

HEROES, DAMES, AND DAMSELS IN DISTRESS:  
CONSTRUCTING GENDER TYPES IN  
CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD FILM MUSIC

by

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## Abstract

This dissertation examines the musical construction of gender in films of the classical Hollywood era of approximately 1935 to 1960. Just as gender expectations shaped these films' narratives, music created under the studio system also helped construct gender identities and archetypes, typically reinforcing and occasionally undermining dominant gender ideologies. In addition to employing musical tropes for stock characters, such as the damsel-in-distress or the femme fatale, Hollywood composers used a musical trope that I call the "Feminine Romantic Cliché" to accompany an idealized type of female behavior. Use of such clichéd music helped create female characters who served as complementary figures to male-driven plotlines and constructed musical boundaries around their agency. Chapter 1 traces the feminine romantic cliché over several decades, integrating archival material, critical reception, analyses of dozens of film scores, and transcriptions, and culminating in a longer analysis of *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938, comp. Erich Wolfgang Korngold).

The establishment of gendered clichés also encouraged some composers to find alternative methods of scoring female characters, which is the subject of chapter 2. Rather than overdetermining their characters with typical bad girl musical clichés, *Jezebel* (1938, Max Steiner) and *Duel in the Sun* (1946, Dimitri Tiomkin) use multiple themes and different kinds of music to create complex characterizations. Gender expectations for Hollywood pictures were so powerful, however, that at the end of each of film, each composer reverts to scoring strategies that emphasize the necessity for the women's downfalls. Scoring gender also presents unique

challenges in films without women. Chapter 3, which focuses on *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962, Maurice Jarre) and *The Great Escape* (1963, Elmer Bernstein), examines how film composers negotiated the depiction of masculinity and emotion without female characters present to bear the burden of musical emotionality. The final chapter explains how music contributes in performative fashion to the projection of femininities and masculinities onto cinematic bodies. Drawing on analyses of the scoring practices in *Laura* (1944, David Raksin) and *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959, Duke Ellington), I argue that musical representations of masculinity are often seemingly “naturalized” upon male bodies, while musical representations of femininity are exposed as “unnatural” and externally constructed. Throughout the dissertation, I look at how intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality shape the way characters are represented by their musical accompaniment and how they either conform to or resist categorization into gendered archetypes.

## Introduction: Gendered Discourses, Gendered Scoring

“The history of American women is about the fight for freedom, but it’s less a war against oppressive men than a struggle to straighten out the perpetually mixed message about women’s role that was accepted by almost everybody of both genders.”

—Gail Collins, *America’s Women: Four Hundred Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines*

“Were I to give way to inebriated rhetorical enthusiasm and confess that I love them for their passion, their irrationality, and their vulnerability, while accepting that they have the power to manipulate me, my enthusiasm for Hollywood films of the so-called classical sound era would be colloquially comprehensible to those who knew what I was talking about. Were I a red-blooded male character *in* one of those movies, however, that expostulation (without further explanation) could just as well have been taken as referring to women—specifically the type of women supposedly played by the great female stars of the period, like Vivien Leigh, Bette Davis, or Joan Crawford.”

—Peter Franklin, *Seeing through Music: Gender and Modernism in Classic Hollywood Film Scores*

I was about fifteen years old when I saw the original *Star Wars* trilogy for the first time. It was the late 1990s—the films had been out for well over a decade and I had long since become familiar with the basic plot and the famous title music by John Williams. One image was all too familiar to me before I knew much at all about the films: Princess Leia in the gold bikini. This iconic moment from *Return of the Jedi*, while contributing nothing vital to the plot, sums up quite succinctly the purpose of the character played by Carrie Fisher (see Figure I.1). Although her presence is certainly necessary to the story and she often shows smarts and initiative some of the other characters lack, the infamous gold bikini reminds us that alongside any of her empowering qualities, Leia also functions as an object of sexual desire and romantic pursuit. In this realm she demonstrates little self-contained purpose, for she is largely defined by her relationships to the male characters around her. She provides motivation for Luke Skywalker





Figure I.1: Princess Leia wears the famous gold bikini in *The Return of the Jedi* (1983)

(Mark Hamill) to leave his home planet of Tatooine, embarking on the adventure that will change his life. She provides interesting romantic possibilities for the handsome Han Solo (Harrison Ford), another male character who

becomes a hero in part due to Leia's influence. Forced to wear the skimpy gold bikini, she serves as titillating eye candy for the villainous Jabba the Hutt and audience members alike in the final film of the original trilogy. Without Princess Leia, the film's narrative could work nearly as well, although it would be pronouncedly lacking in romance, a plot element that—in mainstream Hollywood cinema, at least—historically has always required the inclusion of a woman.

John Williams's epic and award-winning scores highlight this interpretation of Princess Leia's primarily romantic role. In the first film of the original trilogy, *A New Hope* (1977), Williams gives Leia her own theme (Example I.1), which is characterized by the opening gesture of an ascending major sixth (from scale degree 5 to scale degree 3, indicated by the boxed area) followed by a descent (indicated by the arrow). Usually played by a woodwind such as the flute, the theme readily connotes romance and the promise of a love story with its delicate scoring and oscillating accompaniment, slow tempo, and lyrical melodic line, and it underscores Leia's



Example I.1: Princess Leia's theme



Example I.2: Han and Leia's theme



Example I.3: Luke and Leia's theme

feminine rather than heroic attributes.<sup>1</sup> In *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), Williams transforms Leia's music, replacing it with a very similar tune—a love theme that she shares with Han Solo. The ascending sixth gesture, again from scale degrees 5 to 3, serves as a recognizable link between these two themes (Example I.2). Finally, in *The Return of the Jedi* (1983), a new love theme with a disguised ascending sixth develops for the brother-sister relationship between Luke and Leia. In this incarnation of Leia's music, the melody begins on scale degree 5 and rises a fourth to the tonic pitch, then up another fifth before descending stepwise to close in on scale degree 3, elaborating on the ascending sixth of the original theme (Example I.3, indicated by the

<sup>1</sup> John Williams's cinematic love themes often begin with a sweeping ascending sixth, always on the same scale degrees, followed by some kind of descent; these include the love themes from *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) and *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* (2002). The love theme from *Superman* (1978) opens with the outlining of a major triad, followed by a leap up a major sixth to scale degree 3 and then a descent to scale degree 2.

curved dotted line).<sup>2</sup> The recognizably feminine elements of the theme and its periodic incorporation into themes that link her to Han and to Luke call attention to Leia's principal function as an essentially romantic and decorative character.

The romantic themes that encircle Princess Leia engage with key issues about film music and gender that will be the focus of this dissertation. Leia's musical treatment follows traditional film scoring conventions in which the composer informs the viewer/listener of the romantic function of a female character by means of a clichéd musical theme. But it also reveals more about the nature and role of femininity and gender in film in general. Leia's relative lack of musical autonomy—the fact that her music links her to other characters rather than establishing her as an individual—not only confirms our expectations for heterosexual romance but also suggests that her presence alone makes inevitable the advent of romance. Such film scoring practices and stereotypes did not, of course, begin with Princess Leia in a galaxy far, far away but instead blossomed earlier during the age of classical Hollywood film that George Lucas and John Williams—in creating *Star Wars* and its memorable score—were both attempting to emulate in their nod to the westerns and symphonic film scores of yesteryear.

Taking up Hollywood's so-called golden age (approximately the mid-1930s through the 1950s), this dissertation explores how such musical clichés and gendered types worked during this formative time in the history of American filmmaking. It explores how contemporary gender ideologies shaped the kinds of roles men and women were allowed to play onscreen, what happened when they pursued other goals not sanctioned by society, and how music helped to reflect and shape these gendered characterizations. In short, it questions how heroes, dames,

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<sup>2</sup> The increased lyricism of this theme, as well as its instrumentation, distinguishes it from the more emphatic *Superman* theme, with which it shares the first three pitches.

damsels in distress, and other recognizable gendered character archetypes shaped both the sound and the narratives of classical Hollywood film.

David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson collectively defined the “classical style” of Hollywood cinema in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*.<sup>3</sup> According to their broad overview, the classical Hollywood cinema lasted from 1919 to 1960. Due to the technological limitations and conventions of the silent film era, however, classical-style scoring did not develop until several years after the advent of synchronized sound in 1926 and did not become common until after 1933, with the popularity of *King Kong* (music by Max Steiner). I therefore define the classical Hollywood period in film music, for the purposes of this dissertation, as lasting from approximately the mid-1930s until the late 1950s, with classical scoring continuing to develop to a lesser extent into the 1960s.

Bordwell et al. explain that the style of classical Hollywood cinema masks the artifice of the medium to emphasize narrative. What the authors describes as the “invisibility” of the technology is meant to draw in the spectator and allow for full immersion into the story while at the same time facilitating the telling of that story in a way that avoids confusion—in a way that is, as the authors put it, “excessively obvious.”<sup>4</sup> Music is one of the elements that aids in the excessive obviousness of the classical Hollywood narrative, setting the scene, alerting the spectator to important events in the narrative, aiding with continuity, and revealing emotions and characterization. Excessively obvious film music has long contributed to the depiction and enhancement of gendered characterization, particularly (but not exclusively) for female characters.

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<sup>3</sup> David Bordwell, Janet Thompson, and Kristin Staiger, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 25; *ibid.*, 3–11.

When talking about film music, and particularly American film music from this time period, it is important to point out that the musical decisions being made cannot always be attributed entirely to the composer credited with the score. As has been discussed by others, composers functioned as part of the assembly line process of the Hollywood studio system, churning out scores in a very short amount of time, generally in collaboration with others, and often under the watchful eye of directors or producers, whose lack of musical knowledge could sometimes frustrate the progress of the composer.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, as Max Steiner explained, many different factors could change the composer's original conception of the film score, such as "a bad preview reaction, very bad sound, the unfortunate presence of a director or producer, who might still be opposed to the use of music throughout, or dialogue that may have been recorded too softly at the outset, so that no music could be heard."<sup>6</sup> Composing for film was understood to be an entirely different process than composing concert music, as Aaron Copland acknowledged in a 1941 piece in which he lamented the "subordinate position" of a film's music and its composer. Copland, who wrote several film scores during this period, argued that a composer accustomed to the kind of artistic freedom generally afforded to concert composers would be ill suited to the profession of film composer: "After all, film music makes sense only if it helps the film; no matter how good, distinguished, or successful, the music must be secondary in importance to the story being told on the screen. Essentially there is nothing about the movie medium to rule out any composer with a dramatic imagination. But the man who insists on complete self-expression had better stay home and write symphonies. He will never be happy in

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<sup>5</sup> Nathan Platte, "Musical Collaboration in the Films of David O. Selznick, 1932–1957," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Max Steiner, "Scoring the Film" (1937), printed in Mervyn Cooke, ed., *The Hollywood Film Music Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 64.

Hollywood.”<sup>7</sup> The composer’s “happiness,” Copland goes on to say, generally depends upon the producer and the time allotted for completing the score. At the same time, as revealed by anecdotes such as Dimitri Tiomkin’s memory of how he ignored director Frank Capra’s instructions for the death-of-the-lama scene in *Lost Horizon* (1937), some composers were able to express their creativity despite the meddling of their superiors.<sup>8</sup> Generally speaking, however, film audiences cannot always know whose decisions have influenced the score, and so in this dissertation I will refer to “the filmmakers” as the larger decision-making body that might include the producer, director, composer, and music director. Since this project focuses on how ideological constructs and culturally held ideas concerning gender representation influenced the end product of the musical score, it is not always critical to ascertain who was responsible for each individual scoring decision. In the end, I am interested in the final product as consumed and interpreted by the audience.

The use of gender difference and gender types was not something new to classical Hollywood film, nor was it the discreet idea of one or another of the decision makers mentioned above. Since gender has become an accepted avenue of research in musicology, scholars have been investigating how composers over the centuries have exploited, emphasized, or undermined gender difference, particularly in opera. Catherine Clément has argued that the archetypes underlying voice types in nineteenth-century opera are so strong—the victimized soprano, the courageous tenor, the philosophical baritone, and the treacherous mezzo-soprano—that even when the story departs from the familiar model, the meanings behind the archetypes remain the

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<sup>7</sup> Aaron Copland, “Our New Music” (1941), printed in Cooke, *The Hollywood Film Music Reader*, 86.

<sup>8</sup> Dimitri Tiomkin, “Please Don’t Hate Me!” (1959), printed in Cooke, *The Hollywood Film Music Reader*, 119–21.

same.<sup>9</sup> Thus can we understand, as Mary Ann Smart explains, “the tension between Beethoven’s trousered, vocally omnipotent Leonore and the traditional soprano archetype: behind even Leonore’s most forceful vocal moments, the image of a soprano victim remains, always available for exploitation by a director, singer, or conductor.”<sup>10</sup> Shinobu Yoshida has also identified female character types in the operas of Giacomo Puccini, including the “sentimental heroine,” the “femme fatale,” and the “New Woman.”<sup>11</sup> Like the Hollywood character types that would emerge in the decades following Puccini’s death, these archetypes are based on male fantasies, fears, culturally held expectations of idealized feminine behavior, and emerging realities of new possibilities for women with the advent of women’s suffrage and first-wave feminism. Characters in opera often sang in styles that accentuated their gendered character, such as Lucia’s hysterical coloratura in the mad scene of Gaetano Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*, or the sensuous and racialized dance rhythms sung by the title character of Georges Bizet’s *Carmen*. But music in opera differs from classical Hollywood film music in one very crucial way: characters in film do not own and embody their music the way opera characters do; instead they are usually accompanied by non-diegetic music that only the audience hears.<sup>12</sup> If this music attempts to illustrate character, its relationship with that character is essentially different from that of an opera character—for even if *Carmen* is seen by the audience as a villain, her powerful

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<sup>9</sup> Catherine Clément, “Through Voices, History,” in *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera*, ed. Mary Ann Smart (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 17–28.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Ann Smart, introduction to *Siren Songs*, 12.

<sup>11</sup> Shinobu Yoshida, “Modeling Heroines from Giacomo Puccini’s Operas” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> “Diegetic” and “non-diegetic” are terms used in scholarly writing about film music to differentiate between music and sound that characters in the film hear (“diegetic”) and that which only the audience hears (“non-diegetic”). Those in the film industry would more likely use the term “source music” to refer to diegetic music (music that has an onscreen “source”) and “background” or “underscore” for non-diegetic. Using the words diegetic and non-diegetic has the advantage of allowing us better to address cases of music seeming to cross the boundary between the two realms of sound and other instances in which the distinction is not clear.

and entrancing musical performance gives her an embodied strength that the cinematic bad girl, with her essentializing saxophone accompaniment that she neither produces herself nor hears, can never have.<sup>13</sup>

Filmmakers of the classical Hollywood era frequently made use of stock female characters, such as the femme fatale, the chatty older woman, and what I will call the “female love object.” Male archetypes were also employed and, like female archetypes, were generally defined by their sexuality: traditionally masculine, heterosexual men could be heroes, but effeminate or homosexual men were nearly always villains. Romantic subplots became conventional as well, even in films whose main plots were decidedly unromantic, such as the socially conscious western *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1943) and the Cold War–hysteria monster movie *Them!* (1954). In these and other examples, female characters often seem inserted into the films purely to make a romantic subplot possible, and the character contains little or no intrinsic interest apart from her ability to provide the possibility for romance. The cinematic significance of these characters is different from that of most male characters in that their onscreen activities are closely tied to gender roles: their ability to attract the male gaze, their potential for romance, their feminine attractions that make them an Other.

The tendency to gender female characters as intrinsically romantic—meaning not only that their inner essence is apparently rooted in their ability to inspire romantic love but also that they are shown to be preoccupied with matters of the heart even in situations in which such matters would be considered frivolous—is one of the primary themes addressed by this dissertation. Focusing on the classical era of Hollywood, I will investigate films with original scores through a variety of genres, including the woman’s picture, film noir, and the adventure

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<sup>13</sup> A comparison of female opera characters and female film characters who sing in non-musical films, such as Lauren Bacall in *To Have and Have Not* (1944) and Rita Hayworth in *Gilda* (1946), would offer fascinating nuance to this argument, but such characters are exceptions rather than the rule.



film. Shaping this project is a series of questions concerning how music either suppresses or opens up possibilities for characters in film to be more than a simple archetype. What types of femininities become available, or unavailable, to female characters through their musical scoring? Was it common for characters to be scored in ways that emphasized their roles as love objects or other stock characters? How did such clichés for music signifying romance develop, and on what musical characteristics did they rely? What is the relationship of film music practices to conceptions of masculinity as well as to femininity?

### **Gender and sex in film and music scholarship**

In order to discuss masculinity and femininity in the context of film music, we must first ask what exactly these terms means and in what ways they reflect cultural attitudes about men, women, and gender roles. As explained by Kay E. Payne, “*Gender* includes the social construction of masculinity and femininity within a culture, whereas *sex* refers to a person’s biological or physical self. Gender reflects the interaction whereby a person incorporates his or her biological, psychological/sociological, cultural, and religious characteristics. . . . Sexist ideas often account for and justify divisions of labor and family responsibilities by gender.”<sup>14</sup> Gender, then, is a social construct that includes an often binary division of characteristics and traits deemed acceptable for each sex. Gender roles are the gender-specific responsibilities and behavior that society expects of men and women, whether or not they are accepted and played out by individuals within a society. The terms “masculine” and “feminine” refer to these archetypal constructions of gender and are not synonymous with the terms “male” and “female,” which describe physical and biological sex, not culturally constructed gender. As Payne puts it,

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<sup>14</sup> Kay E. Payne, *Different but Equal: Communication between the Sexes* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001), 4.

“Gender . . . is how we play out our life roles.”<sup>15</sup> In this dissertation, I will use the terms “masculinity” and “femininity” to describe modes of behavior or traits that are deemed by society to be ideally suited to either males or females. Real people exhibit a range of behaviors that might be classified as mixing conventional notions of masculinity and femininity. As Payne explains, “Regardless of sex, a person can engage in different levels of masculinity and femininity or fall somewhere in between.”<sup>16</sup> Or as Marcia Citron writes, gender can represent “a continuum of possibilities between the end points socially male and socially female.”<sup>17</sup>

Characters in Hollywood films, by contrast, tend to be far more simply constructed, their behaviors and actions more directly linked to significant themes and plot points, and therefore less ambiguous and complex than real people. Masculinity tends to go unmarked in the narrative, for the quality of being male is, according to the gender ideologies informing classical Hollywood, constructed as normative and not meant to be made into a spectacle. Femininity and feminine behavior, on the other hand, are often made into a spectacle that can in many cases be closely linked to the plot of the film. In this way female characters often become defined by their adherence to gender expectations. For example, the plot of *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959, see chapter 4) hinges upon the supposedly improper behavior of Laura Manion (Lee Remick). When her husband is accused of murdering her alleged rapist, Laura’s character goes on trial, and her overly sexual and flirtatious behavior is suggested as justification for the murdered man’s attack on her. She engages in behavior inappropriate for a proper woman, exhibited by her affinity for dancing with strange men at cheap bars and her refusal to wear properly modest undergarments. While the character’s behavior might easily be written off as simply bad behavior, it is quite

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 13–14.

<sup>17</sup> Marcia Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 5.

significantly her inability to conform to proper *femininity* (modest, domestic, controlled) that constitutes said bad behavior and calls it into question.

The practice of using multiple signifiers to construct a single, essentialized personality trait that defines a character's entire being is often referred to in film studies as "overdetermination." A classic example of overdetermination occurs in John Ford's *The Informer* (1935) with the character Katie. As film scholar Kathryn Kalinak has demonstrated, Katie, a prostitute, is sketched very efficiently for the audience using obvious and redundant signifiers. Kalinak points to a publicity still showing Katie. "Note the visual signifiers for 'easy' virtue," she begins: "make-up, costume, lighting, even the cigarette. The music externalizes these codes through 'jazzy' instrumentation (like the saxophone), syncopated rhythm, chromaticism, and *portamento*."<sup>18</sup> In *Anatomy of a Murder*, Laura Manion is similarly overdetermined as a hypersexualized bad girl by her costuming (clothes considered to be trashy and excessively provocative at the time), her behavior (including incessant flirtation), her back story (she is a divorcée who claims to have been raped), and the sexy jazz saxophone solo that serves as her theme.

The concept of overdetermination was popularized in academia by Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, who credited Freud with the idea. According to sociologists Susan Sered and Maureen Norton-Hawk, who have written of how criminalized women are overdetermined by acts of resistance that are interpreted as evidence of their essentialized gender identity, "overdetermination describes a dynamic yet persistent social world in which elements of social structure ('contradictions') determine but are also determined in 'one and the same

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<sup>18</sup> Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 121.

movement.”<sup>19</sup> Freud’s understanding of this concept seems even more gendered due to its roots in the problem of hysteria, a since discredited medical ailment once thought to be uniquely female: “For Freud, overdetermination described a mental mystification in which the sources of hysteria or other affect are derived from diverse experiences, yet the object of their representation appears unified as the ego attempts to unite these various, even contradictory, sources.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, overdetermination happens when various signifiers come together to create the appearance of a unified, essentialized self. Such methods of characterization happen all too often in film, but as an example from Caryl Flinn demonstrates, it need not always be individual characters that are overdetermined. In her analysis of the 1945 film noir *Detour*, Flinn describes the film as projecting an overdetermined “misogynist utopia” that gets projected onto the femme fatale Vera, whose sexuality and treacherous behavior establish her as a villain, in contrast to Sue, whose relatively closer adherence to traditional gender expectations privilege her (at least compared to Vera).<sup>21</sup> The question of whether musical scoring acts as a redundant signifier of gendered characterization or opens up possibilities for multiple readings will recur throughout this dissertation. Female characters, we will find, often become overdetermined in order to fulfill some kind of functional role required by the film’s masculine-oriented plot. Male characters generally escape such practices, particularly through musical means, as they tend to be the active subjects of the story rather than its functional objects and are often more subtly and individually portrayed. Of course, protagonists of female-centered stories, such as those discussed in chapter 2, are often given far more complex musical accompaniments and

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<sup>19</sup> Susan Sered and Maureen Norton-Hawk, “Gender Overdetermination and Resistance: The Case of Criminalised Women,” *Feminist Theory* 12, no. 3 (2011): 317. Sered and Norton Hawk are quoting Althusser’s *For Marx* here.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>21</sup> Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 132.

characterizations that allow them to avoid overdetermination, even if that does not necessarily mean that they end their films victoriously.

The filmic representation of gender has been a viable topic of scholarship ever since feminist theorists took on film analysis. Marjorie Rosen wrote in 1973 of Hollywood's ability to produce and transmit the values of patriarchal ideology, and feminist film criticism has long concerned itself with representations of women in film and how these representations reflect social attitudes and ideologies.<sup>22</sup> In another early monograph on women in film, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies*,<sup>23</sup> Molly Haskell's tendency to treat films as accurate representations of real-life women's lives and experiences has led others to criticize her work for being overly literal and reductive.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, Haskell's attempt to chronicle the development of the representation of cinematic women decade by decade was an important step in the creation of a canon of feminist film studies. Scholars following in Haskell's and her contemporaries' footsteps developed more nuanced ways of interpreting the meanings and significance of how women are treated in film. As Janet McCabe writes, scholars after Haskell and Rosen demonstrate a "theoretical shift from interpreting cinema as reflecting reality to putting forward an ideological construct of reality."<sup>25</sup> Representations of women in film reveal cultural ideologies rather than truths about actual women and their lives, and diverse methodologies have been employed to uncover these ideologies. Lacanian psychoanalysis is one such tool. In *The Acoustic Mirror*, Kaja Silverman uses psychoanalytic techniques to show how

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<sup>22</sup> Marjorie Rosen, *Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies & the American Dream* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1973).

<sup>23</sup> Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974).

<sup>24</sup> D. I. Grossvogel, review of *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* by Molly Haskell, *Diacritics* 5, no. 3 (1975): 49–55; Janet McCabe, *Feminist Film Studies: Writing the Woman into Cinema* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> McCabe, *Feminist Film Studies*, 14.

sound in film is used to construct the idea of “woman” in order to reinforce patriarchal ideology. *The Acoustic Mirror* is unique among its contemporaries in that its focus is on sound in film as a basis for understanding cinema. Focusing on the female voice in film, Silverman writes: “Hollywood’s sound regime is another mechanism . . . whereby the female subject is obliged to bear the double burden of lack—to absorb the male Subject’s castration as well as her own.”<sup>26</sup> Silverman’s work is less convincing to those disinclined toward psychoanalysis as a theoretical tool. One of the most influential works of feminist film scholarship is Laura Mulvey’s 1973 essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” and her concept of the “male gaze,” which posits that women in film are positioned by the camera such that they are shown from the perspective of the looking heterosexual male.<sup>27</sup> The audience, whether male or female, is invited to gaze upon the sexualized female body through the influence of cinematography and editing—the setup of the camera and shots of looking male characters, respectively. While some have questioned the value of the gaze as a theoretical tool, Mulvey’s work has opened important doors toward understanding gender and film spectatorship (although she has little to say about sound). Nevertheless Mulvey’s work informs my own as I incorporate the visual aspects of feminine representation with a study of the aural/musical aspects. By shifting our focus to think about whether female characters (or in some cases even male characters) are objects rather than subjects *of their stories*, instead of simply the object of the male gaze, we can better understand how music serves to form their subjectivities and interiorities, which can have a great effect on a character’s appearance of having power and agency within the narrative. These ideas will be particularly useful in chapter 4, where we will find female characters whose musical

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<sup>26</sup> Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 63.

<sup>27</sup> Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 14–27.

subjectivities are created entirely by music that seems unrelated to their own interiorities, but also in chapter 1, in which we will meet a female archetype whose simplistic and clichéd musical accompaniment constructs an interiority that is actually informed by the desire and subjectivity of other, male characters.

Another important contribution to the literature on film, female representation, and the gaze is Mary Ann Doane's *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s*, whose work also influences my thinking on music and gendered subjectivity as I seek to uncover how music plays a role in how film positions characters in relation to their supposed desires and interiority.<sup>28</sup> In her study of the so-called woman's film, domestic melodramas that were aimed primarily at a female audience (famous examples include *Now, Voyager* [1942] and *Mildred Pierce* [1945]), Doane argues that women's subjectivity in such films is something of a paradox. Although women are often represented as fascinated spectators prone to "passivity, overinvolvement and overidentification, . . . feminist film criticism has consistently demonstrated that, in the classical Hollywood cinema, the woman is deprived of a gaze, deprived of subjectivity and repeatedly transformed into the object of a masculine scopophilic desire."<sup>29</sup> Doane argues that Hollywood film presents not accurate representations of female subjectivity, but something else rather different:

The recent focus on issues surrounding female spectatorship and the woman's film is determined by a desire to shift the terms of an analysis of fantasy and history in favor of the woman and away from a paternal reference point. Yet, the woman's film does not provide us with an access to a pure and authentic female subjectivity, much as we might like it to do so. It provides us instead with an image repertoire of poses—classical feminine pose and assumptions about the female appropriation of the gaze. Hollywood women's films of the 1940s document a crisis in subjectivity around the figure of the woman—although it is not always clear whose subjectivity is at stake.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

In this dissertation I extend Doane's work on subjectivity to genres beyond the 1940s woman's film to ask how music plays a part in forming the subjectivity of characters from Olivia de Havilland's Maid Marian in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* to James Stewart's Paul Biegler in *Anatomy of a Murder*.

Until recently, few scholars of film music had joined the conversation of how music and notions of gender intersect to create essentialized or even misogynistic portrayals of femininity in classical Hollywood film. Some of the film scholars who first opened up film music as a discipline, such as Claudia Gorbman and Kathryn Kalinak, address the scoring of female characters. Both Gorbman and Kalinak provide useful vocabulary for studying film music's function in narrative film while beginning to question the formulaic and reductive representations of the female characters they observe. In my own work I build on these questions and integrate them into a musicological inquiry, focusing more on the music itself and what it means in a broader context of music from the Western tradition. Another more recent monograph, *The Gendered Score: Music in 1940s Melodrama and the Woman's Film* by Heather Laing, provides a large-scale study of music and gender in film.<sup>31</sup> Laing focuses on how music creates female subjectivity in woman's pictures, the same genre examined by Doane in *The Desire to Desire*. Her argument hinges upon the assertion that music represents emotion, and that excessive emotionality is understood as a characteristic of women and femininity. Men, on the other hand, have a more limited association with music, which "becomes a means of reinforcing the behaviour that society expects and considers 'natural' to a man"—in other words, men are expected to distinguish themselves from women by demonstrating control over their emotions,

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<sup>31</sup> Heather Laing, *The Gendered Score: Music in 1940s Melodrama and the Woman's Film* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Press, 2007).



and their music along with them.<sup>32</sup> Laing concludes that “Music . . . becomes completely integral to our understanding of gender construction. The predilection of film for defining women and men according to cultural prejudices of femininity and masculinity, means that non-diegetic music becomes primarily associated with women.”<sup>33</sup> The connection of film music to emotion that Laing addresses is crucial to my own study, but I will extend these questions to films outside the woman’s picture genre, in particular by applying it to films in which masculinity is threatened due to the absence of women altogether.

My work seeks to contribute to the study of film music and gender by building upon ideas of many of the above authors and by moving in new directions. Following the lines of other film scholars, I find that certain female characters in film are subjected to the objectifying and sexualizing gaze and burdened with hyper-emotional musical representation; furthermore, however, I argue that by using recognizable gender types and their expected musical accompaniments, filmmakers helped to reinforce the contemporary dominant gender ideology that valued women as passive, decorative objects and men as active doers who control women’s bodies and behavior—or as Mulvey states, “a world ordered by sexual imbalance” in which “pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female.”<sup>34</sup> At times, as I will discuss in chapter 4, these men even *seem* to have the power to control women’s music. The strategy employed in my dissertation fits alongside works of other notable film music scholars such as Caryl Flinn, Krin Gabbard, and Anahid Kassabian through its interest in uncovering hidden ideologies in Hollywood film, although my work will employ different tactics. I wish to show how film music ideologies perform cultural work and shape our understandings of human relations and gender. One of the major factors that shaped discourses about gender and sexuality

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>34</sup> Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” 19.

at the time that these films were made was the not-so-invisible man behind the curtain deciding what could or could not appear onscreen: the Hollywood Production Code.

### **The Hollywood Production Code**

It is easy to look back on the films of the 1930s, '40s, and '50s as illustrating a mythical simpler time when people did not demand sex, violence, and vulgar language in their popular entertainment. One might even surmise from these films that audiences at the time were unfamiliar with these concepts, absent as they were from motion pictures. This idyllic picture could not be further from the truth. A quick look at films made before 1934 reveals that Hollywood once rivaled the modern-day movie industry with its focus on sex, crime, and other such tawdry topics. What happened to change the industry so much that married couples could not even be shown sharing a bed? What happened was the Production Code.

The Hollywood Production Code grew out of several years of confusion regarding how the film industry was going to deal with the growing backlash against and censorship of their films as they became progressively more provocative toward the end of the 1920s and early 1930s. To prevent censorship on the local level—state and local governments cutting films themselves and causing different versions of each film to be shown at different theaters—the industry set up its own central censorship office that would appease local censors and give the impression that Hollywood cared about morality enough to address these concerns. According to film historians Leonard J. Leff and Jerold L. Simmons, the Code's original chief censor Will Hays "did not want to turn the Little Tramp into the Little Puritan. Rather, he wanted Hollywood to become mature enough to bear censure, conservative enough to value goodwill, and shrewd

enough to advocate middle-class morals.”<sup>35</sup> With the adoption of an enforceable set of rules and under the leadership of “well-connected and media-savvy Roman Catholic” Joseph Breen, the Production Code Administration began enforcing the Code in 1934.<sup>36</sup> But this did not change the tastes or expectations of audiences:

Moviegoers were not inhabitants of Plato’s Cave. They read the novels and attended the plays on which many controversial films were based, and they soaked up the gossip columns and news accounts that glossed the content the Code had rendered vague or ambiguous. Moviegoers, in other words, decoded what the agency encoded; moreover, and perhaps more important, Joe Breen and Geoff Shurlock, his successor, were less doctrinaire than historians have painted them. As Breen and Shurlock understood, American motion pictures needed enough rope—enough sex, and violence, and tang—to lasso an audience, and not enough to strangle the industry.<sup>37</sup>

In other words, the powerful moguls heading the growing film industry knew what audiences wanted and expected, and the censors knew better than to stifle it altogether.

The Code itself was based on the supposition that movies have the ability to influence the morals of their audiences. According to the preamble, films were acknowledged to be entertainment, but an entertainment that had a greater capacity to either raise or lower the morals of its mass audience than did the written word or live theater. The “General Principles” reveal the main concerns of the Code, which are then expanded upon in the following sections:

1. No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.
2. Correct standards of life, subject only to the requirements of drama and entertainment, shall be presented.
3. Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Leonard J. Leff and Jerold L. Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 5–6.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood’s Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 7. Much of Breen’s motivation for censoring the film industry stemmed from extreme anti-Semitism and his concern that the primarily Jewish Hollywood moguls were polluting American minds with their films. Leff and Simmons write in *The Dame in the Kimono*: “In the last analysis . . . as Breen later wrote to a Jesuit confidant, he (Breen) was the one man ‘who could cram decent ethics down the throats of the Jews’” (47).

<sup>37</sup> Leff and Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono*, xvi.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 286–87.

The “Particular Applications” that follow give specific descriptions of that which must be avoided or treated in a specific way in order to adhere to the General Principles. For example, “Crimes Against the Law . . . shall never be presented in such a way as to throw sympathy with the crime as against the law and justice or to inspire others with a desire for imitation.”<sup>39</sup> Hence in *Duel in the Sun*, a film I will discuss in chapter 2, the filmmakers were obligated to alter completely the outcome of the original novel on which the film was based, in which the female protagonist, who has already been involved in a train robbery, murders her former lover and lives happily ever after with his brother. In the section labeled “Sex,” the Code prohibits the treatment of “sex perversion” (“*Sex perversion* or any inference to it is forbidden”) as well as miscegenation (“sex relationships between the white and black races . . . [are] forbidden”).<sup>40</sup> This rule had a significant effect on the representation of sexuality; with the overt representation of homosexuality forbidden, filmmakers developed visual coding and adopted well-known euphemisms that subtly indicated the supposedly deviant sexualities of characters, particularly in 1940s film noir (as will be discussed in chapters 3 and 4).

Because the Code dictated that correct behavior be presented positively in Hollywood films, characters who resemble positive gendered archetypes were useful, as were their opposite—negative gendered archetypes. Heroes were manly and noble; heroines were meek and innocent; villains were devious and often sexually deviant. While certainly not *all* characters in Code-era Hollywood film were based on archetypes, they were certainly not uncommon. Perhaps for similar reasons, female characters translated from novels that were made into films were often drastically simplified so as to match existing archetypes. Thus the relatively complex female characters from *Duel in the Sun*, *Laura*, and *Anatomy of a Murder*—three films I discuss

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 288.

in the following chapters—are transformed into character types such as the whore/femme fatale, girl next door/female love object, and sassy asexual secretary, all of which map onto existing female stereotypes. And as composers, including Max Steiner among others, began to use excessively obvious musical scoring to help tell stories, musical tropes signifying various aspects of gender identity (domestic femininity, excessive female sexuality, noble heroism) became a recognizable part of the Hollywood soundscape. By considering how these archetypes and their music fit into the broader discourse of stories being told by Hollywood at this time, we can better understand how different kinds of gendered behavior were received or generated specific meanings at various times, leading to a richer understanding of the films themselves and their social/historical context.

To carry out this inquiry into how scoring practices influenced gendered characterization, my approach is based largely in close readings of seven mainstream Hollywood films made over the course of just over a quarter century. The films are, in chronological order and with their composers' names listed: *Jezebel* (1938, Max Steiner), *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938, Erich Wolfgang Korngold), *Laura* (1944, David Raksin), *Duel in the Sun* (1946, Dimitri Tiomkin), *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959, Duke Ellington), *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962, Maurice Jarre), and *The Great Escape* (1963, Elmer Bernstein). I have chosen these particular films because they demonstrate a number of key issues of musical gender construction while spanning nearly the entire classical Hollywood era. They also include not only some of the most prolific and successful film composers of the era but also a composer best known as a band leader and jazz pianist (Duke Ellington) and one whose greatest successes writing music steeped in the Hollywood tradition came in the 1960s and beyond (Maurice Jarre). These films run the gamut

of genres from swashbuckling adventure to western to film noir, demonstrating that while some music and gender issues are particular to specific genres (as in the specific way the music of the 1940s woman's picture tends to create a complex interiority for the female protagonist), the use of music to create gendered types occurred across genres.<sup>41</sup> Any number of films from this time period would usefully have served to tell interesting stories about intersections between music and gender construction: *Casablanca* (1942) could have provided an opportunity to talk about the feminine-romantic musical trope presented in chapter 1, but with the added complication of the use of popular songs in addition to non-diegetic scoring; *Humoresque* (1946) and *The Constant Nymph* (1943) could have inspired a chapter on how music constructs the female muse in films featuring male musicians; and so on. Nevertheless, the choices I have made suggest a specific narrative of the use and musical reinforcement of gendered archetypes that shaped popular entertainment throughout the classical Hollywood period.

My choices in films were also informed by my attempt to focus on works that reached the widest possible audience, rather than art films or those geared more toward specialized audiences. The films listed above were all mainstream, well publicized, and in most cases popular. Films with the broadest appeal must generally attempt to hit some kind of common denominator—speak a language that is understandable to the largest possible potential audience. This means that the films with which I am dealing were aimed primarily at white middle-class audiences, and their values (were meant to) reflect those of their target audience. Evidence from historically black newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*, however, suggests that it was not only white audiences who enjoyed these films. While my approach cannot fully account for the subjectivity and contributions of minorities in American

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<sup>41</sup> This dissertation does not deal genres such as musical films or cartoons, both of which are governed by very different musical conventions than are live-action, non-musical films and deserve separate treatment elsewhere.

film, we cannot ignore the fact that Hollywood sought to impose its apparently white middle-class values upon audiences of the largest possible demographic.

Archived sources such as newspaper reviews, studio memos, and personal correspondence make up a small but significant part of my research. The opinions of newspaper critics do not always reflect what general audiences thought of the films to which they were exposed, but they do offer us insight into what certain knowledgeable and interested observers of Hollywood film perceived. The writings of directors and producers may offer an excellent starting point for uncovering problematic constructions of feminine gender identity, as the two case studies of chapter 2 demonstrate, but archives can only take the researcher so far. Some records have not have been preserved, and personal reasons or rationales for specific artistic decisions often are never documented. As such, my archival research did not yield great insight into what filmmakers and composers intended or thought about the music for each film. For that reason I have also examined the choices that filmmakers made in adapting works from the page to the screen, as all seven films analyzed in this dissertation were based on some sort of preexisting material—three novels (*Duel in the Sun*, *Anatomy of a Murder*, *Laura*, which was also adapted into a play), two works of nonfiction (*The Great Escape* and *Lawrence of Arabia*), one play (*Jezebel*), and one popular legend passed down mainly through ballads (*The Adventures of Robin Hood*). The decisions and deviations made regarding the characters and plotlines say much about the kinds of stories that the filmmakers wanted to tell, the audiences wanted to see, and the moral guardians of the time, including those who enforced the Production Code, were willing to allow. Trying to unravel the exact measure of influence each of these groups exerted on motion pictures of the time would lead to a far different project than what I have accomplished here. Nevertheless, identifying some of these decisions, such as the simplification

of complex female characters into overdetermined character types or the repositioning of a story about English and Continental-European heroism into one about Americans, has the potential to tell us more about the goals of an individual film than even a memo from a director might. And so although we may never know why Korngold wrote two separate but corresponding themes for Maid Marian in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, or why director Otto Preminger seemingly mishandled Ellington's intricate and multi-themed jazz score for *Anatomy of a Murder*, we can analyze these choices using what we know about contemporary gender ideology, audience expectations, and conventions and clichés inherited from older musical traditions.

Each chapter of this dissertation examines intersections of music and gender construction using different lenses and tools, and concerns different types of gender problems, including the use of gendered musical clichés to construct stereotyped characters, the use of non-clichéd music to construct deviant femininities, musical exoticism and nontraditional masculinities, and music as a gender performative creating gender identity on cinematic bodies. Chapter 1, "The Feminine Romantic Cliché," provides the foundation for much of my work by focusing on a musical-narrative convention I call the Feminine Romantic Cliché, a trope used by Hollywood composers to provide extra information to the viewer/listener about a character's sexuality. Here, having surveyed one hundred films made between 1935 and 1955, I explain how this cliché helped to shape a very important, idealized type of feminine gender identity starting in the mid-1930s and extending through the end of the studio era. My discussion of the Feminine Romantic Cliché, which includes short analyses of a number of scores and culminates in a longer analysis of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, will show how overdetermining, clichéd music can limit female characterization and subjectivity, helping to create characters who serve to complement a masculine-oriented plotline.



Chapter 2, “The Bitch and the Wildcat,” moves from clichés to alternative methods of scoring female characters. Whereas bad girl characters were often scored using excessively obvious clichés and overdetermining themes signifying bad behavior, the characters and films analyzed in this chapter demonstrate that composers sometimes wrote far more complex and ambiguous music for women who didn’t conform to positive archetypes. The composers of *Jezebel* and *Duel in the Sun* initially score their female leads with a wide variety of music, granting them an unusual amount of individuality rather than overdetermining them with negative characteristics. In other words, these films don’t rely on typical bad girl musical clichés such as excessive chromaticism and dissonance, jazz-derived tropes, or non-Western supposedly exotic and dangerous tropes. Despite this initial complexity and individuality allowed each character, however, ultimately both of the women in these two films are punished for transgressing the boundaries of proper feminine behavior, and the composers change their scoring strategies at the films’ ends to emphasize the women’s dangerous natures and the need for their containment.

Chapter 3, “Scoring Masculinity and Homosocial Desire,” turns to masculinities and male characterization in films that do not have any female characters. Because classical Hollywood films set up the spectacularization and emotionalization of female characters as normative, often deflecting from male spectacle and emotion, films with no women at all pose a unique threat to constructions of masculinity. Drawing on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s work on male homosociality, I explore how homosociality both threatens and reinforces Hollywood film’s obligatory heterosexuality, and how the presence of music that seems to signify the absent feminine complicates the intense focus on displays of masculinity in *The Great Escape* and *Lawrence of Arabia*. Both films set up constructions of idealized masculinity that certain

characters fail to live up to; in each case music is used to reinforce that failed or threatened masculinity, intersecting with issues of national identity, Orientalism, and the depiction of homoerotic desire.

In the final chapter, “Musical Performativity and Unnatural Femininity,” I examine how gender was created performatively on the bodies of male and female actors in classical Hollywood film. Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity offers a useful tool for exploring how music plays a performative role in creating and projecting femininities and masculinities onto cinematic bodies. I argue that the disparate ways in which male and female gender identities are created in film lead to masculinity seemingly naturalized upon male bodies and femininity appearing as unnatural and externally constructed. This chapter investigates two films directed by Otto Preminger, *Anatomy of a Murder* and *Laura*. In each example, the filmmakers create the illusion that the male characters have control over music and their own gender characterization, whereas the female characters have no control over the music that characterizes them, demonstrating that their gendered identities are constructed outside their own bodies and not by their own subjective selves. Characters themselves, of course, have no actual agency when it comes to their role any given film—they are at the whim of screenwriters, directors, producers, actors, and everyone else who takes part in the making of the picture. But within the diegetic world of the film, certain characters can *seem* to have greater agency than others, and in overdetermining the gendered behavior of female characters while giving male characters the appearance of control over diegetic (and even sometimes non-diegetic) music, filmmakers create the illusion that these male characters have greater agency in forming their own characters than do the female characters. Whereas gender and sexuality are, in fact, constructed in the case of both male and female characters, the types of performatives that shape femininity are more

visible and obviously external, giving male characters seemingly a greater amount of subjectivity and control over their interiorities.

Shaping this dissertation is the overarching idea that no matter what choices are made in the scoring of the film—clichéd or seemingly more creative—ultimately music in classical Hollywood era films tended to uphold rather than challenge the dominant gender ideologies of the time. The cinema of any culture can have much to teach us about the ideals, dreams, and fears collectively held by the members of that society, and with music acting as an often subconscious, but just as often overt, signifier of gender ideology, attending to the music of these rich and fascinating films reveals much about a culture and history that has informed our own. In the epilogue, I look beyond the classical Hollywood era to ask whether and how the gendered character types that populated these older films still play an important role in the popular entertainment of today. Do today's movies challenge the gendered practices that prevailed three quarters of a century ago, or do they instead duplicate them, giving us male and female gender types who less and less reflect the realities of the modern age? This dissertation does not attempt to provide exhaustive answers to these questions but rather attempts to use the knowledge garnered through a study of the film music of our past to see what can then be better understood about our present.

## Chapter 1: The Feminine Romantic Cliché

Horace:        There must be something about the tall lady that made you select her as your partner for life.  
Fitzgerald:   Well she's beautiful for one thing.  
Horace:        She is, indeed.  
Fitzgerald:   With a man's courage and a man's brains.  
Horace:        Yes . . . is there anything wrong with a woman's courage and a woman's brains?

—*The Luck of the Irish*, 1948

In a tiny sea-locked village nestled on the coast of Ireland, a handsome young American reporter waits impatiently to secure passage back to New York. As he settles into his rooms at the local inn, the door opens and a young woman appears carrying some towels. Orchestral music suddenly enters, with high strings playing a lilting, lyrical melody over simple harmonies colored by suspensions and the occasional wistful minor harmony. At each point of arrival in the melodic line, the strings pause, as if holding their breath. Pastoral woodwinds provide a babbling accompaniment to the folk-like melody. Despite the mundane conversation that ensues, the music has already revealed the woman's purpose as a potential love object for the reporter.

This scene takes place in *The Luck of the Irish* (1948), with Tyrone Power as the reporter Stephen "Fitz" Fitzgerald and Anne Baxter as the emerging object of his romantic pursuit, the Irishwoman Nora. The film's fantastical plot involves a well-meaning but bumbling leprechaun named Horace (Cecil Kellaway) who follows Fitz from Ireland to New York to wreak havoc on Fitz's professional and romantic life. In doing so he plays architect to the budding romance between Fitz and Nora, whose gentle and supportive nature makes her a better choice of love interest than Fitz's ambitious and self-serving girlfriend Frances, the "tall lady" from this

chapter's epigraph. Composer Cyril Mockridge helps to make this distinction clear by creating a theme that easily connotes idealized and nonthreatening femininity, attaching it to the appropriate character early on, and allowing for recurring uses of the theme to reinforce and remind the viewer of this woman's romantic potential at important points in the narrative. And so the music helps make inevitable that the feminine and self-sacrificing Nora, the true woman with a woman's courage and a woman's brains, will help to lead Fitz away from the path of greed and ambition.

