positions or spectatorial readings will be returned to in several case studies.

The idea of music as a semiotic system has been fundamental in the development of theoretical models of the way in which music contributes to classical Hollywood cinema,[144] a practice that has its roots in the use of music in the silent film era. The notion of "silent" cinema has been effectively problematised by research into this period of film production and distribution. Rick Altman points out that practices varied widely during the silent era,[145] but the general prevalence of live musical accompaniment in silent film exhibition is

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Mrs. Muir": A Film Score Guide (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005), pp. 23-24; Tagg, 'Introductory Notes to the Semiotics of Music' pp. 23-28.

[141] *The Body Snatcher,* dir. Robert Wise, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1945).

[142] *Berlin Express,* dir. Jacques Tourneur, comp. Friedrich Hollaender (RKO Radio Pictures, 1948).

[143] Flinn, *Strains of Utopia,* p. 11.

[144] They also contribute heavily to the theorisation of other cinemas and styles, which, for reasons of space, are not addressed here.

[145] Rick Altman, 'The Silence of the Silents', *Musical Quarterly,* 80.4 (1996), 648-718.

discussed by the majority of film sound and music scholars, including Tim Anderson, Royal S. Brown, Claudia Gorbman, Kathryn Kalinak, and Roy M. Prendergast,[146] whose work follows earlier studies including those by Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler, Kurt London, John Huntley and Roger Manvell, and Leonid Sabaneev.[147] These authors propose a variety of both practical and aesthetic reasons for the presence of music in the cinematic experience, which include: disguising the sound of the projector and other audience noise; long-standing conventions surrounding the use of music in any dramatic spectacle (such as melodrama, theatre, or opera); counteracting the lack of speech and two-dimensional aspect of screened performances; mediating between the temporal experience of the audience and that of the film; providing 'suture' between audience and image; and emphasising the collective nature of audience experience.[148] Varying emphases are placed on these ideas by different authors, but all of these sources draw connections between the function and effect of musical accompaniment in silent cinema and its later use in the sound film era, and many of these ideas are dependent on the concepts of narrativity and musical meaning introduced previously.

The scale and style of musical accompaniment for silent film exhibition varied, primarily depending on the size and relative affluence of the venue. Smaller or temporary picture houses might have no accompaniment at all or perhaps a single musician, whilst larger, more established venues might employ anything up to an orchestra of a hundred players.[149] Similarly, the choice of repertoire varied early on in the silent era, comprising a mixture of improvised music and pre-existing popular and concert-hall music that was largely in the hands of the performers themselves.[150] Jeff Smith notes that the commercial imperative often attached to film music was also an influence on these practices; the choice of musicians and their repertoire was a large factor in stimulating sheet music sales, and

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[146] Tim Anderson, 'Reforming "Jackass Music": The Problematic Aesthetics of Early American Film Music Accompaniment', *Cinema Journal*, 37.1 (1997), 3-22; Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, pp. 12-14; Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, pp. 31-69; Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, pp. 40-65; Prendergast, *Film Music*, pp. 3-18.

[147] Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler, *Composing for the Films* (London: Athlone Press, 1994); John Huntley and Roger Manvell, *The Technique of Film Music* (London and New York: Focal Press, 1957); Kurt London, *Film Music: A Summary of the Characteristic Features of Its History, Aesthetics, Technique, and Possible Developments*. trans. by Eric S. Bensinger (Salem, NH: Ayer, 1992); Leonid Sabaneev, *Music for the Films: A Handbook for Composers and Conductors*. trans. by S. W. Pring (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1935).

[148] Gorbman provides a particularly succinct overview of these ideas and their provenance. See Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, pp. 33-41.

[149] Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, p. 48.

[150] Tim Anderson provides an overview of the disparity of styles and material used by early theatre musicians, demonstrating that the industry saw standardisation and control of these practices as a way of improving the 'quality' of the silent film experience, and thereby maximising profits. See Anderson, 'Reforming "Jackass Music"'.

theatre owners paid licensing fees to the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) for use of their members' material.[151] As practices developed during the silent era, the choice of music became increasingly standardised and conventions surrounding "appropriate" music for various kinds of onscreen action developed. These were disseminated through the production of cue sheets, early film scores,[152] and musical encyclopaedias and periodicals aimed at theatre musicians.[153]

As Hollywood entered the sound era in the late 1920s, many of the conventions surrounding the use of music in silent film persisted, but others were either dropped or developed in different ways to suit the demands of the new medium, as Kalinak notes:

> Film music in the silent cinema proves not so much a forerunner of the classical Hollywood film score as an alternative practice, a set of conventions developed in response to particular needs. The classical score appropriated from the silent model its insistence on narrative integrity throughout an amalgamation of music and image and its translation of musical experience into collective associations which could be harnessed in service to that narrative. But it fundamentally altered the relationship which the silent film score established between the spectator and the screen. What characterizes the sound model is a movement away from the diegetic nonspecificity and continuous musical correspondence of the typically compiled silent film score to uncompromising diegetic fidelity and selective musical accompaniment.[154]

Kalinak here highlights several problematic issues affecting the soundtrack during the transition from silent to sound film, which, in common with industrial practice throughout the studio system, were issues affecting technology, economics, and aesthetics.

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[151] 11,000 American theatre owners became ASCAP licensees in 1926, generating fees of over $500,000. Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce*, pp. 27-32.

[152] Cue sheets (generated either by the film production company or by individuals writing in trade publications) provided suggestions for music to accompany sections of a film, and ranged from a list of titles and timings through to transcribed selections of music. Although not common practice, due to their expense and the logistics of scoring for unpredictable orchestral forces, several silent films in Hollywood, Russia, and Europe are documented as having original scores written for them, often by well-known art music composers. See Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, pp. 50-54; Larsen, *Film Music*, pp. 26-35.

[153] Some of the most well-known of these collections of short musical cues, indexed according to their suitability for accompanying various scenes, moods, or characters, include those released under the 'Sam Fox' brand beginning in 1913, Ernö Rapée's collections in the 1920s, and, in Germany, Hans Erdmann and Guiseppe Becce's 1927 compilation for theatre musicians based partially on the success of Becce's series of *Kinobibliothek* publications between 1919 and 1929. Hans Erdmann and Guiseppe Becce, *Allgemeines Handbuch Der Film-Musick Vol. I* (Berlin and Leipzig: Schlesinger'schen Buch-und Musikhandlung, 1927); Ernö Rapée, *Motion Picture Moods for Pianists and Organists* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1924); Ernö Rapée, *Encyclopedia of Music for Pictures* (New York: Belwin, 1925); John Stepan Zamecnik, *Sam Fox Moving Picture Music* (Cleveland: Sam Fox Publishing Company, 1913).

[154] Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, p. 65. See also Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, pp. 43-52; Larsen, *Film Music*, pp. 76-85; Prendergast, *Film Music*, pp. 19-34.

The continuous musical accompaniment favoured during the majority of the silent era was a problem for newly developed sound recording, mixing, and reproduction technologies, and also created a potential conflict with the idea of a new "realism" that was possible in synchronised sound cinema.[155] Although some productions persisted with the continuous accompaniment style, justifying the presence of music increasingly became a problem for filmmakers, leading to an emphasis on "diegetic" cues that were often conspicuously highlighted by the characters,[156] or alternatively to the use of no music at all.[157] As technology developed to allow multi-track mixing and more precise and flexible ways of recording, it became possible for music, dialogue and effects to occur simultaneously. By the early 1930s the use of "unjustified" nondiegetic scoring in selected scenes, as well as diegetically-motivated music, was becoming standard practice.[158] The coming of sound also

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[155] Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, pp. 65-68.

[156] Max Steiner, 'Scoring the Film', in *We Make the Movies*, ed. by Nancy Naumberg (London: Faber & Faber, 1938), pp. 216-238 (p. 219).

[157] To define music that does not occupy the same narrative space as a film's characters as "nondiegetic" can be seen as limiting the role of music in constructing cinematic narrative, as summarised by Anahid Kassabian: 'The distinction between diegetic and nondiegetic music [...] obscures music's role in producing the diegesis itself'. Various models for classifying musical source in a way appropriate to its role within narrative processes have been proposed, but this debate is ongoing in film music studies and seems likely to generate discussion for some time. For clarity, this study will continue to use the terms "diegetic" and "nondiegetic" to distinguish between music that is respectively audible and not audible within the narrative space occupied by characters (whether or not its source is on screen), although, as subsequent case studies will demonstrate, the function and effect of these cues is often very similar, despite their difference in source. Anahid Kassabian, *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music* (New York; London: Routledge, 2001), p. 42. See also Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. trans. by Claudia Gorbman (New York and Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 66-94; Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert, 'Introduction: Phonoplay', in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. by Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 1-9; Jerrold Levinson, 'Film Music and Narrative Agency', in *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, ed. by David Bordwell and Noël Carroll (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), pp. 248-282; David Neumeyer, 'Diegetic/Nondiegetic: A Theoretical Model', *Music and the Moving Image*, 2.1 (2009), <http://mmi.press.illinois.edu/mmi_index.html> [accessed 13 August 2010]; Jeff Smith, 'Bridging the Gap: Reconsidering the Border between Diegetic and Nondiegetic Music', *Music and the Moving Image*, 2.1 (2009), <http://mmi.press.illinois.edu/mmi_index.html> [accessed 13 August 2010]; Robynn Stilwell, 'The Fantastical Gap between Diegetic and Nondiegetic', in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. by Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 184-202; Ben Winters, 'The Non-Diegetic Fallacy: Film, Music, and Narrative Space', *Music and Letters*, 91.2 (2010), 224-244.

[158] Max Steiner's scores for *Cimarron, King Kong,* and *The Informer* are often cited as significant in discussions of this "transitional" period in film music, and can be seen as representing some of the key stages within it (perhaps also partially explaining the dominance of Steiner's scores as the analytical basis for much of the writing about classical scoring): *Cimarron* contains little music and most, but not all, of this is explained as diegetic; *King Kong,* once the ship arrives at the island, is almost continuously scored and contains some attempts to justify music as diegetic; and *The Informer* is often discussed as one of the earliest examples of fully integrated "classical" scoring. *Cimarron* (RKO Radio Pictures, 1931); *King Kong* (RKO Radio Pictures, 1933); *The Informer,* dir. John Ford, comp. Max Steiner (RKO Radio Pictures, 1935).

shifted ASCAP's attention away from theatre owners to the studios themselves, forcing many early sound studios into expensive licensing agreements with the organisation and stimulating interest amongst the larger studios into the acquisition of music publishing companies as a means of reducing royalty payments and generating new income streams.[159] As well as the costs associated with sound technology and licensing repertoire, the development of classical scoring practices also cost the studios money through the hiring of new personnel to score, conduct, and record film music.

The personnel employed as part of a typical studio era music department included music directors,[160] composers, arrangers and orchestrators,[161] copyists, librarians, and musicians. The placement of the scoring process at the end of the overall production schedule for a film had a large impact upon working methods and roles. Scores were written and recorded under great pressure of time, and, to a large extent, were composed "to order" within the conventions of classical Hollywood scoring practices and the more personal wishes of directors and producers.[162] One of the primary ways in which these time constraints were dealt with was via division of the labour required to produce a working score, meaning that a very pragmatic approach was often required towards the creative process. Orchestrators and arrangers were an established and necessary part of the system, working regularly to expand initial material provided by a composer into a working score, often without any credit in the film itself (although it seems likely that orchestrators would sometimes have contributed "original" material to a score as well). Working methods, composer-orchestrator interaction, and levels of musical control varied widely between departments

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[159] Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce*, pp. 27-32.

[160] The role of the music director varied at different studios and in different periods, sometimes referring to the head of the music department, and sometimes to a member of staff who took responsibility for conducting the studio orchestra.

[161] The terms "orchestrator" and "arranger" are also used inconsistently and often interchangeably. The newsletter of the American Society of Music Arrangers, *The Score,* first published in January 1944 (the Society was founded in 1938) refers to its members as carrying out 'arranging' and 'orchestrating' work on various films, distinguishing these practices from 'composition' or 'scoring', but not from each other. Clifford McCarty, in *Film Composers in America* differentiates between the two (arranging goes beyond orchestrating to 'constitute composition', for example in 'extend[ing] and develop[ing] the tunes of a songwriter to form a background score'), but also notes that the two practices often overlapped, partially due to differences in the initial sketches provided for orchestrating by composers. Clifford McCarty, *Film Composers in America: A Filmography, 1911-1970*, Second edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 4-5; '*The Score*', 1.1 (1944) <http://www.asmac.org/clientimages/39902/newslettersarchive/asmacscore001.pdf> [accessed 22 August 2010].

[162] Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, pp. 66-78. Robert Faulkner explores many of these issues from a more sociological perspective, discussing working models and practices at the studios alongside their effect upon contract and freelance Hollywood musicians. Robert R. Faulkner, *Hollywood Studio Musicians: Their Work and Careers in the Recording Industry* (Lanham, New York and London: University Press of America, 1971).

and individuals, ranging from freelance orchestrators bought in on a per-project, or even per-reel basis, to long-running collaborative partnerships such as the one between Max Steiner and Hugo Friedhofer.[163] The role of the orchestrator in Hollywood film composition was often misunderstood outside the industry, as were the working conditions and pressures of the music department (especially when compared with more autonomous "art music" models of composition).[164]

These working methods are discussed by composer David Raksin in a short essay titled 'Holding a Nineteenth Century Pedal at Twentieth Century-Fox'.[165] Raksin highlights the different roles taken by various members of the creative music team at Twentieth Century-Fox during the late 1930s and early 1940s, demonstrating the hierarchy within the department and also giving a clear indication that particular composers, orchestrators, and arrangers were often associated with specific styles, genres, or production units. He also notes the use of 'team composition' as 'one of the procedures employed to deal with the implausible time schedules' imposed by the studio, most commonly on cheaper 'second-string' pictures that required around twenty-five to forty minutes worth of music.[166] Raksin outlines this collaborative process of composition and states that this process was not unique to Fox: 'While the better films were usually handed to a single composer, very often scores were done by teams – even when there was no particular hurry. I myself worked in this way at nearly every studio in town'.[167] As Kalinak notes, collaborative working methods and the orchestration system 'did not promote allegiance to a single film, but rather fostered primary allegiance to the studio'.[168]

The process of deciding where music cues should feature, and what their content should be, was therefore a collaborative one in classical Hollywood. The positioning of initial "spotting" sessions near to the end of the production process can be argued to reflect a

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[163] A detailed examination of the working relationship between Steiner and Friedhofer is provided in Daubney, 'The View from the Piano'.

[164] For a lively discussion of some of these issues, see Lawrence Morton, 'Composing, Orchestrating, and Criticizing', *The Quarterly of Film Radio and Television,* 6.2 (1951), 191-206; Lawrence Morton, 'Film Music of the Quarter', *Hollywood Quarterly,* 5.3 (1951), 282-288.

[165] David Raksin, 'Holding a Nineteenth Century Pedal at Twentieth Century-Fox', in *Film Music 1*, ed. by Clifford McCarty (New York and London: Garland, 1989), pp. 167-181. See also Frank Skinner, *Underscore: A Combination Method-Text-Treatise on Scoring Music for Motion Picture Films or T.V.* (New York: Criterion, 1950); Steiner, 'Scoring the Film'.

[166] Raksin, 'Holding a Nineteenth Century Pedal at Twentieth Century-Fox', pp. 171-174.

[167] Raksin, 'Holding a Nineteenth Century Pedal at Twentieth Century-Fox', pp. 173-174.

[168] Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, p. 75. For clarity and simplicity, films discussed and referenced throughout the thesis follow the established convention of listing only credited personnel in the role of composer (and director), but these are often not the sole people involved in scoring a film, and the full extent of others' involvement in the process is not always clear.

visual primacy within this process; rarely were musical cues decided before the creative team were able to view rough cuts of the scenes they would feature in. In general, the process of scoring a film was expected to work around the other aspects of film production, meaning that composers and other music department staff could be considered as quite low down in the production hierarchy. Although expected to bring their creativity and expertise to the score, they did not always have control of either the final product or the process of writing the score itself, as Kalinak highlights: 'A composer, like other craftspeople employed by the studio, experienced a relationship to any given film that was specific, transitory, and subject to the authority of the studio'.[169] Studio control of composers' music was reflected in the fact that it was common practice for the studio to retain copyright on all music written for their films.[170] This also meant that the reuse of cues as "library music" was sometimes sanctioned as a fast and cost-effective way of scoring relatively standard sequences.[171]

Academic writing about the classical Hollywood score focuses on films from the mid-1930s, after the transitional period from the silent era was largely over and musical (and extra-musical) practices were standardised throughout the American cinema industry. As in theorisations of the role of music in silent cinema, authors and practitioners stress both practical and aesthetic functions in models of classical scoring, and link these back to more general questions about the signifying properties of music and other justifications for its presence in the cinematic experience. Of these models, Claudia Gorbman's (which uses Max Steiner's work as a basis) has been the most influential upon subsequent work in the discipline, and similarities to her ideas can also be found in earlier texts on film music, including those by practicing composers. A summary of Gorbman's model will therefore serve as the basis for further discussion.

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[169] Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, p. 72.

[170] Leonard Zissu writes about the 'unfairness' of this practice in a 1946 edition of *The Hollywood Quarterly,* and it is also addressed by Steiner in 'Scoring the Film'. The "ownership" of film music by the studios who commissioned it also meant that film composers were not protected by membership of ASCAP, leading to the formation of organisations such as the Studio Composer's Association in 1945 and the Composers and Lyricists Guild in 1950. Unlike other production departments in Hollywood the music departments never officially unionised, which may help to explain why their working conditions remained so pressured. See Flinn, *Strains of Utopia*, pp. 18-20; Lack, *Twenty Four Frames Under: A Buried History of Film Music*, pp. 149-153. Steiner, 'Scoring the Film'; Leonard Zissu, 'The Copyright Dilemma of the Screen Composer', *Hollywood Quarterly,* 1.3 (1946), 317-320.

[171] William Darby and Jack Du Bois, *American Film Music: Major Composers, Techniques, Trends, 1915-1990* (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, 1990), p. xii.

Gorbman proposes seven 'principles' that govern the placement, style, and function of music in classical Hollywood cinema, noting that the film score supports the general ideology of the classical style in promoting audience involvement in the text and pushing them towards a particular viewing (and listening) position.[172] She further proposes that this viewing position is one that is encouraged to be as 'uncritical' as possible, drawing upon ideas about classical cinema's aim of promoting the fullest possible involvement of the audience in the story via the disguise of its commercial and industrial origins: 'Music lessens defences against the fantasy structures to which narrative provides access. It increases the spectator's susceptibility to suggestion.'[173] Gorbman's principles of the classical score can be summarised as follows:[174]

I. Invisibility

The basic tenet of this principle is that the apparatus of nondiegetic music and sound is not visible in the finished print of the film. Like the principles governing classical continuity editing, this helps to render the industrial process of filmmaking less visible, and thereby encourage the "illusion of reality" that is a crucial part of the classical style. In the case of diegetic music, the presence of musicians or musical devices in shot can help to naturalise the appearance of this music on the soundtrack, but Gorbman notes that this fidelity is also an illusion, as the visual representation of music is not usually the source that we actually hear. Even if music is playing or played on set, this rendition will not normally be used in the final print as it does not allow enough flexibility in mixing with the other elements of the soundtrack.

II. 'Inaudibility'

The idea of film music's 'inaudibility' is again compared to the techniques of classical continuity editing in that it must exist without drawing undue attention to itself. Music should not "distract" the audience from other elements of the film: 'Its volume, mood, and rhythm must be subordinated to the dramatic and emotional dictates of the film narrative'.[175] Although Gorbman stops short of arguing that film music is always subordinate to the visual and other tracks of narrative (instead using the term 'mutual implication' to explain their relationship),[176] her principle of inaudibility clearly implies a hierarchical relationship between music and other signifying elements in the film

[172] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, pp. 70-73.
[173] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, p. 5.
[174] Although references to these ideas occur throughout *Unheard Melodies*, the majority of the discussion of these principles is from Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, pp. 73-91.
[175] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, p. 76.
[176] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, p. 15.

text. This is reflected in several further precepts that Gorbman documents here: that musical form is dictated by narrative form, which affects the length of cues and therefore their content; that music must not obscure spoken dialogue, meaning its presence, orchestration, and volume need to be regulated; that music should start and stop as unobtrusively as possible, meaning that it often does so simultaneously with a "distracting" visual action; and that music should generally match the mood or tone of the scene it accompanies, rather than risk distracting the audience from their involvement in the story. Gorbman suggests that this is another reason that the late Romantic style has continued to dominate in film scoring, as its familiarity and predictability render it relatively unobtrusive.

III. Signifier of emotion

Gorbman argues that the function of film music as signifying emotion is heavily reliant on the broader connections often drawn between music and the idea of 'irrationality' and 'excess'. Music brings a less representational element to the cinematic experience and can thereby heighten the effect of sequences for the audience and give the individual stories and characters it accompanies a feeling of universal significance, or a mythical quality. In fantastical narratives, music's role as an agent in aiding the suspension of disbelief is particularly important, and it acts 'as a catalyst in the textual process of slipping in and out of the discourse of realism'.[177] Gorbman also highlights the frequent use of music as accompaniment to romance, and therefore to the presence of female characters in the male-dominated narratives of most classical cinema, a point that will be returned to later.

IV. Narrative cueing:

a. Referential/narrative

These narrative cues are used to highlight formal structures and boundaries within the film, and include opening and closing titles, which also frequently signify genre; the establishment of historical and geographical location and introduction of character types, usually via the use of musical stereotypes; and the emphasis of particular subjectivities through the association of thematic material or cues with a character.

b. Connotative

Connotative narrative cues are used to emphasise other aspects of cinematic narrative and aid in our correct interpretation of it. They might illustrate the "values" of particular characters or their response to events (again with the use of musical stereotypes), or the physical action depicted on screen. This latter category includes

[177] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, p. 79.

techniques such as Mickey-mousing, where music is strongly coordinated with physical movement, and the stinger, where a one-off musical event (or sudden silence) is used to illustrate a corresponding dramatic moment in the narrative. Gorbman notes that much of this music actually serves to "oversignify" – it tells us, in a different form, what we already know, and can therefore be seen as supporting classical cinema's strategy of promoting spectator involvement by making a film as easy to follow as possible.

V. Continuity

Music is used as a cohesive device, to smooth over gaps, cuts, and transitions within the structure and editing of a film. It is therefore usually an important component of montage and related sequences which show, for example, the passing of time or arrival at a new location.

VI. Unity

Music is used to reinforce the formal and narrative unity that underpins the classical Hollywood style. Aside from the use of opening and closing credits music (which reinforces the generic and structural boundaries of a film), tonal relationships and musical structures are carefully managed to appear unified and cohesive across the score. The repetitive use of leitmotif is often a key part of the unification of the film score, and this technique is usually theorised as developing from the use of leitmotifs in Wagner's operas and music-dramas.[178] The leitmotif principle, which Gorbman terms a 'semiotic subsystem',[179] relies on the association of particular characters, themes, or locations with a musical motif that can be modified to reflect the progression of the narrative. This thematic structure is often an important part of the other principles of classical scoring outlined above: leitmotifs are often based around musical stereotypes, for example, and can therefore function as narrative cues as well as unifying devices.

VII. Breaking the rules

Gorbman here makes clear that these principles are not inviolable and, like classical cinema's visual and narrative conventions, 'music as a nonrepresentational "cohesive"

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[178] Leitmotif is a central idea in all discussions of the classical score, and is also the extended focus of the following chapters in *Music and Cinema*: Justin London, 'Leitmotifs and Musical Reference in the Classical Film Score', in *Music and Cinema*, ed. by James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, and David Neumeyer (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), pp. 85-96; Scott D. Paulin, 'Richard Wagner and the Fantasy of Cinematic Unity: The Idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the History and Theory of Film Music', in *Music and Cinema*, ed. by James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, and David Neumeyer (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), pp. 58-84.

[179] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, p. 91.

> mediates among many types of textual contradictions and itself participates in them'.[180] Cues may therefore break one "rule" in the service of another.

Two significant themes run throughout Gorbman's 'principles', and are particularly important to the function and effect of the classical Hollywood score: the use of music as a pleasurable and practical device to aid the smooth running and "invisible" structure of the classical film experience, and its semiotic functions as an illustrative and interpretative element of narrative construction and communication. These themes (although often expressed in less "academic" terms) are also found in earlier publications about film scoring. These include texts by composers working in the industry, and demonstrate an awareness of the functional, as well as aesthetic roles that their music was expected to play in the film.[181] The majority of these articles and interviews are positive in tone, containing practical advice for composers and audiences about how film music works (often accompanied by demands for it to be given a more elevated status), a tradition which is continued, despite developments in technology and aesthetics, in interviews with more recent composers.[182] An exception to this positive tone is found in *Composing for the Films,* published in 1947 by Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler, which (particularly in their opening section, 'Prejudices and Bad Habits') provides an often scathing criticism of classical Hollywood practice.[183] Adorno and Eisler's critique aims to stimulate a new aesthetics of film music with a musical language drawn more from contemporary art music rather than Romanticism, a greater degree of independence from the film (often actively encouraging composers to write music that would be seen as contradicting or working against the rest of the narrative), and a less standardised approach to creative practice in Hollywood. *Composing for the Films* is clearly redolent of Adorno's views about the homogenising nature of the 'culture industry' expressed elsewhere, and although this text differs in being

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[180] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, p. 91.

[181] For example, Aaron Copland, 'Film Music', in *What to Listen for in Music*. Revised edn, ed. by Aaron Copland, (Foreword and Epilogue by Alan Rich, Introduction by William Schuman) (New York and London: Mentor, 1999), pp. 202-210; David Raksin, 'Talking Back: A Hollywood Composer States the Case for His Craft', *The New York Times*, 20 February 1949, section 2, p. 7; Sabaneev, *Music for the Films*; Skinner, *Underscore*; Steiner, 'Scoring the Film'.

[182] Examples of interviews with contemporary film composers can be found throughout specialist periodicals and websites such as *Film Music Magazine, Film Score Monthly,* and *FilmSound.org*, as well as in several book-length studies. See, for example, Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, pp. 269-342; *Cinemusic? Constructing the Film Score*, ed. by David Cooper, Christopher Fox, and Ian Sapiro (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008); Richard Davis, *Complete Guide to Film Scoring: The Art and Business of Writing Music for Movies and TV* (Boston: Berklee Press, 1999), pp. 255-363; 'Film Music Magazine', <http://www.filmmusicmag.com/> [accessed 22 August 2010]; 'Film Score Monthly', <http://www.filmscoremonthly.com> [accessed 22 August 2010]; 'FilmSound.org', ed. by Sven E. Carlsson <http://filmsound.org/> [accessed 22 August 2010]; Tony Thomas, *Film Score: The Art and Craft of Movie Music* (Burbank, California: Riverwood Press, 1991).

[183] Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for the Films*, pp. 3-19.

positioned as a largely practical guide, many of the suggestions that the authors make seem little suited to the commercial and industrial demands of the Hollywood studio system.[184]

Several of these composer texts are contemporaneous with early attempts to theorise film music as a discipline worthy of more "serious" study,[185] and are then followed by further studies from the late 1950s onwards.[186] These texts, although significant in stimulating further interest in the role of music in film, do not always adopt a particularly critical approach to their histories or analyses of the field, and a more extended and rigorous focus on these aspects of scholarship is what distinguishes the majority of more recent studies in the area.[187] Ideas about film music as supporting the structural, immersive, and storytelling functions of classical cinema are still a central element in texts by recent scholars who are primarily concerned with providing an overview of the structural and aesthetic functions of orchestral film music.[188] They also provide a basis for work in other areas, which, although not the primary focus of this project, will be referred to at various points where relevant. These include discussions of film sound more generally, the specific structural and aesthetic properties affecting the role of music in the film musical, and the use of popular music and alternative scoring practices in film.

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[184] See Richard Leppert, 'Music and Mass Culture: Commentary', in *Essays on Music by Theodor W. Adorno*, trans. by Susan H. Gillespie, ed. by Richard D. Leppert (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 365-371.

[185] Gerald Cockshott, *Incidental Music in the Sound Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1946); John Huntley, *British Film Music* (London: Skelton Robinson, 1947). Lawrence Morton's regular column on film music in *The Hollywood Quarterly* can also be included here, and often contains interesting observations on trends in scoring practices and their reception from the mid-1940s to early 1950s. Lawrence Morton, 'Film Music of the Quarter', *Hollywood Quarterly,* 1.1-8.3 (1945-1953).

[186] Earle Hagen, *Scoring for Films*, Updated edn (Los Angeles: Alfred Publishing Company, 1991); Huntley and Manvell, *The Technique of Film Music*; William Johnson, 'Face the Music', *Film Quarterly,* 22.4 (1969), 3-19; Prendergast, *Film Music*; Tony Thomas, *Music for the Movies*, Second edn (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 1997).

[187] There are some exceptions to this critically-oriented focus in more recent texts, for example the book-length studies of William Darby and Jack Du Bois and Christopher Palmer, which, although containing useful information about the position of various composers in the studio system, largely replicate the "great men/films/scores" tradition of many earlier works. Darby and Du Bois, *American Film Music*; Christopher Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood* (London: Marion Boyars, 1990). For further discussion of recent developments in film music literature, see Claudia Gorbman, 'The State of Film Music Criticism', *Cineaste,* 21.1-2 (1995), 72-75; Robynn Stilwell, 'Music in Films: A Critical Review of Literature, 1980-1996', *The Journal of Film Music,* 1.1 (2002), 19-61.

[188] Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*; *Music and Cinema*, ed. by James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, and David Neumeyer (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000); *Film Music: Critical Approaches*, ed. by Kevin Donnelly (New York: Continuum, 2001); *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. by Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Kalinak, *Settling the Score*; Larsen, *Film Music*.

Classical Hollywood scoring: issues of representation and subjectivity

These other areas of scholarly inquiry into film music are generally those where the hierarchical nature of the sound-image relationship implicit in the "inaudible" aspect of most classical scoring models has been most comprehensively critiqued.[189] However, problematising this relationship has also become an issue within theorisations of the orchestral score as well. As Jeff Smith notes in 'Unheard melodies? A Critique of Psychoanalytic Theories of Film Music', the idea of "inaudibility" underpins the two central concerns of classical scoring models: music's ability to ease the process of engagement with the film, and to communicate and solidify its meaning.[190] Conscious engagement with any aspect of the film text would destroy the illusion of reality that classical cinema aims to create; music must therefore necessarily go "unnoticed" if it is to successfully ward off the potential displeasures of uncertain signification or acknowledgement of the constructed and "unreal" nature of the cinematic experience.[191] However, the idea of the score as largely "unnoticed" is a problematic one, and seems to imply a contradiction between its "unheard" nature and simultaneous power as a signifier of meaning and narrative content. Smith argues against this idea of "inaudibility", stating that our experience as spectators is full of moments where music clearly assumes a role very much at the foreground of perception, and that 'these moments are so highly codified and conventionalized that they neither disrupt nor weaken the cinematic illusion, but rather encourage narrative comprehension'.[192] Challenges to the "unheard" nature of film music also render its

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[189] For example, Hilary Lapedis' article on the compilation scores of *Forrest Gump* and *The Big Chill* proposes a much more flexible, and not necessarily hierarchical, relationship between the two "tracks" where they run in parallel to each other, often expressing similar ideas through different means. Hilary Lapedis, 'Popping the Question: The Function and Effect of Popular Music in Cinema', *Popular Music,* 18.3 (1999), 367-379. *Forrest Gump,* dir. Robert Zemeckis, comp. Alan Silvestri (Paramount Pictures, 1994); *The Big Chill,* dir. Lawrence Kasdan (Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1983).

[190] Smith's critique is most specifically centred upon the work of Gorbman and Flinn. Jeff Smith, 'Unheard Melodies? A Critique of Psychoanalytic Theories of Film Music', in *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, ed. by David Bordwell and Noël Carroll (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), pp. 230-247.

[191] Anecdotes about a good score going largely unnoticed are prevalent amongst composer interviews and articles, and this maxim also occupies an important role in academically-oriented literature about orchestral scoring as well as being one of the principles underpinning Gorbman's model.

[192] Smith, 'Unheard Melodies?', p. 237. Although Gorbman's seventh principle, 'Breaking the rules', technically allows room for these moments within her model, Smith's argument is that they function as much more, and more commonly, than mere aberrations. Kalinak and Smith also demonstrate the commercial potential of classical scores which effectively challenges the notion that this music effectively goes unnoticed. Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, pp. 159-183; Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce*, pp. 24-44.

theorisation as a "suturing" device problematic. This is further complicated by the intermittent nature of most scores, which means that this suture (and also the narrative signification of music) can only be present at certain moments. For Smith, this renders the theoretical position of the spectator in relation to film music as constantly 'wavering between belief and disbelief, pleasure and unpleasure';[193] a position that does not match with our actual experience of film or its music.

A final aspect of psychoanalytic theories of film music that Smith problematises is also related to the issue of spectatorship. He notes that models of scoring as an "unheard" aspect of the film text place the viewer in a very passive role, where they do not consciously comprehend or process the "meaning" of what they hear (or, alternatively, those trained in the codes and conventions of Western art music would have access to a level of signification and understanding that is denied to any other spectators).[194] This seems at odds with elements of the viewing experience, and Smith argues that models of film music predicated on the idea of "unheard" scoring need to adopt a more flexible approach to theorising the way in which music is perceived and understood by "untrained" and "expert" listeners, suggesting that cognitive music theory may offer one such approach.[195]

Although by no means solving the problem of how we might model film music as both a necessary and complex element of the film text, and one that is accessible to both trained and untrained listeners, Smith usefully highlights some of the areas in which theorisation of the classical score has yet to fully outgrow reliance on what are frequently problematic (and often outdated) concepts of musical comprehension and perception. These issues are also highlighted by Anahid Kassabian in *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music.*[196] Kassabian divides 'serious' film music scholarship into two schools, the first based around discussion of the audio-visual relationship at the moment of creation (exemplified here by Adorno and Eisler's argument for a more autonomous "art" of film composition in *Composing for the Films),* and the second (represented by Gorbman's 'Principles') consisting of models that attempt to analyse this

[193] Smith, 'Unheard Melodies?', p. 238.
[194] Smith, 'Unheard Melodies?', p. 239.
[195] For Smith, cognitive approaches provide a better way to address the most common, "middle-ground" listening strategies of cinema spectators ('the free association which takes music to be representational, and the understanding of music in terms of emotional expressivity'), and to think about these as active, engaged modes of listening, rather than passive or naïve in some way. Smith, 'Unheard Melodies?', pp. 239-245.
[196] Kassabian, *Hearing Film.*

relationship at the 'moment of "text"', or in the finished product.[197] What neither of these analytical schools offer, according to Kassabian, are 'readings' of films: analytical, critical, and discursive attempts to investigate the audio-visual relationship at the moment of perception.[198] In overlooking the role of perception, they do not allow enough space for (or even the possibility of) differences between perceivers, instead seeming to advocate a universalised, and passive, idea of the spectator. Kassabian proposes that film music studies has concerned itself with the score's relationship with visual aspects of cinematic narrative to the point where it has perhaps begun to neglect questions about ideology and representation:

> [...] classical Hollywood film music is a semiotic code, and [...] it can and should be subjected to various semiotic and cultural studies methods, such as discourse analysis and ideology critique. Such studies would not only further scholarly understandings of classical Hollywood film, but would also intervene in important ways in debates about music and meaning in musicology, communications, sociology, music theory, ethnomusicology, philosophy, and popular music studies.[199]

Like Gorbman, and the majority of film music theorists, Kassabian asserts that the classical scoring tradition is designed to encourage a particular point of view in its listeners. However, she develops this further by arguing that this point of view can usually be considered as representative of dominant ideologies within Hollywood and wider culture.[200] She argues that the 'assimilating identifications' encouraged by classical scoring practices most commonly push spectators towards the viewpoint of the white, middle-class American male (Hollywood's most common "hero" figure), contrasting this with the 'affiliating identifications' produced by popular music in the cinema.[201] These affiliating identifications are more likely to allow room for different responses between spectators. These responses may result from previous experience of a track or its genre outside the cinematic context, potentially creating a much more individualised, and therefore inclusive, model of the way music functions for the cinema audience.

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[197] Kassabian, *Hearing Film*, pp. 37-42.
[198] See footnote 157 for a brief discussion of Kassabian's critique of the terms "diegetic" and "nondiegetic", which relates to her arguments about the need to address issues of perception adequately.
[199] Kassabian, *Hearing Film*, p. 36.
[200] Kassabian, *Hearing Film*, pp. 91-116.
[201] Kassabian, *Hearing Film*, pp. 1-3.

Although Kassabian is sometimes a little unclear about the boundaries between these different modes of identification,[202] she poses challenging questions about the role of the film score in underpinning Hollywood's often problematic ideologies of representation and its address to a seemingly unified "spectator". In this way her work can be considered alongside some of the feminist criticism directed primarily towards the visual aspects of narrative that was discussed in chapter two. Like Kassabian's work on more recent Hollywood film, this project aims to 'read' films and their soundtracks at the moment of perception, although this reading is also informed by consideration of historical context and any available documentary evidence. However, despite the overall tendency of orchestral scoring to encourage particular spectator responses to the text, several case studies discussed here will extend the model of 'assimilating' identification processes outlined in *Hearing Film*. Orchestral scores are shown to have a much more flexible relationship with other elements of narrative than many critics (including Kassabian and those theorists whose work focuses upon the classical score) have previously allowed. Additionally, the possibility for spectators to resist the positioning work of the orchestral score (or to produce alternative readings of their own) should be considered; the case studies discussed in subsequent chapters emphasise my own reading of these films, but other subjective readings or interpretations would also be possible.

Hearing Film is focused upon contemporary films, which Kassabian views as offering, through their employment of popular soundtracks, a potentially more flexible alternative to classical Hollywood's frequently stereotypical and clichéd representations of difference. These classical scoring clichés are most thoroughly documented in relation to the representation of gender, race, and ethnicity, although work in these areas also tends to include observations about sexual and class difference as well, partially because of Hollywood's frequent collapse of several of these categories into a problematic whole.

Robynn Stilwell, in 'Sound and Empathy: Subjectivity, Gender and the Cinematic Soundscape', approaches the gendered aspects of film music and sound from a relatively general perspective, arguing that both sound and subjectivity are culturally coded as feminine, and that this affects the way in which we perceive and articulate the relationship between sound and vision in cinema.[203] She demonstrates that, in opposition to the

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[202] For example, how the use of pre-existing orchestral music on the soundtrack, or popular music that is unfamiliar in style to the perceiver (outside their 'competency') fits into her model.

[203] Robynn Stilwell, 'Sound and Empathy: Subjectivity, Gender and the Cinematic Soundscape', in *Film Music: Critical Approaches*, ed. by Kevin Donnelly (New York: Continuum, 2001), pp. 167-187. See also Amy Lawrence, *Echo and Narcissus: Women's Voices in Classical Hollywood Cinema*

masculinised realm of objectivity and logic, supposedly feminine ideas of the 'irrational' and 'emotional' adhere strongly to the concept of subjectivity – a broad term encompassing ideas about self-awareness and identity, reactions to events, and affinity or empathy with other people, characters, or situations – which is 'the basis of one's experience as a spectator/auditor of a film'.[204] Ideas about femininity are also implicit in our experience as auditors more generally, as hearing is often portrayed as a 'passive' and 'uncontrollable' activity, especially when compared to sight ('which is a means of exerting control; what we look at is an active choice', although a somewhat illusory choice in the cinema, which seeks to direct both looking and listening).[205] Gendered conceptions of sound as feminine are also prevalent in much psychoanalytic film theory, meaning that the discourse of film sound is one that is commonly aligned with discourse about subjectivity, either in the spectator or within the film text itself:

> The psychoanalytic feminine, even in its most benign form, is always shot through with violently negative feelings and irrationality; it is also associated with sound. [...] feminine sound is elided similarly to the way Mulvey describes the collapse of the male gaze. Yet the experience of a film is still dislocated in space, split between the visual image projected on the screen at some distance from us, and the sound which envelops and even literally touches us [...] This split reinscribes the visual as masculine and the aural as feminine, and this welter of gendered factors works to overdetermine a close relationship between sound and female subjectivity.[206]

Stilwell proposes that this gendered model of sound and subjectivity has further implications when considered alongside Michel Chion's concept of 'point of audition': the space that spectators occupy in relation to both the physical and perceptual locations of film sound.[207] Chion summarises these two aspects of point of audition as follows:

(Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), p. 111. Caryl Flinn argues that the use of musical Romanticism imbues the classical score with a sense of 'nostalgia', either for an idealised past, or, in the case of genres like *film noir*, a past that is threatening and dystopian. The idea of 'femininity' is implicit in this musical nostalgia and in wider discussion of music and its place in narrative film, leading to often problematic connections between discourses of music and gender in classical cinema, as Flinn's analysis of *Detour* demonstrates: 'Femininity and music are first construed as a source of goods, and when this is proven inaccessible, they become objects of terror that are subsequently punished – both by the hero of these films and the male critics who respond to them.' Caryl Flinn, 'Male Nostalgia and Hollywood Film Music: The Terror of the Feminine', *Canadian University Music Review,* 10.2 (1990), 19-26 (p. 20). See also Caryl Flinn, 'The Problem of Femininity in Theories of Film Music', *Screen,* 27.6 (1986), 56-72; Caryl Flinn, 'The Most Romantic Art of All: Music in the Classical Hollywood Cinema', *Cinema Journal,* 29.4 (1990), 35-50; Flinn, *Strains of Utopia.*

[204] Stilwell, 'Sound and Empathy', p. 170.

[205] Stilwell, 'Sound and Empathy', p. 171.

[206] Stilwell, 'Sound and Empathy', p. 172.

[207] Chion, *Audio-Vision*, pp. 89-94; Stilwell, 'Sound and Empathy', pp. 173-174.

1. A spatial sense: from where do I hear, from what point in the space represented on the screen or on the soundtrack?

2. A subjective sense: which character, at a given moment of the story, is (apparently) hearing what I hear?[208]

In other words, what and where do we hear, and who in the film is hearing it with us?[209] Stilwell argues that point of audition is exploited as a device to encourage audience identification with particular characters more frequently than point of view shots are, and that these two techniques are often divided along gendered lines. Point of view shots are usually associated with male characters, and point of audition moments, or 'subjective sound', with women (Stilwell gives the examples of the overemphasis of the word "knife" in *Blackmail* and our ability to eavesdrop on the voices in Marion's head as she flees with the stolen money in *Psycho).*[210] For Stilwell, these uses of point of audition to emphasise female subjectivity are again linked with ideas about irrationality and excessive emotion: 'while point-of-view puts us in the subject position of a character in control, point-of-audition puts us in the subject position of a character who has lost or is losing control'.[211]

Stilwell's arguments are significant in starting to address the place of the soundtrack within some of the feminist debates surrounding Hollywood film that were introduced in chapter two, although the persuasiveness of her model is somewhat limited by her lack of engagement with some of the critiques of Mulvey's work.[212] One area in particular that would seem to challenge Stilwell's gender division between point of view as primarily masculine and point of audition as feminine is the use of voiceover narration, which is a powerful and often highly "authoritative" use of subjective sound that is most frequently

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[208] Chion, *Audio-Vision*, p. 90.

[209] These ideas of subjective sound and point of audition are similar to Gorbman's concept of 'metadiegetic' sound or music, a point highlighted by her use of the term in relation to the soundtrack of *Blackmail*. She describes this level of musical narration as occurring when we 'are privileged to read [a character's] musical thoughts'. (This idea also indirectly provides support to those critics who find the terms "diegetic" and "nondiegetic" unhelpful – the character whose musical thoughts we are reading is clearly within the diegesis, yet this music occupies a very different space from conventionally "diegetic" music. "Metadiegetic" sound therefore seems to occupy a curious space "inbetween" diegetic and nondiegetic in Gorbman's model.) See Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, pp. 22-26 (p. 23).

[210] *Blackmail,* dir. Alfred Hitchcock (British International Pictures, 1929); *Psycho,* dir. Alfred Hitchcock, comp. Bernard Herrmann (Shamley Productions, 1960). See also John Belton, 'Awkward Transitions: Hitchcock's "Blackmail" And the Dynamics of Early Film Sound', *The Musical Quarterly,* 83.2 (1999), 227-246; Elisabeth Weis, *The Silent Scream: Alfred Hitchcock's Soundtrack* (Rutherford, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982), pp. 28-62.

[211] Stilwell, 'Sound and Empathy', p. 174.

[212] For example, those that start to explore the problematic use of "masculine" and "feminine" as binary oppositions, and the place of the spectator's subjectivity in theories of cinematic perception and communication.

associated with male characters.[213] Sarah Kozloff notes that as well as providing a useful expository device, the presence of first-person narration 'can greatly affect the viewer's experience of the text by "naturalizing" the source of the narrative, by increasing identification with the characters, by prompting nostalgia, and by stressing the individuality and subjectivity of perception and storytelling'.[214] Kozloff argues that even though first-person narration functions as just one element of the constructed and multi-faceted narrative text of cinema, 'in many cases the voice-over narrator is so inscribed in the film as to seem as if he or she has generated not only what he is saying but also what we are seeing. [...] We put our faith in the voice not as created but as creator'.[215] As subsequent discussion of *Experiment Perilous* will demonstrate, voiceover narrators can also appear to generate elements of the sound (as well as visual) track.

Kaja Silverman offers a slightly more ambiguous account of the position of voice-over narrators within the text, arguing that the majority of diegetic (rather than fully 'disembodied') narrators are those with psychological or physical 'trauma' that gives them the impetus to tell their story, rather than this speech necessarily resulting from privilege or authority.[216] However, this also helps to give these narrations an air of 'immediacy' that in part derives from their position at the heart of the story – what Silverman refers to as their 'diegetic interiority'.[217] She argues that in order to compensate for this less authoritative position of the male diegetic narrator, classical film is often at pains to contain the position of the female voice even further. This occurs in a variety of ways, including the containment of female voices within clearly defined 'textual spaces' (such as song sequences or brief

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[213] One example of a more contemporary film that uses female voiceover extensively is *The Piano,* which is well represented in literature on film music, primarily because of its musical protagonist. Scholarly discussions of the film emphasise the implied connections between Ada's musicality and her voiceover, arguing that these elements of the soundtrack give significant access to her subjectivity (a role that is heightened because of Ada's muteness). See, for example, Michel Chion, 'Mute Music: Polanski's *the Pianist* and Campion's *The Piano*', in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, trans. by Claudia Gorbman, ed. by Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 86-96; Claudia Gorbman, 'Music in *The Piano*', in *Jane Campion's "The Piano"*, ed. by Harriet Margolis, Cambridge Film Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 42-58; C. Knight, 'Ada's Piano Playing in Jane Campion's The Piano - Genteel Accomplishment or Romantic Self-Expression?', *Australian Feminist Studies,* 21.49 (2006), 23-34; *The Piano,* dir. Jane Campion, comp. Michael Nyman (The Australian Film Commission; CiBy 2000; Jan Chapman Productions; New South Wales Film and Television Office, 1993).

[214] Sarah Kozloff, *Invisible Storytellers: Voice-over Narration in American Fiction Film* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1988), p. 41.

[215] Kozloff, *Invisible Storytellers*, p. 45.

[216] Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 52-54. See also Liz Greene, 'Speaking, Singing, Screaming: Controlling the Female Voice in American Cinema', *The Soundtrack,* 2.1 (2009), 63-76.

[217] Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, p. 53.

moments of voiceover narration impelled by a woman's position as an analysand receiving the "talking cure"), and the emphasis of the female body via a highly distinctive female voice (for example one with a strong accent, speech impediment, or distinct timbre).[218] This last example provides a particularly heavy contrast with the very 'casual, monotonous, and world-weary' delivery of male voiceover narrators that Jacob Smith identifies as a characteristic of 'hard-boiled' narration in film, television, and radio.[219]

Several films discussed here make use of voiceover (which is often associated with the flashback structures characteristic of *film noir)* and they engage with the construction of "masculinity" in a variety of ways that correspond, at least partially, with some of the strategies identified by Kozloff and Silverman. *Out of the Past* and *Stranger on the Third Floor* are two films where voiceover is associated with a male protagonist who is "feminised" or emasculated in some way, and, unusually, *The Locket* makes use of female voiceover in its central section.[220] However, the more conventional use of voiceover as indicating the subjectivity of the dominant and authoritative leading male is also represented in films such as *Journey Into Fear* and *Experiment Perilous*. Subjective use of the soundtrack is not limited to voiceover, however, and all the case studies discussed here explore the use of music in communicating and emphasising the subjectivity of both male and female characters.

In classical scoring, the general connections between femininity, sound, and subjectivity explored by Stilwell are overlaid by more specific musical representations of female sexuality. Kathryn Kalinak's work on female stereotypes in classical film scoring documents the various types of musical cue that are most commonly associated with the presentation of the 'fallen woman' and 'virtuous wife', the two most prevalent characterisations of women in classical Hollywood.[221] In analyses of films including *The Informer, Laura,* and *Gone With The Wind,*[222] Kalinak notes the use of simple harmonic and rhythmic language, ascending melodies, and high-pitched, "warm" orchestration (such as flutes and violins) to denote the presence of the virtuous wife. These ideas are similarly present in Gorbman's remarks about music acting as a 'signifier of emotion', where she notes a connection

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[218] Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, pp. 56-61.
[219] Jacob Smith, *Vocal Tracks: Performance and Sound Media* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2008), p. 108.
[220] *Out of the Past,* dir. Jacques Tourneur, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1947); *The Locket,* dir. John Brahm, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1946).
[221] Kathryn Kalinak, 'Musical Stereotyping in Hollywood Films', in *Film Reader 5* ([n.p.]: [n.pub.], 1982), pp. 76-82; Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, pp. 113-134; pp. 159-183.
[222] *Gone with the Wind,* dir. Victor Fleming, comp. Max Steiner (Selznick International Pictures; Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1939).

between the 'emotional excess' contained in the presence of 'Woman as romantic Good Object' and similarly excessive nondiegetic scoring, often dominated by strings.[223] Connections between music, emotion, and gendered representation are also explored by Heather Laing, who argues that the interplay of diegetic and nondiegetic music in 1940s 'melodrama' and the woman's film is crucial to the genre's presentation of female (and male) subjectivity and identity, particularly in characters who are "musical" in some way or other.[224] Laing demonstrates that many of these representational practices have their roots in earlier musical forms such as opera, and that music forms an important part of 'a socially accepted codification that allocates particular narrative roles and possibilities to women'.[225] Several films in the present study also feature musical characters, which foregrounds the role of music and sound as key part of the way in which they communicate with the audience. These musical characters most often take the form of female singers (a stereotypical occupation for many *femmes fatales,* as chapter six will explore in more detail), such as those featured in *Criminal Court, The Leopard Man,* and *Mystery in Mexico,*[226] but also the male composer-pianist protagonists of *A Woman's Secret* and *Nocturne.*[227]

In contrast with the musical presentation of the virtuous wife, the *femme fatale* is often marked musically by the incorporation of signifiers of jazz, blues, and other popular forms,[228] as Kalinak notes:

> Like the Hollywood film itself which created an image of woman as the projection of its own (male) fear and desire, the classical Hollywood film score

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[223] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, pp. 79-81 (p. 80). See also Skinner's remarks about the various musical features and orchestration suited to different character types in his initial planning for the film *'The Irishman'* which is the focus of most of the discussion in *Underscore* (it seems likely that the film he is actually referring to is *The Fighting O'Flynn,* which has several similarities in plot and characterisation to Skinner's account of *The Irishman*.) Skinner, *Underscore*, pp. 11-20; *The Fighting O'Flynn,* dir. Arthur Pierson, comp. Frank Skinner (Fairbanks Company; Universal International Pictures, 1949).

[224] Heather Laing, *Onscreen Musicians, Unseen Emotions: Music and Gender in 1940s Melodrama and the Woman's Film* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007). Laing demonstrates that conflicting cultural and historical ideas about femininity and musicality are played out in the figures of the female performer and female listener, and these will be returned to as appropriate.

[225] Laing, *Onscreen Musicians, Unseen Emotions*, p. 23.

[226] *Criminal Court,* dir. Robert Wise, comp. Paul Sawtell (RKO Radio Pictures, 1946); *Mystery in Mexico,* dir. Robert Wise, comp. Paul Sawtell (RKO Radio Pictures, 1948); *The Leopard Man,* dir. Jacques Tourneur, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1943).

[227] *Nocturne,* dir. Edwin L. Marin, comp. Leigh Harline (RKO Radio Pictures, 1946).

[228] Musical and visual cues were an important way of conveying information about "deviancy" of all kinds to the audience without demonstrating it explicitly, which would attract censure from the Production Code Administration. Music can therefore be a significant factor in avoiding censorship in the classical era. For more on this issue, see Annette Davison, *Alex North's "A Streetcar Named Desire": A Film Score Guide* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009).

> collaborated in the dominant ideology which punished women for their sexuality. Visual displays of female sexuality were accompanied by a nucleus of musical practices which carried implications of indecency and promiscuity through their association with so-called decadent forms such as jazz, the blues, and ragtime. These included a predilection for woodwind and brass instrumentation, particularly saxophones and muted horns; a dependence upon unusual harmonies, including chromaticism and dissonance; the use of dotted rhythms and syncopation; and the incorporation of portamento [...] and blue notes [...][229]

This musical dichotomy helps to further encode the *femme fatale* figure as "other", outside the conventional boundaries of tonality and Romantic musical logic,[230] and often drawing upon the problematic cultural associations of popular musics with non-white ethnicity (a theme that will be developed further in chapter six, along with the possibilities for resistance to these positionings).

As Ruth Solie notes in her introduction to *Music and Difference,* the notion of "difference" in itself is not always problematic (it can be equally damaging to enforce ideas of "similarity", for example),[231] and can be celebrated as a means of resistance to dominant social orders or as a crucial part of identity formation and communication.[232] Politically, however, the discourse of difference is often explicitly about power and the creation of hierarchical orders which marginalise those considered as other. A flexible approach is therefore required to assessing the means used to construct, define, and communicate difference, and also to the idea of difference itself, which is always more diverse and fluid

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[229] Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, pp. 120-121. Also see Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, p. 80.

[230] The representation of the *femme fatale's* otherness in film scoring has close similarities with the "threat" of chromaticism to the tonal order in opera, which feminist musicologists have linked with the portrayal of gender, sexual, or ethnic difference. See, for example, Catherine Clément, *Opera, or, the Undoing of Women*. trans. by Betsy Wing; foreword by Susan McClary (London: Virago, 1989); Suzanne G. Cusick, 'Of Women, Music, and Power: A Model from Seicento Florence', in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. by Ruth Solie (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 281-304 (pp. 296-301); Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Susan McClary, 'Narrative Agendas In "Absolute" Music: Identity and Difference in Brahms's Third Symphony', in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. by Ruth Solie (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 326-344.

[231] Ruth Solie, 'Introduction: On "Difference"', in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. by Ruth Solie (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 1-20 (p. 2).

[232] Solie, 'Introduction: On "Difference"', p. 6. Subcultural theorists have discussed these aspects of difference in detail; in musicology this has been most comprehensively discussed in relation to various popular musics. See, for example, Keith Negus, *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), pp. 99-135; Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

than its categorisation allows.[233] Classical Hollywood's approach to difference most commonly rejects this fluidity, collapsing many differences into one othered representation; musically, this is made clear in the use of musical styles that are often used as signifiers of othered race and ethnicity (jazz, blues, and Latin-style cues) to represent ideas about gender and sexual difference.[234] The musical signifiers of the *femme fatale* are also often used in the presentation of male characters constructed as homosexual, emphasising their most common representation as negative and "non-masculine" via their association with the musical stereotypes of the woman of easy virtue.[235]

The representation of both the *femme fatale* and the dutiful wife character in classical film scoring is problematic: these musical stereotypes perpetuate the representation of women as defined primarily through their sexuality, and therefore their musical presentation corresponds most often with the viewpoint of the heterosexual male character, as the implied audience for, or recipient of, this sexuality (which is used to connote more general ideas about morality and ethics). This kind of cue would therefore seem to largely correspond with Kassabian's ideas about the 'assimilating identifications' produced by orchestral scores, whereby spectators are pushed towards one highly reductive viewpoint of these characters. It also emphasises the idea of difference or otherness in both characters, as they are defined by their "lack of maleness". In the *femme fatale,* the threat implicit in these signifiers of difference is increased due to the explicit positioning of that sexuality as "predatory" and "knowing", attributes more commonly aligned with the idea of masculinity in Hollywood (and elsewhere).

Music in the crime film

Many of the musical features associated by Kalinak and other scholars with the fallen woman or *femme fatale,* such as chromaticism, jazz inflections, and the harmonic ambiguity that these create, can be found more generally throughout the 1940s crime scores

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[233] Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell make a similar plea for a flexible and nuanced approach to issues of identity and difference in musical scholarship in *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity.* Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell, 'Introduction: Secret Passages', in *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity,* ed. by Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), pp. 1-21 (pp. 10-11).

[234] Susan McClary's reading of Brahms's Third Symphony in *Musicology and Difference* notes a similar tendency for ideas of gender and ethnic others to be collapsed together in nineteenth century writings about this instrumental work. McClary, 'Narrative Agendas In "Absolute" Music', pp. 338-339.

[235] Kalinak discusses this technique in relation to David Raksin's musical theme for Waldo Lydecker in *Laura.* Kalinak, *Settling the Score,* pp. 163-173.

discussed here. Studies of music in the classical era crime film have tended to focus primarily on *film noir,* or at least on the use of music in creating and sustaining the character archetypes most associated with these films – the *femme fatale* and the detective. Philip Tagg notes that the detective is consistently identified with the use of 'jazzy chromaticism' that makes a particular feature of tritone intervals (although the majority of his examples are drawn from the 1950s onwards, he finds the roots of this practice in earlier uses of jazz in the cinema).[236] The other significant area in research on music and the crime film concerns those films directed by Alfred Hitchcock with music by Bernard Herrmann, although this work tends to be much more concerned with analysing Herrmann's compositional style and process and how this relates to individual narratives, rather than these films as examples of the crime genre.[237] Herrmann's relatively angular and more modern musical style is often perceived as an appropriate aural counterpart to Hitchcock's taut and suspenseful direction.

The extended musical language of the 1940s crime film, moving away from the stricter harmonic and tonal structures of Romanticism, is particularly noticeable in those films that can be categorised as *film noir.* Helen Hanson argues that *film noir's* 'affective power' arises as much from its 'sonographic style' as well as its more thoroughly-critiqued iconography.[238] Hanson takes a holistic approach to exploring this sonic fabric, demonstrating that the typical *noir* soundtrack is a complex one in which multiple elements are carefully balanced and deployed to create an 'urban' ambience that enriches the narrative:

> The *noir* cityscape is one that is powerfully invested with suspense, fear, threat and desire through the purposeful weaving together of different and mutually influencing threads: musical themes, sound effects, diegetic popular songs and distinctive scores which skilfully create and advance *noir's* distinctive moods and contribute to its narration.[239]

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[236] Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida, 'Tritonal Crime and 'Music As "Music"'', in *Norme Con Ironie. Scritti Per I Settant' Anni Di Ennio Morricone* ed. by S. Miceli, L. Gallenga, and L. Kokkaliari (Milan: Suvini Zerboni, 1998), pp. 273-312 <http://www.tagg.org/articles/morric70.html> [accessed 15/06/2009]. Frank Skinner's *Underscore* also points to an associated between jazz and the detective narrative: 'some pictures, especially TV detective stories with city locales, lend themselves to jazz treatment'. Skinner, *Underscore*, p. 7.

[237] Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, pp. 148-174; Graham Bruce, *Bernard Herrmann: Film Music and Narrative* (Ann Arbor, Michigan UMI Research Press, 1985); David Cooper, *Bernard Herrmann's "Vertigo": A Film Score Handbook* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001); Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, pp. 3-19; Jack Sullivan, *Hitchcock's Music* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2006).

[238] Helen Hanson, 'Sounds of the City: The Sonic Fabric of *Film Noir*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Film Music*, ed. by Peter Franklin and Robynn Stilwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

[239] Hanson, 'Sounds of the City'.

Hanson isolates various elements of this sonic fabric for more detailed discussion, including: the use of stock musical styles to indicate urban location;[240] the use of particular sound mixes or effects, such as closely-miked footsteps, to indicate location and mood; and the role played by diegetic song performance sequences in the articulation of the complex characterisation and identification processes at work in the figure of the *femme fatale.* Essentially, these disparate sonic elements are interdependent, acting together and with other elements of the film text to give *film noir* a 'unique ambience and dramatic charge'. Hanson's remarks about the communicative properties of sound effects are developed in more detail in her *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image* article, which argues that sound design was an important means by which Hollywood differentiated between different genres and through which different studios were able to carve out distinct aesthetic niches: 'sound styles contributed both to each genre's representational regime, and to the development of distinctive studio styles'.[241]

Richard Ness also proposes that *film noir* has a 'specific sound', arguing that this is characterised by 'the incorporation of dissonance and atonality [...] destabilizing devices [such] as the breakdown of traditional diegetic/nondiegetic distinctions and the use of unusual instrumentation and experimental recording techniques'.[242] The extensive use of dissonance in *noir* scores is used by Ness to critique Caryl Flinn's theorisation of these film soundtracks in *Strains of Utopia.*[243] He argues that dissonance is much more pervasive in *film noir* than Flinn's model allows (Flinn proposes that dissonance essentially functions as a temporary interruption or aberration in a largely consonant musical language, thereby giving greater impact to a final tonal resolution) and that dissonance and consonance exist 'on an equal level [...] and exert their own control over the musical discourse'.[244] Although *noir* scores (and crime scores in general during the 1940s) exhibit increased levels of dissonance and chromaticism, Flinn's ideas are not necessarily in opposition to those of Ness. Some confusion here may be a result of Ness attempting to address music in both "classic" and "neo-*noir*", which although making use of many of the same themes and iconography, also display significant differences. Neo-*noir* does not necessarily restore

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[240] Several films in this study make use of similar "Gershwin-sounding" cues to establish location, most often following on from the title sequence and accompanying establishing shots of city skylines or street scenes. Prominent examples can be found in *Born to Kill, Race Street,* and *The Truth About Murder.*

[241] Helen Hanson, 'Sound Affects: Post-Production Sound, Soundscapes and Sound Design in Hollywood's Studio Era', *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image,* 1.1 (2007), 27-49 (p. 33).