Musical conventions of the type described above helped reinforce the Hollywood aesthetic of excessive obviousness, as they could easily be called upon to relay information to the viewer/listener without resorting to extra dialogue or narration.<sup>1</sup> Such scoring could be simultaneously denotative and connotative—for example, the oft-used “stinger chord” is a sudden musical exclamation that underscores sudden surprises or shocking revelations, alerting the audience to the surprise and coloring it with sense of foreboding, danger, or even occasionally humor. Markers of ethnicity such as pentatonic scales identify a character's ethnicity as an exotic Other, while pentatonic scales played on percussion with mallets mark her or him as a specifically *East Asian* exotic Other. Likewise, contemporary connotations of jazz as representing vice and easy virtue provided filmmakers with a quick and easy method of covertly suggesting female sexual deviance without transgressing the Production Code, which barred studios from overtly representing female promiscuity onscreen. The musical trope used in *The Luck of the Irish*, which I call the Feminine Romantic Cliché (henceforth “FRC”), is a powerful device that quickly and efficiently informs the viewer/listener of the narrative function of the female character while also transmitting connotative information about the nature of her

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<sup>1</sup> As described in the Introduction, “excessive obviousness” is the term offered by Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* to describe the aesthetic of classical Hollywood films that privileges narrative clarity above all else.

femininity. The ubiquity of this character and her accompanying music, as well as the predictable way in which her music functions, tells us much about gender ideology and ideals of feminine behavior as expressed in classic Hollywood film.

The FRC is a recurring musical theme that can be identified by its context within a film—it acts as characterizing music for a female love interest as well as the love theme for the film’s romantic plotline. A character playing this type of a female love interest is by definition a specific kind of woman who exudes romantic femininity to the extent that her very character is defined by its romantic potential. It is important to underscore that FRC themes cannot be identified solely by their musical qualities; they can vary widely in sound even if they often tend to share certain musical characteristics, which I will describe in more detail later in this chapter. Employed by a broad variety of films throughout the classical era, the FRC is often used in stock situations, such as in scenes introducing the female love interest, or in films (such as *The Luck of the Irish*) featuring plots in which an appropriate choice of female romantic partner must be distinguished from the wrong choice. Difficult to define in part because of the many musical and narrative possibilities that such a broadly defined cliché allows, the FRC nevertheless, like any cliché, has become readily recognizable to film audiences. At the same time, the complexities of its design, function, and impact require reapproaching and reexamining the FRC from various angles throughout this remainder of this chapter.

Musical conventions are not unique to classical Hollywood film; composers and listeners alike have relied upon the existence of conventions for at least as long as music has been documented, whether it be the use of chant melodies in medieval Christian prayer, the Classical era’s sonata-allegro form or the nineteenth century’s romantic pairing of the heroic tenor and tragic soprano. While I am referring to the musical trope to be discussed as a convention, with its

more neutral connotation of the way in which something typically is done, I am also using the more negatively charged word “cliché,” which suggests a convention that has become hackneyed or derivative. I would argue, however, that clichés such as those described above, including the FRC, are in fact conventions that are functionally suited to the classical Hollywood film soundtrack, which required that information be relayed quickly and obviously to the broadest possible audience. In seeking to understand musical gendering through the lens of film scoring convention generally, and the FRC in particular, I seek to show how such a convention—gradually naturalized over time and thus hiding in plain sight—can help create a kind of femininity that limits female characterization, essentializing certain aspects of the female character and suppressing others.

In her 2000 work *Conventional Wisdom*, Susan McClary argues that practices long considered purely musical were in fact built on conventions deeply embedded within culture and ideology. As part of her discussion of the blues, in which she describes how male British rockers of the 1960s appropriated and adapted the conventions of the genre for their own needs and purposes, she writes: “I hope to have established that this process of grabbing established conventions and arranging them according to the needs of the moment can be artistically powerful and culturally consequential—especially if we pay close attention to the signifying devices engaged in each tune as well as the historical contexts that make them meaningful.”<sup>2</sup> Following conventions, therefore, does not necessarily entail “the surrender of individuality and expression,” but rather provides a framework within which the composer or performer can create new musical meaning. Having demonstrated how twentieth-century popular musicians transformed blues conventions, McClary takes on eighteenth-century tonality, asking what

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<sup>2</sup> Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 61–62.

function it served within the cultural context of the Enlightenment. Such conventions, McClary argues, not only reflect but also shape ideology, as eighteenth-century ideals such as “rationality, individualism, progress, and centered subjectivity” were reflected and reproduced in the art music of the time.<sup>3</sup>

Using McClary’s work as a model, it is helpful to look at the conventions of Hollywood film music and how they both responded to and shaped audiences’ expectations of popular film. The necessities of film music composition at the time—that it be written quickly, often by multiple composers and with the assistance of orchestrators and music supervisors; that it be subordinate to dialogue and other elements of the soundtrack; that it not be continuous but instead be broken up into cues and not always unified by key and thematic relationships—have influenced and shaped the conventions of the classical Hollywood score. These conventions relate to materials and style—the neo-Romantic style combined with contemporary popular sensibilities and use of the classical symphony orchestra—as well as placement within the film and relationship to the narrative. Claudia Gorbman describes the basic narrative conventions of the classical film score through seven principles of Hollywood film scoring, which describe functions such as narrative cueing, signifying emotion, and creating continuity and unity throughout the entire film.<sup>4</sup> In performing these and other functions, all of which contribute to the larger-scale convention of excessive obviousness, the music must also support and reproduce the ideological underpinnings of the narrative, often by drawing attention to characters’ ability or inability to conform to proper gender expectations using easily construed musical signs. These musical signs are also conventions that grew out of earlier forms of musical entertainment and were already well suited to function in the new medium of the synchronized sound film. I intend

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>4</sup> Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 73.



to show how conventions of representing gender in music, as well as how gender identity influences narrative, helped to shape Hollywood film music practices.

To understand how musical conventions worked during the classical era of Hollywood film, I focus on the Feminine Romantic Cliché during the period from 1935 to 1955. This time span encompasses the earliest film scores that can truly be said to represent the classical Hollywood style as exemplified by Max Steiner and Erich Wolfgang Korngold, among others, until the style began to decline. The classical style was still present into the 1960s, as we shall see in chapter 3, but alternatives to scoring techniques and new styles were increasingly taking its place, and changing attitudes regarding sexuality and gender roles meant that the different types of roles and functions typically available to female characters were also evolving. To gauge the impact of popular mainstream film, I have examined one hundred American films—primarily those that were popular and well-known—including many whose scores were nominated for or won the Academy Award for best musical score between 1935 and 1955. While awards given by industry insiders to other industry insiders is no measure of which scores were the best or even the most popular, we can be assured that these scores at least gained publicity and exposure from their nominations, allowing them greater opportunity to influence subsequent composers and filmmakers. Other films are included in the survey in order to broaden the scope of the survey and provide a cross section of key film scores from this time (see Appendix: Feminine Romantic Cliché Survey). My analysis sought to determine what types of films feature the FRC, define the important musical characteristics of the FRC, and uncover what kind of connotative value the music lends the character.

More specifically, these scores suggest that the FRC works to strip the female character of any identity or value apart from her romantic potential, making her a love *object* rather than an

autonomous *subject*. The cultural and political significance of this cinematic phenomenon will become clear as I show how the female character scored with the FRC performed her ideally submissive and romantic femininity, demonstrating to millions of Americans and viewers worldwide that proper feminine behavior is rewarded with love, happiness, and security. I conclude with a close analysis of Erich Wolfgang Korngold's score for *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), which demonstrates the specific workings of the FRC within the context of a film score, further addressing the question of how the cliché ultimately limits rather than develops possibilities for female characterization. The primary questions that motivate my discussion are: (1) What types of narratives support the inclusion of the FRC, and why? (2) What kind of gender identity does the FRC create, and how? and (3) Why is the creation of this gender identity important? This examination of the FRC will help reveal how conventional music practices aided composers and filmmakers in the construction of gender and the promotion of a conservative gender ideology in their films.

### **The FRC: Some definitions and qualifications**

The Feminine Romantic Cliché must be understood not simply as any music that accompanies a love scene, but rather as a special kind of music that represents the female love interest *and* the love story simultaneously, thereby reducing the woman's role to that of a love object. It is defined not solely by its musical qualities, but also contextually by this narrative function. The FRC spotlights the woman's role as a love object and suggests that femininity and romantic potential are practically equivalent with her character (a conflation of "female" and "feminine"). It also reduces the character's subjectivity by purporting to represent *her* while at the same time reflecting the male hero's own point of view—her feminine essence becomes the male

character's desire. It is this specific type of romantic music that I define as the Feminine Romantic Cliché. *The Luck of the Irish* clearly demonstrates not just how music can act as a love theme, but how by overstating the importance of Nora's femininity and romantic potential, it actually fetishizes both qualities, making femininity and romance practically equivalent with her character. Nora's music, heard during almost all her scenes with Fitz, is presented in a way that establishes her as a feminized love object rather than simply as a person. Although the question of subjectivity is less clear in the scene described earlier, the suppression of Nora's subjectivity becomes clearer in a later scene in which Nora does not appear but the FRC does. In this scene, quoted in the epigraph, Fitz and the leprechaun discuss Fitz's engagement to "the tall lady" and Fitz begins to doubt his feelings for her. The entrance of Nora's theme suggests that he is instead thinking about her. But because Nora is not present for the conversation, the music actually tells us much more about *Fitz* than it does about her—the FRC commonly portrays the love object under the auspices of the male gaze, either from the male character's point of view or else by thrusting the audience into a masculine subject position to watch the musically accompanied spectacle of the female character. Plenty of other films include love scenes that are scored with effusively emotive string music and include female characters who serve as love interests; however, not all of these instances are scored with an FRC. In some of these cases the female love interest is allowed to develop as a character before the score enters to essentialize her as a romantic being, and the music we hear is therefore associated with the relationship between two characters as opposed to being mapped solely onto the woman. The FRC, then, must be understood not only as a musical but as a musico-narrative convention that is contingent upon the music itself *and* its role within the film's narrative.

To understand how the FRC is used, we must clarify to what kind of character it belongs. Strictly speaking, such characters are without exception female and must conform to the archetype described by Claudia Gorbman in *Unheard Melodies* as the “romantic Good Object”:<sup>5</sup> “A film of the forties is airing on television. Even though you are in the next room, you are likely to find that a certain kind of music will cue you in correctly to the presence of Woman on screen. It is as if the emotional excess of this presence must find its outlet in the euphony of a string orchestra. I refer here to Woman as romantic Good Object, and not to old women, or humorous or chatty women, or femme fatales.”<sup>6</sup> Like the archetypal good woman described by Gorbman, the characters I will discuss are *not* showgirls, prostitutes, tricksters, old women, or femmes fatales. They are also, importantly, *never* ethnically Othered women (at least not until the end of the studio era, and even then only rarely).<sup>7</sup> The FRC underscores the femininity and innocent sexuality of white women who are virgins, loyal wives, or otherwise depicted as an ideal

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<sup>5</sup> Two of the films surveyed, *The Heiress* (1949) and *Arizona* (1940), demonstrate that even if it first *appears* that a male character is scored with the FRC, in fact this can never happen. In *The Heiress*, Morris Townsend (Montgomery Clift) introduces Catherine Sloper (Olivia de Havilland) to the music that could have been her FRC when he plays “Plaisir d’amour” for her on the piano. The music is therefore originally associated with him and represents Catherine’s love for him every time we hear it. It is not, however, an FRC because it represents a false love (Morris wants to marry Catherine for her money) rather than any sincere feelings on Morris’s part. The false FRC highlights both Catherine’s inability to be a love object—she is plain and uninteresting to men—and Morris’s masculine deviance, which has him placing himself temporarily in the position of a love object in order to win Catherine’s trust. In *Arizona*, the love theme also originates with the male protagonist Peter Muncie (William Holden) as he falls in love with the gun-wielding, independent frontier woman Phoebe Titus (Jean Arthur). Phoebe does not appear at first to be a candidate for the love object character, but it soon becomes clear that she has only adopted a masculine persona in order to take care of herself until she can find a man, at which point she will gladly relinquish her masculine authority to him. As she becomes more feminine, the FRC transfers from Peter to her.

<sup>6</sup> Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, 80. Gorbman identifies this connection between romantic music and a specific type of female character but does not go any further with the concept, and in fact the type of music she refers to can include generic love scene music as well as the FRC.

<sup>7</sup> A fascinating example of a post-1955 love object character scored with the FRC who is not white is Katsumi from *Sayonara* (1957, music by Franz Waxman). In this film, the American male protagonists discover that Japanese women conform better to their expectations of docile, submissive wives than do newly empowered, headstrong American women during the occupation of Japan after World War II. Katsumi (Miyoshi Umeki) represents the ideal wife and therefore merits an FRC theme.

feminine love interest. These women are not, however, the subjects of their own stories, a point to which I will return. The FRC occurs only in films with characters that conform to this ideal: for instance, Barbara Stanwyck's character Sugarpuss in *Ball of Fire* (1941), a showgirl and gangster's moll who falls for the naive and straitlaced professor Bertram Potts (Gary Cooper), is a romantic co-star who does not fit the archetype. Her blatant sexuality, the seductive jazz-infused music that accompanies her, and her role as an active subject in the story remove her from the realm of the "romantic Good Object" and the FRC. A character accompanied by the FRC typically exudes a femininity that is devoid of sexuality (or places priority on domesticity), that is dependent upon her romantic potential, and that fails to suggest she has any interior life that is *not* contingent upon that romantic potential.

Following a Victorian model of female sexuality that held that women were incapable of expressing sexuality until marriage, the love object in classical Hollywood film generally demonstrates a lack of desire (although not a lack of interest in *love*) until her partnership with the male hero allows her finally to show desire. As demonstrated in work tracking evolving models of female sexuality in marriage and sex manuals over the years, sex in the nineteenth century United States was regarded as primarily for procreative purposes, particularly from the point of view of the wife. Such Victorian attitudes continued to resonate long into the twentieth century. Indeed, a marriage manual from 1869 offers a description of female sexuality that bears surprising resemblances to films created more than a half century later: "As a general rule, a modest woman seldom desires sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband, but only to please him; and but for the desire to maternity, would far rather be relieved from his

attentions.”<sup>8</sup> While in the beginning of the twentieth century the manuals began to assert that sex could be mutually fulfilling for both partners, “certain key assumptions carried over from the 19th century. First, middle-class women, at whom these manuals were directed, were assumed to have little overt interest in sex. Second, women’s sexuality was assumed to be fundamentally different from men’s: men were assumed to be more experienced and knowledgeable and to have stronger and more overt sex drives. Third, it was taken for granted that sexual experience for women takes place only within marriage. These three assumptions support a fourth: that women depend on men to awaken their sexual potential.”<sup>9</sup> The love object character reflects these old-fashioned yet still-influential attitudes toward female sexuality and thus is distinguished from the bad girl character by her unwillingness—or even inability—to feel sexual desire until those feelings have been awakened in her by the male protagonist.

By definition, the female love object has seemingly few interests or concerns apart from her relationship with the male protagonist, as she is merely a function of *his* story rather than the protagonist of her own. A good example is Tess Millay (Joanne Dru) in the Howard Hawks western *Red River* (1948). In her first scene, Tess is rescued by Matthew Garth (Montgomery Clift) after her wagon train is attacked by Indians. As the situation grows increasingly dire, Tess, who is immediately attracted to Matt, seems oblivious to the danger (and to the arrow sticking out of her shoulder) and continually tries to get his attention while he defends the wagon train from the surrounding Indians. Later, Tess single-mindedly pursues Matt, nearly sacrifices her virtue to save Matt from his adopted father Tom Dunson (John Wayne), and again tries to protect

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<sup>8</sup> Albert Hamilton Hayes, *Physiology of Woman and Her Diseases; or, Woman, Treated of Physiologically, Pathologically, and Esthetically* (Boston: Peabody Medical Institute, 1869), 227, quoted by Martin S. Weinberg, Rochelle Ganz Swensson, and Sue Kiefer Hammersmith, “Sexual Autonomy and the Status of Women: Models of Female Sexuality in U.S. Sex Manuals from 1950 to 1980,” *Social Problems* 30, no. 3 (1983): 313.

<sup>9</sup> Weinberg, Swensson, and Hammersmith 313.

him before the final showdown between the two men. Tess's story is unclear—we do not know what her life was like before she met Matt or what she might have pursued had she never met him. Once he enters the story, her entire world revolves around Matt alone. The single-minded romanticism of the FRC in this case mirrors Tess's devotion to Matt; just as the music shows only her romantic side, so too has Tess no other purpose other than to support and love Matt.

It is also possible for the FRC to help romanticize and objectify a character who is not initially such an obvious female love object. In the Alfred Hitchcock thriller *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), Carol Fisher (Laraine Day) is at first portrayed as intelligent, strong-minded, independent, and possessed of her own agenda and interests relating to the international peacekeeping organization with which she is involved. After first resisting, she eventually falls in love with the protagonist Johnny Jones (Joel McCrea); as this happens the FRC grows stronger, and her independence and interest in non-romantic things dissipates. A character who in the beginning seemed to transcend the feminine stereotype in the end succumbs to it as, like Tess, she begins to show less interest in outside issues and a single-minded interest in love.

There are two basic plot archetypes in which the female characters described above are frequently characterized with FRC music: the Good vs. Bad Girl plot, in which two diametrically opposed women illustrate the advantages and superiority of chaste femininity over overt female sexuality; and the Romantic Subplot in films dealing mainly with supposedly masculine concerns and usually featuring only one romantic female character. In the Good vs. Bad Girl plot archetype, two female characters—one virtuous and the other not—are pitted against each other, often as rival love interests for the male protagonist. In such films, the FRC works in conjunction with the Good Girl, signaling her superiority to the Bad Girl, who may or may not be

accompanied by contrasting music. The FRC helps to accentuate the positive nature of the Good Girl even if the Bad Girl does not have music emphasizing her own bad character.

In comparison to the straightforward Good vs. Bad Girl plot of *The Luck of the Irish*, *Stagecoach* (1939) presents a more complicated and interesting example. In this western, the two women are the upper-class, refined Mrs. Mallory (Louise Platt) and the prostitute Dallas (Claire Trevor), both passengers on the eponymous stagecoach whose occupants, as Kathryn Kalinak describes, represent “the forward guard of settlement on the frontier,” embodying “a spectrum of social classes and occupations in American society.”<sup>10</sup> Contrary to contemporary dominant ideology that vilifies sexually liberated women and favors the upper classes, the film casts Dallas, not Mrs. Mallory, as the more sympathetic character, suggesting that Dallas deserves the sympathy of and inclusion in the community formed within the stagecoach. Dallas, who is being courted by the charismatic outlaw “the Ringo Kid” (John Wayne), is scored with a variety of preexisting pieces of music, none of which could be considered to fulfill the requirements of an FRC (although preexisting music *can* act as an FRC, as we will see in the case of Mrs. Mallory). As argued by Kalinak, the use of these songs reveals the changing nature of Dallas and Ringo’s relationship, from sexually transgressive to validated romantic relationship.<sup>11</sup> The songs encourage a sympathetic and multifaceted interpretation of Dallas’s character: she is Ringo’s object of romance, for sure, but her complex inner life—the possibility that she can hope for more than the life of a whore—is brought to the fore by her evolving musical accompaniment. Mrs. Mallory, on the other hand, who is portrayed not only as a proper lady but as an ideal wife whose unselfish motivations revolve around her desire to support her husband, is given a far more simplistic musical portrayal by way of the Stephen Foster song “Jennie with the Light

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<sup>10</sup> Kathryn Kalinak, *How the West Was Sung: Music in the Westerns of John Ford* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 65.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.



Brown Hair” as an FRC. “Jeanie” romanticizes Mrs. Mallory’s character and, on an almost subconscious level, suggests that it is she, not Dallas, who should be considered the film’s proper love object. With its romantic subtext, connotations of chaste domesticity, and absolute objectification of a woman who is allowed no agency, “Jeanie” genders Mrs. Mallory not just as a feminine woman, but as a *romantic*, feminine woman.

In the Romantic Subplot archetype, there is generally only one (important) female character in a large cast of male characters and a masculine-oriented plotline. These films present situations in which reasonably few if any women would be present—often adventure films or stories of war and espionage—as they are located outside the domestic sphere and in more traditionally masculine locales. A typical example is the 1946 spy drama and pseudo-noir film *Cloak and Dagger*, starring Gary Cooper and Lilli Palmer. Cooper plays Al, an American scientist turned spy who tries to sabotage the Germans in their attempt to create an atom bomb. The plot places him conveniently in hiding with a beautiful Italian woman, Gina, a member of the Italian Resistance, who quickly succumbs to Al’s charms and American idealism. Gina (Palmer) is presented as a love object from the moment she appears onscreen. As Al is being smuggled into Italy in the back of a truck, one of his rescuers begins to take off her dark hat and outerwear and is revealed to be a beautiful young woman. As she does this, the dark dirge-like music of the previous scene transitions to a sparkling, animated new theme featuring a pulsating accompaniment, a dramatic glissando from the harp, and a lyrical string melody. As though cued by the theme’s entrance, Al becomes visibly distracted and agitated by Gina’s feminine presence within the dark, masculine space of the truck. Coinciding with Al’s recognition of Gina as a potential love object, the theme is clearly positioned as representing Gina from Al’s and the audience’s perspective, overburdening her with romantic significance through the power of Al’s

gaze. Gina's theme recurs with increasing frequency as their love blooms, where it is clearly positioned not simply as their love theme representing the both of them equally, but as *Gina's* romantic love theme, representing her alone. This is unsurprising, given the operatic and literary precedent of structuring stories from the male perspective; as McClary argues in her discussion of George Bizet's *Carmen*, "it is not Carmen but rather Don José who is the central character of this moral fable: it is *his* story that organizes the narrative, *his* fate that hangs in the balance between the Good Woman and the Bad. And his musical discourse is that of the 'universal' tongue of Western classical music."<sup>12</sup> Just as *Carmen* serves as a male fantasy that organizes female sexuality according to patriarchal Western viewpoint, *Cloak and Dagger* allows us access to Gina and her femininity through the access point of Al's male subjectivity.

Not every film conforms perfectly to either one of these two plot archetypes, although most can be understood as existing somewhere along a continuum between the two, if not squarely in one or the other. In *Ivanhoe* (1952), for instance, Rowena (Joan Fontaine) and Rebecca (Elizabeth Taylor) are rivals for Ivanhoe's love, but Rebecca is not a bad woman. Rather, she is the less appropriate love interest of the two due to her religious beliefs and ethnicity. Even in *Cloak and Dagger*, a seemingly straightforward example of the Romantic Subplot, a femme fatale is briefly introduced early in the story; this character, a German spy who tries to distract Al from his work, sets up Gina to seem that much better in comparison. Films that do not fit along this continuum are unlikely to have a suitable love object character and by extension will not include the FRC, as in the cases of *Ball of Fire*, *The End of the Affair*, and *From Here to Eternity*, none of which has the compulsory female love object or the accompanying Feminine Romantic Cliché.

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<sup>12</sup> Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 58–59.

Certain types of films are more likely than others to use the love object character and FRC (see Appendix). Because this character is portrayed as an *object* of the male protagonist's romantic pursuits, the character and her FRC are most likely to appear in films in which she is *not* the main character, but rather a secondary character around which the love story, usually a subplot, revolves. Films falling under the category of woman's picture and other melodramas, therefore, are largely excluded from this discussion.<sup>13</sup> In general, the FRC is more likely to be used in "genre films," which Barry Keith Grant defines as "those commercial feature films which, through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations. They also encourage expectations and experiences similar to those of similar films we have already seen."<sup>14</sup> Genres that would have been familiar and intelligible to American audiences in the classical Hollywood era include the western, screwball comedy, film noir (in the 1940s), and the historical adventure. The FRC is more common to certain genres than other, and although nearly every genre and category is represented by at least a small handful of FRC films, the historical adventure, particularly the swashbuckler, was certainly the most common type of film to include the love object character (thereby opening the possibility for the inclusion of the FRC).

The swashbuckler was an adventure film generally set between the early modern period and the eighteenth century featuring a noble and virtuous hero and an evil villain. The hero is placed in a dangerous situation, often tasked with rescuing a fair maiden, and fights the villain in hand-to-hand combat to emerge victorious in the end. Brian Taves describes the principal characteristics of the swashbuckler: "This form usually opens with oppression imposed on a

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<sup>13</sup> Heather Laing's *The Gendered Score: Music in 1940s Melodrama and the Woman's Film* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007) looks at such films in great detail. Laing argues that the music of the 1940s woman's picture represents the interiority of the main female character, a phenomenon that necessarily implies a more complex characterization than happens in the films to be discussed here.

<sup>14</sup> Barry Keith Grant, ed., *Film Genre Reader II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), xv.

peaceful land, resulting in a rebellion that . . . calls forth a leader dedicated to the rights of the people. . . . With the hero's aid, at the conclusion of the swashbuckling adventure either a just regime is restored or a new, improved establishment is created, replacing one liable to transgression by tyrants."<sup>15</sup> With the strong theme of good vs. evil inherent to the genre, exaggerated characterizations such as the flawless male hero and perfect female love object are common. Taves's description of the role of the love interest in the historical adventure film reveals not only the suitability of the love object character to the genre, but also why the FRC is so much more common in this genre than in any other:

Women are consorts who do not challenge the hero's centrality, while still deflecting attention from the predominantly male environment. No matter how important she may be to the hero's life, a woman is usually a support or at best a partner, assisting or measuring the hero's progress. Women are essential in adventure as inspiration and love interests, but the hero's relationships with them are depicted primarily insofar as they impact a man's life, adopting his viewpoint, not that of the woman. . . . Yet the love interest is also more important to adventure films than to such other actions genres as westerns, war, or crime films. Love forms a subplot that parallels the main themes, placing the woman in a perilous situation that provides the hero with the opportunity he seeks to prove his nobility, chivalry, courage, and altruism. The resolution of the love interest reflects the political settlement, reinstating the proper relation of peasants, nobles, and monarchy in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* or the union of nobility and peasantry in *The Flame and the Arrow*.<sup>16</sup>

It is little wonder, then, that the FRC shows up in over 75 percent of the adventure films surveyed, and in 100 percent of those in which the love interest is a good woman love object character. Toward the end of the time period surveyed, when the FRC appeared less often in films of every other type, in one genre it consistently continued to appear—the historical adventure—and in fact the percentage of FRC films from the 1950s that fall into that genre is close to 80 percent.

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<sup>15</sup> Brian Taves, *The Romance of Adventure: The Genre of Historical Adventure Movies* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), 16–17.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 123–24.

While the FRC was used in nearly every type of film surveyed, some genres used it considerably less, due to narrative conventions and genre expectations. Film noir was unlikely to employ the FRC, as these films typically featured a femme fatale rather than a good woman. Comedies are also less likely to feature the FRC, since they tend to turn cultural and gender expectations on their heads, portraying a skewed reality in need of restoration to the natural order of things. In *The Philadelphia Story* (1940), for example, whether or not Tracy Lord (Katharine Hepburn) conforms to proper femininity is not the issue, though the fact that she has been married once before her upcoming nuptials would suggest that perhaps she is not. The problem, however, is not that she isn't the right kind of woman, but rather that she is not marrying the right man. In the end, she is steered in the right direction by the right man himself, and all is well with the universe. Similarly, Elaine Harper (Priscilla Lane) would seem to fit the bill for the female love object in *Arsenic and Old Lace* (filmed in 1941, released 1944), but her role as a new bride who only wants to go away with her husband Mortimer Brewster (Cary Grant) on their honeymoon is overshadowed by the main plot—Mortimer has discovered that his two maiden aunts are systematically murdering old men and burying them in the cellar of their Brooklyn home. Elaine serves as a constant reminder to Mortimer of his responsibilities and desire for normalcy in a family of lunatics, but it is not necessary for the film to emphasize her position as a love object.

While there are no hard-and-fast rules that governed when composers employed the FRC, the predictability of where and how this musical convention was used suggests that to composers and filmmakers at the time, there was truly something conventional and clichéd about this type of character and her corresponding music. Rather than representing a unique and nuanced character such as those that will be discussed in the later chapters, the character associated with

the FRC performs a narrative function, and this function is strengthened by the use of music that emphasizes her feminine beauty and romantic potential.

### **Musical precursors and the music of the FRC**

Unlike the pentatonic East Asian or jazzy female deviance tropes described earlier, the FRC has few *specific* musical characteristics that identify it outside the context of the film. There is no specific chord progression or motivic figure that defines it. Its identifying musical features may vary, and yet its purpose and meaning are always recognizable. This is in part due to its place within the context of the film, but also to the long tradition of Western art music that is understood as representing love, romance, and femininity on which this musical trope is based.

To say that music can “be” either masculine or feminine, or that it can objectively represent a man or a woman, would be grossly to overestimate music as a representational art. While a painting or a sculpture can objectively represent gender (or more accurately *sex*) by portraying a male or female figure, music’s ability to represent lies in the cultural associations and conventions that have formed around it over a long period of time, resulting in certain tropes or characteristics that people *tend* to find either masculine or feminine. These associations tend to be so strong and so naturalized—such as the notion that masculine music is strong and aggressive and feminine music is gentle and lyrical—that they generally go unremarked or unchallenged even in scholarly literature. Since I will be using the words masculine and feminine to show how cultural constructions of gender infiltrate musical constructions of gendered characters onscreen, it is important to understand first how music derived from the Western art music tradition has come to acquire these gendered associations and how elements of gendering might have been passed down to the classical Hollywood film score.

Over the centuries, at certain points in history the relationship between women and music has been considered a problem.<sup>17</sup> Because of the perception of considerable inherent differences between men and women that were only in the twentieth century successfully questioned and challenged in scholarly discourse, but which are still upheld in the cultural mainstream, music has often been considered to have different effects on the male and female disposition. Linda Phyllis Austern, in her exploration of the debate surrounding the performance of music by women in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, writes that music and women shared a perceived nature as “sensual, affective, and in need of strict rational control.”<sup>18</sup> Her description of the position of women during the English Renaissance should remind us of the definition of a female love object: the “woman’s place remained subordinate to man’s; her sphere of existence was domestic, spousal, maternal, inspirational, and decorative. The few exceptional women of the highest social classes who stepped outside of this restricted position did so only through the denial of normal femininity and at the risk of censure.”<sup>19</sup> Women were distinguished at this time for their “ability to inspire a higher and more perfect love,” making love (whether romantic, familial, or spiritual) the essence of femininity and womanhood.<sup>20</sup> And because it also was considered to hold this special connection to love, music held a precarious position among philosophers. Some praised music and some denounced it as evil, and a great debate arose as to the possible merits or evils of women performing music, that most sensual of the arts. Austern writes: “At the very center of the musical part of the debate on women was the widespread belief that music, as the other inspiration to love, enhanced feminine attractiveness and therefore

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<sup>17</sup> Linda Phyllis Austern, “Music and the English Renaissance Controversy over Women,” in *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music*, ed. Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 52.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

became a powerful agent of seduction unless it was placed strictly under masculine control.”<sup>21</sup>

Women playing music were criticized by contemporary critics as sexually empowered, independent, and monstrous, and their music as causing otherwise well-brought-up gentlewomen to “become licentious, delicate, and effeminate.”<sup>22</sup> Male musicians, on the other hand, make their male listeners nobler and more masculine, whereas women are considered too vulnerable to withstand the sensuous power of music. Austern does not indicate how women’s music differed from men’s music, apart from the well-known rules governing which instruments women were allowed to play, but one of her sources does make a distinction between music he considers masculine and feminine. This author Austern writes, “perceives all sounding, melodious music as feminine and feminizing. Woman’s frail, sensual nature delights in the soft, artificial music of stringed instruments and in the dance, not in the useful music of war.”<sup>23</sup> Feminine music, unsurprisingly, is that music that is melodious (lyrical), related to dance (sensual), frivolous (not useful), and featuring “artificial” string instruments (unnatural). Masculine music, its natural opposite, is militaristic and “useful,” featuring percussion and strict rhythms (for marching).

As Austern demonstrates, the prospect of women performing or being connected to music is historically fraught with controversy and sets up the question of what makes music sound masculine or feminine, regardless who is doing the performing and particularly when (a) the music is purely instrumental, and (b) the composer is a man. In *Feminine Endings*, Susan McClary deals in part with musical constructions of gender and sexuality, which is also the subject of this dissertation. She writes: “Beginning with the rise of opera in the seventeenth century, composers worked painstakingly to develop a musical semiotics of gender: a set of

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 60–61 (quotation from Giovanni Bruto, *The Necessarie, Fit, and Convenient Education of a Yong Gentlewoman*, trans. W. P. [London: Adam Islip, 1598], sigs. C3–C3).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 58.



conventions for constructing ‘masculinity’ or ‘femininity’ in music. The codes marking gender difference in music are informed by the prevalent attitudes of their time.”<sup>24</sup> These codes, she adds, change as meanings of femininity and masculinity shift over time and vary from culture to culture, but some seem to remain stable over the centuries. This, she argues, “is not because music is a ‘universal language,’ but rather because certain social attitudes concerning gender have remained relatively constant throughout that stretch of history.”<sup>25</sup> Many of these codes that have remained constant are those that reflect unchanging social attitudes and, perhaps due to their longevity, are so widely understood that they were particularly suited to the musical language of the classical Hollywood film score.

McClary gives a number of examples of gendered terminology and ideology in music history and theory, including the “masculine” first theme and “feminine” second theme in mid-nineteenth-century music theory, and the distinction between strong-beat and weak-beat cadences, the former being the normal masculine ending and the latter the romantic feminine ending referred to in her book title.<sup>26</sup> But she also gives a specific example of the character archetype I am investigating in her analysis of Georges Bizet’s *Carmen*. Micaëla, she writes, “represents the stereotypical Angel in the House: the sexless, submissive ideal of the bourgeoisie. Her signs of affection are carefully defined in terms of José’s mother, for whom she is but the passive conduit of a maternal kiss. Her musical discourse accordingly is simple, lyrical, sweet: as she sings to José in their initial encounter, her melody lines are diatonic (never deviating into insinuating inflections), her rhythms innocent of physicality.”<sup>27</sup> Unlike Carmen, the “dissonant Other,” Micaëla represents the same domestic, spiritual and inspirational ideal

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<sup>24</sup> McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 9.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

described by Austern above, and her music is marked by simplicity, decorativeness, lyricism, and a lack of references to physicality and sexuality, the same kinds of musical tropes that are often linked with musical constructions of good femininity. In her discussion of constructions of femininity in opera, Naomi André defines two stock characters from Italian opera before the *secondo ottocento*, the “first woman” and “second woman.” André explains the distinction between these two character types: “The first woman is the soprano who loves the tenor and is loved in return; the second woman is the soprano who frequently loves the tenor, but is not loved (or is loved less) in return. The first woman is usually the higher soprano; in ensembles she almost always gets the top line. The second woman might also have very high notes, yet she generally has a wider range (with more low notes), lower tessitura, and heavier sound to her voice with more weight and heft.”<sup>28</sup> The first woman, of course, is the archetype exemplified by Micaëla and the character that most closely resembles the female love object. In her analysis of Simon Mayr’s *Medea in Corinto*, André compares Medea’s “emphatic” style of singing with large leaps and angular vocal lines, characteristic of her second woman status, to the more lyrical first woman singing exhibited by her rival Creusa, and by Medea herself when she is trying to regain Giasone’s love (and her status as the first woman).<sup>29</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, these simple codes continued to reinforce ideological constructs of proper femininity, and they would continue to do so into the era of the silent film score.

Although the classical style of film scoring did not develop until the mid-1930s, music had been used to accompany films since the earliest days of cinema. In film’s earliest years, the short and generally non-narrative nature of the films shown to audiences—what film historians

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<sup>28</sup> Naomi André, *Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti, and the Second Woman in Early-Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 143–53.

have called the “cinema of attractions”<sup>30</sup>—made fitting specially composed or arranged music to individual films (as would have been done for contemporary forms of entertainment such as melodrama) unnecessary. As films grew longer and narrative cinema more popular, the question of how best to accompany these moving pictures became a more important one, one that was addressed in different ways by filmmakers and theater musicians. “Special scores,” prepared in conjunction with the filmmakers and distributed to theaters presenting the films, were rare but not unheard of before *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), the most famous special score of the silent era. The most useful tool for the theater musician was the film-accompanying manual or handbook, whose publication flourished during the teens and twenties. These handbooks, such as Erno Rapee’s *Motion Picture Moods for Pianists and Organists* and Hans Erdmann and Giuseppe Becce’s *Allgemeines Handbuch der Film-Musik*, gave suggestions for pieces of music that could be played during specific types of scenes in films.<sup>31</sup> Theater musicians used these handbooks and other material to create their own semi-improvised film scores. Both volumes give suggestions for accompanying love scenes, with Erdmann/Becce dividing their love scenes into numerous categories including *Liebesleidenschaft* (“passion of love”), *Lockende Liebe* (“enticing love”), and so on (Examples 1.1–1.3). Although there are no entries devoted to “women” or “femininity” in either volume, Erdmann and Becce do offer a few sub-categories

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<sup>30</sup> Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde,” *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000), 229–35.

<sup>31</sup> Erno Rapee, *Motion Picture Moods: For Pianists and Organists* (New York: Arno Press, 1974); Hans Erdmann and Giuseppe Becce, *Allgemeines Handbuch der Film-Musik* (Berlin-Lichterfelde: Schlesinger’sche Buch- und Musikhandlung, 1927).

<p><b>405</b> D'Albert 8, Dramatische Suite (Bece) Nr. 1 <i>Bewegt.</i></p> <p><b>406</b> Axt 3, Capit. Photopl. Ser. Nr. 21 <i>Allegro appassionato.</i></p> <p><b>407</b> Bergé 13, Capit. Photopl. Ser. Nr. 37 <i>Con moto appassionato.</i></p> <p><b>408</b> Blech 2, Rappelkopf (Bece) S. 7 <i>Schnell.</i></p>	<p>Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen.</p> <p>Romantisch-pathetischer Ausklang, S.</p>	
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Example 1.1: Examples from *Allgemeines Handbuch der Film-Musik* by Hans Erdmann and Giuseppe Bece. #405–407: “the waves of the sea and love”; #408: “romantic-solemn/lofty finale”

<p><b>461</b> Smetana 5, Geheimnis (Dauber) S. 7 <i>Allegro affettuoso.</i>   : nach letzte Z, T. 2.</p> <p><b>462</b> Strauß 2, Elektra (Tavan) S. 5 <i>Allegro brillante.</i></p> <p><b>463</b> Strauß 2, Elektra (Tavan) S. 8 <i>Moderato. Più lento. Tpo. I. Allo. mod. Più mod. Molto mosso. Più lento. Più vivo.</i></p> <p><b>464</b> Tschalkowski 11, Eugen Onegin (Atzler) S. 14 <i>Allegro moderato. Poco animato.</i></p>	<p>Liebesfreude.</p> <p>Beschwingt. Leidenschaftlich. Jubelnd.</p> <p>Jubel. Begeisterung.</p> <p>Liebesleidenschaft.</p>	
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Example 1.2: #461: “joy of love”; #464: “passion of love”

pertaining specifically to women, such as *Zarte mädchenhafte Melancholie* (“soft maidenly melancholy”). These and other love scene examples, however, correspond closely to the types of music that would later appear as the Feminine Romantic Cliché. This type of romantic music, we will see, would later easily be appropriated to represent not just love scenes but also feminine/romantic characters in scenes *without* men.

<p><b>836</b> Massenet 32, Roi de Lahore (Tavan) S. 2 <i>Andante con moto.</i></p> <p><b>837</b> Massenet 34, Sappho (Tavan) S. 19 <i>Très mod. Plus anim.</i></p> <p><b>838</b> Massenet 35, Thais (Tavan) S. 2 (Allo.) <i>Moins vite. Plus vite.</i> :  : nach Z. 6, T. 1.</p> <p><b>839</b> Massenet 40, Werther (Tavan) S. 4 <i>Andante. Moderato.</i> Z. 4, letzt. Takt, 1. Achtel → Auftakt Moderato S. 6.</p> <p><b>840</b> Mevensen-Ackermans, Barque tragique, S. 10 <i>Allegro non troppo.</i> :  :</p> <p><b>841</b> Moussorgski 3, Boris Godunow, Duett <i>Larghetto amoroso.</i> dasselbe 1, (Goldmann) S. 16 dasselbe 2, (Weninger) S. 12</p> <p><b>842</b> Noyes 11, Hawkes Ser. Nr. 53 <i>Andante.</i></p>	<p>Junge Liebe.</p> <p>Drängende Liebe.</p> <p>Werbende, sehnsüchtige Liebe.</p> <p>Sentimentale Liebe.</p> <p>Liebesbitte.</p> <p>Liebeserinnerung.</p>	<p>(♩ = 76) sim. p</p> <p>(♩ = 50-104) sim. p</p> <p>(♩ = 108) mf</p> <p>♩ = 76      ♩ = 60 f      mf</p> <p>(♩ = 108) mf</p> <p>(♩ = 50) p</p> <p>(♩ = 72)</p>
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Example 1.3: #836: “young love”; #837: “urgent, pressing love”; #838: “court-shipping, yearning love”; #839–840: “sentimental love”; #841: “plea of love”; #842: “memory of love”

## A Musical Survey of the FRC

Despite the clichéd nature of the FRC, the musical possibilities for such themes are surprisingly varied. The FRC’s connection to earlier notions of femininity in music and its flexibility make possible an aural cliché that is recognizable to the ear while still broad enough to remain interesting and effective across a range of film genres and narrative archetypes. The following eight examples—drawn from *Captain Blood* (1935, music by Erich Wolfgang Korngold), *The Great Lie* (1941, Max Steiner), *Cloak and Dagger* (1946, Steiner), *The Luck of the Irish* (1948, Mockridge), *A Place in the Sun* (1951, Franz Waxman), *Ivanhoe* (1952, Miklós Rózsa), and *The Robe* (1953, Alfred Newman)—are all characteristic of the FRC, and yet diverse enough to

demonstrate its flexibility and scope.<sup>32</sup> This section will focus solely on the musical characteristics of the FRC and their connection to the silent film love scene examples, after which I will show how the music fits into its narrative context. For in order for the FRC to communicate its purpose to the audience, not only must its sound connote the right kind of romance and femininity, but it must also be implemented in a way that communicates this function.

A characteristic common to nearly every FRC, and shared by most of the silent film excerpts, is a relatively slow tempo. All the FRC's except "Gina" (Example 1.8) feature tempi corresponding roughly to *andante* or *moderato*, and although some of Erdmann/Becce's examples feature more vigorous speeds, most of them are slower. These slower tempi are made more interesting, particularly in the FRCs, with contrasting quick and slow note values, with the tendency toward faster note values of eighth or quarter notes moving toward a half or whole note mid-phrase, interspersing shorter note values with longer ones. This, along with the lyrical nature of the melodies, gives them a lilting, unhurried feeling as opposed to a feeling of kinetic or perpetual motion. These feminine characters are not active, vigorous women, but soft and delicate ones with sudden outpourings of emotion connoted by the quicker note values.<sup>33</sup> The long note values common to so many of these themes, particularly in "Nora" (Example 1.4) and "Arabella" (Example 1.5), give the impression that they are unmeasured or marked with a *fermata*, contributing to the halting, "held breath" feeling and the wistful, tender feelings they create.

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<sup>32</sup> All Feminine Romantic Cliché themes (except those from *The Adventures of Robin Hood*), as well as themes from *The Sea Hawk*, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, and "Robin Hood Hero" were transcribed by Michael Schachter, and in all cases the note values and time signatures are approximated.

<sup>33</sup> "Gina" is unusual among the FRC examples, but the fast tempo and forward-moving feel of her theme suit the specific narrative of *Cloak and Dagger*. The film's main musical theme, the slow-moving dirge-like melody, permeates the score and creates contrast with Gina's brighter and more upbeat theme. Gina is also a more active character than most love objects, as she is an Italian freedom fighter who takes part in smuggling Al across the border.



Example 1.4: "Nora" from *The Luck of the Irish* (1948, Mockridge)

Example 1.5: "Arabella" from *Captain Blood* (1935, Korngold)

Example 1.6: "Rowena" from *Ivanhoe* (1952, Rózsa)

All violins

Vla., Vc.

Example 1.7: "Rebecca" from *Ivanhoe* (1952, Rózsa)

VLN I

Strings

Harp

gliss.

(etc.)

Harp

gliss.

Example 1.8: "Gina" from *Cloak and Dagger* (1946, Steiner)



Medium waltz tempo

Musical score for strings, measures 1-6. The score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The upper staff is labeled "Strings".

Musical score for strings, measures 7-13. The score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

Musical score for strings and harp, measures 14-20. The score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The upper staff is labeled "+ Harp".

Example 1.9: "Maggie" from *The Great Lie* (1941, Steiner)

Musical score for oboe and harp, measures 1-4. The score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The upper staff is labeled "Oboe solo" and the lower staff is labeled "Harp".

Musical score for oboe and harp, measures 5-8. The score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The upper staff is labeled "5".

Example 1.10: "Diana" from *The Robe* (1953, Newman)

Example 1.11: “Angela” from *A Place in the Sun* (1951, Waxman)

Instruments used in the FRCs include most prominently the strings, particularly violins and violas, along with oboe/English horn and harp. No brass instrumentation or percussion apart from the vibraphone is used. Accompaniments are either arpeggiated or chorale-like chordal harmonies subordinated to the melodic lines, which are always the focus.

Although the silent film examples are just about as likely to be in the major mode as minor, FRC themes tend to be major, as the music is meant to convey the character’s positive and love-inspiring nature. All but two of the eight example FRCs are in the major mode; the two exceptions are the two “exotic” modal melodies, both of which are minor inflected—ancient Roman patrician Diana (Example 1.10) gets a pseudo-modal melody that experiments with the

Aeolian and Dorian modes before arriving in an ambiguous B major/G-sharp minor, and Rebecca (Example 1.7), exotic because she is a “Jewess” in medieval England, gets a melody using the D-Phrygian mode. “Rowena” (Example 1.6), though major in character, has hints of modality due to the prominent F-natural in measure 2, giving it the feel of G-Mixolydian. The eventual cadence uses an F-sharp, but the strong feeling of F-natural helps to lend a supposedly medieval flavor to the score, notwithstanding the modern instrumentation and harmonic language.