[242] Richard R. Ness, 'A Lotta Night Music: The Sound of *Film Noir*', *Cinema Journal,* 47.2 (2008), 52-73 (pp. 52-53).

[243] Flinn, *Strains of Utopia,* pp. 115-132; Ness, 'A Lotta Night Music', pp. 55-56.

[244] Ness, 'A Lotta Night Music', p. 56.

order in the same way that early *film noir* does (for example, the *femme fatale* often escapes punishment or containment in neo-*noir*).[245] Flinn's examples are all drawn from 1940s and 1950s *film noir,* and the tonal resolution she describes in the musical scores of these films can be read as paralleling their resolution of narrative "problems" (discussed at the end of chapter two, and a feature of several later case studies). The possibility therefore exists that these musical "resolutions", as well as narrative ones, could be sidelined by the spectator.

Ness usefully highlights some of the trends towards smaller ensembles, a more dissonant and contemporary style of scoring, and more sparing use of music that characterise many *film noir* scores. However, he overstates the extent to which this style was adopted in classic *film noir* and overlooks the possible connections between budget and scoring style. Many of the sparsest scores in the present study, for example, or those that rely most heavily on the use of library music, belong to films with smaller budgets. Several of the *films noirs* addressed here also differ dramatically in the approaches taken to their musical scoring, ranging from the extensive, lush, and very "classical"-sounding thematic scores of *Out of the Past* and *The Locket* to the extremely sparse soundtrack of *Two O'Clock Courage* and the unusual approach of *The Set-Up,* which uses no nondiegetic scoring at all.[246] Ness is also keen to stress a particular 'Americanism' within this new approach, arguing that contemporary *noir* composers tend to be those with jazz or Broadway backgrounds, reflecting a move away from the European conservatoire training of composers associated with more 'classical' approaches to scoring in the original *films noirs* of the 1940s and 1950s.[247] Although this argument is not entirely convincing (the enforced variety of composers' projects under the studio system is relegated to a footnote, and he arguably draws too great a division between training in jazz and popular harmony and more traditional Western art music approaches), Ness's identification of a more modern, and less European sound in *film noir* scoring is clearly present in many examples of the genre, and supported by Royal S. Brown's assertion that: 'As Hollywood moved into new areas with its

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[245] Jack Boozer, 'The Lethal Femme Fatale in the Noir Tradition', *Journal of Film and Video,* 51.3-4 (1999), 20-35; Helen Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines: Women in Film Noir and the Female Gothic Film* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 134-172; Kaplan, 'Introduction to New Edition'; Julianne Pidduck, 'The 1990s Hollywood Fatal Femme: (Dis)Figuring Feminism, Family, Irony, Violence', *Cineaction,* 38 (1995), 64-72; B. Ruby Rich, 'Dumb Lugs and *Femmes Fatales*', *Sight and Sound,* 5.11 (1995), 6-10; Miranda Sherwin, 'Deconstructing the Male Gaze: Masochism, Female Spectatorship, and the Femme Fatale in 'Fatal Attraction', 'Body of Evidence', and 'Basic Instinct'', *Journal of Popular Film and Television,* 35.4 (2008), 174-182; Tasker, *Working Girls,* pp. 117-135.
[246] *The Set-Up,* dir. Robert Wise (RKO Radio Pictures, 1949); *Two O'Clock Courage,* dir. Anthony Mann, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1945).
[247] Ness, 'A Lotta Night Music', pp. 53-55.

films noirs, its psychological dramas, and its crime stories of the 1940s, newer and more modern-sounding musical styles were able to take greater and even stronger hold on the music tracks'.[248]

One of the reasons underlying these problems with Ness's article is perhaps his predominant focus on the musical language of these scores, rather than the various ways in which this engages with other elements of the narrative (although his case studies address this more thoroughly). Subsequent examples will demonstrate that although there are certain sonic characteristics that help to create the specific ambience of many *films noirs,* these are not uniformly applied and often function in different ways depending on other elements of narrative and characterisation. The difficulties in defining and categorising 1940s *film noir* partially arise because of its instability and fluidity, which is also a feature of the way in which its soundtracks function, making any assessment of the overarching style and language of *noir* scores very difficult. Many of the techniques and styles that appear in scores for 1940s *noirs* are also a more general feature of crime films during this period, further problematising efforts to define a style or function of scoring that is specific to the *film noir.*

Attempts to define a *noir* style of scoring, or to highlight some of its recurring features have most often focused on the use of jazz in these films, either explicitly or by finding its influence in the extended harmonic palette and use of chromaticism outlined by authors such as Ness and Flinn. The use of jazz is one of the most persistent stereotypes surrounding *film noir,* but this is largely a misconception in relation to the earlier examples of the genre, as David Butler notes:

> The association of jazz with film noir can be found in all manner of media today, but is curiously not so prevalent in the actual original artefacts – the films noir of American cinema from the 1940s and 1950s. Despite this fact, the belief that jazz flourished in these films is commonly held and perpetuated.[249]

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[248] Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, p. 119. Brown discusses Miklós Rózsa's score for *Double Indemnity* in detail, proposing that it functions very differently from the leitmotif-driven structures of many classical scores and tying this explicitly to the flashback and voiceover devices around which the film is based: 'Rather than involving us emotionally with specific characters and their specific situations, *Double Indemnity's* score basically allows us to experience its characters only through the eyes of its Orphic protagonist [...] as if much of the music [...] springs from the character's imagination to back the drama he is creating'. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, pp. 120-133 (p. 133).

[249] David Butler, *Jazz Noir: Listening to Music From "Phantom Lady" To "The Last Seduction"* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2002), p. 2.

Butler notes that when jazz is heard is classic *film noir* it is not usually in the style that would have been contemporaneous with its production and release. He gives the example of the New Orleans nightclub sequence in *They Live By Night* as a scene that does not use the bebop popular at the time of the film's release, but instead 'an extremely diluted form of jazz – music that is merely suggestive of jazz, but does enough for the audience to associate with it that idiom and the connotations related to it'.[250] These ideas about the "inauthentic" representation of jazz in film have clear connections with classical scoring's tendency to rely heavily on musical clichés as part of its communicative processes with a wide audience. Both practices use these stereotypes as convenient and easily comprehended tools, despite their often inaccurate application. Although Robert Porfirio posits a connection between the 'improvisational and affective qualities of jazz' and the 'expressionistic quest for "deeper meanings"' and ideas of the unconscious that are often found in *film noir,*[251] the stereotypical use of jazz in Hollywood film is most often related to ideas about "excess" and "deviance", whether this concerns drink, drugs, or sexual or criminal behaviour. Butler cites *Mildred Pierce* as a good example of this tendency, where Veda's selfish immorality and conniving behaviour is represented musically by her rejection of her 'refined, classical training' in favour of a jazz singing role in a questionable nightclub.[252] The problematic connections between Hollywood representations of jazz and the wider cultural associations of black sexuality, musicianship, and "deviant" behaviour will be returned to in chapter six.

Film scoring during the 1940s at RKO Radio Pictures

Despite only being employed by RKO for seven years, Max Steiner is probably the most commonly cited composer in literature that refers to music at the studio. This may be partly to do with his influential scores for films such as *King Kong* and *The Informer* (as discussed in footnote 158 above) and also his high profile after he left RKO for Warner Bros. in 1936.

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[250] Butler, *Jazz Noir*, p. 3; *They Live by Night,* dir. Nicholas Ray, comp. Leigh Harline (RKO Radio Pictures, 1948). See also Phil Ford, 'Jazz Exotica and the Naked City', *Journal of Musicological Research,* 27.2 (2008), 113-133.

[251] Robert G. Porfirio, 'Dark Jazz: Music in the *Film Noir*', in *Film Noir Reader 2*, ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 2003), pp. 176-187.

[252] Butler, *Jazz Noir*, pp. 55-56; *Mildred Pierce,* dir. Michael Curtiz, comp. Max Steiner (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1945). More overt uses of jazz as a metaphor for deviant and sexualised behaviour include sequences in *D.O.A.* and *Phantom Lady,* where the nightclub location is seen as an environment "out of control"; whilst Kansas in *Phantom Lady* can tame and resist Cliff's drumming and take control of the situation, in *D.O.A* Frank is not so lucky and it is here that his fatal dose of "luminal poison" is administered. *D.O.A.,* dir. Rudolph Maté, comp. Dimitri Tiomkin (Cardinal Films, 1950); *Phantom Lady,* dir. Robert Siodmak (Universal Pictures, 1944). See also Butler, *Jazz Noir*, pp. 61-71; Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines*, pp. 20-23; Porfirio, 'Dark Jazz: Music in the *Film Noir*', pp. 179-183.

Steiner worked alongside Roy Webb during almost all of his time at RKO, and Webb continued to work for the studio until the mid-1950s. Although relatively infrequently cited in literature about music and film, Webb is particularly noted for his horror and *film noir* scores.[253] Together with his regular output and contract at RKO, this explains the large proportion of films in this study that feature his music. Christopher Palmer describes Webb as RKO's 'premier composer', and speculates that Val Lewton may have specifically requested that Webb work with the RKO horror unit (as he would not normally have been assigned to compose for B pictures),[254] but it seems unlikely that the RKO music department was run on such rigid lines: Webb's projects included in this study encompass a wide variety of pictures that represent both A and B productions. Other regular RKO composers whose scores are discussed here include Friedrich Hollaender, Leigh Harline, and Paul Sawtell, and, like Webb, their work as film composers has not yet been the subject of any substantial or systematic investigation.[255]

According to Darby and Du Bois, RKO had two musical directors during the 1940s: Webb and Constantin Bakaleinikoff, who, although joining the studio as a composer, seems primarily to have functioned as a dedicated conductor for the RKO studio orchestra (he is featured as the conductor of the radio broadcast orchestra in the opening scene of *A Woman's Secret).* Although Darby and Du Bois do not distinguish between the two musical directors, it seems likely that Bakaleinikoff was either the most senior or the most actively involved in managing the music department (rather than composing), as he is much more regularly credited in this role than Webb.

Music cues were reused in various pictures at RKO, in line with common practice at other studio music departments.[256] The reuse of these cues, commonly known as "library" or "stock" music, was made possible through the regulations surrounding the retention of copyright for film music by the studio who commissioned the score. Although the Musicians' Union managed to stop the use of "tracked" library music by the end of the

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[253] Darby and Du Bois, *American Film Music*, pp. 185-186; Hanson, 'Sound Affects', pp. 42-46; Randall D. Larson, 'The Quiet Horror Music of Roy Webb: Scoring Val Lewton (the Jacques Tourneur Films)', *Midnight Marquee,* 40 (1990), 14-17; Randall D. Larson, 'The Quiet Horror Music of Roy Webb: Scoring Val Lewton (the Mark Robson Films)', *Midnight Marquee,* 41 (1990), 17-19; Randall D. Larson, 'The Quiet Horror Music of Roy Webb: Scoring Val Lewton (the Robert Wise Films)', *Midnight Marquee,* 44 (1992), 31-32; Christopher Palmer, 'Write It Black: Roy Webb, Val Lewton and Film Noir', *Monthly Film Bulletin,* 48 (1981), 168; Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood*, pp. 160-183; Porfirio, 'Introduction'.

[254] Palmer, 'Write It Black: Roy Webb, Val Lewton and Film Noir', p. 168.

[255] See Darby and Du Bois, *American Film Music*, pp. 370-371.

[256] Prendergast comments briefly upon the reuse of cues from *King Kong*. Prendergast, *Film Music*, pp. 31-32.

1930s, insisting that all library cues were re-recorded before being used in a new film (and thereby helping to ensure regular employment for its members), library music still provided a relatively cost-effective means of scoring pictures or individual scenes. Palmer refers to a discussion with Webb in which the composer noted that his ASCAP return included cues for *Spellbound,* indicating that RKO was at least occasionally involved in licensing cues from its music library (or previous work by its composers) to outside productions.[257]

Library music included cues that were been written for another RKO film and then reused, and original songs or instrumental compositions by non-studio composers that were licensed for use by the studio. This latter category includes the song 'Estrellita', an original composition by the Mexican composer Manuel Ponce which is used in prominent vocal and instrumental arrangements in *A Woman's Secret,* and also more subtly as diegetic instrumental music in the closing stages of *The Set-Up*. However, perhaps the most obvious use of library music in the crime films discussed here is a cue that first appears in *Notorious,* then again in the same year's *The Locket,* and the year after in *Born to Kill.*[258] The cue is fairly nondescript, light instrumental dance music scored primarily for strings, and on each occasion is used in a similar sequence: the central party at the Sebastian mansion in *Notorious,* the celebration of Nancy's engagement that opens *The Locket,* and the post-wedding party in *Born To Kill.* Although used in the same way in each film, as unobtrusive but atmospheric and relatively "upper class" party music, the tempo and playing style are varied in each recording to suit the pacing, intensity, and desired effect of each scene. Another example of the reuse of musical material in the films discussed here is found in the use of self-quotation in Webb's score for *Murder, My Sweet,* which recycles a theme that originally appears in *Stranger on the Third Floor* (discussed further in chapter five). An additional element of some RKO scores is their use of music to accompany the opening shots of the RKO radio mast logo (see Figure 3.1) at the opening of the film. Some scores treat this logo seamlessly as part of the opening main title, but others make use of various fanfare-style figures before the start of the main title, and several feature Morse code on the soundtrack as the logo is shown.[259] The use of the Morse code (the central section of which spells out "AN RKO RADIO PICTURE") is the most consistent sonic signature

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[257] Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood,* pp. 229-230; *Spellbound,* dir. Alfred Hitchcock, comp. Miklós Rózsa (Vanguard Films; Selznick International Pictures, 1945).

[258] *Born to Kill,* dir. Robert Wise, comp. Paul Sawtell (RKO Radio Pictures, 1947).

[259] The ASCAP online 'ACE' database, which indexes all compositions that have appeared in the organisation's domestic performance surveys since January 1978, contains two entries with the title 'RKO Signature', one credited to Robert Russell Bennett and the other to Dave Dreyer and Paul Sawtell. Whether these are "original" versions of a fanfare or variations on a previous one is unclear. 'ASCAP ACE Title Search Database', <http://www.ascap.com/ace/> [accessed 24 August 2010]

associated with the studio's visual logo (although even this is used inconsistently), and can be considered an important part of RKO's identity.

Figure 3.1. 1940s version of the RKO radio mast logo

Table 3.1 compares three sources that give the "authorship" of each of the scores studied here, and demonstrates significant discrepancies between them. McCarty, in a brief section about the RKO music department in *Film Composers in America*, states that the studio 'apparently never made up conductor's scores' and that 'Collaborative scores were few and never acknowledged in the credits'.[260] Both of these statements are questionable; conductor's scores for several Webb projects are housed in the Christopher Palmer Collection of Roy Webb Scores at Syracuse University (copies of four of these scores, all labelled 'Piano Conductor' will be referred to during discussion of their respective films),[261] and ASCAP records for the films discussed here provide evidence to support the idea that collaboration was a relatively common working method at RKO during the 1940s. McCarty excludes all diegetic and song cues from his study, which may account for many of the discrepancies between his listings and those in the ASCAP database, but even allowing for this, there are several entries across multiple films that list two composers as the authors of a single entry in the database (which may comprise several cues from the same film). For example, the entry 'Work ID: 348009372, *Devil Thumbs A Ride* cues' is credited to both Paul

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[260] McCarty, *Film Composers in America*, pp. 12-13.

[261] 'Christopher Palmer Collection of Roy Webb Scores: An Inventory of His Collection at Syracuse University', <http://library.syr.edu/digital/guides/p/palmer_c.htm> [accessed 24 August 2010]; Roy Webb, 'Piano Conductor's Score for *Farewell My Lovely*' (1944), Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library Christopher Palmer Collection of Roy Webb Scores, Oversize 13; Roy Webb, 'Piano Conductor's Score for *the Spiral Staircase*' (1945), Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library Christopher Palmer Collection of Roy Webb Scores, Oversize 13; Roy Webb, 'Piano Conductor's Score for *Notorious*' (1946), Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library Christopher Palmer Collection of Roy Webb Scores, Oversize 26; Roy Webb, 'Piano Conductor's Score for *Out of the Past*' (1947), Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library Christopher Palmer Collection of Roy Webb Scores, Oversize 27. *Farewell My Lovely* was the original proposed title of *Murder, My Sweet* and the film was released in the UK under this name (which is taken from the Raymond Chandler novel that it is based upon).

Sawtell and Roy Webb. This score is credited to Paul Sawtell in the film itself, but McCarty lists Webb as its primary composer, also noting that it contains significant use of stock music. Entries such as this, where two composers are jointly credited in ASCAP under a single entry, seem to suggest that collaborative working methods (such as those outlined by Raksin and referred to earlier in this chapter) were part of the scoring process at RKO during the 1940s.[262] Table 3.1 also demonstrates that orchestrators were not routinely credited for their work at RKO during the 1940s: McCarty lists orchestrators on several film titles, but only on one occasion is this orchestrator also present in the credits for the film itself (Gil Grau for *Notorious).* In this, and most other respects, it seems that the organisation of the RKO music department can be considered as representative of common practice across Hollywood studios during the classical era, and also as remaining relatively unchanged and stable under the directorship of Webb and Bakaleinikoff, when compared to the frequent upheavals and changes in personnel elsewhere at the studio.

[262] An often-cited example of multiple authorship on an RKO film score concerns *The Magnificent Ambersons,* a Bernard Herrmann score that was edited extensively when studio executives re-cut sections of the film against director Orson Welles' wishes. Webb was asked to do additional composition for the new cut of the film, much to Herrmann's displeasure. Herrmann subsequently asked for his name to be removed from the film's credits. Kalinak, *Settling the Score,* pp. 149-158; *The Magnificent Ambersons,* dir. Orson Welles (RKO Radio Pictures, 1942).

Title	Year Released	Credited personnel	Listings in McCarty	Listings in ASCAP ACE database
They Made Her a Spy	1939	Musical director: Roy Webb	Composer: Roy Webb	Work ID: 508005689 *TMHAS* cues: Roy Webb
Stranger on the Third Floor	1940	Composer: Roy Webb	Composer: Roy Webb Orchestrators: George Parrish Maurice De Packh	Work ID: 498025286 *SOTTF*: Roy Webb. Variations: STRANGER ON THE THIRD 51
Lady Scarface	1941	None	None	Work ID: 428001610 *LS* cues: Dave Dreyer, Paul Sawtell Work ID: 428001629 *LS* cues: Harry Tierney Work ID: 428001638 *LS* cues: Frank E. Tours Work ID: 428001647 *LS* cues: Roy Webb Work ID: 428001656 *LS* cues: Gene Rose, Roy Webb. Variations: EUGENE FOXTROT, DANCELAND, ANN
Suspicion	1941	Composer: Franz Waxman	Composer: Franz Waxman Orchestrator: Leonid Raab	Work ID: 198005615 *Suspicion* cues: Franz Waxman Work ID: 498029166 *Suspicion* cues: Franz Waxman. Variations: SUSPICION (PARAPHRASE); SUSPICION; SUSPICION GRANT C/FONTAINE; SUSPICION FILM MUSIC; SUSPICION GRANT C/FONTAINE J Work ID: 498029175 *Suspicion* cues: Roy Webb Work ID: 190036427 *Suspicion* cues: L E de Francesco Also work ID: 490542053 *Suspicion:* Franz Waxman, Variations: SUSPICION (PARAPHRASE); SUSPICION SELECTION; SUSPICION: SUITE

Journey into Fear	1942	Composer: Roy Webb Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	None	Work ID: 400125459 *JIF*: Rex Dunne. Variation: JOURNEY INTO FEAR 51 Work ID: 408003094 *JIF* cues: Robert Russell Bennett. Variation: CHOLERA Work ID: 408003101 *JIF* cues: Nathaniel Shilkret. Variation: JOURNEY INTO FEAR Work ID: 408003110 *JIF* cues: Frank E Tours Work ID: 408003129 *JIF* cues: Roy Webb. Variation: JOURNEY INTO FEAR Work ID: 408003138 *JIF* cues: Rex Dunne
The Leopard Man	1943	Composer: Roy Webb Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Roy Webb	Work ID: 428006286 *Leopard Man* cues: Dave Dreyer, Paul Sawtell Work ID: 428006295 *Leopard Man* cues: Albert Hay Malotte Work ID: 428006302 *Leopard Man* cues: Roy Webb. Variations: LEOPARD MAN; LEOPARD MAN 51 Work ID: 128001054 *Leopard Man* cues: Unknown Work ID: 128001063 *Leopard Man* cues: Roy Webb
Experiment Perilous	1944	Composer: Roy Webb Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Roy Webb	Work ID: 350098978 *EP*: Francisco J Lomuto, Writer unknown Work ID: 358004901 *EP* cues: Roy Webb Work ID: 058000670 *EP* cues: Writer unknown Work ID: 058000689 *EP* cues: Roy Webb Work ID: 058000698 *EP* cues: Roy Webb

Murder, My Sweet	1944	Composer: Roy Webb Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Roy Webb Orchestrator Gil Grau	Work ID: 438022838 *MMS* cues: Roy Webb. Variations: MURDER MY SWEET FM; MURDER MY SWEET; MURDER MY SWEET SHIRLEY A/POW
The Body Snatcher	1945	Composer: Roy Webb Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Roy Webb Orchestrator: Gil Grau	Work ID: 328013323 *Body Snatchers* cues: Norman Bennett, Val Lewton Work ID: 328013332 *Body Snatchers* cues: Richard Heymann Werner Work ID: 328013341 *Body Snatchers* cues: Paul Sawtell, Roy Webb Work ID: 328013350 *Body Snatchers* cues: Roy Webb. Variations: THE BODY SNACHERS; BODY SNATCHERS Work ID: 328013369 *Body Snatchers* cues: Val Lewton Work ID: 028002377 *The Body Snatchers* cues: Roy Webb
Two O'Clock Courage	1945	Composer: Roy Webb	None	Work ID: 208003954 *TOCC* Cues: Roy Webb, Richard Wagner. Variations: Bridal chorus Work ID: 508020911 *TOCC* Cues: Roy Webb
Criminal Court	1946	Composer: Paul Sawtell Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Paul Sawtell	Work ID: 038002689 *CC* cues: Roy Webb. Work ID: 338017962 *CC* cues: Paul Sawtell, Roy Webb Work ID: 338017971 *CC* cues: Roy Webb
Deadline at Dawn	1946	Composer: Hanns Eisler Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Hanns Eisler Orchestrator: Gil Grau	Work ID: 348004162 *DAD* cues: Hanns Johannes Eisler

Notorious	1946	Composer: Roy Webb Orchestrator: Gil Grau Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Roy Webb Orchestrator: Gil Grau	Work ID: 148001294 *Notorious* cues: Roy Webb Work ID: 448007023 *Notorious* cues: Leigh Harline. Variations: NOTORIUS/F; (BKG) NOTORIOUS (2) Work ID: 448007032 *Notorious* cues: Leigh Howard Stevens, Dave Torbett. Variations: PANTINS; (BKG) NOTORIOUS (2); VIE EST BELLE Work ID: 448007041 *Notorious* cues: Roy Webb. Variations: NOTORIOUS/F; NOTORIUS; NOTORIOUS FILM MUSIC; NOTORIOUS FM; CARNAVAL ET WARUM Work ID: 448007050 *Notorious* cues: Gene Rose, Roy Webb. Variation: (BKG) NOTORIOUS (2)
The Locket	1946	Composer: Roy Webb Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Roy Webb	Work ID: 128002053 *The Locket* cues: Traditional, Roy Webb Work ID: 428010502 *The Locket* cues: Robert Keith Work ID: 428010495 *The Locket* cues: Gene Rose, Roy Webb Work ID: 428010486 *The Locket* cues: Roy Webb. Variation: LOCKET DAY L/MITCHUM R Work ID: 428010477 *The Locket* cues: Richard Heymann Werner Work ID: 128002044 *The Locket* cues: Traditional, Roy Webb. Work ID: 420061954 *Locket waltz:* Roy Webb
The Spiral Staircase	1946	Composer: Roy Webb Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Roy Webb	Work ID: 498019551. *TSS* cues: Roy Webb. Variations: (BKG) SPIRAL STAIRCASE (2); SPIRAL STAIRCASE/F; SPIRAL STAIRCASE D MCGUIRE G Work ID: 498019560 *TSS* cues: Gordon Clarke, Steve Morgan. Variations: (BKG) SPIRAL STAIRCASE (2); JE CHERCHE UN HOMME

				Work ID: 198003671 *TSS* cues: Roy Webb
The Truth About Murder	1946	Composer: Leigh Harline Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Leigh Harline	Work ID: 508018728 *Truth About Murder* cues: Leigh Harline
Born to Kill	1947	Composer: Paul Sawtell Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Paul Sawtell	Work ID: 028002797 *BTK* cues: Roy Webb Work ID: 328015625 *BTK* cues: Roy Webb Work ID: 328015616 *BTK* cues: Gene Rose, Roy Webb. Variation: JUMPIN JACK Work ID: 328015607 *BTK* cues: Paul Sawtell, Roy Webb. Variation: LADY OF DECEIT
Crossfire	1947	Composer: Roy Webb Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Roy Webb	Work ID: 038002723 *Crossfire* cues: Roy Webb Work ID: 338018327 *Crossfire* cues: Roy Webb. Variations: CROSS FIRE Work ID: 338031124 *Crossfire* cues: Max Steiner
Out of the Past	1947	Composer: Roy Webb Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Roy Webb	Work ID: 458006952 *OOTP* cues: Roy Webb. Variation: OUT OF THE PAST Work ID: 451147796 *OOTP:* Frank C Skinner
The Devil Thumbs a Ride	1947	Composer: Paul Sawtell Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Roy Webb plus additional stock music	Work ID: 348009372 *DTAR* cues: Paul Sawtell, Roy Webb Work ID: 348009381 *DTAR* cues: Roy Webb, Writer unknown Work ID: 348009390 *DTAR* cues: Roy Webb Work ID: 348009407 *Devil Thumbs a Ride etc:* Werner Richard Heymann

They Won't Believe Me	1947	Composer: Roy Webb Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Roy Webb	Work ID: 208001296 *TWBM* cues: Roy Webb Work ID: 508005876 *TWBM* cues: Leigh Harline Work ID: 508005885 *TWBM* cues: Leigh Harline Work ID: 508005894 *TWBM* cues: Roy Webb
Berlin Express	1948	Composer: Friedrich Hollaender Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Friedrich Hollaender	Work ID: 328005556 *BE* cues: Friedrich Hollaender Work ID: 328005565 *BE* cues: Friedrich Hollaender, writer unknown Work ID: 028001109 *BE* cues: Friedrich Hollaender
Mystery in Mexico	1948	Composer: Paul Sawtell	Composer: Paul Sawtell	Work ID: 438025620 *MIM* cues: Paul Sawtell, Roy Webb Work ID: 430669904 *MIM* theme: Paul Sawtell, Roy Webb
Nocturne	1948	Composer: Leigh Harline Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff 'Nocturne' Music by Leigh Harline, lyrics by Mort Greene 'Why Pretend' Music and lyrics by Eleanor Rudolph 'A Little Bit is Better Than None' Music and lyrics by Eleanor Rudolph	Composer: Leigh Harline	Work ID: 448005892 *Nocturne* cues: Leigh Harline Work ID: 440035098 *Nocturne:* Mort Greene, Leigh Harline. Variations: NOCTURNE OP 9.

Race Street	1948	Composer: Roy Webb Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff 'Love that Boy' Don Raye and Gene de Paul 'I'm in a Jam with Baby' Ray Heindorf and Moe Jerome, lyrics by Ted Koehler	Composer: Roy Webb	Work ID: 488000080 *Race Street* cues: Roy Webb. Variation: THIRD RACE STREET DANCE
They Live By Night	1948	Composer: Leigh Harline Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Leigh Harline	Work ID: 208001223 *TLBN* cues: Leigh Harline. Variations: GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN; GOIN DOWN THE ROAD; JINGLE BELLS; ADESTE FIDELIS; BRIDAL CHORUS; FIRST NOEL; I KNOW WHERE I'M GOING Work ID: 208001232 *TLBN* cues: Leigh Harline. Variation: PROMISE ME. Work ID: 508005563 *TLBN* cues: Leigh Harline Work ID: 508005572 *TLBN* cues: Gene Rose, Roy Webb
A Woman's Secret	1949	Composer: Friedrich Hollaender Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Friedrich Hollaender	Work ID: 238002612 *AWS* cues: Friedrich Hollaender, Various Work ID: 538012098 *AWS* cues: Morton Gould, Leigh Harline Work ID: 538012105 *AWS* cues: Friedrich Hollaender. Variations: WOMAN'S SECRET/F Work ID: 538012114 *AWS* cues: Roy Webb. Variations: WOMAN'S SECRET 22 Work ID: 538052312 *AWS* cues: Mort Greene, Leigh Harline. Variations: A WOMAN'S SECRET CUES; I'M IN LOVE; WOMAN'S SECRET CUES

The Big Steal	1949	Composer: Leigh Harline Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Leigh Harline	Work ID: 328008213 *Big Steal* cues: Leigh Harline. Variations: BIG STEAL 51; BIG STEAL Work ID: 028001592 *The Big Steal* cues: Leigh Harline
The Set-Up	1949	Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	None	Work ID: 498006805 *Set Up* cues: Gene Rose, Roy Webb. Variations: (BKG) THE SET UP; SET UP Work ID: 498006814 *Set Up* cues: Herschel Burke Gilbert Work ID: 498006823 *Set Up* cues: Herschel Burke Gilbert Work ID: 498006841 *Set Up* cues: Arthur Morton Work ID: 498006850 *Set Up* cues: Joseph Mullendore Work ID: 498006869 *Set Up* cues: Hans J Salter Work ID: 498006878 *Set Up* cues: Rudy Schrager Work ID: 498006887 *Set Up* cues: Walter K Sheets Work ID: 498006896 *Set Up* cues: Leith A Stevens
The Woman on Pier 13	1950	Composer: Leigh Harline Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Leigh Harline [film entered as *I Married A Communist,* its original proposed title]	Work ID: 390470123 *IMAC*: Leigh Harline. Variations: I MARRIED A COMMUNIST 52; I MARRIED A COMMUNIST RKO 1949. Work ID: 238002489 *Woman on Pier 13* cues: Robert Russell Bennett Work ID: 238002498 *Woman on Pier 13* cues: Roy Webb Work ID: 538012865 *Women on Pier Thirteen* cues: Mort Greene, Leigh Harline. Variations: WOMAN ON PIER 13 Work ID: 538012874

				Women on Pier Thirteen cues: Friedrich Hollaender Work ID: 538012838 *Women on Pier Thirteen* cues: Leigh Harline. Work ID: 538012847 *Women on Pier Thirteen* cues: Roy Webb, Writer unknown Work ID: 538012856 *Women on Pier Thirteen* cues: Roy Webb Work ID: 238002505 *Woman on Pier Thirteen* cues: Robert Russell Bennett, Writer unknown Work ID: 238002514 *Woman on Pier Thirteen* cues: Roy Webb, Writer unknown
Where Danger Lives	1950	Composer: Roy Webb Musical director: Constantin Bakaleinikoff	Composer: Roy Webb Orchestrators: Gil Grau Leonid Raab	Work ID: 238001364 *WDL* cues: Unknown Work ID: 538005935 *WDL* cues: Roy Webb Work ID: 538005944 *WDL* cues: Roy Webb, Writer unknown

Table 3.1. Possible authorship of musical cues in selected RKO crime films 1939-1950[263]

[263] Information is taken from the following sources: "Credited personnel" from the viewed prints of the film; "Listings in McCarty" by cross-referencing titles and composers in *Film Composers in America;* "Listings in ASCAP ACE database" from searches conducted in the ASCAP online 'ACE' database. Information in this database is often unreliably indexed, with spelling errors and inconsistencies in the way titles have been entered, and also problems where several films with the same name exist *(The Spiral Staircase,* for example), or the title includes keywords that generate large numbers of results (such as *Suspicion* and *Nocturne).* Searches for particular titles have been conducted as broadly as possible using keywords from both titles and personnel, and then narrowed down where necessary by cross-referencing results and establishing whether they lie plausibly within the date range. The 'Variations' field of the ACE database is also used inconsistently. Sometimes this field indicates alternate names for the cues (including some misspellings) and on other occasions gives relatively detailed information about the type of cues it refers to or any pre-existing material used, for example 'Work ID: 208001223 *They Live By Night* cues' credited to Leigh Harline. Here, the 'Variations' field shows that these cues make use of various Christmas melodies, the "wedding march", and the traditional song 'I Know Where I'm Goin'', and thereby clearly identifies Harline as the author of the cues that accompany Keechie and Bowie getting married, Keechie waiting for Bowie in the cabin as Christmas approaches, and several of the film's major romantic cues that make use of the melody from 'I Know Where I'm Goin'' as a leitmotif for the couple. 'ASCAP ACE Title Search Database', <http://www.ascap.com/ace/> [accessed 24 August 2010]; McCarty, *Film Composers in America*; *The Spiral Staircase,* dir. Robert Siodmak, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, Dore Schary Productions, Vanguard Films, 1946).

Chapter 4

Damsels in distress? Music and the female victim

Experiment Perilous and *The Spiral Staircase* feature central female characters that are positioned as victims of criminals they know personally. This aligns these films with the narrative features of the female gothic, and their historical settings also place them within the "gaslight" cycle of Hollywood crime pictures. In both films, the positioning of the female lead is heavily mediated through the presence of medical discourse, and this is also used to position a mentally unstable villain.

Women and medical discourse in 1940s Hollywood

In *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s,* Mary Ann Doane notes the frequent presence of medical discourse in the woman's film, arguing that its presence is often a means of 'narrativizing' the usually 'unknowable' woman by invoking long-standing associations between femininity and the pathological.[264] Doane identifies a collapse between the physical and mental sites of illness in these films, which frequently conflate the two (and their effects) in the figure of the female patient:

> Represented as possessing a body which is *over*present, unavoidable, in constant sympathy with the emotional and mental faculties, the woman resides just outside the boundaries of the problematic wherein Western culture operates a mind/body dualism. Hence the illnesses associated with women in the many films of the 1940s which activate a medical discourse are never restricted or localized – they always affect or are effects of a "character" or an essence, implicating the woman's entire being.[265]

This collapse of the mental and physical registers of illness (exemplified in films such as *Now, Voyager,* where Charlotte's supposedly "frumpy" appearance is used to reflect her sexual repression)[266] allows films invoking a medical discourse to give the illusion of going "beyond" the normal focus of classical cinema on the woman as a shallow and fetishised object, and instead to focus on her interior and emotional presence.[267] The doctor figure therefore

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[264] Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 38-69. See also Mary Ann Doane, 'The Clinical Eye: Medical Discourses in The "Woman's Film" Of the 1940s', *Poetics Today,* 6.1/2 (1985), 205-227.
[265] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, p. 39.
[266] *Now, Voyager,* dir. Irving Rapper, comp. Max Steiner (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1942).
[267] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, pp. 39-44.

becomes significant as the explorer or investigator of this terrain, frequently resulting in the eroticisation of the doctor-patient relationship and an emphasis on the doctor's role in effecting some kind of "cure". This often collapses the realms of the physical and mental together: for example, Charlotte's medical treatment and the love affair that cements her "cure" are entwined throughout *Now, Voyager* with the gradual "feminisation" and "beautification" of her appearance. The way in which the 'medicalization of femininity' works to elide mental and physical factors leads Doane to propose that these films move between the 'medical gaze' and the 'erotic gaze', with the doctor at the centre of these two looks: 'The doctor's work is the transformation of the woman into a specular object', thereby reversing the woman's film's initial illusion of moving "beyond" the focus on woman as defined primarily by appearance.[268]

Although physical illness or defect is present in some examples of the 1940s woman's film, Doane notes that their most common preoccupation is with mental illness or distress of some kind.[269] Therefore the most common type of medical discourse invoked during the studio era is that of psychoanalysis or psychology, following on from the more general popularisation of Freudian ideas in American society during the 1930s and 1940s.[270] Psychoanalytic and cinematic narrative are shown to be compatible and complementary; the "talking cure" of the couch often triggers the use of flashback, casting the psychoanalyst in the role of a detective who guides the audience through the narrative.[271] Doane argues that the popular representation of psychoanalysis tends to focus almost exclusively on its sexual or erotic aspects, and that this ultimately results in Hollywood using the discourse of psychoanalysis 'to validate socially constructed modes of sexual difference which are already in place – though potentially threatened by wartime reorganisation'.[272] One of the most significant ways in

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[268] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, p. 41.

[269] The more common appearance of mental, rather than physical, illness is clearly reflected in those films in this study that feature some kind of medical discourse in relation to female characters. All of these are suffering from some kind of mental "problem", ranging from clear-cut "insanity" to the physical manifestations of mental strain, such as Helen's muteness in *The Spiral Staircase* and Marian's incurable tonsillitis in *A Woman's Secret.* A sole exception is the character of Slade in *Lady Scarface,* whose "monstrous" physical appearance (a scar on one cheek) is used to reflect her criminal disposition and role as a ruthless gangster. *Lady Scarface,* dir. Frank Woodruff (RKO Radio Pictures, 1941).

[270] Krin and Glen Gabbard chart the history of cinematic depictions of psychiatry and psychology in *Psychiatry and the Cinema,* noting that the 1940s woman's film provides a 'comfortable niche for psychiatrists, involved as these films are with the problem of identity that women faced during the upheavals of the 1940s'. Krin Gabbard and Glen O. Gabbard, *Psychiatry and the Cinema* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 61. See also Michael Shortland, 'Screen Memories: Towards a History of Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis in the Movies', *The British Journal for the History of Science,* 20.4 (1987), 421-452.

[271] Psychoanalytic discourse also has a significant presence in 1940s *film noir,* although these films do generally make use of the doctor figure to the same extent. See Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street*, pp. 45-55.

[272] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, p. 46.

which this reinforcement of patriarchal cultural values is achieved is through the withholding of narrative agency from women, both in psychoanalysis itself, and its representation in the cinema. Narration by the female patient most often occurs as part of the "cure", medicalising and mediating that narration via the dominant figure of the doctor,[273] and often also implying that this narration is in some way unreliable:

> Narration by the woman is therefore therapeutic only when constrained and regulated by the purposeful ear of the listening doctor. By embedding her words within a case history, psychoanalysis can control the woman's access to language and the agency of narration [...] This is why, in the films, the woman's narration is so often framed within an encompassing discourse.[274]

Doane cites Nancy's segment of narration and flashback in *The Locket* as a relatively extreme example of this tendency: it occurs as a flashback, within a flashback, within a flashback and her narration is therefore mediated by the "higher-level" narration of both Clyde and Dr Blair. *A Woman's Secret* also makes use of male authority figures to mediate female subjectivity and narration: here both medical and legal personnel are used as the means of framing the flashbacks of both Susan and Marian (and the majority of "Marian's story" is also told by Luke, after he explicitly draws her own account of events into question). Female muteness, as Doane also notes, carries these ideas of controlling and containing access to narration even further, and this issue will subsequently be explored in more detail with reference to *The Spiral Staircase*.

Doane allows room for representations of mental illness in her model that are not confined to the female patient, although these are positioned as rather exceptional and are usually explained by the presence of a wartime narrative (for example in the portrayal of war veterans with some form of shellshock).[275] The heroism associated with war service potentially helps to "masculinise" the mental illness of the male patient, and, as with the female sufferer, a cure usually runs in tandem with the restoration of more traditional gender representations. An example of this tendency can be found in *Crossfire,* where the war-damaged Sergeant Mitchell is "prescribed" a visit from his wife by his commanding officer in order to 'turn things around' for him.

Representations of male mental illness or psychosis are actually relatively common in the group of films studied here, and this perhaps adds further weight to arguments about the problematic and unstable gender presentations that are often cited as a characteristic of 1940s

[273] See also Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, pp. 59-61.
[274] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, p. 54.
[275] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, p. 46.

crime and *noir* films. Several case studies will explore these presentations of male mental instability further: which include the often highly "feminised" representation of the male serial killer in films such as *The Spiral Staircase, The Leopard Man,* and *Stranger on the Third Floor;* the temporary amnesia caused by physical trauma that afflicts the male protagonists of *Deadline at Dawn* and *Two O'Clock Courage;* and the almost "contagious" mental illness of Nancy in *The Locket* and Margo in *Where Danger Lives,* which clouds the judgement and impairs the effectiveness of their male companions.[276]

It is also possible to include the dangerous and pathologically violent characters played by Lawrence Tierney in *Born to Kill* and *The Devil Thumbs a Ride* here, although these "tough guy" roles are presented quite differently from the other examples outlined above.[277] The violent aspects of Tierney's characters in these films are portrayed as intensely "masculine" and attractive, sexualising violence in a disturbing and often explicit way. *Born to Kill* makes this particularly clear through early dialogue in which Laury (Isabel Jewell) expresses her infatuation with her boyfriend Sam (Tierney). She describes his heavy build and potential for violence ecstatically, referring to him as 'the quiet sort. But you get the feeling that if you step out of line, he'd kick your teeth down your throat'. Laury's description of Sam proves apt, as later that evening he murders her in a jealous rage after seeing her on the arm of another man. The film's connections between masculinity, violence, and female desire are then underlined by heroine Helen's (Claire Trevor) total obsession with Sam, despite his dangerous temper and violent past. This is notably played out in an erotically charged and unusual scene that intersperses their criminal confessions to each other with passionate kissing.[278] Despite her internal moral struggles, Helen cannot give up the illicit and masochistic excitement of her affair with Sam, and his moral turpitude "infects" her until she is disowned by her fiancée and denounced as a cold, cruel, and 'rotten' woman. Helen eventually falls victim, like Laury, to Sam's violence and is shot and killed by him at the film's climax.

A further extension to Doane's discussion of medical discourse is required to allow for the place of music and sound in her model. Doane mentions sound very briefly as part of her analysis of *Cat People,* demonstrating how the soundtrack plays a crucial part in articulating

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[276] *Deadline at Dawn,* dir. Harold Clurman, comp. Hanns Eisler (RKO Radio Pictures, 1946); *Where Danger Lives,* dir. John Farrow, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1950).
[277] *The Devil Thumbs a Ride,* dir. Felix E. Feist, comp. Paul Sawtell (RKO Radio Pictures, 1947).
[278] Advertising for both these films played heavily on Tierney's casting: following the success of the controversial gangster film *Dillinger,* in which he played the title role, he was very much associated with "tough" and criminal characters. *Dillinger,* dir. Max Nosseck, comp. Dimitri Tiomkin (King Brothers Productions, 1945).

the idea of Irena's affinity with the panther.[279] In her analysis of the sequence where Irena follows Alice through the streets at night, Doane demonstrates that much of the scene's "meaning" is heavily dependent on the sound design: the sudden absence of the sound of Irena's high heels is used to signify the absence of Irena-as-woman and her possible metamorphosis into a panther with silent paws.[280] In this way, sound is able to suggest what would otherwise be invisible, a property that Doane ascribes to the soundtrack more widely: 'For, sound in the cinema – voice, music, and sound effects – generally bears a heavy load in the signification of that which is invisible, that which is just beyond the edge of the frame'.[281]

The function of the soundtrack in signifying film's 'invisible' aspects have close links with some of the ideas discussed earlier about the effectiveness of sound and music as signifiers of subjectivity, and this makes the absence of music and sound from Doane's other analyses in this section of *The Desire to Desire* a significant one. The majority of Doane's arguments are based heavily around the visual aspects of the films she discusses, something stressed when she describes the 'immediacy of vision' promoted by the psychoanalytic film narrative (here referring to the common use of flashback sequences as a means of realising dreams, visions, and other aspects of the talking cure).[282] Many of the medical sequences and narrative trajectories that are described by Doane are expressly to do with issues of subjectivity and identity, and the soundtrack plays a key role in classical cinema in the articulation and communication of these two concepts.

Additionally, music and sound are often an important structural part of sequences involving flashback, or other forms of subjective vision, helping to both ease and make clear the transition from the "objective" present to a subjective "elsewhere". *They Won't Believe Me* provides a good example of this structural use of the soundtrack; the film is heavily reliant on flashbacks as the means of constructing its courtroom-based narrative, and the transitions at the beginning of each of these flashbacks are signalled in the same way. They are marked by a gradual track into a close up of Larry in the witness box, followed by a relaxing of focus that creates a "swimmy" visual effect. As this camerawork is unfolding, nondiegetic music enters subtly and gradually increases in volume, with repetitive harp arpeggiated figures, trilled flute notes, and tremolo strings covering the transition into Larry's memory of the events he is

[279] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, pp. 48-52.
[280] This section of *Cat People* is also one of the sequences discussed by Hanson in her article about studio era sound design, where she argues that in these scenes both the characters and the audience are 'engaged in an intense shared experience of listening' that results from the careful interplay of visual, sonic, and sometimes musical elements to support the use of 'sound as narrative.' Hanson, 'Sound Affects', p. 40.
[281] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, p. 50.
[282] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, p. 47.

describing to the court. When we return to the courtroom at the end of these flashbacks the visual transition is very similar but the scoring is absent, underlining the connection between nondiegetic music and Larry's subjectivity.

Similar uses of music as a means of easing the transition to flashback or fantasy sequences occur in many of the films discussed here. Music also frequently plays a crucial role in allowing access to subjectivity that is not highlighted visually; many of the sequences in *Suspicion,* for example, explicitly highlight Lina's subjectivity in the score but much more subtly in the visual track.[283] The opposite function of the soundtrack also occurs in several films, and music and sound can be used to deny access to subjectivity and narrative agency for various characters, particularly female ones (often through their support of the agency of male characters). Music and sound can therefore be considered as a significant part of what Doane refers to as the 'encompassing discourse' that helps to control and mediate female agency and narrativity in films that feature the female patient-male doctor relationship, and also those with other kinds of male authority figure. The first two of these case studies, *Experiment Perilous* and *The Spiral Staircase,* are both films that rely heavily on medical discourse to help position their heroines primarily as "victims". Both films also make use of historical settings, taking place around the turn of the century, a feature that contributes to their location within the gaslight cycle.

Gaslight films and the female gothic cycle

Gaslight films, named after their particular combination of 'gaslight, crime, and melodrama'[284] are an important subgenre of the female gothic film, which was popular throughout the 1940s. The presence of the female gothic as a cycle or genre of films has often been obscured due to its close links with both the woman's film and *film noir,* both of which garner considerably more critical attention,[285] but these films offer a distinct combination of 'paranoia, fear and suspicion' that foregrounds the subjective experience of the female protagonist.[286] Female gothic narratives usually feature women under threat from men they are romantically involved with or know personally, and therefore often contain an investigative role for this woman, as Hanson notes:

> The female gothic heroine is an investigative figure and the generic situations of the gothic story require her to navigate a series of positions conditioned by her

[283] *Suspicion,* dir. Alfred Hitchcock, comp. Franz Waxman (RKO Radio Pictures, 1941).
[284] Guy Barefoot, *Gaslight Melodrama: From Victorian London to 1940s Hollywood* (New York and London: Continuum, 2001), p. 3.
[285] Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines,* pp. 41-43; Neale, *Genre and Hollywood,* pp. 163-164.
[286] Neale, *Genre and Hollywood,* p. 163.

> speculation about, or knowledge of, events at different moments in that story. The centrality of the heroine as protagonist means that unfolding of story events are understood in relation to her, and what the audience understands about her. This "relation" is quite intricate in the female gothic film, where the process of narrating [...] is generically motivated by secrecy and concealment, a restriction of knowledge that is a common feature of the mystery narrative.[287]

Hanson argues that the way in which female gothic films 'foreground questions of knowledge and interpretation' through their focus on the subjective experience of the heroine is one of the things that distinguish them from more conventional detective narratives.[288] Often the initial investigation in the female gothic film is to establish whether the heroine's suspicions that a crime *might* have been committed are correct, rather than to ascertain the guilty party of a crime that has already been witnessed.[289]

Their emphasis on female subjectivity leads Doane to refer to these films as 'paranoid woman's films', and she argues that the gothic variation on the woman's film provides one of the most overt examples of the way in which classical Hollywood cinema objectifies women.[290] Doane, who also identifies close links between these films, horror films, and *films noirs*, identifies a more intense and obvious crisis of "looking" in the female gothic, where the heroine's paranoia is linked to her acknowledgement that she is the subject of the (male) gaze and her fear of it.[291] Doane distinguishes between those films invoking a medical discourse, where the woman's body becomes a site of knowledge and investigation by the doctor, and the female gothic, where she is instead the subject of knowledge – the investigator, in effect: 'The narrative structure produces an insistence on situating the woman as agent of the gaze, as investigator in charge of the epistemological trajectory of the text'.[292] Looking and seeing, therefore, are constructed as both a potential threat to the gothic heroine, and the tools of her active investigative role.

Doane's analysis of these films is ultimately a pessimistic one, where she finds that the representation of female subjectivity (through visual and other means, such as voiceover) is constantly undercut or attacked by other characters, or by the operations of the cinematic apparatus. This often realigns or repositions her into a victim figure, and for Doane, this additionally problematises the relationship of the female gothic narrative with the female

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[287] Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines*, pp. 53-54.
[288] Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines*, p. 55.
[289] Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines*, pp. 57-58.
[290] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, pp. 123-154.
[291] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, pp. 123-129.
[292] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, p. 134.

spectator.[293] However, despite the often problematic representation of female agency and subjectivity in female gothic and gaslight films, these narratives offer a focus on female point of view and experience that is frequently overlooked or sidelined elsewhere in classical Hollywood, and issues of identity and narrative role are frequently much more fluid than Doane's model (structured around psychoanalytic constructions of gender as binary opposites) allows.[294]

Hollywood's traditional approach to the female gothic will be explored further in chapter five's discussion of *Suspicion,* but in *Experiment Perilous* and *The Spiral Staircase* gothic elements in the narrative are highlighted primarily through an evocative use of period setting and their implications of madness and instability. This is used to create a tense and suspenseful atmosphere, especially within the confines of the large and ornate family homes that are the dominant locations in both films. This further situates these films as part of the gaslight cycle of the female gothic, which frequently make use of imposing and menacing houses that function as a kind of "prison" for the heroine. Tania Modleski argues that gaslight films 'reflect[s] women's fears about losing their unprecedented freedoms and being forced back into the homes after the men returned from fighting to take over the jobs and assume control of their families'.[295] Modleski here draws an explicit connection between Hollywood cinema and anxieties about changing gender roles in the 1940s, something which also preoccupies many commentators on *film noir* and underlines gaslight's connection with these films.[296]

Hanson notes that the terminology used to describe the female gothic and its related forms, such as gaslight, varies in both critical commentary on these films and in contemporary trade accounts of them.[297] She argues that this multiplicity of descriptors points towards the various stylistic and generic influences on the female gothic, including: the frequent use of historical settings; significant plot elements of romance, mystery, and crime; and ideas of paranoia and mental instability that often engender the presence of medical discourse. One of the most common 1940s descriptions of female gothic and gaslight films (and of crime pictures and *films*

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[293] Doane here refers to the idea of 'overidentification with the image' that is an important part of her arguments in 'Film and the Masquerade', discussed briefly in chapter two: by identifying with the female gothic heroine, the female spectator is drawn into a masochistic position due to the patriarchal structures of control in place in classical cinema. Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, pp. 152-153; Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade'.

[294] See Helen Hanson, 'From *Suspicion* (1941) to *Deceived* (1991): Gothic Continuities, Feminism and Postfeminism in the Neo-Gothic Film', *Gothic studies,* 9.2 (2007), 20-32; Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines*, pp. 59-60.

[295] Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women*, Second edn (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), p. 12. See also Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, pp. 134-140.

[296] See also Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, pp. 163-164.

[297] Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines*, pp. 40-44.

noirs more generally) in trade publications and reviews was as some kind of "melodrama". As Steve Neale notes, the contemporary critical usage of this term to primarily denote women's films and "weepies" is very different from its earlier use in industry discourse, where it could be used to describe practically any non-comic genre:

> 'melodrama' and 'melodramatic' meant [...] crime, guns and violence; they meant heroines in peril; they meant action, tension and suspense; and they meant villains, villains who in 'cheap melodrama,' at any rate, could masquerade as 'apparently harmless' fellows, thus thwarting the hero, evading justice, and sustaining suspense until the last minute.[298]

Reviewers in *The New York Times* situate both of this chapter's case studies as part of this tradition, describing *Experiment Perilous* as 'one of the better psychological melodramas that has come this way since Hollywood began dabbling in the macabre some months back', and noting that the 'creepy melodrama' of *The Spiral Staircase* make it 'a shocker, plain and simple [...] whatever pretentions it has to psychological drama may be considered merely as a concession to a currently popular fancy'.[299] Guy Barefoot notes the importance of melodrama to the Hollywood gaslight cycle, arguing that the period setting and psychological emphasis of these films provided one way in which to market these films as in some way more prestigious and 'classier' than other melodramatic offerings.[300]

Case studies 1

Music, medical discourse, and male control

Experiment Perilous

Set in the early 1900s, *Experiment Perilous* follows the story of Dr Huntington Bailey (George Brent) and his involvement with the Bederauxs, a rich New York society family who are originally from Vienna.[301] Bailey meets Cissie Bederaux (Olive Blakeney), an ageing and nervous spinster, on a train during a severe storm and comforts her. They strike up a friendship and she tells him about her brother Nick (Paul Lukas) and his wife Allida (Hedy Lamarr) who she has not seen for five years as she has been in a sanatorium undergoing treatment for a heart

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[298] Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, p. 179. See also Steve Neale, 'Melo Talk: On the Meaning and the Use of the Term "Melodrama" In the American Trade Press.', *Velvet Light Trap,* 32 (1993), 66-89.
[299] Bosley Crowther, 'The Spiral Staircase', *The New York Times*, 7 February 1946; T. M. P., 'At The Palace', *The New York Times*, 30 December 1944, section 'Amusements', p. 15.
[300] Barefoot, *Gaslight Melodrama: From Victorian London to 1940s Hollywood*, pp. 140-144.
[301] Plot synopses for case study films use the character name-forms most commonly given within the film's narrative.

condition. In New York, Bailey attends a party hosted by his sculptor friend Clag (Albert Dekker) to celebrate the completion of his latest work, 'Woman'. Whilst at the party, Bailey learns that Cissie has died of a heart attack and also hears that Allida is considered to be a great beauty. Clag describes Allida as 'fateful', and tells Bailey that if he views her portrait (which hangs in the museum), he will arrange to take him to meet Nick and Allida at their mansion.

Bailey is captivated by Allida's portrait and Allida herself, and intrigued by her jumpy behaviour and Nick's allusions about the precarious state of his wife's mental health and the wellbeing of their young son, Alex. Spurred on by his increasing desire for Allida, Nick's stories of Allida's confusion and forgetfulness, and his curiosity about the fate of Cissie, Bailey starts to investigate the Bederaux family more closely. After discovering that he has mistakenly acquired Cissie's writing case, Bailey reads her diaries and her secret biography of Nick, learning about their troubled childhood. Cissie's diaries also tell the story of their initial meetings with a young and innocent Allida, who Nick invites to accompany them to Paris. Here, Nick supervises Allida's transformation into a groomed and educated society debutante who he then marries and brings back to New York, where Nick becomes a patron of several artists. One of these artists, Alec Gregory (George Neise), is infatuated with Allida, and after an uncomfortable confrontation with Nick at Allida's birthday party, he mysteriously disappears.

After reading Cissie's diaries, Bailey becomes convinced that Nick (rather than Allida) is mentally unstable, a diagnosis confirmed by his suspicions that Nick is having him followed. Allida telephones Bailey, who is invited to dinner at the Bederaux mansion, and asks him to follow Nick if he leaves the room during dinner. Bailey does so, and secretly discovers that Nick has been staging Allida's "illness" and also causing Alex's mental distress by telling him stories about how evil beautiful women are. Bailey and Allida declare their love for each other, and Bailey's concerns about Nick seem to be abated when he receives a note from Nick that indicates he intends to commit suicide. However, it turns out that the note was merely a ruse and Nick is actually lying in wait at the Bederaux mansion. Here, he attempts to gas Allida and their child and confronts Bailey with a gun, admitting that he murdered both Alec and Cissie. Bailey is able to talk and fight his way out of the situation and rescue Allida and Alex from the house before it is destroyed by a massive explosion. Nick is killed by a falling statue of a goddess. In a short epilogue, we see Bailey, Allida, and Alex living happily in the countryside together, and learn that they have concealed the true story of Nick's demise and mental state in order to protect their son from the stigma and worry of his father's mental illness.

Experiment Perilous has a complex plot, and its structure is also relatively convoluted. The film relies heavily upon flashback sequences and moments of subjective sound to construct its narrative and remind viewers of significant events or lines of dialogue. The source of these flashbacks and reminiscences is Dr Bailey, and his narrative dominance is immediately made clear in the use of his voiceover in the opening scene, where he introduces us to Cissie:

> Bailey: I remember clearly everything that happened that night, for that was when it started innocently enough on an East-bound train. It was in the early spring of 1903 to be exact, and the train was ploughing through a heavy storm. I had been napping, and I awoke to find a woman watching me, smiling, a bird-like sort of little woman. But behind that smile I thought I could see something of terror in her eyes. She was badly frightened by the storm and she asked me if she could sit by me – she said it would make her feel safer. I reassured her to the best of my ability and wondered vaguely if she were mentally ill. I found out later that she was nothing of the sort. But now she seemed to read my thoughts...

During this opening section, the noise of the train remains audible but other diegetic sound, including dialogue, is absent, replaced instead with Bailey's voiceover. This voiceover heavily mediates our initial response to Cissie, positioning her as nervous and frightened, and, despite its immediate rebuttal, introducing the idea that she is in some way unwell. Bailey casts himself in the role of "protector" and speaks for Cissie: we can see her mouth moving, but cannot hear what she might be saying. As Bailey's voiceover fades out and the sound design returns to "normal",[302] his conversation with Cissie becomes audible:

> Cissie: Why, you're a doctor aren't you?
>
> Bailey: How did you know?
>
> Cissie: Oh, I know a lot about doctors, there's something alike about them all. The fat ones, the thin ones, the homely ones, and [here she indicates Bailey] the good-looking ones. It's as if they were looking at something beneath the flesh, something that does not change.

[302] Sound design in all film sequences can be considered as manipulated and "false", even when deliberately designed to sound as natural as possible. Michel Chion notes that even the use of 'direct sound', or sound recorded during filming that is included in the final mix (sometimes called 'wild sound'), is usually manipulated in post-production by the addition of other effects and ambiences, or the elimination of unwanted sound elements. "Standard" Hollywood sound design, including during the classical era, be considered as a kind of "hyperreal" approach to accuracy: unless a specific effect is required sound is usually much clearer and more distinct than it would ordinarily be, and to create this "realism" sounds are often extensively manipulated and recontextualised. Chion uses the term 'rendered', rather than 'real' to describe these sounds. See Chion, *Audio-Vision*, pp. 95-122; Hanson, 'Sound Affects', pp. 38-39.

This scene establishes two important features of *Experiment Perilous* that help to create and reinforce Bailey's narrative agency: his position as doctor and the access that this gives him to both the physical and mental state of his "patients" (highlighted by Cissie's comments about the gaze of the physician seeing 'beneath the flesh' and Bailey's initial assumption that Cissie is mentally ill because she looks frightened), and Bailey's control over the soundtrack, here reflected in the use of voiceover accompanied by subjective sound (where Bailey's remembrance of dialogue replaces its actual presence). Medical discourse and subjective uses of sound and music are combined throughout *Experiment Perilous* to ensure Bailey's continuing narrative dominance, and this has significant implications for the representation of the film's other characters. Bailey is portrayed as a talented and instinctive physician, and despite Clag's assertion that all Bailey can see in the eyes of a beautiful woman is 'an inflamed cornea', the doctor is also shown to be a true judge of character and beauty, and an accomplished investigator.

Medical discourse and references to psychology and psychiatry appear throughout *Experiment Perilous;* as well as Bailey's somewhat over-frequent remarks about mental health issues, Nick also appears to be well-read on the subject, and his misleading and malicious diagnoses of the "problems" of both Allida and Alex, are initially convincing (although his ideas and terminology are later dismissed by Bailey as out of date 'hocus-pocus'). Other parallels drawn between Bailey and Nick are also later shown to be misleading: Nick's appreciation for "culture" and "beauty" pales next to Bailey's *real* understanding of them, and Bailey therefore wins Allida, who is portrayed as the feminine embodiment of these ideals. Nick, on the other hand, is crushed beneath the falling statue of his 'favourite goddess'. This ironically reinforces Nick's own view of the "dangers" of female beauty and his incorrect belief that he is able to master these through possession of this form via its artistic fetishisation (an idea that is made explicit in Clag's Medusa-like statue of 'Woman' and Allida's portrait).

Allida's beauty is continually referred to throughout the film. At first, this seems to function primarily to heighten expectation surrounding her appearance and to reinforce Lamarr's star image as a major Hollywood beauty, but as the narrative develops, Allida's beauty also becomes a signifier of the way in which she is misunderstood by society and repressed by Nick. This idea of Allida as repressed and trapped is particularly symbolised by her portrait, commissioned by Nick and now hanging on public display in the Bederaux wing of the museum. Thomas Elsaesser notes that the presence of portraits in films 'motivates a host of determinate signifiers' including those of material wealth and extravagance, but also ideas of

beauty, perfection, and the subject as an unattainable object of desire.[303] Allida's portrait therefore potentially draws Bailey into the first of an uncomfortable series of comparisons with Nick: in viewing it, he views Allida herself and is able to gaze at her uninterrupted, participating in the objectification of her beauty that the portrait symbolises. The musical construction of this scene, which is discussed in detail later, is important in protecting Bailey from these comparisons with Nick, and the film also takes care to preface this sequence with demonstrations that Bailey's "vision" is not like that of other men. This takes place in the dialogue surrounding Clag's statue of 'Woman', and again as Clag and Bailey discuss Allida with their friend Elaine:

> Elaine: I think Allida's the most beautiful woman I've ever seen.
>
> Clag: She's a work of art.
>
> Bailey: I don't like beautiful women. It makes them nervous.

As well as highlighting Bailey's tendency to collapse physical and mental attributes together, the difference of opinion, or value, implied in this statement is crucial in ensuring Bailey's positive presentation and continuing authority within the narrative. Bailey is portrayed throughout *Experiment Perilous* as valuing a beauty that goes "beyond" surface appearance (or 'beneath the flesh', to use Cissie's phrase) to encompass issues of character and morality. With his privileged position as doctor, Bailey has access to these elements as well as the surface-level beauty that Clag, Elaine, the artist community, and Nick are concerned with. Bailey's scientific "vision" sees through the potential artifice and disguise of surface beauty, and is therefore the most complete and reliable, making him by far the most agent character in the narrative.