Despite the prevalence of the major mode and the general tendency toward diatonicism, the FRC melodies are not lacking in harmonic interest. There is in fact a great deal of harmonic variety both in the FRCs as well as in the romantic excerpts offered by the silent film manuals. Unresolved dissonances and nonfunctional harmonies abound in the FRCs, perhaps most obviously in “Arabella” but also in the second phrases of “Diana” and “Angela” (Example 1.11). In “Arabella,” eleventh and thirteenth harmonies along with unresolved dissonances in every measure starting with bar 5 make this perhaps the most longing and unfulfilled of all the examples. Changing perceptions of the meaning of dissonance and how it relates to constructions of femininity allow for idealized femininity to be portrayed by the chromatic excess demonstrated in “Arabella” and “Angela,” the modal austerity of “Rowena,” “Rebecca,” and “Diana,” and the straightforward diatonicism (with only a few hints of chromaticism) of “Nora,” “Maggie” (Example 1.9) and “Gina.” As a rule, the female love object must be represented by music that does not suggest excessive sexuality within the harmonic language idiomatic to its particular cultural context. Chromaticism and intense dissonance, therefore, occur sparingly; slinky chromatic melodies and jazz-inflected harmonies are generally reserved for the second women of classical Hollywood.

The melodic lines themselves are also important in creating the sense of romantic femininity so important to the Feminine Romantic Cliché. The melodies rarely if ever have repeated pitches, their contours rounded and flowing rather than angular and repetitive. Only in the case of “Gina” does the melody begin with its highest pitch. The lyricism of the melodies is created in part by the UP-DOWN-UP or DOWN-UP-DOWN contours of the lines and the irregularity of the rhythms, with the exceptions of the waltz-like “Maggie” and straight eighth notes of “Diana.” Above all, these themes highlight melody, not rhythm, counterpoint, or orchestral texture.

The following counterexamples highlight the obvious contrast between typical FRC themes and comparable masculine themes (themes for male characters) from the same time period. These themes represent different kinds of male characters from films scored by Korngold and Steiner. “Robin Hood Hero” (Example 1.12) from *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and the title theme from *The Sea Hawk* (Example 1.15) (1940, both scored by Korngold) are themes for the heroic male protagonist, and “Merry Men” (Example 1.13) from *Robin Hood* represents Robin’s band of brave and heroic men; “King Richard” (Example 1.14), also from *Robin Hood*, is another good character, although he is not the film’s main hero; and finally the main theme from *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (Example 1.16) (1948, Steiner) represents a trio of greedy miners whose lust for gold turns them from friends into savages.

The instrumentation of the FRC music is perhaps the most immediately noticeable difference from the masculine themes. All the masculine themes feature brass instruments prominently (with the exception of “King Richard,” in which strings play the melody supported by a brass chorale). Symbolic of the heroic, the militaristic, and the active, the trumpet fanfare (as in *The Sea Hawk*) or brief tag (as in *Robin Hood*’s “Hero” motive) signals macho masculinity

Musical score for the trumpet part of "Robin Hood Hero". The score is written on a single staff in treble clef with a common time signature (C). It begins with a dynamic marking of *mf* and features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet of eighth notes. The melody concludes with a half note and a quarter note.

Example 1.12: "Robin Hood Hero" from *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938, Korngold)

Musical score for the piano accompaniment of "Merry Men". The score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef, both with a common time signature (C). The music is marked *ff* and includes a trill in the upper right. The lower staff features a triplet of eighth notes and various chordal textures.

Example 1.13: "Merry Men" from *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938, Korngold)

Musical score for the violin and viola parts of "King Richard". The score is written on two staves. The upper staff is in bass clef and the lower staff is in treble clef, both with a 3/4 time signature. The music is marked *p* and features a melodic line with various ornaments and phrasing.

Example 1.14: "King Richard" from *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938, Korngold)

Musical score for the main theme of "The Sea Hawk". The score is written on two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef, both with a common time signature (C). The music is marked *ff* and includes a glissando for the harp and a trill for the violins. The score features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many accents.

Example 1.15: Main theme from *The Sea Hawk* (1940, Korngold)



What the music sounds like is, of course, only half the story. Not only is the sound important but how also it is used within the film's narrative. The FRC must position the female character as a love object early and obviously in order to distinguish itself from a generic love theme. The following examples demonstrate this process in a pirate adventure (*Captain Blood*, 1935), a melodrama (*The Great Lie*, 1941), a contemporary drama (*A Place in the Sun*, 1951), and a swashbuckler (*Ivanhoe*, 1952), which presents the unusual case of two FRC themes for two different characters.

*Historical pirate adventure: Arabella in Captain Blood (1935)*

“Arabella” from *Captain Blood* demonstrates a prototypical FRC both musically and narratively. As the only female character with a significant speaking role, Arabella's function in the seventeenth-century pirate story is primarily to provide a love interest for the main character, Peter Blood (Errol Flynn). Arabella (Olivia de Havilland), a wealthy noblewoman, is feisty and impulsive but she demonstrates the appropriate amount of modesty and lack of experience when first romanced by Blood. Although she initially shows interest in Blood—an interest that never translates into inappropriately forward or romantic behavior—Arabella spends much of the film believing Blood to be a villain, which of course causes her violently to dislike him. Her anger is eventually resolved by her discovery that he has been in love with her all along and has been protecting her from the true villain, Levasseur (Basil Rathbone). Arabella fits the model of the romantic love object perfectly, as she is beautiful and feminine, passive and inexperienced, and devoted to the hero's well being (when she doesn't believe him to be a murderous scoundrel).

Throughout the film, Arabella's FRC helps constantly to underscore her romantic femininity and detract from any actions that might be perceived as too heroic or unfeminine. The

FRC is introduced shortly after her first appearance, which occurs well into the film and long after Blood's introduction. Unlike Blood's first scene, in which we learn that the hero is a hard-working, ethical doctor who helps anyone in need of medical attention and at any hour, day or night, Arabella's introduction emphasizes her feminine beauty and delicacy. Her first big scene with Blood is where her theme is most obviously presented as an FRC. After Arabella has arranged for Blood, a newly arrived slave in Port Royal, to become the governor's physician, she encounters him leaving the governor's mansion as she rides up in her carriage. The held appoggiaturas in the melody coincide with Blood's point-of-view shots of Arabella in the carriage, showing that we are looking at her from Blood's perspective. Even though he looks annoyed at her presence, the melody continues to unfold in a series of sweetly dissonant appoggiaturas, giving a sense of unfulfilled longing. Arabella, thinking the slave will be grateful for her assistance, pretends not to recognize him and attempts to flirt. He rebuffs her friendliness and refuses to acknowledge her generosity toward him. Nevertheless, the romantic music continues underneath their dialogue, as though Arabella's romantic presence cannot help but exude such music.

During their early scenes together, including their next encounter when Blood tries to steal a kiss (earning a slap to the face), the theme very clearly represents not just Arabella, but also the romance. As the story progresses, the theme plays often in short fragments to stand in for or foreshadow Arabella's presence, as in a sequence taking place shortly after Blood and his fellow slaves have become successful pirates: the lookout on Blood's ship spots an English ship on the horizon and asks his captain if they should attack. Amid a medley of themes associated with Blood and the sea, we hear a fragment of "Arabella"—a moment later, we see that this is indeed the ship on which she is sailing for England. Rather than signifying Arabella herself here,



the theme represents her romantic potential within a missed connection that will only be righted later when the two are reunited.

*Woman's film/melodrama: Maggie in The Great Lie (1941)*

The unusual focus on feminine interiority common to the 1940s woman's picture, as I have already mentioned, means these films are far less likely to use the FRC than films in which the love object is a less-developed secondary character. The storyline of the typical woman's film dealt with issues assumed to be of the greatest interest to the typical American woman, and were thus usually romantic or tragic melodramas. Because the music of the woman's film, as argued by Heather Laing, tends to portray the complex inner life of the female protagonist, the music is unlikely to include an FRC, as the FRC typically flattens out and simplifies rather than complicates the character. *The Great Lie* is a significant counterexample, where the protagonist Maggie (Bette Davis) is the character to whom the FRC is assigned. Ordinarily the protagonist of a woman's film would be too individualized a character and her interiority too much in the forefront to be scored by an FRC, but Maggie's conformity to the feminine romantic ideal is a key theme of *The Great Lie*, one that contributes significantly to the conflict between her and the film's antagonist Sandra (Mary Astor). This example demonstrates how the FRC can be used to make a female protagonist less complex and more dependent upon a male partner, even in one of the few Hollywood genres that typically featured strong and complicated heroines.

Maggie and Sandra are romantic rivals fighting for the love of Pete (George Brent). Sandra, a wild and self-centered concert pianist, refuses to put Pete's needs before those of her career, causing Pete to leave her for the more down-to-earth and domestic Maggie (Pete and Sandra had been briefly married but their marriage was found to be invalid). Maggie, who has no

occupation and is portrayed as a genteel landowner from old money, distinguishes herself as a wife by pushing for career advancements for Pete, in contrast to Sandra's selfish pursuit of her own career. Maggie also shows sexual restraint by resisting Pete's initial advances whereas Sandra actively pursues him. Sandra soon appears to tell Maggie that she is pregnant with Pete's child, and immediately thereafter Pete is the victim of a plane crash and believed to be dead. Despite being enemies, Maggie convinces Sandra to give birth to her baby in secret and, pretending that it was Maggie who was carrying Pete's child, give him up to her after the birth, as being an unwed mother would not help Sandra's career. Once Maggie is happily established at home with the baby, she discovers that Pete survived the crash and is on his way home. Sandra returns to demand both her baby and Pete, believing that he will "do the right thing" when he learns of Maggie's "great lie." When she finally realizes that it is really Maggie that he loves, Sandra relinquishes Pete to Maggie and returns to her solitary life as a pianist.

The rivalry between Maggie and Sandra is musically intensified by the juxtaposition of Sandra's theme, the opening passage from Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1, and Maggie's theme, a gentle waltz-like melody that doubles as her love theme with Pete. Sandra, who is portrayed as self-serving and overly aggressive in her insistence on being the dominant partner in her brief marriage with Pete, is repeatedly shown playing the opening chords of the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto, both in concert and while practicing. The strength and athleticism required to play these crashing chords accentuates Sandra's masculine side, as physical strength is an attribute traditionally assigned to men. Compare this with Maggie's FRC, a gentle waltz referencing domestic bliss and above all proper, heteronormative gender roles between the male and female dance partners. By scoring Maggie with music normally reserved for a secondary female character, Steiner reinforces the understanding of Maggie as a character who deserves

Pete because of her ability to subordinate herself to the role of love object. In this way, the FRC shows itself to be so strong as to reference the familiar meaning behind the archetype despite the departure from the expected model, as in Clément's example of Leonore in Beethoven's *Fidelio*.

*Drama: Angela in A Place in the Sun (1951)*

By the 1950s, both the types of narratives being told and the kinds of music that could be used to tell them had begun to change in Hollywood. For one thing, the sexual and moral standards to which women were previously held were beginning to loosen. Whereas earlier the absence of overt desire from the romantic object was all but required, now a female character could occasionally show more initiative in her own romantic pursuits without losing her feminine virtue. *A Place in the Sun* complicates both the female love object archetype and the model for the FRC, although ultimately it reinforces rather than challenges the ideology behind the Feminine Romantic Cliché.

The love object character is Angela (Elizabeth Taylor), the glamorous society girl with whom George (Montgomery Clift) falls in love despite already being in a relationship with plain working girl Alice (Shelley Winters). Angela is a relatively independent woman who makes her own choices in her romantic relationships and does not need to be introduced to her own sexuality by an acceptable male protagonist. She is still, however, acceptable as the film's love object in part due to the contrast between her and Alice. Throughout the film George, a poor boy trying to work his way up in the world, struggles to separate himself from Alice in order to be with Angela, only to be confronted with Alice's surprise pregnancy. Angela is George's feminine ideal: wealthy, beautiful, and sophisticated, in contrast with the unfortunately poor, plain, and prosaic Alice, who has no theme of her own. Alice's willingness to have sex with

George early in their relationship also makes Angela seem more like a proper love object in comparison.

The FRC that Franz Waxman wrote for Angela reflects changing attitudes toward female sexuality. For at least two decades, female promiscuity and deviance onscreen had been commonly reflected in the soundtrack with jazz-inflected music. Jazz continued to signify sexual and moral deviance into the 1950s and beyond, but as this example from *A Place in the Sun* shows, the possibilities for its meaning within a film's narrative had grown from a simple signifier of deviance. The FRC is introduced in nearly in the same manner as Nora's from *The Luck of the Irish*, which played simultaneously with Anne Baxter's first appearance. But Waxman complicates both Angela and George's perception of Angela with his treatment of the theme. In the scene, George is at the home of his wealthy relatives the Eastmans, who are somewhat embarrassed of their poor relation. While George clumsily tries to make conversation with his sophisticated relatives, the door behind him opens and a beautiful young woman enters and approaches. The music that begins to play the moment she enters immediately paints the woman, whom we will soon learn is Angela, as a romantic character, *even though George has not yet seen her*. Once her presence is made known, George turns to look at her and the character of the music changes immediately. The melody is the same, but it is played by the alto saxophone, ornamented with florid jazz tropes, and the harmonies become dissonant and nonfunctional.

Through the culturally loaded timbre of the saxophone, which replaced the more neutral strings at the crucial moment of George's first glimpse of her, the scene positions Angela both as a love object, and from George's exaggerated subjectivity, a sex object as well—as in earlier examples, it still positions the woman as the object rather than the subject of the theme. This is

Angela not in her pure love object form, but sexualized and seen through George's eyes. In George's imagination, Angela becomes an object of sexual desire and fascination, and in subsequent scenes whenever he sees or thinks of her we hear this jazz-inflected variant of the FRC. But the music does not taint Angela's character; rather it tells us much more about George, showing us the intensity of his feelings for her and foreshadowing the tragic outcome of their love affair (Alice is killed in a boating accident for which George might have been responsible, and he is later convicted of her murder, for which he is ultimately executed). "Angela" recurs throughout the film in both forms: the original for more objective portrayals of her and the jazz variant when we glimpse her from George's point of view. George's lower class background and sexual frustration contrasts with Angela's upper class sophistication and comparative sexual restraint, a juxtaposition that is brought to the fore by the jazz-influenced music that distinguishes Angela from George's subjectivity, and the classically derived version of the same theme that purports to represent Angela objectively.

*Historical adventure/swashbuckler: Rowena and Rebecca in Ivanhoe (1952)*

Because the FRC singles out one character for her unique position as the ideal mate for the male protagonist, it is highly unusual for a composer to write two such themes in one film for two different female characters. But in *Ivanhoe*, Sir Walter Scott's story of a medieval English knight who fights for King Richard's freedom and in the process aids (and is aided by) the oppressed Jewish population of England, composer Miklós Rózsa scores both Rowena and her rival Rebecca as idealized feminine/romantic women. The considerable contrast between the two themes, however, distinguishes Rebecca's exotic and more active femininity—Rebecca has a much more active role in the plot and helps move the story forward—from Rowena's passive

and more conventional femininity. This distinction helps to demonstrate why Rowena is the correct love for Ivanhoe (Robert Taylor), despite Rebecca's obvious devotion to him.

Rowena's theme plays when we first meet her, as she sits alone in her chambers wearing a virginal white gown. The servant Wamba enters, followed by Ivanhoe, with whom Rowena shares a romantic reunion. A gentle English horn melody with a Mixolydian inflection at the end of the first phrase, the tranquil music is soon covered by the dialogue, making it difficult to hear. The quiet, pastoral serenity of the music and its almost inaudible disappearance into the soundtrack emphasize Rowena's passivity and gentleness. Such is the strength of the FRC that only the brief opening of the theme, before it is covered by dialogue, is necessary to situate the viewer as to Rowena's personality and function within the narrative. The conversation touches on Rowena's undying devotion to Ivanhoe despite his long absence as well as on her feminine delicacy, which comes up when Ivanhoe recalls how Rowena "trembled" when they once made a blood oath to each other. In a single scene, Rowena is established as the good woman, the female love object with whom Ivanhoe *must* be united at the film's end.

But the story throws us a complication in the form of Rebecca, the beautiful young Jewish woman who risks everything to help Ivanhoe in his quest and nurses him back to health after he is seriously wounded in the tournament. Rebecca is also in love with Ivanhoe, and though he cares for her too, he never wavers in his devotion to Rowena. While she seems to fill the role of the operatic second woman, Rebecca is not portrayed negatively, nor does she do anything particularly wicked or unfeminine to jeopardize her position as a good woman. She is, on the contrary, the one side of the feminine coin to which Rowena represents the other half. Rowena is gentle, passive, and domestic, but it is Rebecca who devotes herself fully to supporting Ivanhoe in achieving his goals—neither woman possesses all the important traits of

the ideal female love object. But only one woman can be Ivanhoe's true love, and the two themes reveal which it is to be: for whereas Rowena's theme portrays her as an ideal, passive, good woman, Rebecca's paints her as a vibrant and exotic. "Rebecca" is first heard after Ivanhoe has rescued the old man Isaac, Rebecca's father, and accompanies him home. Ivanhoe glimpses Rebecca, who quickly and modestly hides her face with a veil, in the upstairs window. The Phrygian-mode melody helps to exoticize Rebecca, who as a Jew is an Other in medieval English society. Unlike Rowena's hard-to-hear English horn solo, Rebecca's theme is played by the entire violin section on the resonant G-string, giving it a passionate and full-bodied timbre. Significantly, Rebecca's theme sounds in a much lower register and with a heavier sound than Rowena's, just as the nineteenth-century-opera first woman's vocal part would have been higher and lighter than the second woman's. A brief and inconclusive motive, it has no satisfactory closing cadence, sounding occasionally major but more often minor.<sup>34</sup>

This FRC places Rebecca in the position of a female love object while at the same time revealing the reason why ultimately she will not be successful in becoming the object of Ivanhoe's romantic desire. It helps to situate her as a good character—as the "other" woman traditionally she would have been more like Sandra in *The Great Lie*, overly aggressive or masculine, or like Alice in *A Place in the Sun*, boring and incapable of inspiring romantic love in the male hero. It also helps make her even more sympathetic when she is threatened by the evil De Bois-Guilbert (George Sanders); as an innocent love object, the danger is more real than it would be were Rebecca portrayed as sexually experienced or aggressive. Ultimately, though,

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<sup>34</sup> Rózsa would write a very similar melody seven years later that would once again serve as an exotic love theme in the biblical epic *Ben-Hur*.

Rebecca's ethnic Otherness, as well as Rowena's superior passivity and gentle nature, make it impossible for her to be that woman.<sup>35</sup>

### **A “highly decorative” role: Maid Marian in *The Adventures of Robin Hood***

The above analyses demonstrate the purpose of the FRC in different types of films, but they do not show how it works within the context of an entire film score and over the course of a feature-length story. In the context of the score as a whole, the FRC always works on the level of a convention but at the same time it can be more malleable and complex, seemingly working against character archetypes and conventionalized portrayals. Erich Wolfgang Korngold's score from *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938, dirs. William Keighley and Michael Curtiz) offers an interesting example because of how it plays both within and outside expectations for how conventional film music works. A swashbuckling adventure movie featuring conventional character types, including a dashing male hero and a winsome damsel in distress, *Robin Hood* uses the FRC for the expected character, Maid Marian. But instead of composing a simple FRC, Korngold scores a two-part theme that at first seems to complicate the character, but in the end serves to reinforce gender expectations by sticking closely to traditionally feminine musical signifiers and emphasizing personality traits that make Marian an ideal love object. As already suggested in the examples of *A Place in the Sun* and *Ivanhoe*, even when composers treated the FRC creatively, the cultural gender expectations it upholds and the gendered musical codes it

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<sup>35</sup> The musical characteristics identified above as being understood as feminine and masculine are worth comparing to Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida's findings in *Ten Little Tunes: Towards a Musicology of the Mass Media* (New York: Mass Media Music Scholars' Press, 2003). The authors surveyed listeners on their reactions to ten melodies from film and television shows from the 1950s through the 1980s, uncovering what kinds of commonly held associations Western listeners have with difference aspects of melody, harmony, instrumentation, tempo, and so on. Their findings on what musical characteristics listeners associate with men and women are remarkably similar to my own, suggesting that the gender associations have remained firmly entrenched in the American mind-set at the at the time of this survey, in part because of their repeated use within Hollywood film scores.



references are so strong that more often than not it fulfills the same purpose as it does when it and its corresponding love object character are more simply portrayed.

In Warner Bros. hugely successful, Technicolor version of the Robin Hood legend, the screenwriters created the iconic story that would inform and inspire future Robin Hood films, television shows, and cartoons up to the present day. In *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, Robin (Errol Flynn) is a Saxon lord who becomes the protector of the oppressed Saxon peasants against their overlords, the greedy and powerful Normans. Once he has been branded an outlaw, Robin forms his band of merry men who swear to help the poor and fight for the good King Richard, who has been captured and is being held for ransom in Austria while Prince John (Claude Rains) and Guy of Gisborne (Basil Rathbone) plot to usurp his throne.<sup>36</sup> Robin soon encounters the Lady Marian (Olivia de Havilland), a beautiful but haughty and standoffish ward of the king. Marian initially supports her own people, whom she sees as the legitimate custodians of law and order in Nottingham. Only when confronted with the cruelty of the Normans and after being convinced of Robin's selfless devotion to the rightful king does Marian fall in love with and shift her allegiance to him. After several episodic adventures, Robin eventually helps to restore Richard to the throne, while also saving Marian from the clutches of Prince John and defeating

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<sup>36</sup> The idea of stealing from the rich *to give to the poor* is not emphasized in this film as it is in later Robin Hoods, including the animated Disney film from 1973, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991), and the BBC's recent television series (2006–9). Nick Roddick in *A New Deal in Entertainment* and Ben Winters in his film score guide both point out that when Robin steals the ransom money from Guy of Gisborne he vows to hold it for Richard rather than dividing it amongst the poor, and Richard is allowed to keep his money in the forest merely by claiming to be a friend of the king. This Robin Hood, Ina Rae Hark argues, "is not a revolutionary, but . . . a counterrevolutionary, determined to restore responsible government and sensible economic policy and maintain the social status quo that keeps disgraced knights in their place." Ben Winters, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold's The Adventures of Robin Hood: A Film Score Guide* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 64; Nick Roddick, *A New Deal in Entertainment: Warner Bros. in the 1930s* (London: British Film Institute, 1983), 241; Ina Rae Hark, "The Visual Politics of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*," *Journal of Popular Film* 5, no. 1 (1976): 3–17.

Gisborne in a spectacular sword fight. In return for his help and unswerving loyalty, Richard pardons Robin and his men and offers Robin Marian's hand in marriage.

In the context of the film's narrative, Marian serves the very specific purpose of providing a love interest. She is integrated into the plot to the extent that she aids in Robin's rescue midway through the film and must herself be rescued in the end, after her betrayal of the Normans is discovered by Gisborne and Prince John sentences her to death. As defined above by Brian Taves, the love story's plot "parallels the main themes" of the narrative, so that the romance develops alongside and in accord with the swashbuckling plot. But the basic structure of the plot—a struggle between male heroes and villains—could stand very well on its own without any female characters at all, and at least one member of the Warner Bros. writing team seemed to think that the film would work better without a love story at all. In one set of notes an anonymous (presumably male) author put forth his own unique vision of the film he hoped would be made.<sup>37</sup> His description of the title character, based closely on his understanding of the original Robin Hood ballads, is what one familiar with versions of the story that both preceded and followed the Warner Bros. film might expect: "Robin Hood's character stands out with the greatest clarity. He was gay, brave, chivalrous, a little boastful—not lacking human faults of an understandable nature, and his object in life was to rectify the abuses of his generation—not pompously, but in a sprightly, almost elfin manner. He stole from the rich to give to the poor, but only because he felt that the rich had stolen from the poor in order to become rich. He was a small Czar in an outlaw realm of his own."<sup>38</sup> Upon turning to the subject of the love interest, or "heart interest" as he calls it, the author diverges considerably from what we have since come to

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<sup>37</sup> He was probably Rowland Leigh, one of the original screenwriters asked to write a story treatment as early as 1935. The final script was penned by Norman Reilly Raine and Seton I. Miller. See Winters, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold's The Adventures of Robin Hood*, 55.

<sup>38</sup> Anonymous note from Warner Bros. Archive.

expect from Robin Hood. He states that Robin's "interest in women was chivalrous rather than amorous," and points out the relative lack of female characters in the earliest of Robin Hood lore.

Finally, he writes:

Naturally I understand that, under ordinary circumstances, what is called a heart interest is considered essential. However, I would strenuously put forward the suggestion in this case either that Maid Marian be omitted completely, in that she is a later and purely operetta addition to the story of Robin Hood, or that she be brought in as little as possible, because women hold no place in the scheme of life of Robin Hood and his band of merry men. It is implied in the ballads that when periodically they swooped down on the fair city of Nottingham they caused no little excitement with the local ladies, but there is not even a hint at any moment that women could possibly have played any serious part in their scheme of things, and it is a noticeable fact that from the moment Allan-a-Dale married fair Ellen he ceased to be an active member of the band.<sup>39</sup>

It is important to note here that Marian was thus considered by this contributor to be an irrelevant contribution to the Robin Hood mythology. This is due not entirely to her being a "later and purely operetta addition" to the myth—so too are other familiar aspects of the Robin Hood story including Robin as the Earl of Huntington rather than a yeoman, the *Ivanhoe*-inspired Saxon/Norman conflict and centrality of Prince John, and likewise the Crusades-era setting. Rather, what seems most important to the author is the argument that "women could [not] possibly have played any serious part in their scheme of things" at this point in history.<sup>40</sup> According to him, romance stops the action from moving forward, just as an emotion-laden operatic aria halts the progression of the plot. Better, this author argues, that a character whose purpose is only to support a love story be left out of the film entirely.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. The anonymous author included the following caveat explaining more thoroughly (although from a highly subjective point of view) Marian's role in the original Robin Hood ballads, which he somewhat misrepresents in his initial comments: "In case my references to Maid Marian being an operetta intrusion should be misunderstood, let me point out that there is a ballad referring to Maid Marian, though it is of a much later date than the others—i.e. written around 1500. This, however, is one of the least important of the ballads and one of the least entertaining because, to tell the truth, when Maid Marian appears in this version she appears as the vis-à-vis of Friar Tuck, and so it can be safely said that she has only been linked with Robin Hood at a far later date in order to create what seems to me an absolutely artificial love angle to the adventures of our hero."

<sup>40</sup> Some earlier incarnations of Robin Hood do suggest otherwise, such as the 1822 novel *Maid Marian* by Thomas Love Peacock, in which Marian *does* join Robin's band and is portrayed as a skilled archer.

Although no other evidence either supporting or opposing the exclusion of Marian was found in the archives, the notes show that this type of discourse—the suggestion of dropping what we now consider an essential romantic lead—did take place concerning Marian; to at least one participant, she was a completely disposable and even unattractive character. The other screenwriters, presumably, disagreed with the author of the notes, and Marian appears in the film first as an object of conquest, then as an unexpected savior, and finally as a damsel in distress who helps Robin prove his manliness and therefore his worth as a nobleman and leader of his people. She fulfills her role, following Taves, of helping the hero demonstrate his manliness through “his nobility, chivalry, courage, and altruism,” a role she shares with several other characters, including Guy of Gisborne. Just as Gisborne plays this role actively as a physical threat to Robin’s masculine dominance, Marian does so passively, with her passive femininity reinforcing Robin’s masculinity by contrast with the help of her romantic music. According to Ben Winters, Errol Flynn’s Robin Hood is one whose masculinity is under attack, “both implicitly by Sir Guy as a rival for Marian, and overtly by Little John who, upon being threatened by a longbow when he only has a staff, asks ‘aren’t you man enough to . . .’ Robin cuts him off before he can finish his question, slighted by the questioning of his masculinity.”<sup>41</sup> Both Prince John and the Sheriff of Nottingham are portrayed as effeminate, John due to his effete and mannered portrayal by Claude Rains, and the Sheriff due to his inability to fight, encapsulated humorously by his failed attempt to unsheathe his sword in the film’s climactic fight scene. Only Gisborne is shown to be Robin’s masculine equal—even Little John, though he defeats Robin with the quarter staff, submits to Robin’s authority and even to being called by his emasculating (if also ironic) nickname. Winters argues that Robin’s acts of aggression symbolize

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<sup>41</sup> Winters, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold’s The Adventures of Robin Hood*, 68.

a kind of sexual violence that can only end “once Sir Guy is dead, with no perceived rival to the masculine subject position, and effeminate men captured.”<sup>42</sup> This is also the point at which Robin can legitimately claim Marian as his own, as sanctioned by King Richard. Although Winters does not state it explicitly, the implication is that those who transgress supposedly normal gendered behavior—men who are effeminate—are implicitly bad and must be conquered. Gisborne is afforded a special respect despite the fact that he is evil, because he is Robin’s masculine equal.<sup>43</sup> Gisborne helps reinforce Robin’s masculine dominance actively as a rival, and Marian does so passively as a feminine counterpart.

Why would a composer such as Korngold use an FRC for a character like Marian, rather than depict her with (a) no music, or (b) a different kind of music? By using music to underscore and reinforce Marian’s role as decorative, romantic, and feminine, a strategy to which I return below, the filmmakers strengthen her overall functional role in the film and weaken any sort of independence, autonomy, or complexity that she might otherwise have had. This is not to say that anyone involved in the film directly expressed the idea of weakening the character through music; rather, by choosing music that accentuates this type of feminine character, the filmmakers acted (whether consciously or not) to strip Marian of autonomy and complexity, as these qualities are not valued in the kind of character archetype Marian exemplifies. Additionally, they might have wanted to use music to help bolster the manliness of their hero, a task for which the FRC and love object are eminently suited: using an FRC helps to reinforce the femininity, Otherness, and limited role of a functional female character, a task that is especially important in

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>43</sup> Will Scarlett (Patric Knowles) is also portrayed as somewhat effeminate, with his dandified red costume and ability to play the lute, which he does whilst Robin tries to prove his manliness against Little John. He is more “pretty” than handsome, and he is never challenged to prove his masculinity in a fight with Robin as Little John, Friar Tuck, and Gisborne are. His effeminacy, however, serves to make Robin seem even more masculine, and any suggestion of a lack of masculine potency is tempered by Will’s heroic acts (unlike Prince John, Will is shown fighting, and he rescues Much after the fight with Dickon).

a story in which the normative masculinity of the hero is so crucial. In order to understand why the use of the FRC for Marian is so significant, let us look first at a character from *The Adventures of Robin Hood* who does *not* merit such music, but who instead is scored with contrasting music that emphasizes humorously how different she is from the ideal love object character. By looking at a female character who is *not* treated as a love object, we are better able to appreciate the artifice and constructedness of Marian as the love object; viewing Marian in relationship to a female character without such distinctive qualities thus helps to expose the idealized (if ultimately unrealistic) nature of her character.

The only other female character in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* is Bess (Una O'Connor), Marian's lady-in-waiting. Everything about Bess seems to be created specifically to contrast with Marian. Where Marian is young and beautiful, Bess is elderly and plain; where Marian is a noblewoman who speaks with a refined British accent, Bess is utterly common and speaks in a lower-class Irish brogue. De Havilland was a popular box office beauty who had already played love object characters in *Captain Blood* and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936) and would soon epitomize the helpless good woman/love object as Melanie in *Gone with the Wind* (1939), while O'Connor was a character actress and comedienne who had risen to fame playing comic characters in films such as *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935). Marian exudes a romantic, feminine sensibility that makes her the character the audience *expects* to fall in love with the hero; Bess's relationship with the younger and less experienced Much the miller's son (Herbert Mundin), on the other hand, is comical and even grotesque due to its improbability within the context of the Hollywood narrative; ugly people don't generally fall in love in Hollywood movies, and when they do, it is pitched as something funny rather than romantic



Example 1.17: "Flirt" from *The Adventures of Robin Hood*

(Figure 1.1).<sup>44</sup> Bess is also, as she hints suggestively to Much at one point, not sexually innocent, precluding her from being scored with music that suggests feminine purity.

Bess's musical accompaniment reinforces her comic role, which in turn throws into sharper relief Marian's romantic role. Bess is not scored with an FRC; in fact, she has no musical theme of her own. Instead, it is her relationship with Much that becomes associated with a quirky



Figure 1.1: "Flirt:" Much (Herbert Mundin) and Bess (Una O'Connor) flirt on the way to the feast in Sherwood Forest.

theme called "Flirt" (Example 1.17)—just as an FRC is connected to a romantic relationship, so too is Bess given music that is associated with one. But "Flirt" is very obviously not an FRC, for reasons that will soon become clear. We actually hear this theme first when it supports Robin's early and unsuccessful attempts to woo Marian, but eventually it becomes associated

<sup>44</sup> Music examples from *The Adventures of Robin Hood* are based on the conductor's score housed at the Warner Bros. Archive, Cinematic Arts Library, University of Southern California Libraries.

exclusively with Bess and Much. “Flirt” is not an FRC-like theme, thanks to its whimsical chromatic melodic line provided by an initial chromatic ascent followed by a leap of a minor seventh (resulting in a diminished octave between the first and third pitches of the melody). This awkward, almost-but-not-quite-lyrical melody matches the almost-romantic nature of the Bess/Much relationship, helping to brand it as comical and silly against the more serious and romantic love (and love theme) of Robin and Marian. Bess’s obvious unsuitability as a romantic character sets Marian’s equally obvious suitability for the role in stark relief, with each character’s music subtly reinforcing what would seem to be self-evident. Bess and her lack of an FRC reinforce everything about Marian and her FRC that make her the ideal feminine woman, and her relationship with Robin the ideal romance.<sup>45</sup> This in turn, and within the larger discourse of Hollywood film and Western literature from which this tradition stems, naturalizes Marian’s romantic function, ensuring that the audience will not question the character’s role any more than they would question Robin as the hero.

Marian is scored with an FRC because she is beautiful, young, and sexually innocent; these qualities help reinforce her function within the plot as the object of conquest and finally damsel in distress that solidifies Robin’s status as the ultimate masculine hero. In addition to de-emphasizing her heroism and individuality, Marian’s music also performs another role, one that we do not find in the other films discussed earlier in the chapter. The FRC recuperates and re-feminizes Marian after she is initially on the side of the villains and coldly refuses to show warmth or compassion for the poor. The FRC actually appears in two parts that are eventually brought together in one extended musical theme: the “English Air #1” (Example 1.18) and the

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<sup>45</sup> Just as Robin’s companions serve to reinforce his place as the leader and the alpha male.



*Dolcissimo*  
Solo Viol.

*pp*

5

*p*

Fl.

*piu p*

*Espr.*

*mp*  
All Viols

*sub. p*

Example 1.18: “English Air #1” from *The Adventures of Robin Hood*

*ESPRESS*

*mp*

*ESPRESS*

4

*ESPRESS*

*pp*

Example 1.19: “Lady Marian” from *The Adventures of Robin Hood*

love theme proper, referred to in the score as “Lady Marian” (Example 1.19). These two musical fragments reinforce the two most important aspects of Marian’s character, and the two sides of her femininity: her docile domesticity, and her romantic essence. Instead of giving the impression of two separate themes differentiating Marian’s romantic presence from the essence of her character, the two-part FRC highlights it by presenting the two sides of her femininity separately and then bringing them together at the moment when she finally reaches her feminine potential by giving her love to Robin.

It is important to understand how the two-part theme works to rehabilitate and re-position Marian as an appropriate love object character. Unlike characters such as Arabella and Rowena

who are perfect love objects from the beginning, Marian starts off on the side of the evil Normans and learns to be a love object as she learns to feel compassion for the Saxons. The plot actually requires Marian to *become* a love object in order for the audience's expectations and desires to be met. The first part of the FRC, "English Air #1," plays with Marian's introduction during the banquet scene early in the film. "English Air #1" has a gently rocking melody with a constant dotted rhythm in 6/4 time. In the first phrase the melodic gestures aim upwards, although each subsequent gesture drops down the scale. In the second phrase the gestures and melodic line as a whole descend. The melodic contour and instrumentation make this theme consistent with the feminine FRCs presented above, but its placement and presentation are as reserved and reticent as Marian herself. Cold, haughty, and standoffish, Marian is uninterested in her suitor Guy of Gisborne—her cool dismissal of him seems to emasculate and embarrass him, much to the amusement of Prince John. She shows no more romantic inclinations when Robin soon after brazenly interrupts the Norman feasting by entering the hall carrying a dead deer across his shoulders. Lacking compassion and an interest in romance, Marian is incomplete as a woman. The quiet, reserved presentation of "English Air #1" supports her personality at this point, lacking the sentimentality and passion of the typical FRC. But the music does not entirely *undermine* Marian's status as the love object, even if she has not yet fulfilled her potential. The music's tranquility and obvious references to genteel dance music help to portray Marian as both domestic (rather than politically oriented, worldly, or adventurous) and passive. "English Air #1" alerts the audience that Marian is the love interest, but with a catch: only when Marian learns to embrace her feminine nature, show compassion and empathy for the poor, and fall in love with Robin will she become a worthy female love object with corresponding music to match. In line

with contemporary views of women relying on men to awaken their sexual potential, Marian *needs* Robin in order to awaken her own passive sexuality.

The emergence of the “Lady Marian” theme continues the work of “English Air #1,”



Figure 1.2: At the beginning of the feast, Marian (Olivia de Havilland) shows nothing but contempt for Robin (Errol Flynn).

demonstrating the beginnings of Marian’s ability to feel love and compassion and allowing her to become the film’s required love object; as such it first appears only when Marian begins to succumb to romantic feelings for Robin, which happens during the feast in Sherwood Forest. Before

this happens, Robin and his men have taken Marian captive along with Gisborne and the Sheriff of Nottingham, and we at first hear “Flirt” as Robin tries unsuccessfully to charm the indignant Marian. During the feast Gisborne and the Sheriff are subjected to mockery and contempt from Robin’s men, but Marian is treated as an honored if unwilling guest (Figure 1.2). As the scene progresses, she begins to warm to Robin, in part because she is impressed by his devotion to King Richard, but also because she finally begins to understand the suffering of the Saxons at the hands of the Normans. Immediately after Marian is shown firsthand the destitution of the people Robin is protecting, we hear a new theme, the one that will eventually be identified in the score as “Lady Marian”: this melody features expressive leaps and halting rhythms, as the high pitch, a dotted quarter note, seems to float in the air before it reluctantly falls down to its lowest pitch.

The melody seeks to rise rather than to fall, and although its first utterance falls down the scale, in the second it rises an octave. More chromatic and passionate than the “English Air #1,” this theme illustrates the romantic rather than domestic side of Marian’s femininity. It is this lyrical, expressive theme that the astute listener is most likely to identify as the love theme, and its placement in the film at this point helps to associate it more with Marian than with Robin—the sudden emergence of a striking new musical theme corresponds to the sudden change in her behavior, and her obviously blossoming feelings for Robin are likewise connected to her burgeoning correct femininity.

In the scene described above, we hear only the first strain of “Lady Marian.” The full theme plays—and is finally connected to “English Air #1”—in Robin and Marian’s love scene. After Robin has been captured at the archery tournament and Marian assists his men in his rescue (she does not take part herself but instead uses her knowledge of the castle to concoct a plan that is executed by Robin’s men), he pays her a visit by climbing onto her balcony under cover of



Figure 1.3: Marian, displaying her long girlish hair, begins to admit her feelings for Robin.

darkness. The cue begins with a motive entitled “Robin Hood #1: Quasi Romance.”

Fluttering strings and muted horns play a shimmering accompaniment to a lyrical variant of Robin’s “Hero” motive as Robin climbs the

trellis up to Marian’s room. He listens, hidden, as inside

Marian and Bess discuss Robin, and at this point the FRC “Lady Marian” plays. Although as a love theme it of course must be associated with a *pair* of characters, again the placement shifts its focus primarily onto Marian, who is accompanied by it as she confesses to Bess the confusing physical sensations (“goose pimples”) her feelings for Robin are causing her (Figure 1.3). Accordingly, it sounds like music for a romantic feminine character, not a heroic masculine character. The theme expands beyond its initial statement in Sherwood Forest; the expressive melody reaches upward not only within the scale, but it also rises in key, progressively modulating higher from B major to C major to D-flat major, and on up the scale. The quick modulations preclude resolution and the sense of excitement builds and builds until it finally rests for a while in E major while Marian and Robin, who has by this time made his presence known, engage in important dialogue—Robin thanks Marian for orchestrating his escape and tries to coax an admission of love from her. The dialogue mostly drowns out the music that follows, which is called simply “Conversation” in the score. This extended moment of harmonic and motivic stability ends when Robin, still unable to win a confession of love from the ever-modest Marian, playfully threatens to give himself up to the guards. At this point the “Quasi Romance” Robin Hood music from the beginning of the scene returns, now less stable with the bass line in E minor but with the harp, flute, and violins in G major.<sup>46</sup> The harmonies increase in dissonance until finally Marian confesses her true feelings—Robin’s masculine influence has finally allowed her to acknowledge feelings previously denied to her—and the “Lady Marian”

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<sup>46</sup> The use of Robin’s “Hero” theme here and earlier in the scene adds an element of romance to Robin’s characterization, but it does so by reinforcing his heroic status rather than by negating it by relying on Marian’s more feminine love theme.

theme returns firmly in D major.<sup>47</sup> The FRC is finally and resolutely fixed as the film's love theme.

Once the FRC has reached completion and cemented Marian's romantic role in the narrative, its purpose is basically fulfilled and, like Marian herself, has very little else to do for the remainder of the film. The love scene ends with a restatement of "English Air #1," Marian's original theme, bringing the two fragments of Marian together and solidifying her romantic/domestic role. Played by a solo violin and marked "dolcissimo" in the score, this part of the larger-scale FRC reinforces Marian's domesticity and gentleness after the sweeping passion of the main love theme. Marian is capable of appropriate displays of passion, but at the core she is gentle and passive, as this theme suggests. The only other notable usage of the FRC after this point in the film is when Robin rescues Marian at the climax of the final battle. The "Lady Marian" theme can be heard triumphantly with brass instrumentation followed by the full orchestra as Robin, who has just slain Gisborne in a spectacular swordfight, sweeps into the dungeon and takes Marian in his arms. After Robin's masculine/heroic rescue of Marian we do not hear the FRC again, not even when King Richard gives them permission to marry—instead we hear Robin's "Hero" theme as the film comes to a triumphant close. The heroic rescue, after all, not the marriage, is the climax and goal of the narrative, and in the end Marian is once again revealed to be a function of Robin's story. Her purpose has already been fulfilled, and the film ends on a grand iteration of the "Hero" theme.

Everything about the FRC, from its deployment throughout the score to indications on the physical score itself, works toward portraying Marian as a character whose primary purpose is to provide romance for the handsome hero Robin Hood. Our impressions of Marian as love object

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<sup>47</sup> She must be coerced into admitting her feelings, demonstrating that she is still passive and feminine and not inappropriately forward.

are also aided by (a) visual aspects: Marian's costuming, including her modestly covered-up hair until the big love scene, and the juxtaposition of the beautiful and feminine de Havilland with the plain and spinsterish O'Connor; (b) narrative aspects, such as Marian's relative lack of agency and her importance to Prince John specifically because he hopes that a marriage between her and Gisborne will help solidify his position; and (c) casting choices, specifically the casting of two leads who had already been paired romantically to great success. In this way musical choices and other factors work together to naturalize the feminization and romanticization of de Havilland and her character. The Feminine Romantic Cliché, while more complex than the simplistic and overtly overdetermining examples from films like *The Luck of the Irish* and *Cloak and Dagger*, neatly fulfills its function by encapsulating the character's important feminine attributes, relating them to their function within the male hero's story, and preventing unfeminine characteristics from taking over the characterization. It also reinforces the ideology that women need men in order to realize their sexuality even better than the more typical, straightforward FRC, as it dramatizes the blossoming of Marian's sexual potential through the facilitation of Robin, whose influence provides the validation and paternalistic permission Marian needs.

The example of Marian in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* shows us how femininity and a woman's ability to inspire love were significant to the classical Hollywood narrative. As a tool for reinforcing, emphasizing, and leading the viewer to understand the woman's romantic function, the FRC was extremely valuable both in its conventionality and flexibility. Marian's purpose as the feminine love interest was not overlooked in contemporary reviews of the film. These reviews deemphasize her agency within the narrative and suggest that her role was understood as a mere "heart interest," a pretty face to create more audience interest among a sea of male actors. Two reviewers used the word "decorative" to describe de Havilland's character;

one writes, “An excellent cast was assembled in Mr. Flynn’s support. Here is Olivia de Havilland, highly decorative as Maid Marian, who renounces the Normans to help Robin Hood escape from the gallows.”<sup>48</sup> The other calls de Havilland “a beautifully appealing love interest. Necessarily her work is largely decorative...”<sup>49</sup> These reviews suggest that having female characters play such decorative roles was both normative and expected. What appears consistently in these reviews from 1938 and 1939 is that the reviewers always point out de Havilland’s beauty but say little if anything about what her character does. The following review differentiates between the swashbuckling domain of the male characters (with a provocative reference to Korngold’s music using gendered terminology) and the romantic domain of female characters:

There are the highest heroics, villainy galore, battles en masse and personal duels—that encounter of Rathbone and Flynn toward the movie’s end is a sweetheart—and all assembled into a movie that will keep you teetering on your seat. Even the masculine music composed for the picture by Erich Wolfgang Korngold sinks into the whole pattern and intensifies its sweep.

And there’s romance with the storybook heroine, lovely Olivia de Havilland, a Norman lady who is haughty until she realizes the wickedness of Prince John and offers aid to Robin Hood.<sup>50</sup>

Other characters are active and have actual personality traits; Marian is simply “beautiful”: “Mr. Flynn is a dashing swashbuckler; Miss De Havilland is beautiful; Mr. Rathbone is still among our suavest cut-throats and Claude Rains gives a subdued, subtle, and wholly admirable performance as Prince John.”<sup>51</sup> Both Flynn and Rathbone are described with words suggesting action—“swashbuckler,” “cut-throat”—and Rains is praised for his “subtle” (i.e., not

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<sup>48</sup> Rose Pelswick, “‘Robin Hood’ Lavish Film Filled with Action,” *New York Journal-American*, May 13, 1938.

<sup>49</sup> “‘ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD’ Another Warner Hit for Showmen,” review in *National Box Office Digest*, 5/18/38, p. 10.

<sup>50</sup> James S. Pooler, “‘Robin Hood’ and Ritz Brothers Comedy Headline New Detroit Screen Fare,” *Detroit Free Press*, May 14, 1938.

<sup>51</sup> James Thrasher of the *Indianapolis Times*, quoted in “Scripps-Howard Critics Name ‘Robin Hood’ Hit,” *Buffalo Times*, June 8, 1938.



overdetermined) characterization. De Havilland is recognized primarily for her physical attributes. Whether or not it was the filmmakers' intent to portray Maid Marian as a simple love object, this undeniably was the result.