Bailey's vision is heavily contrasted with Nick's throughout the film, and this is particularly evident in their ideas about (and treatment of) Allida. As noted above, the portrait of Allida is used to symbolise her repression by Nick: in this fixed, static, and fetishised image, Allida is shown in tight close-up, dressed in an ornate and constricting high-necked black gown, pouring tea with a fixed and distant expression on her face. When Bailey meets the "real" Allida for the

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[303] Thomas Elsaesser, 'Mirror, Muse, Medusa: *Experiment Perilous*', in *Senses of Cinema* 18, (2002) <http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/18/perilous.html> [accessed 26 August 2010]. Hanson discusses the use of portraits in the female gothic cycle in some detail, although in her case studies the portraits are generally of ancestors or women from the past, drawing the heroine into an identification with the image of a woman who 'threatens to overtake and obliterate the heroine's own image'. Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines*, pp. 77-96 (p. 96). See also Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, pp. 142-143.

first time, she occupies exactly the same pose and wears the same gown, telling Bailey that Nick designed it for her and that 'it pleases him for me to wear it'. Her demeanour, pose, and dress in the portrait and at the tea party are representative of the claustrophobic atmosphere in their marriage and Nick's position as a controlling and manipulative husband. When Bailey later reads Cissie's diaries, these ideas are reinforced in a montage sequence showing Nick's regime of "training" for the young Allida in Paris, where she takes classes in French, ballet, and singing, and is groomed to Nick's idea of upper-class perfection, ready for her entrance into French society. Although Nick's sponsoring of Allida's "education" in this sequence is generous, the film constructs it as part of his desire to improve and control the beauty of a previously naïve Allida, contrasting this with Bailey's immediate understanding of the "real" beauty already present in her unspoiled country looks and attitudes. Bailey's description of Allida's portrait as 'disturbing' differentiates his response to Allida's beauty from Nick's, and his own idea of how he would paint her underlines his clarity of vision and the accuracy of his response:

> Bailey: If I were painting her I'd do her quite differently. It wouldn't be a solemn face, or a woman dressed up behind a tea-tray. I'd paint her full length for one thing – in a country field with the sky beyond. Long grasses to her knees and the wind blowing across the field. And the daisies too...

As noted above, the soundtrack of *Experiment Perilous* is significant in highlighting Bailey's importance and agency as the film's narrator.[304] With the exception of the epilogue, the whole film is framed by Bailey's opening voiceover and its indication of flashback narrative, and this "framing" (Doane's 'encompassing discourse') includes the soundtrack, all of which can therefore be theoretically positioned as subjective. Bailey's subjectivity is also more obviously stressed in the soundtrack in several ways: the presence of voiceover, distinctive moments where Bailey remembers past dialogue, and the majority of the nondiegetic score for the film, which engages with and reflects Bailey's love for Allida, his memories of Cissie, and his fear of discovery by Nick.

The musical elements of the *Experiment Perilous* soundtrack consist of four main components: two recurring thematic ideas that function similarly to leitmotifs; diegetic cues that utilise a "Viennese"-style art music idiom; and less obviously recognisable, but stylistically consistent, nondiegetic cues that are used to aid the creation of suspense and tension. These signifiers of

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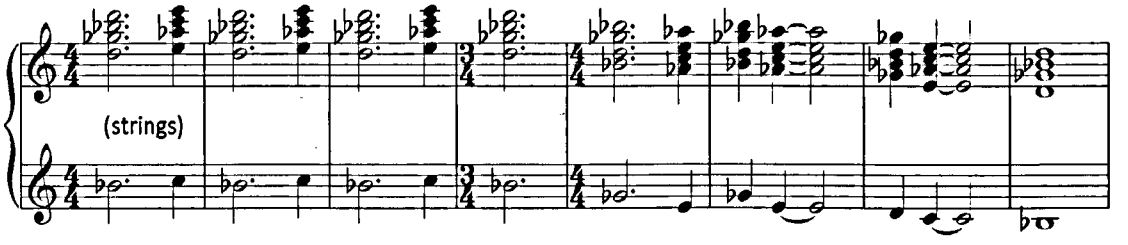
[304] Elsaesser's account of *Experiment Perilous* describes the film as one with 'too many narrators', citing Bailey, Cissie, and (curiously) Clag as examples of these narrative voices. This overlooks the significant role of Bailey as "mediator" of Cissie's narrative voice, and also ignores the role of the soundtrack in reinforcing Bailey's narrative dominance. Elsaesser, 'Mirror, Muse, Medusa: *Experiment Perilous*'.

suspense include: an increase in chromaticism when compared with the rest of the score; the use of "see-saw" textural movement that oscillates between two pitches, rather than any traditional notion of musical progression; orchestration that often emphasises "darker" or more resonant sounds such as those of clarinets, lower strings, celeste, and vibraphone; and frequently the use of additional reverberation in the mixing of the score.[305] These signifiers of suspense are flexible enough to be combined with thematic material or used alone, either in subtle cues that create a sense of unease or in more prominent moments of suspense or confrontation (for example in the climactic battle between Bailey and Nick). Example 4.1 shows the string section of one of these suspenseful cues, here transcribed from the scene where Bailey tells Clag his suspicions about Nick (describing him as being 'out of tune, like a chord of music that has a basic note missing'). Here, suspense surrounds the implications of the diagnosis of Nick's madness and Bailey's fear that Nick is already aware of his investigation, and the "glassy" sound of high strings perhaps suggests Nick's mental fragility (further enhanced by the use of additional reverberation in the mix). The slow movement between chords creates an almost Impressionistic effect due to the parallel, whole tone movement that characterises the cue.



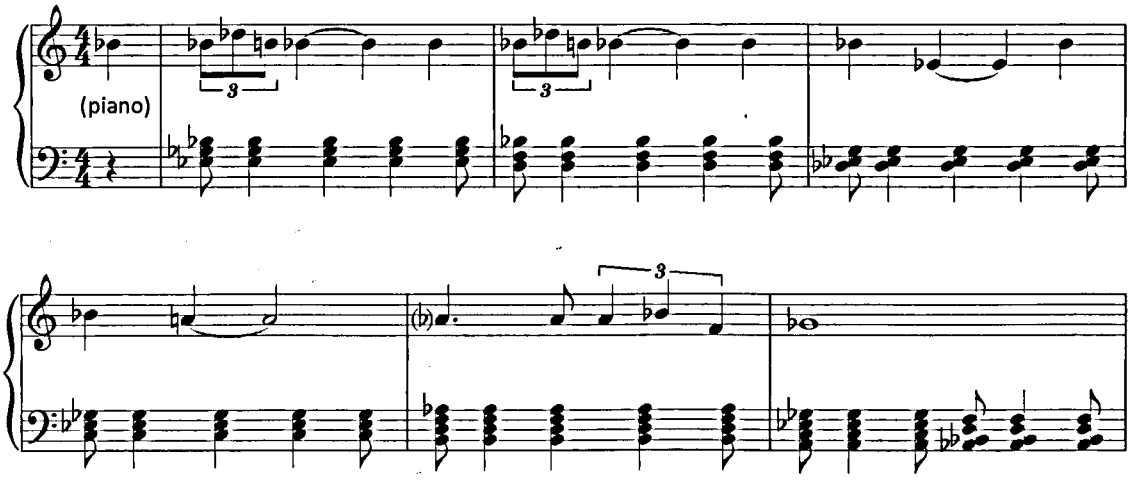
Example 4.1. *Experiment Perilous:* musical signifiers of suspense as Bailey talks about Nick

The use of diegetic music is relatively frequent in *Experiment Perilous,* where several key scenes involve parties or other social gatherings. The prevailing style of these diegetic cues is

[305] Cues like this, with oscillating textures and timbral effects, are a regularly recurring feature of all the scores discussed as part of this project. They work primarily to create a "murky" and ambiguous sound, sacrificing the usually directional properties of Romantic melodic style for more static and repetitive movement around one or two pitches, and replacing clarity of orchestration with a much denser and less easily identifiable sound. Vibraphone, clarinets, tremolo strings, and Novachord (an early electronic keyboard instrument that produces an artificial sound with a noticeable "pulse") are staples of these cues, which often sound like they may have been manipulated via mixing to produce additional oscillations in timbre. Robert Nelson, in a 1946 article for *Hollywood Quarterly,* discusses the use of multitrack recording and mixing to produce specific effects in Webb's score for *Murder, My Sweet.* He describes how vibraphone, high tremolo violins, and Novachord were recorded separately from each other, then put together and run through a 'reverberation chamber' before being added to the recording of the rest of the orchestra, in order to create a high and very insistent pedal note to simulate the effect of a spotlight hitting Marlowe's eyes. Robert U. Nelson, 'Film Music: Color or Line?', *Hollywood Quarterly,* 2.1 (1946), 57-65.

that of nineteenth-century European instrumental music. Some of these cues use pre-existing pieces by well-known composers (for example, Chopin's Waltz No. 7 in C sharp minor plays during first half of Clag's party) whilst others are more generic cues that could be library music or specifically composed pieces that pastiche the nineteenth-century style. The European styling of these diegetic pieces is perhaps designed to be evocative of the privileged Viennese ancestry of the Bederaux family, and also fits more generally with the artistic society that Nick, Allida, and Bailey are part of, adding to the historical setting of the film.

One of these pieces of diegetic music is used as the basis of several nondiegetic cues that are associated with Bailey's memories of Cissie. The original diegetic piano cue is heard at Clag's party after the fast and "flashy" Chopin waltz has finished, as Bailey overhears the story of Cissie's unexpected death. This piano cue features a simple, repetitive melody over a gradually descending bassline, giving it a feeling of sadness and gravity, especially when compared with the previously heard Chopin waltz (see Example 4.2).[306]



Example 4.2. *Experiment Perilous:* original piano version of "Cissie" material

The musical material of this piano cue is later transformed into part of the nondiegetic orchestral score, accompanying Bailey in his hotel room as he remembers some of the things that Cissie said to him on board the train. This version of the cue, scored primarily for strings, retains the melancholy feel of the diegetic original and underlines Cissie's role within the narrative as part of the Bailey's initial motivation for his investigation of the Bederauxs. The idea of Cissie as a catalyst for Bailey's activity is highlighted by a striking shot of 'Woman'

[306] The structure and styling of this cue is very similar to Chopin's Prelude Op. 28, No. 4 in E minor, and it seems possible that this piece provided a model or stimulus for its composition.

seeming to look over Bailey's shoulder as he hears the news about Cissie's death (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. ***Experiment Perilous:*** **Bailey hears the news of Cissie's death**

The orchestral version of the "Cissie" material recurs at other moments in *Experiment Perilous,* primarily when Bailey thinks of Cissie, and is heard for the final time when Bailey meets Allida in Stanley's restaurant after he has finally put the pieces of the puzzle together and realised the true significance of the clues provided by Cissie's dialogue and her diary.

Cissie is portrayed as the only character (other than Bailey) to have any understanding of the "real" Allida, and she occupies a position within the narrative that is simultaneously agent and heavily contained. Although Cissie is shown to appreciate and love Allida for what she really is, describing her as 'dear' and 'sweet', she also characterises her using some of the more problematic descriptors associated with Nick's view of his wife: in the opening sequence on the train with Bailey she emphasises Allida's beauty, and during the birthday party sequence she describes her as 'such a child', echoing previous statements made by Nick. Cissie's contribution to the investigative aspect of the narrative is also significant, yet flawed: her remarks on the train and her personal papers provide information that is crucial to the case against her brother, but she is not able to acknowledge her suspicions about Nick's true character and mental state openly enough to escape him.

Ironically, and significantly, Cissie's narrative agency is strongest in *Experiment Perilous* after she is murdered. Her suspicious death makes Bailey take her strange remarks much more seriously, and prompts his involvement with Nick and Allida and the subsequent reading of Cissie's diaries. Here, Cissie's voiceover is used to narrate portions from these papers, and it is her account of Nick's childhood and courtship of Allida that we hear. However, as in the opening sequences where Cissie features as a "real-life" character, Bailey's presence and point of view are used to frame and control her presentation. It is Bailey's point of view shot of

Cissie's writing that is used as the basis of the visual dissolve to the events she is helping to narrate, and his musical remembrance of her (the "Cissie" material) that dominates the soundtrack at the start of this section. Additionally, this whole sequence is positioned as part of Bailey's original flashback which contains the majority of the film's narrative. This means that the point of view represented in these second-level flashbacks is actually relatively complicated: we hear and see Bailey's constructed version of Cissie's narration, and this is again mediated by its positioning as part of Bailey's flashback remembrance of past events.[307]

This is similarly the case (without the use of accompanying visuals) in several sections of the film where we hear Bailey's subjective aural remembrances of various remarks that other characters, including Cissie, have made to him. These short sequences, which are signalled by a dimming of the scene's lighting and the addition of heavy reverb effects to the voices and any accompanying music (usually the "Cissie" material, often combined with some of the signifiers of suspense outlined above), generally serve to remind us of significant plot points in the story so far, and to highlight Bailey's role as the investigator putting these clues together to form a coherent narrative. The privileging of her subjectivity that constitutes Cissie's agency in these sequences is therefore heavily mediated by Bailey's presence, helping to contain Cissie's role as investigator even after her death.

The idea of Bailey's control and mediation of the "Cissie" material in the film's soundtrack is also important in understanding the function of the most dominant aspect of the score for *Experiment Perilous:* the use of a melodic motif associated with Allida. This motif (reproduced in Example 4.3) is first heard in the film's romantic main title, and functions like the "Cissie" material, appearing on the soundtrack whenever Bailey thinks or speaks about Allida. This use of the "Allida" motif is given additional significance because of Allida's central role in the narrative, and her positioning as a romantic heroine who is fetishised because of her beauty and controlled by her manipulative husband. The "Allida" material is not "Allida's theme", but rather represents Bailey's subjective view of Allida, and therefore can be considered as one of the many devices present in *Experiment Perilous* that are used to position and control Allida, rather than allowing her to express her own subjectivity.

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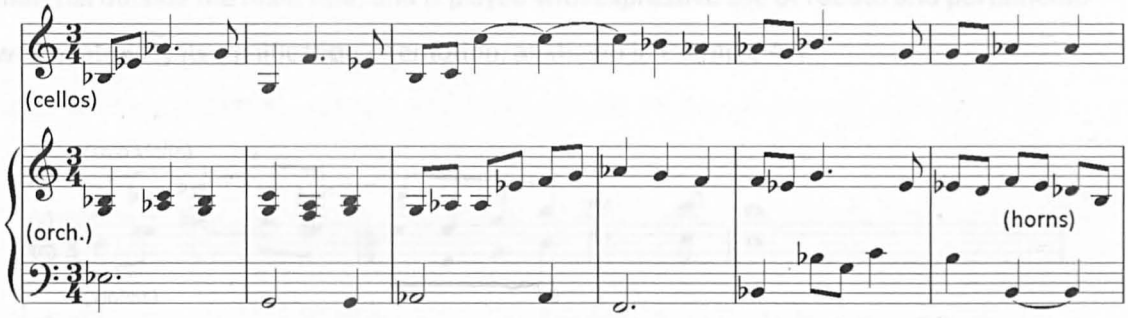
[307] Kaja Silverman refers to this kind of sequence as the use of 'written voiceover', and notes that it is often employed as a strategy to help contain the agency of the female narrator (thereby reinforcing the authority of the male narrator). Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, pp. 57-58. See also Laing, *Onscreen Musicians, Unseen Emotions*, pp. 75-77.



Example 4.3. ***Experiment Perilous:*** **original appearance of "Allida" motif in opening titles**

As well as the (often subtle) uses of the "Allida" motif when either Bailey or someone he is talking to mentions Allida, this positioning is most obviously highlighted in the presentation of the "Allida" material as Bailey views the portrait in the museum. This sequence is a short, but significant one, and segues musically out of the previous cue, which uses the "Cissie" material to underscore one of Bailey's subjective voice-memory moments (here recalling some of Cissie's words to him on the train, and Clag's urging that he view the portrait). After a brief establishing shot of the museum exterior, we see Bailey approaching through the gallery, shot from above with the camera gradually closing in on his face. He contemplates something intensely, and this is then revealed as the portrait. The camera returns to Bailey's face and then again to the portrait, this time in a close-up of Allida's face, as shown in Figure 4.2.

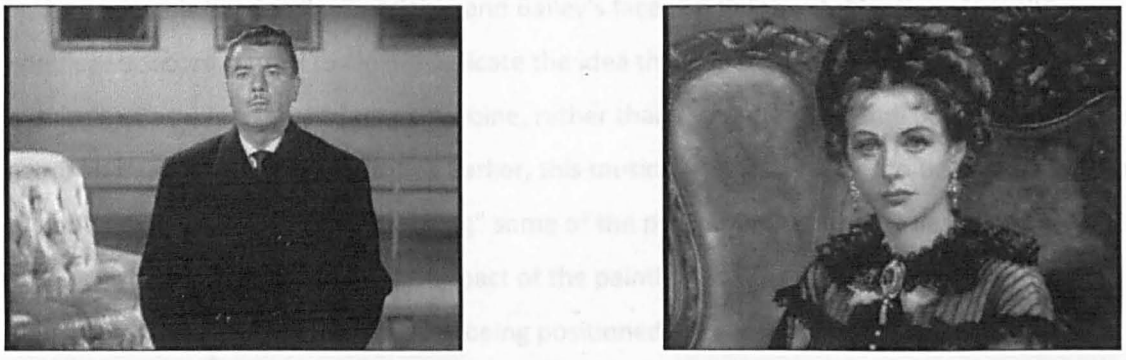
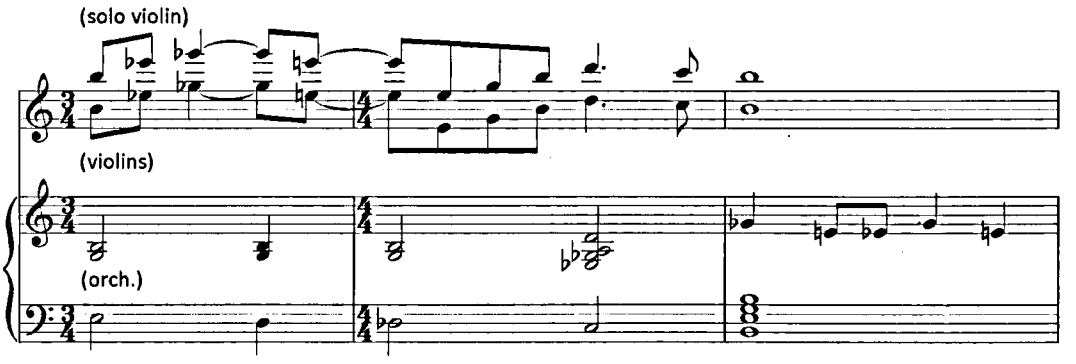


Figure 4.2. ***Experiment Perilous:*** **Bailey views Allida's portrait**[308]

This camerawork replicates a conventional shot-reverse-shot setup, forging a connection between Bailey and Allida, but with the crucial difference that only Bailey is an active participant in this exchange of glances – Allida is "present" only in her portrait. As this camerawork unfolds, we hear a prominent presentation of the "Allida" motif on solo violin, supported by the rest of the orchestra. This is the most obvious and striking appearance of this

[308] Figures containing two or more stills should be read from left to right, unless indicated otherwise.

material outside the main title, and is played with expressive use of rubato and portamento which intensify its signification of emotion, as shown in Example 4.4.



Example 4.4. *Experiment Perilous:* use of the "Allida" motif as Bailey views the portrait

The D natural in the melody line of bar two of this extract is delayed slightly through the use of rubato and is accented by the violin playing and accompanying shift in harmony. This occurs simultaneously with the second cut to the portrait (the close-up), helping to underline the impact that the painting has upon Bailey and further cementing the association of this motif with his view of Allida. The use of chromaticism, together with the descending harmonic movement underneath the melody gives this presentation of the motif an air of melancholy, which imbues the scene as a whole with a sense of sadness or wistfulness. Allida's expression in the portrait is fixed and unreadable and Bailey's face is also inscrutable, therefore the nondiegetic score is used to clearly indicate the idea that the Allida (whom Bailey has not yet met in the flesh) is a sad and tragic heroine, rather than the merely 'fateful' beauty that he has heard so much about. As mentioned earlier, this musical accompaniment to Bailey's viewing of the portrait is significant in "redeeming" some of the problematic connotations that this gaze has: by emphasising the emotional impact of the painting as a representation of a victimised Allida, the cue helps to prevent Bailey being positioned as merely another celebrant of her objectified beauty. These connotations about Allida also encourage a negative positioning of Nick as her husband, underlining the significant impact of the nondiegetic score upon the representation of various characters, due to its close connections with Bailey's subjectivity.[309]

[309] Another significant use of the "Allida" material occurs in the section of the Cissie's diary flashback that shows Nick's proposal of marriage, where Allida's indecision is accompanied by a prominent solo violin rendition of "Allida". The use of this motif at this point could seem to reflect Allida's own subjectivity in some way, especially as the scene is constructed to show her making an active choice about whether to marry Nick, but the "double flashback" structure of this sequence (discussed earlier) means that Bailey is again an important mediating factor in the presentation of Allida. This is Bailey's view of their engagement, building upon the much sparser outline of the event in Cissie's diary, and the violin presentation of the "Allida" material can therefore be read primarily as representing his feelings

Bailey's control over Allida's musical representation within the film draws him into another problematic comparison with Nick, who is also explicitly trying "position" his wife. This element of *Experiment Perilous* is highlighted by Diane Waldman, who includes the film as one of several 'gothic romances' that 'actually dramatize the attempts of a patriarchal order to achieve hegemony over feminine perception and interpretation. In these films the husbands are systematically attempting to drive their wives insane, through manipulation [...] attempting to negate their experience'.[310] Bailey's control of Allida's musical positioning can also be considered as part of the means by which her subjectivity and agency is often suppressed during *Experiment Perilous,* although Nick's manipulation of Allida is shown much more obviously within the narrative, and is symbolised visually by the stiff, tightly framed, and static portrait of her that he commissioned. Allida is musically controlled within the diegesis by Nick: during the Cissie's diary flashback sections we see him paying for Allida's musical education and training in Paris, which culminate in her self-accompanied performance of a French song at her birthday party. This musical accomplishment is primarily representative of Nick's desire to make a 'distinguished lady' out of Allida, rather than any genuine artistic communication on the part of Allida herself (again returning to the film's message that "true" artistry or beauty, and its appreciation requires access to something beyond the surface). Like the portrait, this musical performance serves primarily to exhibit "Nick's Allida" to an admiring public, a point made clear by Clag's supposedly congratulatory remarks to her after the performance: 'It isn't your voice my dear – when you sing we can stare at you without embarrassment'. In the nondiegetic score, Allida's agency is contained by the stressing of Bailey's subjective ideas, replacing any musical ownership or voice of her own with Bailey's aural point of view in the "Allida" material (thereby achieving an effect similar to the silencing of Cissie's dialogue via Bailey's voiceover during the first part of the opening sequence and his control of the "Cissie" material in the nondiegetic score).

Allida's relative lack of agency throughout the majority of *Experiment Perilous* is highlighted by the film's epilogue, where we see a District Attorney arrive at Bailey and Allida's country home to question her, as he has discovered that Nick actually died in the fire at the Bederaux mansion (rather than committing suicide elsewhere). Before the DA says he has decided not to pursue the case any further because of his 'admiration' for her, Allida vehemently argues with him, displaying a spirit and confidence previously only seen in the flashbacks to her country

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about this event, or the feelings that he projects onto Allida's imagined reaction to the proposal, reinforcing his own growing desire for her and antipathy towards and suspicion of Nick.

[310] Diane Waldman, '"At Last I Can Tell It to Someone!": Feminine Point of View and Subjectivity in the Gothic Romance Film of the 1940s', *Cinema Journal,* 23.2 (1984), 29-40 (p. 34).

upbringing. As Allida leaves the house and runs towards Bailey and Alex, a full orchestral presentation of "Allida" accompanies her, and can be read, this time, as representing the subjectivities of both Bailey and Allida, who are now portrayed as much more "equal" partners. In part this is because of the absence of Nick's controlling influence, but it is also because the medical discourse surrounding Allida's mental health has now been played out, and Bailey has moved from being positioned primarily as doctor-investigator to solely as romantic lead.

Webb's score for *Experiment Perilous* does not sound unusual; it is within the Romantic musical idiom commonly used in classical era scoring practices and conforms with the dramatic and practical functions of these scoring practices that are outlined by authors such as Gorbman and Kalinak. The score emphasises Allida's construction as romantic heroine, evokes memories of Cissie after her death in material that is evocative of her Viennese heritage, and reinforces the increasing threat posed by Nick's instability and jealousy. However, when considered alongside the narrative dominance of Bailey's viewpoint in the film, these very conventional aspects of the score are overlaid with another layer of ideological significance that ties these elements strongly to Bailey's subjectivity. Of the various films discussed here, *Experiment Perilous* is perhaps the least "flexible" in the soundtrack's relationship with other elements of the narrative. The film's score corresponds closely with Kassabian's idea of the 'assimilating identifications' produced by orchestral cues; Bailey's dominance and control over narrative elements, including music, strongly encourages the spectator to view events and characters from his point of view. Although Bailey is constructed heroically throughout *Experiment Perilous,* especially when contrasted with the evil, misogynist, and conniving Nick, he is still very much positioned as a dominant force in relation to Allida (although this is generally justified as being part of his "bedside manner" with a delicate patient). This traditional presentation of their medical and romantic relationships is reflected and partially constructed by the film's soundtrack. The fact that, on the surface at least, the musical style and placement of the film's musical cues is indistinguishable from "standard" practice during the studio era demonstrates the important role played by these musical practices in classical Hollywood's often problematic representation of women.

The Spiral Staircase

Many similar ideas about the creation and containment of female agency are also found in *The Spiral Staircase,* another RKO crime film that makes extensive use of medical discourse in positioning both its female "victim" and male aggressor(s). The film, set in New England

around the turn of the century, focuses upon the search for a serial killer who has been targeting women with 'afflictions' and opens with a scene where we witness the murder of a young woman who walks with a limp. Dr Parry (Kent Smith) arrives to examine the body, and afterward offers a lift home to Helen (Dorothy McGuire), a servant at the Warren house. During their ride together, Parry and Helen are shown to be romantically interested in each other and Helen is revealed to have been mute for several years, since witnessing the death of her parents in a fire. Parry is called away to a patient, leaving Helen to walk through the woods alone. A storm starts, and during a tense scene we see the shadow of the killer waiting to grab her. Helen is unaware of this and manages to reach the house safely.

Inside the Warren house, we are introduced to various characters: the housekeepers, Mr and Mrs Oates (Rhys Williams and Elsa Lanchester); Nurse Barker (Sara Allgood) and her patient, the formidable and bed-ridden Mrs Warren (Ethel Barrymore); the two Warren brothers, Steven (Gordon Oliver) and Albert (George Brent), an academic Professor; and Albert's live-in secretary, Blanche (Rhonda Fleming), who is romantically involved with Steven. Helen is warned to be careful, as her muteness makes her a target for the killer. Suspense builds as we realise that all the men in the house, and Dr Parry (who makes frequent visits to Mrs Warren's sickbed), are potential suspects. Mr Oates is forced to go to town for medical supplies for Mrs Warren and Nurse Barker resigns from her post, removing them from the story.

Parry urges Helen to seek treatment for her muteness and offers to take her to see a specialist, and Mrs Warren also insists that Helen leave the house before she is killed. Helen agrees to leave that night. After an argument with Steven, Blanche also decides to leave and goes to fetch her trunk from the basement. She is strangled by the killer, and her body is found by Helen. Steven appears suddenly, leading Helen to assume he is the killer. She manages to trick him into the wine cellar and locks him in. She runs for help, but Mrs Oates is passed out, drunk on brandy stolen from the wine cellar. Helen realises too late that she suspected the wrong man and that she has left herself alone with the real killer, Albert. A tense chase around the house ensues and ends when Mrs Warren rises from her sickbed and shoots her stepson, before collapsing herself. At this horrific event Helen regains her voice, screams, and is able to stagger to the telephone to call Dr Parry for help.

The Spiral Staircase has several similarities to *Experiment Perilous.* Aside from its gaslight style and setting, the film's medical discourse again collapses physical and mental symptoms together in its presentation of illness: Helen is physically mute because of psychological trauma, and the 'afflicted women' that have fallen prey to the serial killer include both those with physical disability and a 'poor, simple-minded creature'. The soundtrack of *The Spiral*

Staircase is an important factor in the construction of agency and its (often simultaneous) containment for various characters, including Helen as victim, Albert as killer, and Dr Parry as the film's most authoritative male figure. However, these roles are not always as clear cut as those in *Experiment Perilous,* and gender construction in *The Spiral Staircase* is often unstable or problematised by its characters, something which is also reflected in aspects of the film's score. Part of the reason behind this more "flexible" construction is perhaps the lack of voiceover and flashback. Whereas almost all of *Experiment Perilous* is presented as Bailey's subjective memory of past events, *The Spiral Staircase* takes place in the "present", and over a relatively short time frame of one afternoon and evening. As well as giving the film an air of immediacy that helps to heighten tension, this also means that *The Spiral Staircase* has no obvious diegetic narrator and allows it to stress the subjectivity of various characters at different points in the story. The two characters whose subjectivities are most prominently featured are that of Helen and, unusually, that of the unknown killer before he is revealed as Albert.

Helen's subjectivity is important throughout *The Spiral Staircase,* as she is its most commonly present character and also its central victim figure. The film is essentially a kind of gothic-horror-detective hybrid, and audience identification with the figure of the victim is therefore an important element in the creation of suspense and, where appropriate, fright. Additionally, *The Spiral Staircase* also features a short sequence depicting Helen's fantasies about marrying Dr Parry. Although this dream sequence seems to stress Helen's subjectivity in a much more obvious way, it also functions to reposition her in a way that actually reduces her agency within the narrative, as subsequent discussion will examine in more detail.

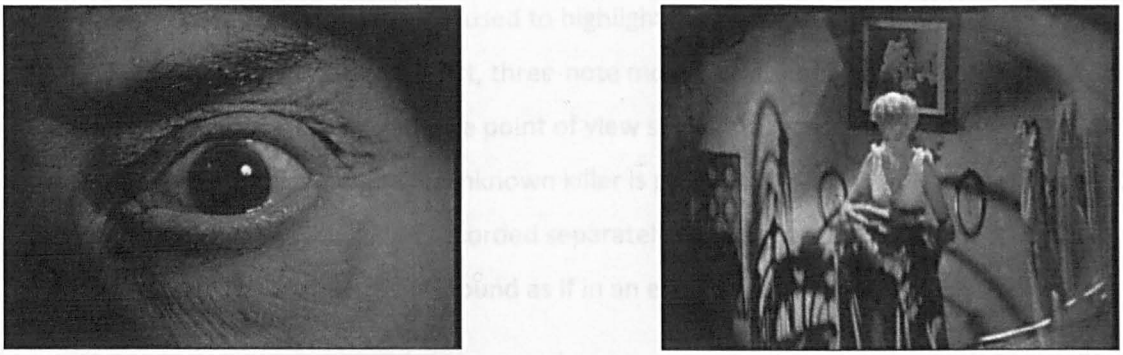

Figure 4.3. *The Spiral Staircase:* killer's eye and point of view shots in the opening murder

The killer's subjectivity is stressed in several striking sequences that use a shot-reverse-shot set up to show the killer's eye followed by a distorted point of view shot of his victim (shown in Figure 4.3 with stills from the opening murder sequence). These point of view shots appear to

be formed by combining static photography of the eye with the moving image of the victim, giving the composite image a curved "frame" that highlights its provenance as point of view; they also emphasise the idea that the killer has warped or distorted "vision" due to his insanity. Similar shots occur during the murder of Blanche in the cellar, and during a sequence where Helen examines herself in a full length mirror on the main stairs of the Warren house, where the killer's obsession with Helen's 'affliction' is visually represented by the blotting out of her mouth. The use of such obvious point of view shots from the killer's perspective is a characteristic identified by Carol Clover in her analysis of more recent developments in the 'slasher film', where she notes that flexibility in manipulating point of view makes the cinema particularly suited to those genres, like horror, that aim to stimulate physical response in the audience.[311]

This striking nature of this camerawork is matched in the soundtrack by the prominent use of the Theremin as a musical signifier of the killer's presence. The Theremin, an electronic instrument developed by Leon Theremin in the 1920s, does not rely on physical contact to produce its sounds, rather upon the distance between the player's hands and two antennae in order to control volume and pitch.[312] This means the Theremin has no keys or frets and that all the notes played on it are usually "joined up" to some extent with glissando effects. This feature has necessarily become a major component of its playing style and music composed for it, together with the use of a wide vibrato that gives it an oscillating and unstable sound. When combined with its highly artificial and electronic timbre, this explains its relatively frequent use in the soundtracks of science-fiction films[313] and films depicting madness or mental instability, for example *Spellbound* and *The Lost Weekend.*[314]

In *The Spiral Staircase* the Theremin is used to highlight the presence of the killer and this is further underlined by the use of a short, three-note motif (see Example 4.5). This is played by the Theremin at the start of each of the point of view shot sequences outlined above, and at other moments in the film when the unknown killer is present. Christopher Palmer states that the Theremin part of the score was recorded separately to the other orchestral parts, so that 'it could dominate the orchestra and sound as if in an echo chamber' (and also notes that its

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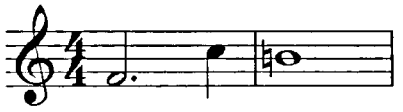
[311] Clover, 'Her Body, Himself', pp. 189-190.

[312] For further detail about the history, technology, and technique of the Theremin see Richard Orton and Hugh Davies, 'Theremin', *Grove Music Online; Oxford Music Online* <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> [accessed 2 September 2010].

[313] See James Wierzbicki, 'Weird Vibrations: How the Theremin Gave Musical Voice to Hollywood's Extraterrestrial "Others"', *Journal of Popular Film and Television,* 30.3 (2002), 125-135.

[314] Both of these films use the Theremin to represent mental distress, brought on by alcoholism in *The Lost Weekend* and a complex series of factors, including amnesia and a 'guilt complex', in *Spellbound. The Lost Weekend,* dir. Billy Wilder, comp. Miklós Rózsa (Paramount Pictures, 1945).

'weirdly oscillating sonority is an apt image of mental derangement').[315] Examination of the conductor's score for *The Spiral Staircase* seems to corroborate this, as the notes of the Theremin part are missing from the reduction throughout, suggesting that the instrument was not recorded at the same session used for the orchestral parts.



Example 4.5. *The Spiral Staircase:* killer's motif in the opening scene

The killer's motif comprises an opening leap of a perfect fifth, followed by a descent of a semitone, making the interval between its opening and closing notes that of a diminished fifth/augmented fourth, also known as a tritone. The tritone, as William Drabkin notes, is an 'ambiguous' interval, as it occurs at the exact halfway point of the octave (the perfect fifth, traditionally theorised as the most fundamental interval outside the octave in Western tonality, splits the octave just above the halfway point), and it is one that is frequently associated with the depiction of evil in many Romantic operas.[316] The killer's motif therefore treats the "stable" interval of the perfect fifth almost as a passing note, before resolving onto the much more ambiguous and unstable interval of the tritone.

When considered together with other elements of the killer's representation in *The Spiral Staircase,* these musical and timbral connotations arguably help to "feminise" the killer by colluding in the presentation of his crimes as resulting from some kind of madness or hysteria, which, as earlier discussion of medical discourse notes, is typically portrayed as a problem associated with women.[317] Throughout the narrative Albert is portrayed as a finicky, pedantic academic, especially when compared with his younger brother, the easy-going and romantically successful Steven. However, neither of the Warren brothers is portrayed as a "real man", and questions about masculinity and what it means to be a man feature throughout the film. The Warren brothers are explicitly positioned as falling short of many of their late father's standards of masculinity, as Steven highlights during a conversation with his brother:

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[315] Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood*, pp. 173-174.

[316] William Drabkin, 'Tritone', *Grove Music Online; Oxford Music Online* <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> [accessed 2 September 2010].

[317] This idea is also occasionally present in the score for *Experiment Perilous,* although never developed as fully or as obviously as in *The Spiral Staircase.* See, for instance, Example 4.1 which shows the oscillating texture of one of the suspense cues underscoring Bailey's description of Nick's mental instability to Clag.

Steven: Let's stop sparring. You're angry because I took Blanche out. You're angry because since I've been home Blanche and I have gotten to know each other pretty well.

Albert: You know Steven, you always did smirk. Even when you were a child. It's one of the things my father didn't like about you.

Steven: He was my father too. You know, I'm inclined to think that father was disappointed in both of us. Neither of us fit his idea of what a real man should be: a gun-totin', hard-drinking, tough-living, god-fearing citizen. He always used to say "the strong survive, the weak die". How wrong he was, Albert! Because you and I, the meek, have inherited the earth... [Steven indicates the house]

Mrs Warren also makes reference to her dead husband's disappointment with his 'weakling' sons, and to her own masculine prowess. She describes herself as being 'as good as any man', and tells Helen and Dr Parry that her husband 'told me I wasn't as beautiful as his first wife, but I was a much better shot', which is borne out by her shooting of Albert at the film's climax. Mrs Warren is a powerful and overbearing figure, despite her age and ill-health, and Albert tells Steven that caring for her has made him 'tired and strained'. The film suggests that Albert has buckled under the weight of his father's (and stepmother's) expectations, compensating for his lack of "masculinity" with academic achievement and the gradual descent into insanity that means he sees murder as a means of demonstrating his strength and superiority over those who are 'afflicted' or who reject him (Blanche). Albert makes this clear as he explains his actions to Helen at the climax of the film:

Albert: [...] Blanche, whom I loved, didn't love me. So she had to die. She's dead, and at peace. And Steven, you took care of him for me. Steven is weak, as I once was. What a pity my father didn't live to see me become strong. To see me dispose of the weak and imperfect of the world whom he detested. He would have admired me for what I'm going to do...

Albert, therefore, is portrayed as "un-manly" and feminised in both his guise as the academic professor and as the yet-to-be-revealed killer. The use of the Theremin motif to characterise the killer aurally in *The Spiral Staircase* engages with these complex and shifting ideas of gendered behaviour by acting as a sonic signifier of both instability and madness.

Alongside the point of view camerawork in these sequences, the Theremin motif can be understood as indicating the killer's point of audition in *The Spiral Staircase*. It replaces breathing, heartbeats, or other physically produced subjective sound (such as those typically

used in point of view sequences in more contemporary horror films)[318] with a musical representation of the killer's subjectivity, and one that renders his mental instability in sonic form. The killer's motif (and the use of the Theremin more generally) therefore serves a dual purpose: it functions as a conventional leitmotif by appearing whenever the killer is on screen or about to strike, and it also plays an important part in the "feminisation" of the killer through its sonic connotations of instability, hysteria, and madness.

These ideas about our enforced identification with the killer, his madness, and the feminisation of his condition are all introduced in the opening sequence of *The Spiral Staircase,* a sequence that also marks the start of our dual identification with Helen. After a brief series of establishing shots of a hotel exterior and lobby, we are shown a silent film screening that is taking place in the hotel, accompanied by a female piano player providing live accompaniment. Although identified within the film as *The Kiss,* the footage actually shown in *The Spiral Staircase* is from *The Sands of Dee,* a short silent film based on a Charles Kingsley poem describing the suicide by drowning of a young girl who is jilted by her lover.[319] We see shots of the film, the accompanist, and the audience, focusing in particular upon one young woman (Helen) who is perhaps less expensively dressed than many of the other women present and seems engrossed in the events unfolding on screen. The camera lingers on Helen's face before gradually angling upwards, and the scene dissolves to that of one of the hotel's upstairs bedrooms. Here, we see another young woman who limps heavily as she shuts the open window and moves towards her closet to find something to wear. As she takes out a dress and moves away, the camera remains focused upon the closet and then zooms in to reveal a watching eye, setting up the killer's point of view shot already outlined above and shown in Figure 4.3. The camera cuts to show a close up of the woman's hands above her head, frozen in the act of putting on her dress by the lunge of the killer. Her hands claw fruitlessly at the air as she makes choking sounds and then suddenly goes limp. We cut back to the "auditorium" below where *The Sands of Dee* is concluding with the body of the suicide victim being carried back home. As the film concludes with a large intertitle reading 'THE END' and the piano player reaches the final cadences of the accompaniment, the crash of the real-life victim's body hitting the floor above is heard, prompting an immediate investigation by hotel staff.

This sequence introduces the idea of the female "victim" as one of the primary themes of *The Spiral Staircase,* and also clearly establishes the idea of audience identification with both the victim and the killer. Helen, silently watching the distressing events of *The Sands of Dee*

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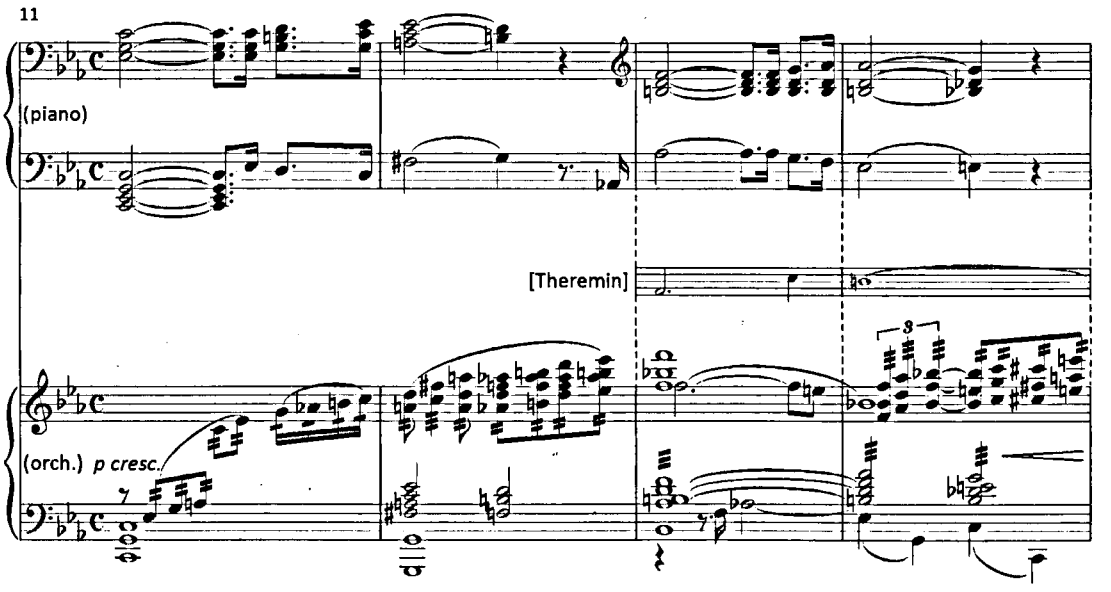
[318] Clover, 'Her Body, Himself', p. 190.
[319] *The Sands of Dee,* dir. D. W. Griffith (Biograph Company, 1912).

downstairs, occupies a position analogous to that of the cinema spectator, and we are explicitly encouraged to identify with the killer's actions through the use of point of view camerawork. The killer is literally "closeted" amongst the feminine clothing in the wardrobe (also a voyeur, like Helen and the cinema spectator), and the prominent sound of the Theremin as we see his point of view and the murder that follows ties his distorted vision and murderous presence clearly to ideas of madness and instability. Although we do not yet know who Helen is, the repeated focus on her face as she dabs away tears of empathy intercut with shots of the female "victims" of the silent film and the murder connects her with this narrative role. It also connects her with the enforced silence of these other victims, who are "muted" because of technology (the silent film), or violent strangulation.[320]



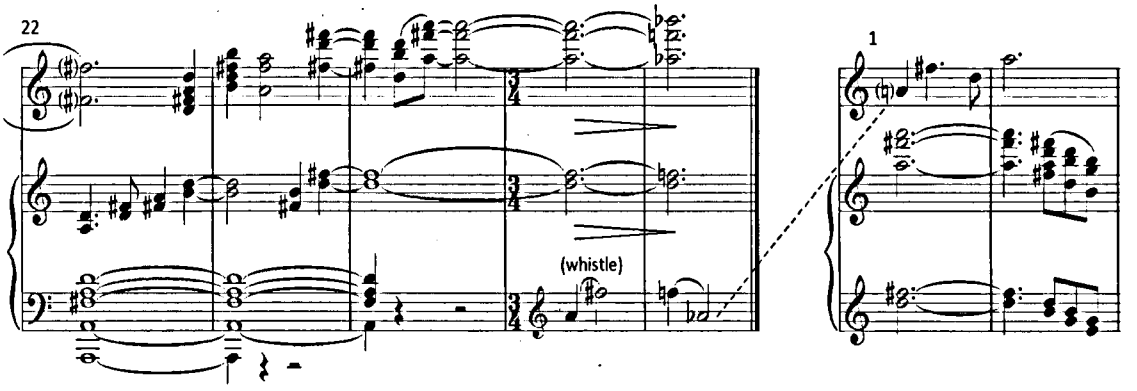
Example 4.6. *The Spiral Staircase:* musical accompaniment to the opening murder[321]

The scene also draws attention to the communicative properties of the soundtrack as part of the cinematic experience, highlighted by the diegetic presence of the piano player and the interplay of her music (the opening movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13) with the nondiegetic orchestral and Theremin cues. The orchestra enters as the camera zooms in towards the closet, with tremolo strings and increasing chromaticism helping to build tension, and the Theremin plays the killer's motif as we cut to the first shot of his concealed eye. All three elements of the score continue and crescendo during the murder,

[320] Barefoot also notes the connection between Helen's muteness and the silent actors on screen during this sequence, arguing that this highlights the use of melodrama in *The Spiral Staircase*. Barefoot, *Gaslight Melodrama: From Victorian London to 1940s Hollywood*, pp. 155-158. Chion makes a similar point, although referring to the presence of mute characters in sound film more generally. Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*. trans. by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 100.
[321] Webb, '*The Spiral Staircase*', cue M:12 'Theatre Piano', bb. 11-14.

before the nondiegetic parts drop out as we return to the auditorium, leaving the pianist to finish the sequence alone. Example 4.6 shows a section of this diegetic/nondiegetic musical texture; both the piano and the orchestral parts are included in the conductor's score, and the Theremin part has been added to show where the killer's motif occurs.

Much of the musical material that Webb uses in the score for *The Spiral Staircase* is connected to the killer's motif, helping to generate tension by carrying its musical characteristics through to other suspenseful sections of the soundtrack. This helps to reinforce the classic "whodunit" structure of the majority of the film, where all the male characters remain plausible suspects until relatively late on in the story. Despite the general prevalence of the tritone and descending semitone intervals throughout the score, Theremin orchestration is reserved exclusively for those scenes featuring the killer as an anonymous and largely "unseen" presence, keeping the original presentation of the killer's motif prominent and distinct.



Example 4.7. *The Spiral Staircase:* Helen and Parry in the carriage[322]

The score's other major recurring motif has strong similarities to the killer's motif, despite its general use as a love theme associated with the relationship between Helen and Dr Parry. Palmer refers to this as 'Helen's theme' and notes its relationship to the killer's motif, calling one a 'maimed or distorted version of the other'.[323] Despite the use of the this second theme in several sequences that feature Helen without Parry present, its first appearance in the film (except in the overture-style main title) establishes it clearly as relating strongly to the idea of Helen and Parry as a couple, rather than Helen as an individual. This shared ownership is reinforced by Parry's diegetic whistling of the theme to Helen, as shown in Example 4.7, which reproduces the end of cue M:21 and the beginning of cue M:22a from the conductor's score (these segue together seamlessly in the film). This whistling occurs during a scene where Parry

[322] Webb, '*The Spiral Staircase*', cue M:21 'Carriage Sequence', bb. 22-26. Webb, '*The Spiral Staircase*', cue M:22a 'Bridge', bb. 1-2.
[323] Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood*, p. 173.

gives Helen a lift part of the way home after the first murder has taken place. Nondiegetic scoring features in most of the scene, and establishes a peaceful and pastoral mood appropriate for the romance that is obviously simmering between the two. As Example 4.7 shows, Parry whistles the first four notes of the theme whilst high strings are sustained (highlighting the transition between the second and third notes with a change of chord), and he then asks Helen if she knows the words to 'that tune'. Helen smiles and looks coy, implying that she does, and then Parry continues to whistle the next four notes as the nondiegetic score continues to accompany him.[324] His diegetic whistling positions Parry as having primary control of the theme at this point in the film (explicitly highlighted because Helen's muteness excludes her from any audible participation in his recitation of it), and means that its use in subsequent scenes evokes his presence as Helen's suitor, even if he is physically absent. This has important implications for the positioning of Helen as "love interest" as well as "victim" in *The Spiral Staircase.* As well as the motif acting to reinforce her agency (as Palmer implies by labelling it 'Helen's theme'), this music can also be used to help contain and diminish that agency by reinforcing the presentation of Helen as "lacking" in voice and dependent on Parry as a doctor-husband-rescuer figure.

Example 4.8. *The Spiral Staircase:* comparison of killer's and love themes

This potential for the love theme to both to create and contain Helen's agency by reinforcing her "victim" status (and her muteness that has led to the killer's fixation with her) is also highlighted by its musical connections with the killer's motif. These are outlined in Example 4.8, which shows the overall similarity in shape between the opening of the love theme (a leap of a major sixth followed by a drop of a semitone) and the three notes of the killer's motif, where the opening leap is instead a perfect fifth. As well as helping to generate suspense about Parry's true motivations (he is a plausible suspect until well into the film), these similarities between the two themes also highlight some of the problematic connections between Parry and the killer and their view of Helen's muteness as some kind of 'affliction'.

[324] What 'that tune' might be is unclear: Palmer suggests that Parry's remark might have been explained in a scene that was cut from the film, or it could be an allusion to either a real or imaginary popular song with a romantic theme. Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood*, p. 185.

Helen's muteness, alongside the insanity of the serial killer, is the primary focus of medical discourse in *The Spiral Staircase,* and also has significant implications for the presentation of Helen and her engagement with other characters and the cinema audience. In the source novel for the film's screenplay, *Some Must Watch* by Ethel Lina White, Helen is not mute and the killer's murderous obsession with her is presented as a result of a misogynist desire to rid the world of 'superfluous women'. When Helen asks why she is superfluous, Professor Warren replies:

> 'Because you have neither beauty, nor brains, nor any positively useful quality, to pass on to posterity. You are refuse. Unskilled labor, in an over-crowded market. One extra mouth to feed. So – I am going to kill you.'[325]

Here, Helen's "crime" is to be merely ordinary, but the film adaptation rejects this as a convincing motivation for murder and instead chooses to focus on the idea of 'afflicted' women, adding a second layer of "victimisation" to the presentation of Helen and the killer's other victims. This is reinforced by the pitying tone and phrases used within the film to describe these women and their various physical and mental disabilities.

Amy Lawrence argues that the treatment of Helen in *The Spiral Staircase* can be considered emblematic of the way in which classical Hollywood deals with 'problem' posed by the speaking woman: Helen's muteness allows Parry to 'position her in ways which appeal to him', and her final speech is only permitted once the narrative has ensured her submission to the patriarchal order.[326] Significantly though, as Lawrence notes, Helen is not initially presented as subscribing to the view that she is either a victim or somehow "lacking" because of her muteness, and this makes her silence a signifier of potential 'rebellion':

> However, as long as her true feelings about the doctor and the past are held in reserve, and as long as she refuses to obey those who insist she speak, the danger looms that this seemingly pathetic silence might be a cover for rebellion. Her silence is what makes her inscrutable and a source of obsession for the other characters and the audience. The problem of woman's insistent silence is that it acts as a goad to, an overt expression of, even an accusation against patriarchal society's deafness to women's discourse.[327]

Helen's early interaction with other characters presents her as a popular and engaging woman who seems relatively contented with her position, and who is not cowed or excessively frightened by the grim warnings she receives about the possibility of the killer targeting her.

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[325] Ethel Lina White, *The Spiral Staircase* (New York: Popular Library, [n.d.]), p. 173.
[326] Lawrence, *Echo and Narcissus*, pp. 109-116 (p. 115).
[327] Lawrence, *Echo and Narcissus*, p. 115. See also Laing, *Onscreen Musicians, Unseen Emotions*, pp. 28-29.

Helen is resourceful and practical: when startled by a noise as she walks home through the isolated woods, she immediately arms herself with a broken branch, ready to defend herself if necessary. Later in the scene, still feeling uneasy (with good reason, as a flash of lightning shows us the killer lying in wait), she clatters the branch along the iron railings of the Warren estate, using this self-produced sound to dispel her fears and announce her presence confidently, providing a practical alternative to the use of her voice. Helen's agency in *The Spiral Staircase* therefore comes from seemingly contradictory sources: her explicit positioning as both potential victim (of the killer) and actual victim (of her muteness) cements her position as the narrative's central heroine figure, and her simultaneous refusal to conform to this positioning or accept her muteness as either disabling or lack celebrates her independence and feisty disposition.

However, Helen's view of her muteness changes through the course of the film, meaning that she comes to occupy a position in relation to her voice that is increasingly in line with that of the medical discourse introduced by Dr Parry. Parry "diagnoses" Helen's muteness as a physical manifestation of a mental problem – the shock and guilt she felt when she was unable to scream for help as her parents' house burned with them trapped inside – and clearly views it as a problem that she must overcome if she is to "progress" in any way. This idea of progression or improvement is referred to when Parry talks dismissively about the work that Helen does at the Warren house, and his insistence on getting her cured implies that her disability may also prove to be a barrier to his acceptance of her romantically.[328] Heather Laing notes that in films featuring a female mute, 'the whole narrative turns on the inducement of the woman actually to *speak* within the diegetic space', thereby returning her to a 'socially desirable' construction, and Parry's treatment of Helen can be seen as conforming to this tendency.[329]

Although Parry's medical training and connections can provide his patient with a means of treatment, he clearly views Helen herself as the root cause of her muteness: she is simply "not trying hard enough" to speak. Two sections of Parry's dialogue demonstrate these ideas: the first from the early carriage ride, where his whistling of the love theme is preceded with remarks about Helen's lack of effort in seeking a cure:

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[328] Chion argues that the mute in cinema may be constructed as desirable, but is rarely presented as part of a romantic couple: 'On occasion the mute is the object of desire, as long as no one ever succeeds in having her'. Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, p. 99.

[329] Laing, *Onscreen Musicians, Unseen Emotions*, pp. 27-28.

Parry: I got to wondering how long you're going to go on like this. I mean doing the work you're doing at the Warrens'. You used to want to be a nurse or a teacher. You mean you're going to give up that, without making an effort to get your voice back again? Yes, I know Helen, you did see a doctor once, but that was a long time ago – they might have discovered a lot since then. There are specialists in Boston now. I don't want to build your hopes up Helen, but it seems such a shame to give up so easily. You'd rather I wouldn't talk about it, wouldn't you? Alright, I won't.
[Parry pats Helen's hand as she holds his medical bag, and then begins to whistle]

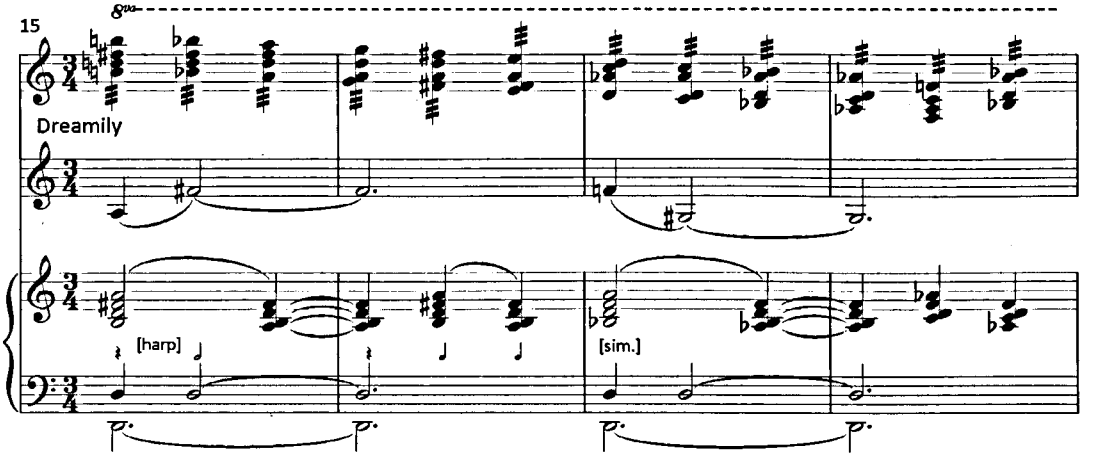
Later, when Parry visits the Warren house to see Mrs Warren, he "persuades" Helen to see a specialist in Boston by describing the story of her parents' death in detail, despite her severe distress. As Helen lies sobbing on a chair, Parry claims it was "for her own good" and equates his own situation as the new doctor in town to Helen's:

Parry: I'm sorry Helen, but I had to do it. It's only because I wanted to help you. Go over everything that happened that day, have the courage to see it all again and by not blocking out of your mind you may find your voice again. I don't like being an outsider and you shouldn't either. I know what I'm talking about because I'm an outsider here myself. A lot of people don't want me. They want me to quit. But I won't, because there's at least one person who wants me here and that's good enough for me.
[Parry grabs Helen's arms and pulls her up to face him]
And there's one person who wants you to talk and that ought to be good enough for you. Look at me! Look at me! You remember how wonderful it was when you had a voice, when you could say 'hello' and 'thank you'? When you could yell back at someone who started picking at you? I do it all the time. You look at me as though you don't believe it, but I know I'm right!
[He stands up, pulling her with him and starts to shake her]
Try to talk! Try it! Try it!

After each of these episodes, Helen seems immediately more concerned about her muteness: following the carriage ride we see her fruitlessly trying to speak to her reflection in the mirror on the staircase (her lack of success highlighted by the distorted point of view shot of her from the killer's perspective where she is shown without a mouth); and after the second scene where Parry tries to force her to speak, Helen fantasises about her wedding to Parry. This fantasy is shown as a subjective dream sequence, where Helen shuts her eyes and the image dissolves to show her and Parry, in formal eveningwear, waltzing around the entrance hall of the Warren house. The sequence dissolves again to show Helen descending the stairs dressed as a bride, watched by Mr and Mrs Oates, Blanche, and the Warrens. As the ceremony

progresses, the fantasy breaks down because Helen cannot speak in order to say 'I do'. We cut back to the present where she looks confused and distressed.

This fantasy sequence marks the moment in the film where Helen is shown as unequivocally viewing her muteness as a problem and as a barrier to her romantic relationship with Parry. The fact that this follows on from his rough and bullying treatment of her in the previous scene highlights the connection between Parry's medical discourse and Helen's positioning as "victim" of her muteness; a muteness that is also the primary cause of her victimisation at the hands of the killer. It also emphasises the collapse in distance between the categories of "victim" and "love interest" that Helen occupies in *The Spiral Staircase,* a collapse that has her simultaneously romantic and medical relationship with Parry at its centre. Both Parry and the killer are obsessed with curing Helen's muteness in order to "possess" her: Parry seeks to cure her medically and then possess her as his wife, and the killer views his desire to possess Helen through murder as one that will also bring about her cure. Helen's acceptance that Parry is correct in his opinion of her muteness is used to justify his unpleasant and rough behaviour in the previous scene, and it is also effectively what "justifies" her subjective fantasy sequence. Instead of emphasising Helen's subjectivity in a positive and agent way, this actually serves primarily to reinforce her victimisation on several levels: the various ways in which her muteness marks her as victim, and the increasingly subservient role she occupies as Parry's love interest. Helen's stressed subjectivity is therefore one that by now emphasises primarily her own "lack" and containment.



Example 4.9. *The Spiral Staircase:* Helen's dream sequence[330]

As Example 4.9 shows, the love theme provides the primary basis for the waltz-style scoring of the dream sequence, with chromatic tremolo strings over the top giving an indication of the

[330] Webb, '*The Spiral Staircase*', cue M:66 'Dream Sequence', bb. 15-18.

"fantasy" nature of the dance. Again, the love theme acts as the musical site of engagement for both the agent and contained elements of Helen's presentation in *The Spiral Staircase,* emphasising her subjectivity through the presence of dream sequence and its music as "her" fantasy, but also undermining this fantasy because of the strong connections that this thematic material has to both the killer's motif and the problematic figure of Dr Parry.

Helen's resourcefulness and survival point towards her occupying a role similar to those of Clover's 'Final Girls', but in *The Spiral Staircase* this presentation is tempered by the film's reinforcement of Parry's medical discourse in its finale. Although keeping her wits about her long enough to escape from Albert's clutches several times, it is the "manly" figure of Mrs Warren who finally saves Helen's life. This act also triggers the sudden restoration of Helen's voice: firstly to scream, and then immediately to phone Parry for assistance, reinforcing her status as "victim" at the very moment when the greatest threat to her safety has been dealt with. The return of Helen's voice is supposed to signal her final move away from the "victim" category to that of "love interest", but the film's previous presentation of Parry as complicit in her positioning as victim means that this move is by no means clear cut. If, as Palmer suggests, nondiegetic music is used to 'speak for' Helen in *The Spiral Staircase,*[331] then she is portrayed as having just one thing to say, and this is reinforced by her croaky cries of 'Dr Parry' during the film's final scene. Instead of contributing to the creation of agency for Helen, music in *The Spiral Staircase* works primarily to reinforce her subjugation and containment, both as victim and love interest.

In both *The Spiral Staircase* and *Experiment Perilous,* music plays a significant role in the articulating the position of Helen and Allida as female victims. Although initially seeming to be very "present" in the musical scores of these films (through the use of recurring thematic material associated with them) music is actually used primarily as a means of reducing their agency through the soundtrack's engagement with the dominant and controlling male medical figures of Dr Bailey and Dr Parry. Bailey's control of the narrative in *Experiment Perilous* extends to at least partial control of the soundtrack as well, and this is used to direct audience perception of both Allida and Cissie through Bailey's control of "their" musical themes. Similarly, in *The Spiral Staircase,* Helen's victimisation is stressed musically by the association of the love theme with Parry's bullying behaviour and refusal to accept her muteness, and the similarity of this theme to that of the killer who is targeting her. Music can therefore be seen as an important part of the 'encompassing discourse' that Doane discusses as mediating

[331] Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood*, p. 175.

female subjectivity in the woman's film, simultaneously seeming to grant narrative agency to Allida and Helen, but actually working largely to control it.

Chapter 5

Detective agency?

Music, sound, and the female investigator

The detective in the crime narrative

The detective is a key figure in the crime genre and appears in many different guises, including: the traditional semi-amateur investigative figures of classical or "golden age" Western detective fiction and its adaptations;[332] professional investigators who are agents of law and order; gifted amateur sleuths of all ages; and other professionals whose work has an investigative element (such as the journalist). Despite this diversity, crime narratives most commonly represent the detective figure as a "truth seeker". They are often placed in a similar position to that of the reader or audience in assembling and interpreting clues so as to understand events, apportion blame, exonerate the innocent, and seek "justice" of some kind. Detectives usually have access to the scene of the crime and to the suspects, and this in turn gives them agency, which thereby reinforces their "access" to, and influence upon, the audience.

The most frequently encountered detective characters (such as the police and other "officially" employed figures, or the detectives of the golden age crime writers), often reflect this agency and privilege in their personal circumstances. They are usually white, middle or upper class men who either have substantial private assets or institutional resources at their disposal.[333] Less traditional investigative figures are also frequently less "privileged", which may inhibit their access to some of these resources and instead force reliance on different techniques and tactics. This often results in interesting, and sometimes problematic, investigative figures who are simultaneously agent (because of the elevated position of the detective in the crime genre), and contained or controlled in some way (because of those elements of their construction which mark them out as "other"). Examples of this kind of "non-traditional" investigative figure include young detectives aimed at a teenage market (including those of the

[332] The 1920s and 1930s are often referred to as the golden age of detective fiction, when writers such as Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers (building upon earlier developments by authors including Arthur Conan Doyle and Wilkie Collins) popularised the 'clue-puzzle' style mystery and the figure of the logical, reasoning detective. See Stephen Knight, *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 85-93.

[333] Knight, *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity*, pp. 86-88.

Stratemeyer Syndicate who published series' featuring Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys);[334] detectives who challenge the overwhelming whiteness of Western detective fiction; the private eyes of the "hard-boiled" school; and female investigative figures of all kinds.[335]

These last two categories are the most germane to the films studied here: many 1940s crime films feature major or minor investigative roles for women, and hard-boiled fiction was an important influence upon the emergence of *film noir*. The hard-boiled style emerged in American literature during the mid-1920s, and is characterised by its unsentimental and "gritty" approach to the depiction of crime, violence, and sex. These stories usually featured tough-talking, hard-hitting, and fast-living detectives, and were more morally ambiguous and cynical than established types of detective fiction, often employing less "polished" prose as part of their style. The style was initially associated in America with the popular pulp magazine *Black Mask,* and several writers of the hard-boiled school (including James M. Cain, Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and Cornell Woolrich) were featured in this periodical and credited with creating a "realistic" kind of detective story that was more reflective of the mood and composition of American society. Translations of this kind of American fiction, together with the imitative writings of other authors, became popular in many countries during the late 1930s and 1940s (particularly Argentina and France) and were an important influence on early *noir* criticism.[336] The mood and tone of hard-boiled fiction, and its central detective figures,

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[334] The Stratemeyer Syndicate was a successful and influential publishing operation headed by Edward Stratemeyer. It hired writers to work anonymously on a per-book fee basis, providing them with pre-existing characters and detailed plot outlines in order to produce large numbers of formulaic books across several series. Although similar operations were in place for adult fiction, the Stratemeyer Syndicate was the first to target the child and teenage market, specialising in mystery series including those featuring the Bobbsey Twins, Nancy Drew, and the Hardy Boys. These, in turn, were an important influence in the creation and marketing of other series aimed at teenagers, including books featuring the detective characters of Cherry Ames and Judy Bolton. For information about the Syndicate and authorship of its books see James D. Keeline, 'The Nancy Drew *Myth*tery Stories', in *Nancy Drew and Her Sister Sleuths: Essays on the Fiction of Girl Detectives*, ed. by Michael G. Cornelius and Melanie E. Gregg (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, 2008), pp. 13-32. Further discussion of the "girl sleuth" can be found in *Nancy Drew and Her Sister Sleuths: Essays on the Fiction of Girl Detectives*, ed. by Michael G. Cornelius and Melanie E. Gregg (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, 2008); *Nancy Drew and Company: Culture, Gender, and Girls' Series*, ed. by Sherrie A. Inness (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1997); Bobbie Ann Mason, *The Girl Sleuth*, New edn (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

[335] Stephen Knight gives a thorough overview of the diverse presentation of the detective figure in more recent crime fiction. See Knight, *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity*, pp. 162-208.

[336] For further discussion of the characteristics of hard-boiled fiction and its links with *film noir,* see Megan E. Abbot, *The Street Was Mine: White Masculinity in Hardboiled Fiction and Film Noir* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Claire Gorrara, 'Cultural Intersections: The American Hard-Boiled Detective Novel and Early French Roman Noir', *The Modern Language Review,* 98.3 (2003), 590-601; William Marling, 'On the Relation between the American Roman-Noir and Film Noir', *Literature-Film Quarterly,* 21.3 (1993), 178-193.

were a significant influence on the *film noir* strand of the 1940s crime film, and several *noirs* are adaptations of hard-boiled novels or stories.[337]

The 1940s private eye frequently occupies an ambiguous position, both morally and more personally: morally, he often appears to be "in between" the worlds of the criminal and the police; and personally, in spite of his wit and tough, self-sufficient exterior, he is often emasculated in some way. Despite these "flaws", the central investigators of these narratives are usually shown to adhere strongly to their own codes of behaviour, enabling them to continue to act as the "moral compass" of the crime story, even if they appear fallible in comparison to more traditional detective figures. Raymond Chandler, in a 1944 essay originally written for *The Atlantic Monthly*, summed up the significance and characteristics of the hard-boiled detective as follows:

> [...] down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective in this kind of story must be such a man. He is the hero; he is everything. He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor – by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world.[338]

Examples of this kind of morally ambiguous investigative figure can be found in several of the films discussed here, including two characters played by George Raft (the independent and insubordinate police detective of *Nocturne,* and the fearless bookmaker who stands up to the mob in *Race Street),* the tough but charismatic military characters played by Robert Mitchum in *Crossfire* and *The Big Steal,*[339] and Dick Powell's portrayal of Chandler's private investigator Philip Marlowe in *Murder, My Sweet.*

The female investigative figure in 1940s Hollywood

Unsurprisingly, given the typical construction of masculinity in Western society, these tough and self-sufficient detectives were usually men, and Chandler refers to them as such throughout 'The Simple Art of Murder'. However, there are some examples of female private eye figures in hard-boiled literature, including the tough and influential characters of Bertha

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[337] Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street*, pp. 33-44. Naremore discusses the influence of both American and British crime fiction on the emergence of *film noir,* arguing that literary 'modernists' such as Dashiell Hammett and Graham Greene were an important influence on the style and politics of these films. Naremore, *More Than Night*, pp. 40-81.

[338] Raymond Chandler, 'The Simple Art of Murder: An Essay', in *The Simple Art of Murder*, ed. by Raymond Chandler (New York: Random House, 1998), pp. 1-18 (p. 18).

[339] *The Big Steal,* dir. Don Siegel, comp. Leigh Harline (RKO Radio Pictures, 1949).

Cool (introduced in 1939 by Erle Stanley Gardner writing under the pseudonym A. A. Fair) and Gale Gallagher, the first independent female eye to appear in a full length novel, *I Found Him Dead* (where Gallagher's name is used as a pseudonym for the writing team of Will Oursler and Margaret Scott).[340] Despite the modest success of the literary female private eye, these professional detective characters do not appear with any regularity in the cinema, unlike their male counterparts who provide *film noir* with one of its most important character archetypes.

This cinematic lack of visibility of the female private eye during the time when hard-boiled fiction was popular can be seen as reflecting some of the more general problems associated with the female detective, both in fiction and on screen. As mentioned above, the agency and authority usually granted to the detective in the crime story is at odds with more traditional representations of female characters in many narratives. In her introduction to a 1928 collection of mystery, horror, and crime short stories, crime writer Dorothy L. Sayers is scathing about the characterisation of female investigative figures:

> There have also been a few women detectives, but on the whole, they have not been very successful. In order to justify their choice of sex, they are obliged to be so irritatingly intuitive as to destroy that quiet enjoyment of the logical which we look for in our detective reading. Or else they are active and courageous, and insist on walking into physical danger and hampering the men engaged on the job. Marriage, also, looms too large in their view of life; which is not surprising, for they are all young and beautiful. Why these charming creatures should be able to tackle abstruse problems at the age of twenty-one or thereabouts, while the male detectives are usually content to wait till their thirties or forties before setting up as experts, it is hard to say. Where do they pick up their worldly knowledge? Not from personal experience, for they are always immaculate as the driven snow. Presumably it is all intuition.[341]

Sayers sardonically notes several issues that have continued to be a feature of the characterisation of the female investigator in print and in other media. She identifies an inability to reconcile the "masculine" powers of deductive reasoning or good judgement with the typical construction of female characters: female detectives are primarily presented as excessively reliant on 'intuition', or as blundering and over-enthusiastic amateurs who are

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[340] A. A. Fair, *The Bigger They Come* (New York: Morrow, 1939); Gale Gallagher, *I Found Him Dead* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1947). For a detailed overview of female detective characters in hard-boiled literature see Kathleen Gregory Klein, *The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre*, Second edn (Urbana and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 122-148; pp. 191-199; William Marling, 'Early Female Authors of Hard-Boiled Writing', detnovel.com <http://www.detnovel.com/EarlyFemaleAuthors.html> [accessed 8 September 2010].

[341] Dorothy L. Sayers, 'Introduction', in *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery and Horror*, ed. by Dorothy L. Sayers (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1928), pp. 9-47 (pp. 15-16).

more of an investigative hindrance than a help.[342] Although acknowledging some more positive constructions of the female investigator, Sayers concludes that 'the really brilliant woman detective has yet to be created'.[343]

More recent academic criticism of the female detective identifies similar tensions between the crime genre and the presentation of women in investigative roles. Many historical surveys of female detective characters in literary fiction, such as *The Lady Investigates* by Patricia Craig and Mary Cadogan, emphasise the lack of credibility and respect accorded to these characters in many of their appearances, despite the progressive and positive aspects of the female investigator as active, practical, and intelligent.[344] Kathleen Gregory Klein, in *The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre,* the most thorough examination of the history of professional female detectives, argues that only the most recent developments in the crime novel have started to find a way to reconcile feminist politics with the overall conservatism and male-domination of the genre.[345] However, Sally Munt argues that it is possible to read elements of feminist resistance as well as hegemonic compliance in many earlier examples of the form's female characters, as well as in more recent work (an idea that is also present in much of Priscilla Walton and Manina Jones' discussion of contemporary crime fiction and female investigators created by female authors).[346] Munt concludes that: 'Despite its well-known apparent "unsuitability" for women, crime fiction clearly can manifest feminine novelistic forms, and feminist political agendas [...] The peculiar attraction of a crime novel is its ability to appease sometimes contradictory desires'.[347]

Appealing to 'contradictory desires' is also an important feature of cinematic presentations of the female investigator, which frequently reveal many of the problems and anxieties identified around the figure by literary critics. The majority of critical writing about female detectives outside print media has tended to focus on the increasing visibility of the female investigator

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[342] Miss Marple, perhaps the most well-known literary female detective, is initially characterised by just such 'intuition', although in this case Agatha Christie is at pains to stress that this has its roots in empirical observation and human experience. However, as the series develops Miss Marple becomes increasingly "active" in her detection, as demonstrated most clearly in the novel *Nemesis,* where she is effectively employed as a private investigator under the terms of a deceased friend's will.
For a more detailed analysis of Miss Marple's methods of detection, see Marion Shaw and Sabine Vanacker, *Reflecting on Miss Marple* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 60-88. Agatha Christie, *Nemesis* (London: Collins, 1971).

[343] Sayers, 'Introduction', p. 16.

[344] Patricia Craig and Mary Cadogan, *The Lady Investigates: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[345] Klein, *The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre*, pp. 230-242.

[346] Sally Munt, *Murder by the Book? Feminism and the Crime Novel* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Priscilla L. Walton and Manina Jones, *Detective Agency: Women Rewriting the Hard-Boiled Tradition* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 86-117.

[347] Munt, *Murder by the Book?,* p. 207.

in contemporary film and television,[348] but examples of the role can be found in much earlier cinema. Thomas Leitch notes the popularity of the whodunit narrative and what he describes as 'unofficial-detective' characters in early cinema, and includes the characters of Hildegard Withers and Nancy Drew in his list of literary detectives adapted for the cinema.[349] These characters are amongst the earliest examples of crime films focused around the female detective figure: RKO produced several light hearted films featuring Stuart Palmer's character Hildegarde Withers, a sleuthing schoolteacher, beginning with *The Penguin Pool Murder* in 1932 and concluding with *Forty Naughty Girls* in 1937;[350] and four Nancy Drew films, released by Warner Bros., capitalised upon the popularity of the girl detective in teenage fiction during the 1930s.[351] Helen Hanson lists several examples of 1940s films featuring prominent female detective roles and argues that one of the primary reasons that many of these films are neglected is that much of the critical attention paid to the 1940s crime film (especially to *film noir)* has tended to focus upon its links to hard-boiled fiction, and consequently to privilege the figure of the male private eye.[352]

The overwhelming majority of female sleuths in classical cinema are amateur or "accidental" investigators. This status often works to limit some of the agency accorded to the detective figure via the removal of the idea of detection as an active choice or profession, or by overemphasising the "feminine" trait of intuition. Another aspect of the literary female detective tradition that also features in many films is the co-existence of romantic and investigative themes in the narrative. Whereas for Sayers this romantic plot often obscures the focus on detection, Hanson argues that in the 1940s crime film it is often entwined with the criminal investigation in ways that can be considered indicative of the changing role of women in the workplace during this period.[353] The increase in women working in urban clerical positions during the late 1930s and early 1940s is reflected by an increasing presence of young, professional women in Hollywood film, and Hanson notes that many of the investigative roles for women in 1940s crime and mystery films belong to these characters:

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[348] Lisa M. Dresner, *The Female Investigator in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture* (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, 2007), pp. 63-153; Linda Mizejewski, *Hardboiled and High Heeled: The Woman Detective in Popular Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004).
[349] Leitch, *Crime Films*, pp. 170-174.
[350] *Forty Naughty Girls,* dir. Edward F. Cline (RKO Radio Pictures, 1937); *The Penguin Pool Mystery,* dir. George Archainbaud (RKO Radio Pictures, 1932).
[351] *Nancy Drew - Detective,* dir. William Clemens (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1938); *Nancy Drew - Reporter,* dir. William Clemens, comp. Heinz Roemheld (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1939); *Nancy Drew - Trouble Shooter,* dir. William Clemens (Warner. Bros Pictures, 1939); *Nancy Drew and the Hidden Staircase,* dir. William Clemens (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1939).
[352] Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines*, pp. 27-28.
[353] Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines*, pp. 11-32.

> The increased emphasis on the "woman's angle" resulted in a number of films where working-girl characters use their position in the city to investigate and solve crime enigmas. The films present female investigative action as concurrent with a negotiation of women's public and private roles, and narrative strands of the crime-enigma are intertwined with romance. The films therefore visualise women negotiating, adapting and transforming their roles in meaningful and revealing ways.[354]

Despite these positive and agent aspects of the 'working-girl investigator', many of these narratives also demonstrate strategies to contain and diminish that agency. The romance strand of these films is often used to "justify" the investigative activity of the female, ensuring that the (less agent) position of woman as love interest is not forgotten, and that this role can be used to frame a more temporary positioning as detective. Romance is usually theorised as presenting a threat to the independence of the male *noir* detective, but Hanson argues that the female investigative figure has a different perspective on this matter: her 'carefully negotiated role as resourceful helper-in-exceptional circumstance allows her to embody a female figure who is a suitable "partner" to the man of the city'.[355] These films can therefore be understood as a partial reversal of the more commonplace narrative trajectory of Hollywood crime films, where men are the active "investigators" of both crime and women.[356] It is important to note, however, that as well as this "enabling" function of romance for the female investigator, it often fulfils a dual role in acting to diminish or contain her agency.

The 1940s female detective figures discussed in this chapter are primarily examples of this kind of portrayal: their investigative action is temporary and motivated out of necessity, usually in order to facilitate a romantic resolution in the plot, or because the initial positioning of the woman as love interest is threatened. Many of these films also display additional strategies for justifying investigative activity that are particular to the 1940s, including the presence of the working-girl investigator, and of female gothic heroines who are motivated by a perceived threat to their own safety. However, the RKO films discussed here also include two rare examples of professional female investigators: in *Notorious,* which is the subject of an extended case study discussion in chapter seven, and *They Made Her a Spy,* released by the studio in 1939.[357]

The title of *They Made Her a Spy* is immediately revealing about the "problem" of the agent and active female investigator; Irene (Sally Eilers), the film's heroine, is not "made" to be a spy

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[354] Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines*, pp. 17-18.
[355] Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines*, p. 29.
[356] Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, p. 60.
[357] *They Made Her a Spy,* dir. Jack B. Hively, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1939).

in any way – instead she willingly volunteers for the role, resigning from her job to do so. Irene wants to avenge the death of her brother by going undercover to catch the saboteurs who killed him whilst on manoeuvres with the US army. Despite initial scepticism from the army chiefs, Irene soon proves herself a capable, brave, and intelligent spy. She acts as a double agent, working for the manager of the terrorist operation, Dr Krull (Fritz Leiber), whom she impresses with her professionalism. Despite the repeated advances of one of Krull's subordinates, and a night posing as a married couple with Huntley (Allan Lane), a fellow employee, Irene remains focused and chaste until her mission is complete. Huntley is also then revealed to be a "spy" (this time a journalist), and the film ends with a comic epilogue showing their honeymoon.

They Made Her a Spy is something of an anomaly amongst the films discussed here that feature a female investigative figure: Irene is a professional spy (at least for the course of this particular narrative), and the film makes little obvious attempt to contain or diminish her agency in any way. She holds her own against the sometimes sneering and sexist attitudes displayed by male figures on both sides of the law, and her aptitude for detection is emphasised repeatedly during sections of the film that highlight her investigative techniques. For example, an early sequence showing the complex passing of a coded message in a restaurant is largely shot from Irene's perspective, and the film makes a feature of her ability to improvise on several occasions, including her convincing portrayal of a bickering wife and a successful pose as a stockings saleswoman that allows her to procure several blank passports. The attempts of Huntley to act as Irene's masculine "protector" are repelled by both Irene and Krull, and her position within the narrative is only shifted from "detective" to "love interest" at the very end. This emphasises Irene's primary construction as a professional spy throughout the film, and arguably helps to dilute any impact that the romantic resolution to the plot has on her character's positioning and agency. *They Made Her a Spy* uses music more conventionally than other films discussed here, deploying nondiegetic cues at important structural points (the opening and closing titles, and an early montage sequence showing the effects of the saboteurs), and two moments when the film is particularly suspenseful. These cues fit the general principles of classical scoring and work with other elements of the narrative to reinforce its construction of Irene and other characters, who develop little over the course of the film.

The case studies that follow make more significant, although often still subtle, use of music to position and reposition female investigative characters in relation to the issues of crime and

romance. They represent a variety of approaches to both the creation and containment of agency in the female investigator.

Case studies 2
Working girls and avenging angels

This group of films all feature working-girl investigators, whose jobs are either used as one way of explaining and justifying their investigative agency, or as a means of introducing them into the situation surrounding the crime. As in Hanson's model of these narratives *(Stranger on the Third Floor* is one of the examples she uses), the romance strand of the narrative also plays an important part in locating the female within a temporary investigative role. In these case studies, this romance strand also acts as the primary means of containment for the female investigator.

Stranger on the Third Floor

Often cited as one of the first *films noirs, Stranger on the Third Floor* follows a newspaper reporter, Mike (John McGuire), who gives an eyewitness account at a murder trial that sends Briggs (Elisha Cook Jr) to death row. His girlfriend Jane (Margaret Tallichet) expresses some doubts about the safety of the conviction, and although Mike dismisses her warnings, he is obviously troubled by them. Walking home after the trial, Mike notices a suspicious stranger (Peter Lorre) outside his building and later sees him inside as well. The Stranger runs off, and Mike realises he can't hear his annoying neighbour, Meng (Charles Halton), snoring anymore. Still preoccupied with Briggs' trial, Mike falls into an uneasy sleep and imagines that Meng has been murdered and that he is convicted of the crime. Upon waking, Mike finds that Meng is indeed dead, as a result of his throat being cut. Mike panics and wants to flee, but Jane persuades him to stay and inform the police. Mike then becomes the victim of the film's second miscarriage of justice, as no-one except Jane will believe his story about the mysterious man with a white scarf.

When she receives the news that Mike has been arrested, Jane immediately leaves her secretarial job and starts to look for the Stranger. Eventually, after questioning as many people as she can, she stumbles across him in a coffee shop. Jane persuades him to trust her and extracts his confession to both murders, before he realises what she is doing and turns on her. The Stranger is killed by a truck as he threatens Jane, leaving her and Mike free to marry, and Briggs a free man.

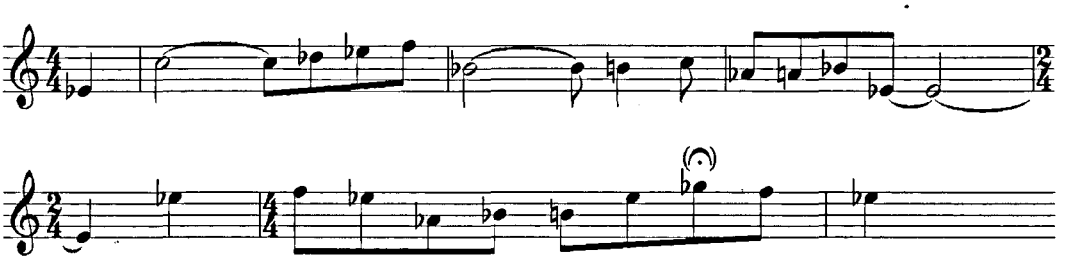
Hanson cites *Stranger on the Third Floor* as a good example of the agency of the working-girl investigator, noting that Jane's mobility contrasts with Mike's imprisonment, and that her role as the film's 'moral centre' is endorsed by its ending.[358] Frank Krutnik, on the other hand, describes Jane's investigative activity as 'compromised by her femininity – for, although she can find the escaped lunatic [...] she cannot free herself from the danger her discovery leads to'.[359] Additionally, Krutnik views the romance strand of the film as acting to limit and obscure Jane's role as detective: 'the woman's placement in the conventional masculine role as detective is motivated by, and ultimately bound within, her love for the wrongly-convicted hero'.[360] This differs from Hanson's view of the working-girl investigator film (where the crime and romance strands essentially complement each other), and it also fails to sufficiently acknowledge the difference in presentation between Mike and Jane. Although Jane's agency is contained, and arguably compromised, by the film's emphasis on her "feminine" helplessness when the Stranger finally realises she is out to trap him, this is put into perspective by Mike's plight. He is reliant on Jane's investigative activity to free him, and despite Jane's distress at the perceived brutality of the legal system, the film constructs him as by far the more "fragile" and helpless of the two. Jane is unafraid to act on her convictions, and her determination to free Mike outweighs her fear of confronting a madman. However, despite these positive aspects of Jane's construction as female detective, Krutnik is correct to highlight the negative impact that Jane's relationship with Mike has on her presentation as detective, as *Stranger on the Third Floor* diminishes Jane's agency through its repeated focus on Mike's viewpoint and point of audition.

Mike's profession as a reporter is in many ways analogous to that of the detective, and this helps to give him a high degree of agency in the early scenes of the film. These show him to be full of confidence in his own abilities and sure of his position at work, in court, and in his relationship with Jane. He repeatedly, and patronisingly, dismisses her doubts about the guilt of Briggs, blaming her "emotional" state and lack of legal knowledge for causing her to question his witness statement and the judge's verdict.

These agent, confident, and supposedly charismatic aspects of Mike are represented musically by the inclusion of a distinct and identifiable motif in Webb's score for *Stranger on the Third Floor.* This "Mike" motif first appears in the film's main title cue (which is structured, like many classical era opening title cues, as an overture-style medley of some of the score's most significant elements) and is transcribed in Example 5.1. The main feature of this motif is its

[358] Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines*, p. 24.
[359] Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street*, p. 194.
[360] Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street*, p. 194.

melody, a lyrical theme that is given a "jaunty", almost jazz-like feel through the use of syncopation. This melody is often accompanied with prominent and regular arpeggiated chords on the harp that sound almost like a strummed guitar, adding to the motif's air of "urban nonchalance". This motif contrasts with much of the material included in the score, which tends to emphasise much darker sonorities with unstable and ambiguous tonality, and acts to aid the portrayal of Mike as a confident "man of the city".

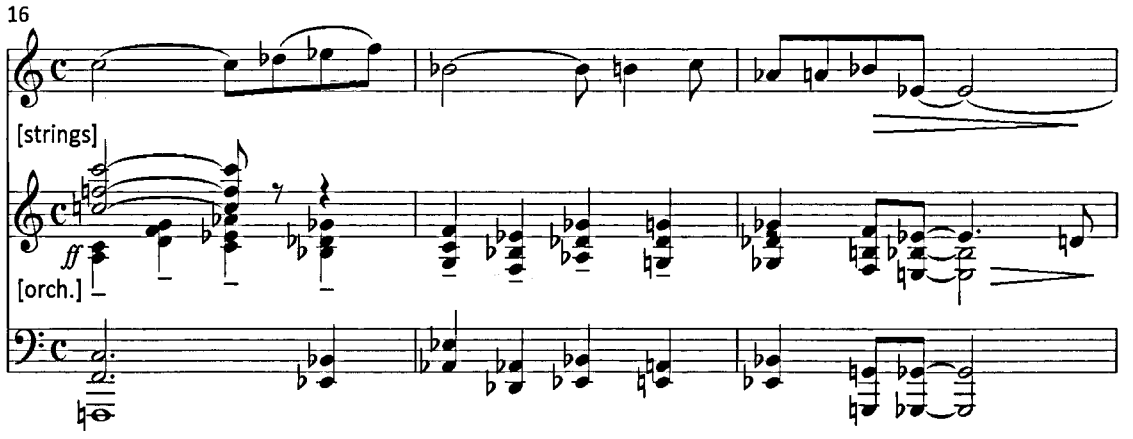


Example 5.1. *Stranger on the Third Floor:* "Mike" motif in the opening titles

This reading of the "Mike" motif's significance is supported by Webb's later re-use of this thematic material in his score for *Murder, My Sweet.* Example 5.2 shows a section of the main title from this film that features the motif; the melody is identical to that of the first half of Example 5.1, although here the theme (which here acts as the "Marlowe" motif) is accompanied by more complex harmonies that are indicative of the unsettling nature of *Murder, My Sweet's* main title. Throughout the film, this melody is associated strongly with the presence and agency of Marlowe, the film's private eye protagonist. Marlowe's viewpoint is stressed throughout the film via the use of voiceover narration and striking point of view shots. This is supported in the musical score by a similar emphasis on the "Marlowe" motif when he is most in control, and cues that emphasise his subjective response to situations where he is less typically agent (for example, the central section of the film where he is drugged uses smoked glass to evoke Marlowe's distorted point of view, and woozy, chromatic scoring with a high degree of reverberation added to represent his point of audition).[361] Webb's re-use of the "Mike" motif from *Stranger on the Third Floor* to act as a motif for Marlowe highlights its use as a signifier of "masculine" confidence, agency, and urban familiarity.[362]

[361] Palmer describes this section of the score in typically colourful language: 'The music is a black cloudy chaos of discordant brass, high screaming woodwinds (jabbing minor seconds as Marlowe feels the harpoon-like syringe bury itself in him) and high trilling strings to create a swirling effect as his body falls into the bottomless abyss'. Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood*, pp. 167-168.

[362] Palmer and Ness both associate this motif with Marlowe's relationship with Ann Grayle (Palmer arguing that it identifies Ann herself, and Ness that it represents Marlowe's 'longing for an idealized



Example 5.2. ***Murder, My Sweet:*** **"Marlowe" motif in the opening titles**[363]

However, Mike's certainty and confidence at the start of *Stranger on the Third Floor* is short-lived, and his increasing concerns that Briggs might be innocent are used as the initial motivation for *Stranger on the Third Floor's* frequent use of "internal" voiceover and flashback to depict Mike's subjectivity and increasingly fragile mental state.[364] The first of these voiceovers, which always allow us to eavesdrop upon Mike's inner monologue, begins after a phone call between Mike and Jane in which they discuss the guilty verdict. Jane again expresses her doubts about the conviction, and Mike dismisses them:

> Mike: Please Jane! After all, what do you know of law, and trials, and all those things? The odds are a million to one that that boy is guilty!
>
> Jane: It doesn't make any difference Michael. He'll be with us for the rest of our lives – I'll always hear his voice.

Jane's fears that they will be haunted by the cries of an innocent man are immediately proven to be well-founded: as Mike walks home past the courtroom we hear his subjective remembrance of Briggs' anguished cries of innocence. Mike's voiceover reveals his worries

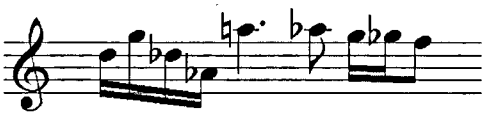
---

romantic relationship'), but cannot convincingly explain why the prominent presentations of the motif pre-empt Ann's appearance in the film. Neither analysis takes sufficient account of the centrality of Marlowe's experience to the whole construction of the narrative and the effect that this might have on the function and effect of the soundtrack. Ness, 'A Lotta Night Music', p. 64; Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood*, pp. 167-168.

[363] Webb, '*Farewell My Lovely*', cue M:10 'Main Title', bb. 16-18.

[364] The use of voiceover provides an interesting contrast between the presentation of Mike in *Stranger on the Third Floor* and Marlowe in *Murder, My Sweet.* Whilst Marlowe's voiceover, following the hard-boiled style of Raymond Chandler's source novel, is generally used to reinforce the presentation of Marlowe as tough, cynical, and wise-cracking, Mike's voiceover is primarily used to highlight his indecision and increasing fragility. In this way, Mike embodies some of the characteristics of the 'unreliable narrator', although here this unreliability results from the emphasis on his mental fragility, rather than any conscious desire to manipulate. See Kozloff, *Invisible Storytellers*, pp. 112-117.

about whether Briggs was really guilty, and his subsequent attempts to assuage his doubts and reassure himself. As he walks home, Mike remembers Jane's questions about Briggs' conviction and reluctantly begins to admit that she may be right.



Example 5.3. *Stranger on the Third Floor:* "fanfare" figure in the main title

This initial use of subjective voiceover is pre-empted and then accompanied by a long nondiegetic cue. This cue is in two parts: a short, noticeable, and ominous brass figure that pre-empts the use of voiceover and acts to highlight a point of view shot of the shadow of the scales of Justice on the courtroom wall; and then more subtle and low-key music that underscores Mike's walk home and his inner monologue. A similar combination of the brass figure with a shot of the scales of Justice has previously been used in the film's depiction of Briggs' trial (the sequence that Mike is about to remember), and it therefore effectively prepares us for the subjective sound that follows. The brass figure itself is a truncated version of the fanfare that opens the main title of the film (shown in Example 5.3), and this motif is used throughout the film at moments of shock, or to highlight particularly striking effects. The brevity, scoring (usually brass, but occasionally accented woodwind), and ominous nature of this motif make it particularly suitable for use as a stinger, and it comes to be associated with the Stranger's presence later in the film, clearly tying him to the miscarriage of justice hinted at earlier by the shots of the scales.[365] During Mike's later nightmare sequence, a three note derivative of this figure features throughout the imagined scenes in the courtroom, becoming especially prominent in the trombones during the final section of the sequence. We see Mike struggling to wake the sleeping jury as the Stranger advances towards him. As the guilty verdict is delivered, Mike looks up at the judge and sees him morph into the Justice statue (Figure 5.1) from the earlier trial of Briggs and the current sequence where Mike is walking home.

[365] This motif is used more subtly in the nondiegetic score when Jane realises who the Stranger is at the film's climax (she is convinced she has mistaken him at first due to his kindness to a stray dog, but then recognises his white scarf from Mike's description): the motif highlights this recognition.

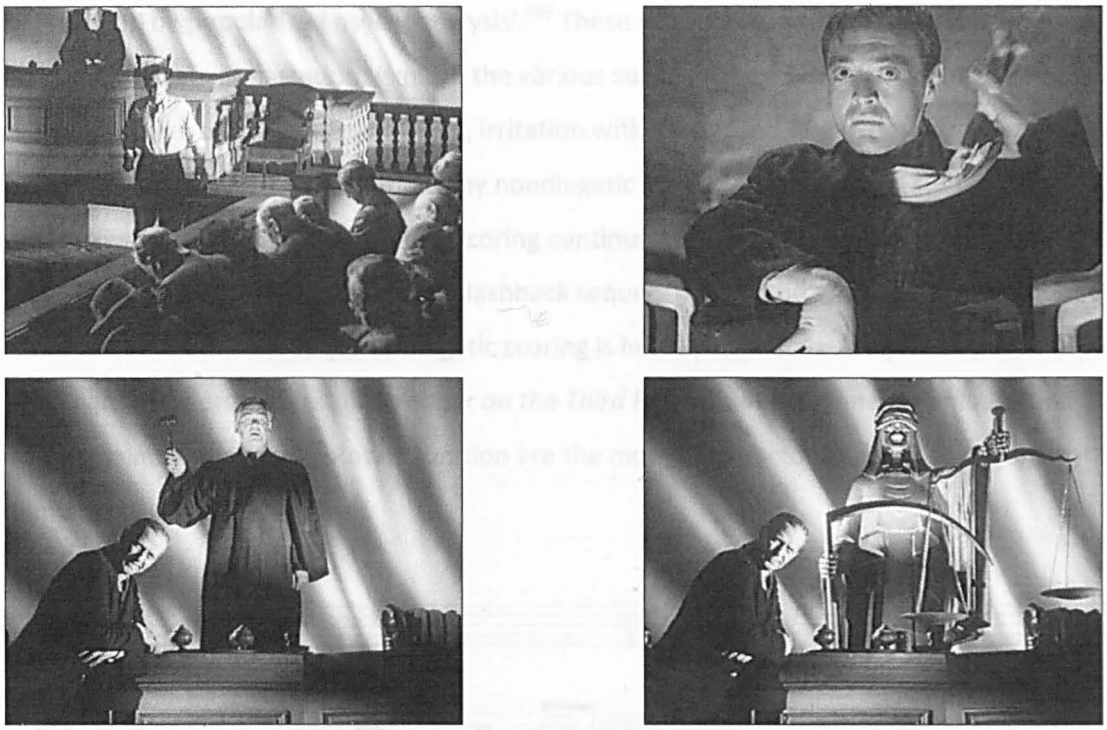
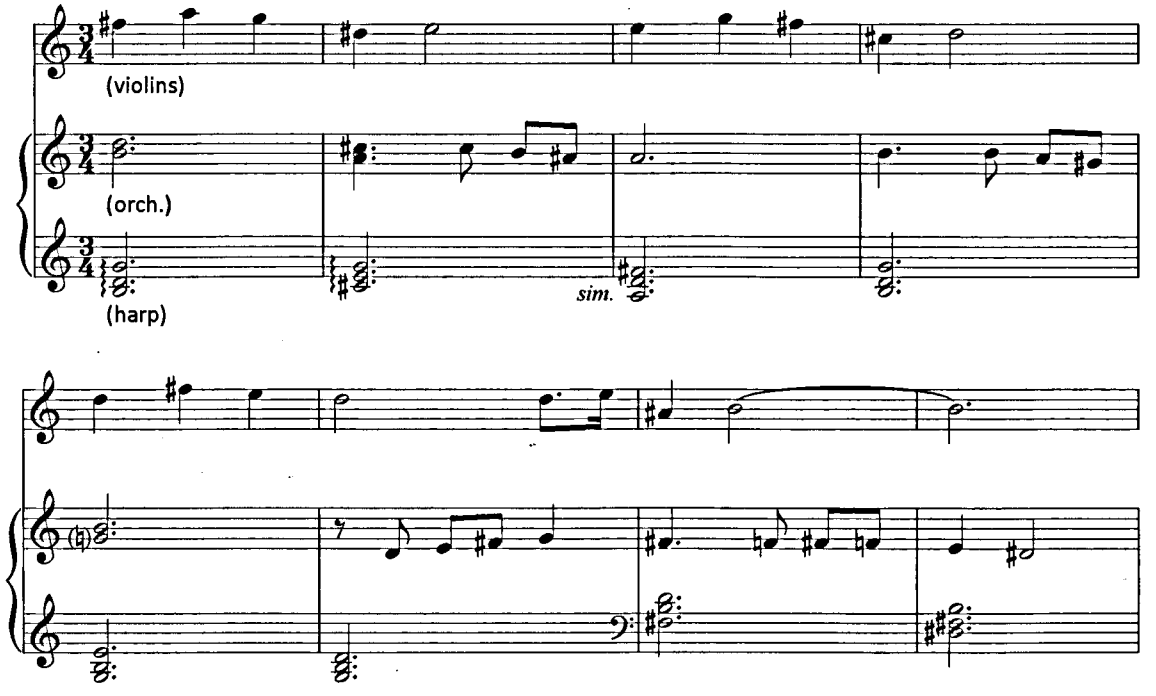


Figure 5.1. *Stranger on the Third Floor*: the final section of Mike's nightmare

Following the use of the brass motif as Mike leaves the courtroom, his voiceover and remembrance of the words of Briggs and Jane are accompanied by much less prominent nondiegetic scoring. This uses a slowly oscillating bass line with pitches a semitone apart (mirroring Mike's gait as he walks), overlaid with subtle clarinet, harp, and string figures. The music becomes gradually more insistent as Mike's worries begin to deepen, before moving back into a more relaxed presentation of the "Mike" motif as he temporarily shakes off these doubts and assumes a more nonchalant attitude again. When his voiceover returns, the music also returns to its previous chromatic, oscillating style and this is used, with varying orchestral forces and degrees of intensity, whenever Mike's internal voiceover is heard. These voiceovers are used throughout the central section of *Stranger on the Third Floor,* and frequently act as part of the transition to flashback sequences showing us events from Mike's relationship with his neighbour Meng. Internal voiceover is also used to frame the film's surreal, Expressionistic nightmare sequence where Mike dreams of his own trial and conviction for a murder he has not committed (the finale of which is discussed above and shown in Figure 5.1).

Krutnik uses *Stranger on the Third Floor* as an example of *film noir's* emphasis on identity and psychology, noting that its flashback and nightmare sequences can be seen as indicative of the ways in which *'noir* thrillers are marked by a codification of psychological verisimilitude which

is informed by popularised psychoanalysis'.[366] These sequences, together with many aspects of the film's voiceover narration, explore the various subconscious desires and frustrations of Mike (his anger at his living conditions, irritation with Meng, and sexual desire for Jane). They are all accompanied, at least initially, by nondiegetic scoring that is used to aid the transition to subjective sound and vision, and this scoring continues throughout those sequences that do not use voiceover as a precursor to a flashback sequence (as in the scene outside the courtroom outlined earlier). Nondiegetic scoring is heavily tied to the subjectivity of the dominant male protagonist in *Stranger on the Third Floor* (as in *Experiment Perilous),* and Mike's point of view and point of audition are the motivating factor behind the majority of the film's shots and musical cues.



Example 5.4. *Stranger on the Third Floor:* "Jane" motif during the flashback in Mike's apartment

As well as highlighting the narrative dominance of Mike, the privileging of his visual and aural subjectivity also serves to contain Jane's agency through the use of thematic material in a way that has some similarities with the use of music in both *Experiment Perilous* and *The Spiral Staircase*. Jane is associated with a simplistic, sequential melodic motif that first appears in the opening titles, and then throughout the score at moments when Mike thinks about her or speaks to her (for example, when he looks fondly at her photograph; during her appearance as a witness during his nightmare; and during the start of the flashback sequence when she enters his room to shelter from the rain). The "Jane" motif (shown in Example 5.4) thereby

[366] Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street*, pp. 47-50 (p. 49).

becomes particularly representative of Mike's idealised, and somewhat child-like, view of Jane. It continually reminds the viewer that Jane's primary role is that of girlfriend and wife, tying the film's representation of Jane strongly to Mike's subjective view of her and helping to contain her impact and the additional "threat" that her agency is perceived to offer to Mike's masculinity. This motif is scored primarily for strings and flutes and features simple, consonant harmonies that contrast with the more complex and unstable tonality of the majority of the score; musical signifiers that Kalinak and Gorbman both identify with the archetypal "good wife" figure.

Throughout the sequence where Jane tries to find the Stranger music is used very conventionally to score suspense and tension, with sustained, gradually ascending violin notes over slowly oscillating movement in clarinets and lower strings. The gradual ascent in pitch corresponds with an increased pace in the editing of the visual track, increasing tension whilst giving an overall impression of Jane's thorough and exhausting search. The overall style of this cue is congruent with other uses of nondiegetic scoring to highlight tension, suspense, and uncertainty in *Stranger on the Third Floor,* and is very different from the use of the "Jane" motif as a previous indicator of Jane's role as Mike's love interest. The score therefore reminds us of Mike's failed role as detective and acts to reposition Jane as the film's primary investigator. This section of the film highlights her agency, showing her dedicated and wide-ranging search and her familiarity with the urban environment, and supporting this through the inclusion of appropriate musical material.

A more conventional positioning of Jane is restored as soon as the Stranger realises that she is a threat to him. This shifts Jane temporarily to the role of victim (the brief chase sequence is scored by appropriately frantic-sounding nondiegetic music), before she is repositioned again as Mike's love interest in the film's epilogue. This short sequence reprises the opening of the film, with Mike and Jane meeting for breakfast before work, and makes clear that Jane will be a very traditional wife to Mike in the near future: from now on he'll be 'switching to eggs, cooked by my own wife in our own kitchen'. This representation of their future relationship, with Mike as the dominant partner and Jane positioned primarily as occupying a domestic role, seems to reinforce Mike's earlier patronising attitude towards Jane and arguably prevents this epilogue being as easily sidelined as some other examples of this kind of sequence. This is additionally highlighted by the return of the "Mike" motif in the nondiegetic score as the film's "happy ending" (an ending that reinforces and secures his "masculinity") is played out. Throughout *Stranger on the Third Floor,* Mike's dominance, despite his crumbling psyche, is reinforced by the centrality of his point of view and point of audition. Mike shows himself to

be selfishly preoccupied with his own concerns, rather than real justice, and the increasingly unstable language of the musical score and decreasing audibility of the "Mike" motif helps to underline his mental breakdown and subsequent emasculation. Although Jane acts to counter Mike's character through her strong sense of morality and her bravery, her eventual containment as Mike's wife is continually foreshadowed by the film's narrative, including the presence of the "Jane" motif on the soundtrack, and her agency is only ever granted temporarily.

Two O'Clock Courage and Deadline at Dawn

Deadline at Dawn and *Two O'Clock Courage* are B productions released in the mid-1940s by RKO that display marked similarities in plot. They work to contain the agency of the female investigative figure in a similar way to *Stranger on the Third Floor,* repositioning the investigative female as love interest, although in these films the relationship of the female to the male protagonist is initially much less clear-cut.

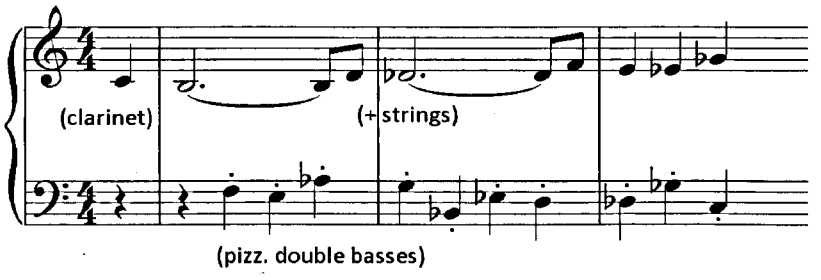
Two O'Clock Courage opens as taxi-driver Patty (Ann Rutherford) nearly knocks over a disorientated man on a fog-shrouded street corner. The Man (Tom Conway) has lost his memory and it appears he may have been involved in the murder of a theatre director that has recently taken place in the area. Patty takes control of the situation, getting The Man a disguise, tracing his movements using clues drawn from the contents of his pockets, and coming up with a husband-and-wife cover story for them to throw the police off their scent. Their search for The Man's identity takes them to the dance hall of a large hotel, where The Man is able to start putting the pieces of his memory back together. They meet several people who obviously know or recognise him, including: Helen (Jane Greer); Mark (Lester Matthews), who is a playwright; and Barbara Borden (Jean Brooks), a well-known actress. The film's convoluted plot turns out to be about a plagiarised theatre script, and The Man is revealed to be Ted 'Step' Allison, a lawyer who has been trying to get justice for the original writer from Mark and the dead theatre director. Ted leaves Patty to face some awkward questions from the police whilst he breaks in to the murder scene to recover the script that will prove his innocence, but he is knocked out by an unseen assailant. When he wakes, his memory has come back and he returns to the hotel where a showdown between Ted, the police, and the other suspects takes place. Mark and Barbara are revealed to have conspired to kill the director (who was blackmailing Barbara), and Barbara then kills Mark before being arrested. An epilogue shows Patty and Ted arriving back at Patty's apartment – now as Mr and Mrs Allison.

Displaying many similarities in plot to *Two O'Clock Courage, Deadline at Dawn* follows Alex (Bill Williams), a sailor with just a few hours left of his leave. He wakes up on the street with a roll of money in his pocket, and realises he cannot remember how he got it or how he ended up passed out by the side of the road. As he tries to recover, he enters a dance hall where he meets and dances with one of the hostesses, the cynical and sharp-witted June (Susan Hayward). He tells her about his troubles and she confides that she lies to her mother about how successful her show business career is. Because Alex is in the navy and June's brother is a 'belly-gunner' serving in Japan, she agrees to help Alex find out what happened to him and return the money if needed. As the film's complicated plot develops, Alex remembers drinking the previous night with a woman, Edna (Lola Lane), who we have previously seen in the film's prologue sequence. Edna got Alex drunk at her apartment and he stole the money from her following an argument. When June and Alex go to return the money, they find that Edna has been murdered. June and Alex team up with Gus (Paul Lukas), a philosophical taxi driver (who gets involved after picking up Alex as a fare), and they begin to investigate Edna's life and death. They realise that Edna was a blackmailer and that there are many possible suspects, including Edna's brother Val (Joseph Calleia) and her ex-husband 'Sleepy' (Marvin Miller), a blind jazz pianist who they confront at a nightclub. Sleepy denies any involvement in the murder, and finding out that Edna is dead causes him to have a heart attack. When the police find Edna's body Alex is arrested, which prompts a surprise confession to the murder from Gus, who killed Edna to stop her blackmailing his daughter's husband. Gus is cheerfully led away to death row ('Imagine having to learn the harp at my age!'), leaving Alex and June to head off to his naval base together as a couple.

In addition to their broad similarities in plot and narrative structure, the female investigative figure is used similarly in *Two O'Clock Courage* and *Deadline at Dawn.* The opening sections of both films rely heavily on the quick wit and clear thinking of their female protagonists in order to advance the plot and protect the temporarily incapacitated male lead from further harm, before gradually repositioning the female investigative figure as love interest. The soundtrack is used to support and underline these shifts in position, although in very different ways: in *Deadline at Dawn* this is achieved through the use of conventional musical signifiers in Hanns Eisler's nondiegetic score, and in *Two O'Clock Courage* it occurs largely through the absence of music in much of the film.

The initial investigative agency of *Deadline at Dawn's* June is highlighted by the extreme weakness that is used to characterise Alex for much of the film: despite his position in the navy (highlighted throughout by his uniform), Alex is portrayed as weak, indecisive, and ineffectual.

There are repeated references to his amnesia as making him 'non compos mentis', implying that his lack of memory clouds his judgement and abilities; he tells June that she's 'smarter' than him; and June refers to him as a 'baby' on several occasions. Together with Alex's job, this is used as part of the film's justification for June's investigative role: by helping Alex she is portrayed as fulfilling an almost maternal instinct, and these actions are further represented as a manifestation of her patriotism (given her brother's active service in Japan). June's intelligence and resourcefulness is used to counteract Alex's positioning early in the film, and she is the one who directs their investigation by examining Edna's apartment for clues and planning their strategies for tracing the killer and proving Alex's innocence. Musical cues are used to support the positioning of both Alex and June as investigators: for example, the nondiegetic scoring for the sequence where June eavesdrops on a potential suspect comprises chromatic solo woodwind and string lines over sparse pizzicato strings that sound tense and brittle, increasing the suspense (see Example 5.5).



Example 5.5. *Deadline at Dawn:* June eavesdrops on the Robinsons

These features are important in counteracting the potential effects of June's first appearance in the film, when Alex meets her in the dance hall. June's job as a hostess is shown to be tiring, unpleasant, and somewhat seedy, with her fighting off the advances of much older men. June has little autonomy or agency at work (contrasting with the majority of working-girl investigators whose job is presented in a more positive light), and June's attitude towards her job is underlined when she later admits that she lies to her family about what she does, portraying the profession of dance hostess as in some way shameful. At the dance hall, she is essentially "hired" by Alex when he produces a large strip of dance tickets he had to buy in order to gain entry, and their initial relationship is therefore primarily a business transaction, implying that June is somehow "for sale". This sequence therefore places Alex in a position of control over June, despite her cynical and disinterested demeanour and his confusion and naivety, and arguably helps to lay the foundation for her later positioning as Alex's love interest. The dance hall sequence is accompanied throughout by diegetic dance music in a generic 1940s light swing style, played by the venue's live band.

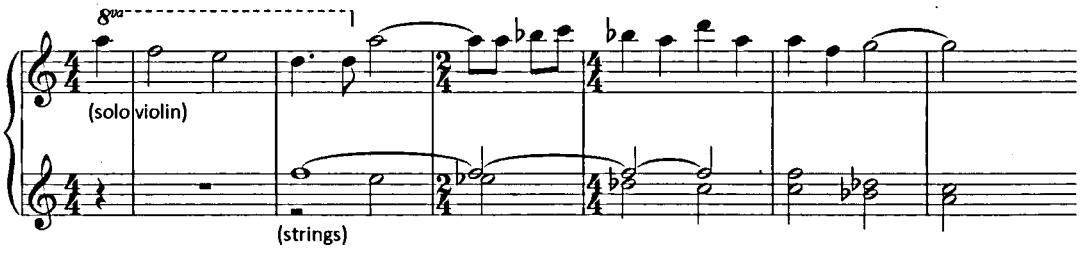
Although this initial representation of June as a weary dance hostess is soon replaced by her positioning as investigator, her role as detective is also very temporary. The introduction of Gus, the taxi driver, into the story marks the point at which June's investigative role becomes increasingly redundant. Gus is older and apparently wiser than either Alex or June, and his dialogue is peppered with philosophical musings and advice. He begins to direct their activities as soon as he finds out what they are really up to and advises both of them in a fatherly way, effectively usurping June's roles as investigator and "parent".

June's relegation to a supporting role in the investigation, and her increasing visibility in the role of love interest, is highlighted in a scene where she breaks down and cries in front of Gus. She again calls Alex a 'baby', but this time clearly demonstrates that she has romantic feelings for him in addition to her patriotic ones. This scene follows an uncomfortable encounter with a patron from the dance hall (which reminds us of June's lack of agency at work), and a confrontation between June, the patron, and Gus is what precipitates June's breakdown. When Gus asks her what is wrong, she is unable to articulate her real feelings for Alex, but Gus's fatherly and indulgent smile as she talks, together with the musical signifiers used in the nondiegetic score at this point make it clear that her concern for Alex now goes beyond the purely patriotic or maternal:

> Gus: Why are you crying, June?
>
> June: [sobs] I don't know. I thought this chase would lead to something. What'll happen to that boy? I know he can't take care of himself. It's hot and I feel unnerved. Electric storms always unnerve me. Life in this crazy city unnerves me too, though I pretend it doesn't. Where's the logic to it? Where's the logic?

After June's dialogue, Gus begins a long, whimsical, philosophical speech about the possibilities for love in June's future. Several times he refers to her age – 'you're so young June, you're a baby' – and thereby repositions June as a child, aligning her with Alex and reinforcing his own, now dominant role in their investigative and emotional trio. During this sequence, the style of nondiegetic scoring used to characterise June's activity changes dramatically. Instead of the angular, sparse chromaticism that has characterised the majority of nondiegetic cues associated with June, we hear an expressively played solo violin melody as she starts to talk about Alex, accompanied by descending warm string figures (see Example 5.6). This sequence works to remind us of June's dance hostess profession and its negative connotations, and then to further highlight her vulnerability via the dialogue with Gus (showing her lack of true affinity with the city), her tears and posture, and the musical signifiers of romance and tragedy that

are present. This effectively challenges June's previous positioning as investigator and repositions her as love interest to Alex and in a subservient role to Gus.



Example 5.6. ***Deadline at Dawn:*** **June talks with Gus**

June's investigative activity is increasingly sidelined after this point, with the exception of a later scene at Sleepy's jazz club. Here, June (again in the familiar environment of the nightclub) attempts to shock a confession out of the blind musician by standing next to him wearing Edna's perfume. This investigative technique falls far short of her previous work on Alex's "case", and has disastrous results (Sleepy dies soon after from a heart attack, bringing the police onto the scene). It also emphasises June's "femininity" via the perfume, and places her in an acting role as "wife".

The film's unexpected resolution of the murder plot removes the father figure from the Alex-Gus-June relationship when Gus admits that he killed Edna. He is taken away by the police after giving June a final piece of romantic advice about moving out of the city to somewhere closer to Alex's naval base. The film's closing scene sees June agreeing to leave with Alex and Alex finally asserting his "masculinity" by punching one of the minor characters in the film. These repeated punches are obviously and comically Mickey-moused in the nondiegetic score, highlighting Alex's increased agency and narrative prominence now the threat of arrest is over and he is in a romantic relationship with June. This also serves to move the register of the film away from that of crime or *noir* and closer to that of romantic comedy.[367] The "threat" implicit in June's earlier investigative activity is effectively neutralised by her containment in the role of love interest and her removal from the urban space of the city.

Similarly, in *Two O'Clock Courage,* Patty begins the narrative with a relatively high degree of agency, but this is increasingly diminished as the plot develops. This film straddles an often uneasy line between suspenseful crime thriller and romantic comedy, and Patty's characterisation also fluctuates between those of the female sleuth and romantic lead. After

[367] Steve Neale refers to *Deadline at Dawn* as one of the relatively few *films noirs* that feature 'positive and successful romances'. Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, p. 162.

the opening scene, where she nearly knocks The Man over,[368] Patty assumes the lead in her relationship with The Man, driving their investigation forward with her focused approach to evading the police and her clever strategies for uncovering his identity without giving themselves away. Patty explains that she used to be a chorus dancer, but wanted the independence of a new profession; her job as taxi driver is used throughout the first half of the film to explain her mobility and familiarity with the city, and her self-sufficient and confident demeanour.

> The Man: Driving a cab seems to have made you a cynic.
>
> Patty: Oh, don't go blaming it on Harry [her cab]. That happened some time ago when I was on the stage.
>
> The Man: Oh, you were an actress?
>
> Patty: Thanks mister. That was the original idea, but I sort of wound up "little Patty Mitchell" fourth from the end in the floor show.
>
> The Man: And you like driving a cab better?
>
> Patty: Why not? I'm out in the fresh air, I'm my own boss, and at least there's a thick pane of glass between me and the drunks.

Patty's identity, agency, and independence, both as woman and detective, are clearly linked with her profession and the shift in her career from the world of the chorus line to what is portrayed as the less "feminine", more autonomous role of the taxi driver.

As the film's reliance on comic and romantic situations increases, Patty's role as detective is gradually scaled down. The Man instead starts to take charge: even though he cannot remember who he is, the flirtatious romantic interplay with Patty is enough to restore him to the dominant role in their relationship, and this propels him into the primary investigative role as well.[369] Significantly, this change occurs after Patty and The Man arrive at her apartment so

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[368] This opening scene demonstrates many of the contradictory elements in the relationship between Patty and The Man. Despite his physical weakness and confusion, she is presented as the more "hysterical" over the near-collision and shrilly berates him whilst he towers over her in the frame. After she realises he is hurt, Patty assumes a more nurturing role (again highlighting an element of "maternal instinct") and The Man is shown to be receptive to her taking charge. The scene also highlights their difference in social class through dialogue: Tom Conway's clipped British accent indicates The Man's relative wealth and privilege when compared with Patty's use of idiomatic American slang terms (she has to try several different colloquial expressions before he understands that she's trying to tell him that somebody knocked him out).

[369] The Man's portrayal by Conway also potentially encourages audience identification with him as detective, due to Conway starring in the title role in several of RKO's popular detective films based

she can change out of her relatively androgynous uniform into something more 'suitable' for the dance hall of an upper-class hotel. Throughout these scenes in the hotel, diegetic dance music is playing – the first music on the soundtrack since the main title that continues over the first half of the opening scene – and this, together with her new attire and increasing relegation to the sidelines of the investigation serves to remind us of Patty's former profession as showgirl and her move from the investigative to the romantic role in the narrative. The Man is instrumental in effecting this change, asking her to leave so that he can try to get information out of the glamorous and vampishly presented Helen: 'perhaps you had better let me play this hand out. Wait for me in the lobby'. Patty disappears for a short time, but is soon back at The Man's table. Although this demonstrates Patty's refusal to take orders from The Man, it portrays this refusal as one motivated by sexual jealousy and therefore highlights her role as love interest, rather than detective.

Patty's role as detective is given no musical support in the soundtrack, and although this is primarily a result of the very sparse scoring of the picture as a whole, the film's few nondiegetic musical cues draw attention to The Man as the central figure of the narrative, helping to sideline Patty even further. The first cue segues out of the brief title sequence to the film, and makes use of Novachord and other "woozy" sounds to represent The Man's gait as he limps out of the mist. The longest and most elaborate section of nondiegetic scoring in *Two O'Clock Courage* comes near the end of the story, by which point The Man has totally usurped the investigative role from Patty and has left her at home to face the questions of the police. Here, his suspenseful attempt to find the theatre script that will solve the mystery is accompanied by a musical cue that acknowledges and cements his position as heroic investigator. Quiet, reverberant underscoring with slowly oscillating strings and a chromatic flute ostinato figure underneath a high pedal note enter as The Man searches the darkened office, growing gradually louder and more intense as we see the door opening behind him. A stinger marks his assault and subsequent fall to the floor, where the shock brings back his memory. Nondiegetic scoring continues (now featuring harp, celeste, and high tremolo strings) as we see The Man's flashback of what really happened to him. The sudden appearance of

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around the character of The Falcon. Conway played opposite his brother (the original Falcon) in 1942's *The Falcon's Brother,* before taking over the role in another nine films. At least six of these were released prior to *Two O'Clock Courage. The Falcon's Brother,* dir. Stanley Logan, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1942); *The Falcon and the Co-Eds,* dir. William Clemens (RKO Radio Pictures, 1943); *The Falcon in Danger,* dir. William Clemens, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1943); *The Falcon in Hollywood,* dir. Gordon Douglas (RKO Radio Pictures, 1944); *The Falcon in Mexico,* dir. William Berke, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1944); *The Falcon out West,* dir. William Clemens, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1944); *The Falcon Strikes Back,* dir. Edward Dmytryk, comp. Roy Webb (RKO Radio Pictures, 1943).

nondiegetic scoring in this sequence (the first nondiegetic cue since the opening of the film) helps to move the register of *Two O'Clock Courage* back from romantic comedy to crime thriller, and thereby reinforces The Man's role as detective in time for him to take centre stage during the final revelation of the murderer. The only nondiegetic music that Patty gets to share ownership of is a jolly rendition of the wedding march over the film's closing credits, emphasising her new role as The Man's wife.[370]

Both *Two O'Clock Courage* and *Deadline at Dawn* initially reverse the female victim/male detective relationship of films like *The Spiral Staircase* and *Experiment Perilous:* here, the men are those who are marked as "victim" because of their amnesia and related physical ailments, helping to position the female in the dominant and investigative role. However, this hierarchy reverts to normal as health and mental stability are restored to the male protagonists, allowing them to occupy a more dominant position in relation to the female. This process is mirrored by the gradual removal of investigative agency from June and Patty as they are moved into the roles of love interest. Musically, these shifts in position are supported in very different ways: in *Deadline at Dawn,* Eisler's score reflects the positioning of various characters through the use of classical-style cues, and in *Two O'Clock Courage* the lack of nondiegetic music associated with Patty's investigative activity helps to sideline her role as detective.

These two films, together with *Stranger on the Third Floor,* provide good examples of the working-girl investigator figure, although in both *Deadline at Dawn* and *Two O'Clock Courage* employment is also used as part of the films' strategies of containment for the female detective. June's work in the dance hall and Patty's former profession as a chorus dancer are portrayed as shameful or embarrassing in some way, and *Deadline at Dawn* makes clear the potential for illicit sexualised encounters in the space of the urban dance hall or nightclub (ideas that are also present in many of the films discussed in chapter six). Due to the

[370] Similar musical strategies are employed in *Lady Scarface* to contain the investigative activities of Ann, a reporter writing an article about the notorious gangster Slade. Although Ann's investigation is briefly presented as legitimate and suspenseful at the start of the film, the romantic and professional sparring between her and Mason, a police detective chasing the same gang, is used to diminish her credibility. Mason belittles Ann constantly and manipulates her for his own ends, and after the opening scenes Ann's investigation is given no musical support (like *Two O'Clock Courage* this film uses very few nondiegetic cues). Instead, she is associated primarily with diegetic dance hall music that is being broadcast over the radio and listened to by the newlywed couple in the room next to Ann and Mason. A long series of shots between the two rooms, connected by the music which is audible in each, clearly sets up the idea that Ann and Mason will become a couple, foreshadowing the connection between his unpleasant professional behaviour and his attitude towards Ann as a romantic partner that the film's final scene makes clear. Here, Ann finds out that Mason has publicly humiliated her in her own magazine in order to save himself embarrassment, but instead of reacting angrily she instead accepts his proposal of marriage, cementing her position as subordinate to Mason's investigative agency, both professionally and personally.

problematic nature of June's profession, the film takes care to justify her investigative agency in different ways, invoking the idea of patriotism as a primary part of her motivation – a tactic also used in *They Made Her a Spy.*

Case studies 3
Sleuthing as self-preservation

In films that feature a female detective figure who is not characterised primarily as a working-girl or a dutiful partner aiming to help her man, other strategies are used to position and justify her investigative agency. In the case of the professional spy or detective, patriotism may provide one compelling reason behind investigative activity, as detailed above in *They Made Her a Spy* and in chapter seven's discussion of *Notorious.* Another frequently used justification is that of response to a personal threat of some kind, and this idea of investigation as a means of protection or self-preservation ties this type of female detective closely to the figure of the (potential) victim.[371] This not only provides a powerful motive and justification for the investigation, but also potentially provides a means through which to contain the threat posed by the female detective (by aligning her with the typically non-agent role of the victim). This kind of investigative narrative is often closely linked with the female gothic heroine, as introduced in chapter four, and *Suspicion* fits primarily into this cycle of films.