### **FRCs and Love Objects in the 1950s and Beyond**

While the Feminine Romantic Cliché remains part of our contemporary motion picture landscape, even by the 1950s changes in the way gender and sexuality were portrayed onscreen, as already mentioned in the discussion of *A Place in the Sun*, meant that its use was becoming more limited. With notions of idealized femininity shifting and filmmakers seemingly becoming more comfortable with a wider variety of female roles, even the adventure film genre began to feature more complicated women and many storylines held no place for the FRC. In *Against All Flags* (1952) a curious role reversal features Errol Flynn as a naval officer posing as a pirate recruit in order to infiltrate a gang of pirates, and Maureen O'Hara as a "spitfire" female pirate captain who falls in love with him. O'Hara plays a strong woman who calls the shots in her romantic relationships but retains her femininity despite her illegal activities (and she gets Flynn in the end). And in *The Buccaneer's Girl* (1950), Yvonne De Carlo plays an equally feisty working-class singer who pursues a pirate (Philip Friend) posing as a New Orleans gentleman. In both of these pirate swashbucklers, the female love interests have considerably more agency than did their earlier counterparts, they pursue the male heroes rather than playing the part of the reluctant romantic object, and they are not punished for their relatively unfeminine behavior. Neither, however, is the type of woman who is scored with an FRC.

Other films of the 1950s also featured a shift in focus on a woman's sexuality to other issues; in 1955's *Picnic* beautiful Madge Owens (Kim Novak), who wants nothing more than to

be valued for something other than her looks, challenges the entire gender system that values feminine decorativeness when she asks her mother, “What good is it *just* to be pretty?” In the same year Novak played a very different kind of character, one whose sexuality and past history would have singled her out for punishment ten years earlier. Opposite Frank Sinatra in *The Man with the Golden Arm*, Novak’s character Molly represents the better love interest in contrast with Frankie’s neurotic wife, despite her active love life and implied past involvement with Frankie. But despite these steps forward in the portrayal of women and femininity, the Feminine Romantic Cliché continued to create a gender identity for female characters that is based on a conflation of femaleness, femininity, and romance in films that position white male characters in a place of privilege with all other characters revolving around them in places of secondary or every tertiary importance. If the music makes any impact upon the audience, it is likely to reinforce the idea, supplied by the film’s narrative, that this woman is here not because her own motivations are important, but because we need her there to satisfy *our* desire for a love story.

## Chapter 2: The Bitch and the Wildcat

I'm thinking of a woman called Jezebel who did evil in the sight of God.  
—Aunt Belle, *Jezebel*

You call her a child, Laura Belle? Under that heathen blanket,  
there's a full-blossomed woman built *by the devil to drive men crazy!*  
—The Sinkiller, *Duel in the Sun*

As demonstrated in chapter 1 and its discussion of the Feminine Romantic Cliché, film music clichés became a common way for composers to reinforce, whether consciously or not, dominant cultural ideologies in film narratives. Relying on musical clichés, however, was not the only way to score films; many films featured significantly more complex scoring for individual characters than the music that accompanied Marian (which itself is more involved than a typical FRC). By using misdirection and working against convention, some Hollywood composers were able to make their characters appear far more individualized and less essentialized than the female love object as well as to deliver other powerful information about the character not supplied by the visuals and dialogue.

The goals and precepts of the Production Code, as put forward in the Introduction, suggest that classical Hollywood film both served as entertainment and also operated didactically. As such, it not only presented positive examples of behavior for both men and women but also demonstrated the negative consequences awaiting characters who transgress social and moral boundaries. Anti-heroes and anti-heroines like the gangster and the vamp proved attractive to filmgoers, but the Code ensured that they always received their comeuppance in the end. Composers and filmmakers also had the option of using music to

amplify or condemn bad behavior. For example, as Kathryn Kalinak has convincingly argued in *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film*, female characters who transgressed the boundaries of proper feminine behavior were often scored with music signifying their deviance.<sup>1</sup> For example, Kalinak explains, in *The Informer* (1935, Max Steiner), the prostitute Katie (Margot Grahame) is scored with a jazz-tinged theme that is completely unlike the music for her love object foil Mary (Heather Angel), who accordingly is scored with what I have called the film's Feminine Romantic Cliché. Along similar lines, the character Helen Ramirez (Katy Jurado) in *High Noon* (1952, Dimitri Tiomkin) is scored with minor-mode Spanish-sounding music. Helen's music acts as a signifier of her non-whiteness—and of the sexual excess that was thought naturally to accompany it—in contrast to the normative, wholesome Americana of the rest of the score that recalls the style topics common to other westerns of the 1940s and 1950s. Neither Katie nor Helen is portrayed as an entirely bad character, but even sympathetic bad women were often scored with music laden with culturally constructed symbols of deviance, such as jazz or music of the ethnic Other. The music for both characters works in a similar manner, if to opposite effect, as the Feminine Romantic Cliché. It overdetermines the bad woman with musical reminders of her flawed character: in Katie's case, her sexual experience, and in Helen's, and her ethnic Otherness.

But composers did not always construct film music solely to emphasize or reinforce a woman's bad behavior. On the contrary, some featured complex and often contradictory musical accompaniments that could seemingly undermine contemporary ideology regarding idealized feminine behavior yet at the same time actually work to reinforce it. The films *Jezebel* (1938, Max Steiner) and *Duel in the Sun* (1946, Dimitri Tiomkin) both feature strong female

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<sup>1</sup> Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 120–29.

protagonists who defy conventions, and both are rich examples of film scores highlighted by musical variety. In *Jezebel*, Julie Marsden (Bette Davis) is portrayed as wicked due to her unacceptable behavior despite her privileged social standing; in *Duel in the Sun*, Pearl Chavez (Jennifer Jones) fails to achieve respectability due to her racial identity, which apparently precludes her from behaving appropriately. In each film the composers avoid simple musical clichés that would quickly overdetermine the characters as deviant, and the resulting characterizations are richly developed and individualistic. Initially this translates to a more positive portrayal of the women and an apparent, if temporary, reversal of contemporary gender ideology; by the end of each film, however, these women are portrayed—dramatically and musically—as fallen heroines. Each film raises the following important questions: how do the composers use music that would be easily comprehended by the audience to suggest the characters’ depth? What was the purpose of undermining (and then reinforcing) contemporary gender ideology, especially considering the didactic and moralistic goals of Hollywood film? To what extent does the music suggest that the characters are full and complex?

Both of the characters featured in this chapter were intentionally portrayed as bad women, an important point made clear not only from dialogue such as that from which each of this chapter’s two epigraphs were taken, but also from the language used by the filmmakers to describe the characters. In a 1935 memo, Warner Bros. executive Walter MacEwen wrote enthusiastically that Bette Davis would be a good choice as the main character in *Jezebel*, as she could “play the spots off the part of a little bitch of an aristocratic Southern girl.”<sup>2</sup> Another *Jezebel* contributor lamented that “although it is quite possible to put a vivid picture upon the

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<sup>2</sup> Memo from Walter MacEwen to Hal Wallis, Feb. 15, 1935, Warner Bros. Archive, Cinematic Arts Library, University of Southern California Libraries.

screen, that picture can only tell the story of the triumph of bitchery.”<sup>3</sup> And David O. Selznick, producer of *Duel in the Sun*, referred to the film’s half-Native American protagonist as a “wild cat,” drawing on racist ideology linking non-white female sexuality to animalistic behavior. The multifaceted musical characterizations provided by the films’ composers complicate these views, drawing out the characters’ individuality and encouraging the viewer to understand them not as female types but as complex, realistic women with real problems and goals motivating their behavior.

For Julie, her refusal to surrender her strong will and individuality to a society that requires her to submit to patriarchal authority translates into her being labeled a “bitch” and a “Jezebel,” although we will find that her music does not always work to reinforce or exaggerate her negative qualities.

### **Dangerous individualism: *Jezebel***

Toward the end of William Wyler’s antebellum melodrama *Jezebel*, the main character Julie Marsden is prevailed upon by the slaves at her Louisiana plantation, Halcyon, to join them in a communal sing-along. By this point in the film we know quite a bit about Julie, the headstrong young mistress of Halcyon, and although we have witnessed her fair treatment of the slaves, the camaraderie shown now to exist between them might take the viewer a bit by surprise. Rather than showing annoyance or anger at being interrupted in front of her guests—members of the white plantation-owning elite—Julie cheerfully greets the already-singing slaves and hushes them with a wave of her delicate white hands, calling out, “Let’s raise a ruckus tonight!” Sitting

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 221. The choice of adjective may have originated in the original play by Owen Davis from 1932, in which the character Ted Kendrick (Ted Dillard in the film) speaks the line, “You’re a bitch, Julie!” Owen Davis, *Jezebel*, manuscript copy, 1933.

herself down before them, her voluminous white gown billowing around her, Julie leads them in song (Figure 2.1):

Come along, oh chillen, little chillens come along,  
While the moon am shinin' bright  
Git on board and float down the river  
Gonna raise a ruckus tonight!<sup>4</sup>



Figure 2.1: Julie (seated) and the slaves raise a ruckus, to the disapproval of the other women (right, standing).

The joyful, carefree singing of the Hollywood-ized “contented slaves” belies the traumatic events that immediately preceded the scene, while the lyrics that refer to raising a “ruckus” seem to point directly to those events:<sup>5</sup> Julie has just unintentionally goaded her former fiancé’s hot-headed

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<sup>4</sup> The three songs used in this scene—a medley of “Susan Jane” and “Susie Gal” along with “Raise a Rukus Tonight,” as they are called in the film’s cue sheets—come from Thomas Washington Talley’s 1922 collection of folk songs, *Negro Folk Rhymes, Wise and Otherwise*, ed. Charles K. Wolfe (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), and the cue sheets confirm that this was the source used by the filmmakers. Talley’s book, however, included no musical notation in its original publication; he gives no hint as to the songs’ precise origins or how they might originally have been used, and he does not generally distinguish between songs of African American origin and those composed for blackface minstrel shows. The “authenticity” that these songs lend the scene, therefore, is highly suspect.

<sup>5</sup> Sterling A Brown identified seven types of African American characters as portrayed by white authors in his 1933 article, “Negro Character as Seen by White Authors,” *Journal of Negro Education* 2, no. 2 (1933): 179–203. The first of these is “The Contented Slave,” which he traces back to literature of the nineteenth century and which he demonstrates was a tool in the justification of slavery. The contented slave is also similar to Donald Bogle’s description of the “tom” character in his study of black stereotypes in American film. According to Bogle, characters in film who fit the tom stereotype “n’er turn against their white massas, and remain hearty, submissive, stoic, generous, selfless, and oh-so-very kind.” Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattos, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 4, 6.

younger brother Ted into challenging the experienced marksman Buck Cantrell to a duel. Despite Julie's pleas that Buck decline the challenge, he feigns ignorance of any duel—women after all, are supposed to be shielded from the indelicate realities of the world of men—and the men continue their preparations for the following morning's contest. Julie has, indeed, raised quite a ruckus. Assuming a mask of indifference, Julie joins her slaves in their exuberant, oblivious singing as the other white women watch, horror struck at Julie's callous behavior. Her actions—including her earlier behavior that provoked Ted's challenge, but especially her pretense in the face of such a catastrophe—seem to confirm not only their suspicions all along of Julie's vicious nature but also the film's labeling of her as a Jezebel.

But is Julie truly as callous as her companions believe her to be? Is Julie really the evil, man-eating Jezebel the film seems to claim? The stunned look on her ashen face as the scene comes to a close informs the audience otherwise: Julie is shocked by behavior of which she didn't believe herself capable, that her actions could have set off such a potentially deadly chain of events as a duel that will claim the life of one of her friends, and that her attempts to right the situation (asking Buck to decline the duel) have failed. As her Aunt Belle resignedly remarks, "We women can start the men quarreling often enough. We can't ever stop 'em." Unable to accept that her efforts have no effect on the men's actions, Julie takes the only action—passive and unavailing though it might seem—that she can, choosing to sing with her slaves rather than to wring her hands alongside the other women and watch the men carry out their senseless acts of violence.<sup>6</sup> But Julie refuses to acknowledge this deceit and instead allows her companions to believe her to be cold hearted; in doing so, Julie becomes complicit in her own downfall.

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<sup>6</sup> The film presents a contradictory view of female agency in which women are considered responsible for the reactions of the men around them when they misbehave, but are incapable of influencing the outcome of such events once they are set in motion. Thus can the men carry out their traditions (i.e., legalized dueling) without taking responsibility for the inevitably bloody outcome.



Julie's inability to rescue her own damaged reputation—which begins earlier in the film and comes to a head with the duel she unintentionally instigates—and her recourse to a stubborn course of action that only serves to make things worse—ignoring the problem and engaging in seemingly frivolous behavior—is indicative of her behavior throughout most of the film. In *Jezebel* we find a character whose individuality and desire for self-expression lead her on a path of destructive behavior and supposed villainy, culminating in a sudden conversion and transformation in the end that leads to her own self-sacrifice. Along the way, Julie convinces nearly all the other characters in the film of her wickedness, and she loses her fiancé, family, and friends as her behavior grows increasingly nasty and unpredictable. Film audiences at the time found Julie's behavior bewildering: contemporary reviewers on the whole responded negatively to the film, many expressing confusion at Julie's characterization. One reviewer blamed the playwright, Owen Davis:<sup>7</sup> “[Bette] Davis in the opening scenes is as insidious as absinthe, and thereafter about as dangerous as a petulant child—and not nearly as consistent. But the fault is with Owen Davis who presents a vain, selfish, destructive character to us and then with no time for plausible transition—an angel of mercy and humility.”<sup>8</sup> Another reviewer compared Julie to the licentious female character lamented in W. C. Handy's “St. Louis Blues,” describing her as “so thoroughly vicious that we feel something near perfection is marred when she goes good on us at the end. The character is a masterpiece of feminine spitefulness until she suddenly sprouts wings.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> No relation to the film's star, Bette Davis.

<sup>8</sup> Chapin, “‘Jezebel’ Is Attraction on Screen of Music Hall,” *Journal of Commerce and Commercial*, April 12, 1938.

<sup>9</sup> The reviewer does not quote any lyrics from “St. Louis Blues” or explain the connection between the song and the character, but he could be referring specifically to the line “St. Louis woman with her diamond rings / Pulls that man ‘round by her apron strings,” referencing Julie's tendency to manipulate the men around her as well as her ostentatious mode of dress. Corbin Patrick, review of “St. Louis Blues,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 26, 1938.

At the root of the confusion seem to be the many changes the character undergoes as the story progresses, which one reviewer called “the discouraging problem of showing a spoiled, vicious young woman going through various moods.”<sup>10</sup> Julie begins the film as a vivacious, confident young woman set to marry her childhood sweetheart Preston “Pres” Dillard (Henry Fonda). When her attempts to test and strengthen Pres’s love backfire horribly, she turns stubborn and vicious, making the situation even worse and causing Preston to leave her. She withdraws inward and becomes modest and penitent when she learns that Preston is returning to New Orleans and determines to win him back. Finally she becomes vindictive and manipulative when faced with the reality of his recent marriage to another woman. Julie ends the film once again penitent and redemptive when she sacrifices her own life to save Pres’s, a transformation that several reviewers found unbelievable and which, one wrote, “leaves the audience in doubt over its sincerity.”<sup>11</sup> Julie’s richly drawn character, constantly shifting “moods,” and eventual redemption clearly did not sit well with many in the audience, but they do reflect the apparent intentions of the filmmakers.

Early story treatments and scripts demonstrate that the goal of the filmmakers was to portray a woman who is ruled by evil motivations and is incapable of rational thought.<sup>12</sup> In a 1937 story treatment, Clement Ripley, one of several writers credited with the final screenplay, described Julie in great detail:

This is the story of the triumph of the *fundamental instinct of a woman* for the one mate of her choice over all *man-made conventions* of caste or code.

In Julie we see the sublimation of an instinct which smashes its way ruthlessly through all the restraints with which society has protected itself.

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<sup>10</sup> “Buck” Herzog, “Reviewing the New Films: Bette Davis in ‘Jezebel,’ Pre-Civil War Drama, at the Warner Theater,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 22, 1938.

<sup>11</sup> Review by L.L., “Bette Davis Still Shines Brilliantly in ‘Jezebel,’ the Fine Film at the Newman,” *Kansas City Star*, April 24, 1938.

<sup>12</sup> Warner Bros. Archive.

Conventions—honor, morality, loyalty, the Church, the family, the State, are not instinctive in human beings. They are the outgrowth of a long, harsh, bloody struggle on the part of individuals to find some means of living in a group.

Julie goes back to the primitive. She is first and last an individual, with the hard drive of the individual to get what it wants.

It is not that Julie doesn't care. She cares a great deal. Position, family, convention, mean a great deal to her. But she will smash them all—knowing quite well what she is doing—to gain the one end that matters to her: her sole possession of Pres.<sup>13</sup>

Ripley makes clear distinctions between Julie (the feminine) and Society (the masculine), pitting Julie's "instincts" against Society's "conventions," and describing Julie as "primitive" (as opposed to the implied "civilized" of Society). The way he describes Julie as an "individual" suggests that her individuality itself poses a threat, as it causes her to put herself and her own needs above those of Society (which is represented by men). And although he insists that Julie knows "quite well what she is doing"—that is, that she understands the consequences of her actions—he contradicts himself by insisting upon Julie's lack of reason: "Julie . . . is the product of her environment, and typifies it. She *is the* deep south, beautiful, exotic, alluring, lavish and also savage and deadly dangerous. She moves by instinct rather than by reason—that is, she uses her intellect as a means to gratifying her instincts rather than as a means to controlling them."<sup>14</sup> Ripley could not be clearer in his depiction of Julie as the ultimate threat, an exotic Female Other who is ruled by instinct; in direct contrast stands Male Reason, which is responsible for convention, civilization, and everything that the primitive, irrational, instinct-driven Julie is not.

This Julie differs only slightly from the character as she appeared in the original 1933 play by Owen Davis, from which the film departs primarily in its ending. Whereas in the play Julie's beloved Preston eventually confesses (while dying of yellow fever) to being still in love with Julie, resulting in a triumphant if not entirely admirable Julie, the film shows Preston

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<sup>13</sup> Ripley story treatment, Warner Bros. Archive (emphasis mine).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

remaining faithful to his wife, Amy, and Julie sacrificing her life to save Preston (and presumably allowing him eventually to return to Amy, the implication being that Julie will likely be able to save Pres but will herself perish in the process). This change was likely due to the influence of the Production Code, which would not have allowed Preston to abandon his wife, particularly one who conforms so well to idealized wifely behavior, for a Jezebel. Furthermore *Jezebel* had not been a great success on the stage, in part due to negative reactions to Julie's ultimate triumph—perhaps the filmmakers thought audiences would respond better to a Jezebel who repents than they did to one who wins her man. In translating this not-entirely-successful play to the silver screen, the filmmakers make Julie pay for what she has done in compliance with the Code, at the expense of consistency in her characterization.

Despite Julie's undeniably bad behavior over the course of the film, she comes across as far more ambiguous than suggested by the commentary of the filmmakers and the staging of the original play. On the one hand she is selfish, spoiled, and manipulative. She flouts society's expectations and insults her social peers in doing so—in her first scene she arrives late to her own party and refuses to change out of her “horse clothes” into the proper party attire, an action that we are to understand is offensive to the sensibilities of polite society. Later she again uses fashion conventions to shock when she insists upon wearing a scandalous red dress to the Olympus Ball, a scene that I will discuss in greater detail below. Throughout, Julie's behavior seems designed to challenge the status quo and break convention. When she doesn't get what she wants, she lashes out and hurts those around her. When things look up, she swears off her bad behavior and promises to be good.

On the other hand, Julie is presented as being somehow better than the other characters. She is fun, personable, clever, and often surprisingly kind. When one of her young slaves balks

at leading her obstinate colt back to the stables, Julie encourages rather than rebukes him, teasingly suggesting that if the horse bites, “Well then you just bite him back!” When her maid Zette admires one of Julie’s gowns, Julie offers to give it to her. She rebels against the obsolete and arbitrary rules of her social class (was a 1938 audience truly expected to be outraged when Julie is shown to care more about greeting her guests than changing into the proper clothes?). In the original play, an exchange between Julie and Buck about Preston’s “Yankee” wife shows Julie recognizing, with a heavy dose of irony, that her strength of character is in fact her greatest weakness, according to her culture:

Buck: I like the little Yankee.

Julie: Of course you do, she is shy and sweet—and she is pretty, and men like that.

Buck: (Boldly) And you are beautiful!

Julie: (Laughs) And men think they like that—but they don’t, usually they find it rather hard to live up to, pretty girls just cry, and men rush to comfort them. (She turns away) I don’t know how to cry!

Buck: (Smiles at her) I can believe that.

Julie: She is the clinging sort, this pretty Yankee! She is soft, and sweet, she is all weakness—so she is ten times too strong for me!<sup>15</sup>

Amy’s dependence on men is seen as a positive attribute, while Julie’s independence makes her less attractive, and therefore less valued. Bette Davis’s Julie sums up her feelings of being stuck in a backwards-looking society when she admonishes her silently suffering Aunt Belle early in the film: “This is 1852, dumpling. *Eighteen fifty-two*, not the Dark Ages!” Despite the inappropriateness of Julie’s behavior, she is clearly ahead of her time. The film wants us to admire Julie for her spirit and independence, but also to hate and fear her for it. This tension is difficult to analyze, as audience members who identify with and like Julie are likely to respond differently to the film, and it is not always clear just *what* the intended response might be. Julie cannot be read in easily defined ways—all the inconsistent and confusing aspects of her personality must be considered, rather than simply her alleged wickedness.

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<sup>15</sup> Davis, *Jezebel*.

It is, of course, this wickedness that is most strongly emphasized by the filmmakers, as evidenced by the film's title. Julie is compared to and equated with the biblical Jezebel, the Phoenician princess who led the Hebrew King Ahab astray with her worship of pagan gods in 1 and 2 Kings. Popular representations of Jezebel portray her as a prostitute as well as a pagan, as she dressed in her best finery and painted her face with makeup before she was killed. The term "Jezebel" has taken on the meaning of a woman with loose morals who tempts men with her overt sexuality. Julie Marsden's connection to the figure of the Jezebel is, on the surface, obvious. Both use their sexuality to lead men astray: in Julie's case, she flirts with Buck and encourages his argumentative nature, resulting in an unintended duel and his untimely death, for which Julie is universally blamed. (Ted, who initiates the challenge, refuses to apologize and call it off when given the opportunity and subsequently shoots Buck dead, escapes blame entirely). The other main point of comparison is the vulgar red dress Julie wears in the Olympus Ball scene, which causes the other dancers to shun her and leads directly to Preston's breaking of their engagement. The dress, which seems so vividly red even in the black-and-white film, is reminiscent of the biblical Jezebel dressing in her best finery before being fed to the dogs, something that happens only metaphorically in our film.

Although the film's dialogue makes a direct connection between Julie and the biblical Jezebel, there is another important connection to be made that is only implicitly implied: Julie is compared not only to King Ahab's Jezebel, but also to the well-known myth of the black slave woman as a Jezebel, racializing her and further complicating the scene in which she sings with her slaves. The stereotype of the black Jezebel was described by Jennifer Bailey Woodard and Teresa Mastin in an article concerning stereotypical images of black women in magazines and

other popular culture. In addition to the “mammy,” “matriarch,” and “welfare mother” is the image of the “sexual siren,”

which represents negative portrayals of the Black women as bitch or whore. The sexually aggressive, uncaring Jezebel image is “central in this nexus of elite White male images of Black womanhood because efforts to control Black women’s sexuality lie at the heart of Black women’s oppression.” . . . White males fostered this image of Black women during slavery to excuse their sexual abuse and rape of Black women. Because Black women were such sexual animals, the White man could not help but get carried away. And because she was characterized as something other than human, the assault did not matter. This image of the Black woman cares for nothing but her own sexual satisfaction.<sup>16</sup>

Deborah Gray White describes how this image was created in the imagination of the antebellum South, in which “the female slave’s chattel status, sex, and race combined to create a complicated set of myths about black womanhood.”<sup>17</sup> The need to create this sexualized, accessible female type, as argued by Woodard and Mastin, resulted in a powerful legacy of black female sexuality that still influences popular culture today. As White writes:

One of the most prevalent images of black women in antebellum America was of a person governed almost entirely by her libido, a Jezebel character. In every way Jezebel was the counterimage of the mid-nineteenth-century ideal of the Victorian lady. She did not lead men and children to God; piety was foreign to her. She saw no advantage in prudery, indeed domesticity paled in importance before matters of the flesh. How white Americans, and Southerners in particular, came to think of black women as sensual beings has to do with the impressions formed during their initial contact with Africans, with the way black women were forced to live under chattel slavery, and with the ideas that Southern white men had about women in general.<sup>18</sup>

Rupe Simms’s description of the image of the black Jezebel as a “sex-starved woman, who was childishly promiscuous and consumed by lustful passions,” and whose “sexual aggression, fertility, and libidinous self-expression were considered limitless” can be seen as an exaggeration of Julie’s supposed faults (in particular her childishness, aggression, and limitless self-

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<sup>16</sup> Jennifer Bailey Woodard and Teresa Mastin, “Black Womanhood: ‘Essence’ and Its Treatment of Stereotypical Images of Black Women,” *Journal of Black Studies* 36, no. 2 (2005): 272, quoting Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 77.

<sup>17</sup> Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 28.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

expression). Furthermore her argument that “The Jezebel image concretized Black female subordination, justifying the rape of African women by white men,” suggests that as a Jezebel, Julie actually desires the punishment that comes to her in the end (justifying her self-sacrifice even further).<sup>19</sup> By connecting Julie to the image of the black Jezebel, and furthermore by demonstrating her easy interactions with her own slaves, the film racializes Julie’s bad behavior. She does not need to *act* the Jezebel in the scene with her slaves, as she has already behaved inappropriately regarding men, and her interactions with the slaves, while not intrinsically inappropriate, connect her to what is perceived as typical slave behavior.

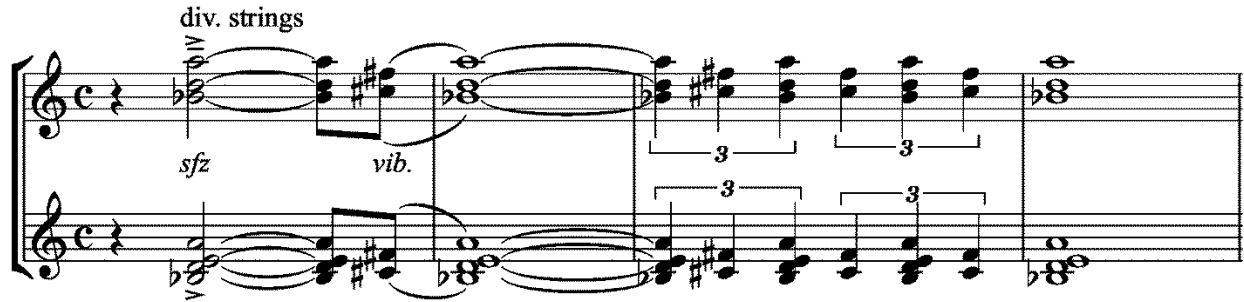
#### *Scoring individuality: The music of Jezebel*

Close analysis of Max Steiner’s score tells an alternative story about Julie, allowing for a far more interesting interpretation of her character. By looking at the variety of themes and musical developments used to sketch Julie’s character, we see that this character is constantly evolving and expressing contradictory shades of personality, making Julie one of the most starkly realistic female characters to appear in a classical Hollywood film. Despite Clement Ripley’s description of her as single-mindedly “savage,” and more in line with her contradictory behavior throughout the story, Julie’s music is more suggestive of the sympathetic, complex characterization I have argued for above. Steiner could have repeatedly used a single musical cliché, in the manner of the FRC but instead to portray Julie as evil. Indeed, he chose a simpler method two years later when scoring another Bette Davis film, *The Letter* (1940, also directed by Wyler). In this tense drama, in which Davis played an adulterous wife who tries to get away with the murder of her former lover, Steiner wrote a tonally ambiguous motive featuring an unstable oscillating figure to

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<sup>19</sup> Rupe Simms, “Controlling Images and the Gender Construction of Enslaved African Women,” *Gender and Society* 15, no. 6 (2001): 882–83.





Example 2.1: Main theme from *The Letter* (1940, Steiner)

lend a sinister and unsettling tone to the film (Example 2.1).<sup>20</sup> The chromatic, dissonant figure rocks uneasily back and forth with constantly shifting, unstable harmonies, painting Davis's character as emotionally and psychologically unstable while at the same time underscoring the film's exotic setting of Singapore. Instead of using such a one-dimensional theme in *Jezebel*, Steiner wrote a number of musically ambiguous themes that suggest different, often contradictory, and constantly shifting ideas about her character. Given the lack of written testimony from Steiner explaining exactly why such choices were made, we must turn to the score to work out how and why the music makes Julie such a complex, ambiguous, and unapologetically *individualistic* character.

Because *Jezebel* not only focuses on Julie's character but also tells us the story from her perspective, the film's music tends to represent her subjectivity rather than that of others, meaning it positions her as the subject with the music reflecting the thoughts, emotions, and point of view of Julie herself. Even in the few instances when the music seems to be about someone else, it is in reality filtered through Julie's subjectivity and should be understood as reflecting her interiority rather than that of other characters.<sup>21</sup> There are six recurring themes that

<sup>20</sup> Examples from *The Letter* and *Jezebel* are based on the conductor's score housed at the Warner Bros. Archive.

<sup>21</sup> My views here echo those of Heather Laing, who argues that in the 1940s woman's film, all the music represents the interiority of the female protagonist, giving the audience seemingly direct access to the

make up the vast majority of Julie’s characterizing music; some occur only a handful of times, while others can be heard throughout the film. Their names and significant uses within the film are listed in the table below (Figure 2.2).<sup>22</sup>

Theme Name	First Appearance	Important Transformations
“Julie”	Title sequence (non-diegetic)	Used as waltz music during the Olympic Ball sequence (diegetic)  Dissonant variant highlights breaking of the engagement (non-diegetic)  Reverent, hymn-like variant during Julie’s attempted reformation (non-diegetic)  Dirge-like, minor-key variant used during the yellow fever outbreak (non-diegetic)
“The Meeting”	Julie interrupts Preston at the bank (non-diegetic)	No significant changes
“Beautiful Dreamer” (by Stephen Foster)	Julie taunts Preston with the red dress (diegetic)	Dissonant, skewed variant used throughout when Julie is plotting (non-diegetic)
“The Vixen”	Julie plots to wear the red dress (non-diegetic)	No significant changes
“Amy”	Amy offers to accompany Preston to New Orleans (non-diegetic)	Music doesn’t change but transfers allegiance from Amy to Julie during the final scene (non-diegetic)
“Fortitude”	Title sequence (non-diegetic)	Not heard again until the film’s final moments, no changes

Figure 2.2: Significant musical themes from *Jezebel*

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character’s emotions, thoughts, and struggles. *Jezebel* is a precursor to the 1940s version of the melodrama as discussed by Laing, but its music acts in the same way, representing Julie virtually at all times. Laing, *The Gendered Score: Music in 1940s Melodrama and the Woman’s Film* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> All theme names apart from “Amy” are those given in the film’s cue sheets, presumably by Max Steiner. “Amy” is referred to as “The New Wife” in a cue that was later deleted from the finished film. It was clearly intended to be Amy’s theme, and for the sake of clarity I refer to it as such here.



Example 2.2: "Julie"

Instead of relying on clichés within the themes themselves, most of these themes do not point to a specific, singular meaning (as do Robin Hood’s “Hero” theme and the comical “Flirt” theme from *The Adventures of Robin Hood*). These ambiguous or undefined meanings permit for multiple interpretations of Julie’s character and portray a great deal of growth and development as the story progresses. “Julie” is the best example of this type of undefined, flexible theme in *Jezebel*: in addition to being most closely associated with the lead character, it is also the theme the audience hears most often. “Julie” resembles a Feminine Romantic Cliché to some degree, with its lyrical major-mode melody in triple meter with even-length phrases and lack of chromaticism (Example 2.2). But its repeated pitches, forward-moving momentum, and frequent use of brass instrumentation align it more with masculine themes. This musical depiction of Julie is benign, beautiful, and refined but also contains a strength and energy more often associated with male characters in classical Hollywood film. “Beautiful Dreamer,” by contrast, lends Julie ambiguity in the guise of nostalgic domesticity, as it brings with it connotations of genteel southern womanhood at the same time as it also comes to represent Julie’s manipulative tendencies through motivic development and manipulation.

There are two exceptions to the previous point: two of the themes *do* use easily recognized musical clichés, but their use in the narrative and in combination with other themes undermines their immediate meanings and allows them to adopt further meanings than they

might have on their own and out of context. “The Vixen” is perhaps the most obvious use of a musical cliché to connote evil: it consists of a fluttering, dissonant chromatic figure of oscillating sixteenth notes marked “mysterioso” [sic] and represents Julie’s manipulative tendencies. It often appears in combination with the dissonant variant of “Beautiful Dreamer,” reinforcing the double-edged significance of the latter theme. The other clichéd theme is “Amy,” which seems to have been originally intended as an FRC for Amy, the proper northern woman whom Preston marries and who acts as a foil to Julie. While its use in the finished film de-emphasizes the connection to Amy (this will be discussed later in more detail), “Amy” *does* function to reinforce her suitability as a wife for Pres in comparison with the wholly unsuitable Julie. In its final appearance, however, it reverses this function and transfers allegiance from Amy to Julie, helping to effect Julie’s final transformation. The limited use of musical clichés in *Jezebel* should be understood as helping to complicate rather than to confine Julie’s character.

The interplay and development of these themes reflect and help to shape Julie’s individuality throughout the film, marking important turning points in Julie’s development. All these turning points are scored in ways that encourage a more ambiguous reading of her character.

### *From Flirtation to Manipulation*

The many themes that accompany and characterize Julie throughout the film not only establish the various aspects of her character but also show her developing character over time. The first musical hints come from the main “Julie” theme during the film’s opening credits, which introduces her bright, outgoing personality and aristocratic social standing, first in a grand orchestral setting and then in a more refined waltz, but reveals little of her darker side. Two

themes that enter early on and help to shape the trajectory of her character development, complicating and adding nuance to her character, are “The Meeting” and “The Vixen” (so named in the film’s cue sheets). “The Meeting,” the first of the two cues, represents the playful and flirtatious nature of Julie’s relationship with Preston and is used in conjunction with his side of the relationship as well. “The Vixen” is used throughout the film in scenes where Julie is crossing the boundary of appropriate flirtation into sinister manipulation, and as the story progresses it appears more often than “The Meeting,” which disappears altogether. This shift mirrors the gradually changing nature of Julie’s behavior toward and relationship with Preston.

Julie’s transgressions, beginning with her supposedly shocking behavior at the party and culminating in her wearing of the scandalous red dress to the Olympus Ball, are motivated primarily by her frustration with her fiancé Preston, whose failure above all to demonstrate adequately his love and devotion to her drive her to engage in behavior not sanctioned by white southern antebellum society. Early in the film (when their engagement is still on), Preston angers Julie when he fails to attend the party she hosts at her New Orleans residence. Immediately thereafter he also reneges on his agreement to accompany her to a dress fitting in preparation for the Olympus Ball, an important social event for New Orleans elite. Pres, she is told, is too busy in a meeting at the bank where he works. Demonstrating her willingness to break social boundaries, including those regarding gender expectations, Julie leaves the protected sphere of her carriage and chaperone (her Aunt Belle, played by Fay Bainter) and strides into the bank, a male-only sphere in which she is forbidden. As she does so, we hear “The Meeting” for the first time (Example 2.3). Opening with a string and harp glissando playing tone clusters, the cello



Example 2.3: "The Meeting"

melody alternates an upward-moving staccato line with a longer, descending dotted rhythm as the rest of the strings play dissonant chords on the off beats. Eventually the melody begins to fragment and sequence upward, mimicking Julie’s growing frustration and impatience. The music breaks off and Julie briefly speaks with Pres, who fails to understand the depth of Julie’s anger. Julie sarcastically refers to her own pursuits as “unimportant”; barred as she is from “important” affairs due to her sex, Julie resents the implication that Pres views her own activities as trivial and therefore refuses to acknowledge the importance of his business at the bank—business, it is important to remember, about which she is allowed to know nothing. “I don’t suppose it’s important to you what I wear to the Olympus Ball,” she says, prophesying her later actions. “It’s only you that’s so important.” Pres refuses to validate Julie’s feelings, repeating, “Julie, you must realize . . .” and “Try to understand!” But as society’s strictures prevent Julie from participating in anything that would help her understand Pres’s business, she remains stubborn and uncaring. We hear “The Meeting” again as Julie angrily leaves the bank and she and Aunt Belle set off for the dressmaker’s, where Julie will concoct a plan to test Pres’s love for her by wearing a shocking red dress to the Olympus Ball. “The Meeting,” then, sets up Julie’s stubbornness and willingness to push the boundaries of social convention; it will also, as we will

shall see, serve to draw a comparison between Julie's actions and Pres's, demonstrating the similarities in their characters and setting up their unequal treatment in the narrative.

It is important to situate Julie's feelings of disenfranchisement within the story and its historical/fictional context, to indicate why she might be so prone to childish and vindictive behavior. The film goes to great pains to point out the supposedly inherent differences between men and women. In the film's opening sequence at a New Orleans saloon, Buck Cantrell (George Brent) and Ted Dillard (Richard Cromwell) overhear a loudmouth gossiping about Julie. This is cause for great scandal, as mentioning a lady's name in a bar is considered grounds for a duel. Women do not enter bars, and their names are not mentioned in male-designated spaces. Julie scandalizes Aunt Belle at the party when, after having arrived late and wearing the wrong clothes, she reaches for a whiskey drink intended *only* for the men. Even alcoholic beverages are gendered in this society. And in a brief but crucial scene between Preston and Dr. Livingstone (Donald Crisp) after Julie's interruption at the bank, we learn how even a sympathetic character like the good doctor feels about relationships between men and women: "Woman, sir, is a chalice, a frail, delicate chalice to be cherished and protected. But nowadays, hmph! No proper respect for our Southern womanhood. Think your father would have allowed the lady of his choice to come surging into his place of business? . . . He'd have cut him a hickory sir, a *hickory!* And he'd have flailed the living daylight out of her, and then helped put lard on her welts, and bought her a diamond brooch. That's what he'd have done, sir, and she'd have loved him for it." Women in this society—a fictionalized American South as portrayed by filmmakers of the 1930s—are treated like children who are never allowed to grow up. The "respect" shown them by the men includes shelter from life's realities and corporal punishment should they resist. Ostensibly protected from the dangers and ugliness of the real world, white women of the elite

class (the “gentle folk”) are expected to be grateful to their male protectors for the privilege of their sheltered position but are discouraged from expressing any individuality or free will. Sylvia D. Hoffert describes this aspect of nineteenth-century white southern womanhood in *A History of Gender in America*. The femininity of plantation mistresses like Julie, she writes, “was construct[ed] . . . about a series of contradictions.” These women needed to be responsible, sturdy, competent, and hard working but give the impression of being helpless and dependent upon men. She further writes: “And in an age in which many idealized women as ‘naturally’ delicate, asexual beings, southern plantation mistresses needed robust good health, physical strength, and stamina in order to fulfill their womanly responsibilities which included the more or less unrestricted bearing of children.”<sup>23</sup> The film conceals the unromantic reality of the life of a plantation mistress, which would have included the running of the household and charge of dozens of slaves, choosing instead to represent Julie as Dr. Livingstone and Pres see her: a pretty, delicate doll/child who needs to be protected from life’s realities and beaten into submission should she express any sort of initiative or intellectual curiosity.

While music of “The Meeting” at first represents Julie as petty and childish, and that is only if we ignore the possible reasons behind her behavior, it also importantly represents Preston engaging in similar behavior. Later that same evening, Julie mimics Pres’s earlier behavior and refuses to see him when he stops by her home to visit her. Realizing that Julie is giving him the silent treatment because of their quarrel earlier, Pres grabs a stick and marches purposefully up the stairs to the same “Meeting” cue used earlier, presumably intending to follow Dr. Livingstone’s advice.<sup>24</sup> The similarity of the two scenes in which “The Meeting” is featured is

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<sup>23</sup> Sylvia D. Hoffert, *A History of Gender in America: Essays, Documents, and Articles* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2003), 209.

<sup>24</sup> The threat of violence symbolized by Pres’s stick is treated humorously, as though domestic abuse were fodder for light comedy (as it often was in films of the 1930s and 1940s). Hoffert provides a reason why it



hard to miss. Pres refuses to come out to see Julie because he is too busy, sending the message with the young slave Ti Bat; Julie refuses to come down to see Pres for unstated reasons and sends another slave, Uncle Cato, with the dismissal. Both refuse to be ignored and cross over into spaces in which they would normally not be allowed—the bank for Julie, and Julie’s bedroom for Pres. But while Pres’s reasons are considered legitimate, Julie’s hurt feelings are not. The use of “The Meeting” to accompany Pres’s ascent into Julie’s space suggests not that Julie is simply acting out, but that she and Preston are playing a carefully choreographed game of flirtation and courtship (one that has been played out many times before, as evidenced by their subsequent making up). At the same time that Pres’s reaction to Julie’s behavior and his barely contained threat of violence emphasize the double standards inherent in this society, the music actually serves to lessen the severity of Julie’s transgressions thus far, as the playful “Meeting” music used in each parallel scene serves to bring out their similarities.

Preston’s controlling behavior and the suggestion of possible physical violence, no matter how lightly treated, must not be overlooked as a contributing factor in the shift in Julie’s behavior as “The Meeting” begins to give way to “The Vixen.” But before this happens, another theme enters to complicate the seemingly straightforward associations offered by “The Meeting.” Following Preston’s angry ascent up the staircase, Julie at first refuses to let him into her room. As he pounds on the door and yells her name repeatedly, Julie nonchalantly sings and hums the melody of Stephen Foster’s song “Beautiful Dreamer” to herself (Example 2.4). The use of

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is so important that Pres be able to control Julie physically: “female submission was crucial to the maintenance of discipline on the plantation. A man who could not control his wife was unlikely to be able to control his slaves. The dependence of a woman was also an important component of the idea of manly honor. Only if women allowed men to believe that they were dependent upon them for the necessities of life, their social identity, and for protection against insult and injury could southern gentlemen feel secure in their manliness.” Pres must show his control over Julie in order to assert his own masculinity, and so Julie’s rebelliousness is not simply a challenge to society’s expectations about *women*: it is also a serious threat to Preston’s manhood. Ibid.

Voice Solo

Be - auti - ful drea - mer Wait there for me (Hm \_\_\_\_\_)

Example 2.4: “Beautiful Dreamer”

*p* *pp* *rit.* *mf*

*pp slower* *rall.*

Example 2.5: “Beautiful Dreamer” variant

preexisting American folk songs to establish a sense of time and place was not uncommon in period films of this time. Often these songs are in fact parlor or minstrel songs dating from the mid- to late-nineteenth century, as is the case in *Jezebel* with this parlor song by Stephen Foster. “Beautiful Dreamer” brings with it connotations of genteel white southern womanhood and nostalgia for an earlier, presumably better time, lending Julie ambiguity in the guise of nostalgic domesticity. Julie herself does not display any traditional, domestic tendencies, but she chooses to sing, and thereby associate herself with, a song that associates her with these qualities. As her diegetic performance of the song ends, the melody is taken up by the non-diegetic orchestra, but

in a comically skewed and eerily dissonant variant that belies Julie's claims to traditional domestic femininity (Example 2.5). The ironic use of the "Beautiful Dreamer" theme here will be tested later on in the film, when its associations suggest a different side of Julie's personality.

The shift away from playfulness and toward more sinister themes, which starts with the skewing of "Beautiful Dreamer," continues as this scene progresses, helping to demonstrate the change in Julie's mind-set and motivations. Once Julie has finally allowed Preston entrance to her room, the two have a brief reconciliation:

Pres: Julie, how long must we go on like this?

Julie: <feigning ignorance> Like what, Pres?

Pres: Fightin', fussin' all the time like a couple of children!

Julie: Why do you treat me like a child?

Pres: <angrily> Because you act like one, a spoiled one!

Julie: <flirtatiously> You used to say you liked me like that once. You never wanted me to change. Remember?

Pres: <Smiles and kisses her>

The music swells in a romantic outpouring of strings playing a melody not associated with any of the main themes. At this point, all seems to be unfolding according to a pattern of behavior in which Julie pushes the limits of what Pres (and society) will allow, Pres chastises her, she reminds him of her feminine charms that attracted him in the first place, and they reconcile to the strains of generic-sounding love music (i.e., not already laden with other associations). But as Julie spies Pres's stick and comprehends its purpose, the strings play a sudden sour note—a chord marked *sforzando* that sounds like a French augmented sixth but does not function as one. A chromatic figure of oscillating sixteenth notes marked "mysterioso" follows as Julie seems to recall her plot to punish and test Pres; she quietly asks, "Would you like to see my new dress?" The music fades out as Julie gestures to the red dress and carefully gauges Preston's nonplussed reaction. This "mysterioso" fluttering motive is "The Vixen" (Example 2.6).

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "The Vixen". The score is written for three staves: a vocal line (top), a piano accompaniment (middle), and a string section (bottom). The tempo is marked "mysterioso". The piano part begins with the instruction "p subito". The string section is labeled "Strings". The score is divided into two systems. The first system consists of two measures. The second system begins with a measure number "3" and also consists of two measures. The piano accompaniment features a complex, rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The vocal line consists of long, sustained notes. The string section provides a low, sustained accompaniment.

Example 2.6: "The Vixen"

With the introduction of "The Vixen," we begin to see the transformation of Julie and Preston's relationship from predictable flirtation to dangerous manipulation on Julie's part. Instead of the good-natured game playing depicted by "The Meeting," "The Vixen" sounds a warning to the dark turn Julie's behavior is now taking. For his part, Pres responds badly to the dress, leading to another argument as Preston realizes Julie is still angry about what happened earlier. Preston refuses to play Julie's games, ordering her to behave appropriately and wear the proper garment (a white dress). Unable to comprehend that his patronizing tone only infuriates Julie further, he leaves angry but confident that Julie will bow to his orders. The fluttering and sinister sounds of "The Vixen" return quietly, suggesting that Julie has no intention of following Pres's orders, and that a new scheme is already forming in her head. "The Vixen," along with the

dissonant “Beautiful Dreamer” variant, with which it often appears in combination, have supplanted the playful, mischievous “Meeting” theme just as Julie has changed from a willing participant in a game of flirtatious courtship to a resentful, angry manipulator willing to bend the rules in order to achieve a better outcome for herself. The transition from “The Meeting” to “The Vixen” traces the development of Julie’s character, suggesting that her supposed wickedness stems from her (arguably) justifiable frustration with Preston. The introduction of “The Vixen,” which unlike “The Meeting” is never used in conjunction with Preston’s behavior, therefore represents the turning point in Julie’s character that causes her to go from headstrong but well-liked to dangerously independent and hated.

#### *Julie’s humiliation and initial repentance*

The theme most responsible for demonstrating the breadth and depth of Julie’s character is the main “Julie” theme, described above. The traits depicted by this theme exist along a continuum of behaviors Julie exhibits, ranging from gentle to vicious to pitiable. Three particular appearances of this theme demonstrate these highly contrasting behaviors in rather swift succession, suggesting either that Julie is constantly evolving, or else that she is consistently in possession of all these traits. First in the pivotal Olympus Ball sequence during which Julie’s plan to increase Preston’s love for her through inciting jealousy backfires horribly, a diegetic performance of “Julie” both comments ironically on Julie’s humiliation and calls attention to her humanity in the face of Preston’s cruel actions. Shortly after this scene, a dissonant variant of the theme plays to mark Julie’s defeat, causing us both to pity her and to recoil in horror at her callous behavior. But soon after, a gentle, chorale-like setting of “Julie” shows her attempting to rise from defeat and alter her destructive behavior by conforming to society’s expectations.

The music of the Olympus Ball scene is entirely diegetic, coming from an onscreen orchestra with which the characters at certain points interact. The use of the “Julie” theme, however, serves to blur slightly the boundaries between diegetic and non-diegetic, and as such the music carries more meaning due to associations it has already accrued in the non-diegetic score. When Julie and Preston first arrive at the ball—after a brief scene during which Pres initially refuses to go until Julie changes into the white dress—the negative reactions from the



Figure 2.3: Other dancers clear the floor as the disgraced Julie and Preston dance to the “Julie” waltz.

other dancers are obvious and immediate. Julie begins to realize that she has made a mistake and asks Preston to take her home. At this point, the music has changed from the “Huguenots Waltz” to an arrangement of “Julie” as a stately waltz performed by the onscreen orchestra.<sup>25</sup> Preston insists upon a dance before they

leave, pointedly ignoring Julie’s discomfort and subjecting her to the embarrassment of dancing amidst a crowd of couples who are clearly offended by her presence. The camera closes in on Julie’s face, her eyes shifting uneasily back and forth as she perceives the effect she is having on the other dancers. Two by two, the couples walk off the dance floor, forming a wide circle around Julie and Pres, with most of the women—who wear nearly identical white gowns—facing away from the dance floor, refusing even to look at her disgrace (Figure 2.3). As the dancers

<sup>25</sup> Called “Huguenots Waltz” by Giacomo Meyerbeer in cue sheets.

clear the floor, the pleasant major-mode melody gives way to a minor B section—the cheerful mood suddenly switches to one of tense foreboding, matching Julie’s feelings and allowing the supposedly diegetic score to illustrate her subjectivity. Adding brass instrumentation and featuring a melodic line with dotted rhythms and leaps followed by quick scalar passages, this B section sounds hostile and aggressive, particularly when compared with the preceding melody. This more aggressive development of the “Julie” theme certainly comments on Julie’s behavior, but more strikingly it calls attention to her humanity, emphasizing *Preston’s* cruelty rather than her own, as Pres forces Julie to perform her disgrace for the entire assembly. When Julie finally breaks down and begs Pres to take her home, he ignores her pleas and the A melody comes back with a triumphant restatement that mocks Julie’s behavior with its indifference to her plight. At this point Julie’s humiliation would seem complete, but even after the orchestra stops playing in an attempt to end the embarrassing situation, Pres angrily orders the conductor to “Go on and play!” Later when Preston silently but meaningfully breaks their engagement, the dissonant variant of “Julie” plays, using only fragments of the melody with chromatic pitches that tilt it toward the minor mode. This “Julie” variant is full of pathos and similar versions occur several times later in the film to mark points of Julie’s defeat. “Julie” has, at this point, been transformed from a pleasant and sprightly melody to a bitter and twisted shell of what it once was—much like Julie herself, at this point.

I have been arguing that Julie’s music helps to emphasize and bring out her complexity and transformations over the course of the film. Until the Olympus Ball, it could be argued that Julie’s trajectory has been steadily moving from self-centeredness to increasing hostility and bitterness as all of Julie’s manipulations and machinations backfire. The next appearance of the “Julie” theme complicates this simplistic portrait, showing us Julie’s capacity for remorse and

rehabilitation, and even willingness to submit to the strictures of society against which she had so obstinately fought earlier. This transformation occurs when a now chastened and repentant Julie learns that Preston, who left New Orleans immediately after the Olympus Ball, is finally returning. We hear the “Julie” theme initially as Dr. Livingstone reveals the news to Aunt Belle; the theme plays low in the French horn, with the strings taking over in the second part of the first phrase, at which point it modulates up a half step from B major to C major. The nobility of the French horn combined with the passionate taking over of the melody by the strings suggest hope and anticipation, as does the ascending modulation. The tonality continues to shift upward, first to D-flat major after Dr. Livingstone has left and Julie enters, and then back down to B major to begin another gradual ascent as Belle casually reveals the news she has just learned about Pres’s imminent return. After an extended pause during which the words sink in (and with a fermata in the written score), Julie’s theme begins again in B major played by the high strings in a delicate chordal texture. The chorale-like setting lends an aura of religiosity, as do the harp flourishes and addition of chimes after a modulation to C major. Meanwhile Julie, in quiet ecstasy, dreams of her next meeting with Pres: “We’ll be married. I’m gonna beg his forgiveness. I was vicious and mean and selfish. And I’m gonna tell him I hated myself for being like I was even then. I’ll humble myself before him. And everything that ever stood between us will be gone when he takes me in his arms.” The music continues ever more passionately, the melody fragmenting and sequencing upward in pitch until it loses its sense of tonality and only a solo violin and cello supported by rumbling harp tone clusters remain.

The use of the “Julie” theme here is not ironic as it was at the Olympus Ball or foreboding as it was during her last meeting with Preston. Here, the solemn hopefulness validates Julie’s feelings of remorse and suggests that whether or not the audience and Aunt Belle are



convinced by Julie's promises, the important point is that *Julie* believes herself to be honest. And also importantly, at this point, Julie is giving voice to a culturally held belief of what makes an ideal woman, in contrast to her earlier behavior that exemplified a villainous woman. As an ideal woman, Julie will put her own needs and desires aside in favor of her husband's and, in humbling herself, will acknowledge *his* authority and dominance in their relationship. Of course, this will ultimately not happen and Julie will be faced with the embodiment of every positive feminine attribute that she lacks in the personage of Amy (Margaret Lindsay). But the hymn-like presentation of "Julie" in this scene momentarily shows Julie in as positive a light as we have been allowed to see her thus far in the film, and it will be topped only in the final scene when Julie will once again be represented by music with religious undertones, her domestication highlighted by religious fervor.

As the previous examples have shown, Julie's main theme does not portray her as either all good or all bad but rather shifts fluidly up and down a continuum of behaviors. I have argued that Julie was understood by the filmmakers as a wicked character, and the descriptions to be found among their writings focus solely on her negative qualities. But upon the film's release, at least one reviewer noticed a lack of consistency in Julie's personality: "It is a difficult role, for Julie is beautiful and loveable, but spoiled, self-willed and selfish. She is one of those psychiatric cases who hurt most when they love most. In short, she's a perverse critter, but, like the men in the story, you'll probably love her at the same time that you'd like to knock her head against something hard. Bette Davis does a magnificent job in conveying this peculiar, almost dual, personality of the character of Julie."<sup>26</sup> Because Julie fails to conform to familiar feminine archetypes (Good Woman and Bad Woman), she complicates the reviewer's crude view of female psychology and becomes an enigma. Unlike the ideal woman represented by Julie's

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<sup>26</sup> Roly Young, "Rambling with Roly," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, March 21, 1938.

fantasy of herself as Preston's bride, and again by Amy as Preston's actual bride, Julie has contradictory characteristics that are not consistent with this unrealistic, idealistic archetype; this complexity and her dissatisfaction at being treated like a child in a society that does not value her as a person help to explain *why* she is prone to such bad behavior. But contemporary reviewers seemed incapable of reconciling these aspects of Julie's character, leading to confusion. Rather than suggesting that this points to an ineffectiveness or failure of the music, I would suggest that Steiner's score demonstrates the limitations of Hollywood's policy of excessive obviousness when ideology clashes with source material and creative impulse. The music does, ultimately, uphold the film's patriarchal ideology, even if it unconsciously deconstructs its darker side.

*Ambiguity, nostalgia, and shifting meanings of "Beautiful Dreamer"*

Although "Beautiful Dreamer" was initially introduced in order to set up ironically Julie's nastiness against the backdrop of southern gentility, it does not maintain these negative associations throughout the entire film. "Beautiful Dreamer," which was made ambiguous and negative through its dissonant and atonal arrangement and associations with Julie's manipulative side, eventually comes to be used more in conjunction with the positive side of Julie's charm, and even with the possibility of her conforming to her expected domestic role. It therefore plays on the subtle distinction between Julie's ability to *manipulate*, a skill not valued by her southern society, and her ability to *charm*, one that would be valued. Capitalizing on the nostalgia embedded into the cultural value the song brings with it, "Beautiful Dreamer" not only works to provide ironic commentary on Julie's inappropriately independent character, as we have already seen, but also paradoxically softens and blurs the edges of her character to call into question the supposed wickedness that "The Vixen" and earlier incarnations of "Dreamer" had introduced.

The narrative function of “Beautiful Dreamer” begins to shift after the slave singing scene as the women anxiously wait to learn the outcome of the duel between Ted and Buck—the duel that Julie has inadvertently caused through her attempts to incite a fight between *Preston* and Buck. All assume that Ted, the less experienced dueler, will be killed. In this scene, “Dreamer” is used to highlight the hypocrisy that Julie exposes about her southern culture. Arguing with Amy, who reproaches Julie for feigning ignorance of the duel, Julie responds blithely: “You know sometimes I envy ’em [the men]. To face the one you hate. To kill or be killed, to settle something. We can’t do that, we women.” Far from being sincere, Julie is playing a part, feigning the child-like innocence against which she has struggled all along, at the one time when it is least appreciated. In praising her culture’s customs, she reveals their barbarity and obsolescence, actions that make her even more of a threat to that same society. The dissonant “Dreamer” variant that we hear reminds us of Julie’s bad deeds that led to this situation, to be sure, but it does more than that. As argued by Susan Key, Stephen Foster’s parlor songs and ballads evoked nostalgia even at the time of their publication and initial popularity, along with reinforcing the so-called cult of domesticity that idealized in women virtue, faithfulness, piety, and devotion to their roles as wife and mother.<sup>27</sup> By representing and invoking a nostalgia for this supposedly idealized society against which Julie rebels, the fracturing of “Beautiful Dreamer” helps to expose the falseness of this ideal, implicating society itself and not just Julie in the events currently taking place.

“Dreamer” continues to accrue more meanings as the scene progresses. Ted makes a surprise entrance and reveals himself as the victor of the duel. He confronts Julie with the revelation that Buck had realized the extent of her wickedness before he died; the assembled

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<sup>27</sup> Key, “Sound and Sentimentality: Nostalgia in the Songs of Stephen Foster,” *American Music* 13/2 (1995), 145–166.

guests awkwardly arrange to leave, implying that they are all cutting off ties with Julie. Even Aunt Belle expresses her disgust with Julie, speaking to her the line that appears as an epigraph to this chapter and which equates Julie with the biblical Jezebel. Julie's downfall and disgrace seem complete. She is, however, given a second chance when the departing guests learn that the yellow fever has spread so far that the parish borders have been closed, preventing them from traveling back to New Orleans. They have no choice but to stay, however unwillingly, at Halcyon. Julie adopts the attitude of the gracious hostess and kindly invites them all to return to the house. A hesitant, wistful orchestration of "Dreamer" plays as the reluctant guests turn back to the house. No longer scheming for Pres's attention, "Beautiful Dreamer" now illustrates how Julie has turned her charm on her guests, and for the first time for a positive purpose.

### *Julie's Redemption*

By this point in the film, Julie has been portrayed as many things: vivacious, charming, vindictive, petty, manipulative, and nasty. Her music constantly undercuts and makes ambiguous such straightforward personality traits. Rather than being just one of these things, Julie is all of them, brimming with both good and bad qualities—in other words, she demonstrates a realism not often seen in Hollywood films, in which characters are more often portrayed as caricatures and types rather than complicated, realistic individuals. After Julie's personality has been allowed to develop and become increasingly complicated throughout the film, in the end her individuality and complexity are undercut by the combined use of the themes "Amy" and "Funebre." During the final sequence Julie adopts the FRC-like "Amy" theme, which works to transform her into a love object character, and she is subsequently scored with a quasi-religious presentation of "Funebre," a dirge-like variant of the "Julie" theme. This sudden transformation undermines the gradual changes that Julie had been undergoing throughout the film, suggesting

that her repentance has a divine element—in other words, that only through an act of God (not her own will and determination) could Julie find redemption.

According to the scores kept in the Warner Bros. Archive, Steiner wrote a musical theme for Amy Dillard. “The New Wife” was meant to have been introduced during Amy’s first



Figure 2.4: Amy's initial appearance was originally to have been scored with an FRC-like theme; instead, this moment was left unscored.

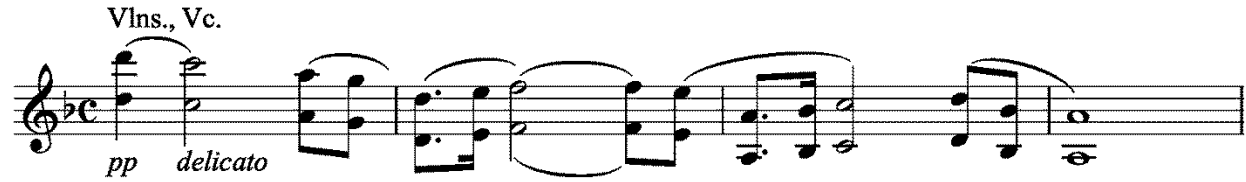
appearance in the film, when her surprise appearance at Julie’s long-awaited party at Halcyon reveals Preston’s secret marriage and dashes any hopes of a reconciliation between Pres and Julie. The conductor’s score for this cue shows a full statement of this theme, marked “delicate”

(Example 2.7); its lyricism

and expressive leaps alternating with slower rhythms fit the model of the Feminine Romantic Cliché perfectly, and it would have been one had it appeared in the film as originally intended.<sup>28</sup>

Instead, in the final cut of the film the shocking revelation of Preston’s marriage is scored with a sudden break in the music acting as an implied stinger chord (Figure 2.4). Amy’s theme is heard only later, and as a result its connection to the character is less strong; it becomes associated with

<sup>28</sup> The score, located at the Warner Bros. Archive, includes a cue corresponding to the scene in question (reel 6, part 2). The opening of the cue includes the music leading up to Amy’s entrance; at the point of Amy’s appearance in the film, the music cuts out. In the written score, however, the cue continues on with a theme referred to as “The New Wife.” It is unclear why this cut was made, but it is clear from this cue that the theme was meant to underscore Amy’s introduction.



Example 2.7: “Amy”

her mainly because it *does* sound like music for a female love object, not because the film positions it to belong to her. It is unclear why the musical theme “Amy” was suppressed in the film’s final cut. Whatever the reason, instead of characterizing Amy directly, her music becomes filtered through Julie’s subjectivity, like the rest of the film’s score. The first time we do hear “Amy” is a brief statement when Pres is forced to leave Halcyon suddenly and return to New Orleans on urgent bank business. The theme plays as Amy asks Pres to take her with him, he refuses, and she acquiesces; the short exchange illustrates, as Julie watches jealously, supposedly proper interactions between a husband and wife. The wife shows due concern for her husband’s well-being but ultimately does as she is told and does not act on her own impulses and desires. The music takes on added meaning through Julie’s bitter observation of feminine behavior, further validating Amy’s claim to proper womanhood. Even here, the function of “Amy” is to give us information about Julie. In the film’s final scene, it will go even further as it actually transfers from Amy to Julie.

In the film’s climactic finale, previously heard musical themes are used to bring about Julie’s supposed transformation. The film’s ending requires a brief plot synopsis here in order then to explain how the music fits into the denouement. Toward the end of the film, Preston has become desperately ill from the yellow fever, and Julie secretly returns to New Orleans to care for him. The rest of the Halcyon party soon arrives, and Amy decides that as a dutiful wife she must go with Pres to Lazarette Island, the leper colony where the afflicted are all taken. Julie

realizes that she, not Amy, must go with Pres to the island, as only she has the skills and strength required to negotiate the terror of the leper colony. Eventually Amy agrees, and Julie is last seen being carried off on a wagon with Pres and other fever victims, presumably to her death. While previous examples have suggested that the change in Julie's character had been gradually taking place over the course of the film's third act, supporting the idea of Julie's multidimensional and ambiguous character, the finale instead points to a dramatic, magical transformation from two-dimensional Jezebel to similarly two-dimensional martyr.

The sequence begins with music that blurs rather than clarifies Julie's subjectivity at this point. Scenes of the panic and mayhem sweeping the streets of the city are scored with a theme called "Funebre," which is actually a variant of the "Julie" theme arranged as a duple-meter funeral dirge. Whether this is meant to suggest a connection between the havoc wreaked by Julie and that caused by the yellow fever, or it is merely meant to filter the experience of the yellow fever panic further through Julie's subjectivity, is debatable, but this variant on "Julie" plays a crucial role in the film's final scenes, alongside appearances of the original triple-meter "Julie." Once the Halcyon party has arrived and Dr. Livingstone apprises everyone of Preston's dire situation, while Julie struggles with her feelings and estrangement from the rest of the group, familiar musical themes creep suggestively into the score: when the others are surprised to see Julie caring for Preston, we hear "The Vixen" and a dissonant statement of "Amy" suggesting either that Julie's motivations may be sinister or else that they are *assumed* to be so. Is Julie plotting something wicked, or is she trying to change?

It is directly after this, when Julie petitions Amy to take her place at Preston's side, that the music begins to give us a clearer idea as to Julie's motivations—as well as to bring about the seemingly sudden transformation in her character. Julie pleads with Amy and claims that in fact

she has already changed: no longer are Julie's strength and strong will directed toward her own selfish desires—now they are more appropriately directed toward the welfare of the man she loves. "Amy," she explains, "it's no longer you and me," suggesting that the two need to work together in order to help Preston. Almost convinced, Amy finally asks Julie if Pres is still in love with her, and we hear "The Vixen." Julie is unwilling to answer at first, but then admits that Pres no longer loves her, as the music transitions to "Julie." One cannot help but wonder while watching this scene: is Julie being honest, or is she being manipulative once again? The music points to Julie's sincerity, as the sinister nature behind "The Vixen" shifts toward the more positive "Amy" and "Julie" themes. The gradual transformation of these themes and the clear motivations behind Julie's behavior suggest that she is truly reforming.

The way the rest of the scene unfolds, however, tells a slightly different story. As Preston is carried down the stairs to be taken away to the leper island, Julie waits anxiously for Amy to make her decision. Julie urges her with an anguished cry of "Amy!" and Amy's theme enters



Figure 2.5: Julie, newly reborn as a good woman.

suddenly. Finally, she consents. As "Amy" continues to play, the camera shows her standing on the stairs looking down at Julie, who is shown in the next shot looking up gratefully at Amy before she turns to hurry after Preston (Figure 2.5). Another shot/reverse shot sequence shows Julie looking back, with Amy still standing



resolutely on the stairs, and then Julie's final look of gratitude.<sup>29</sup> This editing suggests that Amy's music is actually being transferred *onto* Julie, and by the end of the brief exchange "Amy," with all the associations it brings with it as a pseudo-FRC, belongs to Julie. Despite the many reasons why Julie cannot be the woman behind the Feminine Romantic Cliché, suddenly and magically she has become worthy of such music.

As this newly rehabilitated Julie joins Preston, the music swells into an ever-ascending crescendo of strings, followed by a sudden descent that transitions into "Funebre," the slowed-down, funereal variant of "Julie." The low brass play a plodding bass line, joined by the trumpets with the melody. After a moment a wordless choir joins in on the melodic line. We see Julie



Figure 2.6: Julie and Pres are carried along with the other fever victims to Lazarette Island.

sitting defiantly on the wagon surrounded by bodies, looking like a martyr ready to be burned at the stake (Figure 2.6). The wordless choir lends a quasi-religious tone to the music, supporting the idea that Julie's transformation and repentance have a divine element. The camera focuses in on the bonfire and we hear the fever

cannons in the background, and a theme we have not heard since the opening credits returns.

Called "Fortitude," this fanfare-like theme is played by a meaty brass section and is

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<sup>29</sup> "Shot/reverse shot" is a technique crucial to the Hollywood practice of continuity editing, defined by Bordwell and Thompson as: "Two or more shots edited together that alternate characters, typically in a conversation situation. In *continuity editing*, characters in one framing usually look left, in the other framing, right. Over-the-shoulder framings are common in shot/reverse shot editing." (David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, sixth edition [New York: McGraw Hill, 2001], 433.)



Example 2.8: "Fortitude"

characterized by a leap of a minor seventh followed by stepwise motion down (Example 2.8). As it did in the opening credits, it leads directly into the “Julie” theme, heard here in an upbeat waltz arrangement. Along with facilitating the transition from the heavy and portentous “Funebre” theme, “Fortitude” lends strength and force to Julie’s act before we are finally brought back to the agreeably ambiguous “Julie” theme that has overshadowed the entire film.

In the end, instead of realistically portraying her as a woman with positive and negative qualities who makes serious errors in judgment, realizes the depth of her mistakes, and wants to redeem herself, the music unmask Julie as a cartoon villain who ultimately undergoes a magical transformation from evil bitch to saintly penitent. One reviewer called this apparently implausible transformation “occult chemistry,” adding that it “makes no more sense on the screen than it did behind footlights” (comparing it to the original play) but crediting Steiner’s musical score with helping to “make any hardened filmgoer certain that everything has turned out all right.”<sup>30</sup> He does not indicate what particularly about the music helps to achieve this effect, referring only to the “big climax,” but something about the music’s suturing effect on the film’s strange ending made an impression on more than one reviewer. Another wrote: “[The ending] reveals the willful Julie, whose pride and arrogance and selfishness already have done irreparable harm, making a vaingloriously self-sacrificial speech to Pres’s wife, pleading for the privilege of cleansing her soul by going with the plague-struck Pres. . . . And the celestial choir, which always is lurking offstage, raises its voice in a swelling crescendo as we (according to the

<sup>30</sup> Howard Barnes, *New York Herald Tribune*, March 11, 1938.

script) fade out.”<sup>31</sup> The score, with its lurking “celestial choir,” helps to make “certain that everything has turned out all right” by supporting the denouement, supplying the narrative with the magic it needs to redeem a supposedly irredeemable character. This transformation—facilitated through the *deus ex machina* of the overdetermining good girl theme Julie borrows from Amy and the quasi-religious dirge based on her own musical theme—strips Julie of the power and autonomy she had throughout the film, making her nothing more than a simple Jezebel. In this way the music, which had seemed to offer Julie individuality as well as a powerful subjectivity, turns the tables on her in the end, reinforcing the notion that her behavior makes her a threat to society while at the same time, paradoxically, it attempts to redeem her.

With her musical scoring taken into account, Julie starts to seem less like the two-dimensional villain described by the filmmakers and more like the character described by Bette Davis herself in an interview she gave the *Washington Post* several months before the film’s premiere. In this article, Davis reveals her own unique understanding of Julie, the character type she regularly played, and the reasons behind her long-standing desire to star in the film:

I couldn’t do a part I didn’t think was justified to save my neck. All the women I’ve been have had reasons for acting the way they did and being the kind they were. I don’t think any of them were completely bad—nobody can be. . . .

In this one, “Julie” wasn’t always hard; she was merely a spoiled brat who always had her own way, and it never occurred to her that she was trampling on people. But when Pres—that’s Hank Fonda—marries the Northern girl, it changes her and she sets out to do everything she can to get him.

The other women were like that. They wanted something and they went after it, that’s all; it didn’t matter how they got it. They had their reasons for being hard—maybe because they’d been kicked around so much, and I don’t blame them.

What everyone seems to overlook is the fact that all the women I’ve played were people with an enormous amount of guts. That’s why I resent it very much when everybody says, “Oh, you play only vixen parts, don’t you?”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Frank S. Nugent, “Warners Start the Southern Cycle with ‘Jezebel’ at the Music Hall,” *New York Times*, May 11, 1938.

<sup>32</sup> Lucie Neville, “Blonde Star of ‘Jezebel’ Likes Part,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 23, 1938.

It is notable that Davis finds it necessary to explain her empathy for the “vixen” character she had long been typecast playing; presumably she felt others neither understood nor shared this empathy.<sup>33</sup> Later in the article she continues:

Another reason I wanted to play “Jezebel” was that I liked the girl, Jule [sic]. She interests me because she has an immense amount of character and goes through an interesting character change. . . . Julie’s as ruthless as anyone can be and completely feminine.

But I couldn’t make anybody here believe that for a long time. I’ve wanted that Owen Davis play for four years. . . . But nobody would buy it. One director said it had possibilities. The others said it didn’t make sense—no man would be annoyed or angry because a woman would wear a red dress to a white ball.

. . . Now, every woman in the audience will understand perfectly. You know how it is—you plan a dress and then a man doesn’t like it. So you say to yourself, “I’ve stood for fittings on this dress by the hour and I know it’s divine. I will wear it, and as for you, my fine fellow, you can go to the devil!”<sup>34</sup>

Bette Davis did not believe Julie to be evil or wholly mean, but rather spoiled and headstrong, qualities that she did not seem to judge as harshly as some of those in the film’s audience.<sup>35</sup> One critic who *did* seem to understand Davis’s intentions with the character might be one of the few reviewers able to make sense of Julie’s strange behavior. After describing some of Julie’s outrageous behavior and asking “what is it she does that causes her to be called [a Jezebel],” the critic provides this explanation:

Time and again in “Jezebel” we wonder what the other characters are so outraged about: we realize that it is because Julie is behaving as a real person. She is human, with love very near to hate and self-sacrifice scorned turning into revenge. She dare be direct, desperate if necessary, despicable if inevitable. She knows herself, and that lets her know others. Their refusal to know themselves or to be themselves is what, finally, makes her a Jezebel in their eyes. In short, Bette Davis, seeing beyond the externals of what could

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<sup>33</sup> The interviewer indicates that “vixen” was not the word Davis used but was instead a necessary substitution for print publication.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> It is also noteworthy that Davis believed that men would have a harder time understanding her character’s motivations than would women—the gender gap is significant both in how the character was ultimately painted in the film and in how critics responded to her.

have been a trite story, contrives to make her performance a private conversation between herself and each member of the audience.<sup>36</sup>

This reviewer interprets Julie as a realistic character whose transformation makes sense, a deeply sensitive performance that captures the full range of real human emotions. Steiner's score makes the case, apparently unintentionally, for this interpretation of Julie; as a result, by listening closely to the music, we are misdirected into believing that Julie is already well on the way to redeeming her bad behavior when the score suddenly changes its tune, convincing us with its celestial choir and "swelling crescendo" that only through divine intervention can this woman be saved.

### **"Like a Savage Child": *Duel in the Sun***

In *Jezebel*, it was Julie's uncontrolled and irrational femininity that made her a threat to society; in *Duel in the Sun* (1946, dir. King Vidor), dangerous feminine instinct is also to blame, but more importantly it is the female protagonist's racial background that defines her character. In this melodramatic western set in the 1880s, the mixed-race Pearl Chavez (Jennifer Jones) fights for acceptance after she is sent to Texas to live with the McCanleses—her wealthy white relatives—following the death of her father. Certain aspects of the film posit that Pearl's supposed racial inferiority—inherited from her Native American/Mexican mother—is to blame for her inability to conform to proper society. This idea is supported in an early version of the script, which has a staging direction describing Pearl as being "like a savage child."<sup>37</sup> The film's overarching narrative, however, seems to imply that Pearl's failure to thrive is caused just as much by the racism she faces from members within that society as it does to an inherited defect

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<sup>36</sup> H. H. "Bette Davis's New Film," *Manchester Guardian*, April 14, 1938.

<sup>37</sup> Script: Original Copy Without Any Revisions—January 12, 1946; credited as by Selznick, pg. 19. Warner Bros. Archive.

of her own. Dimitri Tiomkin's musical score adds a further twist to her characterization: the film's main musical themes early in the film represent other characters but *not*, significantly, Pearl herself. These other characters mold and shape Pearl's destiny, while Pearl herself demonstrates little of her own subjectivity or ability to carve out her own path. The music helps to reinforce Pearl's lack of agency, as it both represents the interests and personality traits of other characters and superimposes those onto her. Similarly to how Max Steiner used the "Amy" theme in *Jezebel* to give us information about Julie in addition to Amy, Tiomkin uses music to reveal information about Pearl through her relationships with the people around her and *their* characterizing music. Thus Pearl develops as a constantly shifting character who resists being defined simply as a bad girl or "wildcat." In the end, however, as happened in *Jezebel*, one theme emerges that seems to negate the complexity that Pearl had shown throughout the film and establishes her finally as nothing more than a wildcat after all. Was she a bad girl all along, or was she victimized and ruined by outside forces? Here I will argue that in *Duel in the Sun*, Dimitri Tiomkin's music works to add layers to Pearl's character not by representing her as a simply good or bad character, but rather by illustrating how she is influenced by other characters. This is a notable contrast to the expected practice of using a specific piece of music to illustrate character, as in the FRC examples, or even Steiner's strategy in *Jezebel* of attaching a large variety of music to a single character that represents that character's interiority. Instead, Pearl's music represents how her character develops from the outside in. These musics and the film's narrative not only highlight, in light of Julie's redemption at the end of *Jezebel*, how lack of access to white privilege shapes a bad woman's destiny; it complicates the question of whether Pearl ever had a chance to succeed in mainstream white society, or she was doomed to disgrace

from birth. In other words, was it the film's racist characters, or racist ideology, or a mixture of both, that resulted in Pearl's characterization as a "half-breed" wildcat?

Based on the 1944 novel by Niven Busch, directed by King Vidor, and headed by independent producer David O. Selznick, *Duel in the Sun* was considered at the time to be the most anticipated film ever made, and one of the most expensive.<sup>38</sup> Before its release on December 31, 1946, Hollywood was abuzz with excitement over the film—for its high-profile cast including Jones, Gregory Peck, Joseph Cotten, Lionel Barrymore, Lillian Gish, Walter Huston, and Butterfly McQueen; for its dazzling use of Technicolor and purportedly stunning cinematography; and for the over five million dollars Selznick spent making the film (not including the two million he spent to publicize it).<sup>39</sup> Although it met with some favorable reception when it opened in Los Angeles, virulent backlash spearheaded by the Catholic League of Decency concerning the film's supposedly offensive subject matter—the archbishop of Los Angeles called it “morally offensive and spiritually depressing”<sup>40</sup>—prevented its wide release until May of 1947.<sup>41</sup> Although Selznick had attempted to work within the restrictions of the Production Code, he and director King Vidor were forced to make additional cuts to the film to

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<sup>38</sup> Edwin Schallert, “Box-Office Seer Rates ‘Duel’ High” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 10, 1946: “Today [Al] Lichtman is betting on Selznick again. He thinks that his picture ‘Duel in the Sun’ will gross \$30,000,000 ‘if it is properly exploited.’ That is the only provision that he makes. But beyond that ‘if’ he makes no stipulations of reservations. He has seen much of the footage, believes in the production, and he argues that the rest is simply a mathematical proposition.”

<sup>39</sup> Fred Stanley, “Selznick’s Costly ‘Sun,’” *New York Times*, Jan. 27, 1946: “Last week the filming costs of the Niven Busch story, which is now in the editing and music-scoring stages, reached \$5,069,000. More will be added to the production cost, it is stated, before the master print of the super-Western is completely cut and edited.” “End of the Trail,” *New York Times*, Nov. 3, 1946: “Filming began in March, 1945, and continued pretty constantly (what with added scenes, retakes, special photographic sequences, et al.) until two weeks ago. The cost of all this was \$5,255,000, with an additional \$2,000,000 assigned to advertising and exploitation.”

<sup>40</sup> “Cantwell Warns People against ‘Duel in the Sun,’” *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 16, 1947.

<sup>41</sup> The positive review was written by Edwin Schallert, who had also earlier written a propagandistic piece prophesying the film's inevitable success (see fn. 48); “‘Duel in the Sun’ Elemental Triumph,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 1, 1947; “Cantwell Warns People against ‘Duel in the Sun,’” *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 16, 1947; “2 Religious Groups Attack ‘Duel in Sun,’” *New York Times*, Jan. 16, 1947.

achieve a “B” rating from the League of Decency (a rating indicating that the organization still found the film objectionable but consented to its release).<sup>42</sup>

Over the months leading up to the film’s wide release, newspapers continued to promote *Duel in the Sun*, lauding its epic scope, Academy Award–worthy performances (one writer predicted that *all* the lead and co-starring actors would be nominated for awards, as would Dimitri Tiomkin for the score), and overall brilliance.<sup>43</sup> But upon its release, the film was panned by reviewers. Local religious groups continued to condemn the film for its overt sexuality and negative portrayal of a clergyman, and it was banned in Memphis as well as censored in Pennsylvania.<sup>44</sup> There were also calls for a ban on the film in Connecticut and Washington, D.C.<sup>45</sup> Adding to the disappointment, the film failed to meet expectations come award time, receiving only two Academy Awards nominations for Jones (“Best Actress in a Leading Role”) and Gish (“Best Actress in a Supporting Role”).<sup>46</sup> Neither actress won. The negative press did not deter audiences from buying tickets, but it was not the critical and popular success Selznick had hoped it would be.<sup>47</sup> Nicknamed “lust in the dust” by one reviewer, *Duel in the Sun*

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<sup>42</sup> “‘Duel in the Sun’ Revised,” *New York Times*, Feb. 8, 1947; “Cuts in ‘Duel in the Sun’ Made by Selznick,” *New York Times*, March 14, 1947.

<sup>43</sup> “‘Duel in the Sun’ at Loew’s,” *New York Amsterdam News*, May 3, 1947; “The Theatre: Duel in the Sun,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 7, 1947.

<sup>44</sup> A *New York Times* article from May 21, 1947 (“‘Duel’ Again Censored”) indicates that in Pennsylvania “many protests were filed by church groups and women’s clubs objecting to showing of the picture without major cuts in the love scenes.” See also “Memphis Bans Another Film,” *New York Times*, April 25, 1947.

<sup>45</sup> “‘Duel in Sun’ Condemned,” *New York Times*, May 9, 1947; “‘Duel in the Sun’ Is Debasing, Rankin Says,” *Washington Post*, June 20, 1947; “‘Duel in Sun’ Called ‘Nasty’; House Unit Hints Censorship,” *Washington Post*, June 21, 1947.

<sup>46</sup> Surprise at the Academy’s overlooking of the film was registered in a Feb. 11, 1947, *Washington Post* article announcing the nominees (“Academy Nominations Studied with British Names; ‘Duel’ Missing”).

<sup>47</sup> A short blurb in the *Wall Street Journal* recorded the following: “Never underestimate the power of publicity. The ballyhooed *Duel in the Sun* was seen by 202,000 moviegoers within a period of 15 hours in 39 New York City theatres when it opened last week. This is held to be a record for the number of people seeing one attraction at one time in one day in the city, and exceeds by 104,000 the number of persons who saw *Gone with the Wind* during the opening day of its neighborhood showings.” “The Theatre,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 12, 1947. Another reviewer wrote, “Oh Yes, ‘Duel in the Sun’ will make money, just



impressed audiences and critics more with its unprecedented and scandalous focus on sexuality and raw passion than it did for its cinematic excellence.<sup>48</sup>

Like *Jezebel* several years earlier, *Duel in the Sun* too had to be altered significantly from its original source material in order to pass muster with the Production Code, and even the considerable changes Selznick authorized were not considered by all to be sufficient. The changes made to the characters Pearl and Jesse (Pearl's distant cousin and a potential love interest, played by Joseph Cotten) are particularly important to understanding how the filmmakers intended to portray the main character. These changes, while not directly concerning the score, suggest that the filmmakers had a certain type of female archetype in mind in constructing Pearl, an archetype that is not entirely consistent with how the narrative plays out or with how the music portrays her. I will first address how the filmmakers attempted to construct Pearl's character, as evidenced by production memos and changes made in translation of the story from novel to screenplay. From there I will move past the production end to focus on how Pearl's character can be received critically by analyzing the film's music.

For the film, the filmmakers altered Pearl's role to fit the bad woman archetype that we also saw in *Jezebel*. Both the novel and film feature a love triangle between Pearl and two brothers: the virtuous and upstanding Jesse McCandles, who tries to reform her, and his delinquent and wicked brother Lewt (Gregory Peck), who seduces her and ruins her reputation.

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as it was designed to do. In its first week alone, in 160 theaters throughout this country, it has taken in 2 ½ million dollars." Richard L. Coe, "'Duel Offends Senses as It Does 'Code,' but It's Piling up Bucks,'" *Washington Post*, May 22, 1947.

<sup>48</sup> Hedda Hopper, "Meet Miss Jones," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 2, 1947; "Billy Rowe's Notebook," *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 24, 1947: "Butterfly McQueen, who has been rated by some critics as the most realistic actress in 'Duel in the Sun,' the Winchell-dubbed 'lust in the dust' flicker." One particularly virulent negative review claimed that the reason for the additional censorship was "to dilute the Sinkiller role [Walter] Huston plays. Church groups objected to suggesting that anyone to do with religion should be pictured as the lecherous gospel shouter Huston skillfully plays." Coe, "'Duel' Offends Senses as It Does 'Code,' but It's Piling up Bucks," *Washington Post*, May 22, 1947.

The novel ends with Pearl and Jesse defeating Lewt, marrying, and setting off to live happily ever after together. This ending would not have satisfied Hollywood's censors, particularly considering the numerous laws the two characters break in order to achieve their goals (including train robbery, perjury in a court of law, and murder).<sup>49</sup> Instead, the film's screenplay alters the story so that Jesse finds happiness with another woman who better fits the model of the good woman female love object; Pearl, who realizes that she will never succeed in good society, ultimately sacrifices herself to protect Jesse, whose life is threatened by Lewt. The following memo, written by Selznick after an initial script was rejected by the "Hays Office," indicates the changes that were meant to appease chief censor Joseph Breen and his "lieutenants":

Although a few days ago I instructed Miss Deardorff . . . not to submit any of the present script on DUEL IN THE SUN to the Breen Office, I should like to change these instructions and have the submissions of the material to the Hays office handled under your supervision. However, in advance of this I think that you should personally see Mr. Breen and whichever one of his lieutenants is going to handle this job, and should explain about our new ending and the fact that both Lewt and Pearl are going to pay and pay and pay the wages of sin, and how! Obviously, their attitude toward the script as it progresses will be entirely different if they know that God punishes these two sinners more completely than he did under the more tolerant and forgiving deities, the Messrs. Koerner and Busch.<sup>50</sup>

The alternative to rewarding immoral behavior as it appears in the book is for Pearl to *fail* to win Jesse's love and then sacrifice herself to protect him.

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<sup>49</sup> In a 1944 letter David O. Selznick wrote to the head of RKO, Selznick indicated that he disliked the book's happy ending, writing, "I find the ending lacking in satisfaction, because it seems to negate what the whole picture has been about; and because there was insufficient preparation for the hope that the girl will be happy with the older brother. Also, I even feel it is unpleasant as I don't think that Jesse's life with Pearl, beyond the fadeout, based upon her murder of Jesse's brother, presents a very pretty picture." At this time, RKO had the rights to the novel and Koerner had asked to borrow Jennifer Jones, who was under contract to Selznick, for the picture to co-star with John Wayne as Lewt. Selznick disliked Wayne for the part, and RKO never followed through with the project. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>50</sup> Inter-office communication from Selznick to "Miss Keon" (Barbara "Bobby" Keon), Jan. 3, 1945, David O. Selznick Collection. By "Messrs. Koerner and Busch" Selznick refers to RKO studio head Charles Koerner and author Niven Busch.

The changes made to Jesse's character and storyline further emphasize the filmmakers' desires to portray Pearl as a bad woman and are facilitated in part through the aforementioned added love interest in the person of Helen Langford. In the novel, Helen is described as a rather plain and spinsterish woman in her late twenties, possessing "what is usually known as an 'intelligent' look that went with her primness," which Jesse at one point muses is likely the reason for her spinsterhood.<sup>51</sup> In the film, on the other hand, Helen becomes Jesse's sweet, feminine, and genteel fiancée, playing a role analogous to Amy's in *Jezebel*: both women function to demonstrate ideal femininity and proper decorum in sharp contrast to the lead female character. Helen in the film (Joan Tetzl) is delicate and beautiful with flawless pale skin contrasting with Pearl's darker half-Indian complexion. She supports Jesse in his professional and political endeavors and is even charitable toward Pearl. These changes made by the filmmakers reflect a narrative device common to Western literature that Susan McClary identifies in her analysis of *Carmen* as she contrasts the structure of the original novella by Prosper Mérimée to Bizet's opera. The novella, she writes, "is structured around a solitary female character, Carmen, who is sought after by two principal men—Don José and the 'objective,' scholarly narrator—in addition to Carmen's husband and the bullfighter. By contrast, the opera is organized in terms of the traditional Western dichotomy between proper and improper constructions of female sexuality, between the virgin and the whore." This change, she continues, simplifies Mérimée's multiple narratives and even made the opera more "family friendly." She explains, "The authors justified the change by claiming that the family audience of the Opéra-Comique required a positive female figure to stand in binary opposition to Carmen."<sup>52</sup> Like Carmen, so too does Pearl require a positively portrayed counterpart in the form of Helen

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<sup>51</sup> Niven Busch, *Duel in the Sun*, 3rd ed. (New York: Popular Library, 1947), 154.

<sup>52</sup> McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*, 56.

(even though it is Laura Belle McCanles, the more central character, who is assigned the film's FRC, as I will show later).<sup>53</sup>

Despite Pearl's efforts throughout the story to better herself, the film is clear in its presentation of her as, using McClary's distinction, the "whore" to Helen's "virgin." The reason for Pearl's bad nature is less clear, as the film ambiguously suggests both her ethnicity and the social prejudice she encounters as possible explanations. The exact nature of this social prejudice is murky, perhaps due to contemporary concerns about the suggestion of historical racism against Latin Americans. When Paramount considered filming the novel in 1944, the subject of racism bothered studio executives enough to have produced this astonishing memo:

The more serious problem, however, which is a very dangerous one to raise in wartime, particularly in view of the Hitler master race theory, is that the half-breed girl is all right for an affair but not to marry. If the half-breed were part negro, that of course, would be unacceptable under the Code; but when you make her part Indian there should not be any stigma against her *as there is no racial prejudice in the United States against people of part Indian blood*, which is a very good thing because that strain runs very strongly in Latin Americans (incidentally, our girl has a Spanish name and our story is laid in controversial Texas). If we consequently make a picture showing that condition to have existed at one time the Germans will be able to put it to good use abroad with their Divide and Conquer technique for Latin America. Recognizing this, the picture would be denied an export license. The townspeople's objection to the boy's marrying the girl should be a social one only, and not a racial one. This last point is very dangerous to delve into.<sup>54</sup>

Written while the United States was still fighting in World War II, this document shows the great lengths to which American filmmakers were obliged to go to avoid offending their neighbors to

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<sup>53</sup> This was not the only time that filmmakers created or exaggerated this dichotomy of feminine archetypes in a classical Hollywood film based on a novel. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945), the character of Sibyl Vane (Angela Lansbury) was changed from a Shakespearean actress to a far less respectable vaudeville singer. In Oscar Wilde's novel, Dorian abandons her because he is disgusted that she is willing to give up her artistic career for him, whereas in the film it is because she agrees to spend the night with him out of fear of his leaving her. Sibyl is not actually bad in the film but is forced to put herself in a bad light through Dorian's trickery. This trampier version of Sibyl is contrasted with the more proper and upper-class Gladys Hallward (Donna Reed), to whom Dorian later becomes engaged and who never faces the test of virtue that Sibyl had earlier failed. Something similar happened later in the transition of *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), which will be discussed in chapter 4, from novel to screen.

<sup>54</sup> Inter-office communication, Paramount Pictures, from Luigi Luraschi to William Dozier, Jan. 22, 1944, David O. Selznick Collection (emphasis mine).

the south in the interest of the war effort. Curiously, in Selznick's hands the film does suggest as early as its opening scene that Pearl suffers from discrimination due to her race just as strongly as she did in the novel. In fact, the film actually heightens the racism angle in its portrayal of Senator McCanles (Lionel Barrymore), who only mildly disapproves of Pearl in the book but is openly prejudiced against her in the movie. And indeed, the memo says nothing of suggesting people of part-Indian blood to be in some way inferior—only that no prejudice be displayed. While this memo does not seem to have been taken into consideration under Selznick's guidance, the confused attitude toward the issue of prejudice survives in the film, further blurring the source of Pearl's downfall: racial/social prejudice, or her own inherent racial inferiority.

The source of Pearl's bad character is never satisfactorily resolved in the film, although we are given several contradictory clues. Laura Mulvey has applied psychoanalytic theory in order to explain Pearl's negative portrayal in a piece written as a response to her earlier essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Mulvey uses Freud's theory of femininity to argue that the film presents Pearl as struggling between feminine and masculine identification due to the memory of her "active" phase, a period of early childhood development which Freud also calls the "phallic phase" that takes place before femininity sets in (for girls).<sup>55</sup> Mulvey's purpose is to investigate the subject position of the female film spectator who finds herself identifying with the male hero and is therefore masculinized. She compares this viewer to the "woman central protagonist . . . shown to be unable to achieve a stable sexual identity, torn between the deep blue sea of passive femininity and the devil of regressive masculinity."<sup>56</sup> With Pearl as her example, Mulvey argues that by using a woman as the film's central character, the film alters the terms of

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<sup>55</sup> Laura Mulvey, "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)," in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 2nd ed. (Hampshire, UK: Macmillan, 2009), 30–31.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

the traditional western genre in which “woman” usually symbolizes marriage and sexuality. In *Duel in the Sun*, “Woman is no longer the signifier of sexuality. . . . Now the female presence as centre allows the story to be actually, *overtly*, about sexuality: it becomes a melodrama.” With Jesse and Lewt symbolizing the two paths that beckon Pearl—Jesse the correct one and Lewt the wrong one—the film shows us that there is no room down either path for Pearl. Because she tries to identify with masculinity, she cannot be accepted by either Jesse or Lewt. Mulvey writes: “Pearl is unable to settle or find a ‘femininity’ in which she and the male world can meet. In this sense, although the male characters personify Pearl’s dilemma, it is their terms that make or finally break her.”<sup>57</sup> While my own analysis focuses on the importance of racial and class difference and does not take Freud or psychoanalysis into consideration, Mulvey’s focus on Pearl’s inability to identify with what is perceived as correct femininity points in the same direction and provides a precedent for my study. But instead of focusing on Mulvey’s Freudian models, I turn to Pearl’s portrayal as a Native American character and how her Otherness intersects with her musical accompaniment.