Suspicion

Suspicion follows the marriage of prim and wealthy spinster Lina (Joan Fontaine) to the handsome, charming, and perhaps too-good-to-be-true, Johnnie (Cary Grant). Directed by Alfred Hitchcock with music by Franz Waxman, *Suspicion* was a commercial and artistic success for RKO, gaining Oscar nominations for Best Picture and Best Scoring of a Dramatic Picture, and winning Joan Fontaine the 1942 Oscar for Best Actress.[372] *Suspicion,* like many female gothic

[371] This kind of justification for investigative activity is also important in positioning Joan (Jane Greer) in *The Big Steal.* Joan is trying to track down her ex-boyfriend, who has stolen money from her and absconded to Mexico. Duke Halliday (Robert Mitchum) is chasing the same man, who also stole from the US Army payroll, and Joan and Halliday team up to track him down. Joan is a feisty and engaging character and her flirtatious sparring with Halliday plays upon Greer's previous star pairing with Mitchum in *Out of the Past. The Big Steal* relies heavily upon Mexican-style cues to emphasise its location, and these also highlight the agent characteristics of Joan, who is shown as very much at home in this geographical and cultural location. Rather than acting to highlight this "otherness" in a primarily negative way (chapter six discusses this idea in more detail), her connection with Mexican culture here presents Joan in a largely positive light, reinforcing her linguistic skills and ability to negotiate with the police and various other characters in a much more successful and useful way than Halliday.

[372] Waxman was under contract to MGM at the time of writing the score and was presumably hired solely to work on *Suspicion* by RKO, as his name does not appear in any other credits for the studio

films, has a literary origin and is based on the novel *Before the Fact* by Anthony Berkeley (writing as Francis Iles).[373] Aside from the ending, which will be discussed in more detail later, the film follows this source material fairly closely.

Set in England, the film opens with Lina and Johnnie meeting on board a train, where she watches primly as he tries to wriggle out of paying the full first class fare. As well as her book on child psychology, Lina has a copy of a magazine with her and realises that Johnnie is something of a society figure when she recognises him from his photograph. Johnnie's interest in Lina is piqued when he sees her again at a countryside hunt and marvels at the change in her appearance when she is wearing riding clothes and has removed her reading glasses. After an unlikely and whirlwind courtship, Lina marries Johnnie and settles down to live a comfortable life with him. However, she soon comes to realise that Johnnie is not as rich, or as honest as he initially seems, and from this point the film follows her developing suspicions about his illicit activities and increasingly outlandish attempts to get money. Eventually, Lina comes to suspect that Johnnie has murdered their hapless friend Beaky (Nigel Bruce) for his money, although she does not confide her suspicions to anyone. When she uncovers a secret insurance policy that Johnnie has taken out on her life, and their mystery novelist friend Isobel (Auriol Lee) tells them about a newly discovered 'undetectable poison', Lina begins to fear that she will be Johnnie's next victim. The film's final scenes take place on a cliff-top road, where Lina thinks that Johnnie is trying to push her out of the car. She fights back, nearly causing the car to crash, and Johnnie angrily tells her that he was trying to stop her falling out. Lina realises that she has been wrong about Johnnie, who was intending to take the undetectable poison himself, committing suicide rather than face prison over his gambling debts. She begs him to return home with her so that they can try to make their marriage work, and the film ends with Johnnie putting his arm around Lina as they drive off.

Scholarship on *Suspicion* relates primarily to this unsatisfactory and unconvincing ending, which Hitchcock claimed was foisted upon him by RKO executives who did not think audiences would accept Cary Grant in the role of a murderer.[374] Several authors discuss the numerous

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during 1941. It is possible that RKO wished to capitalise on the success of the previous year's *Rebecca,* a Selznick production that also featured Fontaine, with Hitchcock directing and a musical score by Waxman. Hanson notes that Selznick was instrumental in bringing adaptations of literary female gothic texts to the screen during the 1940s, and both Hitchcock and Fontaine were under contract with Selznick when *Suspicion* was made. Their services are recorded as being 'secured through the courtesy of David O. Selznick Productions, Inc.' in the film's credits. Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines,* pp. 44-47; *Rebecca,* dir. Alfred Hitchcock, comp. Franz Waxman (Selznick International Pictures, 1940).

[373] Francis Iles, *Before the Fact* (London: Gollancz Crime, 1991).

[374] *Hitchcock on Hitchcock: Selected Writings and Interviews,* ed. by Sidney Gottlieb (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 137. Richard Allen argues that one of *Suspicion's* strengths is in the casting of Grant as

drafts and edits of the screenplay and film in some detail, and of these the most comprehensive and interesting discussions are those of Bill Krohn and Rick Worland.[375] Both make use of extensive archival research[376] to outline the various problems in the film's production process, and Worland also includes a breakdown of the responses to *Suspicion*'s preview screenings and the possible effect that these may have had on the final cut of the film, and the way RKO chose to market it (emphasising the 'artistic' style of direction, rather than the plot).[377] In the film's released form, Lina's suspicions have all been the totally unfounded theories of a hysterical woman, effectively proving her father right about her over-education, bookishness, and general unsuitability for marriage. Although the presence of alternative (and possibly preferable) endings can be revealing about the negotiation of production processes, studio and directorial control, and the audience-driven commercial imperative in Hollywood, it does not negate the presentation and characterisation of Lina and Johnnie earlier in *Suspicion*. As discussed previously, endings that feel "unsatisfactory" in some way are a feature of many classical films, where potentially dangerous or subversive characters or plot elements are neutralised in the closing moments. This is also the case in *Suspicion*, and the portrayal of Johnnie throughout the film (where he is objectively shown to be an adept and convincing liar), means that there is also space for the audience to reject his explanations and the resulting "happy ending" as merely one more failed attempt on Lina's life. In one scene, Johnnie asks Lina and the rest of the guests at Isobel's dinner party if he looks like a murderer, and the audience are never really given the answer to this question, even in the film's final moments. Several scholars argue that the film's ending is actually relatively ambiguous.[378] Mary Ann Doane, for example, argues that *Suspicion's* ending is unclear because of the film's prior construction around Lina's point of view: 'because *Suspicion* fails to maintain a legible division between subjectivity and objectivity, its belated attempt to construct a norm of objectivity for purposes of closure cannot succeed'.[379] In a similar way, the final scene is also ambiguous with regard to its use of music. The score finishes with an upbeat rendition of its

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Johnnie, using Grant's star persona to mirror Johnnie's characterisation as a 'gent' (a lower-class man passing as a gentleman). Richard Allen, 'Hitchcock, or the Pleasures of Metaskepticism', *October,* 89 (1999), 69-86 (p. 76).

[375] Bill Krohn, 'Ambivalence *(Suspicion)*', in *Hitchcock Annual* (New London, New Hampshire: Hitchcock Annual Association, 2002-3), pp. 67-116; Rick Worland, 'Before and after the Fact: Writing and Reading Hitchcock's *Suspicion*', *Cinema Journal,* 41.4 (2002), 3-26.

[376] Some of the production materials relating to *Suspicion* are reproduced in Dan Auiler, *Hitchcock's Notebooks: An Authorized and Illustrated Look inside the Creative Mind of Alfred Hitchcock* (New York: Harper Entertainment, 1999), pp. 62-95.

[377] Worland, 'Before and after the Fact', pp. 18-21.

[378] Michael Pressler argues that the film's ending is much more ambiguous than has often been stated, Michael Pressler, 'Hitchcock's *Suspicion:* Reading between the Lines', *Studies in the Humanities,* 31.1 (2004), 99-104. See also Allen, 'Hitchcock, or the Pleasures of Metaskepticism', pp. 75-76.

[379] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, p. 149.

primary theme, but the close association of this musical material with Lina's subjectivity that has been developed throughout the narrative means that any definite reading of this cue is impossible.[380]

The narrative trajectory of *Suspicion*, which moves from light romance to heavy suspense (in common with many female gothic narratives), unsurprisingly has implications for Lina. She occupies various roles within the narrative, depending on how advanced, or how deeply rooted, her suspicions of Johnnie are. At the beginning of the film, she is presented as a bookish and unattractive spinster, with Johnnie's almost comic point of view shot of her on the train showing her stiff posture, "sensible" clothes, academic reading material, and large glasses. Lina's parents are also shown to share Johnnie's initial view of Lina, in a conversation that she overhears and that prompts her to kiss Johnnie impulsively, as if to prove her parents wrong:

> Father: Lina will never marry, she's not the marrying sort. Anyhow, she's no need to worry, there's enough to care for her for the rest of her life.
>
> Mother: I suppose you're right dear. I'm afraid she is rather spinsterish.
>
> Father: What's wrong with that? The old maid is a respectable institution. All women are not alike. Lina has intellect and a fine solid character.[381]

Lina's father is presented as somewhat overbearing throughout the film, and even after his death his imposing portrait is used to symbolise his influence over Lina and his adversarial position with respect to Johnnie (a relationship also played out through the plot device of the chairs given as wedding presents).[382] As Lina's unlikely romance with Johnnie develops, she moves to occupy the generic space of the female gothic heroine, who is commonly portrayed

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[380] Jack Sullivan's reading of Waxman's score for *Suspicion* argues that the nondiegetic scoring of this sequence reinforces the idea that Johnnie is innocent, and that the 'credibility of the film's ending is tightly linked with that of the music', but this fails to correspond with his earlier assertions that the nondiegetic score is linked throughout the film with Lina's subjective view of events. Although providing useful archival information about Waxman's score and the titles given to various cues, Sullivan's analysis of the role of music in *Suspicion* is generally a little over-simplistic, linking both the "suspicion" theme and the waltz solely with Lina's fluctuating opinion of Johnnie, rather than examining the more complex ways in which the score interacts with her developing suspicions and relationship to the investigation of them. Sullivan, *Hitchcock's Music*, pp. 84-89 (p. 89).

[381] Lina's response to this conversation demonstrates her rejection of her father's opinions about the "respectability" of the "old maid" and aligns her with a very conventional viewpoint of woman-as-wife that is potentially at odds with her "academic" positioning in the opening scene.

[382] See Mladen Dolar, 'A Father Who Is Not Quite Dead', in *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan... But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock*, ed. by Slavoj Žižek (London and New York: Verso, 1992), pp. 143-149.

as both a victim and investigator of her husband.[383] Lina's later role as detective is motivated by her fears for her marriage and later her life, justifying and containing her increasingly prominent and active role as investigator through and within the institutional confines of marriage. Figure 5.2 demonstrates the changing visual representation of Lina throughout *Suspicion,* where costume and lighting are used to portray her initially as repressed and spinsterish, then as romantic heroine, active and suspicious detective, and finally as a sacrificial victim.

Figure 5.2. *Suspicion:* the changing visual representation of Lina during the film

Lina's role as investigator is also highlighted by *Suspicion's* repeated references to detective fiction. Johnnie and Lina are friends with the successful mystery novelist Isobel Sedbusk, and Johnnie is shown as an enthusiastic mystery buff and avid reader of her novels. The plot device of the 'undetectable poison' that Lina suspects Johnnie is trying to kill her with is drawn from a dinner-table conversation at Isobel's house, and the death of Johnnie's friend and business partner Beaky mirrors the plot of Isobel's latest bestseller, *Murder on the Footbridge.* Isobel's presence in the film also highlights the "dangerous" and threatening nature of the woman who

[383] Allen uses the term 'metaskepticism' to refer to the particular combination of romance with elements that undercut it in Hitchcock's work (referring primarily to *The Lodger* and *Suspicion* as examples), although he does not consider these elements in relation to their prominence within the female gothic cycle. Allen, 'Hitchcock, or the Pleasures of Metaskepticism'; *The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog,* dir. Alfred Hitchcock (Gainsborough Films, 1926).

pursues crime as a professional activity. Tweedy, brusque and "mannish", with her housemate Phyl(lis) even more so, Isobel's construction clearly contains elements that are designed to identify her as lesbian, linking her focus on the criminal with her transgressive sexuality.[384] Lina's heavy contrast with these aspects of Isobel's (and Phyllis') characterisation help to remind us that her investigation is amateur, not professional, and represents a quest for heterosexual and "feminine" romance, rather than financial gain.

Lina's viewpoint is absolutely central to *Suspicion*, and is emphasised in the following ways: its plot construction; the use of point of view shots from her perspective; the ongoing use of her glasses to emphasise her "vision" of Johnnie;[385] and her time on screen (even when not actually showing her point of view the camera often lingers on Lina's face whilst people speak off screen, stressing her response to dialogue).[386] In contrast, there are very few scenes that show Johnnie with any kind of objectivity, or in which his point of view is shown. These exceptions aside, every other sequence in the film is skewed heavily towards Lina's viewpoint and interpretation of events, meaning that our opinion of Johnnie is constantly mediated by hers. This emphasis on Lina's viewpoint is key in creating and sustaining suspense: as an audience, we are constantly put in a position analogous to hers, uncertain about what, or who, to trust. Diane Waldman argues that this ambiguity is a key feature in what she calls the 'gothic romance film', which highlights 'the hesitation between two possible interpretations of events by the protagonist and often, in these filmic presentations, by the spectator as well.'[387]

Music plays a key role in articulating this constantly shifting and ambiguous narrative. Franz Waxman's score for *Suspicion* makes use of two primary thematic ideas: Johann Strauss' Wiener Blut op. 354 waltz, and a melodramatic and angular string-led motif that is first heard in the film's opening titles and goes on to dominate the score. This title theme, which Jack Sullivan states is referred to as "suspicion" in the film's score,[388] also provides the basis for several smaller-scale motifs that are developed from it and used in the same way – as an aural manifestation of Lina's subjectivity. As the film develops, gradually moving from a frivolous romance to a taut psychological thriller, the presentation of this motif reflects the transition and becomes gradually more ambiguous, unstable, and chromatic. In line with the general

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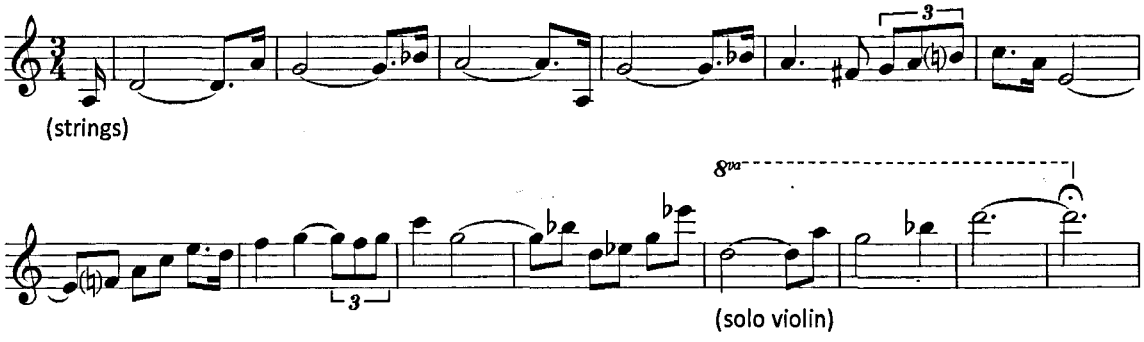
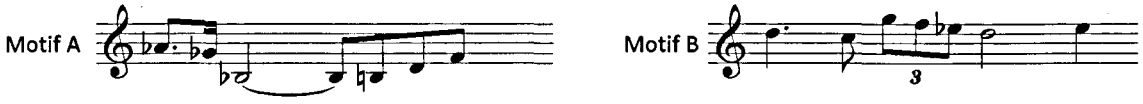
[384] Worland notes that the PCA insisted on several changes to the dinner party sequence at Isobel's house after receiving one draft of the script, with Joseph Breen highlighting the 'entirely unacceptable' characterisation of Phyllis as 'suggestive of lesbianism'. Worland, 'Before and after the Fact', p. 10.
[385] See Waldman, '"At Last I Can Tell It to Someone!"', p. 32.
[386] Krohn, 'Ambivalence *(Suspicion)*', p. 73.
[387] Waldman, '"At Last I Can Tell It to Someone!"', p. 31.
[388] Sullivan, *Hitchcock's Music*, p. 86.

tone of the film, the transformation of the "suspicion" motif highlights Lina's shift from romantic heroine through to potential victim and active detective.



Example 5.7. *Suspicion:* the "suspicion" theme in the main title

Example 5.7 shows the first appearance of the "suspicion" theme in the film's opening credits, which are superimposed over an illustration of a countryside scene. Here, the "suspicion" theme mixes conventional signifiers of Hollywood romance and passion (for example, the wide range and rise and fall of most of the melody line, and the emphasis on string and woodwind orchestration) with indications of unease and possible tonal ambiguity (the angular and unpredictable nature of some sections of the melody, and the use of a prominent and ominous pedal note in the bass). The use of solo violin at the close of the cue is an important feature elsewhere in the score: solo instrumentation is often used together with extended close-ups of Lina's troubled face to highlight her internal struggle to make sense of things, and further emphasise her subjectivity.



Example 5.8. *Suspicion:* example of motifs derived from "suspicion" material

Various musical phrases and motifs derived from the "suspicion" theme are used throughout *Suspicion's* score, in common with many orchestral soundtracks that make use of leitmotif techniques. This allows Waxman to maintain the relationship between nondiegetic music and Lina's subjectivity without the "suspicion" theme itself becoming overused. Two of these melodic motifs are shown in Example 5.8: motif A, which is transcribed from the scene where Lina finds the copy of 'The Trial of Robert Palmer' hidden in Johnnie's desk, and motif B (which recurs several times) from the end of the sequence where Johnnie brings Lina a glass of milk that she suspects is poisoned. The rhythm of motif A is identical to bars six and seven of the "suspicion" material transcribed in Example 5.7, and the overall shape of both melodies is also

very similar (here with the use of more diminished intervals to mirror the shock of Lina's discovery); motif B recalls the triplet figure in bar 5 of the "suspicion" theme, inverting the direction of the melody whilst retaining much of its intervallic structure.

The "suspicion" theme and the various motifs derived from it are flexible enough to bridge the gap between Lina's various roles as love interest, potential victim, and detective. With their emotional style and use of solo instrumental passages, Waxman's cues are used to underline Lina's tortured and frequently changing mental state and responses to Johnnie. These cues generally emphasise the romantic strand of the female gothic narrative, whilst their frequent combination with signifiers of suspense and tension point towards the investigative elements of the genre. By combining the two styles with increasing frequency towards the end of *Suspicion*, Waxman is able to highlight Lina's increasingly direct activity and agency without relinquishing the subjectivity associated with her point of view, and thereby a major component of the film's suspense.

This leitmotific structure and series of thematic relationships, together with the overall style, orchestration, and aesthetic of Waxman's score seems to point to a largely "classical" relationship of music and narrative in *Suspicion*. However, the film's continual emphasis on the subjective and ambiguous nature of the Lina-mediated narrative starts to complicate this relationship because the music is so closely tied to the authorial voice of a "narrator" whose reliability is always in doubt. Lina's opinion of Johnnie is not only subjective, but also frequently changes, and often his "worst" moments, when he is exposed as a cheat and a liar, are simultaneously those when he is at his most charming and generous. These layers of subjectivity reinforce the need for a flexible and frequently highly ambiguous approach to scoring, as well as direction, in the film.

Suspicion's score also contains a secondary recurring motif, Johann Strauss' 'Wiener Blut' waltz. Easily recognisable in style and musical genre, its light-hearted, dizzying, and dance-like feel make it seem much more appropriate than the "suspicion" theme for the start of a romance. Fittingly, this music is at first used to focus attention upon Johnnie and his viewpoint (Sullivan states that it 'represents Johnnie's allure and glamour'),[389] something that is paid scant attention to elsewhere in the narrative. We first hear the Wiener Blut at the Hunt Ball, where Johnnie and Lina meet for the third time and kiss for the first. He whisks Lina onto the floor just as the waltz begins. Later that night he cements the idea of this being "their song"[390]

[389] Sullivan, *Hitchcock's Music*, p. 85.
[390] Krohn states that the waltz is referred to as Lina and Johnnie's 'theme song' in the shooting script for the film. Krohn, 'Ambivalence *(Suspicion)*', p. 99.

back at Lina's house in an unusual scene where we hear Johnnie's subjective remembrance of the waltz (a version scored for reduced orchestral forces and with additional reverberation) as he embraces Lina in front of the forbidding portrait of Lina's father:

> Johnnie: Do you hear the music?
>
> Lina: Very clearly.
>
> Johnnie: Well let's dance... let's dance before I... before we
> [Johnnie tries to kiss Lina and she stops him, smiling]
>
> Lina: Let's dance.
> [They waltz around the room together]

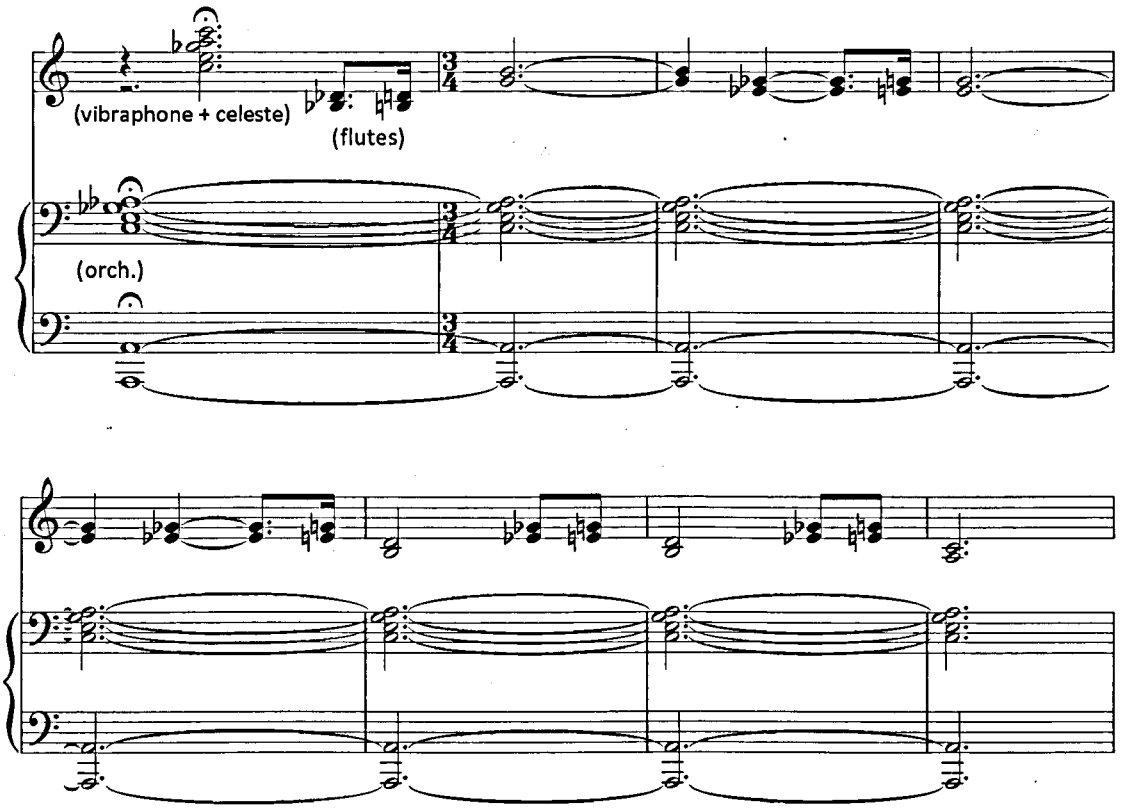
This sequence is the only point in the film where Johnnie's point of audition is stressed, and it acts to make him seem much more attractive as a character and as a suitor for Lina. It is important to note, however, that Lina can hear the music too. The waltz also therefore becomes tied to her subjectivity as well as Johnnie's, and specifically to Lina's most positive and romantic feelings about him. For the majority of the film, the Strauss waltz continues to be used in this way, as a kind of "happy ever after" motif for the couple: for example, we hear it as they cross the threshold of their new home and as Lina realises that Beaky is still safe after his cliff-top walk with Johnnie.

The final appearance of the waltz theme is less straightforward, and takes place at the crux of the film where Johnnie brings Lina a glass of milk that she suspects contains poison. Here, Waxman unites both the thematic elements of the soundtrack to score a sequence where Lina occupies all three of her narrative roles (love interest, victim, and detective) simultaneously. A heavily chromatic sustained chord sounds underneath a flute presentation of the Strauss waltz (shown in Example 5.9), moving the waltz out of its familiar tonal context and giving it an eerie and dissonant sound. This is then displaced by the return of the "suspicion" theme (here the version described above as motif B) in one of its most overblown presentations.

In this scene, the "suspicion" material points not only towards Lina's doubts about Johnnie, but also towards her indecision about whether or not to drink the milk – the source novel, and some drafts of the screenplay, see Lina effectively committing suicide here, with varying outcomes for Johnnie.[391] The use of the waltz could therefore be read as representing Johnnie's ghoulishly triumphant arrival with the undetectable poison, or perhaps the fact that Lina is finally now able to see (and hear) the "real" Johnnie. The use of Lina's implied or actual

[391] For detailed discussion of these various endings, see Krohn, 'Ambivalence *(Suspicion)*'.

point of view to frame either side of the shot of Johnnie points much more strongly towards this second option, meaning that Lina has now gained total ownership of what was originally Johnnie's, and then their shared, motif.[392]



Example 5.9. *Suspicion:* use of the 'Wiener Blut' waltz as Johnnie brings Lina the milk

As Figure 5.3 shows, the whole of this sequence is constructed (like much of the film) around Lina's "look": after a brief establishing shot of the bedroom, her wary glance towards the bedroom door is followed by striking high overhead shots of Johnnie as he moves out of the darkness and into the shadowy stairwell,[393] suggesting Lina's surveillance of his activities. Her eyes follow his progress around the bedroom as he places the milk by the bed and kisses her goodnight; the camera closes on Lina's face as she looks uneasily at the milk and then stares after Johnnie's retreating back. Lina does not speak throughout the scene (and Johnnie only says 'Goodnight, Lina'), but yet the combination of camerawork and music clearly articulates

[392] Krohn also highlights the ambivalence of this sequence and the presence of the waltz. Krohn, 'Ambivalence *(Suspicion)*', pp. 99-100.

[393] Many commentators highlight the use of the stairwell shadows to suggest the idea of a spider's web, with Lina caught at its centre as Johnnie's prey. Worland additionally notes that the milk scene (specifically a shot of Johnnie on the shadowy staircase) was one of the photographs included in RKO's pressbook for *Suspicion,* with the caption emphasising the 'spiderlike' nature of the lighting. Sequences such as this also highlight *Suspicion's* connection to the motif of the threatening and prison-like house in the female gothic genre. Worland, 'Before and after the Fact', p. 20.

the perceived "problem" of the milk and Lina's indecision, using the waltz to indicate Johnnie's guilt and the "suspicion" material to underscore Lina's turbulent emotions and indecision.

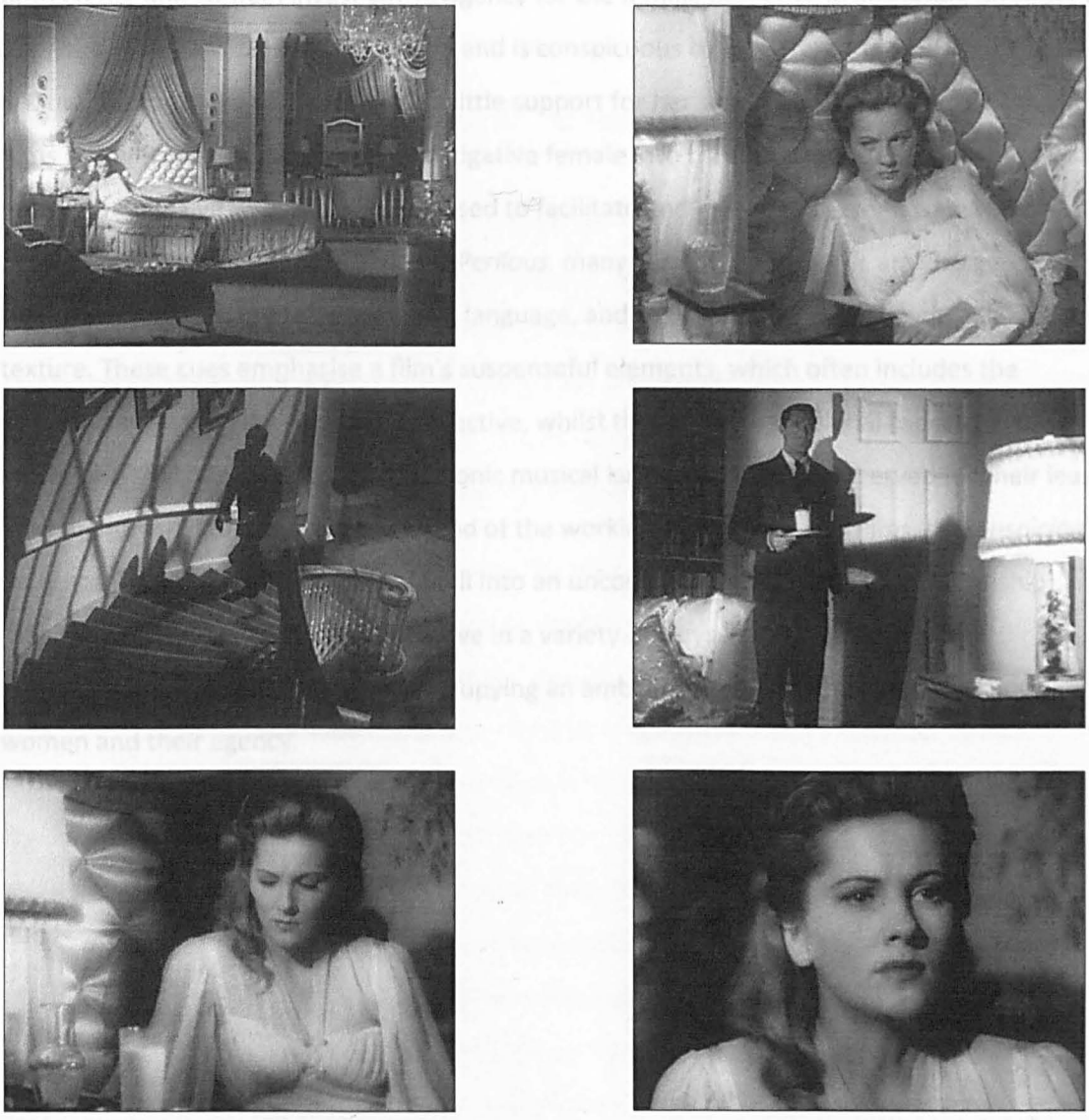


Figure 5.3. *Suspicion:* Johnnie brings Lina the milk

Suspicion's score is characterised by its ambiguity and frequent refusal to solve narrative problems for the viewer. Neither Waxman's original score nor the Wiener Blut waltz are used, as we might expect, to reinforce or negate Lina's suspicions about Johnnie, or to clearly demarcate her character's primary role within the film. Instead, music is used to increase the fluidity of Lina's positioning within an already ambiguous narrative, and becomes a key tool in *Suspicion's* simultaneous creation and containment of her agency, in particular her agency as detective.

This ambivalent attitude towards the female investigator is in line with the musical treatment of other examples of this figure in RKO's crime output of the 1940s. The soundtrack is used to both create and contain investigative agency for the female detective in *Suspicion, Stranger on the Third Floor,* and *Deadline at Dawn,* and is conspicuous by its absence for much of *Two O'Clock Courage,* providing Patty with little support for her sleuthing. A key feature of these films is their repositioning of the investigative female into the less agent role of love interest (and sometimes victim), and music is used to facilitate and reinforce these narrative shifts. As in *The Spiral Staircase* and *Experiment Perilous,* many cues in these scores are characterised by their chromaticism, unstable harmonic language, and use of oscillating motifs throughout the texture. These cues emphasise a film's suspenseful elements, which often includes the investigative activity of the female detective, whilst the more conventional aspects of these scores and their most consonant harmonic musical language is usually reserved for their least challenging aspects (the romance strand of the working-girl investigator films, and *Suspicion's* early scenes where Lina and Johnnie fall into an uncomplicated and carefree relationship). Music engages with the female detective in a variety of ways, but does not solve the "problems" she creates, frequently occupying an ambiguous position in relation to these women and their agency.

Chapter 6

Dangerous dames and siren songs: music and the *femme fatale*

1940s Hollywood and the "criminal" woman

As noted in chapter two, the *femme fatale* is one of the most distinctive character archetypes associated with 1940s crime cinema, and is usually theorised as expressing anxieties about gendered roles and identities in the period around World War II. Although the figure of the *femme fatale* appears in various guises and genres she is most associated with *film noir,* and the case studies examined in this chapter are all examples of this style of filmmaking (in the case of *The Leopard Man,* a cross-generic "horror-*noir*" hybrid).

The figure of the *femme fatale* most commonly collapses issues of morality and sexuality together, and her questionable ethics and corruption are often represented in a mutually dependent relationship with her heightened sexual allure. Although some *femmes fatales* are explicitly criminal, others occupy a position on the fringes of morality with their deviance primarily expressed through sexual or emotional "crimes", rather than involvement in actual law-breaking. This means that the *femme fatale* is often defined primarily in relation to the subjectivity of male characters (the victims of these sexual transgressions), rather than any detailed examination of female identity or experience. Although the "threat" of the *femme fatale* is usually neutralised in classical *film noir* (via redemption, punishment, or containment in some way), she is still frequently an engaging character whose disruptive and charismatic presence may grant her a temporary degree of agency. This temporary agency can be strong enough to transcend her ultimate containment, as Janey Place notes:

> Visually, film noir is fluid, sensual, extraordinarily expressive, making the sexually expressive woman, which is its dominant image of woman, extremely powerful. It is not their inevitable demise we remember but rather their strong, dangerous and, above all, exciting sexuality.[394]

Despite the various approaches taken to the characterisation of the *femme fatale* and her relative significance within the narrative, one aspect that unites these presentations is their emphasis on otherness, highlighting and fetishising the *femme fatale* through an emphasis on her difference from 1940s Hollywood's acceptable norms.

[394] Place, 'Women in Film Noir', p. 48.

The soundtrack plays a key role in the construction of the *femme fatale,* and frequently draws upon existing stereotypes surrounding the use of various popular and non-Western musical styles to articulate her difference (a feature that is often highlighted by the presence of musical *femmes fatales* who perform diegetically within the narrative as nightclub singers). The musical features of these popular styles can also be incorporated into more conventional-sounding orchestral cues in order to imbue nondiegetic scoring with ideas of difference and exoticism. Although highlighting difference is most commonly used as a means of fetishising the *femme fatale,* and thereby containing the threat and agency inherent in her refusal to stay within acceptable boundaries, this difference can also be celebrated as a means of resisting dominant ideologies and as a site of significant audience engagement with a problematic character. This chapter's case studies will explore both positive and negative aspects of the positioning and representation of the *femme fatale,* which often co-exist within the same film.

Music and otherness in the *femme fatale*

Chapter three outlined the common use of musical signifiers associated with jazz, blues, and other "non-white" popular musics to identify the presence of the *femme fatale* and mark her as "other" in relation to more acceptable representations of female sexuality. The use of these signifiers draws on problematic (white middle class) American cultural associations between race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality in order to position jazz and other popular forms as primitive and decadent. In *Jazz Noir,* David Butler traces the cultural association of jazz with irrationality, the physical, and the sexual back to the emergence of evolutionary theories and eugenics, where blackness became associated with ideas of primitivism and a lack of development.[395] Butler argues that these connotations became attached to the 'exoticism' of scenes of black dance, drumming, and music that later became staples of the imperialist adventure film, and were then later carried forward in discourse surrounding more contemporary black musical forms: 'White imperialist ideology could only consider black culture as being an expression of black hypersexuality and irrational thought. Inevitably, as in black music, the same associations were applied to jazz when it first flourished in the 1920s'.[396] Butler argues that in Hollywood (and often in wider culture), jazz is commonly represented in opposition to white musical forms. He identifies the presence of a 'mind/body dualism' that contrasts the "refinement" of white music's stimulation of intellect and rational thought with

[395] Butler, *Jazz Noir*, pp. 29-35.
[396] Butler, *Jazz Noir*, p. 31.

the physical, irrational stimulation of the body found in jazz and other black forms.[397] The association of jazz music with speakeasies and gangster culture during Prohibition furthered its negative connotations, and Butler demonstrates that silent and classical-era Hollywood consistently exploited the connections between jazz and ideas of excess, decadence, and the forbidden, often using it as a means of evading censorship.[398]

Writing more generally about the use of jazz and blues in Hollywood film, Peter Stanfield proposes that, together with vaudeville, these forms can be considered along earlier types of American entertainment such as blackface minstrelsy in their engagement with and reflection of American cultural identity.[399] Drawing on arguments about Victorian constructions of a black, impure, feminine American identity as a direct contrast to notions of Englishness as white, pure, and masculine, Stanfield argues that this cultural identity is one that is 'Of low estate and mixed origin', and that 'The products of miscegenated culture, minstrelsy, jazz, and blues were America's gutter music'.[400] The appearance of these entertainment forms in Hollywood film demonstrates a representation of "black" musics and culture that is constructed and mediated through largely "white" industrial and institutional practices, again recalling some of the processes previously seen in blackface. The later theatrical and cinematic use of popular musical forms such as jazz and blues can be seen as continuing a history of problematic representations of black class and sexuality that underpin Hollywood's use of them to communicate ideas about loss of control, permissiveness, and excess.[401]

Stanfield points out that these notions of "black music" depend heavily on ideas of "blackness" itself, and that this alone is a somewhat meaningless concept: blackness only exists in a relationship with whiteness, and without comparison of the two their difference cannot be

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[397] See also Simon Frith's discussion of similar issues surrounding the 'low' cultural associations of various types of popular music and the discourse surrounding musical, developmental, and evolutionary notions of the 'primitive'. Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 123-144.

[398] Butler uses the example here of *Baby Face.* The film stars Barbara Stanwyck as Lily, a victim of an abusive father who uses her sexuality to further her career and provide her with financial security and social status. Whenever we are supposed to infer that sexual activity is taking place, the camera cuts away from Lily and 'St Louis Blues' is heard on the soundtrack. *Baby Face,* dir. Alfred E. Green (Warner Bros. Pictures, 1933); Butler, *Jazz Noir*, p. 43.

[399] Peter Stanfield, *Body and Soul: Jazz and Blues in American Film 1927-63* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp. 2-4.

[400] Stanfield, *Body and Soul*, p. 3. Stanfield draws heavily in this section on the following study: Jennifer DeVere Brody, *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity and Victorian Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

[401] Stanfield, *Body and Soul*, p. 4. Krin Gabbard discusses the work of Eric Lott on blackface performance, noting that as well as providing a forum for the playing out of negativity about and contempt for blacks, many of these same white men also regarded the black male as a kind of sexual 'role model'. See Krin Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins: Jazz and the American Cinema* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 42-45.

recognised.[402] Difference is therefore key to understanding the cultural connotations of these musical forms, and this lies behind their use in Hollywood film: rather than a marker of specific racial or ethnic characterisations, the use of jazz and other forms of popular music (including Latin American style cues), underlines and creates ideas of difference and otherness, the precise nature of which may take many forms. Kathryn Kalinak makes a similar point in *Settling the Score,* arguing that classical Hollywood used jazz as a relatively flexible marker of difference:

> For white audiences of the era, jazz represented the urban, the sexual, and the decadent in a musical idiom perceived in the culture at large as an indigenous black form. Playing upon these culturally empowered stereotypes, the classical score used jazz as a musical trope for otherness, whether sexual or racial. Difference could thus be encoded into a text not only by visual representation but by music as well.[403]

Krin Gabbard points out the stereotypical treatment and/or frequent absence of black characters in Hollywood, including films that featured jazz. Films such as *King of Jazz,* a 1930 vehicle for white bandleader Paul Whiteman, are an extreme example of Hollywood's ability to effectively rewrite the history of jazz for its own ends (here the glorification of Whiteman and his band). The film removes virtually all trace of black involvement in the evolution of jazz or the production of the film, save for two minor and negatively stereotypical roles that 'show the degree to which blacks were contained in Hollywood even when they were physically present'.[404] This lack of actual difference is perhaps one of the things that allowed studio-era Hollywood to take such a cavalier attitude to the representation of it: its homogenous and hegemonic world, carefully policed by the "moral standards" of the Production Code, was not often able or willing to engage fully or openly with politically and culturally problematic ideas about race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, or class. Instead, these are obliquely alluded to in ways that signal difference, whilst taking care to ensure that the threat to cultural hegemony implied by this difference remains controlled and contained. Audiences were expected to read these indications of otherness to determine that a particular character or situation was subversive in some way.

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[402] Stanfield, *Body and Soul*, p. 4.
[403] Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, p. 167.
[404] Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins*, p. 13; *King of Jazz,* dir. John Murray Anderson (Universal Pictures, 1930). The two black roles in the film are a young girl who sits on Whiteman's knee at one point (Gabbard describes this role as both sexualised and infantilised), and an adult male who dances on a giant drum as Whiteman's narration outlines how 'jazz was born in the African jungle to the beating of the voodoo drum' (evoking notions of primitivism and excessive bodily display). Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins*, pp. 12-13.

Although jazz-based signifiers of difference are the most commonly, and overtly, used in studio-era representations of difference via musical means, other popular and non-white musical forms are also used to communicate these ideas. The scenes set in the Coconut Beach Club in *Murder, My Sweet,* for example, feature diegetic cues that highlight the East Asian styling and appearance of the club's dancer via the use of pentatonic tonality and other Western musical signifiers of the Far East.[405] However, aside from jazz, the most common cues used to indicate difference in 1940s Hollywood are those containing Latin or South American musical signifiers. Several films in the study feature scenes set in South America (usually Mexico) where Latin music is presented as a "realistic" part of the background setting, often contributing to a much broader construction of difference and the exotic via the use of foreign locations.[406] Outside this selection of films, Latin-style cues most commonly appear as diegetic dance music in North American nightclubs, with an emphasis on smooth string melody lines and extended percussion that highlights the syncopation of the underlying rhythms. Examples of this kind of cue appear in several films, including scenes set in the Turf Club in *Race Street,* the tiki bar in *Where Danger Lives,* and Verna's apartment in *They Won't Believe Me.* Due to their emphasis on orchestral strings and relatively conventional Western harmony, these "Latin" cues are sometimes difficult to distinguish from other forms of 1940s dance music,[407] and their wider context is often used to highlight the connotations of difference contained more subtly in the music. In *Race Street,* Lieutenant Runson's remark that 'you have to be Caesar Romero to dance to this!' makes clear the music's South American origins, and in *They Won't Believe Me* Verna's apartment is exotically styled with orchids and cocktail paraphernalia. Whilst jazz is almost always a heavily negative signifier of difference in 1940s Hollywood cinema, the use of Latin music is often less clear-cut and relies more heavily on other contextual signifiers in order to make the nature of its implications of difference clear. This may be a result of the general popularity of Latin-style culture amongst middle and upper class North Americans during the era, and this in turn may be connected with the 'Good

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[405] These cues are referred to as 'Oriental Dance #1' and 'Oriental Dance #2' in the film's score. Webb, '*Farewell My Lovely*'. James Naremore discusses the use of Asian themes in several *films noirs* of the 1940s. See Naremore, *More Than Night*, pp. 225-229.

[406] Naremore notes the frequent use of South American locations in *film noir,* especially for scenes involving parades, carnivals, and other 'baroque celebrations': 'During the 1940s, noir characters visited Latin America more often than any other foreign locale, usually because they wanted to find relief from repression'. Despite the often exotic and picturesque depiction of South America in these films, its initial promise of romance usually turns out to be false, in line with the general pessimism of *noir* narratives, shortening the distance between the representation of North and South America. Naremore, *More Than Night*, pp. 229-233 (p.229).

[407] Latin dances like the samba and rumba were also popular amongst upper class North Americans during the 1940s, explaining the general prevalence of Latin styling in many diegetic dance cues. Naremore, *More Than Night*, p. 231.

Neighbor' politics that characterised official relations between North and South America during the 1930s and 1940s.[408]

There is frequently a wide gap between the "authentic" sounds of jazz, blues, and Latin music and Hollywood's appropriation of them in film scoring. This gap is a familiar one in any process of othering, and one which results from a complex interplay of social and cultural factors, as much of the work on Orientalism and representation has pointed out. Derek Scott, for example, in his survey of the characteristics of various Orientalist approaches to musical representation states that 'Oriental music is not a poor imitation of another cultural practice: its purpose is not to imitate, but to represent'.[409] The representation and appropriation of cultural texts in this way most frequently implies the presence of a hierarchy (where the "home" style is portrayed as superior to those texts outside it), and film music in general owes much to somewhat arbitrary relationships between music and representation, as its frequent recourse to cliché and stereotype reveals. These musical characterisations can be seen as part of Hollywood's more widespread strategies for the containment and frequent punishment of those who step outside its acceptable limits. By seeking to highlight difference, Hollywood also moves to distance itself from it and to reinforce the hierarchical relationships implicit in the identification of cultural others. The identification of the *femme fatale* with overt or more subtle signifiers of jazz, blues, or Latin styles therefore marks her not only as outside the norm, but also as falling short of its moral standards.

Diegetic musical performance and the *femme fatale*

The most obvious examples of jazz and popular music being used as a major component in the characterisation of the "criminal" woman are often found in films that feature diegetic musical performance, particularly those where the *femme fatale* herself is a singer. Although diegetic musical performance may initially seem to be an incongruous addition to the 1940s crime film it is a relatively common one, largely because of the emphasis upon bar and nightclub settings as a regular location in crime and *noir* films. As Helen Hanson notes, the permissive and "underground" atmosphere of the nightclub means that it is often the site of significant exchanges in the crime film, where its connotations of excess and debauchery are often used

[408] For a detailed examination of the representation of Latin America in classical Hollywood film and how this engaged with 'Good Neighbor' politics (here focusing on the film musical), see Bianca Freire-Medeiros, 'Hollywood Musicals and the Invention of Rio De Janiero', *Cinema Journal,* 41.4 (2002), 52-67; Philip Swanson, 'Going Down on Good Neighbours: Imagining *América* in Hollywood Movies of the 1930s and 1940s *(Flying Down to Rio* and *Down Argentine Way)*', *Bulletin of Latin American Research,* 29.1 (2010), 71-84.

[409] Derek B. Scott, 'Orientalism and Musical Style', *The Musical Quarterly,* 82.2 (1998), 309-335 (p. 326).

to suggest what cannot openly be shown: 'The *noir* nightclub setting provides an adjunct to the city's dark streets, and extends its ambivalent terrain. Inhabited by gamblers, crime bosses, heavies, hard-boiled cops and female singers, it is where glamour and crime frequently fuse'.[410] The *femme fatale* is often shown to be most "at home" in the nightclub, which also provides a naturalised setting for the use of jazz and other popular musics on the soundtrack, leading to a continuous circle of signification and re-signification that ties together negative ideas about morality, excess, and sexuality with music.

In those films where the *femme fatale* is a singer, she is literally seen and heard to embody the negative connotations of the music she performs, a relationship which is given additional weight because of its nature as a public performance. Musical performance by the *femme fatale* can be seen as intensifying her difference via the additional "excess" of her singing voice: whereas song and dance is frequently made to seem effortless and natural in the film musical, many of the devices and strategies employed to achieve this naturalisation are missing from other genres.[411] The act of singing also emphasises the body as an unmediated (and thereby potentially threatening) site of production, as Heather Laing notes:

> The singing woman specifies the nature of the performance and its archetypal resonances not only through the style of music and perhaps even the lyrics, but also through the "direct" mode of musical communication constituted by song. These leaves her unmediated and unencumbered by any musical instrument other than the (dangerous) body itself.[412]

This vocal production engages with camerawork, choreography, and costume to highlight the physical presence of the *femme fatale* and her most common construction as sexually desirable (whilst simultaneously morally repellent).[413] This desirability is often coupled with an undercurrent of "availability" as well – these women are effectively advertising their bodies as

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[410] Hanson, 'Sounds of the City'.

[411] Jane Feuer provides a detailed account of the various strategies employed in the Hollywood musical to naturalise and integrate musical performance and dance within the narrative. Underpinning many of these techniques is the musical's ideological imperative to valorise the importance and "worth" of entertainment (a particular feature of "backstage" musicals), which usually contrasts heavily with the use of diegetic performance in other genres. Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical*, Second edn (Houndmills and London: The Macmillan Press, 1993), pp. 1-22.

[412] Laing, *Onscreen Musicians, Unseen Emotions*, p. 101.

[413] The idea of performance as spectacle is a significant theme in much of the scholarship on the film musical, which emphasises excess and abundance as a key part of the genre's pleasures. See, for example Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', in *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader*, ed. by Steven Cohan (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 19-30; Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical*, pp. 23-47; Lucy Fischer, 'Designing Women: Art Deco, the Musical, and the Female Body', in *Music and Cinema*, ed. by James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, and David Neumeyer (Hanover: Weslyan University Press, 2000), pp. 295-315; Martin Rubin, 'Busby Berkeley and the Backstage Musical', in *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader*, ed. by Steven Cohan (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 53-61.

spectacle (both visually and as the means of sound production), moving what in Hollywood terms should always be private, into the very public space of the musical performance. Particularly in the non-musical film, scenes featuring diegetic performance by female characters have most often been theorised as an extreme example of classical Hollywood's tendency to objectify, fetishise, and contain women by offering an extended space for pleasurable contemplation of the female form.[414]

The film that has attracted the most consistent and detailed examination of these ideas is *Gilda,* which features several musical performances as part of its narrative. Mary Ann Doane's analysis of *Gilda,* although primarily based around the way in which the visual aspect of the film engages with its underlying ideologies, emphasises the role of Gilda's various performances of 'Put the Blame on Mame' (a song about a woman who is blamed for things that are clearly out of her control) in highlighting her position in the narrative and changing relationships with Ballin and Johnny.[415] The final "striptease" performance of this song is particularly significant in uniting fetishistic camerawork ('the drama of looking') with the underlying message that appearances are deceptive and that Gilda is not as bad as she seems. For Doane, the climactic revelation of Gilda's inherent "goodness" is unconvincing due to the film's 'elaborate and prolonged construction of a threatening, explosive image of female sexuality and the devastating effect of that image upon Johnny'.[416]

Although several other critics align themselves with a similarly negative view of the way in which *Gilda* positions its central character through song and other means,[417] Richard Dyer and Adrienne McLean have instead cited this film as an example of the potential for musical performance to aid the *femme fatale* in resisting her traditionally fetishistic and limited portrayal in the crime film.[418] For Dyer, this resistance arises from a series of factors that disturb the usual representation of the *femme fatale* as an unknowable enigma: the heavily emasculated presence of Johnny, and his construction as an object of desire for both Gilda and Ballin, positions him (rather than Gilda) in the traditional role of objectified "woman", and this draws the authority of his voiceover into question. Additionally, the star presence of Rita

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[414] See McLean, '"It's Only That I Do What I Love and Love What I Do"', pp. 5-6. Also see the discussion of Laura Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' in chapter two, and chapter three's discussion of Kaja Silverman's arguments about the containment of female voices within clearly defined 'textual spaces' that include the song sequence.

[415] Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, pp. 99-118.

[416] Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, p. 108.

[417] See, for example, Karen Hollinger, '*Film Noir,* Voice-over, and the Femme Fatale', in *Film Noir Reader*, ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 1996), pp. 243-259; K. Lenz, 'Put the Blame on *Gilda:* Dyke-Noir Versus Film-Noir', *Theatre Studies,* 40 (1995), 17-26.

[418] Dyer, 'Resistance through Charisma'; McLean, '"It's Only That I Do What I Love and Love What I Do"'.

Hayworth in the title role gives a "knowability" and charisma to Gilda that is at odds with the usual positioning of the *femme fatale*. Hayworth's presence is also significant in the choreography and staging of several of *Gilda's* musical performances. In those numbers where Hayworth dances, Dyer suggests that this self-sufficient solo movement makes it possible 'to read her dancing in terms of eroticism for herself as well as for the spectator'.[419] Musical performance functions very differently in the first of Gilda's renditions of 'Put the Blame on Mame', and Dyer argues that this sequence functions as a 'private moment', a significant site of audience engagement with, and insight into, Gilda's "real" motivations and character:

> Private moments, in the rhetoric of Hollywood character construction, are moments of truth. What they tell us about the character is privileged over what the character says (and even does) in public. The moment in question in *Gilda* is her first rendition of 'Put the Blame on Mame' [...] This moment of truth informs the rest of the film. We are likely to use it to read Gilda's collapse at Johnny's feet [...] not with sadistic delight (as the voice-over urges us) but with pity of identification. The second, public rendition of 'Put the Blame on Mame' becomes a song of defiance, not just of a trapped wife, but of a woman against the male system.[420]

Dyer concludes that *Gilda* is not truly 'progressive' in its representation of gender roles, as its ending reinforces a much more conventional relationship between Gilda and Johnny, and its earlier problematisation of these traditions relies heavily upon narrow and prescriptive definitions of masculinity and normality.[421] However, in exploring less orthodox positionings of the *femme fatale, Gilda* provides alternative ways in which to conceptualise her presence in *film noir.*

McLean reaches similar conclusions in her discussion of the complex and often contradictory processes at work in Hayworth's musical numbers in *Gilda* and *Affair in Trinidad.*[422] Like Dyer, McLean stresses the importance of Hayworth's star presence, particularly her presence as dancer, to the ability of Gilda to use her professional talents as a musical performer to temporarily escape from Johnny's control. The combination of this "freedom" with the more traditionally "restrictive" aspects of the numbers (and the film as a whole) means that the precise effect of, and intended audience for, *Gilda's* dance numbers and their pleasures are difficult to ascertain: '"Put the Blame on Mame" does not, in the end, play to and signify only

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[419] Dyer, 'Resistance through Charisma', p. 121.

[420] Dyer, 'Resistance through Charisma', p. 119. It is possible that some of the 'truth' of this sequence may be challenged by its dubbing (a common Hollywood practice and one that is achieved with subtlety here) and/or Hayworth's noticeably poor miming of the guitar playing.

[421] Dyer, 'Resistance through Charisma', pp. 121-122.

[422] *Affair in Trinidad,* dir. Vincent Sherman (Columbia Pictures Corporation; The Beckworth Corporation, 1952).

male desire. Although the striptease in *Gilda* is obviously provocative in some sense, exactly for whom it is erotic may not be so easy to pinpoint'.[423]

Contrasting with the physical activity that is a key part of *Gilda's* dance numbers is the earlier performance of 'Put the Blame on Mame' to Uncle Pio (and later Johnny). McLean, like Dyer, highlights the strong identificatory potential of this performance, referring to it as a 'privileged moment': 'Despite its contradictory framing by Johnny's [...] voiceover narration, we are alone with Gilda and her song; we feel her pain at being what she is, a woman, one of a sex always blamed when the world goes wrong'.[424] Although much of the camerawork and editing of this sequence is indistinguishable from that which is commonly thought to fetishise and contain the female performer, the implied privacy and intimacy of the performance (also highlighted in the self-accompanied nature of the music) turn this into an agent moment of identification with the *femme fatale,* rather than a simple signifier of her otherness. McLean concludes that there is a clear 'tension' between "number" and "narrative" in *Gilda* (and *Affair in Trinidad)* that results in 'ideological incoherence', producing a 'space in which performance can be read as resistance'.[425]

The identificatory potential of the song sequence is an important theme in both Dyer's and McLean's analyses of *Gilda,* and this is something that has been most consistently theorised in relation to the film musical. Jane Feuer, for example, states that 'In becoming song, language is in a sense transfigured, lifted up into a higher, more expressive realm',[426] and this remark also provides a starting point for Heather Laing's discussion of the particular function and effect of song in the film musical. Laing argues that the song has a strong affective potential because of its ability to express emotion, meaning that sung performance demonstrates 'one of the closest relationships possible between a character and music'.[427] In many ways this relationship is comparable to Gorbman's concept of the 'metadiegetic' level (or subjective sound/point of audition more generally), giving the audience privileged access to internal thoughts and feelings.

Many of the affective elements of song that Laing discusses are also significant in Richard Dyer's 'Entertainment and Utopia', an analysis of the various pleasures offered by the film

[423] McLean, '"It's Only That I Do What I Love and Love What I Do"', p. 7.
[424] McLean, '"It's Only That I Do What I Love and Love What I Do"', p. 5.
[425] McLean, '"It's Only That I Do What I Love and Love What I Do"', p. 12.
[426] Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical*, p. 52.
[427] Heather Laing, 'Emotion by Numbers: Music, Song and the Musical', in *Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond*, ed. by Bill Marshall and Robynn Stilwell (Exeter and Portland: Intellect, 2000), pp. 5-13 (p. 7).

musical.[428] Dyer argues that although entertainment forms cannot truly be 'escapist' due to their complex relationship with capitalist modes of production, they offer the sense of this escape, giving an indication of what utopia might 'feel like' (rather than how it would be organised). This 'utopian sensibility' is created and communicated by evoking ideas of 'energy', 'abundance', 'intensity', 'transparency', and 'community' via a combination of culturally and historically located signs that are both representational (for example, characterisation, lyrics, the unfolding storyline) and non-representational (colour, movement, musical features, camerawork). These categories act as 'temporary answers to the inadequacies of the society which is being escaped from', which means that entertainment appears to respond to 'real needs *created by society*'.[429]

Dyer notes that this model does not respond to all societal inadequacies, and in responding to certain needs in society, entertainment is also helping to define what those needs are in the first place.[430] In turn, many of these entertainment-offered responses correspond to things that capitalism itself promises to provide:

> The categories of the sensibility point to gaps or inadequacies in capitalism, but only those gaps or inadequacies that capitalism proposes itself to deal with. At our worse sense of it, entertainment provides alternatives *to* capitalism which will be provided *by* capitalism.[431]

Despite the inability of entertainment to address the full range of societal and personal 'needs', 'Entertainment and Utopia' offers a model for identifying aspects of diegetic musical performance that might create a sense of pleasure and fulfilment. These pleasures are prevented from seeming over-simplistic or "false" because of the tensions between narrative (problematic, realistic) and number (escapist, utopian) in the film musical, and the contradictions that are often present between representational and non-representational signs. Dyer notes three broad divisions in the way that musicals attempt to work through these contradictions: those that keep number and narrative entirely separate, those that maintain a clear distinction between them but try to integrate numbers smoothly into the text, and those

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[428] Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia'.
[429] Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', pp. 22-23.
[430] Dyer here notes the inability of most Hollywood entertainment to effectively respond to issues of class, race, gender, and sexuality, as these are 'denied validity as problems by the dominant (bourgeois, white, male) ideology of society'. Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', p. 23.
[431] For example, 'abundance becomes consumerism, energy and intensity personal freedom and individualism, and transparency freedom of speech.' Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', p. 23.

which 'dissolve' the distinction between the two, 'thus implying that the world of the narrative is also (already) utopian'.[432]

Outside the generic boundaries of the film musical the first of these categories is clearly the most relevant: musical numbers in non-musical film are usually self-contained sequences that contrast sharply with the rest of the narrative, again highlighting the function of diegetic performance in signifying difference. Whilst this difference is usually a positively positioned one in the musical, the diegetic performance sequences found in the 1940s crime film often feel distinctly "dystopian". They are also frequently much more static, with less movement and dance – important factors in readings of the atypical positioning of the *femme fatale* in *Gilda*. However, many of the pleasurable, expressive, and emotional elements discussed above are highly relevant to these song sequences and may help to explain the way in which they are able to function as sites of largely positive engagement with the problematic figure of the *femme fatale*. The use of song to highlight the expression of emotion may help to counter the portrayal of the *femme fatale* as cold and unfeeling, and ideas of transparency and intensity (which are themselves often related to the presence of emotion in the song) are frequently significant in explaining the particular appeal of performance sequences for both internal and external audiences. Reaction shots of (usually male) patrons are often included to show the pleasurable effect of the *femme fatale's* song upon the listener. These inserted reaction shots highlight the particular way in which diegetic performance by the *femme fatale* collapses registers of the aural and visual together: not only is the patron listening, but he is also clearly looking, and the objectification of the singer takes place in both registers. Despite this objectification, the singer's role as the primary "source" of the performance combines with the affective power of song in a way that often increases sympathy for the *femme fatale* and thereby potentially increases her narrative agency. As Hanson notes, 'Scenarios where a female "nitery singer" performs a popular song very often prompt audience empathy and identification, and advance female characterisation beyond a stereotype of woman as fatal sexual threat'.[433]

The contrasts and contradictions inherent in diegetic performance sequences in the crime film render the *femme fatale* an intriguing mixture of knowable and unknowable. They often frame diegetic song as an erotic invitation, whilst simultaneously evoking musical and cultural signifiers of otherness that serve to put the performing woman far out of reach. Rather than attempting to theorise the function and effect of diegetic musical performance as a generic

[432] Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', p. 26.
[433] Hanson, 'Sounds of the City'.

marker of the representation of the *femme fatale,* these sequences must be assessed at an individual level. McLean, for example, draws a clear distinction between the well-integrated and meaningful numbers in *Gilda* and *Affair in Trinidad* and the single appearance of musical performance in *The Lady From Shanghai,* which she characterises as a 'more or less standard example of how musical performance functions in *film noir* [...] it may draw us into temporary closer identification with the female protagonist, but we probably wouldn't miss it if it were gone'.[434] Several of the films examined in this study use musical performance in this relatively perfunctory way, with the insertion of a single number sung by the central female character that does little to advance the film's plot or characterisation. Interestingly, the majority of these performances are not delivered by a "true" *femme fatale* figure, although they are clearly designed to introduce some of the desirability and glamour associated with her into the more staid and "safe" characterisation of less obviously problematic characters. Examples of this kind of musical performance are given by Elaine (Gale Robbins) in *Race Street* and Vicky (Jacqueline White) in *Mystery in Mexico.*

Georgia (Martha O'Driscoll), in *Criminal Court,* is another "innocent" singer, which becomes a key feature of the film's plot when she is wrongly accused of murder. A montage of lurid newspaper headlines makes clear that the film is trading upon the stereotype of the 'torch singer' as *femme fatale,* and Georgia's musical performances in the nightclub are carefully managed to ensure that she appears sympathetic and engaging, whilst also highlighting the erotic appeal she has for her gangster employer, Vic (Robert Armstrong). In her first number, 'I Couldn't Sleep a Wink Last Night', Georgia rehearses for the club's musical director and also for Vic. Shot-reverse-shot camerawork is used to highlight Vic's position as the intended audience of the song and Georgia appears to be directing her delivery primarily to him. Georgia remains static and relatively lifeless throughout the song, whilst Vic gradually walks towards her (a movement that is emphasised strongly by tracking shots inserted into the shot-reverse-shot set up), and this highlights his activity as spectator (rather than Georgia's delivery) as the source of the scene's implied erotic charge and sexual suggestiveness. Georgia and her performance are clearly shown to be attractive and beguiling to Vic (and to the musical director, who compliments her afterwards), but she is not shown as celebrating or unduly encouraging this relationship. Instead, she maintains an air of professionalism throughout. This is aided by the dialogue preceding the sequence, which establishes Georgia as a "good girl" who is dating a candidate for the position of District Attorney, and the banal romanticism of the song's lyrics, which are about a couple already in a relationship.