Because the way in which Pearl is portrayed as a Native American character is significant to our understanding of how the filmmakers meant to portray her as a bad woman, we must look back briefly at the history of the portrayal of Native American characters in American cinema. Since the beginning of narrative film in the early 1900s, Native Americans were a favorite topic for filmmakers and audiences. According to Gregory S. Jay:

The Native American presented an ideal subject for the early movie makers; exotic, mysterious, dangerous, and historic, the Indian immediately and powerfully fascinated the gaze of white people, who for centuries had produced cultural representations of the racial other in a variety of artistic, intellectual, and scientific genres. Since the camera loved action, the Indian-white conflict offered countless possibilities with which we are now all too familiar: the chase (whether on horseback or in canoe), the battle, hand-to-hand combat, the circling of the wagons, the burning of the settler’s home, the scalping of

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 36.

the victim, the terrorizing of the innocent white woman, and the bashing of babies' heads. . . . Estimates are that fifty Indian/western/cowboy one-reelers were released in 1909, and between one hundred and two hundred such films in each year through 1914.<sup>58</sup>

Early Native American films, Jay notes, were closer to the genre of the melodrama than they were to what we would now recognize as the western, and in contrast to their portrayal in westerns of the early synchronized sound era, American Indians were often portrayed as sympathetic characters. The Indian woman, or “squaw,” became a key element of the genre, evolving from “the stereotype of the docile squaw who tragically falls in love with the white man, often sacrificing herself for him or her tribe.” These films, Jay argues, “gendered the racialized other as feminine, turning the political struggle between whites and Indians into a romantic tragedy that usually followed the dictates of the prohibition against miscegenation, bolstered by the Darwinian conviction that the Indian was a vestige of an ineluctably doomed primitivism.”<sup>59</sup> In *Duel in the Sun*, the tragic/romantic plot of an older era is combined with contemporary fashions in which the Native American character takes on additional negative characteristics due to her improper feminine behavior. Even the casting of Lewt as a villain fits into the model of the silent-era Indian melodrama, in which the Indians, while not truly heroic characters, are menaced by villainous white men: “In most of [D. W.] Griffith’s Biograph Indian films the Indians elicit white melodramatic sympathy and the white miners, pioneers, and soldiers are often depicted as rapacious scoundrels. On closer analysis, however, this sympathy appears directed toward a creature considered doomed by its very nature, its nobility a primitive defense against the complexity of modernity. These films . . . argued that although the Native Americans had many fine natural qualities, they were incapable of civilization and thus of any

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<sup>58</sup> Gregory S. Jay, “White Man’s Book No Good: D. W. Griffith and the American Indian,” *Cinema Journal* 39, no. 4 (2000): 5–6.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

real nobility.”<sup>60</sup> This approach leaves space in *Duel in the Sun* for Jesse to be the true hero, despite the absence of any traditionally heroic actions on his part, because of his inherently noble character. Pearl, on the other hand, like Griffith’s Biograph Indians, is shown to be “incapable of civilization,” and therefore irredeemable, and must be eliminated in order to restore order, civilization, and decency to the American West.

Pearl’s characterization also encompasses the two most common ways in which Native American or Mexican characters were represented in classical Hollywood cinema: portrayed as childlike and simple but at the same time unable to suppress her sexual nature, Pearl combines and exemplifies both archetypes.<sup>61</sup> Temptresses like Helen Ramirez in *High Noon*, Chihuahua (Linda Darnell) in *My Darling Clementine*, and Yakima (Elvira Ríos, uncredited) in *Stagecoach*, and comedic simpletons like “Look” (Beulah Archuletta) in *The Searchers* and Yakima’s husband Chris (Chris-Pin Martin, uncredited) in *Stagecoach* represent the gamut of Hollywood’s treatment of Native American and Mexican characters with speaking roles. Pearl brings the two stereotypes together, along with lawlessness and savagery, creating a character that epitomizes everything that is deemed wrong with non-white peoples.

*A highly influential Wildcat: The music of Duel in the Sun*

I earlier argued that in *Jezebel*, Julie’s complex characterization was supported by the score in its ambiguous and inconsistent portrayal of the character. Pearl’s individuality in *Duel in the Sun* is similarly created, but with an important difference: her multifaceted characterization comes from the influx of outside influences—numerous and ranging from her mother to Laura Belle to

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>61</sup> Non-white characters in general have historically been portrayed in these ways, but more especially have the conflated Mexican/Native American groups, which also figure into the genre of the western more prominently than did Asian and African American characters.



Lewt—that act upon her throughout the film and prevent her from having a clearly formed identity of her own. These influences are each individually signified through a musical theme, most of which are themselves based on musical/narrative clichés that easily connote information about the character to whom they are attached and how that information becomes translated onto Pearl. For example, two of the themes, “Jesse” and “Laura Belle,” are based on the Feminine Romantic Cliché; the cognitive dissonance between what the FRC represents and what sort of person Pearl is, helps to supply a more powerful yet nuanced characterization. The chart below lists the six most important recurring themes (or uniquely appearing pieces) in the film and how they relate to Pearl’s character (Figure 2.7):<sup>62</sup>

Theme Name/ Associated Character	Function within Narrative	Meaning for Pearl
Pearl’s mother (Mrs. Chavez)	Introduces Mrs. Chavez as a bad woman and ethnic Other	Deviance as inherited from mother to daughter
Jesse	Establishes Jesse as the correct love interest by showing the possibility of Pearl having a sanctioned romance with him.	This theme never belongs to Pearl, showing her ultimate inability to be a good woman
Laura Belle “Beautiful Dreamer”	Heard both as diegetic music (sung by Laura Belle) and as non-diegetic scoring, establishes Laura Belle as a good woman character with an FRC	Laura Belle serves as a model to which Pearl aspires in concert with her attempts to become Jesse’s female love object and earn <i>his</i> FRC-like theme
Lewt	Represents Lewt’s morally depraved character with musical signifiers of sex and decadence	Becomes strongly associated with Pearl as Lewt’s influence over her grows; as he encourages her to engage in bad behavior, the music encourages the audience to associate moral depravity and sexuality with Pearl

<sup>62</sup> Examples from *Duel in the Sun* are based on the conductor’s score housed at the David O. Selznick Collection at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

Senator McCanles “Spanish Bit”	Lends grandiosity and an epic scale to the McCanles ranch, and associates Senator McCanles with musical tropes signifying whiteness and the American west	Never belongs to Pearl, emphasizes her Otherness through its own evocation of whiteness
Pearl “Mexican-Indian” theme (“Wildcat music”)	Emerges in the end as Pearl’s savage, vengeful character finally emerges	Calls on “Native American” tropes to portray Pearl as uncivilized and incapable of becoming civilized

Figure 2.7: Significant themes from *Duel in the Sun*

These influences, some good and others bad, are reflected in and intensified by the musical score. Pearl struggles to form her own identity in the face of monstrously bad influences (her mother, Lewt), good influences (Laura Belle, Jesse), and the constant reminders of her Otherness as she tries to fit in at their ranch, Spanish Bit (the “Spanish Bit,” “Mexican-Indian” themes). While most of these themes never come to represent Pearl, they all take part in helping to shape her character in the specific ways in which Tiomkin uses them—whether it is to set up an ideal to which Pearl aspires, a barrier that she cannot cross, or a manifestation of her own destiny.<sup>63</sup>

Pearl doesn’t measure up to the standards imposed by her white relatives, and her alluring exoticness creates an imbalance in Spanish Bit that can only be righted with her death. I will argue that Pearl’s relative lack of agency, as demonstrated isomorphically by her music, leads to two opposing explanations as to the reasons for her failure to conform: first, that her racial identity creates an inevitable, biological, and instinctive barrier preventing her from learning

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<sup>63</sup> A set of compiled notes from the David O. Selznick Collection indicates the extensive discussions and planning that both Selznick and Tiomkin contributed to the creation of *Duel in the Sun*’s score. These notes describe a number of themes conceived of by one or the other, many of which were not ultimately realized in the completed score. Furthermore the notes do not always describe how the themes were used within the film, and so the theme names listed in the notes do not always correspond to music actually used. The six themes listed above, however, are not ambiguous and we can be sure of their function and meanings. The notes are useful to us in showing the various ideas Selznick and Tiomkin had in the creation of the score, but which suggestions and ideas were used in the final film is not always indicated. I will therefore use the notes only to reveal ideas the filmmakers had rather than to identify what music appears in the film.

proper behavior; and second, that despite her will to succeed and good intentions, she is blocked by the prejudices and racism of the people around her. The film refuses to reconcile these ideas, variously putting forth one view or the other, with the music helping to reinforce its confusing and ambiguous portrayal of Pearl.

*Model behavior and the Feminine Romantic Cliché: Laura Belle and Jesse McCandles*

Dimitri Tiomkin uses clichéd music with strong associations of idealized feminine behavior in order to position Laura Belle (Lillian Gish) and her son Jesse as positive role models for Pearl. The themes for both Laura Belle and Jesse rely on the established connotations of the Feminine Romantic Cliché to establish Jesse and Laura Belle as members of normative, polite, white society while also allowing the characters to demonstrate a feminine gender type that Pearl aspires to emulate. The Feminine Romantic Cliché, we should recall, represents both the romantic female character and the love story simultaneously, using commonly accepted musical signifiers of femininity and romance to establish the woman as an object of romance. The use of the FRC here differs, however, from the more typical examples discussed in chapter 1. Here we can see Tiomkin playing with the established associations of the FRC in order to create new kinds of meanings for a character who does not fit the requirements for the love object character, relying on the audience's understanding of the cliché in order to develop Pearl as a character who aspires toward proper, ladylike behavior but will never achieve it. While Laura Belle's music allows her to demonstrate idealized female love object behavior while at the same time acting as a positive maternal figure, Jesse's music creates a space for Pearl to attempt to become *his* female love object.

For Laura Belle McCanles, a paragon of feminine virtue and Pearl's vision of ideal womanhood, Tiomkin uses the same Stephen Foster song that was used in *Jezebel*, "Beautiful Dreamer." In both films the song lends a feeling of nostalgic domesticity, although toward different aims and with contrasting effects. The presentation of "Dreamer" in *Jezebel* was very unlike that of an FRC due to the use of chromatic dissonance and its connection to Julie's manipulative behavior. In *Duel in the Sun*, more traditional settings of the melody help it become a convincing FRC that overdetermines Laura Belle's femininity in order to emphasize the feminine qualities that Pearl *lacks*. "Beautiful Dreamer" is, pointedly, *not* Pearl's music, but her engagement with it in the diegetic soundtrack as well as its presence in the non-diegetic score helps to shape Pearl's gendered character.

In order to understand what significance "Beautiful Dreamer" has for Pearl, we must first understand it as it relates to Laura Belle, as it is *this* meaning that will be juxtaposed against Pearl's character. Laura Belle's theme functions to establish her as a typical love object character that Pearl will attempt to emulate. We first hear the melody upon the earliest mention of Laura Belle's name, before she actually appears onscreen. "Dreamer" plays in the non-diegetic score nearly any time Laura Belle's name is invoked, so that it is clearly established as her theme by the time we meet her. Furthermore, Laura Belle reinforces her connection to the song by choosing it for herself in an early scene in which we see and hear her singing and accompanying herself on the piano. As was the case in the earlier example of *Jezebel*, "Dreamer" also carries a similarly nostalgic meaning in this film. But whereas in *Jezebel* "Dreamer" represented ironically Julie's inability to embrace feminine domesticity, in *Duel in the Sun* the song signifies the faded southern belle's nostalgia for a life she could have had. Laura Belle, we are to understand, was once in love with Pearl's father, Scott Chavez (Herbert Marshall), and their

relationship caused a rift in her marriage that has never been mended. Late in the film as Laura Belle lies on her deathbed—a scene scored almost entirely with “Beautiful Dreamer”—we learn that the reason for her husband’s infirmity and resentment toward her (Senator McCanles spends the entire film in a wheelchair) is that long ago he was seriously injured when Laura Belle ran away from him—he believes with Scott Chavez.<sup>64</sup> Just before she dies, Laura Belle reveals that she never broke her marriage vows; her claim to proper womanhood, therefore, is reaffirmed and the Senator regains his love for his wife only when it is too late. “Dreamer,” then, works to symbolize this nostalgia for what could have been at the same time as it overwhelms Laura Belle with signifiers of the domestic, romantic femininity that come with the Feminine Romantic Cliché. It also positions Laura Belle in a way that strips her of agency even more than does the typical FRC: she sings her own theme song, but she sings it through the voice of her male lover. The lyrics of the song, which are from the point of view of the man, put Laura Belle in the position of the male looker, gazing down on herself as the passive female:

Beautiful dreamer, queen of my song,  
List while I woo thee with soft melody.  
Gone are the cares of life's busy throng,  
Beautiful dreamer, awake unto me!  
Beautiful dreamer, awake unto me!

Had Laura Belle’s song been one from the point of view of the female lover, such as Foster’s “The Wife (He’ll Come Home),” she might have gained considerably more agency in establishing her own romantic desires. Instead, she is made the object rather than the subject of her own song.

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<sup>64</sup> This whole plotline seems to be largely due to casting. In the book, Senator McCanles is a short but sturdy man who has a decent if not overly warm relationship with his wife. By casting the wheelchair-bound Lionel Barrymore in the role, the filmmakers were obligated to change his backstory to include the reasons for his physical disability.

Although “Beautiful Dreamer” is Laura Belle’s theme, it is also significant in the development of Pearl’s character. By establishing for Pearl’s role model a song that signifies

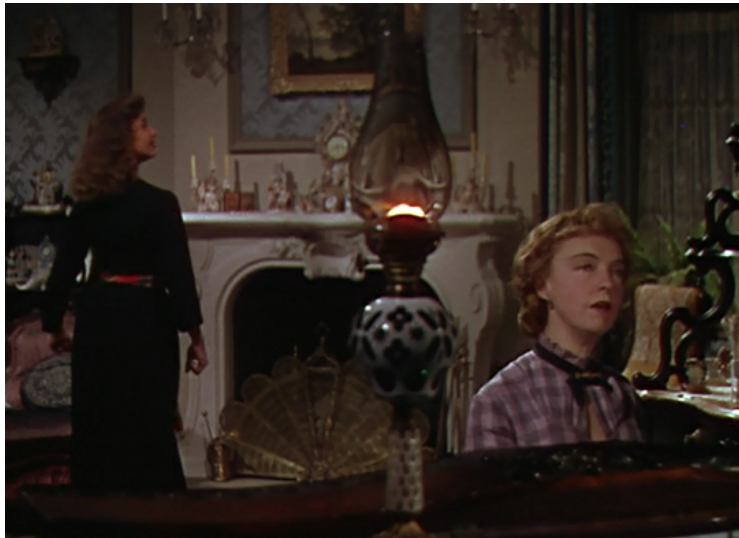


Figure 2.8: Laura Belle, seated at the piano, demonstrates proper domestic femininity while Pearl marvels at (but cannot imitate) the older woman's example.

Laura Belle’s feminine virtue and gentility, Tiomkin is able to demonstrate musically very early in the film how Pearl attempts to conform to the values espoused by this music and its traditional ideology. On the night of Pearl’s arrival at Spanish Bit, the two women are shown in the drawing

room—Laura Belle singing at the piano and Pearl eagerly exploring the beautiful room, her clumsiness with the fancy objects in the room betraying her immaturity and curiosity (Figure 2.8). The contrast between Pearl and Laura Belle is highlighted by a comical interlude from Vashti (Butterfly McQueen), Laura Belle’s incompetent and absentminded servant, who has a tendency to repeat entire conversations word-for-word before finally getting to her point. Vashti interrupts Laura Belle’s performance of “Beautiful Dreamer” and asks her mistress if she can be married:

Laura Belle: But Vashti, whom do you want to marry?

Vashti: Oh, nobody in pa’ticular ma’am, I just thought I’d kind of like to get married.

Laura Belle: Of course, Vashti. You may marry whenever you wish.

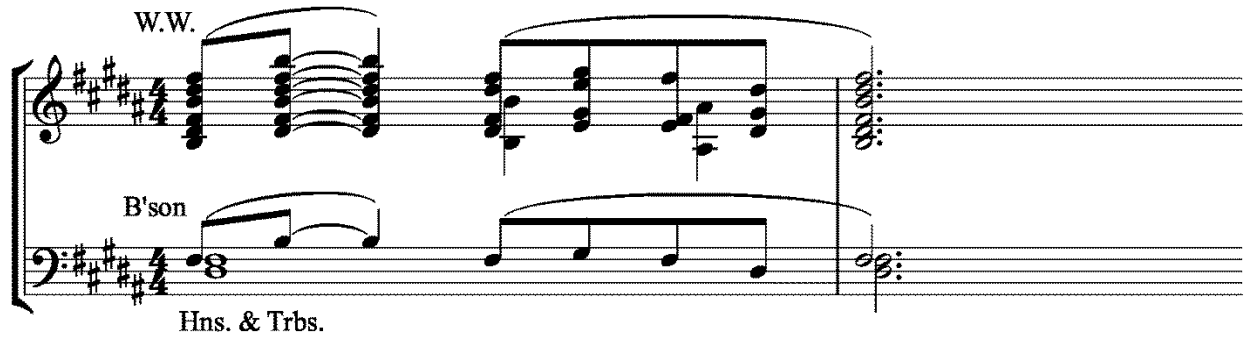
Vashti: Oh, thank you ma’am! <beat> Do you know anybody would be nice fo’ me to marry?

Laura Belle: <as though deep in thought> No, I don’t Vashti, but I’ll think about it.

Vashti: <gratefully> Oh, thank you ma’am! There’s no pa’ticular hurry!

After Vashti leaves the room, Laura Belle and Pearl have a good laugh at the servant's expense: "Oh, that Vashti!" Laura Belle laughs. "I'm afraid I'll never be able to train her properly. And as to marriage! <she scoffs>." As the conversation turns to Laura Belle's hopes that Pearl will be able to "behave like a lady," the comic, if racially insensitive, moment with Vashti is revealed as ironically prophetic of Pearl's own fate: Vashti, whose dark skin and exaggerated dialect make her an obvious racial Other, seems to Laura Belle so unfit for romance and marriage that she can only laugh at the idea. Although the question of "passing" never comes up explicitly in the film, the fact remains that Pearl *can* almost pass as white, and so Laura Belle believes that she can not only look but also act white. Unfortunately, like Vashti, she will never be properly trained, and ultimately she too is unfit for marriage. Laura Belle's overdetermining music, like her behavior, sets a standard that Pearl is unable to follow.

Another positive influence on Pearl, albeit one she can only aspire to live up to, comes from Laura Belle's older son Jesse, whose theme also calls on the musical characteristics of the Feminine Romantic Cliché (Example 2.9). Using a romantic, lyrical theme such as this one for a heroic male character is unusual in a classical Hollywood film, as according to expectations such a theme connotes gentle femininity, not an upstanding male hero. But rather than serving to emasculate Jesse by putting too much emphasis on his capacity for romance and emotion, the heteronormative musical discourse to which the FRC belongs helps to set up the *possibility* for a sanctioned romance—a romance to which Pearl aspires but ultimately fails. Although the FRC does not set up specific expectations for the female love object's male love interest the way it does for her, a sanctioned and successful coupling involving the FRC generally requires a male counterpart for the love object character who is a noble and worthy of this good woman's love; Jesse, the good son, more than fulfills these requirements. An attorney who manages the



Example 2.9: “Jesse”

business affairs of the ranch while his younger brother does the more physical work, Jesse almost immediately impresses Pearl with his kindness and indulgence of her. Although he is obviously attracted to Pearl, he suppresses his feelings for her and continually encourages Pearl in her aspiration for self-betterment. Their complicated relationship is revealed in an early scene during which Pearl, eminently impressed by Laura Belle’s gentility and refinement, expresses her desire to get an education. “Will you learn me?” she asks Jesse. For Pearl, being educated is synonymous with being a lady. After a brief conversation, Jesse takes Pearl in his arms and muses, “I’m afraid a lot of men will want to ‘learn’ you things.” Jesse is unique in that he recognizes Pearl’s innate sexuality and, unlike Lewt, does not take advantage of it. But unlike Laura Belle, who despairs of Pearl’s virtue and blames her for falling victim to Lewt’s schemes, Jesse doesn’t necessarily judge her for it (at first), but instead believes that an education will help her learn to control her animal instincts.

After the film’s lengthy musical “Prelude,” “Jesse” starts off the “Overture” right after David O. Selznick’s signature fanfare.<sup>65</sup> (It also appears in the Prelude.) Its place of prominence in the Overture points to its significance—and that of the relationship it represents—to the story.

<sup>65</sup> This theme is referred to in Selznick’s notes as the “Pearl-Jesse” theme, but for the sake of clarity and as it is more closely connected to Jesse and never represents Pearl on her own, I will refer to it as “Jesse.”



The theme is introduced within the narrative as Jesse is taking Pearl to Spanish Bit for the first time, playing quietly as the two make awkward conversation and Jesse refers to Pearl's "unusual" attire. Instantly self-conscious, Pearl clutches at her dress before Jesse assures her that he likes her Indian clothes, but would like to see her wearing brighter colors. Pearl impulsively offers to change clothes then and there, surprising Jesse and causing him hastily to urge her to "save it for tomorrow." This scene demonstrates again both Pearl's immaturity and her lack of modesty (modesty being one of the cornerstones of proper white womanhood), and a brief statement of the "Jesse" theme follows their conversation. Played by the strings, the melody begins with a rising leap of a fourth up to the keynote, and then a pivoting figure around scale degree five. Its gently lilting rhythm and held breath feeling given by the opening gesture make this theme sound like a typical love theme, and in fact it might even have been an FRC in another film. Unlike the "Lewt" and "Wildcat" themes that I will discuss below, Jesse's music contains no markers of exoticness or Otherness, and in fact Selznick stated in his instructions to Tiomkin that it "shouldn't have any of Pearl in it."<sup>66</sup> By conforming to expectations of the typical Hollywood love theme, the theme would seem to suggest the possibility of a romance between Pearl and Jesse, but only ironically so, as its own musical characteristics exclude Pearl from being able to identify with it. It represents Jesse's attempts to gentrify Pearl as he exerts his all-American boy goodness onto her, as though he is trying to turn her into one of the female love objects from chapter 1. But he is unsuccessful, and the "Jesse" theme ultimately represents Jesse's failure rather than a romance with Pearl. This theme recurs throughout the film, and it is emphasized especially in scenes showing Jesse's goodness and charity toward Pearl, as well as in a scene I will discuss shortly in which the theme changes to illustrate the end of any possibility of a relationship between Jesse and Pearl.

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<sup>66</sup> Selznick's music notes, David O. Selznick Collection.

*Bad behavior and bad girl clichés: Mrs. Chavez and Lewt McCanles*

The two characters with the strongest negative impact on Pearl are her mother (Tilly Losch) and Lewt McCanles.<sup>67</sup> For these characters Tiomkin again draws on tried-and-true clichés and musical juxtaposition to illustrate the badness of each character and project that bad influence on Pearl. Lewt is scored with a number of themes whose musical characteristics are strongly connoted with sexual deviance, the most important of which is the main “Lewt” theme. Mrs. Chavez, on the other hand, like Laura Belle McCanles, is given diegetic music through which she gives a performance that demonstrates to us her bad character. This alone might not be enough to argue that Mrs. Chavez has a negative influence on Pearl, particularly due to the fact that they share no screen time. Instead Tiomkin uses the juxtaposition of Pearl’s behavior with her mother’s—signified through music and dance—in order to show that Pearl is destined to become like Mrs. Chavez, regardless of Pearl’s hopes to the contrary.

The film sets up the comparison between Pearl and her mother from the outset, showing Pearl dancing playfully outside of a saloon in front of a crowd of children who appear to be Mexican or of mixed race. The music is meant to reflect the style of a Mexican folk song and, although it appears to be non-diegetic, we hear children’s voices in addition to the orchestration (Example 2.10). The repetitive, diatonic melody and children’s voices suit the childlike focus of the scene, while at the same time Pearl’s dancing reveals contradictions in her character. The music and her attitude suggest innocence and childishness; her movements and the reactions of the boys watching her, however, suggest a deeply rooted sexuality, and her naive obliviousness to these reactions demonstrate that she is not yet aware of her natural sexual power. The almost immediate juxtaposition of Pearl’s dancing with that of her mother’s invites the audience to

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<sup>67</sup> Pearl’s mother has no name in the film and so for the sake of clarity will be referred to here as “Mrs. Chavez.”



Example 2.10: Pearl's dance

compare the two women, as do the comments made by the sleazy man who approaches Pearl, asks about her mother, and later is revealed to be the mother's lover. "Like mother, like daughter," he remarks, looking Pearl up and down and reaching for her arm. "I'm commencin' to think I like the daughter better." Pearl's response—to throw dirt at the man's retreating form and



Figure 2.9: Pearl's mother's wild dance

stick her tongue out at him—again highlights her childishness and lack of awareness of her own sexuality. As the camera moves inside the saloon, heavily percussive music with a wild and slinky chromatic melody emerges from the soundtrack (Example 2.11). Mrs. Chavez is shown dancing provocatively on the bar surrounded by gambling and drinking men, her movements growing increasingly wild and suggestive as the scene goes on (Figure 2.9). As we watch her dance—and as

we watch the men watching her dance—she

seems animalistic, almost not even a real person. Our brief encounter with Mrs. Chavez, as she will be murdered by her husband shortly after this and never seen again, is carefully constructed to introduce her as a bad woman and create the necessity that she be punished for her wickedness.

The image displays three excerpts of a musical score for 'Mrs. Chavez's dance'.  
 The first excerpt (measures 1-4) is for Horns 1-3, Flute (Fl.), Euphonium (E.H.), Tom-toms, Timp., and C + Bass. It features a melody in the upper staves with accents and a 'fz' (forzando) dynamic. The lower staves show a rhythmic accompaniment with 'tom-toms (roll)' and 'timp.' in the first two measures, and 'Str. Piano' in the last two. The C + Bass part has a wavy line indicating a tremolo.  
 The second excerpt (measures 5-8) is for W.W. Trpt., Horns, and Bsn. It features a melody in the upper staves with accents and a 'ff' (fortissimo) dynamic. The lower staves show a rhythmic accompaniment with accents.  
 The third excerpt (measures 9-12) is a piano accompaniment starting at measure 5. It features a melody in the upper staves with accents and a 'v' (accrescendo) dynamic. The lower staves show a rhythmic accompaniment with accents.

Example 2.11: Mrs. Chavez's dance (2 excerpts)

Following Pearl's dance with her mother's at first blush might seem to emphasize the differences between the two women, but ultimately it does just the opposite. The emphasis on their similarities is reinforced by the "Like mother, like daughter" comment, Pearl's unconscious effect on the boys and men, and her obvious enjoyment of their attention despite her inability to understand its true meaning. Consider, by contrast, if we had first met Pearl while she was engaged in needlepoint or demurely sitting at the piano like Laura Belle McCanles. In linking Pearl musically to her mother in this way and showing her engaged in a *non-ladylike* activity, the film sets her up to be drawn *instinctively* to the life of a sexual deviant, suggesting that she is

incapable of suppressing her own natural sexuality. This thread will return later in the film and in my analysis with the introduction of the “Pearl Mexican-Indian theme,” in which Selznick intentionally invokes the mother’s influence to show the inevitability of Pearl’s fate.<sup>68</sup>

If Mrs. Chavez represents the inevitability of Pearl’s downfall, Lewt McCandles acts as a catalyst that helps to bring it about. And whereas the love theme Jesse tries to impart to Pearl contains clichéd aural markers of feminine virtue that are meant to encourage good behavior, Lewt’s love theme does the opposite. Lewt’s theme uses clichéd aural signifiers of sexual and moral deviance to represent his own bad character, to impart those bad qualities onto Pearl, and finally to represent Pearl’s badness once she has taken on these qualities. Lewt represents the absolute worst influence on Pearl and through his actions he becomes in part responsible for her degradation and disgrace. From the moment Lewt and Pearl meet, he makes his unsavory designs on her explicit. We first see Lewt riding up to the house, the differences between him and his brother already manifesting themselves—for although Jesse is sophisticated and rides in a carriage, Lewt is wild, ruggedly masculine, and considered the best horseman on Spanish Bit. Laura Belle introduces Pearl to her younger son and, as they each get a good look at each other, a very different type of musical theme than anything previously heard emerges. Opening with a stinger chord that moves to an uneasy dissonant harmony, the melody that follows has a swinging, repetitive rhythm that recalls the clichéd use of jazz to represent deviant sexuality (Example 2.12). While overtly using jazz in this film would have been anachronistic, Selznick clearly wanted to draw on the musical style’s deviant connotations, as he revealed in his

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<sup>68</sup> Later the film once again invokes the importance of dancing when the McCandleses hold a party at Spanish Bit and Pearl dances with Lewt. Pearl’s ignorance and low-class status come to the fore when it becomes clear that she does not know the steps, but Lewt dances with her anyway, simultaneously being kind to her by being seen publicly with her and embarrassing her by demonstrating to the others that she does not know how to dance in polite society. Dancing then, can be read as an important stumbling block that Pearl cannot overcome due to its deep grounding in social structures and expectations.



Example 2.12: “Lewt”

description of this theme in his notes: “Terrific vitality and sex. Ought to be almost like a ‘blues’ theme—not the modern use of the blues, but an old-fashioned equivalent.”<sup>69</sup> The sexual connotations of the blues impart “vitality and sex” to Lewt’s theme, which Lewt then helps to transfer onto Pearl through his powerful gaze and forceful actions—Pearl becomes characterized by music intended to describe Lewt, which then becomes mapped onto her in this scene and several that follow. After the two have been introduced, Lewt looks down at Pearl with obvious sexual interest, causing Pearl to lower her eyes in shame just as the musical phrase ends on an ambiguously exotic descending gesture. Lewt continues to gaze at Pearl’s retreating form as the two women go inside, and the camera focuses on her bare ankles as Lewt murmurs to himself, “Yea, boy!” Pearl’s sexuality, which was already emerging earlier when she danced, now becomes emphasized and reified for the viewer through Lewt’s performative musical theme. By scoring the scene in this way, the filmmakers establish Lewt’s bad boy character and establish that his unsavory designs on Pearl actually affect and change our understanding of her, helping to bring out her inherent sexuality and to shape her development through the bluesy theme and the sexual connotations it carries. Unlike Julie in *Jezebel*, whose moments of wickedness originated in music that seemed to reflect her interiority, this brief scene shows that it is Lewt’s external influence, signified by his music, that creates Pearl’s badness.

<sup>69</sup> Selznick’s music notes, David O. Selznick Collection.

We continue to hear the “Lewt” theme as his relationship with Pearl develops, including in the scene that follows—this is the drawing room scene described earlier in which Laura Belle sings “Beautiful Dreamer.” The use of “Lewt” in this scene, along with “Jesse,” illustrates the emerging struggle between the two brothers over Pearl, before it is even made apparent in the narrative. As such it not only foreshadows later events, but it also helps to establish that this contest will be played out as much in the musical scoring as it will onscreen. As Laura Belle expresses her understated concerns for Pearl’s virtue, we hear the theme before Lewt’s name is even mentioned: “You see, you’ll be the only young girl at Spanish Bit! No one could blame you if your head were turned a little. Now you take Lewton, for instance. He’s such an attractive boy.” Lewt’s theme sounds as a warning and a clue that in fact, Pearl’s head is already being “turned,” despite her stubborn insistence that she thinks “Jesse’s much nicer.” Jesse’s theme follows as the conversation turns to the older son, with Pearl declaring her hope that Jesse will like her, and Laura Belle revealing her growing fear that he might soon leave Spanish Bit. The two themes, like the two brothers, spar for dominance over Pearl, and of course Lewt’s wins. Unlike Jesse’s theme, which is unsuccessful in its attempts to influence her due to its reliance on musical tropes that are foreign to Pearl’s core identity (white, genteel as opposed to non-white, unrestrained, sexual femininity), Lewt’s theme is successful in reaching her because, in the racist ideology of the film, it speaks her language—its reliance on style topics meant to evoke a racialized sexuality relates to Pearl as the film depicts her better than do either Laura Belle’s or Jesse’s themes that rely on signifiers of normative whiteness with which Pearl cannot engage. Taken together, Lewt’s treatment of Pearl and his controlling musical theme force her to think of herself as less than white, as not being worthy of Laura Belle’s and Jesse’s love.

With the placement of Lewt's music, the filmmakers project Lewt's dissolute nature, as well as his bigotry, onto Pearl, connecting her with the negative qualities of his character that the music represents. The more Lewt treats her like a worthless "half-breed," the more she conforms to his expectations of her. The theme's exotic end gesture also reflects how Lewt mocks Pearl for her Otherness—throughout the film he refers to her by increasingly racially driven, animal-derived nicknames such as "little tiger cat," "bobtailed little tree cat," and "bobtail little half-breed." We see the effect of Pearl's conformance to Lewt's expectations in a later scene during which she seems suddenly to transform from an unwilling victim of Lewt's seduction to a willing protégé. After having made apparent his interest in her, Lewt finally takes advantage of a moment when all other men have left the ranch and rapes Pearl. Afterward, they are discovered by Jesse, who, disgusted with Pearl, tells her that he had been in love with her but can never forget what she has done. Pearl's conversation with Jesse is peppered with statements of the "Jesse" theme, which cut off in dissonant fragments rather than remaining in their original, romantic context. Lewt, pleased with the turn of events, later serenades Pearl from outside her window on his guitar. As she cries on her bed, the guitar music subtly shifts from Lewt's diegetic song to his theme, arranged in a flamenco style, which grows louder and more powerful as Pearl cries out for Jesse.<sup>70</sup> Suddenly she sits up, a somewhat sultry look on her face. With a sudden burst of sound from the non-diegetic soundtrack and a toss of her head, Pearl rises and struts across the room as "Lewt," now fully orchestrated and blurring the boundary between diegetic and non-diegetic, plays loudly and confidently. Having lost her chance with Jesse, Pearl here shows that she has decided to embrace what seems to be her destiny of becoming Lewt's girl. Without the powerful associations "Lewt" has accrued and its sinister influence on Pearl up until

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<sup>70</sup> The score indicates the word "flamenco" in the guitar part. Reel 8, part 4, "Pearl's Transition," David O. Selznick Collection.



this point in the film, this transformation would have been incomprehensible. Now Pearl has internalized the badness that Lewt's theme signifies, conforming to the meaning it had previously imposed upon her. Unable to emulate her more appropriate role models—Laura Belle and Jesse—and accordingly unable to adopt their music, Pearl instead adopts Lewt's theme. Is this because she was predisposed to being a bad girl all along, or was Lewt's influence merely too strong? The fact that "Lewt" was written to include the musical trope referencing stereotypical "Indian" music (the descending major 3rd pickup note leading into measure 7 of example 2.12) suggests that this character flaw was in Pearl all along, and that while Lewt's theme attaches itself to Pearl from without, in fact the emergence of this badness was inevitable, fated by her supposed ethnic inferiority.

*Signifying Otherness: Spanish Bit and the "Wildcat"*

Whereas in *Jezebel* we found that virtually all the music characterized Julie in order to show the ambiguity of her character, *Duel in the Sun*'s score must be understood in relation to Pearl even if it does not always represent her. Each theme creates meaning both for the character it represents and for Pearl, developing Pearl's character and revealing aspects of her personality either in juxtaposition or sympathy with other characters. Both Jesse's and Lewt's themes represent romances that might have been but neither truly belongs to Pearl; Laura Belle's theme signifies Pearl's inability to conform to idealized feminine behavior by representing Laura Belle and *not* Pearl; and the dance music that accompanies Mrs. Chavez foreshadows Pearl's fate by implying the similarities rather than differences between the two women. The last two themes under discussion both help to emphasize Pearl's Otherness, one through exclusion and the other through direct representation: the "Spanish Bit" theme represents whiteness and everything that

Pearl is not, thereby excluding her from Spanish Bit's world of white, American aristocracy, whereas the "Mexican-Indian" theme, also called the "Wildcat music," is the only music in the film that uniquely represents Pearl and no one else.<sup>71</sup> It is the "Wildcat music" that shows us that despite Pearl's earlier struggles to prove her worth to the McCandles family, it is her wild nature rather than her attempts at civilization that control her fate. Both the "Spanish Bit" and "Wildcat" themes work to demonstrate that as an Other Pearl does not belong.

The "Spanish Bit" theme represents both the eponymous ranch owned by the McCandles and Senator McCandles himself (Example 2.13). Using music to connect the land with the one character who outright rejects Pearl due to her racial background, the filmmakers also connect the "Spanish Bit" theme to Pearl's oppression. In addition to serving as the film's main title music, it also appears in scenes showcasing the grandeur of the ranch and in several scenes between Pearl and the Senator in which he makes clear his disapproval of her. In this way, the film's main theme functions to set Pearl apart from mainstream white society and to emphasize her Otherness just as it reinforces the McCandles family's whiteness.

It is no accident that the "Spanish Bit" theme recalls themes from earlier westerns; Selznick himself wanted this theme to recall such typical signifiers of the American West, as he wrote in his music notes: "Real feeling of the West and the Rio Grande. Must have sweep, and be very American."<sup>72</sup> Tiomkin accomplishes this sound by using primarily the pentatonic scale for the melody and by favoring simple, diatonic harmonies, sweeping melodic leaps, and accompaniments that often recall the sound of a trotting horse. The theme, as presented at the

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<sup>71</sup> The name "Spanish Bit" does not imply that the inhabitants boast Mexican American or even Spanish ancestry; in the original novel, it is explained that Senator McCandles named the ranch after an old, Spanish-style piece of equestrian equipment—a "bit," the device placed in the horse's mouth to keep it steady while riding—that he had found on the land and kept as a trophy in his study. Any confusion this name might cause to the viewer is likely unintentional.

<sup>72</sup> David O. Selznick Collection.

MAJESTIC  
Full orch.

*mf*

SCHMALTZ

6

GRANDIOSO  
molto legato

Full orch.

Example 2.13: “Spanish Bit” (2 excerpts)

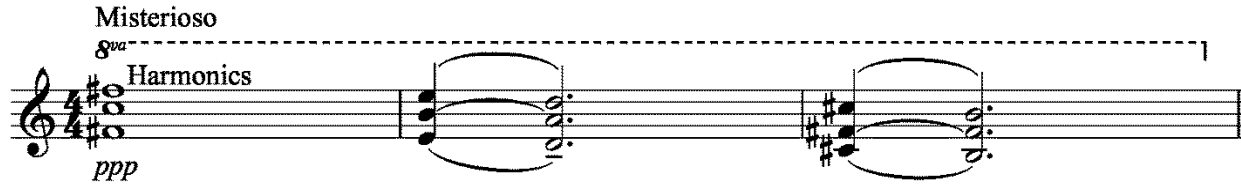
opening of the prelude, is in two parts: part one sets up the theme in B-flat major, while part two moves to E-flat major. The opening phrase of part one momentarily moves toward E-flat major with an A-flat in the melody supported by a D-flat major harmony that moves quickly back to B-flat major. This is followed by a confirmation of B-flat major with the melody arpeggiating the tonic chord. After this phrase repeats and ends firmly in B-flat major, the second part of the theme moves us toward E-flat major and a typical western melody using mostly the notes of the pentatonic scale. The first part of this phrase is grand and stately with a prominent triplet figure in the percussion, but it quickly turns quiet and reflective for the second half of the phrase featuring the string section. The entirety of the theme is played by the full orchestra featuring the brass section, a full contingent of percussion, and a stately but not slow tempo. There is something regal about the second phrase of the theme’s first section—the repeated outlining of the B-flat major triad—referencing the McCanles’s position of near royalty in the Spanish Bit empire. “Spanish Bit” often appears in scenes showing work being done around the ranch, and at

these times it features a more driving tempo and more brass. Despite its flexibility in these are other scenes, “Spanish Bit” retains always its grandeur and its connection to the McCanles ranch and its American normalcy.

But “Spanish Bit” also plays during scenes with Pearl, particularly in her few scenes with Senator McCanles. In these scenes the theme works directly to point out Pearl’s Otherness and lack of belonging. In one early example, it appears as a fragment shortly after Pearl’s first encounter with the Senator. The Senator has expressed his extreme disapproval of Pearl’s presence at Spanish Bit, insulting her clothes and saying, “Is it what they’re wearing this season in wigwams?” A low and menacing drum beat plays, referencing well-known “Indian” musical tropes and foreshadowing the “Mexican-Indian” theme that will emerge later in the film, to show that the Senator is bothered by Pearl’s racial difference.<sup>73</sup> After the Senator and Jesse leave the ladies, Pearl is upset and laments to Laura Belle, “He don’t want me here.” As she says it, we hear a brief statement of “Spanish Bit,” as if to confirm her statement despite Laura Belle’s protestations. Pearl’s menacing drumming, projected onto her by the Senator in his racist comment, contrasts with the grand nobility and implication of normative “whiteness” of “Spanish Bit.” During Pearl’s second scene with Senator McCanles, he sees her walking past his door and calls to her in order to harass her, mocking her name and suggesting that “Pocahontas” or “Minnehaha” would be more appropriate than a name that connotes pearly whiteness. “Spanish Bit” plays menacingly and low in the background, reinforcing the Senator’s disapproval of her, while a motive that will later form part of the “Mexican-Indian” theme also plays (Example 2.14). “Spanish Bit” is a theme that could never be Pearl’s and it serves to set her apart from the world to which she so wants to belong.

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<sup>73</sup> He is really more bothered by her because of his hatred for Scott Chavez, but this loathing manifests itself as racially motivated insults.



Example 2.14: “Minnie Ha Ha” (“Pearl Mexican-Indian” theme or “Wildcat” music)

All the above-mentioned themes are introduced within the first thirty minutes of the film (nearly fifteen minutes of which are taken up by the prelude, overture, and prologue) and are the most-heard music throughout. As they battle over Pearl’s fate, a new theme emerges that belongs to Pearl alone. Unlike the rest of the musical score, most of which comes from outside characters and is projected onto Pearl, as I have shown, this theme seems to come directly from within Pearl as she falls further and further from redemption and is overcome by instinct. Labeling the theme as “Pearl Mexican-Indian” in his notes (and also occasionally “wild cat music,” “Indian-Killer,” or simply “Killer”) (Example 2.15), Selznick again draws on racist ideology in his description of the theme, as well as using it to connect Pearl once again to the negative influence of her mother: “PEARL MEXICAN-INDIAN THEME: wild cat [sic] music—in the scenes where she is a throw-back to her Indian mother, as, for instance, in her Trek into the desert, and then her ride to the Duel with Lewt.”<sup>74</sup> For Selznick, the importance of Pearl’s non-white heritage cannot be overstated. His memos and communications suggest that he considered it to be the source of her wildness and the ultimate barrier preventing her from becoming civilized. In another memo, Selznick again used racially charged language to describe how he wanted to shoot the key sequence in which Pearl sets off for the duel with Lewt: “In the opening sequence on the road, I

<sup>74</sup> Selznick’s music notes, David O. Selznick Collection.

Picc.  
fl. *tr*  
Ob. *8va*  
Brass *fff*  
Strings  
W.W. Trbs. Tuba

Example 2.15: “Pearl Mexican-Indian” theme (“Wildcat” music)

think that the rising wrath of the girl, Indian fashion, and her Mexican blood finally exploding, should be covered in close angle. . . . I think we can do much more on her temper.”<sup>75</sup> The theme represents Pearl’s savage, core identity, her inner essence finally emerging despite the attempts made by Jesse and Laura Belle to tame her as well as earlier suggestions that Lewt’s outside influence was a major contributor to her bad behavior. With Pearl having given up trying to be good and no longer influenced by those around her, the “wildcat” music seems to reveal her true nature as a passionate, exotic half-breed prone to violence and incapable of civilized behavior.

For most of the film we hear only brief and subtle hints of the “Mexican-Indian” theme, such as the ominous drum beats that play when Senator McCandles makes the crack to Pearl about wigwams. The theme develops gradually, and we do not hear much more of it until later after Lewt has shot dead Sam Pierce (Charles Bickford), the older but kind ranch worker Pearl was to marry. Once again Lewt has gotten in the way of Pearl’s chance for a better future due of his own selfishness—he has refused to marry Pearl himself but won’t let anyone else have her (which will also lead to his later attempt on Jesse’s life). The “Mexican-Indian” theme begins to emerge at Sam’s funeral; the camera closes in on Pearl’s serious, drawn face and we see a shovel

<sup>75</sup> Memo from Selznick to Vidor, Kern, and Glett, dated June 29, 1945, David O. Selznick Collection.

scooping dirt into the grave at the bottom of the frame. After a few bass drum beats, the low brass enters playing a menacing and short six-note statement beginning and ending on A and turning around the pitch C. The low percussion accompaniment and modal character of the melody suggest again music meant to evoke Native Americans, as it did when the drumbeats were earlier used in the scene with Senator McCanles. But this, an hour and forty minutes into the film, is all that we hear of the “Mexican-Indian” theme to this point. In addition to reflecting Pearl’s anger in this scene, the theme does much more: it suggests that her anger is tied to the “Mexican-Indian” savagery and temper she inherited from her mother. But does it imply that this savagery is instinctive and inevitable, or that it is only developing now after the cruel treatment she has received from people like Lewt and Senator McCanles?

In the film’s long final sequence, the “Mexican-Indian” theme finally emerges fully formed and presents Pearl as the wildcat Selznick intended her to be all along. The music for the dramatic climax also works to completely rewrite the relationship between Pearl and Lewt, validating it as a true if not pure love and seemingly invalidating all the prior musical indications that Pearl might not have been savage to the core all along. Just before this final scene, Pearl learns that Lewt is hiding out in the desert and waiting for her to meet him for one final rendezvous before he flees across the border into Mexico. Pearl has just been confronted with the manifestation of her failure to become a suitable wife for Jesse in the form of Helen, who graciously asks Pearl to come live with the couple in Austin.<sup>76</sup> With the “Jesse” theme playing sweetly in the background—now apparently representing Jesse’s romance with Helen rather than anything he might have shared with Pearl—it is made painfully obvious to Pearl that she will never be like Helen or Laura Belle. She quietly accepts defeat when she concedes to Helen, “I’m

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<sup>76</sup> Jesse had previously told Pearl that he planned to send her to school, making good on an earlier promise to educate her. Presumably Pearl would live with Helen and Jesse as their ward or in a similar arrangement.

glad that you and Jesse are . . . bespoken,” relinquishing any claim she might have had on Jesse. When Pearl subsequently learns that Lewt still poses a threat to Jesse, who is recovering from Lewt’s previous attempt on his life, she makes the decision to go after him to protect Jesse, even though she still has the chance to live with Jesse and go to school as he had promised. But Pearl knows at this point that there is no more hope for her, and she sets off for “Squaw’s Head Rock” to meet up with Lewt one last time.