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[434] McLean, '"It's Only That I Do What I Love and Love What I Do"', p. 5; *The Lady from Shanghai*, comp. Heinz Roemheld (Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1947).

Musical performance is also shown to be an unreliable indicator of morality in *Nocturne,* where the twist in the film's ending relies upon audience recognition of the tropes of otherness associated with the *femme fatale.* Throughout the film, jobbing actress Frances (Lynn Bari) is clearly positioned as the prime suspect in the killing of a womanising composer, despite her sister Carol's (Virginia Huston) profession as a nightclub singer. Carol's musical performances are often overshadowed by important action taking place elsewhere in the scene, and even those numbers where she is the primary focus are characterised by a lack of direct address or eye contact with the camera, and a naïve and conservative performance style. In contrast, the confident Frances is presented as vampish and alluring: we first see her climbing out of a swimming pool in a revealing costume, and later she appears in glamorous "Eastern" dress for a rehearsal of *Sinbad* on the RKO sound stage. However, the film eventually reveals Carol as the "guilty" party (although it actually turns out to be her husband who committed the murder), and Frances' adoption of the characteristics of the *femme fatale* is shown to be a red herring. Suitably chastised after an attempt on her own life, Frances finally accepts the authority of the investigating officer (George Raft) with whom she has been sparring flirtatiously, and is taken home to meet his mother.

Diegetic musical performance plays a significant role in two of the case studies discussed below, *The Leopard Man* and *A Woman's Secret,* films that contain examples of both the fetishisation of the female performer and her (often limited) ability to resist this presentation. Although diegetic performance by the *femme fatale* does not feature in *Out of the Past,* the use of popular musical styles is an important aspect of Kathie's construction as dangerous and unknowable. Kathie's centrality to the narrative is signalled by her association with a prominent motif in the nondiegetic score and this engages with other aspects of the film, including its voiceover narration by Jeff, in various and complex ways. *The Locket* also makes use of a central musical motif that is identified with the *femme fatale,* Nancy, although here the film's multiple voiceover narrators arguably contain Nancy's threat much more tightly than Kathie's. *The Locket* also relies heavily on the presence of medical discourse to position and tame the *femme fatale* by calling her sanity into question.

Case studies 4

Medical discourse revisited: mental illness and the murderess

The potential of medical discourse to assist in the positioning of female characters and to aid their containment has previously been discussed in relation to *Experiment Perilous* and *The*

Spiral Staircase. In addition to *The Locket,* which is used as the primary case study here, *Where Danger Lives* also makes use of this strategy as a means of neutralising the threat of a *femme fatale* figure, rather than to assist in the positioning of a female character as victim. In this film, Margo (Faith Domergue) is only gradually revealed to be a *femme fatale* when surgeon Jeff (Robert Mitchum) begins to realise that she is not as in love with him, or as victimised by her husband, as he thought. Margo, who originally appears in the film as an emergency patient after a suicide attempt, is eventually shown to have a history of mental illness which is then used to explain her increasingly disturbed and violent state. Margo is a problematic and unconvincing character, and medical discourse is used to suggest that she has cunningly planned to use Jeff all along, whilst also maintaining that she is incapable of rational or comprehensible thought. Jeff, who leaves his long-term girlfriend Julie (Maureen O'Sullivan) to be with Margo, is injured relatively early on in the film and becomes increasingly sick and disoriented as the narrative progresses. Despite his increasing lack of physical and "practical" agency, Jeff's narrative authority is maintained because of his position as doctor. In addition to creating a hierarchical relationship with Margo as Jeff's "patient", this effectively gives Jeff an element of control over his symptoms (despite his inability to actually treat them whilst on the run).

Jeff's control over the narrative is reinforced by the soundtrack, which privileges his viewpoint and experience in a way that is relatively similar to the use of music in *Experiment Perilous* (although without the use of flashback). Jeff's subjectivity is stressed in cues that illustrate both his physical condition (the continual wooziness that results from his concussion) and his emotional state (his changing responses to Julie and Margo, both of whom are associated with individual leitmotifs in the score). As in *Experiment Perilous,* these motifs are used to privilege the male protagonist's response to female characters and their actions, rather than being indicative of the subjectivity of these women. Music is therefore used in *Where Danger Lives* to support the film's reliance on medical discourse as a strategy to help create and reinforce Jeff's narrative dominance and control over Margo's positioning.

The Locket

The Locket has a complex narrative structure that is largely reliant on a series of "nested" flashbacks. This is shown in Figure 6.1, which also shows the position of several key events within this structure.

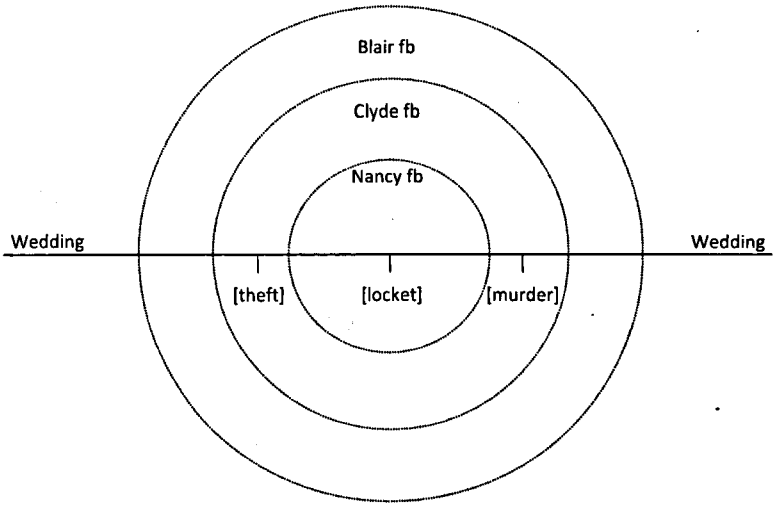

Figure 6.1. *The Locket:* narrative structure as nested flashbacks[435]

The film begins and ends on the wedding day of Nancy (Laraine Day) and her fiancée John Willis (Gene Raymond). Their pre-ceremony preparations are interrupted by the arrival of Dr Blair, a psychoanalyst. Blair warns Willis that Nancy has 'ruined the lives' of at least three men and that 'truth is beyond her'. Before an angry Willis can throw him out, Blair manages to convince him to listen to his story and a flashback begins, showing scenes from Blair's own previous relationship with Nancy. As part of his story, we also see flashbacks from Norman Clyde (Robert Mitchum), a painter who was involved with Nancy before she met Blair, and from Nancy herself, when she tells Clyde about a traumatic childhood incident when she was accused of stealing a locket by her mother's employer.

This revelation from Nancy is prompted by Clyde's discovery that she has stolen a valuable bracelet at a party given by her boss, Bonner (Ricardo Cortez), who is also Clyde's new patron. Clyde's painting of Cassandra, using Nancy as a model, has won the judges' prize at Bonner's exhibition. Although Clyde convinces himself that Nancy's story explains her behaviour as a temporary aberration, another, more serious incident at a similar party makes him reconsider. Bonner is murdered whilst fetching his wife's diamond pendant from their bedroom, and Clyde sees Nancy coming out of the room shortly after a shot has been fired. Although Clyde lies to give her an alibi (eventually leading to the conviction of Bonner's valet for the murder), he is doubtful of her innocence. The couple split up and Nancy leaves for Miami, which is where she meets Blair for the first time.

[435] Adapted from Maureen Turim, 'Fictive Psyches: The Psychological Melodrama in 40s Films', *boundary 2*, 12.3 - 13.1 (1984), 321-331 (p. 325).

Blair's story (as told to Willis) describes how Clyde visited him at his New York clinic to warn him about the impending execution of the valet, telling him that Nancy (by now Blair's wife) is the real culprit behind the murder. Blair thinks that Clyde is hysterical and wants to psychoanalyse him, but his 'masochistic curiosity' forces him to listen to Clyde's story about Nancy. Blair doesn't believe Clyde, whom Nancy accuses of lying, and the painter eventually commits suicide by leaping from the window of Blair's skyscraper clinic. The scandal of the suicide means that Blair and Nancy leave for England, and they are resident in London when World War II breaks out. They enlist, with Nancy driving an ambulance and Blair volunteering for the British medical services. They spend a long weekend at a country estate designed to give relief for exhausted war workers, and an antique necklace is stolen from the owners whilst they are there. Blair is tormented with doubts about Nancy and eventually tells her what he suspects, but she blames Clyde for this and shows him that she doesn't have the necklace. After their home is destroyed in a bombing raid, Blair discovers a box full of jewellery in the rubble and realises that Nancy has been lying. Despite being confronted with this evidence, she continues to lie and persuades doctors to commit Blair to a psychiatric ward before leaving for America.

After this complex series of flashbacks, the conclusion of the film takes place during the wedding ceremony of Nancy and Willis. Nancy invites Blair to stay and watch the wedding, and Willis is still convinced that Blair's story is nonsense. However, Nancy's new mother-in-law is then revealed to be the same woman who accused her of stealing the locket, and when she presents her with the locket as a gift this triggers a total breakdown on the part of Nancy. As she staggers down the aisle, she becomes increasingly overwhelmed by voices from the past and eventually screams and collapses. At the end of the film Nancy is led away a psychiatric institution whilst Blair looks on.

The emphasis on Nancy's "madness" means that *The Locket* has several similarities with other films where medical discourse is used to position female characters. However, in *The Locket,* the male narrators who are used to frame Nancy's own story are themselves positioned as "mentally unreliable" (Clyde commits suicide, and, despite the usual authority of the doctor-psychiatrist, Blair is institutionalised at one point). This means that the narrative is less clear-cut in the way that it approaches Nancy's own section of narration, even though her flashback is contained inside the subjective memories of both Blair and Clyde.[436] Mary Ann Doane argues that the complex structure of the film foregrounds the processes of cinematic narrative, and

[436] Doane refers to *The Locket* as a particularly 'extreme' example of the use of a male-oriented 'encompassing discourse' in the medicalised woman's film. Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, p. 54.

its reliance upon multiple flashbacks belonging to various and questionable narrators results in a 'textual vertigo' that can only be resolved when Nancy's ultimate breakdown proves Blair and Clyde right: 'it is the hallucinatory voices heard by a madwoman which act as a verification of the narratives told by the men. The film is structured so that her madness confirms their sanity'.[437] Unlike Doane, who stresses only the film's containment of Nancy, Andrew Spicer argues that *The Locket* is 'radically ambivalent' in its attitude towards her.[438] He notes the 'graphic' nature of Nancy's flashback and the scene that depicts her breakdown, and argues that these sequences are used to create sympathy for her by stressing her mental illness as the cause of her behaviour (which goes some way to undermining its 'misogynist warning to prospective husbands').[439] Spicer concludes that the film's 'oscillation between condemnation and sympathy for its central protagonist, draws attention to the processes of narration and to the attempt of male narrators to control the "problem" of femininity'.[440] Despite arguably creating sympathy for Nancy, however, the film's stress on her mental illness also works to further contain and diminish her agency, as subsequent discussion will explore in greater detail.

Figure 6.2. *The Locket:* Nancy with Clyde's painting of the blind Cassandra

Clyde's painting of Cassandra is used to highlight the themes of knowledge and truth throughout the central section of *The Locket.* In Greek mythology, Cassandra is the beautiful daughter of the King of Troy who is given the gift of prophecy by Apollo. When she refuses to return Apollo's love he curses her, causing people to disbelieve her prophecies. Cassandra is condemned to watch the destruction of Troy, despite having foretold it. Nancy provides Clyde's model for his painting of Cassandra, which is unusual in that he has pictured Cassandra as blind, removing her usual "gift" of heightened vision and prophecy (see Figure 6.2).

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[437] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, p. 59.
[438] Andrew Spicer, *Film Noir* (Harlow: Longman, 2002), p. 79.
[439] Spicer, *Film Noir*, p. 79.
[440] Spicer, *Film Noir*, p. 79.

For Doane, Cassandra's blindness is indicative of both Nancy's inability to "see" the truth of her own condition and her (related) lack of agency in the film:

> The male narrators are therefore only apparently or temporarily mentally unbalanced while the woman is essentially mad. *The Locket* proves the truth of the portrait of Nancy as a Cassandra without eyes [...] The woman = Cassandra = the image which is endowed with the gift of knowledge but fated not to be believed. And this Cassandra herself is blind, lacking in subjectivity. Because she is the image of doom she cannot see it.[441]

However, the figure of Cassandra is also indicative of the position of Clyde, its artist, and Blair, who receives the painting from Clyde moments before his suicide.[442] Clyde paints the picture before he knows of Nancy's true character, and Cassandra's blindness thereby demonstrates his own position as "prophet", which is then reinforced by his visit to warn Blair about Nancy. As in Cassandra's case, both Clyde and Blair are condemned to failure as prophets and their warnings about Nancy go unheard until it is too late. The portrait therefore works in several ways to draw attention to various aspects of *The Locket's* narrative: it shows the blindness of Nancy to her own condition, the blindness of the film's men to her true nature, and it highlights Blair and Clyde's roles as prophets whose warnings fall on deaf ears.

A second painting by Clyde is also used to draw attention to his relationship with Nancy and to highlight her part in Bonner's murder (which occurs off-camera, potentially leaving some ambiguity about whether or not Nancy is guilty). The painting is similar to the first one of Cassandra, but this time her eyes are painted conventionally, and she is a less intimidating figure. She also wears a locket around her neck. This picture is introduced after Clyde confronts Nancy about the stolen bracelet and she tells him the story of the locket. It perhaps is designed to represent Clyde's changing attitude towards Nancy and the feeling that he now fully "understands" her: in the painting he has restored Nancy/Cassandra's "vision" and has also given her the locket she desired in childhood. However, the "monstrous" reality of Nancy is also present in the painting (and in the presence of the locket as a symbol with a double meaning, given the trouble the incident has caused for Nancy and those she is in contact with). As Mrs Bonner is told about her husband's murder by one of the maids, the painting dominates the background of the scene, highlighting Nancy's culpability despite Clyde's refusal to seriously consider that she might be guilty (see Figure 6.3).

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[441] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, p. 59.
[442] Turim, 'Fictive Psyches', pp. 328-329.

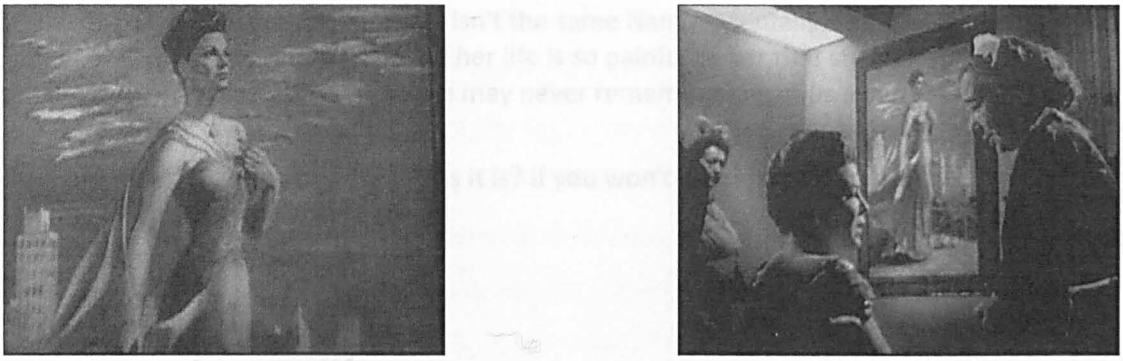


Figure 6.3. *The Locket:* Nancy and Clyde's view of his second painting; Mrs Bonner hears about her husband's death

Although Doane, in particular, emphasises Nancy's lack of subjectivity when compared to the film's male narrators, her experience is strikingly stressed on two occasions during the film: the central flashback to her childhood experience with the locket, and her final collapse as she prepares to get married to Willis. However, these sequences are problematic in the way that they present female subjectivity. Nancy's flashback is embedded within two others, as discussed above, and both sequences focus upon the moments of her greatest trauma and weakest position with respect to other characters. They highlight her mental state at those points where it is under the most strain, and this intensifies the effect of the film's medical discourse and its use to position Nancy as "mad". By explaining Nancy's compulsive lying and kleptomania as manifestations of her inability to recover from the childhood trauma of the locket, the film implies that Nancy has never really "grown up", and therefore that she cannot be truly held responsible for her actions. Although this can be seen as making her more acceptable in a way, it also removes Nancy's autonomy and denies her even the largely negative agency that is usually found in the disruptive and criminal elements of the *femme fatale.* The film's emphasis on Nancy's madness, together with the predominance of narration about her, rather than by her, effectively prevents her character from being fully developed; a containment and two-dimensionality that is also present in the blind Cassandra of Clyde's painting.

The dialogue between Blair, Willis, and his mother in the final scene makes clear this link between Nancy's illness and her "childlike" state, and also demonstrates the reinstatement of Blair's narrative and medical authority now that his "diagnosis" is proved correct. The film's ending is relatively ambiguous about whether Willis will become Nancy's next "victim" or not: Blair's prognosis obviously disturbs him, but he still follows Nancy to the ambulance.

Blair: You must realise this isn't the same Nancy. Mentally, she's a child now. The remembrance of her life is so painful to her that she's shut it out completely. Why, she may never remember any of us again.

Mother: You see how hopeless it is? If you won't consider me, at least for your own sake...

Willis: I'm sorry, mother.

Mother: Believe me, John, I wish we could do something for Nancy but we can't. Isn't that right, doctor?

Willis: Is that true?

Blair: Who am I to say? Nancy never got her locket as a child. But lockets are only symbols. It was love she needed, and its love she needs now. Pity won't help. Can you go on loving her? You must be honest with yourself. [Nancy is led out by the nurse, and Willis follows them slowly]

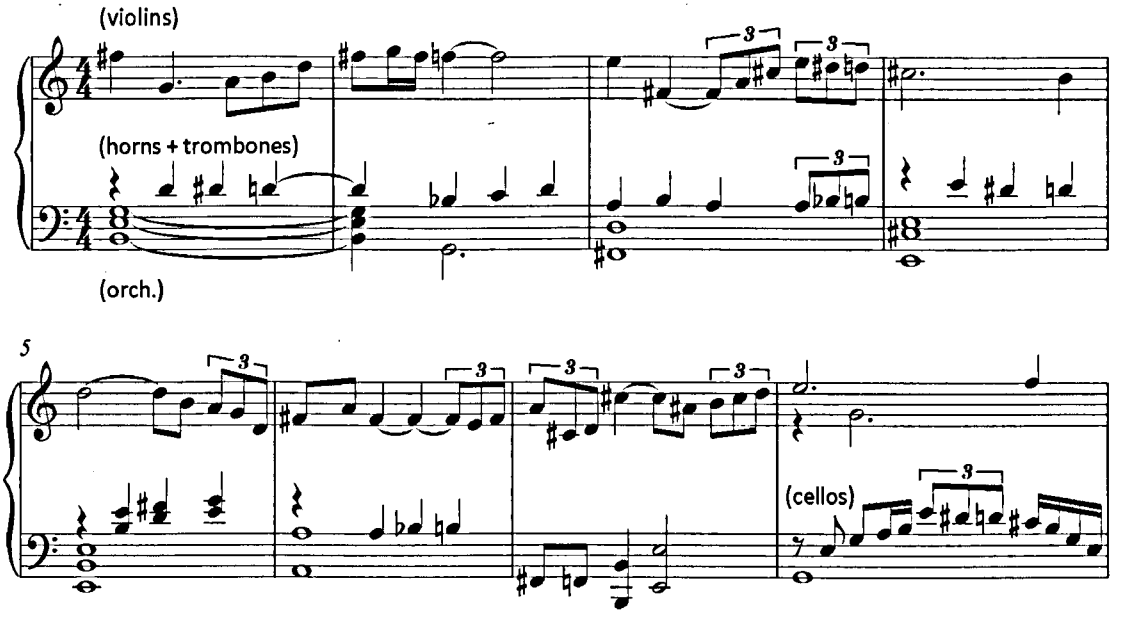
This closing speech also attempts to portray Nancy's kleptomania as a surface result of her real desire for "love", implying that perhaps the love of Willis can help her recover (or indeed, could have halted her descent into madness in the first place). This belated attempt to add Nancy's romantic relationships to her list of "symptoms" feels unconvincing, however. Nancy's previous relationships have done little to halt her illness or its effects, and her romantic progression through the film's men is also a practical one which elevates her social status. Nancy's childhood trauma is also one rooted in the class distinction between her mother as household servant and her employer, Mrs Willis. Nancy's anger about this incident (expressed to her mother in the flashback and to Clyde afterwards) shows clearly her belief that her treatment was unfair, and her gradual social ascent (as well as her stealing) could be read as part of a more calculated strategy of "revenge", despite the film's attempts to deny her the mental capacity for criminal intent.

The soundtrack to *The Locket* engages with these aspects of storyline and characterisation in a relatively straightforward way. The film again displays some similarities to *Experiment Perilous* and *The Spiral Staircase,* as music is used to heighten the effect of male narrators upon the positioning of female characters. The most dominant theme in the film's nondiegetic score is a melodic motif associated with Nancy, first heard in the main title that opens the film (see Example 6.1). This motif (which is often treated sequentially and usually orchestrated for strings) sounds relatively typical of the markers of "feminine" romance that characterise the "good wife", and at first seems to represent Nancy primarily as a romantic heroine. However,

as its first use within the narrative of the film makes clear, it not only connotes Nancy's beauty and charm, but also her dark and dangerous interior. This appearance of the motif occurs just after the first transition to flashback in the film, when Blair begins to tell Willis about how he met Nancy for the first time in Miami. His voiceover is still narrating the sequence at this point, and we hear about his accidental meeting with Nancy and how they quickly became inseparable. As the "Nancy" motif is introduced in the score, Blair's voiceover continues:

> Blair: "Lovely" is a dull word for Nancy. She seemed so perfect. It was a lie. Despite my psychiatric training, I was unable to detect the slightest flaw in her, which should in itself have given me pause. Since none of us are perfect.

Voiceover accompanies a very brief montage sequence of Blair and Nancy's courtship that ends with scenes of them waltzing together at a dance. The "Nancy" motif is used as the theme for the waltz, moving the motif clearly into the diegetic space of the soundtrack. This increases its prominence as a motif associated with Blair's story about Nancy, and specifically his opinions (expressed both in the present to Willis and in his voiceover narration) about her simultaneous allure and threat.



Example 6.1. ***The Locket:*** **the "Nancy" motif in the main title**

The idea of the "Nancy" motif being used as part of the discourse about Nancy, rather than as a motif that indicates her own subjectivity, is reinforced by its use in those scenes narrated by Clyde at the second level of *The Locket's* flashback sequences. A striking solo violin rendition of the motif is used nondiegetically over the dialogue between Blair and Clyde that precedes the

transition into Clyde's flashback, again accompanying dialogue about his initial fascination with Nancy. This dialogue also makes clear the shared position of Blair and Clyde in relation to their first experience of Nancy, prefiguring the film's later exploration of the similarities between the two men as "Cassandra figures":

> Clyde: From that day on, as far as I was concerned, she was the only one. I knew it as soon as I saw her. It was as though the perfect girl, the one you'd always imagined but never expected to meet, suddenly materialised. If you know what I mean?
>
> Blair: I understand. Go on, please.
> [Clyde's flashback begins]

As in Blair's flashback, the "Nancy" motif is also incorporated into the diegetic score in Clyde's section of narration: as he and Nancy have dinner together in the Italian restaurant, the fairly nondescript background music gradually changes to a version of the "Nancy" theme as their conversation grows more romantic. The second time we see them in the restaurant (after the party at Bonner's house where Clyde's painting is exhibited) diegetic music is absent, as Clyde discovers the stolen bracelet in Nancy's purse before they can put a record on the jukebox. Back at Clyde's studio he confronts Nancy about the theft and demands to know why she took the bracelet. The nondiegetic score represents Clyde's confusion, with an initial clear presentation of "Nancy" that grows progressively more abstract as the scene moves into Nancy's flashback about the locket. Here, the musical score changes character, as discussed further below. In the later sections of Clyde and Blair's stories that follow Nancy's own flashback, the "Nancy" motif continues to be used as the most dominant part of the scoring, and it accompanies Nancy's final exit from the film, leaning heavily on the nurse as a thoughtful Blair looks on.

"Nancy", or variations upon it, therefore dominates the score (often in a noticeable and contrived-sounding way) in those scenes where either Blair or Clyde are in control of the narrative, and the motif is therefore representative of their own experience of Nancy.[443] The motif can be seen as part of the way in which *The Locket* highlights the similarities between these two men and also the way in which their discourse (particularly the medical discourse of Blair) is used to position Nancy both before and after she has a chance to "speak" for herself.

In Nancy's flashback the "Nancy" motif is absent, which reinforces the idea that this is a theme relating primarily to the subjectivities of Blair and Clyde. Nancy's story about the locket instead

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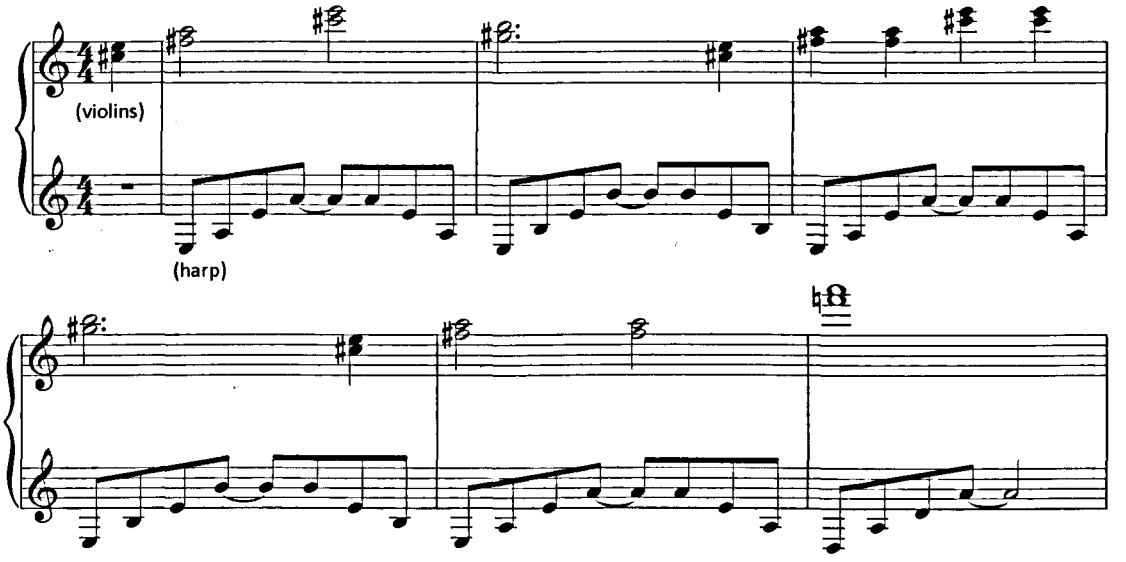
[443] Raksin's score for *Laura* also contains prominent moments where previously nondiegetic material ('Laura's Theme') appears within the diegesis. See Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, pp. 159-183.

features two other musical motifs that recur later in the film (as well as various more generic cues designed to match the mood of the unfolding action). The first of these motifs is heard on the soundtrack as Karen (the daughter of the house and Nancy's forbidden friend) gives Nancy her birthday locket as consolation for not being allowed to attend her birthday party. Nancy is overjoyed to receive the necklace, examining it thoroughly before lifting her head upwards and thanking God, promising that she 'won't ever ask for anything again'. The "locket" motif (shown in Example 6.2) enters as Karen fastens the locket around her neck, and then leaves Nancy alone with her prize. The motif is very simple and repetitive, with a violin melody over resonant harp arpeggios. Its simplicity and sparse texture are evocative of a nursery rhyme or music box, helping to highlight Nancy's childlike delight at receiving such an expensive gift, and also contrasting heavily with the cues that have featured on the film's soundtrack up to this point.

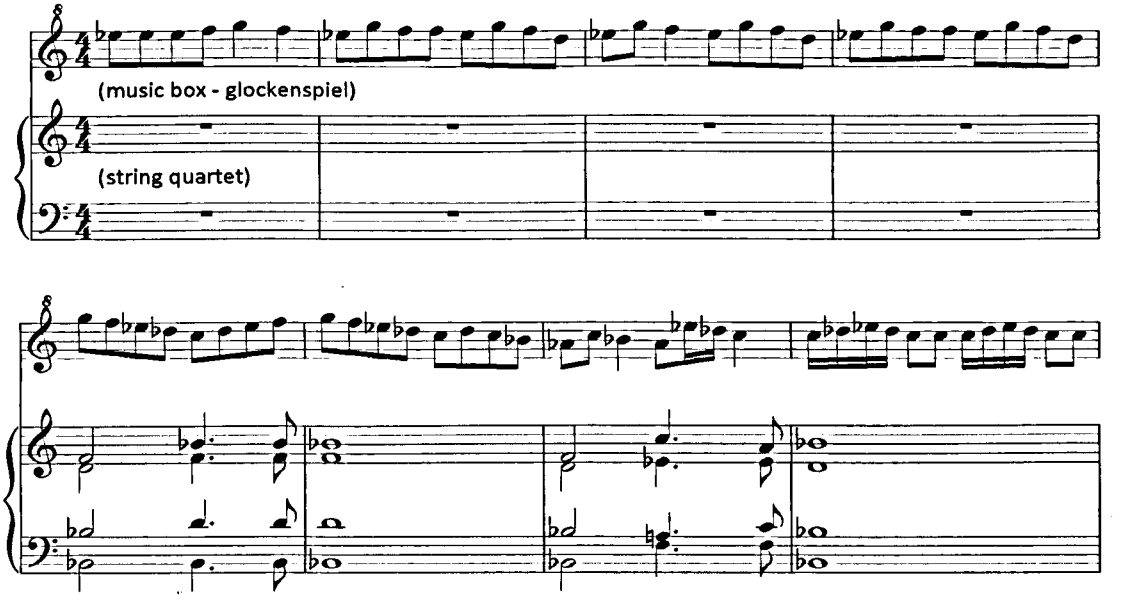


Example 6.2. *The Locket:* use of the "locket" motif during Nancy's flashback

The childlike sounds of the "locket" motif are recalled in the second recurring motif associated with Nancy's subjectivity. This motif is the melody of the French folk song 'Au Clair de la Lune', and is played by a music box that is opened accidentally during a traumatic scene where Nancy is accused of stealing the locket. As Karen's mother tries to shake the truth out of a distressed Nancy (who eventually confesses just to stop the shaking) the music box is knocked to the floor. A stricken Nancy stares at it in shock, before her mother is dismissed and they are forced to leave the house immediately.

Both of these musical motifs feature heavily in the sequence showing Nancy's breakdown at the end of the film. As she makes the final preparations for her wedding to Willis, his mother

(also Karen's mother, who has not recognised Nancy at all) asks her to wear the locket at the ceremony, telling her it is a family heirloom. After she fastens it around Nancy's neck, Nancy is left alone to clasp the necklace and look upwards in a striking repetition of her childhood pose. Here, both the "locket" theme and a repetition of Nancy's prayer (spoken by the voice of her young self) are used on the soundtrack. Nancy is then startled by the sudden arrival of one of her bridesmaids, and again knocks over the music box. 'Au Clair de la Lune' enters diegetically, but then continues even after the box has been closed by the bridesmaid, moving to the metadiegetic level where its presence indicates the increasingly fragile state of Nancy. Nancy's dialogue makes it clear here that only she can hear 'the tune', and as she walks out of the room to the ceremony, the metadiegetic sound of the music box is combined with the diegetic sound of the wedding march that she and her bridesmaids are slowly walking in time to. This confused and discordant combination,[444] the opening of which is shown in Example 6.3, underlines her increasing distress and the soundtrack becomes progressively more complex and ominous as she gets nearer to the altar. Shots from Nancy's perspective are added to increase the visual subjectivity of the sequence, and various remarks made to Nancy in previous scenes are also included over the top of the musical score. The scene's increasing tension and Nancy's panic are finally dispelled by her sudden scream and collapse.



Example 6.3. *The Locket:* the beginning of Nancy's breakdown

[444] Christopher Palmer describes this cue as 'quasi-phantasmagorical'. Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood*, p. 183.

In its reuse of the two childlike motifs heard in Nancy's flashback sequence, the soundtrack in this scene makes clear the links drawn in *The Locket* between Nancy's criminality, her madness, and the roots of these conditions in her childhood trauma. As discussed above, this emphasis on her childlike state is used to diminish her responsibility for that criminality and thereby also helps to contain her agency as the film's *femme fatale.* The soundtrack of *The Locket* therefore supports the other strategies at work in the film to diminish Nancy's threat: firstly by underlining her position within the male and medically-oriented discourse of Clyde and Blair through the use of the "Nancy" motif to stress their subjectivity, and secondly by stressing her own subjectivity, but in a primarily negative and non-agent way. The "locket" theme and 'Au Clair de la Lune' are used to highlight Nancy's subjectivity, but they stress a particular aspect of that subjectivity that she is herself unaware of: it belongs to Nancy as a child, rather than a mature and self-aware woman (a process similar to that highlighted by Doane in her discussion of the painting of Nancy as a blind Cassandra). Despite the film's emphasis on the complex processes of cinematic narrative and the position of its male narrators as unusually "weak", *The Locket* ultimately reinforces the vision and sanity of Clyde and Blair through its emphasis on Nancy's more acute mental illness. This illness is the primary explanation for Nancy's lack of agency in the film, and the use of childlike musical cues reinforces the medical discourse surrounding Nancy's condition, highlighting her difference whilst ensuring that this is used to position her as both negative and weak.

Case studies 5

Popular music, ethnicity, and the dangers of desire

The following three case studies highlight the use of popular musical styles as a marker of the *femme fatale's* difference and otherness. Kathie (in *Out of the Past)* and Susan *(A Woman's Secret)* are both relatively clear-cut examples of the *femme fatale,* but in *The Leopard Man,* Clo-Clo's positioning in this role is more problematic, and relies heavily on the conventions surrounding diegetic performance to communicate the idea of her threat. In *The Leopard Man* and *A Woman's Secret,* diegetic musical performance is central to the plot, whereas *Out of the Past* demonstrates a more complex relationship between diegetic and nondiegetic musical signifiers of otherness.

Out of the Past

Out of the Past is often described as a classic *film noir,* with its pessimistic and convoluted storyline, sections of flashback narration, and striking, high-contrast cinematography.[445] Its protagonists also conform largely to *noir* archetypes: Jeff (Robert Mitchum) is a downtrodden private eye, emasculated by his relationship with Kathie (Jane Greer), a sly and glamorous *femme fatale. Out of the Past's* soundtrack is a mixture of the conventional styles of classical Hollywood and those associated more regularly with *film noir.* This combination of scoring styles arguably increases the depth and ambiguity of the film's representation of its primary characters, particularly Kathie.

The opening of the film establishes Jeff as a gas station owner in rural Bridgeport. He is dating Ann (Virginia Huston) and appears happy, if a little mysterious. Jeff's shadowy past catches up with him when Joe (Paul Valentine) arrives in town to tell him that Whit Sterling (Kirk Douglas) wants to see him. As Jeff reveals to Ann (the premise for the film's use of flashback), Whit is a rich and powerful gambler who engaged Jeff and his business partner as detectives some years ago. Whit hired Jeff to find Kathie, his then-girlfriend who he claims shot him and stole his money. Jeff interviews Kathie's maid who tells him that she is in Florida, but, reading between the lines, Jeff deduces that Kathie has actually gone to Mexico and finally finds her in Acapulco. Kathie and Jeff fall in love and he reveals that he has been hired by Whit. Kathie admits that she shot Whit, but denies stealing from him. They decide to run away together so that Whit cannot find them, but their plans are almost ruined when Whit and Joe come to check up on Jeff's investigation. The couple escape to San Francisco, but are eventually found by Jeff's ex-partner, who tries to blackmail them. Kathie shoots and kills him and then drives away, leaving Jeff. Jeff finds her bank book, which shows that she lied about stealing from Whit.

Back in the present, Jeff meets with Whit again and discovers that Kathie is back with him. Whit is being blackmailed by a lawyer, Eels (Ken Niles), over income tax records and wants Jeff to get the records back for him. Because of Kathie's knowledge of the previous murder (which Jeff is certain that Whit must know about), Jeff feels obliged to take the job. He meets an accomplice, Meta (Rhonda Fleming), and goes along with her plan despite his worries that it is a set-up. When Jeff finds Eels' body he realises he is being framed for murder and quickly hides the corpse before sneaking into Meta's apartment. Here, he overhears Kathie making a phone call to trigger the planned discovery of the murder. Jeff confronts her and she reveals that

[445] Naremore discusses the film's lighting and cinematography in some detail. Naremore, *More Than Night*, pp. 175-186.

Whit has made her sign a false affidavit about the murder of Jeff's partner, saying that Jeff killed him. Jeff manages to retrieve the affidavit from Whit's nightclub and quickly puts it in the mail before Joe and Whit can catch up with him. Jeff covers up for Kathie and does not reveal that she told him about her statement, and tries to strike a bargain with Whit over the tax records and the affidavit. He returns to Bridgeport, where Joe attempts to kill him. Jeff's young assistant from the gas station intervenes, and Joe is killed instead. When Jeff returns to Whit's house he finds that Kathie has murdered him and she blackmails Jeff into agreeing to run away with her. As she packs, Jeff makes a phone call. It turns out that he has rung the police, who set up a roadblock. Kathie realises Jeff has betrayed her and shoots him. The police open fire and both of them are killed. After Jeff's funeral, Ann gets back together with her old boyfriend when Jeff's assistant implies to her that Jeff really did love Kathie.

Out of the Past has a complex storyline that is frequently confusing, particularly in the latter stages.[446] However, this convoluted plot and large cast of significant characters potentially work to intensify the emphasis on the most accessible and focused element of the film: the relationship between Jeff and Kathie. Even this is not entirely straightforward though; despite Kathie's clear construction as a murderous *femme fatale,* there are places where her love for Jeff is convincing and seems genuine, and she is also absolutely unrepentant about the less palatable sides of her character. Her presence provides one of the primary pleasures of the film, and she is a complex and unpredictable character with a high degree of agency for much of the narrative, albeit an agency that is primarily the result of her most negative and disruptive characteristics.

Kathie's agency as disruptive and uncontrollable *femme fatale* is highlighted by Jeff's comparative lack of agency, despite his position as detective and narrator of the flashback sections that show us his previous history with Kathie, Whit, and Joe.[447] Jeff is presented as world-weary and hurt by his betrayal by Kathie. His reluctance to involve himself in anything other than a private and relatively undemanding life in rural Bridgeport demonstrates the extent to which her actions have affected him. His new relationship with Ann can be read as a result of his previous relationship with Kathie. Ann is firmly positioned as the "good wife" of the narrative, and is gentle, trusting, and passive, making no demands on Jeff at all. She is

[446] This is similarly the case in the film's source novel, *Build My Gallows High,* although the screenplay for *Out of the Past* differs in various respects. For discussion of these differences see Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street*, p. 245. Geoffrey Homes, *Build My Gallows High* (London: Prion, 2001).

[447] For a detailed discussion of the film, focused primarily around Jeff's troubled masculine identity, see Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street*, pp. 103-114.

associated with the pastoral and idyllic scenes of the countryside around Bridgeport and this is reflected in the nondiegetic scoring that accompanies her initial appearance in the film, where she is fishing at the lake with Jeff. This cue features tonal and expressive string and woodwind lines that are marked with performance directions such as 'Pastorale' and 'Sentimentally' in the film's score.[448] Ann's presence in the film again serves to highlight Kathie's difference and agency as the film's *femme fatale,* and foregrounds the pleasurable elements of this construction: although Ann is portrayed as a positive and loving character, she is also a dull and homely one, especially in comparison to the active and glamorous Kathie.[449] Kathie is a much better match for Jeff's urbane confidence and snappy dialogue in the flashback sequences, and her reappearance in the present also seems to "revive" some of Jeff's previous personality traits in a way that Ann cannot.

Therefore, despite her violence, scheming, and lack of morals, Kathie is also the film's "real" romantic female lead, and her dual nature and centrality to the plot is also highlighted in *Out of the Past's* musical score. Kathie is associated with the score's primary recurring motif, an expressive and romantic melody that is first introduced in the main title (see Example 6.4), although it is not fully developed nondiegetically until we see the start of Kathie's relationship with Jeff in his flashbacks.[450] Kathie's association with this motif acts to both reinforce and partially contain her narrative agency through the various ways in which the motif engages with her dual characterisation as both *femme fatale* and romantic heroine.

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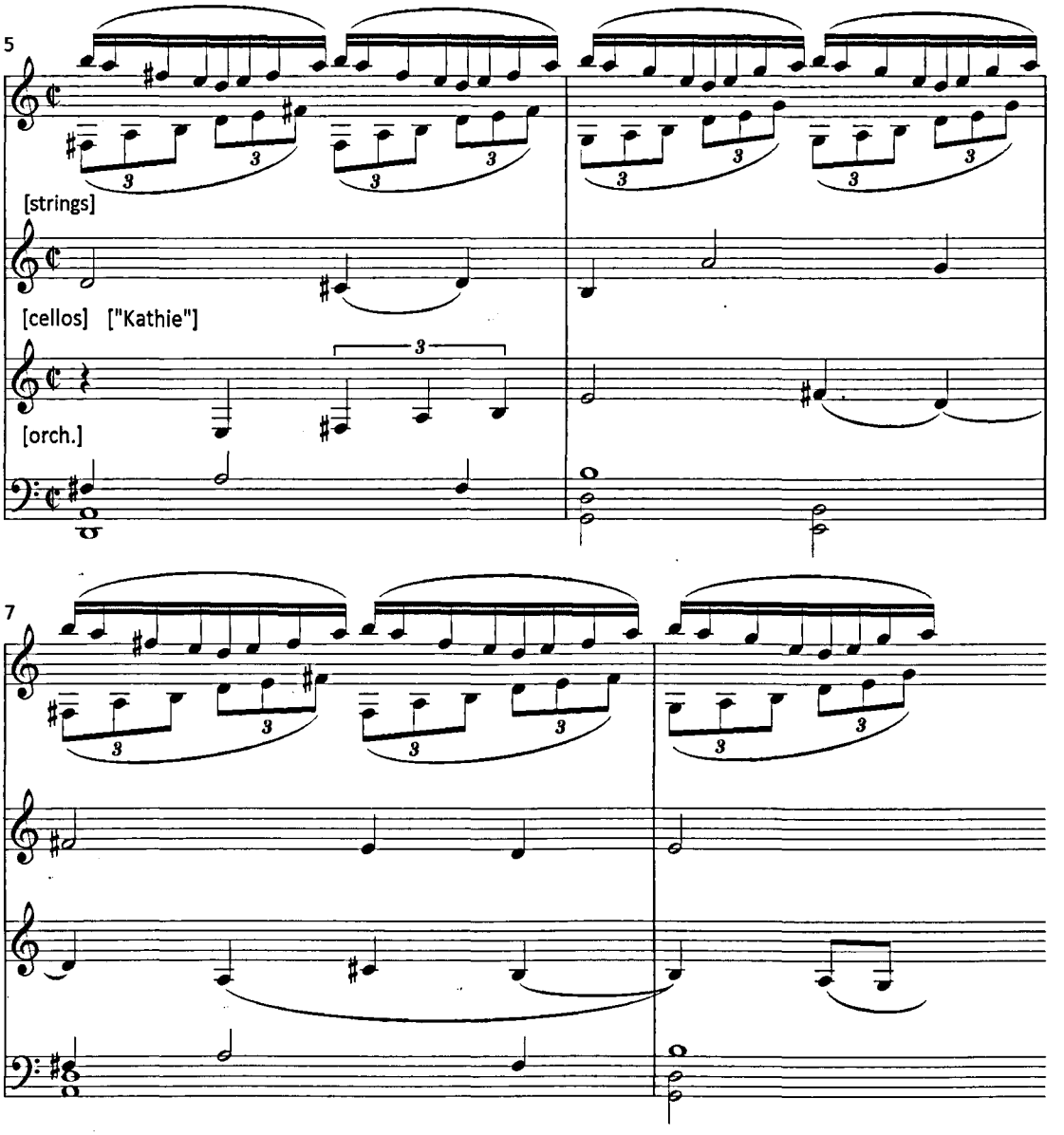
[448] Webb, '*Out of the Past*', cue M:15 'Lake Sequence'.

[449] See Place, 'Women in Film Noir', pp. 60-61.

[450] This motif uses the song 'The First Time I Saw You' (lyrics by Allie Wrubel and music by Nathaniel Shilkret) as its source, but this is not referenced anywhere in the credits or ASCAP listings for the film (although cue M:32 uses the name of the song as its title in the conductor's score). The main section of the song's melody (which forms the "Kathie" motif referenced here) accompanies the lyrics 'The first time I saw you / I knew at a glance / I was meant to be yours, yours alone'. The song was originally featured in the 1937 film *The Toast of New York,* which Shilkret was the uncredited composer for (presumably RKO retained the copyright on the song, which may have motivated its use in *Out of the Past),* and was popular with various recording artists in the late 1930s. Available recordings of it from the 1930s include a relatively staid version by vocalist Gracie Fields and instrumental and vocal big band renditions by the Jimmy Lunceford and Bunny Berigan orchestras. It seems likely that *Out of the Past's* contemporary audiences would have recognised the melody used in the film's score as 'The First Time I Saw You'. As in *The Locket,* the self-conscious use of a prominent motif in both the nondiegetic and diegetic score recalls some of the processes at work in Raksin's score for *Laura.* Kalinak, *Settling the Score,* pp. 159-183; *The Toast of New York,* dir. Rowland V. Lee (Edward Small Productions; RKO Radio Pictures, 1937).

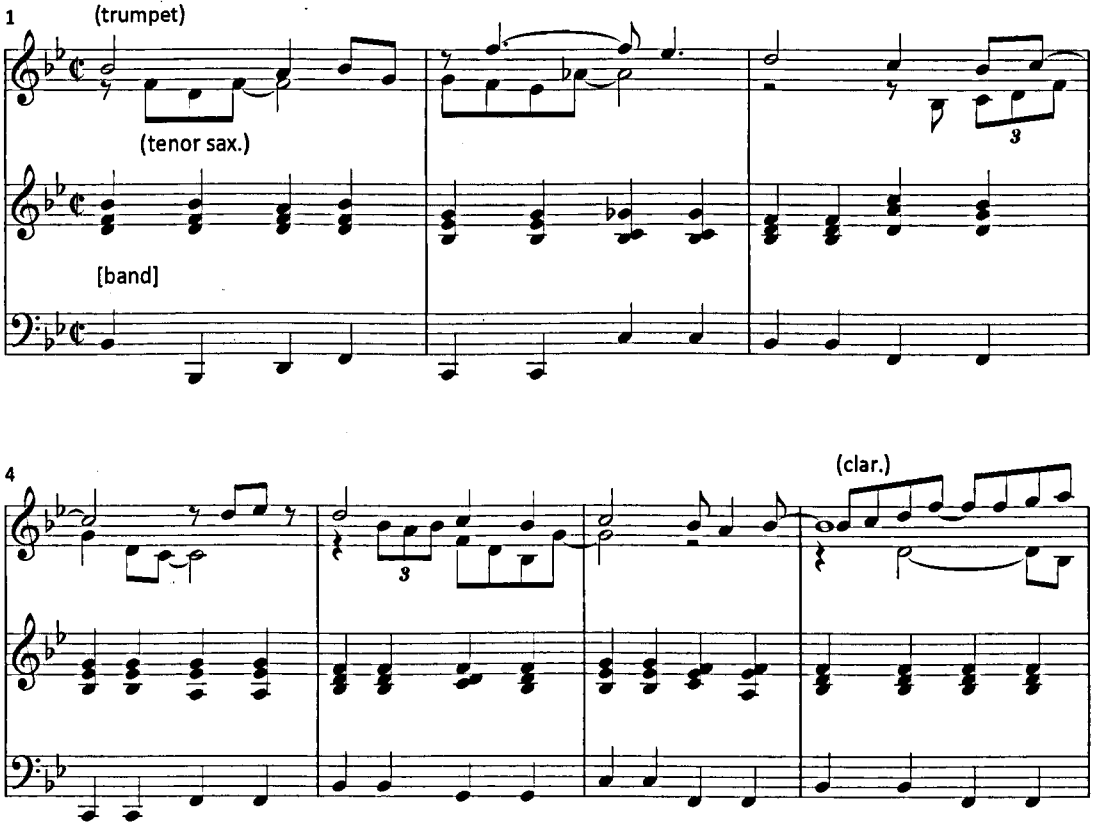


Example 6.4. *Out of the Past:* the beginning of the "Kathie" motif in the main title[451]

The "Kathie" motif is used to highlight Kathie's difference on several occasions, when it appears diegetically within the film's narrative. These appearances are essentially a series of variations upon the theme, all of which are used to "other" Kathie through their signification of difference. The first of these is a jazz variation of the motif that is playing inside the bar where Jeff questions Kathie's maid. The scene opens with a close up of a trumpeter playing an opening improvisatory solo. After establishing shots of people dancing in the bar, the camera cuts to Jeff as the rest of the instruments (a small jazz ensemble) enter and the "Kathie" motif is clearly heard (see Example 6.5 – the trumpet solo is not included in the score, and the performance of this cue is heavily swung).

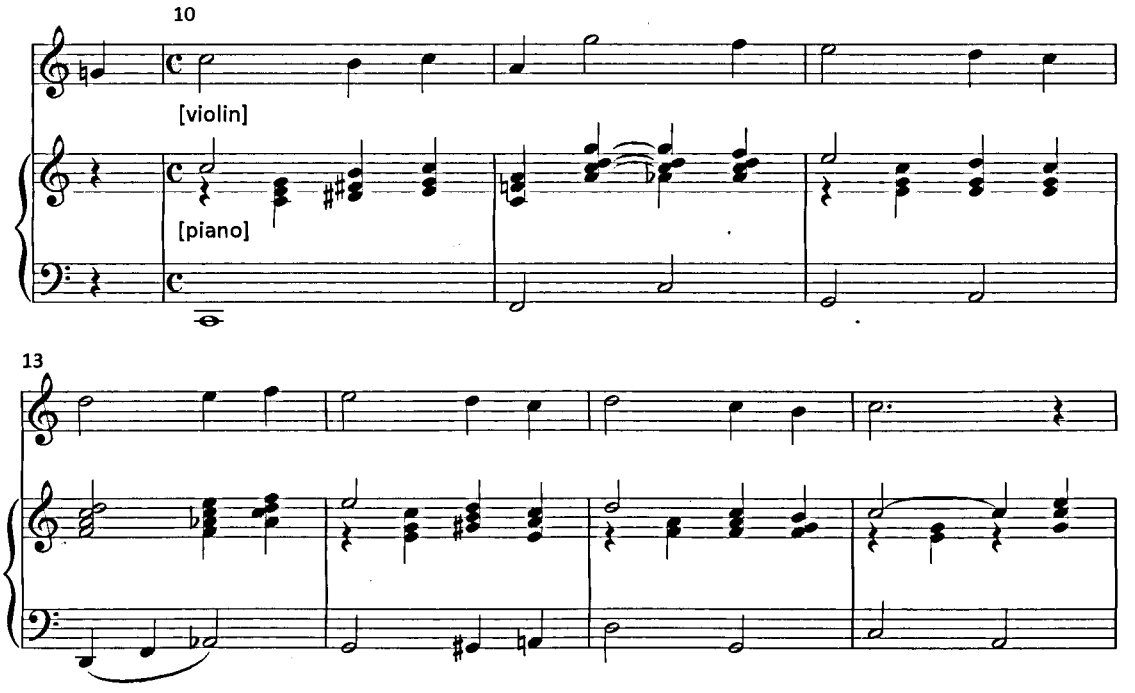
[451] Webb, '*Out of the Past*', cue M:10a 'Main Title', bb. 5-8.

Even before we have seen Kathie, this music begins to associate her with the typical characterisation of the *femme fatale,* and perhaps also foreshadows Jeff's involvement with her as the motif has previously been used as a conventional signifier of romance in the film's main title. Kathie's maid remains loyal to her, which perhaps suggests a more positive view of Kathie than the account given of her by Whit. This positivity is also present in the light hearted and upbeat style of the jazz cue: jazz is here still associated with black culture (Jeff is the only white person in the bar), but not in the typically negative way used in many *films noirs.* Jeff is familiar with the bar and its manager, and jazz is presented as part of the overall "wholesome" image of enjoyment and dancing that characterises the scene, rather than the seedy and sultry atmosphere of many *noir* nightclub sequences. Kathie's position as an object of curiosity is therefore reinforced in this scene by its seemingly contradictory approaches to her (absent) characterisation.



Example 6.5. ***Out of the Past:*** **"Kathie" motif in the jazz bar**[452]

[452] Webb, '*Out of the Past*', cue M:25 'Jive Number', bb. 1-7.



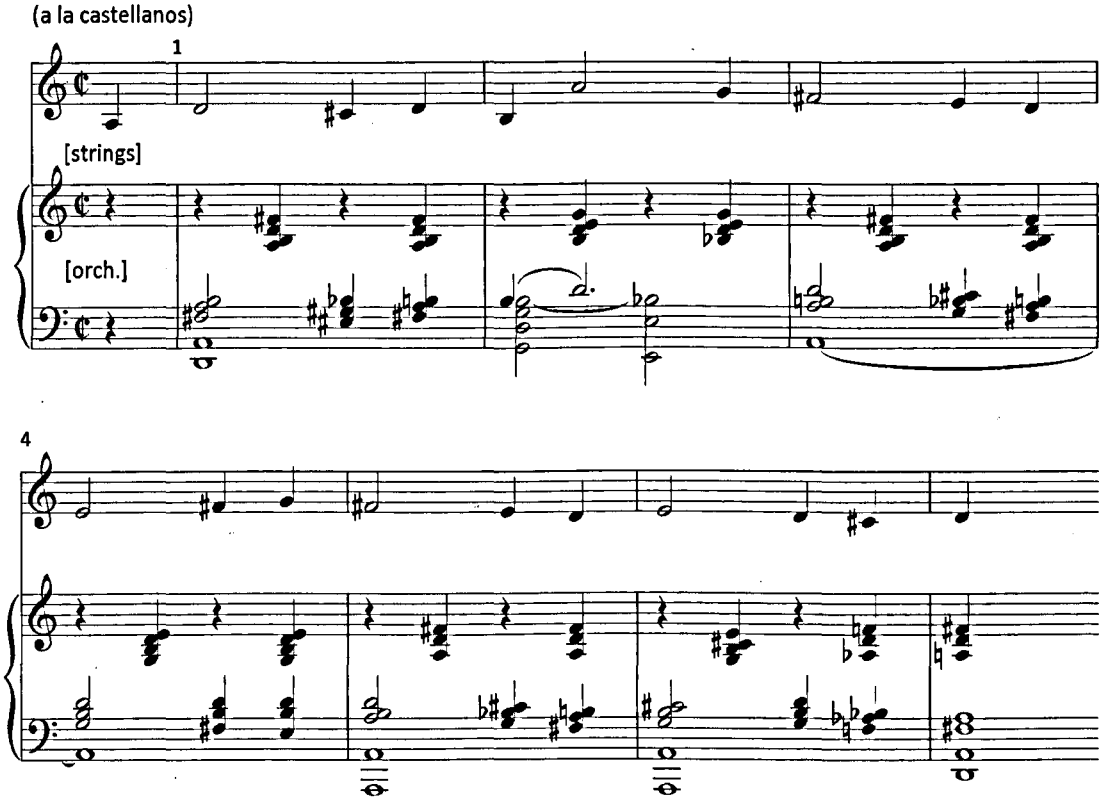
Example 6.6. *Out of the Past:* "Kathie" as the basis of the 'American music' at Pablo's[453]

This contradictory approach is also a feature of the two subsequent diegetic appearances of the "Kathie" motif. The first of these is described by Kathie herself as 'American music', and is played by a trio of musicians (piano, guitar, and violin) in Pablo's cantina, which she has told Jeff she sometimes visits. Whilst Jeff waits alone in the bar, the pianist is playing Western concert-hall style music. As Kathie walks into the bar and Jeff's voiceover highlights her presence, the violin begins a prominent rendition of the "Kathie" melody, accompanied by the guitar and piano in a slow and romantic style (see Example 6.6). Again, the signification of this music is relatively ambiguous: despite its 'American' styling, it acts here (along with the scene's earlier music) to underline difference because of its contrast with the diegetic "Mexican" music that has previously characterised Acapulco (Jeff's voiceover refers to the 'jarring' music from the cinema next door to the bar where he first sees and talks to Kathie).

Whilst Jeff is initially presented as ill at ease in Acapulco, Kathie is at home in Mexico and here offers to be his 'tour guide', leaving the Americanised bar behind for more "exotic" locations (the casino and the beach). Kathie's integration with local culture is underlined by the next diegetic appearance of "Kathie", where it is used as the basis of a Latin-style record heard in her beach house as she romances Jeff (see Example 6.7). This cue, which is marked 'A la Castellanos' (Spanish style) in the score, engages with the other signifiers of exoticism in the scene: the styling of the house, which Jeff describes as full of 'bamboo furniture and Mexican

[453] Webb, '*Out of the Past*', cue M:32 'The First Time I Saw You', bb. 9-16.

gimcracks', and the fact that Kathie is now wearing the Mexican earrings (that she earlier refused as a gift from Jeff). This sequence effectively positions Kathie as the "owner" of the "Kathie" material, tying this music to her self-identity and subjectivity, as well as cementing its portrayal of her as other, and her representation by Jeff and Whit. Kathie's acceptance of her flaws and refusal to apologise for her misdeeds is an important part of her ability to resist the commonplace fetishisation and containment of the *femme fatale,* and this is musically represented by her celebratory ownership of the "Kathie" material and its connotations of difference.[454]



Example 6.7. *Out of the Past:* "Kathie" motif on the record at Kathie's beach house[455]

Kathie's appreciation for both American and Latin music is used in these two scenes, alongside the earlier use of jazz, to underline her familiarity with both American and local cultures. This can be read as intensifying the "threat" she poses as an unpredictable and agent *femme fatale*, particularly given her own celebration and ownership of this music in the scene at the beach house. The various styles of popular music used to bring the "Kathie" motif into the diegesis

[454] Heather Laing cites *Out of the Past* as one example of a woman's 'explicit control over or association with diegetic music' to highlight masculine weakness. Here, the *noir* hero's pursuit by the 'musically signified female influence' results in Jeff's 'tragic slavishness'. Laing, *Onscreen Musicians, Unseen Emotions*, p. 146.

[455] Webb, '*Out of the Past*', cue M:38 'The Record', bb. 1-7.

are indicative of Kathie's multiple personalities and highlight her unknowability, exoticism, and allure for both Jeff and Whit. This effect is intensified by the strong signification of romance that the theme has in the majority of its appearances in the nondiegetic score (and several of its diegetic appearances as well), and this in turn is further complicated by the engagement of these cues with Jeff's subjectivity.The use of "Kathie" in the score can be read as reinforcing aspects of Jeff's control of the narrative, in a way similar to the use of music as a positioning device in *Experiment Perilous* and *The Locket.*[456] Despite his portrayal as an emasculated antihero, Jeff still occupies the privileged position of the film's narrator, a privilege that is particularly explicit in those sequences shown as flashbacks accompanied or introduced by his voiceover.[457] These sequences heavily stress Jeff's subjectivity, and approach his relationship with Kathie from his point of view and experience. The use of the "Kathie" material can therefore act as an additional manifestation of Jeff's subjectivity, and one that relates primarily to his desire for her to be the romantic heroine indicated by the musical signifiers of romance and emotion in the score.

For Kathie to conform with Jeff's unspoken longing for her to be a "good wife", rather than a *femme fatale,* would arguably remove much of her disruptive agency within *Out of the Past.* Kathie alludes to this in dialogue near the end of the film, where she tells Jeff that the reason she walked out on him was because he could not accept her as she really was. Now that Jeff seems to be playing along with her plans and she is explicitly in control of their relationship, she can see a future for them together: 'I never told you I was anything but what I am. You just wanted to imagine that I was. It's why I left you. Now we're back. To stay'. The film suggests that Kathie does love Jeff, but not as much as she loves her independence and control, and this prevents the romantic version of the "Kathie" motif seeming too incongruous after we have learnt of her duplicity. When Jeff has finally made the decision to betray Kathie (by secretly calling the police shortly after this dialogue sequence takes place), the nondiegetic score indicates the finality of his act and the end of their strange relationship with a melancholy and distorted rendition of the "Kathie" motif as they leave Whit's house together (Example 6.8).

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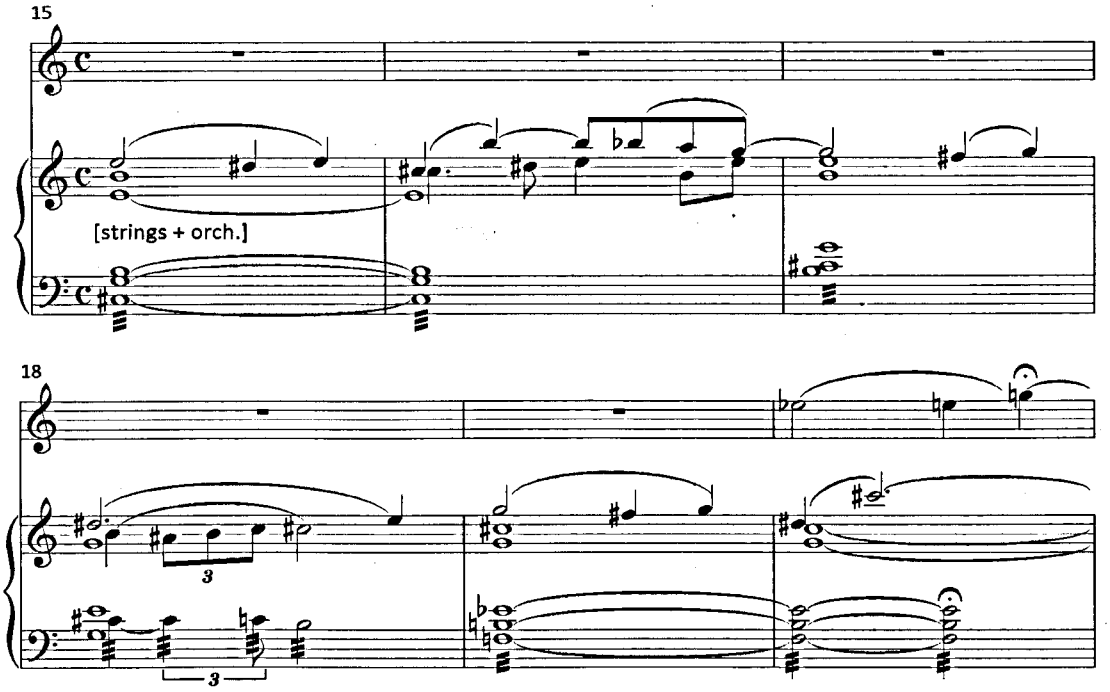
[456] Although the diegetic appearances of "Kathie" are also part of Jeff's flashbacks, they are also positioned as "realistic" moments of music – an effect intensified by dialogue referring to the background music in several scenes. This, together with the privileged place of nondiegetic music as a frequent indicator of subjective character response and Kathie's own use of the music in the beach house, means that the relationship of diegetic cues with Jeff's point of view is not as strong or obvious as the nondiegetic appearances of the motif.

[457] See Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, pp. 52-53.



Example 6.8. *Out of the Past:* "Kathie" motif as Jeff and Kathie begin their getaway[458]

The use of "Kathie" in moments such as this positions the motif as part of a more conventional relationship between music and narrative, one where the melody effectively functions as a "love theme" that Jeff is in control of. This reinforces his somewhat tenuous position as the film's hero and potentially acts to give him an additional air of control in his relationship with Kathie, which, until the very end of the film, is a relationship that she directs according to her own wishes. However, Kathie's disruptive presence in *Out of the Past*, which is also highlighted by the use of the "Kathie" motif to signify her otherness and difference as *femme fatale,* complicates this reading of the theme as primarily indicative of Jeff's subjectivity. As outlined above, Kathie's agency is heavily tied to her negative presentation as *femme fatale* and her own acceptance and celebration of this identity. The motif is used to reinforce these aspects of the text through a series of diegetic appearances designed to highlight her position as "other" and her "ownership" of the motif.

The main feature of the "Kathie" motif is therefore its ambiguity, which arguably makes it very suitable for the complex and problematic relationship between Jeff and Kathie.[459] The motif is

[458] Webb, '*Out of the Past*', cue M:103 'Kathie Takes Over', bb. 15-20.

[459] Krutnik cites *Out of the Past* as a good example of the way in which the representation and identities of the hero and *femme fatale* of the *'noir* "tough" thriller' are inextricably bound up in each other, frequently making their motivations and other elements of their characterisation ambivalent. Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street*, p. 112.

used to indicate both Jeff's love for Kathie and his desire to change her, and to signify Kathie's difference as *femme fatale* and her ability to incorporate this positioning as part of her confident and self-aware identity. Music intensifies the focus upon the emotional, as well as criminal, elements of the text because of the dominance of romantic versions of the motif in the score; it perhaps also acts to "redeem" Kathie slightly by suggesting that she reciprocates Jeff's feelings to a certain extent. The soundtrack challenges conventional notions of the "inaudibility" of classical scoring practices by the noticeable and frequent use of the "Kathie" motif in both the diegetic and nondiegetic score,[460] and the complex signification of the theme engages with the multiple positionings of Kathie as both othered *femme fatale* and romantic heroine, and with Jeff's confused reactions towards her. Although Ann may be the most straightforwardly and "positively" scored of the female characters in *Out of the Past,* this only serves to reinforce her lack of agency and appeal due to the engaging, pleasurable, and resistant elements of Kathie's positioning as *femme fatale.*

The Leopard Man

The Leopard Man is set in a small town in New Mexico, where singer Kiki (Jean Brooks) and her manager Jerry (Dennis O'Keefe) are trying to create additional publicity for her act so that she can compete with local performer Clo-Clo (Margo). Jerry hires a black leopard for Kiki to use as part of her act, telling her to enter partway through Clo-Clo's dance with the cat on a leash and steal the show. This stunt makes Clo-Clo angry, and she rattles her castanets in the leopard's face. The leopard breaks free of its leash and escapes from the nightclub, scratching one of the waiters along the way. The police hunt for the escaped leopard but with little success, and a young girl, Teresa (Margaret Landry) is killed by the cat in a tense sequence where she is sent out to buy cornmeal late at night. Teresa's mother cannot open the door fast enough to let her inside when she returns home, and, after a scream and the sounds of struggle, blood seeps slowly under the door of the house.

Kiki and Jerry feel partially responsible for Teresa's death, despite the unruffled exterior they try to maintain in front of each other. Both of them secretly give money to Teresa's family to help with the cost of the funeral, and Jerry becomes increasingly involved in the search for the leopard. He meets an academic on the hunt, Dr Galbraith (James Bell), who used to teach zoology but moved to New Mexico to curate a museum of local culture. Galbraith predicts that the leopard will move away from the town and stop killing, but he is apparently proved wrong when the body of another young woman is found. Consuelo (Tuulikki Paananen) slips out of

[460] See also Naremore, *More Than Night*, pp. 201-202.

her family home to meet her lover, Raoul, in the local cemetery. He is late for the meeting, and Consuelo is locked in, unable to escape due to the high walls surrounding the graveyard. She screams for help and a man's voice promises to fetch a ladder. Consuelo hears scratching noises and senses movement in the trees, but her screams go unheard and her body is discovered the next day with claw marks and black fur on it. Although most people are convinced that the leopard has killed Consuelo, Jerry becomes increasingly suspicious that her death is really a murder disguised as the work of the cat.

After a sequence inside the nightclub where she is shown talking and drinking with Brunton, a rich, older customer who gives her money to help her support her family, Clo-Clo walks home alone in the dark. She visits her fortune-telling friend Maria (Isabel Jewell), who has prophesied trouble for Clo-Clo on several previous occasions. Maria keeps turning up the 'death card' (the ace of spades) when she tells Clo-Clo's future, and, despite her outward bravado, Clo-Clo is obviously frightened by Maria's warnings. Clo-Clo rushes home, but then realises that she has dropped the money that the customer gave her. As she retraces her steps, she is attacked and killed.

After talking with Galbraith, who gives him an insight into the way in which a serial killer might evade discovery in a conventional police investigation, Jerry is even more convinced that only Teresa's death was really the result of the leopard. Jerry and Kiki prepare to go back to Chicago, but after he tells her of his suspicions they decide to stay to help catch the killer. The escaped leopard is found by a local man – it has been dead for over a week, meaning that it cannot be responsible for the deaths of Consuelo or Clo-Clo. Jerry suspects Galbraith of the killings and lays a trap for him with the assistance of Kiki and Raoul. Using an annual local procession as cover, they attempt to unnerve Galbraith by faking the presence of his two victims as he passes their places of death. Once Galbraith reaches his museum, Kiki appears and asks him to show her the parade. She turns out the lights and Galbraith attacks her. Jerry protects Kiki from harm and Galbraith tries to escape outside, where Jerry and Raoul chase him through the slowly advancing procession. Eventually they catch him and Galbraith confesses to the killings, before being shot by a distressed and angry Raoul. A short epilogue shows Jerry and Kiki ready to leave for Chicago.

Although containing elements of *film noir* and a narrative based around a serial killer, *The Leopard Man* is essentially a horror film. Like other horror films made by the Val Lewton unit at RKO it had a relatively small budget, and its "horror" relies primarily on the creation of a tense atmosphere and violence that takes place off screen, rather than on spectacular or gory special effects. The soundtrack plays a key role in the creation of tension in the film, and a similar

approach to sound design and use of music is taken in *The Leopard Man* to those films discussed by Hanson in her article about studio era soundscapes.[461] Hanson discusses the expressive use of sound and music in *Phantom Lady* and in the Lewton films *Cat People* and *The Seventh Victim,* noting the crucial role played by the soundtrack in the creation and resolution of suspense, and also its significance in communicating a clear understanding of the narrative in long sequences with little or no dialogue.[462]

Several scenes in *The Leopard Man* are very similar to those discussed by Hanson: all three of the female victims are killed at the climax of tense sequences that feature little or no dialogue, and that over-emphasise the sound effects of the surrounding environment and those created by the movement of the victim herself. Of these sequences, only Consuelo's murder (the second killing), uses nondiegetic scoring as part of the sound design:[463] Teresa's tense journey home is all unscored, with a stinger intruding only when the blood appears under the doorway; and Clo-Clo's frantic search for the missing money is also without musical accompaniment. In all three sequences, the victim's fear results in a heightened sensitivity to her surroundings, and this is represented aurally by the increase in prominence of various sound effects, such as footsteps and laboured breathing. Similarities in the sound design of these scenes are used to tie them together and to create the misleading impression that the leopard is responsible for each killing: the moments of greatest tension, just before the leopard/killer strikes, are marked by the inclusion of rustling, shuffling, and scratching sounds that are designed to indicate the animal presence of the cat. The misleading physical evidence left behind by Galbraith is therefore supported in its false impression by the aural signifiers of the leopard's presence on the soundtrack. This helps to maintain the narrative uncertainty about the real identity of the killer, and also supports the idea that Galbraith assumes the role and "persona" of the leopard when he kills (which is the basis of some of the dialogue surrounding the diagnosis of the murderer as a 'pathological case').

The communicative properties of sound that are highlighted in these three scenes are given additional emphasis in *The Leopard Man's* closing stages, where the conscious manipulation of sound forms the basis of Jerry, Kiki, and Raoul's plan to trap Galbraith and force him into revealing his murderous urges. In a sequence that mirrors the earlier depiction of Teresa, Consuelo, and Clo-Clo trying to escape from the terrors of their surroundings to the safety of

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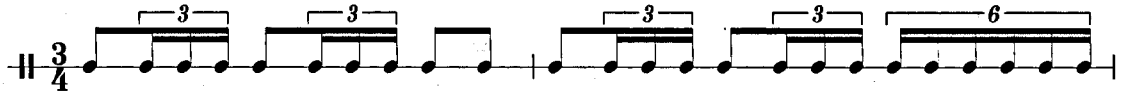
[461] Hanson, 'Sound Affects'.
[462] Hanson, 'Sound Affects', pp. 40-42.
[463] Music is used throughout the scene in the graveyard, at first highlighting Consuelo's romantic longings, then her panic at getting locked in, and later her increasing fear and the accompanying rise in tension.

home, Galbraith is here shown trying to reach the safe haven of his museum to escape from the sonic presence of his victims. Kiki hides behind the wall of the cemetery, softly shouting for help as Galbraith passes by, and a thrown cigarette end and the sound of castanets appears when he reaches the scene of Clo-Clo's murder. These signifiers of his victims are accompanied by nondiegetic scoring that intensifies the scene's tension, using quiet chromatic woodwind figures under a high, sustained tremolo violin pedal. As Galbraith reaches the museum and starts to relax, the underscoring disappears, drawing further attention to the loud, resonant sound of his footsteps crossing the gallery. He sits down and there is a moment of silence, which is then abruptly punctured by the clatter of castanets again. As the rhythm of the castanets increases in volume and rapidity, the camera closes gradually in on Galbraith's face to highlight his fear and sense of entrapment. Now thoroughly unnerved, Galbraith is unable to hide his true personality for long, and when loud and insistent footsteps herald the arrival of Kiki, he appears panicked and disoriented. At this point, the diegetic sound of the approaching procession appears on the soundtrack, as Kiki tries to persuade Galbraith to turn out the lights so that they'll be able to see the participants filing past the museum. The slow, deep chanting of male voices grows louder as the procession approaches, increasing the sense of impending disaster as Galbraith draws nearer to Kiki. The tension is broken when she accidentally lets the castanets drop onto the floor, giving away her part in the plan and bringing Jerry and Raoul in to save her from Galbraith.

Throughout this sequence, as in earlier scenes in the film, sound is used as a means of creating and sustaining tension, and also as an indicator of a particular "presence". The sound of the leopard before it kills is clearly established during Teresa's murder, and can then be falsely imitated in subsequent killings. Similarly, Kiki imitates the sonic identities of Consuelo and Clo-Clo in order to unsettle and frighten Galbraith. The sound of the castanets is particularly distressing to Galbraith, and their presence on the soundtrack is loud, insistent, and aggressive. They act as a potent reminder of Clo-Clo herself, as well as her death, given their association with her charismatic and potentially disruptive presence throughout the scenes prior to her murder.

Although Clo-Clo is technically a "victim", discussion of her role and representation in *The Leopard Man* is included in this chapter because of her earlier, and arguably stronger, association with elements of the *femme fatale*. The sound of the castanets acts as a signifier of these elements of Clo-Clo's characterisation, given their strong associations with her job as a professional dancer, her ethnicity, and her self-aware and confident sexuality. These links are all established in the first section of the film, after a main title which features "Mexican"-style

high muted trumpet melodies and a prominent rhythmic ostinato played by castanets (see Example 6.9).[464] This ostinato emphasises the style of the main title as a Spanish-style bolero dance, helping to locate the film geographically and culturally in its New Mexico setting.[465]



Example 6.9. *The Leopard Man:* castanet ostinato in the main title

The sound of the castanets from the main title continues after the music finishes, shifting to become part of the diegetic soundtrack of the opening scene. We see a shot of Clo-Clo's back through a half-open door (already visually establishing her as an object of fetishistic and furtive desire). She is practicing her dancing and the castanet playing that accompanies it, and wearing a traditional and ornate costume. Kiki bangs on the wall to get Clo-Clo to be quiet and complains to her companion about the noise:

> Kiki: It may sound like music to her, but I can do better with my teeth in a cold shower.
>
> Girl: Oh, she's a local. When the dudes come out to New Mexico they want to wallow in Latin glamour. This is a bad town for blondes.

After Jerry arrives with the leopard, the idea of Clo-Clo as Kiki's professional competition is intensified, along with the connotation that Clo-Clo's "excessive" sexuality and ethnicity are a key part in her success – elements that are strongly foregrounded in her dance performance in the next scene. Jerry and Kiki plan to upstage Clo-Clo during her performance through the addition of the leopard to Kiki's act, not only with the intention of disrupting her dance partway through, but also with the idea that the leopard will intensify Kiki's own sexuality and exoticism in some way. Kiki decides to wear a black dress so that she will be 'just like' the leopard. Although this scheme initially seems to work well, Kiki and Jerry overlook Clo-Clo's reaction to the leopard when making their plans.

Clo-Clo's dance in the second scene of *The Leopard Man* is the film's only featured diegetic performance in the nightclub, despite the occupations of both Kiki and Clo-Clo as professional

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[464] See Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood*, p. 173.

[465] Diegetic music is also regularly used in *The Leopard Man* to reinforce the film's emphasis on Latin American and Spanish culture. This includes the traditional Latin styling of the music used to accompany Clo-Clo's performances in the nightclub, and also the presence of background accordion and guitar music in many of the street scenes.

entertainers.[466] As with the transition from the film's title sequence to its opening scene, the sound of castanets is used across the move from Kiki's dressing room to the nightclub, highlighting the sonic presence of Clo-Clo before she is revealed on the visual track. In a continuation of the first scene's holding back of Clo-Clo's face, this sequence begins with a shot of the top of a fountain, which slowly pans down to reveal the reflection of Clo-Clo dancing and playing the castanets in the pool of water at its base. This delay in the "full" appearance of Clo-Clo creates a sense of expectation that heightens the effect of the scene's erotic and fetishistic focus on the body of the performing woman. It also focuses additional attention on the scene's soundtrack, which is dominated by the sound of the castanets and Clo-Clo's heels, accompanied by a regular vamp figure played by the nightclub's band (here featuring violin, piano, and clarinet). The arrival of Kiki and the leopard makes Clo-Clo stop dancing immediately, obviously angry at the interruption to her act. As a nervous looking Kiki walks towards a vacant table at the front of the room, the musicians also stop playing and the crowd begins to focus their attention upon the leopard. Clo-Clo looks speculatively at the cat and then begins to clatter her castanets again, advancing towards the leopard whilst she does so. The camera here occupies the point of view of the leopard, making the advancing Clo-Clo and the loud noise of the castanets seem like a credible "threat" (see Figure 6.4). This camerawork also potentially underlines a connection made in the film between Clo-Clo's "exotic" and "excessive" sexuality, shown in the twisting and controlled elegance of her dance, and the sleek and powerful cat. Clo-Clo is not afraid of the leopard and deals swiftly with it as competition, again highlighting her difference from Kiki and from the rest of the (predominantly tourist) audience. The leopard bolts, pulling the leash out of Kiki's hand, scratching the hand of a waiter, and escaping through an open door.

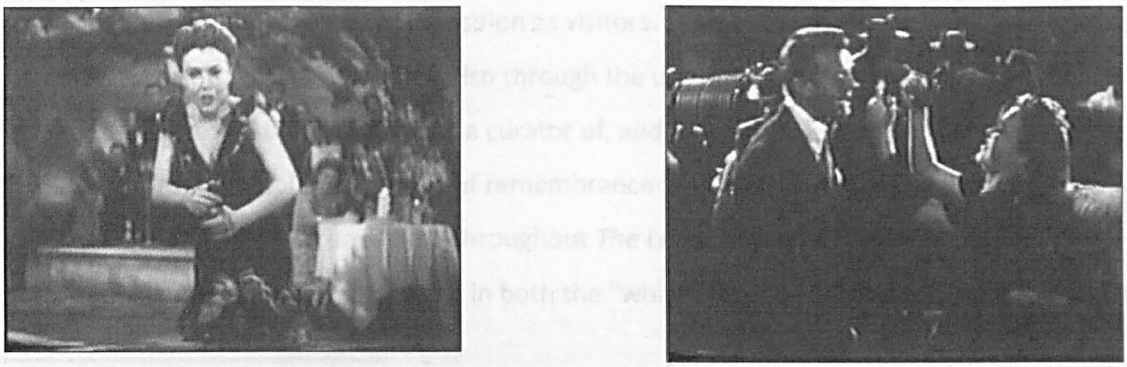

Figure 6.4. *The Leopard Man:* Clo-Clo's castanets used as a "weapon" against the leopard and Jerry

[466] Several scenes take place in the nightclub (including one where Clo-Clo is repeating the dance shown in this sequence), but these are focused around dialogue, rather than the musicians or performances themselves.

Clo-Clo's dance, before the interruption of the leopard, is controlled and intricate, featuring continually twisting, elongated poses that display her taut limbs and flexibility whilst she maintains the continuous and complex rhythmic accompaniment of the castanets. Initially, the camerawork uses primarily long shots, often bisecting Clo-Clo's body with the fountain that is positioned in the foreground. As the scene reaches its climax Clo-Clo is shot in a static mid-close up that allows for extended contemplation of her body, the movements of the castanets, and, finally, her face. As in the danced numbers in *Gilda,* the eroticised, professional, and controlled movement of Clo-Clo's body here works in two ways: it allows for objectifying contemplation of that body by the scene's internal and external audiences, but it also acts to resist that positioning via the clear connection it has with Clo-Clo's own pleasure in the act of performance. The castanets act as a particularly potent symbol of this resistant pleasure, given their intrusive and insistent presence on the soundtrack here and in previous sequences. As she walks home after the performance, Clo-Clo rattles the castanets at Jerry (also shown in Figure 6.4), telling him 'I don't need a leopard, I have talent'. Her castanets symbolise that talent and the pleasure she takes in it, as well as effectively acting as a weapon or a warning of her presence.

There is also another dimension to the use of the castanets to symbolise Clo-Clo's pleasure in her own talent, and that is their use to communicate the "threat" that her charisma and agency (partially arising from her talent) pose within the narrative. They are also a particular marker of her ethnicity, given their association with Spanish and Latin music and dance. Clo-Clo's ethnicity is a key element in her construction as "other" in *The Leopard Man:* despite the film's setting and the many local characters who are featured, the film highlights the "exoticism" of these features through its emphasis on local culture as different from Kiki and Jerry, rather than highlighting their position as visitors.[467] This is partially achieved through the repeated focus on Kiki and Jerry, but also through the use of Dr Galbraith's position at the museum. He is explicitly positioned as a curator of, and ambassador for, the "curiosities" of local culture (for example the parade of remembrance that takes place during the film's dénouement).[468] Clo-Clo is portrayed throughout *The Leopard Man* as a confident and irrepressible character who is at home in both the "white" tourist world of the nightclub and in

[467] Margo, who plays Clo-Clo in *The Leopard Man,* was a Mexican actress and dancer. It is possible that this brings an additional "authenticity" to her positioning as a Latinised "other", which may also be a factor in Clo-Clo's ability to resist some of the film's attempts to position her as *femme fatale.* This idea faciliatates a reading of Clo-Clo as primarily a celebration of Latin culture, rather than the more negative approach often taken by Hollywood film to South American ethnicities.

[468] All the diegetic music in the film is used to heighten the sense of its cultural and geographical location; examples include various accordion and guitar street music cues, the rendition of 'Las mañanitas' for Consuelo's birthday, and the chanting of the male parade participants.

the "Latin" culture of the surrounding locality.[469] She seems to know everyone and is frequently used as a plot device to introduce the audience to other characters in the narrative. Later on in the film, dialogue with a patron of the nightclub makes it clear that she intends to use her job in order to secure a rich husband, a fact that she is not ashamed of and effectively sees as a social necessity:[470]

> Brunton: When you marry champagne, Clo-Clo, you can't trade it in for beer. You're stuck with it.
>
> Clo-Clo: I can't understand that fancy talk. You mean I'm a golddigger? Sure, I'm a golddigger – why not?
>
> Brunton: Why not, if you like it? If that's what you want.
>
> Clo-Clo: Maybe I should just forget all about money, forget about Mamma and the kids, and unpaid bills and the rent, huh? Marry some poor dope like Carlos Dominguez and get fat and...
>
> Brunton: Who's Carlos Dom-what's-his-name?
>
> Clo-Clo: Nobody. A boy who works in a grocery.
>
> Brunton: Good looking?
>
> Clo-Clo: Yes.
>
> Brunton: Nice fellow?
> [Clo-Clo shrugs]
> Is he in love with you?
>
> Clo-Clo: I don't know... Why do you ask so many questions? What difference does it make how Carlos and I feel? Feelings don't buy houses, and pay for rent, and help bring up kids, and buy clothes for them.

Clo-Clo is positioned as knowledgeable, confident, and self-aware, which gives her a high degree of agency in the first half of the narrative. Her musical presence, both inside and

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[469] Like Clo-Clo, Galbraith is positioned as being able to navigate between cultural groups and boundaries, although in his case this knowledge poses a much more literal threat to those around him. Like Professor Warren in *The Spiral Staircase*, Galbraith is presented as over-educated and as compensating for his own sexual inadequacy by killing (his account of Consuelo's death makes clear the sexual components of the murder).The links between the leopard and Clo-Clo's "dangerous" female sexuality established in the opening scenes of the film are therefore transferred to the emasculated and dangerous Galbraith, who "becomes" the leopard when he kills.

[470] For further discussion of the role of economics and other social tensions in *The Leopard Man* and elsewhere in the Lewton horror cycle at RKO see Martha P. Nochimson, 'Val Lewton at RKO: The Social Dimensions of Horror', *Cineaste,* 31.4 (2006), 9-17.

outside the club (Clo-Clo is usually accompanied by the clatter of the castanets, which she plays whilst walking and often whilst talking), therefore becomes a symbol of this agency and also of the threat that this poses. Clo-Clo is heavily othered, but also able to (partially) resist the negative connotations of this positioning and effectively harness it for her own ends – which, of course, is at the root of Kiki's complaint about her as competition in the first place. The fact that Kiki's own performance goes unheard and unseen throughout the film means that she is denied access to some of the agency displayed by Clo-Clo, but also that she poses much less of a threat to the film's politics of representation. Clo-Clo's punishment for her transgressive and celebratory display of female sexuality is as severe as it can be, and is also explicitly linked with her professional activity in two ways: the "lure" of the showgirl for Galbraith (underlined in an earlier sequence where he talks with Kiki and Jerry) and the fact that it is the missing money from Brunton that forces Clo-Clo out into the streets that she now fears.[471]

The scenes leading up to Clo-Clo's murder display a strategy for dealing with the "problem" of the agent and charismatic woman that is reminiscent of the shifts in positioning that characterise many of the films discussed in chapter five. The first half of *The Leopard Man* relies heavily on indicators of the *femme fatale* to characterise Clo-Clo, but as the narrative progresses she is increasingly moved into the role of victim. Maria's fortune telling is the primary means through which this change of position is achieved, with her repeatedly finding the ace of spades (a sign of death) in Clo-Clo's cards. Although Clo-Clo tries to laugh this off at the start of the film, the repeated drawing of the card and Maria's obvious concern means that Clo-Clo finds it increasingly difficult to ignore the bad omen. After her final reading with Maria on the night of her death, Clo-Clo is frightened enough to ask her friend to walk part of the way home with her. The castanets are now silent, symbolising Clo-Clo's loss of agency as her positioning as potential victim becomes increasingly explicit (a shift that is highlighted by the use of tense nondiegetic scoring in the fortune telling sequence and the first half of Clo-Clo's walk home with Maria). After Maria leaves, Clo-Clo's transition to the position of victim is complete: her fear is palpable and, after a man stops to offer her a lift home, she loses her composure for the first time in the film, shouting at him to get away from her before running home. When she is forced to leave again to look for the missing money, her fate seems inevitable.

After Clo-Clo's death, Kiki must take over her role, at least temporarily, in order to trap Galbraith. Together with Jerry and the assistance of Raoul, she uses the local cultural event of

[471] See Nochimson, 'Val Lewton at RKO', pp. 14-15.

the parade as a means to trap the murderer by assuming elements of Clo-Clo's performance and persona. Again, the sound of the castanets is the most potent signifier of Clo-Clo's presence, and their ability to unnerve and frighten Galbraith is clearly shown. However, Kiki is only assuming these characteristics temporarily: she is less agent, less disruptive, and less othered than Clo-Clo, and she controls her habitation of Clo-Clo's cultural space, rather than being subsumed by it. Kiki takes Clo-Clo's role as part of her own (and Jerry's) process of redemption and their "successful" unmasking of the murderer means they are free to leave for Chicago, having atoned for their part in setting the leopard free.

The Leopard Man provides a particularly obvious example of the frequent connections made in 1940s crime films between the dangers of "untamed" female sexuality and musical and cultural signifiers of otherness. Clo-Clo's ethnicity is highlighted by the use of her castanets to serve as a signal of her charismatic and problematic presence, and this is further underlined by the comparisons made in the film between her intrusive musicality and Kiki's position as a performer who is effectively "silenced". Clo-Clo's agency is gradually removed as she is punished for her sexuality and cultural "knowledge" through her repositioning as victim and subsequent murder. Kiki is allowed temporarily to occupy Clo-Clo's ethnic and sonic space, but only in the interests of catching the killer (a killer who also underlines the connections made in the film between the dangers of "feminine" sexuality and too much cultural knowledge). *The Leopard Man* highlights both the fetishistic treatment of musical performance by a *femme fatale* figure and also the ability of the performer to resist this positioning. However, the extremity of Clo-Clo's punishment ensures that her resistance is only temporary, and that the film's overriding image is one of woman as victim.

A Woman's Secret

The three protagonists of *A Woman's Secret* are all musicians: Marian (Maureen O'Hara) and Susan (Gloria Grahame) are singers and Luke (Melvyn Douglas) is a composer and pianist. The film opens with footage of a live radio broadcast given by Susan (under her stage name of 'Estrellita'), whilst Marian listens to the show at their shared apartment. When Susan returns home, the two women quarrel about Susan's desire to give up singing, and Susan storms off to her bedroom. Marian follows her, although we cannot see what takes place in the bedroom. A shot is fired and Marian is discovered, holding a gun, next to Susan's prostrate body. Marian confesses to the shooting and is arrested, whilst Susan is taken to hospital where she eventually starts to recover. Despite Marian's confession, which is shown in a flashback whilst she gives her statement to the police, Luke is convinced of her innocence. Luke believes that

Susan must be in some way responsible for the incident, describing her as manipulative and unpleasant. He tries to convince Inspector Fowler (Jay Flippen) that Marian is lying by telling him about various episodes in his friendship with Marian and Susan, which unfold in a series of flashbacks.

Luke and Marian are old friends and we are shown scenes of them working together early in their careers. Both of them become well-known performers, but Marian collapses on stage one night after losing her voice halfway through a number. She is diagnosed with a rare form of laryngitis, and, although her voice does come back eventually, she is told by a specialist that she will never be able to sing like she used to. After their appointment with the specialist, Luke and Marian meet Susan, a young woman from Azusa who has been auditioning for a show that Luke is involved in. She is half-fainting with cold and hunger and they take her back to Marian's apartment to give her something to eat. Susan is a singer and performs for Luke and Marian, with Luke accompanying her at the piano. They are stunned by her voice and she becomes their protégé. Marian takes Susan to Paris to finish her "education" whilst Luke remains in New York. Marian's letters home become less frequent, prompting Luke to visit Paris to check on the two women. He finds that Susan has run off with a travelling opera company and eventually finds her in a bar in Algiers, where he asks her to sing 'Estrellita' for him. This becomes Susan's feature song and her stage name, and Luke and Marian hatch a plan to find her a rich sponsor on the boat back to New York. Estrellita becomes a household name, bringing Susan fame and fortune.

Interspersed with these flashbacks are sections of the present-day story, with Susan injured in hospital and Marian in police custody. Luke meets an angry and aggressive soldier, Lee (Bill Williams), at the hospital. Lee is anxious to see Susan, saying that he met her on her recent trip to New Orleans (which Marian has previously connected with Susan's new-found lack of interest in her singing career), but he gives Luke no further information. Susan recovers sufficiently to tell her version of the events leading up to the shooting, and her account tallies with Marian's, much to Luke's confusion. He cannot understand how Susan could have heard about Marian's confession whilst she has been in solitary confinement in her hospital room, but eventually Susan's nurse is revealed to have shown her newspaper accounts of the shooting. Susan and Marian's stories are exposed as false and we see the events as they really happened in another flashback.

Lee and Susan got married when she was in New Orleans, a rash decision that she regrets, especially after she receives an ominous telegram from her husband saying he's going to visit her in New York. After storming away from the post-broadcast argument with Marian, Susan

burns the telegram and gets a gun out of her dressing table drawer. When Marian enters the bedroom and sees the gun, she tries to take it from Susan and they struggle. Susan is shot accidentally. Once the truth is revealed, Marian admits to Luke that she lied to save Susan's career from any damage, but that she can now see Susan's true colours. Marian and Luke are now finally able to express their true feelings for each other, and end the film in a romantic clinch.

A Woman's Secret has a relatively convoluted plot that does not always work entirely convincingly. Despite its less successful elements, however, the film provides an interesting study of the way in which musical performance can be used as a means of exploring and communicating various elements of female characterisation. There are five scenes in *A Woman's Secret* that feature prominent moments of diegetic musical performance, beginning with Susan's radio broadcast (as Estrellita) in the opening scene, and then moving back in time to focus on Marian's career and the later arrival of Susan and her rise to fame (see Table 6.1). These sequences occupy a substantial amount of time in the film, and play a key role in the construction and positioning of both Marian and Susan.

Scene	**Temporality**	**Performer**	**Song**
Live radio broadcast	Present day	Susan/Estrellita	'Estrellita'
Bar performance	Flashback	Marian	'Let Him Go, Let Him Tarry'
Throat specialist (recording)	Flashback	Marian	'Paradise'
Marian's apartment	Flashback	Susan	'Paradise'
Bar in Algiers/ship's concert	Flashback	Susan	'Estrellita'

Table 6.1. *A Woman's Secret:* featured diegetic musical performances

The construction of Marian in her rendition of 'Let Him Go, Let Him Tarry' is by far the most "positive" use of musical performance in the film. The song is presented as a light hearted and engaging number that celebrates a woman's decision to leave her cheating lover behind for someone better, as shown in the words of the chorus: 'Let him go, let him tarry, let him sink or let him swim/ He doesn't care for me nor I don't care for him/ He can go and get another that I hope he will enjoy/ For I am going to marry a far nicer boy'.

Figure 6.5. *A Woman's Secret:* Marian sings 'Let Him Go, Let Him Tarry'

Marian's costume, a full-sleeved white blouse under a pinafore dress (see Figure 6.5), is used to highlight the traditional origins of the song. These also fit with Maureen O'Hara's Irish heritage, an important factor in her star persona.[472] Marian's rendition is charismatic and vibrant, emphasising the narrative and comedy of the song through her singing voice and posture in a way that gives the scene a feeling of music hall performance. For much of the sequence, she is moving around the space and delivering individual lines to various different patrons or groups, and the camera often seems to struggle to keep her in shot. Even in those sections of the song filmed using a static close-up of Marian's face, this serves primarily to highlight her exaggerated facial expressions and interplay with the customers, rather than allowing extended eroticised contemplation of her as a static "object". The song receives positive responses from the audience throughout the performance and afterwards from Luke at the piano.

Musical performance here is constructed as a natural extension of Marian's own cheery personality, which is partially reliant on the implied "realism" of the sequence. O'Hara is clearly identifiable as the source of Marian's singing voice to anyone familiar with her work in other films, and Marian's positive and feisty disposition at this point in the narrative is also a close match for O'Hara's off screen image and many of the other roles she played during this period.[473] At this point, Marian is presented as strong and agent, able to avoid the more typical

[472] Ruth Barton, 'Maureen O'Hara: Pirate Queen, Feminist Icon?', *Éire-Ireland,* 41.1 & 2 (2006), 143-168 (p. 144).

[473] Barton proposes that O'Hara's off-screen personality as both a 'strong' and relatively conservative woman was enough to disrupt her positioning in more subservient female roles, and that this, together with her Irish heritage, may have been a factor in her frequent casting in Orientalist dramas and swashbucklers. She argues that 'O'Hara's roles beg to be analyzed for their strengths rather than their weaknesses, for the force of her resistance to the dominant order, rather than for her eventual capitulation to it', thereby aligning her with other, more celebrated, "resistant" stars such as Katherine Hepburn, Joan Crawford, and Rita Hayworth. Barton, 'Maureen O'Hara', p. 144. For a popular account of

positioning of the singing woman via her use of traditional style material and a charismatic performance style that distinguishes the sequence from the regular styling of the musical *femme fatale.*[474] Marian is in control of her career, confident, and on an equal footing with her friend and fellow-musician Luke. This helps her resist the fetishisation that often characterises the female vocal performer, and provides a heavy contrast with the other musical numbers in *A Woman's Secret.*

Although this sequence takes place as part of Luke's flashback (as do the majority of musical performances), his control of the narrative is not as heavily stressed as that of other male narrators in films that also rely heavily on flashbacks. This is partly a result of the film's emphasis on the relationship between Marian and Susan, which Luke's narration is focused towards, but also because of its musical construction. Although nondiegetic scoring is used conventionally throughout *A Woman's Secret,* it is not used very extensively. Instead, the film emphasises diegetic music, and the majority of the nondiegetic score is characterised by its inclusion of material that features diegetically as well (for example, the melodies of 'Estrellita' and 'Paradise'). Much of the music on the soundtrack is therefore primarily associated with Marian and Susan (the "stars" of these performances), rather than Luke, who literally takes an accompanying role. Although Luke is the dominant narrator throughout the film, and this should not be overlooked when considering the positioning of both Marian and Susan, his narrative authority is arguably less "absolute" than it might initially appear.

Despite the positive presentation of Marian in 'Let Him Go, Let Him Tarry', her agency is challenged almost immediately when she is metaphorically and literally "silenced" by the loss of her singing voice. Luke's second flashback shows Marian being carried off-stage and being repeatedly, and aggressively, told to be quiet in order to save her remaining voice. In the sequence where Marian sings for a voice expert, we never hear any of her actual performance for him, and the scene begins with a shot of Marian's back as Luke (facing the camera) plays the final chords of the song. Rather than allow us to hear Marian's real performance, we instead witness her humiliation when the voice expert forces her to listen to a recording of what she used to sound like when singing 'Paradise'. The camera cuts between shots of the

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O'Hara's films and position at RKO see James Robert Parish, *The RKO Gals* (London: Ian Allan Ltd, 1974), pp. 642-703.

[474] The use of traditional, folk-style musical material as a means of "neutralising" potentially negative characteristics is also demonstrated throughout *They Live By Night,* although here in the film's nondiegetic score. Scenes of the relationship between Keechie and Bowie are scored using the melody of the traditional song 'I Know Where I'm Going' in a romantic and often sentimental style. This is an important factor in the creation of sympathy for the couple as victims of circumstance, rather than hardened criminals on the run.

record on the turntable (see Figure 6.6) and Marian and Luke listening to it in dismay. When faced with the sound and image of her previous career, Marian cannot stand to listen to the record and insists that phonograph is turned off. Luke reinforces this action by angrily destroying the record, smashing it on his knee before telling Marian that they are leaving.

Figure 6.6. *A Woman's Secret:* Marian's recording of 'Paradise'

In this scene, Marian is reduced to a silent listener, forced to confront her own inadequacy by listening to the record: a version of the song that, although still recognisable as Marian/O'Hara, is of course disembodied, physically "unreal", and thereby reduced to a fetish of sorts.[475] Her removal of the record from the turntable and Luke's violent destruction of it continues the process of silencing and containing Marian, which is completed in the next sequence by the introduction of Susan into her friendship with Luke.

In the lengthy flashback that shows Marian and Luke meeting Susan and taking her back to Marian's apartment, Susan effectively takes control of Marian's personal space and her place within the narrative. Marian is again reduced to the position of being a spectator watching her former self, as the film has already heavily stressed the clear connection between Susan and Marian's former position as star.[476] After talking about Susan's life, country upbringing, and ambitions, Luke offers to play for her whilst she sings. Susan elects to sing 'Paradise' – the song we have previously heard Marian singing the start of on the phonograph, underlining her role as the "new" Marian of the story. Susan sings 'Paradise' in full, accompanied by Luke, whilst Marian listens. As well as demonstrating Susan's prowess as a singer, the sequence is significant in making clear the complex relationships between the film's three protagonists: the

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[475] See Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins*, pp. 3-6.

[476] Throughout and after the "false" flashback that shows Marian's statement to the police about the shooting, Marian's dialogue is full of references to the way in which her identity is bound up in Susan: examples include 'You see, she was me', to Inspector Fowler, and 'You're myself', to Susan. Costume is also used throughout the film to stress the idea of Susan and Marian as "doubles", and they often wear dark and light coloured versions of very similar outfits.

number is largely static in its "choreography", but relies heavily on the exchange of various "looks" in order to demonstrate the desires of Susan, Marian, and Luke, and their changing positions within the hierarchy of their relationship.

Figure 6.7 shows the primary steps in this sequence of looks, which begins and ends with Susan staring into the middle distance as she sings; a posture that highlights her "unknowability" and acts to emphasise the gap between her as performer and Luke and Marian as "audience". In particular, Marian's position as spectator is made very clear in shots of her peeping around a curtained doorway to watch Susan, until she is unable to resist creeping nearer to the piano as the song develops. Both Marian and Luke stare at Susan as she sings, highlighting the unexpected quality and effect of her voice. The central section of 'Paradise' features a more direct series of looks between the three characters, instigated by Susan. She begins to perform increasingly towards Luke at the piano, and eventually perches on the end of it, drawing close to him as he plays. Luke and Marian exchange a speculative glance, as if to check that they share the same reaction to Susan's voice. Susan appears to respond to this shared glance by momentarily directing her singing towards Marian, although this look differs from the sultry "invitation" directed at Luke and appears to be more "challenging" in nature. Marian draws closer to Luke, staring at him and putting her arm slowly around his shoulders, but this look is not returned: Luke appears to be captivated by Susan. As the song finishes, Susan again resumes her initial posture, directing her performance towards an unseen and imaginary audience elsewhere in the room.

This sequence is particularly interesting in the way that it constructs Marian as an onlooker. Susan's role, although the focus, is fairly straightforward and conforms to many of the stereotypical devices used to frame and position musical performance in the *femme fatale,* belying Susan's naïve and innocent positioning earlier in the scene and preparing us for her disruptive role within the narrative. The static camerawork and general lack of movement, together with the reactions of Marian and Luke, emphasise Susan's construction as an object of desire, and her "invitation" to Luke and "challenge" to Marian indicate that she is fully aware of this desirability. Susan's singing is heavy with portamento and the use of vocalised sections of melody, and the performance as a whole is designed to emphasise her coldness and unknowability, whilst simultaneously constructing her as erotic, sexualised, and available. Marian's positioning is less clear-cut. It is unclear exactly where her desires lie, given the relatively equal direction of her looks at both Luke and Susan, and this is further complicated by the fact that in looking at Susan, she is effectively looking at "herself". Marian's relationship with Susan is presented ambivalently throughout *A Woman's Secret,* with intimations of love,

jealousy, frustration, and desire, and these conflicting and unacknowledged facets of their relationship are established during 'Paradise' (and later reinforced in the performance of 'Estrellita' given by Susan on board the ship). It is only at the end of the film, when Marian realises the mistake she has made in devoting herself to Susan (and has been punished for this through her imprisonment and the pain of Susan's betrayal), that she is "free" to love Luke.

Figure 6.7. *A Woman's Secret:* the exchange of looks during Susan's performance of 'Paradise'

Susan's fetishised and negatively positioned performance of 'Paradise' is therefore a significant contrast to Marian's earlier rendition of 'Let Him Go, Let Him Tarry', although it arguably still contains some elements of resistance. Despite Susan's clear positioning in the role of *femme fatale* via the conventions surrounding female musical performance in the crime film, she appears to make use of these negative signifiers for her own ends, as her sly, challenging looks at Marian show. The sequence is an unsettling mixture of "real" and "unreal", with the relaxed and intimate atmosphere of Marian's home contrasting heavily with the controlled and manipulative "professionalism" of Susan's performance. Susan's performance brings the world of the *noir* nightclub into Marian's domestic space, whereas 'Let Him Go, Let Him Tarry' is based around a reversal of this relationship, highlighting Marian's ability to bring warmth and personality into a professional setting.[477] Although Susan appears to be largely in control of herself and her position within the group at this point, her agency as disruptive *femme fatale* is already being challenged and partially contained by the signifiers of otherness in her presentation. Subsequent numbers intensify this othering by the increasing prominence of 'Estrellita's' identity in Susan's musical, and more general, presentation.

Susan's next musical performance is set in Algiers, after she has run away from Marian and her attempts to "dignify" her in Paris. This bar scene shows us Susan's true colours much less ambiguously: she is rude and ungrateful about Marian, flirts heavily with Luke, and is wearing a cheap and unladylike red chiffon dress that Marian has already warned Luke about, symbolising Susan's lack of "class" and moving her further away from the more "acceptable" models of behaviour and deportment provided by Marian. This sequence is accompanied by a diegetic piano version of 'Paradise' (played by an anonymous musician who works in the bar), which is subsequently replaced by a piano rendition of 'Estrellita' (familiar from the radio broadcast that opens the film). Luke then, rather rudely, gets up to play his own version of the song and motions for Susan to join him and sing. The scene dissolves to the interior of a cruise ship, where an immaculately dressed Susan is singing the same song in the ship's concert, managing (as planned by Luke and Marian) to captivate both the heart and the wallet of a rich philanthropist who is on board, and thereby getting the financial backing she needs to launch her singing career.

The musical positioning of Susan as 'Estrellita' is therefore originally Luke's idea, demonstrating the control he exerts over events in the narrative, and also implying a correlation between his

[477] A further contrast to Marian's presentation earlier in the film is that Gloria Grahame clearly does not provide Susan's singing voice in *A Woman's Secret*, and is instead dubbed. Whilst this is far from an unusual practice in both musical and non-musical films in this era, it signals another difference from Marian and helps to underline the construction of Susan as in some way "unreal".

increasingly accurate vision of the "real" Susan and his association of this song and its related persona with her. 'Estrellita' (which translates as 'Little Star') was originally written in 1912 by the Mexican composer Manuel Ponce, and was extremely popular as both a vocal piece and the basis for several other instrumental arrangements in the early part of the twentieth century.[478] The sheet music for the song forms the background to the opening titles of *A Woman's Secret* (where the song is subtitled as a 'Mexican Serenade'), and it seems probable that many contemporary audience members would recognise 'Estrellita' as an example of Latin American music, despite its congruence with the overall generic style of mainstream popular vocal music in 1940s America.

The transformation of Susan into 'Estrellita', a literal embodiment of this song, completes the process of her othering that began in Marian's apartment. Susan's stage persona as Estrellita ironically reveals the "real"' Susan, giving a public face to her "private" personality. This "reality" (that Susan is vulgar, cheap, and manipulative), which problematically collapses ideas about class, gender and ethnic difference into one, is symbolised in the "difference" of her performance style and the Latin inflections of her name and choice of song. If taken in their actual chronology (which moves the opening radio broadcast to the final section of the film), the diegetic performance sequences of *A Woman's Secret* demonstrate a clear move away from an initially positive and affective characterisation of the female performer that constructs Marian as "authentic", "real" and "knowable", through to the heavy fetishisation and otherness embodied by Susan's performances as Estrellita. The radio broadcast emphasises Susan's objectification most explicitly; as well as repeating the static camerawork and "unknowable" gazing into the middle distance that characterised sections of her 'Paradise' performance, Susan's voice is now subject to the demands of commerce and technology (recalling the shift from "live" to recorded performance in Marian's sequences), rather than "art", as she angrily tells Marian during their argument. Marian again occupies an isolating position as "spectator" in this sequence, listening to the broadcast at home whilst looking anxious and stressed: again, Marian has no-one to return her "look", and Susan holds all the cards in their relationship.

Despite their privileged moments of musical performance, which function as much more than moments of "spectacle", both Susan and Marian end *A Woman's Secret* with much of their initial agency and autonomy removed. For Susan, her success as 'Estrellita' is not enough to bring her happiness, and it serves to remind us and other characters of her devious and

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[478] See Ricardo Miranda Pérez, 'Manuel Ponce', *Grove Music Online; Oxford Music Online* <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> [accessed 9 October 2010].

manipulative personality. She is positioned as the victim of a (potentially violent) husband that she does not love, has a serious gunshot wound, and has lost her "control" over both Luke and Marian. However, as Luke suggests, her newfound notoriety will be sure to stimulate interest in her career, and we are not invited to sympathise with Susan at all at the film's denouement. Marian's own loss of agency comes much earlier in the film when she is brutally and effectively "silenced" by the loss of her singing voice, her obsession with Susan, and her false confession. Marian's narrative "punishment" for her transgressive agency and behaviour is severe, and the film takes care to contain any residual threat that she might pose by ensuring that she ends the narrative firmly in the position of Luke's love interest.

The four case studies discussed in this chapter represent a variety of approaches to the musical and sonic representation of the *femme fatale.* Although displaying many of the same strategies for the creation and containment of female agency as films discussed in earlier chapters, these case studies also feature more extreme and noticeable uses of music as a positioning device (for example, all four films discussed here feature moments where nondiegetic scoring "crosses over" into the diegesis, or vice-versa). This may be a result of the exoticism and excess that commonly form a key part in the characterisation of the *femme fatale,* and this may itself explain the prevalence of *femmes fatales* who sing and/or dance in the crime film. The prominence of female diegetic performance within 1940s crime and *noir* films is striking and unusual, and these sequences vary widely in their treatment of the *femme fatale.* Diegetic performance is often shown to be a means of simultaneously eroticising and objectifying the female performer, whilst also allowing the potential for charismatic, agent, and engaging resistance to this positioning.

Chapter 7

Notorious: an extended case study

This chapter focuses solely on the film *Notorious,* providing the opportunity for extended discussion of the soundtrack of a crime film where the central female character occupies all of the roles examined in previous case studies.[479] Alicia (Ingrid Bergman) is a complex character who contains elements of the *femme fatale,* female detective, and victim, and she is additionally positioned as the love interest of (at least) two men. *Notorious* opens with Alicia Huberman witnessing her father's conviction for Nazi treason against the United States. A good time girl, casual in her relations with men and with drink, Alicia seems happy enough until Devlin (Cary Grant), an American government agent, asks her to take an unspecified mission as a spy in Rio de Janeiro. She agrees and the two of them fly to Rio, accompanied by Devlin's superior, Prescott (Louis Calhern). After arriving in Rio, Alicia renounces her licentious ways and falls in love with Devlin. Despite his obvious reluctance to become romantically involved with Alicia, Devlin eventually surrenders to his feelings.

Matters are soon complicated by Prescott's revelation that Alicia's mission is to infiltrate a group of Nazis by romancing their ringleader, Alex Sebastian (Claude Rains). Alex used to be in love with Alicia, enabling her to quickly secure his interest, love, and a proposal of marriage that she is hesitant to accept because of her feelings for Devlin. Despite his jealousy, Devlin will not give Alicia the declaration of love she needs to refuse the proposal, and she marries Alex, leading to the deterioration of her relationship with Devlin. Alicia and Devlin uncover uranium hidden in the Sebastian's wine cellar, but their investigation is secretly discovered by Alex who realises he has been tricked by his new wife. Acting upon the advice of his domineering mother (Leopoldine Konstantin), he starts to slowly poison Alicia in the hope of killing her without arousing the suspicions of his fellow criminals. Devlin eventually realises what is happening and rescues Alicia, who by now is too ill to escape unaided, leaving Alex and his mother to face their angry co-conspirators.

Producer David O. Selznick was instrumental in sourcing the original idea for the *Notorious* screenplay, which came from a two-part short story, 'The Song of the Dragon' by John Taintor

[479] Material from this chapter is also discussed in Catherine Haworth, 'Shades of Grey: Suspense, Subjectivity and the Soundtrack in *Notorious*', in *Cinemusic? Constructing the Film Score*, ed. by David Cooper, Christopher Fox, and Ian Sapiro (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 113-125.

Foote.[480] By 1941 Selznick had acquired the rights to the story, and was requesting that Val Lewton (then his story editor) start to work on the material from 'The Song of the Dragon' as a possible vehicle for Hitchcock to direct. It is unclear when the script for *Notorious* officially entered its development phase, but the project was headed by Ben Hecht, a screenwriter who had collaborated with Hitchcock on several previous projects including *Spellbound*. Comparing the final release of the film to a copy of the *Notorious* screenplay titled as 'Revised draft by Ben Hecht, 12/04/45' (with some insertions dated 1/22/46),[481] reveals only a few significant changes, mostly in the dialogue, between the written draft and the filmed version. These will be discussed in more detail later, as they impact most noticeably upon the construction and portrayal of the three protagonists, Devlin, Alicia, and Alex.

Alicia as victim, investigator, and *femme fatale*

Hitchcock himself viewed *Notorious* as representative of his own particular brand of suspense narrative, and it has frequently been noted that the uranium in the wine bottles is one of his most audacious 'MacGuffins', the director's own term for a plot device that initially seems to be pivotal to the plot, but then is quickly sidelined as a kind of red herring – here, the *real* plot revolves around the romantic (re)union of Alicia and Devlin, as this will also allow the successful resolution of the espionage subplot. In an article originally written for *The Hollywood Reporter,* Hitchcock locates the suspenseful aspects of *Notorious* (and several other films) primarily around their use of realistic characterisation:

> When characters are unbelievable you never get real suspense, only surprise. Just because there is a touch of murder and an air of mystery about a story it is not necessary to see transoms opening , clutching fingers, hooded creatures, and asps on the Chinese rug [...] *Notorious* concerned a woman caught in a web of world events from which she could not extricate herself.[482]

The romantic aspects of *Notorious,* and the centrality of Alicia's experience to its plot construction, are stressed in the majority of critical writing on the film. As James Naremore suggests, the elevated position of Hitchcock's leading ladies is often undercut by other aspects

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[480] This story originally appeared in two parts in the *Saturday Evening Post* during 1921, and was later anthologised in John Taintor Foote, *The Song of the Dragon* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1923).

[481] Ben Hecht, *Notorious Screenplay: Revised Draft 12/04/45* ([n.p.]: [n.pub.], 1945).

[482] *Hitchcock on Hitchcock: Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. by Gottlieb, p. 114. Hitchcock makes similar comments about Alicia's character and also highlights his use of the uranium as a MacGuffin in his conversation with François Truffaut about *Notorious.* François Truffaut, *Alfred Hitchcock*, Revised edn (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), pp. 167-173.

of the film, leading some critics to believe that Hitchcock's focus on female characters was motivated primarily by commercial factors:

> [Hitchcock] treats romance with an undercurrent of dark irony, and it is impossible to say with any certainty whether his repeated use of the woman's point of view was a product of his personal inclination or his commercial calculations. Throughout his career he had a tendency to represent female subjectivity on the screen; but from Selznick, and perhaps also from the dominant intellectual discourse of the 1930s and 1940s, he arrived at the conclusion that the audience for classic Hollywood entertainment was chiefly female, and that box-office success depended on satisfying women consumers.[483]

Regardless of any perceived commercial benefits that Hitchcock or Selznick may have foreseen in the focus of *Notorious* upon Alicia, female subjectivity is here (as in *Suspicion)* absolutely central to the development of the plot, and Alicia provides the film with a complex and often problematic leading lady.

Tania Modleski situates *Notorious* on the borderline between *film noir* and a reworking of the female gothic, given the combination of roles which are occupied by Alicia at various points in the narrative.[484] Alicia can be seen as both victim and investigator of her father, Devlin, and Alex. She is the victim of her father's crimes against America and the notoriety accorded to the daughter of a traitor; of Devlin's refusal to acknowledge his love for her and inability to stop reminding her of her past mistakes; and of Alex (and his mother's) mistrust, criminal activities, and attempts to kill her. Conversely, Alicia investigates Devlin through her initial taunting and teasing (for example during the drunk driving sequence) and her physical and emotional investigation of him via their romance. Her romantic relationship with Alex allows her to access and investigate him in the same way as Devlin, and Alicia also examines the sins of Alex (and her father) in a more literal way, compensating for her family's taint of Nazism by demonstrating her patriotism as an American agent.

By investigating the men in her life in these ways, Alicia also finds explanations for her own behaviour. The film draws explicit connections between the behaviour of her father and her own "improper" conduct, as she tells Devlin when he informs her of her father's suicide:

> Alicia: I don't know why I should feel so bad. When he told me a few years ago what he was everything went to pot. I didn't care what happened to me. But now I remember how nice he once was. How nice we both were. Very nice. It's a very curious feeling, as if something had happened to

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[483] James Naremore, 'Hitchcock at the Margins of *Noir*', in *Alfred Hitchcock Centenary Essays*, ed. by Richard Allen and S. Ishii Gonzalès (London: BFI Publishing, 1999), pp. 263-277 (p. 273).
[484] Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, p. 57.

> me instead of him. You see, I don't have to hate him anymore, or myself.

Modleski notes how the connection between the criminal immorality of the father and the sexual immorality implied by Alicia's conduct results in the narrative forcing her to atone for both sets of wrongdoing:

> it is only through allowing this sexuality to be placed *in the service* of a harsh and unbending law (that is, through becoming a Mata Hari for callous American agents) and nearly dying the same death as her father – death by poison – that Alicia can expiate her own sins and those of the father.[485]

Problematically, no-one questions why her father's behaviour seems now to be Alicia's responsibility, and even she does not protest when Devlin suggests that taking the job might help her 'make up a little for Daddy's peculiarities.'

In addition to her role as detective, however, Alicia also fulfils the more typical Hollywood role of the object under male investigation: we see the press hound her during the film's opening sequence; Devlin watches her silently as the uncommunicative 'partycrasher'; together with his superiors he questions her integrity, reliability, and suitability for the mission; and Alicia must also prove herself to Alex by accepting his marriage proposal. The formidable Madame Sebastian (a woman who arguably displays much more agency in her confidence, decisiveness, and influence than her over-reliant son) is the only character in the narrative who claims never to have been convinced by Alicia. Modleski cites Alicia's dual role as investigator and investigated as one of the most significant features of *Notorious,* and it is at the heart of her cross-generic reading of the film.[486] In their discussion of Hitchcock's creation of suspense in *Notorious*, Deborah Knight and George McKnight make a similar point:

> Up to the grand party at the Sebastians' mansion, the spy thriller is set against the developing romance between Alicia and Devlin. But with the grand party, the female Gothic comes to the fore, and with it the focus of suspense on the fate of the investigating woman.[487]

Naremore also situates *Notorious,* and much of Hitchcock's other work, at the boundaries of *film noir,* although he notes that these films are often excluded from the *noir* canons of various writers.[488] Naremore suggests that Hitchcock's treatment of female characters is one of the

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[485] Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, p. 58.
[486] Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, p. 60.
[487] Deborah Knight and George McKnight, 'Suspense and Its Master', in *Alfred Hitchcock Centenary Essays*, ed. by Richard Allen and S. Ishii Gonzalès (London: BFI Publishing, 1999), pp. 107-121 (p. 113).
[488] Naremore, 'Hitchcock at the Margins of *Noir*', pp. 263-266.

reasons for this exclusion, citing the director's handling of *femme fatale* figures and heterosexual love affairs as major differences between the work of Hitchcock and other *noir* directors.[489] Alicia's place within the canon of *noir's* leading ladies is of particular interest, and opens up a number of different readings of her character in *Notorious.* Like the film as a whole, Alicia is situated at the boundaries of several generic archetypes: as well as occupying the roles of detective and victim at various points, she contains elements of both the *femme fatale* (her self-aware sexual immorality, glamorous desirability, and original position on the fringes of the law) and the dutiful wife (her patriotic defiance of her father but loyal refusal to turn him in, her attempts at domesticity whilst in Rio, and her love for Devlin and desire to be faithful to him). Whilst these characteristics of the dutiful wife can be seen as allowing Alicia to redeem herself from her dubious past, the conventions of 1940s Hollywood mean that Alicia cannot atone for her sins by simply "turning over a new leaf", but that she must be punished for transgressing its moral code.

Alicia finds herself in a no-win situation: in order to start to compensate for her previous sexual crimes, she is forced to revisit that crime again by seducing Alex upon the orders of Devlin and Prescott. In many ways this is by far the most threatening sexual transgression Alicia commits; she might be acting for noble reasons, but she is now *knowingly* exploiting her sexuality in order to gain both knowledge and power. Modleski argues that most classical Hollywood films keep the qualities of sexuality and knowledge separate in their female characters in order to contain their threat as far as possible, and that genre conventions often enable this separation:

> [...] in noir films woman is typically eroticized and made the object of the male gaze and of narrative investigation, whereas in the Gothic film, she becomes the subject of the investigative gaze, but is characteristically de-eroticized in the process: masochistic fantasy comes to substitute for sexual fantasy.[490]

Several of the previous case studies have explored films that feature an investigative role for women, but these films do not generally portray romance as compatible with investigation, and frequently provide heavy justification for the undertaking of an investigative role by a female character. Alicia, on the other hand, collapses the roles of love interest and professional investigator throughout *Notorious,* and her punishment for contravening the patriarchal code is therefore extremely severe.

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[489] Naremore, 'Hitchcock at the Margins of *Noir*', pp. 266-276.
[490] Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, p. 61.

A memo from Joseph Breen (head of the PCA) to David Selznick indicates that Alicia was originally scripted as dying at the film's climax, presumably as a result of the poison. This memo is revealing about earlier drafts of the *Notorious* screenplay, and the body of it is here quoted in full:

> We have read, with considerable care, the temporary screenplay, dated May 9, 1945, for your proposed production, titled "Notorious," and I regret to be compelled to advise you that the material, in its present form, seems to us to be definitely unacceptable under the provisions of the Production Code.
>
> This unacceptability is suggested principally by the characterization of your lead, Alicia, as a grossly immoral woman, whose immorality is accepted "in stride" in the development of the story and who, eventually, is portrayed as dying a glorious heroine.
>
> There is too, in contrast with her immoral characterization, an almost complete absence of what might be called "compensating moral values."
>
> In addition, the frequent references throughout the story to Alicia's gross immorality, even when the references are intended, possibly, to point up and emphasize her attempts at regeneration, add, we think, very considerably to the overall unacceptability of this story.
>
> It is our thought that it might be possible to tell this story if you were to establish it early that Alicia is, possibly, a lady who lives by her wits – a gold-digger, perhaps, but not specifically a prostitute.
>
> It might be indicated that motivation for this characterization is prompted by her total loss of faith in her father, which leads her to sour on society in general, and, instead of becoming a kept woman of loose morals, such souring process might be evidenced by her determination to get what she can out of life, without paying any personal price for it.
>
> In addition, you will have in mind, I think, the need for your taking some counsel about this story with a representative of the F.B.I., the Navy Department, and the Brazilian government. I think you know that the industry has had a kind of "gentleman's agreement" with Mr. J. Edgar Hoover, wherein we have practically obligated ourselves to submit to him, for his consideration and approval, stories which importantly involve the activities of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
>
> Under the provisions of the Code, we have the responsibility to "represent fairly" the "history, institutions and citizenry" of friendly foreign nations. Because of this, we suggest that you consult with some responsible representative of the Brazilian government – possibly, the Ambassador at Washington.