It is in the montage that follows, in which Pearl embarks on her journey to Squaw’s Head Rock, that we hear the “Mexican-Indian” theme, which establishes her identity of a wild and vengeful savage. It is the same melody we heard at Sam’s funeral, but now it is big and bombastic with an added wordless chorus singing a descending second figure that recalls a figuration widely used in westerns to connote the threat of an Indian attack.<sup>77</sup> This theme repeats



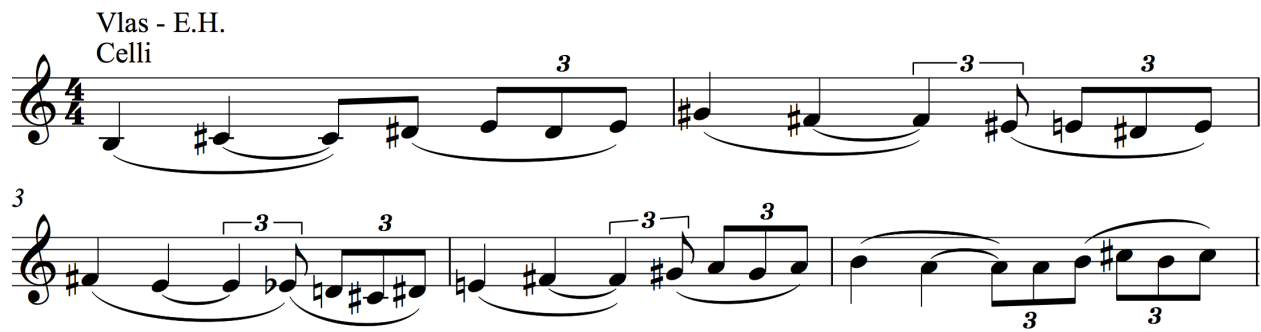
Figure 2.10: Pearl's "Death Crawl": after the shootout, Pearl and Lewt realize their love for each other as the "Sex" theme plays triumphantly.

several times throughout the montage, at times quiet and sinister, at other times loud and aggressive. Upon finally arriving at the designated meeting point, Squaw’s Head Rock, Pearl fires her rifle twice and Lewt, high above her on the rock face, calls down to her. As she

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<sup>77</sup> A similar motive was used in the score for *Stagecoach* to represent the Apaches on the warpath.





Example 2.16: “Sex” (“Desire”)

approaches, the “Mexican-Indian” theme plays again but stops abruptly right before Pearl shoots. After she sees him fall, another motive called “Sex,” which was introduced earlier during Pearl’s romantic interludes with Lewt, enters, and Pearl suddenly regrets what she has done.<sup>78</sup> The “Sex” theme is a passionate, oscillating motive played by the strings that gradually rises up the scale, and then in its second phrase it oscillates downward rather than up (Example 2.16). As the scene progresses, both Pearl and Lewt will alternately feel anger and then regret as they continue to fire at each other until both are too badly injured to fight any longer. The music that plays at each moment reflects these changing motivations: the “Mexican-Indian” theme will play when Pearl advances and tries to kill Lewt, signifying her savage nature; “Sex” plays when she changes her mind, signifying her lustfulness; and “Lewt” plays when he appeals to her and finally tells her he loves her, allowing “Lewt” finally to function as the film’s Love Theme. Suddenly realizing she needs to be with Lewt, a seriously wounded Pearl begins climbing hand-over-hand up the mountain (the “Death Crawl” in the music notes) and we hear strains of “Sex” and the “Lewt” theme in a passage that Selznick grandiosely called “an equivalent to Tristan” (Figure 2.10).<sup>79</sup> As Pearl reaches Lewt and they comfort each other, “Lewt” sounds agonized and strained in the high strings, and then it swells as they kiss one last time and Lewt dies. With one last pathetic

<sup>78</sup> In the Selznick notes, this theme seems to have been referred to also as “Desire,” although it is not clear whether these notes refer to the same theme or if one of them did not make it into the final score.

<sup>79</sup> Selznick’s music notes, David O. Selznick Collection.

statement of Lewt's theme, Pearl caresses his face and dies in his arms. As the camera then pulls back to show the vista of Squaw's Head Rock, we hear one final grand iteration of "Lewt" and the film ends.

As the "Lewt" and "Sex" themes gradually take over and defeat the "Mexican-Indian" theme during this final scene, both the music and the narrative seem to validate Pearl's relationship with Lewt, suggesting that despite the tragic turn their lives took and the horrible things that Lewt did to her (rape, lying about his real intentions toward her, murdering her fiancé Sam Pierce, and so on), Lewt truly was Pearl's real love all along. This validation of the relationship is inconsistent with the film's earlier implication that Jesse was the better man for Pearl (if only she were good enough for him). It also supports the mythology of domestic violence as a useful tool for male partners that should remind us of Hollywood's easy portrayal of comic and so-called harmless violence against women discussed earlier in the section on *Jezebel*. This ending, which appeased censors who required that Pearl and Lewt be punished for their wrongdoings, is confusing and unsettling to viewers who saw Pearl as a woman who could have made something of herself in the absence of Lewt's bad influence.

### **Redemption and White Privilege**

The music in both *Jezebel* and *Duel in the Sun* reinforces rather than undermines gender expectations and stereotypes because both scores' representations of the characters ultimately subscribe and conform to the filmmakers' intended readings: Julie as an evil bitch who undergoes a magical transformation from wickedness to saintliness, and Pearl as a savage wildcat incapable of suppressing her animal instincts and who is naturally drawn to a man who treats her badly. Despite their similarities, however, Julie's and Pearl's contrasting racial

backgrounds and social standings that give Julie greater access to privilege create entirely different outcomes that are also reflected in their musical scoring. Whereas Julie is redeemed in the end, despite the film's obligation to punish her with certain death, there is no redemption for Pearl. Julie ends a martyr, transformed by the musical equivalent of religious icons; Pearl dies a debauched murderess reaching out for the man who ruined her, still unable to transcend her supposedly degenerate nature, as the racially charged "Mexican-Indian" and sexually charged "Lewt," and "Sex" themes take over the musical soundtrack.

Where Julie and Pearl do intersect, however, is in the reasoning behind their similar (but not identical) struggles with society: an inability to control the feminine animal impulses that rule them. Both challenge traditional constructions of femininity and female characterization, both meet with resistance from the patriarchal culture that created—and feared—them, and both must be punished. In each case, the music would seem to resist the tendency to treat women as fetishized, functional objects within a world dominated by men, but in the end it serves only to reinforce that reality. In addition, each score is in some way at odds with the film's intended reading: Julie's music fails to portray her as evil until the final scene suggests her magical transformation, and Pearl's music seems unsure whether her fate is due to her breeding or to a bigoted society (either way, she remains doomed). Each score presents the female character as a complex individual who, in the end, is radically reduced to a negative stereotype through her musical representation; in this way the score makes it clear that the women need to be controlled *because* of their excessive individuality. Taking their nuanced scoring into account and with the lens of classical Hollywood gender expectations stripped away, Julie and Pearl have the potential to become more sympathetic and realistic women whose very individuality makes them a danger to the society that created them.

### Chapter 3: Scoring Masculinity and Homosocial Desire

There will be no women in “Lawrence of Arabia” and they won’t be missed.  
We’ll have some she camels . . . but what greater romance can there be  
than hero worship of millions of men for one man?

—Anthony Nutting, 1960

In his reading of Howard Hughes’s sensationalist 1943 western *The Outlaw*, film historian Robert Lang observed the following of the film’s unexpectedly homoerotic undertones:

As the first *modern* western, *The Outlaw* grapples with the notion that, while the friendship between Pat and Doc was undoubtedly a powerful thing, Doc—in falling in love with Billy—undergoes some sort of change of value. He appears to exchange a “best friend” for a lover, which would make *The Outlaw* Hollywood’s first “coming out” story. But the film does not *necessarily* mean to suggest that Doc is a latent homosexual, who discovers the ‘truth’ of his desire during a desublimating midlife crisis. Rather, the homosexual motif seems to occur almost by default because the filmmakers no longer know how to represent a great friendship between men.<sup>1</sup>

The film, ostensibly a typical (if racier than usual) western featuring outlaws tangling with lawmen and fighting over the love of a beautiful woman, seems instead to tell a far less conventional story: that of the mysterious and beautiful Billy the Kid (Jack Buetel) whose desirability causes a rift between sexually repressed longtime friends Doc Holliday (Walter Huston) and Pat Garrett (Thomas Mitchell), and the sultry and seductive Rio (Jane Russell), in whom no one seems particularly interested. The film struggles with, as Lang eloquently writes, seeming to both “celebrate and deny the nature of the passionate interest the men take in each other,” with Rio serving as a sexy distraction who fails at truly capturing the interest of either

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Lang, *Masculine Interests: Homoerotics in Hollywood Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 87.

man until Doc is dead and buried at the story's end.<sup>2</sup> As a result, Lang summarizes: "It is not clear how conscious [Hughes] and his collaborators were during the making of the film of the extent to which its main interest is not the fragile subplot of heterosexual attraction between Billy and Rio, but the one articulated by the themes of male friendship and homosexual infatuation."<sup>3</sup> By reading the film as an unintentional gay love story, Lang reveals not only how easily cinematic characters transcend the intentions of their makers, but also the precarious place of masculinity in the classical Hollywood film—particularly in films like *The Outlaw* that exert strong homosocial bonds between men. The absence of women—and the potential romance made possible by the "hero worship of millions of men for one man"—can put conventional masculinity, and with it obligatory male heterosexuality, at risk, resulting either in an entirely different story than the filmmakers perhaps intended, or else in the revelation of a hidden homoerotic element disallowed by the Production Code but carefully embedded by savvy filmmakers.

Among the questions that this chapter poses are two raised by Lang's reading of *The Outlaw*: how did filmmakers and composers portray male friendships, and how did they prevent (or encourage) the feminization and romanticization of male characters who, put simply, are portrayed or scored like women? The question pertains not simply to characters who, like Doc and Billy in *The Outlaw*, are eroticized, whether intentionally or not, by the film's plot. Homoerotic situations were not entirely uncommon in the classical Hollywood cinema, although such sexual implications might generally have been ignored or interpreted differently at the time. This chapter looks at male characters who are not simply made to appear as part of a gay coupling, but who are further feminized and romanticized, in the manner of comparable female

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 81.

characters, through emotionalization, spectacularization, and the musical scoring that connects all these elements. Specifically, I focus on films in which there are no female characters to carry the burden of emotional and romantic femininity so common to Hollywood film—in short, films in which *no* women appear at all.

*The Great Escape* (1963) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) are two such films, and their unique positioning of masculinity in a (nearly) completely homosocial world in tandem with musical scoring drawing on the traditions and tropes from earlier Hollywood film makes them fascinating studies of how composers dealt with complications and threats to masculinity. In these films homosexuality is either seemingly nonexistent, in the case of *The Great Escape*, or carefully hiding in plain sight and rendered nearly unrecognizable, in *Lawrence of Arabia*. Following the decline of the Hollywood studio system, filmmakers in the 1960s were still influenced, but not longer constrained, by the powerful censorship and traditional gender ideologies that had informed earlier American film.<sup>4</sup> These dominant gender ideologies conflated gender identity with sexuality such that conventional masculinity signified heterosexuality, while effeminacy implied deviant sexuality or homosexuality. The films' constructions of masculinity therefore are complicated by often ambiguous signifiers of femininity and deviant sexuality, particularly in their musical scoring and often connected to nationally or racially motivated discourses regulating gender and Otherness.

### **Homosociality, Homosexuality, and the Code**

The worlds created by Hollywood filmmakers through their movies generally reflect an attitude not simply of hostility toward homosexuality, but of outright denial. The Production Code

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<sup>4</sup> *Lawrence of Arabia* was a co-U.S./UK production, produced by Austrian-born American producer Sam Spiegel. Although mainly a British production, *Lawrence of Arabia* owes much to the tradition of Hollywood spectacles and thus has earned a place in this study.

banned altogether the representation of “sex perversion,” with the result that any filmmaker who wanted to include a homosexual character was either prevented from doing so, or had to come up with a clever way of using codes and implication to indicate the sexuality of the character in question to the audience, many of whom for a variety of reasons might not cotton on to the intent. Audience members familiar with Dashiell Hammett’s 1930 novel *The Maltese Falcon* would likely have known that Joel Cairo was intended to be homosexual, and his portrayal by Peter Lorre in the 1941 version of the film as, in Vito Russo’s words, “a perfumed fop with lace hankies” might have been enough coding for most in the audience. But did the average viewer understand too that Elisha Cook Jr. as the gunman Wilmer was *also* subtly coded as gay, not by way of an effeminate characterization but from Sam Spade’s (Humphrey Bogart) snide references to him as a “gungsel?”<sup>5</sup> And did this same average viewer in 1949 watching *The Third Man* wonder at why the sleazy Baron Kurtz (Ernst Deutsch) and dandified Dr. Winkel (Erich Ponto) live together? A few passing remarks in the film, such as Kurtz declaring that Holly Martins (Joseph Cotten) has “discovered his secret,” hint at the pair’s relationship, but these references, like those in the other films, could easily be dismissed as meaning something else (in the latter case, that Holly has discovered Kurtz playing the violin), or nothing at all. Regardless of whether every audience member unpacked such meanings, the people responsible for making Hollywood movies were cognizant of delivering such coded messages. Consequently, the possibility for homoerotic tension and male desire in male-dominated films was not a coincidence, and it bears close examination.

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<sup>5</sup> According to Russo, “Since about 1915, bums and prisoners had used the German word *gansel* or *gosling*, corrupted to *gungsel*, for a passive sodomite, especially in a young, inexperienced boy companion. From the mid 1920s it gradually came to mean a sneaky or disreputable person of any kind. By the 1930s it meant petty gangster or hoodlum. That film characters like Wilmer and the taxi driver in *Blood Money* shared a feminine status is obvious. The only variation was the degree to which that equation was carried to its common underworld conclusion.” Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 46–47.

Homosociality has to do with the way that men form bonds with each other, negotiating social taboos regarding homosexuality and expressing “inappropriate” emotion. According to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, homosociality “is a word occasionally used in history and social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with ‘homosexual,’ and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from ‘homosexual.’ In fact, it is applied as such to activities such as ‘male bonding,’ which may, in our society, be characterized by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality.”<sup>6</sup> Sedgwick also points out that male homosociality is not analogous to “the continuum between ‘women loving women’ and ‘women promoting the interests of women,’ extending over the erotic, social, familial, economic, and political realms.” Why is there such a disjunction between how women form relationships across various realms and how men do the same? She continues: “When Ronald Reagan and Jesse Helms get down to serious logrolling on ‘family policy,’ they are men promoting men’s interests. . . . Is their bond in any way congruent with the bond of a loving gay male couple? Reagan and Helms would say no—disgustedly. Most gay couples would say no—disgustedly. But why not? Doesn’t the continuum between ‘men-loving-men’ and ‘men-promoting-the-interests-of-men’ have the same intuitive force that it has for women?” She answers her own rhetorical question in the negative, arguing that scholarship exploring patriarchal structures “suggests that ‘obligatory heterosexuality’ is built into male-dominated kinship systems, or that homophobia is a *necessary* consequence of such patriarchal institutions as heterosexual marriage.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, for society to function the way it is supposed to, we need homophobia to reinforce obligatory heterosexuality at the same time that, contradictorily, male homosociality promotes close kinship between men and even values relationships between

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<sup>6</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.



men more highly than relationships between women (or even, as several authors have noted in studies of Hollywood film, relationships between men and women).<sup>8</sup>

Historians writing about the nature of homosocial societies and relationships have noted time and again that when men are isolated in an all-male environment, homosexual relations are more likely to occur. As Andrew Isenberg writes in his article about Wyatt Earp, “In the nineteenth century, whenever men labored in extended isolation from women—on ships at sea, for instance—homosexual relationships were more common, or at least more apparent, than elsewhere. Historians of sexuality have argued that such relationships were just as common in remote mining and logging camps and on ranches in the nineteenth-century West.”<sup>9</sup> Isenberg argues that only in the late nineteenth century did Earp, who had maintained relationships with both men and women throughout his earlier life, turn to a monogamous, heterosexual lifestyle, “at the same time that mainstream American society began to look with more skepticism on the kinds of friendships he had maintained with [his former companions Jimmy] Cairns and [Doc] Holliday.”<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Peter Stoneley, writing on homosociality during the Gold Rush, shows that the absence of women resulted in a variety of transformations in manhood and masculinity, with the result that “many of these transformed men did *not* return to their wives and families. This fact is also implicitly present in numerous descriptions of fervent and seemingly romantic partnerships between men. Close and loving male-male romantic relationships were not invented with the gold rush, but they became newly conspicuous against the otherwise grim background

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<sup>8</sup> See Lang, *Masculine Interests*; Melvin Donalson’s *Masculinity in the Interracial Buddy Film* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Isenberg, “The Code of the West: Sexuality, Homosociality, and Wyatt Earp,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (2009): 151.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

of a struggle for wealth.”<sup>11</sup> While later, popular retellings of gold rush stories such as the musical film *Paint Your Wagon* (1969) would (humorously) have us believe that the problem of the scarcity of women could only be solved by polygamy and the kidnapping of prostitutes, the historical record suggests that simpler and less heteronormative solutions were perhaps more common.

Such accounts as Isenberg’s and Stoneley’s provide ample evidence of obligatory heterosexuality’s constructed nature—that due to twentieth-century American society’s strong investment in heteronormativity, close homosocial relationships are *assumed* to be nonsexual, and that heteronormativity acts as a shield to protect all-important homosocial bonds from being interpreted as homosexual. Thus can films, as Lang has argued both in *Masculine Interests* and in other articles, use the presumed heterosexuality of its male heroes to express hidden homosexual fantasies. Lang calls such a fantasy the “unconscious logic” of the 1955 film noir *Kiss Me Deadly*, in which Mike Hammer’s (Ralph Meeker) violent run-in with a thug stands in for a homosexual encounter.<sup>12</sup> Homosociality, kinship between men either mutually beneficial or destructive, thus has a great potential to stand in for repressed homoerotic desire in many Hollywood films, particularly when *heterosocial* relationships are de-emphasized to the extent that they are absent altogether.

### **Emotionalization**

When women are absent from film, all the signification and meanings generally attached to them in the tradition of the Hollywood narrative must necessarily be absent as well, unless those

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Stoneley, “Rewriting the Gold Rush: Twain, Harte and Homosociality,” *Journal of American Studies* 30, no. 2 (1996): 192.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Lang, “Looking for the ‘Great Whatzit’: ‘Kiss Me Deadly’ and Film Noir,” *Cinema Journal* 27, no. 3 (1988): 32–33.

meanings are taken up and reclaimed by another cinematic symbol with which women share so much in common: music. One such function of both women and music that significantly affects the dynamics of masculine expression in films without women is the construction or expression of emotion. What happens to musical emotionalization—the imposition of emotionally charged music that seems to express a character’s emotional state—when it cannot be mapped onto the feminine?

As discussed in chapter 1 of this dissertation, female characters in classical Hollywood film, the immediate forebears to the generation of films including *The Great Escape* and *Lawrence of Arabia*, often served functional purposes as the female love object and other such archetypes that served to create or reinforce meaning pertaining to the films’ male protagonists. Female characters, whether good women or not, and whether scored with an FRC (or similar musical cliché) or not, often served to reinforce and rehabilitate the damaged masculinity of their male counterparts. For example, Rick (Humphrey Bogart) in *Casablanca* (1942) is threatened by excessive emotion as signified by music. In order to rescue and reinvigorate his damaged masculinity Rick must, by the film’s end, demonstrate control over his emotions, a control that is signified again by musical scoring. For Rick, the emasculating emotions are inspired by the reappearance of his former lover Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman), whose feminine romantic essence is symbolized by the song “As Time Goes By.” Rick’s emotional breakdown is closely tied to the song itself, as evidenced by his initial angry reaction to hearing the song and later, the complete breakdown and subsequent melodramatic flashback that a second hearing of the song elicits. This scene reveals Rick to be so emotionally vulnerable that he asks Sam (Dooley Wilson) to play the song for him, despite it being previously forbidden. Because “As Time Goes By” signifies both Ilsa and Rick’s love for her, it acts as her FRC; as such it also signifies Rick’s weakness, and it is

this weakness that he must overcome in order to emerge as a heroic character in the end. And overcome it he does, sacrificing his love for Ilsa to aid the Allies and even recruiting the previously Vichy-leaning Captain Renault (Claude Rains) to the cause. As the film ends, with Rick and Renault walking off together in the wake of the departing plane that carries Ilsa and her French Resistance leader husband to safety, it is not “As Time Goes By” we hear, but “La Marseillaise.” The use of this music shows us that Rick has relinquished “As Time Goes By” to Ilsa and claimed the more appropriately patriotic (and masculine) French anthem for himself. This ending suggests that it is not necessarily romance with a woman but a patriotic cause and friendship with a man that Rick needs for personal fulfillment.

Heather Laing’s work on music and gender construction in the 1940s woman’s film is instructive here. Upon considering the scoring of male characters with music in a “conventionally ‘female’ style” (or perhaps she might have written “feminine”) Laing observes in films such as *Dangerous Moonlight* (1942) and *Love Story* (1944, U.S. title: *A Lady Surrenders*) that male characters are distinguished from their female counterparts in that they must, as Rick did in *Casablanca*, show control over the music that overwhelms them emotionally. Such films, Laing writes, “measure the strength of the man by his control over his own interiority, evidenced by his ability to allow its occasional display.”<sup>13</sup> Women, on the other hand, are burdened with, as Laing writes, “the ‘inevitability’ of [their] excessive femininity,” and are overcome by music in films like *Humoresque* (1946) and *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948). While woman’s close relationship to music makes her too fragile to withstand its emotional power, man proves his manliness by overcoming that emotion. And so women and their conventionally feminine and emotional music help to map emotionality away from men and

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<sup>13</sup> Heather Laing, *The Gendered Score: Music in 1940s Melodrama and the Woman’s Film* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 145.

back onto the feminine. In light of such conventions, films that *lack* women throw into sharp relief the danger that musical emotion poses to men.

### A romantic paradox: films without men

To clarify why the absence of women creates such singular obstacles to heteronormativity, let us



Figure 3.1: *The Women* (1939, dir. George Cukor)

briefly consider the unique case of films lacking *men* rather than women. For paradoxical though it might seem, women are *so much more important* in the creation of a romantic storyline in classical Hollywood cinema than men, that while a love story is not possible in a film without women, it is not only possible in a film without men, it is practically essential.

The tagline on nearly every theatrical poster for 1939's *The Women* (Figure 3.1), a film that is unusual even today for its entirely female cast (not a single frame contains even a glimpse of a man),

perfectly sums up the premise not only of *The Women* but of most films supposedly dealing with women's concerns: "It's all about men!" Another tagline salaciously read, "The Female of the

Species . . . when the men aren't watching!" Both taglines situate women as objects in a world in which men are the principal subjects and primary spectators, despite their physical absence from the film itself. *The Women*, with its high-profile cast featuring Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, Rosalind Russell, Joan Fontaine, and even gossip columnist Hedda Hopper (whose interview with Anthony Nutting was quoted in this chapter's epigraph), tells the story of a group of high society women whose catty, backstabbing interplay leads one of the women, Mary (Shearer) to divorce her husband after she learns of his affair with shopgirl Crystal (Crawford). In the end, Mary wins back her husband from the conniving Crystal and all is forgiven. Good wives forgive their philandering husbands and gold-digging shopgirls crawl back to the perfume counter where they belong. In this film in which men are entirely absent, the entire plot revolves around men and their significance to women's lives.

Another rare film with only female characters is the less-known *Cry "Havoc"* from 1943. Unlike *The Women* this film does show men in some shots, but none have speaking roles and the only important male character remains a shadowy offstage presence. Like its predecessor, *Cry "Havoc"* also featured an impressive cast including Margaret Sullavan, Ann Sothorn, Joan Blondell, and Fay Bainter. This World War II film tells the story of a group of Army nurses, many of them civilians with no nursing experience or training, stationed on Bataan. The motley crew of women deals with interpersonal struggles as well as life and death ones, and the film ends chillingly with their surrender to approaching Japanese forces. A far more serious and realistic film than *The Women*, *Cry "Havoc"* nevertheless portrays its female characters as preoccupied with matters of the heart even in such dire circumstances—a major subplot involves one nurse's secret marriage to a doctor who is being pursued by a new recruit. While the film was successful, it was not without its critics. Bosley Crowther, while acknowledging the film as

“moving,” was dissatisfied with its “heavy . . . theatricality and the affectations of an all-girl cast.”<sup>14</sup> Some of his comments are particularly revealing:

In this one the men are but a background. You see them only as anonymous casuals [sic] who die in the arms of the ladies or endure with appropriate fortitude. Otherwise the film and its story are devoted exclusively to the trials of a handful of women working as volunteers with our doomed forces on Bataan. . . . And most of their visible activity, during the hour-and-a-half course of this film, is talking and giving way to feelings in the privacy of their dugout.

. . . And it is here, in the sororal seclusion, that the girls put their natures on display in a set of moody characterizations which might best be described as stock.<sup>15</sup>

A female reviewer made a similar observation, remarking that the film “is not very complimentary to the women who lasted out that grim siege on Bataan. Probably they were at each other’s throats—people under strain often are—but it hardly seems they would have quarreled over such stock situations.”<sup>16</sup> The film’s shortcomings aside, it is the focus on women’s concerns that is both noticed and criticized by the reviewers. But what *are* these women’s concerns? As in *The Women*, this film reveals that what really concerns women is *men*; again, “It’s all about men!”

In summary, women were thought to be *essentially* romantic creatures, and so story possibilities in films featuring only women were limited. A female-centered story must be at least part (and often mostly) romantic in nature; a male-centered one needn’t be, and without women, it *can’t* be.<sup>17</sup> The men in such films therefore are in danger of becoming overburdened,

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<sup>14</sup> Bosley Crowther, “The Screen: ‘Cry ‘Havoc’,’ a Picture about Bataan’s Women Volunteers, with Margaret Sullavan and Others, at the Astor Theatre,” *New York Times*, Nov. 24, 1943.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Marjorie Kelly, “‘Cry Havoc,’ Gay Stage Bill Open Week at the Capitol,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 14, 1944.

<sup>17</sup> A recent pop culture phenomenon known as the “Bechdel Test” purports to test to what extent films depend upon this gender bias in their representation of female characters. Popularized in the 1985 comic strip “Dykes to Watch Out For” by Alison Bechdel, the test, called “The Rule,” sets out three requirements: the film must have (1) at least two (named) women in it (2) who talk to each other (3) about something besides a man. The Bechdel Test has been discussed in the *New York Times* and *New Yorker Magazine* and is a popular tool for starting conversations about gender in popular film. “Bechdel Test

as Rick was, with emasculating musical-emotional excess. Along with emotionalization, a second component of the destabilization of masculinity in Hollywood film comes from a purely visual element that nevertheless can intersect with scoring—spectacularization.

### **Spectacularization**

The process of making the hero into a visual spectacle, spectacularization goes against the core of normative masculinity that claims for itself the power of the gaze and ability to subject others to that spectacularizing gaze. The problem of male spectacles is discussed by Ina Rae Hark, who compares the male spectacle to Laura Mulvey's use of the male gaze to objectify women, arguing that Mulvey's work "did not necessarily exclude the possibility that the [cinematic] apparatus could similarly objectify men who symbolically if not biologically lack the signifying phallus." Hark qualifies that male spectacles are particularly common "in narratives and genres that feature power struggles between men,"<sup>18</sup> but that spectacularized masculinity is generally regarded as somehow wrong or deviant, as contrasted with the normative practice of femininity as spectacle. Such films, Hark writes, "frequently code such spectacles as unnatural, in contrast to those of women, which transpire unremarked within the diegesis. Males played by movie stars become spectacularized or commodified, these narratives assert, only because the rightful exercise of masculine power has been perverted by unmanly tyrants."<sup>19</sup> In her example of *Spartacus* (1960), the title character's spectacularization is itself an attack on his masculinity, a perversion of the natural order. *Spartacus* (Kirk Douglas) is denied subjectivity and forced, along

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Movie List," accessed April 29, 2012, <http://bechdeltest.com>; Dwight Garner, "The Days of Their Lives: Lesbians Star in Funny Pages," *New York Times*, Dec. 3, 2008; Tad Friend, "Funny Like a Guy: Anna Faris and Hollywood's Woman Problem," *New Yorker*, April 11, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Ina Rae Hark, "Animals or Romans: Looking at Masculinity in *Spartacus*," in *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*, ed. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (London: Routledge, 1993), 151.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.



with his fellow gladiator-slaves, into “ritualistic eroticizing” of the body, which makes them and their male bodies spectacles for the public.<sup>20</sup> Even when Spartacus is given apparent power of subjectivity and control over Varinia (Jean Simmons), he is denied that power upon discovering that they are being watched by the gladiator trainers Batiatus and Marcellus. “The irony,” Hark writes, “that Batiatus and Marcellus, with a houseful of women (and men) at their disposal, would also rather look than rape, is precisely the point. The power of the gaze supersedes the power of the penis that is not a phallus.”<sup>21</sup> Hark’s implication here is that Spartacus lacks the phallus because, as a slave whose job is to be looked at by others, he lacks power and subjectivity. The film follows Spartacus’s quest for “healthy” subjectivity, as opposed to the deviant Roman subjectivity or what Hark calls his “animal” subjectivity. He achieves mastery over Varinia, who once they have escaped becomes a typical Hollywood heroine, Spartacus’s “adoring helpmeet,” which, when we compare this film to the all-male films to be discussed later, we might see helps the audience to accept this phallus-less man as the film’s hero.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Spartacus constantly fails to achieve true subjectivity and to the end is forced to play out various spectacles for the pleasure of the Roman villain Crassus (Lawrence Olivier), which in turn reinforces Crassus’s subjectivity and perverse masculinity (as does Crassus’s fascination with the slave Antoninus, played by Tony Curtis). The audience’s engagement with the narrative hinges upon this unsuccessful quest for subjectivity, which is ultimately achieved posthumously when, rendered Christlike on the cross, Spartacus transcends human subjectivity and acquires a sort of divinity that negates his need for the signifying phallus. Varinia’s presence in the story

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 162.

not only deflects from focus on the castrated male, but it gives Spartacus the feeling of power he needs in order to become such a divine figure.<sup>23</sup>

### **Changing attitudes during the decline of the studio system**

Although seemingly antithetical to earlier Hollywood's investment in maintaining binary oppositions between femininity and masculinity, deviant and normative sexuality, and other constructions of contemporary gender ideology, the slow decline of the studio system over the course of the 1950s was marked by changing attitudes toward and the introduction of new possibilities for gender representation. The popularity of a trio of actors who burst onto the scene at the beginning of the decade—Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, and James Dean—opened up male characters to demonstrating more emotion, weakness, and spectacularized sexuality than leading men had previously allowed themselves. More and more films pushed the boundaries of what the Production Code would allow, and many were released without a seal of approval. The influx of foreign-made films that were not governed by the Code influenced the direction American filmmakers were taking, and so although the Production Code itself was not abolished

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<sup>23</sup> In *Trapeze* (1956), the presence of a woman helps to rescue obligatory heterosexuality when an excess of male spectacle blurs the boundaries between homosociality and homoeroticism. The film features a love triangle between trapeze artists Mike (Burt Lancaster) and Tino (Tony Curtis), ostensibly over seductive and manipulative newcomer Lola (Gina Lollobrigida). The characters' desires, however, often transcend the diegesis in ways that highlight the homoerotic tensions between Mike and Tino, whose relationship is complicated by the film's premise that has the studly actors make literal spectacles of themselves in tight, skin-baring costumes. The plot follows Mike's dream of creating a two-man trapeze act with Tino, and Lola's attempt to insert herself into the act. For reasons never explained, Mike believes Lola will prevent Tino from achieving the much-desired "triple" that stands for ultimate achievement and success; it is easy to read this relationship as a bisexual triangle in which Mike desperately tries to prevent anyone from stealing Tino away from him, with the triple signifying Mike's desire for Tino. Lola acts as a surrogate for Mike's homosocial desire, and his successful coupling with Lola at the end barely affirms both his and Tino's heterosexuality. In weakly affirming a heterosexual coupling despite the power of homosocial bonds, *Trapeze* both undermines and reinforces normative sexuality at once.

until 1968, by the early 1960s its influence had greatly weakened and filmmakers were increasingly free to incorporate themes, images, and dialogue previously forbidden them.<sup>24</sup>

This does not mean, however, that there was necessarily a sudden, dramatic shift in what audiences wanted and accepted from their entertainment. Just because audiences were exposed to stories with homosexual themes like the British-made *Victim* and *A Taste of Honey* (both from 1961) does not mean that these ideas were widely accepted or desired. In the former film, Dirk Bogarde could play the homosexual attorney who faces blackmail and risks defamation and the destruction of his marriage to fight injustice, but he does not end up in a sanctioned homosexual relationship (in fact he never consummates the relationship that inspired the blackmail and possibly had never even engaged in *any* homosexual activity). Instead, he vows to return to his devoted and understanding wife once the blackmail trial is over, determined to continue repressing his unnatural urges. Even when homosexuality is no longer invisible, and even treated sympathetically, it is still governed by heteronormativity.

*Lawrence of Arabia* and *The Great Escape*, released within a year of each other, both grapple with the problem of how to make comprehensible to this early 1960s audience different kinds of masculinities in a world without femininity. In *The Great Escape*, identifying characters of different nationalities with a stereotyped degree of masculinity helps to reinforce the manliness of some characters while threatening that of others; in *Lawrence of Arabia*, the juxtaposition of a supposedly English masculinity against an Orientalist construction of “Arabness” helps to set up a continuum of masculinity along which the title character searches for his own fractured identity. In each film, clichéd music or music evoking specific evocative topics plays a part in these constructions of gendered identity.

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<sup>24</sup> Edward J. Rielly, *The 1960s: American Popular Culture through History* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003), 184.

### ***The Great Escape: National identity and the construction of male sexualities***

In his examination of *The Great Escape* and British prisoner-of-war films, Nicholas Cull explains that part of the appeal of the World War II POW film in the 1950s and early 1960s derives from its Cold War historical context. These films, he writes, “looked back to a time of moral certainties. The behaviour of Prisoners of War in the Korean War had caused much concern—rather than tunnel out and attempt to paddle to freedom on an improvised raft, prisoners stayed put. Some even caved-in under communist brainwashing and confessed to imaginary atrocities. In a world in which POWs had broken down is it any wonder that audiences looked to tales of their bearing up?”<sup>25</sup> This is certainly true of *The Great Escape*, which lacks the cynicism of *Stalag 17* (1953), the moral uncertainties of *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), and the social critique of the later *King Rat* (1965). *The Great Escape* portrays honest, patriotic, determined men who work together and sacrifice their lives to fight the Germans. Even Lt. Hilts, Steve McQueen’s arrogant loner hero, eventually puts his individualism aside in favor of the greater good. The film portrays World War II soldiers—and particularly *American* soldiers—at their very best, demonstrating courage and ingenuity in the face of adversity. Despite producer Louis B. Mayer’s admonition of the film when it was first pitched to him by director John Sturges—he purportedly asked, “What the hell kind of great escape is this? No one escapes”<sup>26</sup>—the film was a huge success and audiences were inspired by the characterizations of so many brave men, portrayed by some of the most popular American and British actors of the time.

*The Great Escape* was based on the real-life massive breakout from German prisoner-of-war camp Stalag Luft III on March 24–25, 1944 (and on Paul Brickhill’s 1950 historical account of the same name). The film tells the story from the moment of the prisoners’ arrival in the camp,

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<sup>25</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, “‘Great Escapes’: ‘Englishness’ and the Prisoner of War Genre,” *Film History* 14, no. 3/4 (2002): 288.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

designed as an inescapable camp specifically for officers known for involvement in previous escape attempts, up to the gruesome execution of fifty of the escaped men. Organized by Roger Bartlett (Richard Attenborough), known as “Big X” and the most notorious escape artist of all, the story follows the construction of three escape tunnels, called “Tom,” “Dick,” and “Harry,” and the various challenges and setbacks the men face, all in an effort to break an unprecedented two hundred and fifty men out of the camp. Meanwhile, cocky rebel Virgil Hilts (Steve McQueen), one of only three Americans in the camp, finds himself repeatedly placed in confinement in the “cooler” and is initially resistant to taking part in the group’s efforts. He is finally inspired to make a large personal sacrifice for the cause—a solo escape in the pursuit of reconnaissance and subsequent recapture in order to relay the information back to Bartlett—after Scotsman Archie Ives (Angus Lennie), his friend from the cooler, is tragically shot by the guards. On the appointed night, the men begin their final trip out of the tunnel, only to find that they miscalculated the distance, with the end of the tunnel within sight of the camp’s guards. Seventy-six men are able to escape before they are finally discovered, and the rest of the film follows the individual escape attempts of the principal characters. Roger and several of the other British officers are caught and executed, while Hilts is captured after a daring motorcycle chase and returned to the camp. The film closes with Hilts once again locked in the cooler, refusing to accept defeat and throwing his baseball, that symbol of American identity, defiantly against the wall.

The film posits a construction of idealized masculinity that is closely tied to “Americanness”: masculinity is equated with a conventionally American male identity, with the result that the other characters are less masculine by virtue of *not* being American. Throughout World War II and after, it was common for Hollywood filmmakers to play up American

participation and heroism during the war and reconstruction periods, often at the expense of other Allied characters. From uplifting wartime comedies like *The Canterville Ghost* (1944) to



Figure 3.2: Steve McQueen as Virgil Hilts

serious dramas made after the war like *The Search* (1948) to later cynical entries like *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), *The Great Escape* was one in a legacy of films to emphasize American heroism and ingenuity during the war in order to appeal to audiences in the United States. Although the historical event on which the film was based involved no American officers at all, the screenwriters rewrote the history by

inventing the characters played by McQueen and James Garner, who received top billing.<sup>27</sup> As a result, while there are plenty of characters with whom to identify and sympathize, it is Hilts “the Cooler King” who is clearly the most heroic, with Hendley “the Scrounger” (Garner) following him in a close second.

Serving as film’s primary hero, Hilts projects typically American bravado in all his scenes. McQueen embodies rugged American, individualist masculinity as Hilts, (Figure 3.2).<sup>28</sup> He is unemotional, irreverent, athletic, tough, smart without being intellectual, and he aligns himself

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<sup>27</sup> Americans had been involved in the early stages of planning but were removed to a neighboring camp before the escape could take place, and so none were involved in actual breakout. See *ibid.*, 289.

<sup>28</sup> All music examples from *The Great Escape* and *Lawrence of Arabia* were transcribed by Michael Schachter, and in all cases the note values and time signatures are approximated.

*Vln.*  
*Br., W.W., perc.*  
*Tba., Bn., Vc., Cb.*

This system contains the first four measures of the score. The top staff is for Violins (Vln.), the middle for Brass, Woodwinds, and Percussion (Br., W.W., perc.), and the bottom for Trombones, Bassoons, Violas, and Cellos/Double Basses (Tba., Bn., Vc., Cb.). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with frequent rests and dynamic markings such as *v* and *v*.

This system contains measures 5 through 8. The instrumentation remains the same as in the first system. The music continues with similar rhythmic complexity and dynamic markings.

This system contains measures 9 through 12. The instrumentation includes Violins and Violas (*Vln., Vla.*) in addition to the previous instruments. The bottom staff also includes Timpani (*Timp.*). The music concludes with a final measure in the system.

Example 3.1: "Hilts"

with masculine signs such as motorcycles, baseball, hard liquor, and American patriotism.<sup>29</sup> His storyline is almost entirely without sentimentality or human emotion, with the brief exception of his stoic reaction to the death of Ives—but rather than showing grief at his friend’s murder, he is inspired to take on the dangerous task previously asked of him by Bartlett. Personal tragedy therefore leads directly to further opportunities for manly rather than emasculating displays. Hilts’s famous motorcycle escape is arguably the film’s most exciting sequence, with a heart-pounding score to match. The Hilts escape theme grows out of a simple four-note figure—two repeated notes followed by a whole-step ascent and then back down to the original pitch (Example 3.1). As he races toward the Swiss border followed by a brigade of Nazis on motorcycles, this motive is taken up by the brass with winds and percussion. With the meter shifting from 6/8 to 3/4 from measure to measure, the brass trades back and forth with the violins, each section almost seeming to interrupt the other’s statements. The brass takes over, punctuated by violent outbursts from the timpani. A second phrase of the Hilts music features a rising off-beat figure that is even more exciting than the first motive, accompanied by xylophone and an insistent staccato repeated note. The music grows increasingly irregular and frantic, culminating in Hilts’s spectacular thirty-foot leap over the fence, subsequent crash, and ultimate recapture by the Germans. By scoring Hilts with the most action-packed, percussive, and dynamic music heard in the entire film, Elmer Bernstein paints Hilts as the most conventionally masculine. This masculinity is a uniquely American brand that is especially damaging to the manliness of the film’s many non-American characters.

The film portrays its non-American characters as consistently less manly and heroic. As Cull argues:

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<sup>29</sup> Hilts tells fellow prisoner Ives that before the war he was studying to be a chemical engineer but he never displays his knowledge or intellect for the other men, using physical rather than intellectual strengths to demonstrate his manliness.



The film's sub plot develops in ways that not only marginalise English characters in their own story, but makes their behaviour explicitly "other." The American characters are the norm, and their attachment to things like baseball and improvised celebration of 4 July are the most obvious expressions of national culture in the film, to differentiate them from the Englishness of the camp. . . . There are many moments in the film in which it becomes clear that we are watching an American depiction of Englishness. Attitudes are exaggerated and, indeed, Bartlett's whole plan for a "Great Escape" is presented as a vainglorious latter day Charge of the Light Brigade: "magnificent but it's not war."<sup>30</sup>

Many of the English characters are drawn as caricatures of English archetypes born in the American imagination and popularized in American film: Bartlett, the leader and mastermind of the Great Escape, is the stereotypical British "lover of war" played against the American cynicism of McQueen's Hiltz (and later Hendley), recalling the relationship between the characters played by Alec Guinness and William Holden in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*.<sup>31</sup> Colin Blythe (Donald Pleasence), the myopic "Forger" who fusses over tea leaves and enjoys drawing pictures of birds, is one in a long line of English upper-class sissies who is nevertheless extremely sympathetic even as he reinforces James Garner's unaffected American manliness in the pair's scenes together. Blythe's musical scoring also reinforces his unmasculine character, both in its reliance on tropes commonly considered feminine and by Blythe's unique relationship with music throughout the film.

The handful of non-English (and non-American) characters, all played by American actors, are also portrayed as somehow less manly than Hiltz and Hendley, and scored with music considerably less masculine than Hiltz's ultra-aggressive, action-filled escape theme. Sedgwick (James Coburn), the sarcastic Australian, occasionally plays up comically homoerotic moments, such as when a suspicious guard finds him in the wrong hut and questions him. Indicating a fellow prisoner (Charles Bronson as Danny Velinski) who had stripped off his shirt and jumped in the shower to avoid being caught in the escape tunnel, Sedgwick explains: "I'm watching

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<sup>30</sup> Cull, "Great Escapes," 290.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

him—I'm a lifeguard!" In a direct comparison with the ultra-manly Hilts, who attempts a daredevil escape on a stolen motorcycle, Sedgwick cycles to freedom less impressively (although more successfully) on a bicycle to the strains of a jaunty, leisurely variation on the main theme. But of particular note is Polish tunnel-digger Danny, Bronson's character. Despite his imposing physicality, the eastern-European Danny is emasculated by his emotional complexity and intimate relationship with young and relatively androgynous Willie Dickes (played by popular English teen idol John Leyton). While Bernstein does little to emotionalize the pair musically early in the film, his treatment of them during the escape sequence calls into question their sexuality by evoking musical tropes associated with femininity, nature and pastoral landscapes, which Tagg and Clarida, among others, have noted are commonly associated with the feminine.<sup>32</sup>

Considering the music written for Blythe and for Danny and Willie's escape sequence in comparison to the exciting escape music written for Hilts provides us with a fascinating comparison of how the filmmakers and Bernstein chose to highlight individual characters' masculinities. Such scoring practices ultimately call into question the sexuality of Danny and Willie, as the absence of femininity and heterosexual romance in the narrative forces the next closest thing—the intimate homosociality of these two characters—into that void.

### *An English Sissy: Colin Blythe*

In a review of a play called *Make Way for Lucia*, which opened at the Cort Theatre in New York City in December of 1948, critic Richard P. Cooke wrote the following of the character of Georgie Pillson, as performed by Cyril Ritchard: "Mr. Ritchard has caricatured the English sissy dilettante almost to extinction with his white shoes, blue velvet evening suit and strange gestures,

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<sup>32</sup> Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida, *Ten Little Tunes: Towards a Musicology of the Mass Media* (New York: Mass Media Music Scholars' Press, 2003).

but he kept the portrait from being offensive and was a great figure of fun most of the time.”<sup>33</sup> In describing Georgie, Cooke references an archetype, the “English sissy dilettante,” that from his casual mention he assumes the reader will recognize as a character they have encountered all too many times before.<sup>34</sup> By assuring the reader that Ritchard’s performance is not “offensive,” he also suggests that ordinarily such a character would indeed be considered offensive. Cooke’s review provides evidence, substantiated in nearly all areas of popular culture, of a stereotypical figure that existed (and still exists) in the American imagination of the upper-class English man



Figure 3.3: Donald Pleasence as Colin Blythe (left) and James Garner as Bob Hendley (right). Hendley towers over the balding, middle-aged Blythe in this shot, further emphasizing his superior manliness as Blythe fusses that “tea without milk is so uncivilized!”

as a sexless, limp-wristed sissy in contrast to the supposed red-blooded, hyper-heterosexual masculinity of the ideal American man. If Hilts represents the latter, then Colin Blythe resides at the opposite end of the masculinity spectrum, in many ways embodying the stereotypical “English sissy dilettante.”

<sup>33</sup> Richard P. Cooke, “Pretty Evening: The Theatre,” *Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 24, 1948.

<sup>34</sup> Cooke’s 1996 obituary in the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* does not specify that the alum was a U.S. native, but his education and career at the *Wall Street Journal* suggest that he at least lived as a young adult and for the rest of his life in America. “Memorial: Richard P. Cooke ’27,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, Oct. 9, 1996, accessed April 30, 2012, <http://paw.princeton.edu/memorials/53/41/index.xml>.