> We shall be glad to discuss this story further with you, if you care to have us do so.[491]

It is interesting to note Breen's repeated references to Alicia's 'gross immorality' as the primary reason for his view that the screenplay is 'unacceptable' to be filmed for general release. As the director of the PCA, Breen's comments can be seen as representative of Hollywood concerns about the depiction of female characters as a whole. Breen is against any hint that the screenplay might inadvertently be seen to condone Alicia's 'loose morals' through a storyline that takes her immorality 'in stride' and does not provide her with any 'compensating moral values'. This seems unusual, given her courageous and risky assignment as a spy. It also seems probable that it is not Alicia's death which Breen objects to, but the fact that this death might be seen as 'glorious', thereby valorising her earlier behaviour and turning her into a 'heroine'.

A later memo reveals that appropriate changes were made to the script, and that *Notorious* would be given approval for release, providing that two final changes were made to the film:

> Following upon our conference with the Messrs. Selznick and Hitchcock, it is my understanding that a Production Code Seal will be issued for our production now entitled *Notorious,* subject to the following deletions and changes:
>
> 1. The entire sequence between Ernest and Alicia in the Miami bungalow will be deleted.
>
> 2. The drinking and drunkenness, as well as the shot of the drunken couple on the couch at the Miami party, will be reduced in footage.[492]

The Criterion DVD release of *Notorious* contains extracts from a draft of the screenplay which includes the Miami bungalow sequence referred to in this memo, together with production stills that indicate that the scene was actually filmed, and that the 'conference' detailed above was to discuss a preliminary cut of the finished film. One of these stills is reproduced in Figure 7.1, and shows Alicia returning the diamond bracelet to Ernest.

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[491] *Notorious*, dir. Alfred Hitchcock, comp. Roy Webb (The Criterion Collection, Cat. No. CC1578D, 2001) [DVD], Criterion DVD extras, Memo from Joseph I. Breen to David O. Selznick, May 25 1945.
[492] *Notorious*, Criterion DVD extras, Memo from William Gordon (RKO) to Joseph I. Breen, June 28 1946.

Figure 7.1. *Notorious:* production still showing Alicia returning the bracelet to Ernest

The Ernest and Alicia sequence (titled 'INT. MIAMI BUNGALOW – DAY' in the script) was to have been included in between the first exterior establishing shot of Alicia's Miami bungalow and the start of the evening party at which Alicia first meets Devlin. It shows Alicia wearing a 'morning negligee' and serving breakfast to Ernest Waylin, 'a man of forty whose manners are much better than his morals'.[493] The scene makes it clear that Alicia has been in a sexual relationship with Ernest, a businessman from New York who is anxious not to be publicly connected with Alicia. Ernest supports Alicia financially, paying the rent on her bungalow and buying her presents like the bracelet. After a terse exchange in which Ernest reveals he is flying back to New York that day, terminating their affair (which Alicia correctly interprets as being primarily due to her association with her father's trial), she insists he takes back the diamond bracelet so as not to leave a souvenir of 'unhappy times'. Whilst this last act may help to redeem Alicia slightly by downplaying the value of the material gain brought about by the relationship, the overall effect of the scene is to portray Alicia as a gold-digger and prostitute, thereby necessitating censorship by the PCA. Even without this sequence in the final cut of the film, Alicia's self-aware use of sexuality to gain knowledge is severe enough to warrant punishment in several ways.

The ending of the final cut of *Notorious* is still slightly ambiguous about Alicia's fate: although we see Devlin rescue her from the Sebastian mansion, we do not find out if this rescue comes quickly enough for Alicia to survive. The revised draft screenplay of *Notorious* dated 12/04/45 contains two short additional scenes that are not included in the finished film.[494] Both show two female clerical workers inside a US government office. In the first sequence, positioned in the draft screenplay after Alicia agrees to work for Devlin, the two girls note that Alicia must

[493] *Notorious*, Criterion DVD extras, deleted scenes.
[494] Hecht, *Notorious*.

have 'pull' to be assigned to Rio in the middle of winter.[495] The second omitted sequence, after Devlin drives Alicia away from the mansion, shows the same workers changing the surname on Alicia's file from Huberman to Devlin and noting on their records that the two successful agents now have two months leave for the purposes of 'relaxation'.[496] The girls conclude that this 'shows you what pull can do'.

This draft of the screenplay (which is a version made after the copy commented upon by Breen) makes it clear that Alicia survives her ordeal and becomes a full agent of the American government. She also becomes Devlin's wife, thereby completing the process of her redemption and ensuring that the dangers of both her knowledge and her sexuality will be contained in the future. In comparison to either this ending or a finale in which Alicia dies, the actual conclusion of *Notorious* can be seen as relatively ambiguous about Alicia's fate, and thereby open to readings that include scenarios in which Alicia's threat is not entirely neutralised.

Figure 7.2. *Notorious:* American pre-release advertising poster

Alicia's "notoriety" is the central issue of *Notorious*, and features in the film's publicity as well as in its narrative. In addition to emphasising Grant and Bergman in a typically romantic posture and the suspense device of the Unica key, advertising for the film drew heavily upon Alicia's characterisation as a female on the edge of respectability, labelling her as a 'Notorious woman of affairs' to Devlin's 'Adventurous man of the world' (see Figure 7.2). Devlin is positioned above Alicia and his strapline implies that he is worldly and "man enough" to take on and subdue this potentially scandalous woman. This poster, and others like it, both celebrate and suppress Alicia's questionable morals, and this strategy is also at work in *Notorious* itself: whilst Devlin and Prescott are happy to use Alicia's supposedly promiscuous

[495] Hecht, *Notorious*, p. 24a.
[496] Hecht, *Notorious*, p. 154.

nature for their own ends, her suffering is used to demonstrate that she is also punished for not conforming with traditional ideas of decency.

Alicia is made to suffer physically through her poisoning (which removes her control of her body) and emotionally (through her loneliness, isolation, and fear in the Sebastian mansion, the humiliating nature of her work, and Devlin's refusal to admit his true feelings for her). The reasons for Alicia's narrative suffering and punishment are constantly reinforced by Devlin and Prescott's reminders about her past mistakes and her 'suitability' for a job of this nature. Even Alex, who seems determined to see the best in Alicia until he discovers her true motivations, makes reference to her supposed string of lovers when he tries to find out if she is single at their first dinner date, asking 'Who is it this time?' Despite her repeated declarations of love and fidelity, Devlin only attempts to defend Alicia from the sneering misogyny of Prescott and his superiors on two occasions: his initial shock at the nature of her assignment pushes him to claim that he is 'not sure she'd do it!' (a sentiment he quickly revises under Prescott's inquisitive gaze), and later he makes a sarcastic remark in response to a fellow agent's jibe about Alicia:

> Beardsley: She's had me worried for some time. A woman of that sort.
>
> Devlin: What sort is that, Mr Beardsley?
>
> Beardsley: Oh, I don't think any of us have any illusions about her character, have we Devlin?
>
> Devlin: Not in the slightest. Miss Huberman is first, last, and always not a lady. She may be risking her life, but when it comes to being a lady she doesn't hold a candle to your wife, sir, sitting in Washington playing bridge with three other ladies of great honour and virtue.

Devlin here articulates the double bind of Alicia's dilemma, and for the first time allows us to see the extent of his own conflicted feelings about her.

In addition to punishing Alicia for her self-aware sexuality, *Notorious* also takes care to draw the reliability of her knowledge into question, as Modleski points out:

> Not only does the film disembody the sexual woman, it also continually impairs her vision (something that Hitchcock films do to women with alarming frequency), thus ensuring that man remains in sole control of the gaze – and hence of the knowledge and power with which vision is always associated in the cinema. The

> threat inherent in Alicia's role as a Mata Hari may account for the severity of the punishment she undergoes and for the need to disable her vision.[497]

Alicia's vision is shown to be unreliable on several occasions: when she misidentifies her hair as 'fog' whilst drunk, Devlin's skewed appearance when she wakes up with a hangover, and the merging of Alex and Madame Sebastian into one blurry shadow as she collapses from the poison. Modleski further notes that the final rescue scene sees Alicia keeping her gaze hidden and it is through Devlin's eyes that we see their final escape down the staircase, thereby reasserting the dominance of his vision at the film's climax.[498] Here, Alicia's "moral poison" has been contained and punished by the chemical poison administered by Alex and his mother, making her a victim of their desire to disable her vision and neutralise her threatening role as investigator (and, in this case an unusually threatening role as love interest).

Subjectivity and point of view

Many aspects of *Notorious* highlight the centrality of "vision" to the film's plot, which frequently revolves around the (in)ability of its protagonists to see the truth. Alicia's own notoriety stems in part from the watchful eye of the press at her father's trial, and it also gives the film its title, drawing immediate attention to the preoccupation *Notorious* has with notions of appearance, of looking, and of being looked at. Point of view shots and unusual camerawork and framing are found throughout the film and emphasise the items of particular suspense, the subjectivities of various characters, and the situations they find themselves in. In a film where all the protagonists are acting a part *within* the narrative, the use of point of view camerawork becomes even more significant for the audience's understanding and interpretation of these juxtaposed subjectivities. Alicia's point of view is the most commonly shown in *Notorious,* and is frequently highlighted even further through the use of unusual and striking camerawork: those sequences that show her vision as maimed or distorted in some way are amongst the most visually striking scenes in the film. In the hangover sequence, for example (see Figure 7.3), dialogue is used to draw further attention to the already conspicuous camerawork that shows Devlin approaching Alicia (my emphases shown in bold):

> Alicia: What's this all about? What's your **angle**?
>
> Devlin: What **angle**?
>
> Alicia: About last night.

[497] Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, p. 61.
[498] Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, pp. 61-62.

Devlin: Just wanted to be friends.

Alicia: Friends, huh? So you could **frame** me.

Figure 7.3. *Notorious:* Alicia's hangover

Other significant sequences that feature Alicia's point of view include the first appearance of Madame Sebastian, Alicia's meeting with Alex's co-conspirators at the dinner party, and various shots of the suspense devices used in the film – the wine bottles, the lock and key to the cellar, the champagne at the party, and the coffee cups.[499] The striking nature of these

[499] Sandy Flitterman-Lewis discusses the centrality of Alicia's point of view to *Notorious*, arguing (like Modleski) that the 'power of the gaze' is ultimately relocated to the film's male protagonists and that this is an important strategy in the containment of Alicia's threat. Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, 'To See and Not to Be: Female Subjectivity and the Law in Hitchcock's *Notorious*', *Literature and Psychology,* 33.3-4 (1987), 1-15.

shots, which frequently break with classical cinema's principles of continuity editing and verisimilitude, gives these objects (referred to as 'cataphors' by Knight and McKnight)[500] a surreal and dislocated air that heightens their contribution to the creation of suspense.

Notorious therefore contrasts the audience's privileged access to Alicia's point of view with frequent attempts to draw the reliability of her vision into question. For Modleski, this is particularly problematic as it represents the film's shift in focus away from Alicia as a patriotic investigator to Alicia functioning primarily as a tainted object of desire for the two male leads:

> In a typical noir move, then, the film displaces the center of interest from Alicia as an object of curiosity in relation to her father's espionage activities to Alicia as an object of male sexual desire who must be tortured for and purified of her sexual past – and nearly blinded and killed in the process. In effecting this displacement, the film collapses two very different registers – the realm of politics [...] and the realm of private life (sexuality and romance) – into one.[501]

This shift in position is one that is evident in many other examples of the female investigator in 1940s cinema, and turns Alicia (rather than the MacGuffin of the uranium) into the prize that both Devlin and Alex are chasing. However, unlike the female investigator in many of these other films, Alicia's role as detective is a professional one and is therefore much more difficult to sideline (another reason for the severity of her "punishment"). This slippage between private and political registers is also evident in other ways in *Notorious:* in Alicia's own motivation (her "quest" is for both the uranium and for Devlin's love and trust), and in Alex's "possession" of both the uranium and Alicia as ways of proving himself to his domineering mother.

Point of view shots are also used to highlight the subjectivities of Alex and Devlin, emphasising the way in which the subjectivities of all three protagonists are entwined and interdependent to our understanding of various elements of the film's narrative. The central party scene of *Notorious* constitutes a series of jealous "looks" between Alex and Devlin, each watching the progress of the other with Alicia, and Devlin's underestimation of Alex's vision has catastrophic results when he discovers the two agents together in the wine cellar. After the party, Alex's point of view is emphasised as he finds out about Alicia's betrayal in a pivotal sequence that will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

The visual construction of Devlin's subjectivity is, in many ways, more complex than Alex or Alicia's. He is not granted ownership of point of view shots as frequently as either of these

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[500] Knight and McKnight, 'Suspense and Its Master', pp. 106-121.
[501] Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, p. 62.

characters: although many shots of Alicia are viewed from a perspective congruent with that of Devlin, these shots are lacking in subjectivity as they are also the expected constructions of classical Hollywood continuity editing, and therefore do not have the same impact. The first time we see Devlin in the film, however, he is explicitly cast in the role of spectator at Alicia's bungalow – he is a 'partycrasher', an outsider who refuses to speak or participate. Unlike the point of view shots from Alicia and Alex's perspectives, Hitchcock constructs Devlin's point of view with his silhouette still in the frame (see Figure 7.4). This shot functions in several ways: it draws attention to the unknown partycrasher, heightening audience curiosity through the concealment of his identity; it acts, as Modleski notes, to construct Devlin's spectatorship as seedy and furtive (thereby encouraging the audience to identify with Alicia, rather than the withdrawn and judgemental onlooker);[502] and the very blackness of Devlin's silhouette obscures our own view of Alicia and the other guests. This emphasises the fact that Devlin is controlling the narrative throughout the party and driving sequences, even though Alicia thinks she is. Devlin is less drunk than Alicia and can take control of the situation at any time, as demonstrated in his half-hearted responses to her verbal jousting, his unnecessary covering up of her midriff, and him knocking her unconscious in the car once he has tired of her continued resistance. Devlin's "point of view" is therefore immediately introduced as a problematic one, and is further undermined by the increasing sympathy created for Alicia later in the film (whilst Devlin is still largely being unpleasant to her). The film suggests that he cannot "see" the real Alicia, and this is underlined by Devlin's confession to her in the final scenes of *Notorious*: 'I couldn't see straight or think straight. I was a fatheaded guy full of pain'. Like Alicia and Alex, Devlin's vision is therefore shown to be unreliable, meaning that the looks of all three protagonists are both emphasised and undermined. Similar strategies are also used in the soundtrack to *Notorious,* which aids the creation of suspense and ambiguity in ways that often have a close relationship to the techniques used in the visual track of the film.

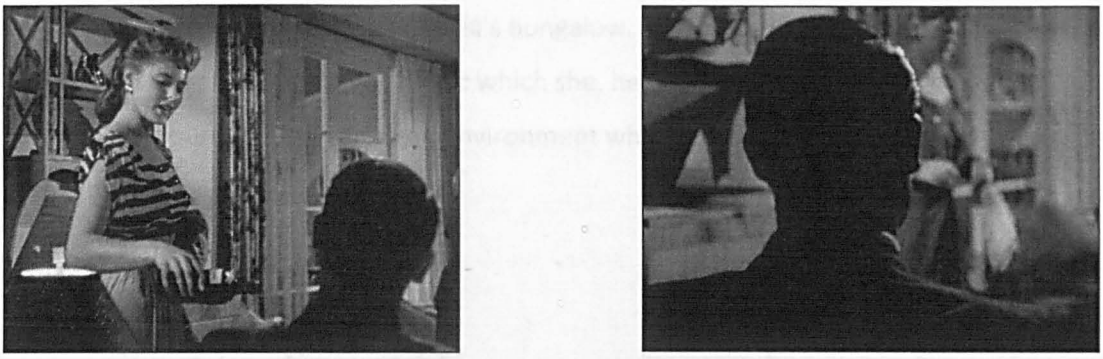

Figure 7.4. *Notorious:* Devlin as spectator at Alicia's party

[502] Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, pp. 66-67.

The *Notorious* soundtrack: positioning Alicia

As befits their dual roles as investigators and investigated, Alicia, Devlin, Alex, and Madame Sebastian are all shown to be sensitive to the communicative properties of sound. Alicia's bungalow has been wired by Devlin's superiors for months; Prescott's professional advice to Alicia is 'not to ask questions, just use your eyes and ears', a tactic she employs repeatedly; Madame Sebastian constantly cuts off the flow of "business" talk whenever she thinks Alicia might hear; Alex orders the removal of the telephone from Alicia's bedroom fearing that her cries for help might be heard; and Devlin initially persuades Alicia to take the job in Rio by playing her a phonograph recording of an argument she had with her father before his arrest.

This phonograph scene, together with some of the dialogue in the previous night's party sequence, is important in understanding how the soundtrack reflects Hitchcock's problematisation of the act of looking in *Notorious.* Amy Lawrence also analyses the phonograph scene as a crucial exchange between Devlin and Alicia, describing it as 'a scene that serves as the turning point of the narrative, the woman's control of her voice is radically undermined when the technology of sound recording is exposed as a male prerogative.'[503] Lawrence argues that Devlin's control of Alicia's (recorded) voice in the scene allows him to reposition her as a patriotic American citizen, rather than a rebellious *femme fatale:*

> [...] the introduction of the audible brings with it a new level of interiority and a concomitant greater "truth" value, Alicia's protests cannot bear any weight [...] Because he operates the technology, Devlin can orchestrate a conversation with Alicia when she is out of the room, dictating when "she" will speak, turning her dialogue on and off as it suits him. By disregarding the woman's right to be the "master" of her speech, the male is able to re-position her in patriarchal terms.[504]

Here, Lawrence highlights the important role that the soundtrack plays in repositioning Alicia, and the impact of this sequence is further heightened by consideration of elements of the previous night's party sequence at Alicia's bungalow. At the party, it is Alicia who is in control of the phonograph, selecting the music which she, her guests, and Devlin will hear. She controls their aural environment, an environment which Devlin questions after the rest of the guests have left or passed out:

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[503] Lawrence, *Echo and Narcissus*, p. 125.
[504] Lawrence, *Echo and Narcissus*, pp. 127-129.

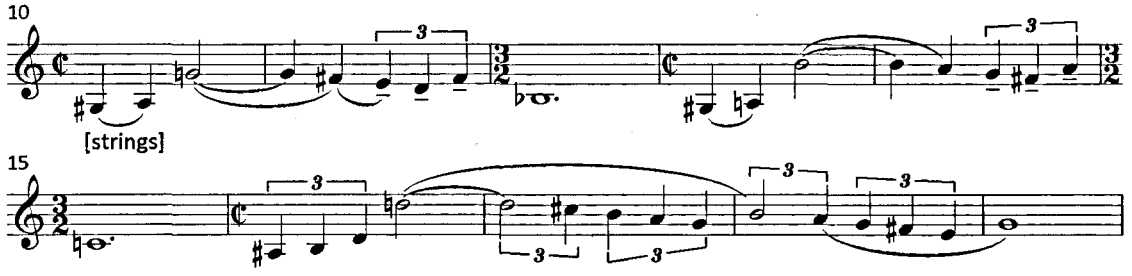
Devlin: Why do you like this song?

Alicia: Because it's a load of hooey. There's nothing like a love song to give you a good laugh.

Devlin: That's right.

Lawrence describes this exchange as a comic moment designed to bring light relief at Alicia's use of American slang, but this overlooks its more serious implications regarding the function and effect of the musical score in *Notorious.* Through this cynical exchange, Alicia and Devlin simultaneously draw attention to, and undermine, the romantic nature of the diegetic background music playing in the scene. The sudden rebuttal of romance at this moment is surprising, as the early part of the sequence is structured and shot as a relatively typical love scene, with shot-reverse-shot camerawork and lingering close-ups highlighting the increasingly flirtatious relationship between Alicia and Devlin. Until this point, the diegetic music playing in the background has seemed to fulfil the usual requirements of classical scoring, with its intimate and relaxed Latin style providing an appropriate accompaniment to the increasing romantic tension on screen. Alicia's statement that 'there's nothing like a love song to give you a good laugh', which Devlin agrees with, therefore not only demonstrates the cynical and world-weary nature of these characters, but also undermines the credibility of the music she has chosen, and draws the reliability of the musical score as a signifier of mood and tone into question.

The problematising of the usual "authority" of the musical score that takes place in this scene has important implications for the way in which the soundtrack works in *Notorious* as a whole, especially with regard to its role in the representation of Alicia. Devlin, who agrees with Alicia's remark, is not strongly associated with recurring nondiegetic musical material in the way that Alicia and Alex are: he sometimes shares romantic cues with Alicia, but these scenes usually stress her subjectivity (often because of Devlin's romantic reticence), and the material used in these cues also recurs in scenes where Devlin plays no part. The musical material associated with Alicia in *Notorious* is first introduced in Webb's main title for the film, the melody of which is shown in Example 7.1. The "Alicia" motif shown here, and material related to it, is frequently referenced elsewhere in the score during sequences that stress Alicia's subjectivity.



Example 7.1. *Notorious:* "Alicia" motif and related material in the main title[505]

In the main title, the "Alicia" motif is accompanied by signifiers of both romance and tension. Fanfare-style "warning" brass opens the film and return in the mysterious and more subtle ending to the main title (segueing into the first of the nondiegetic narrative cues), and the harmony throughout the main title is characterised by ambiguous open fifths. These elements are combined with conventional signifiers of romance, including the wide leap of the main "Alicia" melody, steadily ascending sequences, and full orchestration in the overture's central section (massed strings with wide vibrato, harp arpeggios, high woodwinds, and virtuosic piano flourishes).

The use of these prominent musical signifiers of romance in the main title, particularly relating to its prominent presentation of "Alicia", emphasises a reading of *Notorious* as a love story. In turn, this plays a significant role in positioning Alicia as a romantic heroine, arguably helping to counteract many of the less "positive" signifiers of her character that are present in the opening scenes of the film (her father's trial, and her revealing animal-print costume, drinking, and flirtatious behaviour at the bungalow party). The film's emphasis on Alicia as the object of spectatorship in these scenes (via the press, the patrolling agent, and Devlin's presence at the party) increases the implication that her behaviour is wrong and invites judgement, and music is used in several ways to both support and negate these ideas.

The main title, with its implications of both suspense and romance, segues into the underscoring that accompanies the first section of the trial sequence; a short linking cue (M:10b 'Insert') and cue M:11 'Courtroom Sequence', of which only the first nine bars are used. These cues immediately establish a sinister and suspenseful atmosphere through their heavily chromatic movement and ambiguous tonality.[506] They have a sparser orchestral texture that emphasises the darker sonorities of trombones and lower strings, whilst the violins hold a

[505] Webb, '*Notorious*', cue M:10 'Main Title', bb. 10-28.

[506] Sullivan also notes the contribution of Webb's score to the creation of subjectivity and suspense in *Notorious,* describing it as 'fluid, shifting interior music that is unerringly in touch with Hitchcock's world of moral ambiguity and sexual tension.' Sullivan, *Hitchcock's Music*, p. 136.

high pedal note throughout. These cues act conventionally to link the title sequence with the start of the action, and they also shift the tone of the opening to become much more serious and ominous than the title sequence (which gives little away visually, with credits superimposed over an urban waterfront landscape) has so far suggested. By the time Alicia exits the courtroom to be hounded by the press we have already received somewhat contradictory indications about her possible role within the narrative, and nondiegetic scoring is part of the means through which this ambiguity is established. The bungalow party sequence uses diegetic music to similar effect: throughout the scene, small-ensemble dance music with light jazz styling is playing on the phonograph. This music works to aid the positioning of Alicia in two ways: it acts to underscore the party in a realistic and believable way, highlighting the relaxed atmosphere and comedic aspects of the scene, but by emphasising these elements it also contributes to the negative positioning of Alicia as drunk, promiscuous, and inappropriate – she seems to have little to celebrate given the outcome of her father's trial.

As the party breaks up and Alicia is effectively left alone with Devlin, the music reflects the more intimate atmosphere, moving to a slower, more romantic cue. Initially, the source of this cue is ambiguous, until Devlin asks Alicia why she likes 'this song' and makes it clear that this is diegetic music. As discussed earlier, Alicia's response to Devlin undercuts the signifiers of romance indicated by the music and camerawork in this sequence, and her remark also has implications for the way in which nondiegetic music engages with the "romantic" aspects of Alicia's construction. Although the diegetic cue is more relaxed in style and on a smaller scale than the "Alicia" material in the main title, both cues share an emphasis on musical signifiers of romance and the "good wife", meaning that Alicia's dismissal of the 'love song' also potentially damages the credibility of the nondiegetic score in positioning her as a romantic heroine. The "Alicia" material therefore acts much more ambiguously than its initial appearance in the main title might suggest: although here it seems unequivocally to point towards Alicia as a conventional romantic lead, by the time she leaves the bungalow to go driving with Devlin this musical and extra-musical construction has been extensively compromised, partially by Alicia herself. The "Alicia" motif and its related material therefore acts as a complex signifier in the *Notorious* score and is used throughout the film to emphasise Alicia's subjectivity in both romantic and suspenseful situations. The ambiguity that is established in the opening section of the film is reinforced by the prominent use of the motif to accompany Alicia's decision to take the unknown job in Rio and her first kiss with Devlin. The dialogue and action preceding both of these events makes clear their negative aspects, as well as their function as locations of "redemption" for Alicia: she is essentially bullied into taking a dangerous job that she knows

nothing about, and Devlin's surly and insulting manner at the street café in Rio illustrates his disdain for Alicia and undermines their developing romance.

Despite the ambivalence of the "Alicia" material towards Alicia and Devlin as a couple in the early stages of the film, the idea of Alicia's genuine affection for him (despite the problematic nature of their relationship) is highlighted by the fact that her musical material is missing from the "romantic" scenes with Alex later in the film. Instead, their relationship initially unfolds in sequences that are either unscored, or make use of diegetic cues as atmosphere-enhancing background music: Alicia's arrival at the Sebastian mansion is accompanied by solo piano music that emphasises the highbrow atmosphere; and Alex and Alicia's "first date" features romantic background music that recalls the false intimacy and thwarted romance of the 'love song' used to accompany Alicia and Devlin at the bungalow (again underlining the potentially unreliable nature of music as a signifier of romance and emphasising that Alicia is play-acting throughout the scene).

Later in the film (by which time Alicia has been established more clearly as a positive and engaging character, despite her problematic past), "Alicia" also forms the basis of several suspenseful cues that feature Alicia in the role of investigator. "Alicia", and material derived from it, is therefore flexible enough to emphasise Alicia as detective, as victim, and as the genuine love interest of Devlin, reinforced by the reappearance of the motif in the film's climactic rescue scene. By this point, Alicia's punishment and containment is complete and Devlin has also effectively "atoned" for his treatment of Alicia, meaning that the original romantic implications of the "Alicia" motif can now be realised, albeit given chromatic and suspenseful treatment until the release of tension that comes with their successful escape from the Sebastian mansion.

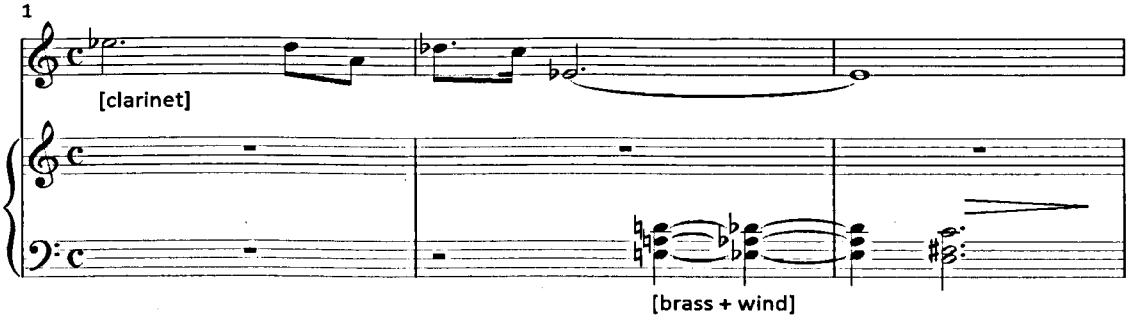
Comparison of a copy of the conductor's score for *Notorious* with the final cut of the film reveals that several substantial cues were composed and orchestrated (and possibly recorded) for scenes that appear in the film with no musical accompaniment.[507] The missing cues are clearly titled and timed to correspond with the sequences as they appear in the final cut of *Notorious,* suggesting that their removal has been necessitated for aesthetic reasons, rather

[507] These missing cues are titled as follows: M:22 'Hangover Sequence' (Alicia's hangover after the bungalow party); M:52 'Mme. Sebastian' (Alicia arrives at the Sebastian mansion and is greeted by Madame Sebastian); M:54 'The Wine Bottles'(Hupka panics at the sight of the wine bottles at dinner); M:67 'Alicia Gets Keys' (Alicia eavesdrops on Alex and Madame Sebastian's argument); M:90 'Breakfast Sequence' (Alicia receives her first dose of poison); and M: 91 'Prescott and Alicia' (Alicia complains of feeling unwell and learns that Devlin has asked for a transfer to Spain). There are other discrepancies between the score and final cut, but these are primarily cues which seem to have been slightly modified to accommodate changes made as part of the editing process.

than because they no longer fit the scene they were written for. All of these sequences stress Alicia's subjectivity, often very overtly through the use of point of view shots (for example in the hangover sequence, the meeting with Madame Sebastian, and the wine bottles at the dinner party). Although difficult to tell precisely, the musical material of these "missing" cues seems to correspond with the general mood and tone of the visual sequences, featuring signifiers of suspense, sadness, and wooziness at appropriate points as well as the use of material derived from "Alicia". The absence of music in these crucial, Alicia-centred sequences means the soundtrack neither supports nor negates the implications of her presentation or stressed subjectivity elsewhere in the narrative. This creates an element of narrative ambiguity through the absence of music on the soundtrack (a technique previously discussed in relation to *Two O'Clock Courage*).

The *Notorious* soundtrack: positioning Alex

Although less prominent than the "Alicia" material, the *Notorious* score also features a second recurring motif, this time associated primarily with Alex. Although a version of it appears in the score almost immediately, in the linking passage between the main title and the courtroom scene (thereby preceding the film's later link between Alicia's father and Alex), the first prominent presentation of this motif is heard in cue M:65 'Jealousy' (see Example 7.2).



Example 7.2. *Notorious:* "Alex" motif used as Alex defies Madame Sebastian[508]

Here, the "Alex" motif is heard during a tense scene where Alex refuses to bow to his mother's wishes and declares his intention to marry Alicia, despite what he considers to be her 'jealousy of any woman I've ever shown interest in'. After the initial clear presentation of the "Alex" motif the cue also subtly references the "Alicia" material several times, reminding us not only of the focus of their argument, but also of the finality of Alicia's decision to go ahead with the wedding. Unlike the ambiguity implicit in the "Alicia" motif, which is primarily context-derived,

[508] Webb, '*Notorious*', cue M:65 'Jealousy', bb. 1-3.

"Alex" contains this connotation within its musical material: it is a short and heavily chromatic falling figure which is very recognisable but never sounds fully developed, and is often heard (as here) with little or no accompaniment, heightening the ambiguity of the tonality.

The decision to use a recognisable and recurring motif in the score to represent Alex's subjectivity is a significant one, especially given that Devlin (supposedly the film's "hero" figure) is not solely associated with any musical material. In stressing the "Alex" motif in cues that are primarily based around Alex's experience, the nondiegetic score engages with other elements of the narrative to construct Alex as a mobile and often sympathetic character, despite his positioning as villain. Despite the more common tendency to stress parallels between Alex and Devlin (both of them are pursuing Alicia, the uranium, and each other), the problematic and often ambiguous construction of Alex actually has more in common with that of Alicia, the "owner" of the score's other recurring motif.

Alex is introduced initially as both a villain (he is a Nazi) and a victim (of his domineering mother, of the investigation, and of the "honey trap" that Alicia is to spring on him). The genuine affection he displays for Alicia recalls her (partially) unrequited love for Devlin, increasing the sympathy for Alex via the existing construction of Alicia. Even when Alex's position as host and co-conspirator of the Nazis is emphasised, he is positioned as ambivalently as possible in relation to their activities: for example, during the scene where Hupka's mistake with the wine bottles is discussed, Alex does not speak at all except to answer a direct question about the arrangements for serving coffee. He remains aloof, looking troubled as Mathis persuades Hupka to accompany him on what will be a fatal journey home. In comparison with his fellow Nazis and the ruthless and cold nature of his mother, Alex is presented as somewhat weak and ineffectual. Together with his often charming portrayal by Claude Rains, and his position as cuckolded and deceived by Alicia's dual role as wife and enemy agent, this makes Alex a relatively sympathetic villain for much of the film and (as with Alicia) his significance and complexity is highlighted by the use of a musical motif connected with his subjectivity.

The musical and extra-musical similarities between the construction of Alex and Alicia are particularly highlighted by the scenes that appear before and after the long sequence showing the Sebastians' party. The first of these scenes shows Alicia stealing the key to the wine cellar from Alex's keyring, in a tense sequence where she is nearly caught several times. After the party (during which Alex discovers Alicia kissing Devlin in the wine cellar and notices that his key is missing), a similarly shot sequence shows him checking the keyring with the missing key before going to bed, and then rising during the night to find that the key has been replaced. As

Alicia continues to sleep, Alex goes down to the wine cellar and, like Devlin and Alicia before him, investigates the wine bottles containing the uranium ore. He finds the broken bottle and realises that Alicia has betrayed him. A high overhead shot shows him crossing the hallway of the house and ascending the stairs, where he goes to wake his mother and ask her advice.

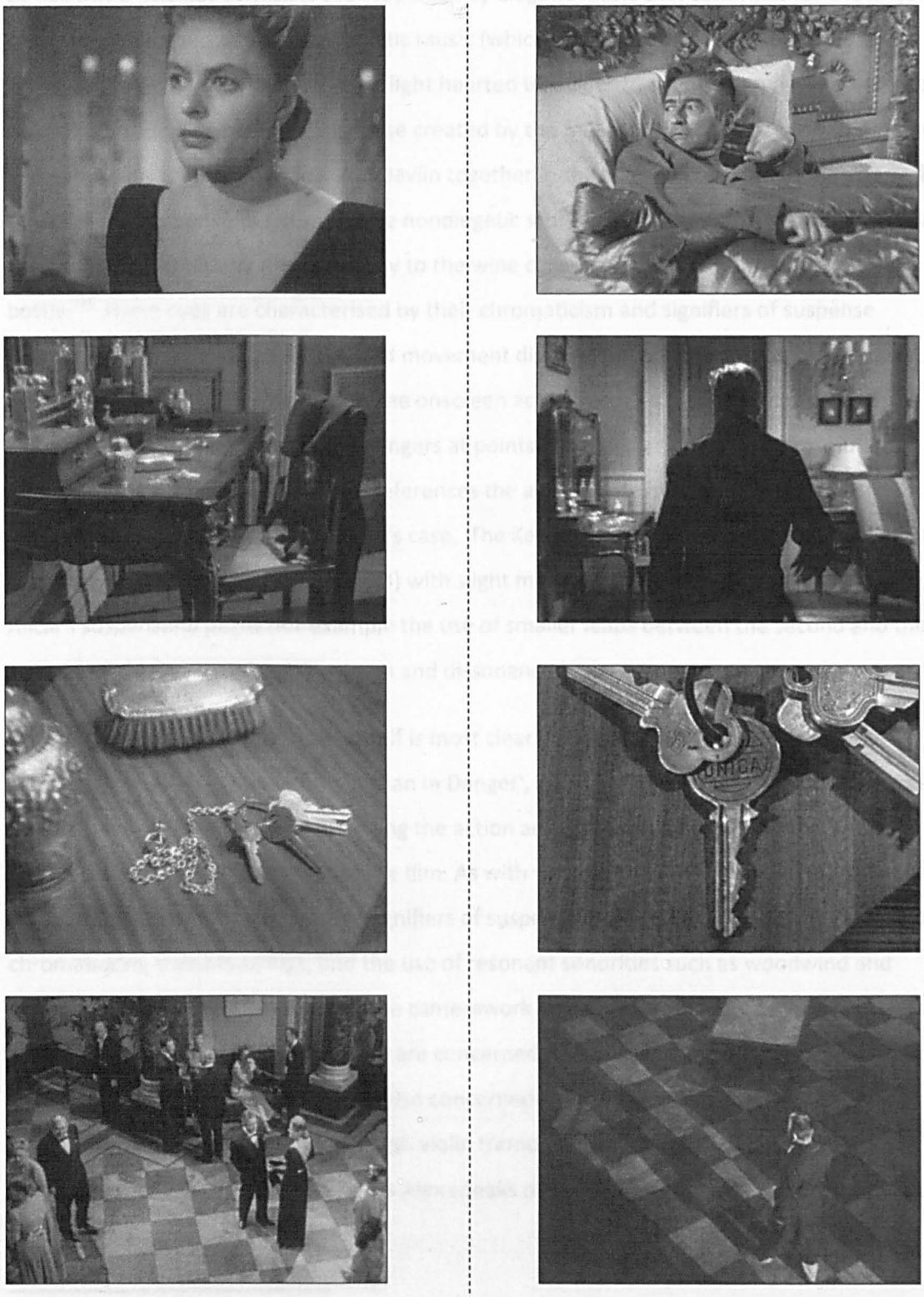


Figure 7.5. *Notorious:* shots of Alicia, and later Alex, taking the key to the wine cellar

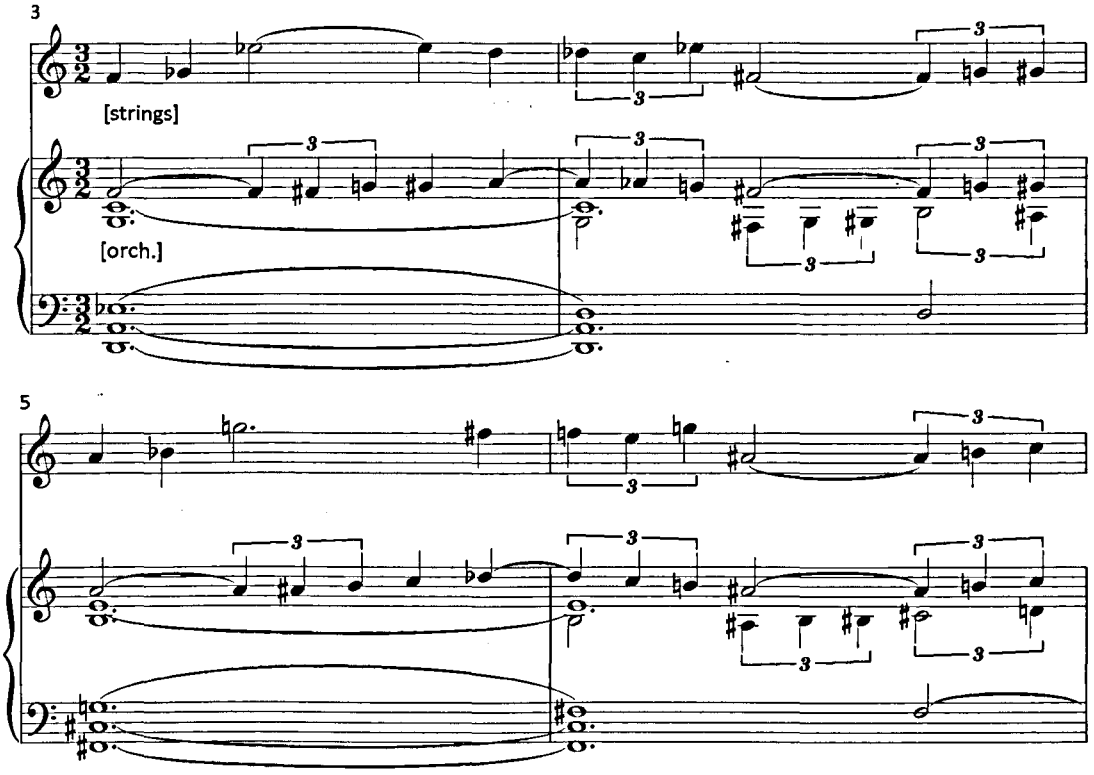
As well as several striking similarities in the camerawork and framing of these two sequences (Figure 7.5 demonstrates several examples of this), they are also related by their use of nondiegetic music to reinforce the subjectivity of the central character and to assist in the creation of tension and suspense. Alicia stealing the key and hiding it from Alex is accompanied by cue M:71 'The Key', which is then replaced by diegetic music that continues for the majority of the long party sequence. This diegetic music (which includes several different cues in a variety of popular and dance styles) is light hearted throughout, acting as an easily sustained counterpoint to the increasing suspense created by the fear that the champagne will run out and cause Alex to discover Alicia and Devlin together in the wine cellar.[509] This contrasts with the intensely suspenseful nature of the nondiegetic scoring in 'The Key' and the four cues that continuously accompany Alex's journey to the wine cellar and discovery of the broken bottle.[510] These cues are characterised by their chromaticism and signifiers of suspense (primarily the oscillating sonorities and movement discussed in many previous case studies). They are also closely correlated with the onscreen action, with rising sequences used at moments of increasing tension and stingers at points of particular suspense or resolution. Additionally, each section of scoring references the appropriate motif to highlight the subjectivity of its protagonist. In Alicia's case, 'The Key' uses a clearly stated version of "Alicia" in its opening section (see Example 7.3) with slight modifications made in order to highlight Alicia's suspenseful plight (for example the use of smaller leaps between the second and third notes, and the increased chromaticism and dissonance in the accompanying parts).

In Alex's series of cues, the "Alex" motif is most clearly stated at the start and end of the sequence in cue M:83a and M:86 'A Man In Danger', with the central section of scoring (when he is in the wine cellar) largely following the action and also quoting the "warning" brass fanfare that opens the main title of the film. As with the treatment of "Alicia" in 'The Key', the "Alex" motif is combined with clear signifiers of suspense and tension, including heavy use of chromaticism, tremolo strings, and the use of resonant sonorities such as woodwind and vibraphone. Again the use of subjective camerawork and nondiegetic music creates suspense, which is now working in two ways: we are concerned that Alex will find out Alicia's secret and that she will be punished, but we are also concerned about Alex, as we know his co-conspirators are entirely ruthless. A high violin tremolo pedal is sustained over the initial presentations of the "Alex" material as Alex sneaks out of bed and approaches the keys on the

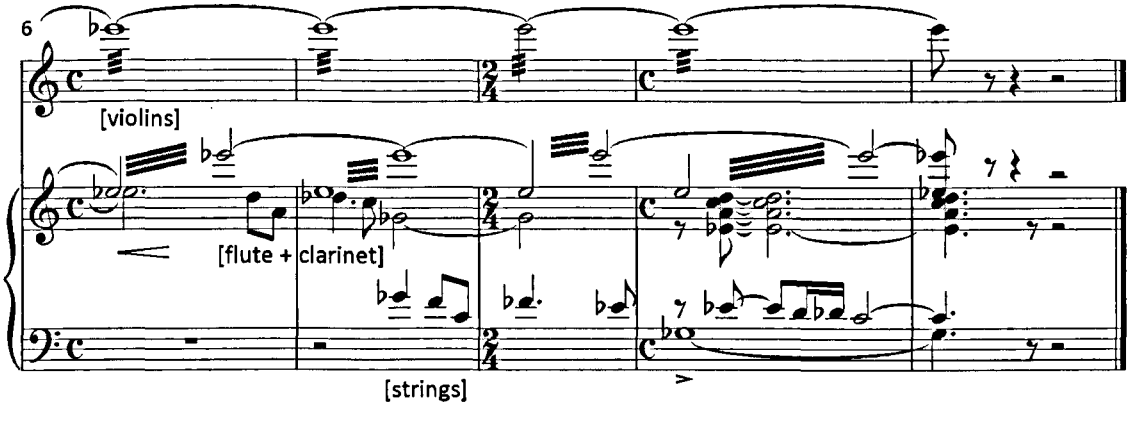
[509] For more detailed discussion of the use of diegetic dance music in *Notorious,* see Sullivan, *Hitchcock's Music*, pp. 124-136.

[510] These cues are M:83a, M:84a 'Unica', M:85 'Troubled Mind', and M:86 'A Man In Danger'

desk, clearly emphasising his subjectivity alongside the point of view shot of the replaced Unica key (see Example 7.4).



Example 7.3. *Notorious:* Use of "Alicia" motif as Alicia steals the key to the wine cellar[511]



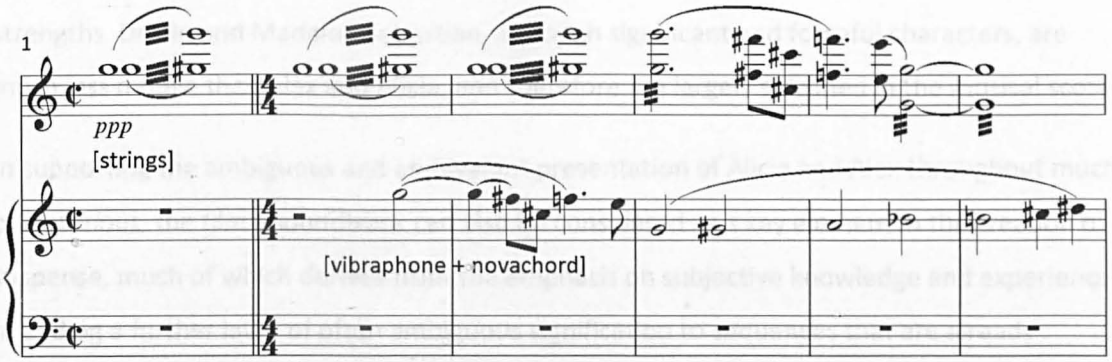
Example 7.4. *Notorious:* Use of "Alex" motif as Alex finds the key back in place[512]

This sequence, beginning with Alex finding the key and ending as he sits in his mother's bedroom discussing Alicia's fate, is a pivotal one in the characterisation and representation of

[511] Webb, '*Notorious*', cue M:71 'The Key', bb. 3-6.
[512] Webb, '*Notorious*', cue M:83a, bb. 6-10.

Alex. He is a mobile and multifaceted character like Alicia, and this sequence marks the point at which he is repositioned primarily as a credible and aggressive villain, rather than the more sympathetic and cuckolded partial victim of earlier scenes. Nondiegetic music is used to aid and reinforce this transition, emphasising Alex's initial trepidation in his bedroom and mounting panic in the wine cellar (cues M:83a and M:84a 'Unica') and then his increasing resolution and calm discussion with Madame Sebastian when he returns upstairs (cues M:85 'Troubled Mind' and M: 86 'A Man In Danger'). The clear statement of the "Alex" motif at the start of M:86 'A Man in Danger' (see Example 7.5) therefore underlines the change in Alex's positioning that has occurred through the sequence. It emphasises his newly credible role as a threat to Alicia's safety, whilst earlier sections of the scoring primarily highlight the dual modes of suspense operating in the scene. The use of the "Alex" motif at the end of the sequence accompanies a striking shot of Alex that underlines his multiple "personalities": he is reflected in a mirror and a further image of his face appears in a photograph displayed by his controlling mother (see Figure 7.6).

Figure 7.6. *Notorious:* Alex wakes Madame Sebastian



Example 7.5. *Notorious:* Use of "Alex" motif as he wakes Madame Sebastian[513]

[513] Webb, '*Notorious*', cue M:86 'A Man In Danger', bb. 1-5.

The *Notorious* soundtrack emphasises both the "criminal" and "romantic" aspects of the film, and engages with the multiple roles occupied by its central female protagonist, Alicia. Music and sound are an integrated part of the film's strategies for articulating and moving between Alicia's various positions as the "notorious" woman of the film's title, the good and faithful wife, the active investigator, and the helpless victim. Given the highly complex and problematic construction of Alicia, musical cues associated with her are required to be relatively flexible in their approach to scoring her continually emphasised subjectivity. The *Notorious* soundtrack achieves this flexibility in several ways: it highlights Alicia's subjectivity via the conventional association of a recurring musical motif with her, but then undercuts the credibility of this motif as a signifier of romance and positivity and allows it to assume a much more ambiguous role in the narrative; it is absent (after initially being present) in several key sequences that stress Alicia's subjectivity, therefore refusing to either endorse or negate Alicia's point of view and experience in these scenes; and it engages with and emphasises the subjectivity of her primary "enemy" in the film, helping to create a measure of sympathy for and identification with Alex, the husband who is poisoning her.

Music is therefore used both to reinforce Alicia's agency (as an independent and self-aware woman, and as a professional detective) and to contain it (in those scenes where she is positioned as love interest to a half-hearted Devlin, and as the victim of Alex's poison). The "Alicia" material introduced in the film's main title is rendered ambiguous through its context within the film and Alicia's disparaging remarks about the unreliability of musical signifiers of romance, and this facilitates the use of "Alicia" to connote multiple aspects of her construction within the narrative. The use of similar techniques, albeit on a smaller scale, with Alex is a significant part of his presentation as an often engaging and sympathetic villain, and the complex and multidimensional construction of both Alicia and Alex is one of the film's strengths. Devlin and Madame Sebastian, although significant and forceful characters, are much less mobile than Alex and Alicia, and therefore are largely sidelined in the musical score.

In supporting the ambiguous and ambivalent presentation of Alicia and Alex throughout much of *Notorious,* the film's soundtrack can also be considered as a key element in the creation of suspense, much of which derives from the emphasis on subjective knowledge and experience. In adding a further layer of often ambiguous signification to sequences that are already constructed around the "unreliable" or "tainted" vision and experience of Alex and Alicia, the musical score intensifies the suspense operating in these sequences. Despite conforming to classical principles relating to the use leitmotif and of music as a signifier of emotion or mood, these cues do not function in the "expected" role of the classical score as a "guide" through

the narrative. They frequently highlight events or characters of importance, but given the intense subjectivity that characterises the majority of the sequences in which nondiegetic music is used, we are often left uncertain about how to interpret the musical and extra-musical signifiers in these scenes. Unlike Waxman's score for *Suspicion,* which is also characterised by subjectivity, point of audition varies in *Notorious* between Alicia and Alex, both of whom also complicate the reading of the score through their complex characterisation and mobility between roles. The soundtrack can therefore be argued to both conform to classical principles and also to challenge them by placing a greater emphasis on audience interpretation than is commonly allowed for in theoretical models of studio era scoring practices. This again reflects and increases the subjectivity stressed within *Notorious* itself, and intensifies its creation of suspense still further.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

The films examined during this project demonstrate a variety of sonic approaches to the "problem" of female agency in classical era Hollywood crime cinema. Multiple approaches are often found within the same film, and a key function of the soundtrack is to reinforce the positioning and repositioning of female characters into different narrative "roles" at various points of the story. The flexibility of these roles, which usually relate to both the issue of the crime and to the male figures involved with it, can allow women to occupy positions with more agency than is traditionally allotted to female characters in classical Hollywood (for example the narrative position of the detective, or the disruptive and unabashed *femme fatale).* However, it can also facilitate their containment within more commonplace and limited roles (the victim of crime, or as a male protagonist's love interest). Music often eases the transition between these female character positions, as well as underlining particular moments where these shifts take place, and can therefore be seen as an important element of the crime film's flexible approach to situating women in relation to other narrative concerns.

Music and sound are therefore directly related to both the creation and containment of agency for women in the crime film. Music engages with other narrative elements to create agency in a variety of ways: for example, the underscoring of female investigative activity in *Deadline at Dawn* and *Stranger on the Third Floor;* Lina's privileged place in the narrative in *Suspicion;* Marian's charismatic, mobile, and engaging performance of 'Let Him Go, Let Him Tarry' in *A Woman's Secret;* and Kathie's celebration of her (negatively positioned) identity in *Out of the Past.* Notable instances of musical "containment" include the fetishistic treatment of Clo-Clo in *The Leopard Man* and Susan in *A Woman's Secret* (both of which rely heavily on the presence of Orientalist discourse); Nancy's strikingly rendered breakdown at the end of *The Locket;* and the move from investigative to romantic-style underscoring for June in *Deadline at Dawn.*

The engagement of the soundtrack with male characters also has a significant effect on the way in which music and sound are used to position women in film. In *Two O'Clock Courage,* Patty's agency is diminished by the absence of nondiegetic scoring in "her" scenes, whereas The Man's tenuous position as the film's hero is reinforced by the soundtrack's engagement with his experience. Similarly, the scores for *Out of the Past, Experiment Perilous, The Locket,* and *Stranger on the Third Floor* can be read as supporting the agency created for their male

protagonists through the use of voiceover narration and flashback sequences. Male narrators are used to position female characters via the structural properties of the narrative, and this has a significant impact on the function and effect of the musical score in these films. Similar processes are also evident in *The Spiral Staircase* and *Where Danger Lives,* which use medical discourse (also seen in *The Locket* and *Experiment Perilous)* to assert and reinforce male control over the narrative, and therefore many elements of its soundtrack. Music is tied to male subjectivity in many sections of these films, making the score representative of male experience and potentially encouraging spectator identification with these characters, which often results in reduced agency for women.[514]

A connection between music, sound, and character subjectivity is perhaps the most significant element of the soundtracks studied in this project. This can create and reinforce agency for male narrators, and it can also highlight the agency of female characters. Robynn Stilwell argues that subjective sound associated with female characters is often representative of their construction as irrational or over-emotional, and this is certainly true of some of the subjective sound sequences in *Suspicion, The Spiral Staircase,* and *The Locket.*[515] However, other films use music primarily as a "celebration" of female subjectivity (a feature that is particularly noticeable in those films featuring diegetic performance by the *femme fatale),* and other facets of Stilwell's argument about the gendered aspects of subjective sound are challenged by the uses of the soundtrack to represent male subjectivity, as outlined above. Many of these male narrators are emasculated in some way, and their fragility is highlighted by the use of subjective sequences and their associated soundtrack.

The relationship between gender, sound, and subjectivity in these films is therefore much more complex than Stilwell's arguments allow for, and the extensive use of music to engage with issues of subjectivity often means that nondiegetic cues start to impinge on the traditional space allotted in theoretical models of film scoring to "metadiegetic", "point of audition", or "subjective" uses of sound. Many nondiegetic cues in the films studied here engage prominently with the subjectivity of a particular character, and are indicative or illustrative of their personal experience or response, as well as reinforcing mood and narrative action in more conventional ways. Therefore they arguably fulfil the functions traditionally associated with both nondiegetic and metadiegetic cues, drawing further attention to the

[514] This also highlights the need to assess music alongside other elements of the soundtrack and narrative: without consideration of voiceover and other elements of male narrative positioning, a very different reading of many of these cues could be proposed, where they act primarily to reinforce the presence of the "things" they relate to. In many cases this is a female character (for example, the "Allida", "Nancy", and "Kathie" motifs).

[515] Stilwell, 'Sound and Empathy'.

communicative properties of the soundtrack and potentially starting to challenge the traditional theorisation of the classical score as largely "inaudible". In *The Locket* and *Out of the Past,* the boundaries between various "levels" of the soundtrack are further problematised by the appearance of the same musical motifs ("Nancy", 'Au Clair de la Lune', and "Kathie") in the diegetic and nondiegetic scores, with the frequent and sometimes explicit possibility that they can be considered metadiegetic as well.[516] Clearly these aspects of the soundtrack draw attention to the music in ways that do not fit comfortably within established models of classical scoring practices, and they underline the flexible nature of musical scoring in narrative cinema and its usefulness as a device to indicate ownership and point of view.

Establishing "ownership" of musical cues or other elements of the soundtrack is contextually dependent and varies between individual films and often between scenes, and this can dramatically affect the way in which musical subjectivity engages with issues of female agency. For example, in *Experiment Perilous,* "Allida" engages primarily with Dr Bailey's subjectivity; in *Notorious,* the "Alicia" motif indicates Alicia's subjectivity; and in *Out of the Past,* "Kathie" relates to elements of both Jeff and Kathie's subjectivity. These differences in ownership may partly be to do with the narrative role(s) occupied by female characters, but this is not a relationship that exists in isolation. It is also dependent on, for example, the way in which men are positioned in these films, the structure and plot of the film, and the overall function and effect of the soundtrack in its mutually dependent relationship with other aspects of the narrative. Film music scholarship often cites the (disputed) maxim that classical scoring is in some way subordinate to other elements of the narrative (perhaps because of the usual place of film sound in the chronology of the production process), but music affects the way in which these other narrative components function or are perceived, leading to a circular relationship that can often be challenging and somewhat subjective in itself to unravel. Throughout this thesis, music and sound are shown to be crucial aspects of the way in which classical cinema communicates not only elements of story, action, and mood, but also its underlying ideologies and subtexts. A fully critical and engaged approach to textual analysis must therefore move beyond the "purely" sonic to take these factors into account.

Female agency is always ultimately contained in these classical era narratives (by death, incarceration, or a shift to the role of love interest or victim). However, the fact that "episodes" of agent female behaviour (which often involve an element of resistance to dominant positionings of women in Hollywood film) are present at all can offer the viewer

[516] This also happens, although sometimes less obviously, in *Experiment Perilous, The Leopard Man* and *A Woman's Secret.*

sites of particular pleasure and engagement with these characters. These sites of engagement are frequently enabled or highlighted by the soundtrack, and they may also enable the subsequent containment of female characters to be partially overlooked or sidelined by the audience. Examples of films where a "traditional" finale struggles to fully neutralise the earlier threat of female agency include the romantic endings to *A Woman's Secret, Two O'Clock Courage,* and *Suspicion.* Similarly, the negative aspects of Alicia's portrayal in *Notorious* do not overshadow the positive elements of her construction, and even the death of Kathie in *Out of the Past* cannot entirely negate her earlier agency and unapologetic and pleasurable disruption of the text.

In addition to the engagement of the soundtrack with issues of identity and representation in these crime films, several of their other aspects may prove fruitful avenues for further research. These include the use of oscillating textures and part movement in many cues, particularly those associated with the creation or sustaining of suspense. This oscillation frequently contributes to the extended harmonic language of many of these scores, which employ a more extensive use of chromaticism than many other classical Hollywood films, especially those outside the crime genre. This feature is especially prominent in those films scored by Roy Webb, and therefore may be a personal, rather than generic, aspect of style. Extending the corpus to include other films by Webb, other non-crime titles, films from other studios, or films outside the time frame studied here would all provide interesting contextualisation for the present research and allow a more extensive examination of the issues raised by these chronologically and generically limited texts.

Although recent articles by scholars such as Rick Altman, Karen Collins, and Anahid Kassabian rightly call for a diversification in the texts studied and questions asked by researchers of audio-visual media, there is still much work to be done upon classical Hollywood film.[517] Issues of gender, identity, and representation are still in need of thorough and focused theorisation, and although some "core" film scores and composers have received extended attention, this canon formation risks perpetuating the exclusion of more marginal or less "prestigious" texts from academic discussion. Although many elements traditionally thought of as belonging to "classical" practices are represented in these crime soundtracks, these cues are often so heavily imbued with subjectivity (itself a particular feature of 1940s crime narratives and *film*

[517] Rick Altman, 'Moving Image, Moving Target', *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image,* 1.1 (2007), 5-7; Karen Collins, 'Video Games Killed the Cinema Star: It's Time for a Change in Studies of Music and the Moving Image', *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image,* 1.1 (2007), 15-19; Anahid Kassabian, 'Some Futures for the Study of Sound, Music, and the Moving Image', in *Cinemusic? Constructing the Film Score*, ed. by David Cooper, Christopher Fox, and Ian Sapiro (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 181-189.

noir), that they start to challenge one of the underlying principles of classical scoring: the idea of a unified, classical narrative. As chapter seven argued in relation to *Notorious,* many of the scores discussed here problematise the most usual theorisation of the orchestral score as an authoritative and reliable "guide" through the narrative. This in turn may leave more space for the agency of the film's audience, which potentially extends the boundaries of the 'assimilating identifications' that Kassabian argues are encouraged by composed scores.[518] Whether this level of subjectivity is particular to the 1940s crime score remains to be investigated, but in a genre that is characterised by mysteries and unanswered questions, an emphasis on subjectivity acts not only to encourage identification with various characters, but also to increase suspense by refusing to solve narrative problems for the viewer. The soundtrack's emphasis on subjectivity is therefore a key element in reinforcing tension and suspense as well as the (often simultaneous) creation and containment of female agency, reconciling a non-conformist emphasis on subjectivity with a highly "classical" narrative function.

This project can be seen as representative of an approach to analytical discussion that is text-driven, providing a historically-informed reading of the soundtrack that responds primarily to issues, characters, and events within the diverse narrative fabric of each film. Music, sound, and their absence, together with the other aspects of cinematic narrative construction are considered as equal elements within this fabric; their signifying properties are interwoven and interdependent. It is impossible to evaluate the impact of the soundtrack without also examining other elements of the film text, and any scholarship that purports to be interdisciplinary in nature (and thereby textually responsive) must approach music and sound in this way. Much of the academic work on film music, particularly that which focuses upon orchestral scoring practices, adopts an approach that is primarily driven by musical analyses (whether these are aural or score-based readings), seeking first to establish musical structure and "meaning", and then mapping these findings onto other elements of the film. This kind of approach has been instrumental in demonstrating to the academy (and wider audiences) that film music and sound are worthy of systematic scholarly investigation, and it can also provide insight into the compositional language, musical processes, and "intention" of a score. However, this methodology can often fail to take adequate account of factors related to the commercial context of Hollywood film production, the potential for variable responses and readings of these cues by a broad audience, or, most importantly, the nature of audio-visual perception as a multi-faceted and multisensory experience. A text-driven approach to film soundtrack studies allows much more flexibility and responsiveness in analysis and discussion,

[518] Kassabian, *Hearing Film.*

and this in itself can also help to widen the field of enquiry beyond the prestige pictures, scores, and composers that have thus far tended to attract classical film scholars. It can reveal new, and perhaps less rigid, ways of thinking about the various roles of the soundtrack in narrative film, and illuminate the complex relationships between issues of representation, identity, and subjectivity that affect both the production and reception of films and their scores.

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