Example 3.2: "Blythe"

Colin Blythe is the mild-mannered bird watcher-turned-aerial reconnaissance photographer and unlikely prisoner of war who, due to his drawing skills, becomes the group's master forger. Middle-aged, balding, and (as the story progresses) increasingly nearsighted to the point of near blindness, Blythe stands in stark contrast with American RAF pilot Bob Hendley, his strapping, young, and physically fit roommate who acts as the audience's surrogate for observing Blythe's exaggerated Englishness (Figure 3.3). Their first scene together, which introduces not only Blythe's curious behavior but also his musical theme that emphasizes his effeminate nature, plays out from Hendley's point of view. Beginning with his entrance into the room, Hendley looks curiously at his new roommate's odd assortment of belongings, including a tea strainer, while the alto flute and oboe play fragments of what soon turns out to be Blythe's theme (Example 3.2). Blythe is the only character in the film for whom Bernstein composed a unique, fully developed musical theme that helps to accentuate his sissiness and possible

homosexuality.<sup>35</sup> The melody—gentle and lyrical with lilting rhythms, slow harmonic progression, and largely woodwind instrumentation that also includes the rich English horn—feminizes Blythe almost in the manner of an FRC, but so does his unique access to music. The balding little man soon enters and introduces himself, attaching himself to the music and to the quaint items that seem so incongruous with the straight-as-an-arrow-looking Hendley. While Blythe fusses over old tea leaves and milk, Hendley watches askance and brandishes an impressive-looking pocket knife he smuggled into the camp. Blythe helps to make Hendley, who has not nearly as many opportunities to flaunt his manliness as Hilts, seem all the more masculine by contrast, while also heightening the inherent danger and pathos of the escape by introducing such a vulnerable character. Unlike the unmanly homosexual characters from *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Third Man*, Blythe is not vilified, but rather is made all the more sympathetic and child-like. His vulnerability and Hendley's almost paternalistic behavior toward him emphasize the supposed weakness of the English, whose warriors (like Bartlett) are reckless and lacking in common sense, and the duty of the Americans to step in and act as the real heroes. This dynamic is played out throughout the film in the relationship between Blythe and Hendley, as Hendley comes obviously to care for his quirky roommate and, after Blythe's eyesight fails him, looks after him in the escape tunnel and afterwards during their doomed escape attempt.

It is important to understand why the English, who should have been the heroes celebrated in *The Great Escape*, might appear such easy targets for attacks on their manliness in the context of mainstream patriarchal American culture. For Blythe appears to embody a specific stereotype of English sissy, timid and devoid of sexuality, that is common in American popular culture, if likely incomprehensible in the context of English culture. Jeremy Paxman's discussion

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<sup>35</sup> Some characters (such as Bartlett and Hilts) are associated with specific, short motives taken from larger themes, and others are associated with particular *arrangements* of themes, as we will see with Danny and Willie. Only Blythe has his own unique, full-length musical theme.

of the “Ideal Englishman” in *The English: A Portrait of a People* provides a theory of how the English education system and the myth of the perfect English gentleman inspired in the American imagination the archetype of the English sissy. Paxman discusses the nineteenth-century upper-class ideal of “the Breed” and how all-male private schools in the nineteenth century tried to mold English boys into imitations of this mythical society. Members of the Breed, he explains, were not the typical Englishman, or even people who truly existed in nature. Rather, they represented “a certain ideal, a carefully selected number of the strengths and weaknesses of the male taken and raised to Platonic heights.”<sup>36</sup> The private-school experience was characterized by regular floggings, which were “accepted as an essential part of the process of turning out a gentlemen.” Rather than rebelling at such treatment, schoolboys reportedly welcomed and cheered it, inspiring Paxman to write, “In the circumstances, is it surprising that the products of these schools were skilled at hiding their emotions?”<sup>37</sup> Hormonal urges were channeled away from normal adolescent male sexuality into school sports, which was considered a tool for training boys to avoid such temptations as masturbation.<sup>38</sup>

Generations of Englishmen were thus produced who “seem[ed] to have more or less discarded their sexuality as baggage not needed on a voyage.”<sup>39</sup> Joel Hodson, in his discussion of the supposed misconstruing of T. E. Lawrence’s sexuality in *Lawrence of Arabia*, describes just this sort of homosocial asexuality while managing to deny outright that it has anything to do with homosexuality. Mentioning Paul Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Hodson writes:

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<sup>36</sup> Jeremy Paxman, *The English: A Portrait of a People* (London: Michael Joseph, 1998), 177.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 179–80.

<sup>39</sup> Paxman also recounts the stories of several men who seemed to have most closely emulated the ideal Englishman, including A. C. Benson and Wilfred Thesiger. Benson, “the author of that hymn of empire ‘Land of Hope and Glory’, confided to his diary that ‘for me the real sexual problem does not exist’. The explorer Wilfred Thesiger wrote in his autobiography that ‘Sex has been of no consequence to me, and the celibacy of the desert left me untroubled . . . with no sense of deprivation.’” *Ibid.*, 180.

Finding in the memoirs and poetry of soldiers from [the Victorian era] a great deal of homoerotic sensibility, Fussell asks if “the British have a special talent for such passions.” Quoting J. B. Priestley, he finds that British youth at the turn of the century lived “a wholly masculine way of life uncomplicated by Women.” They had been “prepared by public-school training to experience . . . crushes” on other boys, a phenomenon which became abundantly apparent in British writing about the war. Fussell writes: “No one turning from the poetry of the Second World War back to that of the First can fail to notice there the unique physical tenderness, the readiness to admire openly bodily beauty of young men, the unapologetic recognition that men may be in love with each other.” Much of this writing emphasizes, as does Lawrence’s writing, the postwar longing for male comradeship and laments the wanton destruction of beautiful young men, but it does not necessarily imply active homosexuality.<sup>40</sup>

How Hodson fails to recognize that such behavior might have been a sign of sincere homosexual desire repressed by heteronormative ideology is rather remarkable, but his description of young men shunning the company of women and yet refraining from homosexual activity sits perfectly with Paxman’s views.<sup>41</sup> This ideal does not reflect how the English actually are or were, but an unrealistic goal that was then bastardized into a caricature as imagined within American culture. The insistence of a lack of sexual urges in the absence of women should be particularly of interest to us, corroborating a long history of men denying the reality of homosocial circumstances that lead to films like *The Great Escape* and, as we shall see, reactions to *Lawrence of Arabia*. When we combine the supposed absence of sexuality with the English aristocratic ideal of the real gentleman not having to work for a living, it is easy to see that such a vision of masculinity clashes greatly with American conceptions of hard work (the American

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<sup>40</sup> Joel Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia and American Culture: The Making of a Transatlantic Legend* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995), 122.

<sup>41</sup> Claudia Nelson discusses how the insistence upon female frigidity in the Victorian era also led to a forced male frigidity, as “By adopting feminine patterns of sexual behavior,” that is, by showing revulsion at sexuality and sexual intercourse, “the husband improves his own lot.” Nelson’s evidence demonstrates that according to the Victorian ideal, men should emulate women’s sexual aversion; as one of her sources wrote, “the proper subjugation of the sexual impulses, and the conservation of the complex seminal fluid, with its wonderfully invigorating influence, develop all that is best and noblest in men.” This element of nineteenth-century English culture presumably also had a great influence on the idealization of male asexuality. Nelson, “Sex and the Single Boy: Ideals of Manliness and Sexuality in Victorian Literature for Boys,” *Victorian Studies* 32, no. 4 (1989): 529, quoting George H. Napheys, *The Transmission of Life: Counsels on the Nature and Hygiene of the Masculine Function* (1871; rpt. Philadelphia: H. C. Watts, 1882), 173–74.

Dream), red-blooded heterosexuality, and individuality (as opposed to the camaraderie and community of the all-boys school) and could have helped to fuel the stereotype of the sexless, effeminate, ambiguously homosexual Englishman.

Several of the film's English characters are based on well-known English stereotypes—Roger Bartlett epitomizes the reckless lover of war mentioned by Cull and also described by Paxman—and several others fit the character of the English sissy, particularly Bartlett's devoted second-in-command MacDonald (Gordon Jackson, actually a Scottish character), and the tailor Griff (Robert Desmond), who rhapsodizes about different fabrics while creating escape outfits for the men. Blythe, with his uniquely feminizing music, serves as their representative of English unmanliness: a middle-aged, physically unfit (symbolized by his quickly deteriorating eyesight that leads to his death) intellectual who needs protection and help from a stronger American character. The music does not represent Blythe as monolithically effeminate, nor is he portrayed as a coward—later when Blythe and Hendley have escaped (Hendley having stolen a German fighter plane), a more heroic statement of the theme resounds from the horn section, followed by a more sumptuous arrangement featuring the strings, a countermelody from the horns, and harp accompaniment. The theme is interrupted by frantic danger music when the plane's engine gives out and Hendley is forced to make a crash landing before reaching the Swiss border. Both men survive the crash but Blythe, who wanders off, is spotted by German soldiers and, failing to see them, is shot and killed. Like the FRC, which always seems more closely linked with the female love object than with her male counterpart, Blythe's sweetly feminine theme resists becoming linked with Hendley, obviously the more masculine of the two, and as soon as Blythe dies the theme disappears with him. Like the murders of Bartlett, MacDonald, and most of the other English officers, Blythe's death acts as a symbol for the futility of the English brand of warfare



to the more common-sense approach of the Americans, all of whom survive, and all of whom are supposedly more masculine.

*Plausible Deniability—Danny Velinski and Willie Dickes*

Like Steve McQueen, Charles Bronson had also by 1963 become well known to audiences, although in his case as a tough guy character actor. His dark, swarthy features meant that Bronson, unlike the blond, all-American McQueen, was often cast in ethnic roles, such as the traitorous Native American Hondo in *Apache* (1954, as Charles Buchinsky) and the Irish-Mexican gunfighter Bernardo O'Reilly in *The Magnificent Seven*. In *The Great Escape*, Sturges once again cast him as an ethnic Other, this time a Polish officer (perhaps a nod to Bronson's actual ancestry). Against Bronson and the tough physicality he gave to Danny, Sturges cast as Danny's constant companion Willie Dickes a young English actor and singer, John Leyton (his biggest hit was 1961's "Johnny Remember Me") (Figure 3.4). With his boyish, clean-cut good looks and fan club of teenage girls, Leyton had a brief period of success in the 1960s before fading into relative obscurity by the 1970s.<sup>42</sup> As the "X" organization's two chief tunnelers (or "tunnel kings"), Willie and Danny bring brawn and masculine physical prowess to the story while also paradoxically providing one of its most sensitive and homoerotic subplots.

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<sup>42</sup> From Leyton's official website, JohnLeytonOfficial.com, accessed July 1, 2012.

As Danny, Bronson's macho physique is diminished not only by the character's ethnic Otherness but also his emotional complexity, both of which prove threatening to his masculinity.



Figure 3.4: Charles Bronson as Danny Velinski (left) and John Leyton as Willie Dickes (right)

His body is more frequently spectacularized than that of any of the other characters (Figure 3.5), and his physicality is undermined by his secret weakness: despite being the chief tunnel engineer, Danny suffers from debilitating claustrophobia.

Determined to avoid the escape tunnel after several cave-ins nearly crack his tough facade, he makes a desperate solo escape attempt "through the wire." His escape is prevented by Willie, to whom he confesses his fears. Willie promises to help Danny through the tunnel, and despite two more meltdowns Danny and Willie make it out and eventually become two of only three prisoners to reach freedom (Sedgwick is the third).

Even more than Blythe's theme, the Danny/Willie escape music recalls the passionate, romantic sound of the Feminine Romantic Cliché, and its juxtaposition against more robust, active music for the other characters emphasizes its lack of manly vigor. The pair's escape, which we witness in brief interludes all lacking dialogue and cut into the larger montage of escapes, is a lyrical, lush variant of the film's main theme (Examples 3.3–3.4). Instead of its normal march setting, the melody soars in a legato arrangement. In their first escape vignette, Danny and Willie emerge from the woods by a pristine river, where they find a small rowboat. The upper strings play a shimmering sustained harmony while the melody emerges in the cello with cascading arpeggios from the harp and celesta tinkling above it. Danny and Willie are briefly interrupted by a more upbeat arrangement of the main theme as we see another character,



Figure 3.5: Danny in the shower, in one of the film's few moments of male spectacle

Cavendish (Nigel Stock), hitching a ride from a truck driver. When we return to Danny and Willie, the serene musical setting returns as the pair set off in the boat, with Danny rowing and Willie steering, and the strings in a middle register continue with a lyrical countermelody to the main theme. This vignette is followed immediately by the fast-paced rumblings of Hilts's music as he takes off on the stolen motorcycle (we first saw him set up the trap in the scene

Example 3.3: Main theme from *The Great Escape*

immediately preceding the first Danny and Willie vignette). In the space of just over a minute of screen time, the pair is set up against both the extreme macho masculinity of Hiltz and the less impressive but still at least nominally masculine original theme accompanying Cavendish. The fact that this music still sounds masculine despite not being as macho as Hiltz’s music speaks to the fact that generally unless music sounds *specifically* feminine—such as sounding like a love theme—by default it is taken to be masculine, the supposedly more normative and unmarked gender. Several more similar scenes follow as Danny and Willie continue their peaceful, uninterrupted journey that culminates in their rescue in neutral waters, while their former companions are picked off by the Nazis one by one.

Whether or not the makers of *The Great Escape* intended Danny and Willie to be portrayed as gay, the delicate nuancing of their characters lent by their musical scoring in these scenes lends a further realism as to the realities of war and prison to the film, and realism was certainly something that the filmmakers *did* intend. Sturges and his company were keenly determined that the film not only look historically accurate, but that it represent as closely as

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Danny and Willie". The score is organized into three systems, each containing three staves. The top staff in each system is for Violin (Vln.), the middle for Cello (Cel.), and the bottom for Bass (Vc.).

- System 1:** The Vln. staff has a whole rest. The Cel. staff features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with triplets (marked '3') and sixteenth notes (marked '6'). The Hp. staff has a similar pattern with sixteenth notes (marked '6'). The Vc. staff has a simple bass line with a melodic line marked "cant.".
- System 2:** The Vln. staff has a whole rest. The Cel. and Hp. staves continue the rhythmic pattern from the first system. The Vc. staff continues its melodic line.
- System 3:** The Vln. staff has a whole rest. The Cel. and Hp. staves continue the rhythmic pattern. The Vc. staff continues its melodic line.

Throughout the score, there are various musical notations including rests, slurs, and articulation marks. The time signature is 4/4.

Example 3.4: "Danny and Willie"

possible the actual event as experienced by the prisoners.<sup>43</sup> On set Sturges had an historical adviser who had been at Stalag Luft III, and several of the cast members had themselves been prisoners of war.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless not everyone watching the film could quite believe that this incredible story corresponded to reality. Critic Bosley Crowther, who twenty years before had written the dismissive review of *Cry "Havoc"* quoted earlier, in particular wrote a damning review of *The Great Escape* in which he not only challenged Sturges's representation of history but also accused him of being derivative:

The boast is that every detail in the new film, "The Great Escape," is "the way it happened," that every incident in this gaudy account of a massive breakout of British and American flyers from a maximum-security German prison camp in World War II was based on fact. . . .

That may be. I've no way of proving that a few of the wilder episodes in this overlong melodrama, which opened yesterday at the DeMille and Coronet, are so far beyond plausibility that they could not have happened anyplace. And since I've seen most of them in other pictures about cheeky prisoners-of-war—three or four in the past year—I must assume that they are derived from common lore.

But nobody is going to con me—at least not the director, John Sturges—into believing that the spirit of defiance in any prisoner-of-war camp anywhere was as arrogant, romantic and Rover Boyish as it is made to appear in this film. And nobody's going to induce me, with shameless Hollywood cliffhanging tricks designed to stretch the tension until you holler and with a thumping Elmer Bernstein musical score, to surrender my reason and my emotions to the sort of fiction fabricated here.<sup>45</sup>

Crowther might have done well to ask an actual World War II veteran for confirmation of his suspicions before publishing this review. Ten days after Crowther's dismissal of *The Great Escape* appeared in the *New York Times*, three letters to the editor were printed in its defense, two of them written by former inmates of Stalag Luft III. One argued that, "As one who was there . . . I must confirm that the American and British flying officers were as arrogant and

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<sup>43</sup> A number of sources, including a 1962 profile of the film printed in *The Guardian*, attest to John Sturges's insistence upon the authenticity and accuracy of the film's look as well as its story. Yorwerth Davies, "The Great Escape," *Guardian*, Aug. 8, 1962.

<sup>44</sup> Steven Jay Rubin, *Combat Films: American Realism, 1945–2010* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2011), 123–48.

<sup>45</sup> Bosley Crowther, "Screen: P.O.W.'s in 'Great Escape,'" *New York Times*, Aug. 8, 1963.

defiant as depicted in this film,” and furthermore that the true story “makes an exciting movie, and if it is unbelievable, it is because it is about men who did the unbelievable. You had to be there to believe it.”<sup>46</sup> The other camp veteran who chimed in was particularly piqued by Crowther’s words, as he was none other than C. Wallace Floody, who as Sturges’s historical adviser had served to help lend the desired authenticity to the film. Floody wrote, “I felt last year, and I feel again now that I have seen the film, that Mr. Sturges and his company of actors and writers truly captured the spirit of the prisoners, of their humor and dedication.”<sup>47</sup>

Although it was never mentioned in the published discourse surrounding the film, all these men who had been involved and knew the realities of life in a prison camp would necessarily also have known the reality of its homosocial environment and the likelihood of homosexual liaisons such as that suggested by Danny and Willie’s relationship. Such faithfulness to reality would not only have been unpalatable to most audiences, it would have been strongly discouraged if not outright banned by the Code. Without undermining its pro-American agenda, which values first and foremost the masculinity of its American heroes, *The Great Escape* allows for subtle cracks in the surface of its masculinist facade; it allows for the possibility, to those audience members open to such an interpretation, of homosexuality in the midst of a group of undeniable heroes, and for the plausible deniability of such an interpretation to those who would find it offensive. Whereas further hinting from the narrative might have made this plot element *too* obvious, musical scoring provides space for audience members to interpret the plotline as they will. A gay couple escaping from the camp, and one that is astonishingly not portrayed as villainous or perverted like Kurtz and Winkel in *The Third Man*, is a subtle touch of truth hidden in one of the most macho he-man movies of the decade.

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<sup>46</sup> David R. Jones, letter to the Screen Editor, “Moviegoers’ Mailbag: Readers Weigh the Authenticity and Timeliness of ‘The Great Escape,’” *New York Times*, Aug. 18, 1963.

<sup>47</sup> C. Wallace Floody, letter to the Screen Editor, in *ibid.*



### ***Lawrence of Arabia*: Veiled masculinities**

In *The Great Escape*, the filmmakers struggled to portray different types of masculinity in a world without women in which presumably homosexuality did not exist (although, as I have suggested, it may be that a homosexual subtext is intentionally embedded into the narrative).

*Lawrence of Arabia* presents a very different situation in which the character's homosexuality was certainly intended, but was misunderstood by some viewers and ultimately rendered confusing. Lawrence's ambiguous portrayal, much like those of Julie and Pearl in the films discussed in chapter 2, is created through complex musical scoring that attempts to construct his unconventional masculinity.

The opening of *Lawrence of Arabia* introduces its title character as a man who is something of an enigma—and this mystery of who Lawrence is and who he will become dominates the entire picture. Fittingly, it is mainly through music that Lawrence's mystery is introduced. The film opens with a lengthy Overture introducing the film's important Arabian

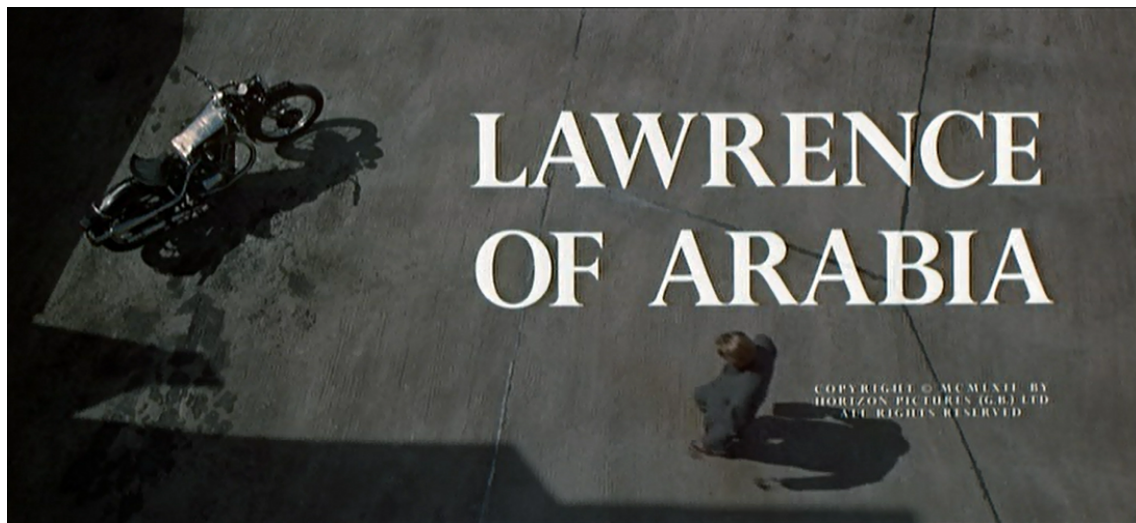


Figure 3.6: *Lawrence of Arabia* main title sequence



themes, as well as an exotic-sounding Janissary arrangement of its main British theme, over a black screen. This Overture is followed by an opening credit sequence: a long, static take of an aerial shot showing a man preparing a motorcycle for a ride (Figure 3.6). The figure of the man is too small to see clearly, and the placement of the camera obscures all but the immediate surroundings, so we cannot tell where this takes place. Neither can we see the figure well enough at first to recognize that this is an older man, not the young man Lawrence was during the Arab Revolt (1916–18) during which he achieved fame.<sup>48</sup> As the man fiddles with the motorcycle, a rich musical accompaniment, including two different themes that suggest opposite pieces of information, fills the otherwise nearly empty space. Precisely what these evocative musical themes are attempting to illustrate is not clear, but they set up very well the ambiguity and mystery that the film wants to create in its depiction of T. E. Lawrence.

The first theme, a new melody not heard in the Overture (and referred to here as “Lawrence”), is a sprightly, upbeat tune that lends an optimistic, hopeful mood to the scene (Example 3.5).<sup>49</sup> The whimsical melody featuring the strings playing crisply articulated lines in mostly even rhythms contrasts with the markedly exotic themes heard in the Overture, evoking an entirely different atmosphere and almost seeming to imply that it belongs to another film altogether. Its diatonic harmonic language and use of solo woodwinds help make this theme sound typically English, particularly in comparison to the previously heard Arab themes. Even

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<sup>48</sup> Furthermore the young Peter O’Toole was not yet famous when *Lawrence of Arabia* premiered, and so the audience might not necessarily have recognized that he was aged for this scene.

<sup>49</sup> Apart from the “Lawrence” theme, all theme names are come Frank K DeWald’s extensive liner notes accompanying the 2010 re-recording of the *Lawrence of Arabia* soundtrack. DeWald refers to this theme as a “British” theme, but as it seems to refer more specifically to Lawrence (unlike the more general British theme “The Voice of the Guns”), I will analyze it as belonging to Lawrence himself. (Maurice Jarre, *Lawrence of Arabia*, The City of Prague Philharmonic, Conducted by Nic Raine, Indie Europe/Zoom, B003YCM0HM, 2010 [compact disc].)

the Overture's arrangement of the "Voice of the Guns" march, a piece contemporaneous to the film's setting as well as appropriate for its British military subject, had featured Janissary-esque

The image displays a musical score for the film "Lawrence of Arabia". It consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes staves for "Str. + W.W." (Strings and Woodwinds), "Br." (Brass), and "Bsn." (Bassoon). The second system includes staves for "Cb." (Cello/Double Bass), "Str." (Strings), and "Br." (Brass). The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The first system features a complex rhythmic pattern with accents and a "sim." (sustained) marking. The second system begins with a measure marked "5" and includes a "W.W." (Woodwinds) part with a long note and a "Str." (Strings) part with a rhythmic pattern.

Example 3.5: "Lawrence"

Example 3.6: “Desert”

scoring and shrill woodwinds that recall the famous E-flat clarinet of Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*, coloring the entire Overture with non-Western sounds that contrast with the more English idiom of the opening credits music. The Englishness of the melody is reinforced when, suddenly and most surprisingly, it is interrupted by a passionate outburst of one of the exotic themes from the Overture. This music, commonly known as “the theme from *Lawrence of Arabia*” and referred to here as the “Desert” theme (Example 3.6), will be one of the most important musical ideas of the entire film, and its appearance here in the opening credits raises a number of questions. Where did this music come from? Does it represent this Englishman’s longing for exotic adventure? Is it a memory from his past? The incongruity of the “Desert”

music with the cold gray concrete of the image invites us to wonder what relationship this music has with this man—and is it *this* music that represents him, and *not* the English music after all?

With these questions raised by the fantastic juxtaposition of the musical Occident and Orient, the music breaks off in a sudden, dissonant harmony not at all in character with the previously established mood. The hopeful optimism suggested by the jaunty English and passionate “Desert” themes is revealed to be a lie as Lawrence, whose face we now see to be lined with age, speeds away on his motorcycle on what proves to be his final adventure in a scene entirely without music. By setting up such an ambiguous opening and tricking the viewer into thinking that perhaps this scene takes place *earlier* in Lawrence’s life, the film has already begun to introduce the enigma that is its construction of T. E. Lawrence.

Both the life of British officer, scholar, and adventurer Thomas Edward Lawrence (1888–1935) and the making of the epic film purporting to tell his story have been written about extensively by scholars, biographers, and journalists.<sup>50</sup> Lawrence had long been a well-known figure in English popular culture due to his leadership role in the Arab Revolt of 1916–18. Hailed as a hero of the First World War by many, he was considered by others to be a liar and charlatan who grossly exaggerated his own importance. In 1955 Richard Aldington published an inflammatory biography of Lawrence that was the first to suggest that Lawrence was a

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<sup>50</sup> For more on T. E. Lawrence, see his 1922 autobiography, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), as well as the following biographies (among others): Philip Knightley and Colin Simpson, *The Secret Lives of Lawrence of Arabia* (London: Nelson, 1969); Michael Yardley, *Backing into the Limelight: A Biography of T. E. Lawrence* (London: Harrap, 1985); Jeremy Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorized Biography of T. E. Lawrence* (New York: Atheneum, 1989); John E. Mack, *A Prince of Disorder: The Life of T. E. Lawrence* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976); Malcolm Brown, *T. E. Lawrence* (New York: New York University Press, 2003). For more on the making of the film, see Adrian Turner’s *The Making of David Lean’s Lawrence of Arabia* (Limpsfield, Surrey, UK: Dragon’s World, 1994), Steven Charles Caton, *Lawrence of Arabia: A Film’s Anthropology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and Gene D. Phillips, *Beyond the Epic: The Life and Films of David Lean* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006).

homosexual;<sup>51</sup> interest in the possibility of Lawrence's homosexuality (which he alludes to but never confirms in his own autobiography) was fueled not only by Aldington's account but by a climate of fascination and revulsion in homosexuality during the 1950s. This interest in homosexuality came about in part due to several high-profile court cases involving English public figures who were convicted of homosexual offenses and the subsequent release of the Wolfenden Report in 1957, which recommended the decriminalization of homosexual acts. While nowadays even those sympathetic to the man might agree that *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* contains some evidence that Lawrence *might* have been gay, at the time Aldington's biography and accusations of homosexuality were seen as (and certainly intended to be) a vitriolic attack on a hero of the waning British Empire.<sup>52</sup> Ever a polarized figure, Lawrence's heroic standing was under attack, and during this time he emerged as an even more enigmatic figure than ever before.<sup>53</sup>

The irony, perhaps, is that as portrayed by Peter O'Toole in *Lawrence of Arabia*, Lawrence is clearly a man who, like the frustrated critics who would chastise both Rattigan and (later) David Lean for failing to solve the mystery of Lawrence, is in search of an identity. Feeling that he does not fit in as an Englishman, Lawrence turns to the Orient, but finds himself fractured between conflicting ideals, motivations, and constructions of masculinity and heroism

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<sup>51</sup> Richard Aldington, *Lawrence of Arabia: A Biographical Enquiry* (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1955).

<sup>52</sup> Gillian Swanson, *Drunk with the Glitter: Space, Consumption and Sexual Instability in Modern Urban Culture* (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> Continuing interest in Lawrence inspired a 1960 play by Terence Rattigan called *Ross*. Set in 1922 but organized around flashbacks to the time of the Arab Revolt, the play's title references the pseudonym Lawrence assumed in the Royal Air Force after he left Arabia. Contemporary reviews of the play foreshadow what critics would eventually write about David Lean's film version of Lawrence's life in 1962: that anyone setting out to tell a story about T. E. Lawrence must also solve the mystery of the man. Terence Rattigan, *Ross, a Dramatic Portrait* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1960); Howard Taubman, "The Theatre: Lawrence of Arabia," *New York Times*, Dec. 27, 1961; Claudia Cassidy, "Europe on the Aisle: 'Ross'—Terence Rattigan's Version of Lawrence of Arabia," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Sept. 22, 1961; W. J. Weatherby, "The Puzzle of Lawrence," *Guardian*, April 30, 1960.

that tear him apart as he seeks to form a coherent sense of self. If Lawrence is a mystery at the beginning when we see him set off on his motorcycle—only to discover that this beginning is in fact the *end* of his life—then he is no less one by the film’s end. Composer Maurice Jarre’s music, I shall argue, plays two somewhat paradoxical roles at once: one, it helps to take us through Lawrence’s journey of self-discovery, showing us his evolving subjectivity and situating him on a spectrum of gender identities ranging from a supposedly normative English masculinity to an equally questionable Oriental feminine-masculinity; and two, it complicates and confounds the viewer’s understanding of the character by leaving ambiguous certain moments that would seem to provide the answers so longed for by critics.

At just under four hours, *Lawrence of Arabia* is long enough and its plot sufficiently complex that a brief plot synopsis proves useful. The film unfolds in two parts. After the opening flash forward that reveals Lawrence’s death and Westminster Abbey memorial service in 1935, the story flashes back to Cairo during World War I. Lawrence, a lowly lieutenant longing for adventure, is assigned a vaguely defined mission to find the Bedouin leader Prince Feisal (Alec Guinness). In the desert Lawrence meets and antagonizes Sherif Ali ibn el Kharish (Omar Sharif), wins the admiration of Feisal, and aggravates his own commanding officer Colonel Brighton (Anthony Quayle), Feisal’s assigned British advisor. Nonetheless, Lawrence convinces Feisal to let him lead a small company of men across the deadly Nefud desert in an attempt to attack the Turkish stronghold of Aqaba from behind. He finally gains the trust of the men, including the previously hostile Sherif Ali, when he refuses to leave behind a fallen man in the Nefud. Lawrence’s courage amazes the men and, dressing him in their native clothes, they adopt him as one of their own and rename him “El Aurens.” Lawrence also gains the allegiance of swaggering rival tribesman Auda Abu Tayi (Anthony Quinn), who had formerly been in the pay

of the Turks. With Auda's help, the newly formed Arab alliance defeats the Turks at Aqaba and an exhausted Lawrence, still in his Arab clothes, brings the news to his superiors at Cairo. At first furious with his outrageous appearance and failure to obey orders, General Allenby (Jack Hawkins) unexpectedly promotes Lawrence to major and even agrees to supply the Arabs with money and arms to fight the Turks. Unknown to Lawrence, however, Allenby confesses to politician Dryden (Claude Rains) that he has no intention of giving the Arabs independence, and Part I ends with Lawrence exalted and praised by the British officers.

Part II begins with the arrival of American reporter Jackson Bentley (Arthur Kennedy), who has come to Arabia looking for a good story. Lawrence, who leads the Arabs on a successful guerilla attack on a Turkish railway, has become a veritable god among his Bedouin followers. He believes himself so invincible that he attempts to infiltrate the Turkish-held city of Deraa, where he is captured, beaten, and presumably raped by the sadistic Turkish Bey (José Ferrer). Broken and tormented, Lawrence initially refuses to take on his next challenge of liberating Damascus and subsequently takes part in a gruesome massacre of Turkish soldiers. He and his Arab soldiers eventually capture Damascus and the Arabs set up a council, which quickly devolves into petty and incompetent squabbling. With the city effectively taken over by the British, who he had naively believed would not extend their imperialistic pursuits to Arabia, Lawrence leaves for England dejected and disappointed that his dreams of a united Arabia have failed.

Unlike *The Great Escape*, a U.S. production that relied on an American conception of masculinity, *Lawrence of Arabia* relocates masculinity to an ambiguous yet recognizably English ideal. The film never makes it clear just *what* the ideal Englishman looks like—only that whatever it is, Lawrence is *not* it, particularly with regard to his barely veiled homosexuality.

Some of this ambiguity could have been created in the collaboration of both Americans and Englishmen on the film; in addition to having an American producer and English director, *Lawrence*'s original screenplay was written by American Michael Wilson, only to be found unsatisfactory by Lean, who then hired English writer Robert Bolt to make substantial changes and rewrites.<sup>54</sup> Similar to the description of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English masculinity provided by Jeremy Paxman (as well as Joel Hodson's insistence upon the underlying heteronormativity of homoerotic behavior with regard to Lawrence himself), the British officers in the film seem perfectly content to live in a world without women, but are notably squeamish about any suggestion of homosexuality: early in the film, General Murray (Donald Wolfitt) makes repeated and pointed jabs at Lawrence's unmanly character, including a sarcastic quip that the mission to Arabia "might even make a man out of [him]" and suggestively calling Lawrence "the kind of creature I can't stand." The Englishmen in the film, apart from Lawrence, are presented as effectively asexual, and although Lawrence does not overtly express interest in sex at any point, his obvious queerness points to a sexuality that is unacceptable among the film's stoic and stiff-upper-lipped English characters.

Although *Lawrence* is not considered to fall under the genre of the western, the film's title character strongly resembles the heroes of a sub-genre of postwar westerns discussed by Claudia Gorbman in her essay "Scoring the Indian: Music in the Liberal Western." Gorbman's description of the liberal western hero and his masculine identity crisis is instructive in understanding the deep significance of masculinity to *Lawrence of Arabia*. After World War II, Gorbman writes, the hero of the western "became a man of reflection as well as action. Older, more battered and worn, he was not so certain of 'civilized' America's moral superiority and

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<sup>54</sup> James Chapman and Nicholas J. Cull, *Projecting Empire: Imperialism and Popular Cinema* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 95–98.



divine right. Like Hollywood's film noir hero, the western hero suffered an identity crisis, his confidence disintegrating and his masculinity in question. The western hero's faltering machismo becomes identified with political uncertainty, with the increasingly questionable prerogative of Manifest Destiny."<sup>55</sup> These so-called liberal westerns treated Native Americans nostalgically as sympathetic noble savages rather than marauding hordes. Nevertheless, Gorbman argues that "the true subject of the liberal western is rarely the Indian, but the white hero as reflected in the Indian's otherness. The Indian remains a foil for the hero's negotiation of his historical/cultural identity."<sup>56</sup> Similarly, *Lawrence of Arabia* uses an exoticized, conventionalized construction of Arabness against which to play out its white hero's masculine identity crisis. But unlike the heroes of the liberal westerns that Gorbman discusses, Lawrence negotiates his masculinity within an Arab rather than European American context, finding his inspiration not through the love of a supportive native woman but through the homosocial network of Bedouin relationships. Lawrence therefore does not end the film having affirmed his masculine heroic identity in light of the tragic destruction of the natives, but in a state of even greater confusion after having lost both his English and Arabian identities.

If the film's gender ideology is unclear as to its representation of English masculinity, it is unambiguous about its use of Arabia and an Orientalist conception of the East as feminine, barbaric, and Other. The music for and general representation of the Arab world in the film reflects a decidedly Orientalist view, despite the film's ultimate critique of Empire. As originally theorized by Edward Said, Orientalism is "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to

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<sup>55</sup> Claudia Gorbman, "Scoring the Indian: Music in the Liberal Western," in *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, ed. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 239.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilization and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience."<sup>57</sup> Said offers three different meanings of Orientalism, the third of which is the most germane to our purposes. Orientalism, he argues, has historically served as a way for the West to deal with and make sense of the Orient with respect to itself; "in short," Said writes, "Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."<sup>58</sup> Said himself restricted his analysis to nonfiction writings in *Orientalism*, but his later work suggests that literature and the arts might also prove areas for useful analysis of Orientalist ideology. Scholars since 1978 have used the term liberally, frequently as a synonym for "exoticism," in analyses of literature and the other arts, often focusing on how Western narratives use Oriental subjects to construct and define gendered boundaries and spaces in opposition to a masculine West. Maria Heung, for example, looks at representations of the Orient in narratives such as Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, which she argues "shaped the Western construction of 'the Orient' as a sexualized, and sexually compliant, space that is ripe for conquest and rule."<sup>59</sup> Colonialist narratives laid the groundwork for Lawrence's ambiguous sexuality, for as Ella Shohat describes, "The exoticist films allow for subliminally transexual [sic] tropes. The phantasm of the Orient gives an outlet for a carnivalesque play with national and at times gender identities."<sup>60</sup> Thus the film's Oriental backdrop, with its musical accompaniment derived not from actual Arab music but clichéd tropes

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<sup>57</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 1–2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Maria Heung, "The Family Romance of Orientalism: From *Madame Butterfly* to *Indochine*," in *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film*, ed. Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 160.

<sup>60</sup> Ella Shohat, "Gender and Culture of Empire: Toward a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema," in *Visions of the East*, 52.

meant to evoke an exotic construction of the East, allows for a natural setting in which Lawrence can play with gender and sexuality. Unable to adjust to an English construction of manliness that is tied to heterosexuality and stoically asexual behavior, Lawrence adopts an Arabian masculinity that is closer to a Western conception of femininity and that does not preclude homosexuality.

While the real Lawrence's sexuality is still a subject for debate, the cinematic Lawrence's homosexuality was certainly intentional on the part of the filmmakers, if only implied and never overtly shown. James Chapman and Nicholas Cull quote a memo of director David Lean's in which he writes, "Let us not avoid or censor out the homosexual aspects of Lawrence's relationships." They furthermore speculate that Lean "seems to have seen the relationship between Lawrence and Sherif Ali as an unconsummated love affair similar to the one at the heart of [his 1945 film] *Brief Encounter*."<sup>61</sup> The film's screenwriter Robert Bolt was completely straightforward about his belief in Lawrence's homosexuality, as he discussed in a *New York Times* article he wrote several months before the film's release in 1962:

And the question I am asked most often now is whether I think Lawrence was homosexual. Whether he was homosexually active I have no idea. That he was more or less homosexual by nature I think almost certain. He, himself, seems to me to make small bones about it.

His references to homosexual practice among the young Bedouins are deliberately lyrical. His punishment by the Turks when he was captured is specifically homosexual and described in the same soaring style. His house was kept full of young soldiers. He seems always to have been with men when he was not alone, never with women.<sup>62</sup>

Bolt concludes that he "can't see the importance of it. It seems more important to know whether a man was brave or cowardly, clever or stupid, noble or ignoble . . . as for the other business: a

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<sup>61</sup> Chapman and Cull, *Projecting Empire*, 97

<sup>62</sup> Robert Bolt, "Clues to the Legend of Lawrence," *New York Times*, Feb. 25, 1962.

very great many people are homosexual; there was only one Lawrence of Arabia.”<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, the final screenplay does suggest a connection between the character’s sexuality and his flaws and perversity. The film constructs Lawrence’s sexuality in three main ways: through his effeminate nature (which is often commented upon by other characters), through his sexual deviance (evidenced by his sadomasochism), and by analogy through the relationship between his young servants Farraj and Daud (Michel Ray and John Dimech).

Subtle references to Lawrence’s sexuality made by other characters, such as the one made by General Murray quoted above, help to reinforce the effeminacy supplied by Peter O’Toole’s nuanced performance. They also serve to support the film’s underlying Orientalist race and gender ideology that locates femininity with the Other. This can be seen early on in the cagey politician Dryden’s selection of Lawrence for the mission in Arabia. As argued by Abdullah Habib AlMaaini:

General Murray . . . gives in to Dryden’s assessment that Lawrence is, in fact, perfectly qualified for the mission precisely for the very reasons the general judges him “inadequate.” Lawrence’s “unmanliness,” suspected sexual orientation, and erotic tendencies become therefore assets, not liabilities. This twist has ultimately to do with Dryden’s implicit thesis that Lawrence will be able to deal with the Arabs because he is of their sort: he is not a clear-cut “man.” . . . Lawrence is the “man” for the job not only because “he knows his stuff” but also because he represents the “stuff” that would make the Arabs relate to and interact with him. Thus sexuality and (homo)eroticism are included in the film’s Orientalist discourse.<sup>64</sup>

Lawrence’s early success in Arabia is at least in part due to his queerness—a liability to him in a British context, but an asset in an Oriental one. It also becomes more pronounced once he takes on an Arabian identity, particularly with regard to his sadomasochism. Just before the scene in which Lawrence is chosen by Dryden for the mission in the desert, he makes a show of putting out a match with his fingers. When one of the other officers attempts the trick and discovers that

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Abdullah Habib AlMaaini “‘You Are an Interesting Man’: Gender, Empire, and Desire in David Lean’s *Lawrence of Arabia*,” in *Swinging Single: Representing Sexuality in the 1960s*, ed. Hilary Radner and Maya Lockett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 88.

“it damn well hurts!” Lawrence answers smugly that “the trick . . . is not *minding* that it hurts.” Later Lawrence discovers that his desire for pain—both causing and receiving—is greater than he had realized when he is forced to execute Gasim (I. S. Johar), whom he had previously rescued from the desert, to avoid a blood feud between rival tribesmen. After initially appearing sickened by the event, he later admits to General Allenby the true reason for his distress is that he “enjoyed it.” Lawrence’s emergent bloodthirstiness, eventual capture and rape at Deraa, and subsequent massacre of a retreating Turkish column fuel his ever-growing (presumed) deviance, taking the place of actual homosexual behavior.

Meanwhile, the relationship between Farraj and Daud symbolizes the supposed inherent homoeroticism of Arabia, or as AlMaaini describes it, “they are metaphoric representations of gender located in the Other’s space.”<sup>65</sup> The pair stands in for the absence of heterosexual coupling that is made impossible due to the film’s lack of (actual) women. As AlMaaini continues:

The two boys nearly correspond to clear divisions between masculine and feminine roles. In terms of Arabic etymology, the name Farraj is derived from the infinitive *faraja*, which denotes, among other things, a split, a breach, a cleave, making an opening, to comfort, to drive away grief, to relieve, to be cleft, pleasure, repose. Not surprisingly, therefore, another close derivation from the infinitive *faraja* is *farj* (vulva). Farraj *always* wears a headdress, which corresponds to the images of the veiled Arab women who appear in the film, unlike Daud, who is always bareheaded. Farraj is shy, tender, fragile, with a soft voice, and *always* walks behind tough Daud, who is always in possession of leadership and initiative.<sup>66</sup>

Farraj and Daud demonstrate that, in a sense, women are not necessary to this story because the Arabian desert is full of feminine men who take the place of women. The close friendship between the two boys, coded as gay through their strongly gendered characterizations, stands in for the less straightforward but still undeniably homoerotic relationship between Ali and Lawrence. Unlike Farraj and Daud, Ali’s and Lawrence’s gender roles are not strictly defined,

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 90–91.

with each taking on at different points feminine or masculine characterizations. First presented as a savage, brutal adversary who kills Lawrence's guide Tafas (Zia Mohyeddin), a Bedouin from a rival tribe, simply for drinking from "his" well, eventually Ali comes to respect and admire Lawrence as the latter demonstrates his superior leadership abilities and, in the tradition of the Great White Savior, superiority in general over the native Other population. Although in their first scene Lawrence insults Ali by calling the Arabs "a little people, barbarous and cruel!" by the end of the film Ali is shown to be the more civilized of the two, showing his horror at Lawrence's growing bloodthirstiness. Shohat describes the evolution of the pair's relationship as "gradually chang[ing] from initial male rivalry to an implied erotic attraction in which [Ali] is associated with female imagery, best encapsulated in the scene where [Ali] is seen in close-up with wet eyes, identifying with the tormented Lawrence."<sup>67</sup> As I will show, the score simultaneously helps to heighten and obscure the romantic and erotic elements of their relationship, covertly reinforcing the film's homoeroticism while also allowing audiences to rationalize it as meaning something else entirely.

### *Cultural sound worlds in Lawrence of Arabia*

An analysis of how the title character of *Lawrence of Arabia* is scored throughout the film will demonstrate how the filmmakers struggled to present a character that resists dominant constructions of masculinity by using stereotypical musical gender constructions as signposts for his journey toward (and failure to establish) a cohesive masculine identity. French composer Maurice Jarre, who by the early 1950s was specializing in film scoring for the French and would

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<sup>67</sup> Shohat, "Gender and Culture of Empire," 53.

collaborate successfully with director David Lean on four films,<sup>68</sup> aids in Lawrence's ambiguous characterization and in the film's various constructions of masculinity by dividing the filmic space into two stereotypical, gendered realms: British/militaristic/masculine and Arabian/Oriental/feminine, locating Lawrence himself somewhere in between and allowing him access to both. While these two opposing sound worlds frequently collide and interact, both their musical content and placement in the film emphasize the split between West/East, masculine/feminine, and civilized/barbaric.

The British Empire is defined aurally mainly through the absence of music, except when diegetically motivated or when the abstract concept of Empire is invoked in Arab spaces. The latter happens often when Lawrence is shown in a victorious pose surrounded by adoring Bedouins, the "Voice of the Guns" march (Example 3.7) in the non-diegetic soundtrack foreshadowing the eventual takeover by the British that Lawrence unwittingly allows. This World War I march by Kenneth Alford, whose "Colonel Bogey March" had been used with such great success in Lean and Spiegel's *The Bride on the River Kwai*, serves in this film as a signifier of the British Empire.<sup>69</sup> The tune is used most notably at the end of Part I when Lawrence returns to Cairo bringing news of the Arab/British victory at Aqaba, ostensibly as diegetic band music establishing the British setting and its colonialist agenda. After the Overture and opening credits, the first twelve minutes of the film, all of which take place in British spaces (the English countryside, Westminster Abbey, and British military headquarters in Cairo) have no music at all, and it is not until we enter the desert that we hear the first outpouring of exotic, non-British music. This pattern continues throughout the film, with normative Englishness represented by no

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<sup>68</sup> *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Jarre, Maurice," by Mark Brill, accessed Aug. 6, 2012, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/14199>.

<sup>69</sup> "Kenneth Alford" was the pseudonym of British bandmaster Lieutenant F. J. Ricketts (1881–1945). *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Alford, Kenneth, J," by Geoffrey Self, accessed May 27, 2012, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/00555>.

The image shows a musical score for the "Voice of the Guns" march. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes staves for Trumpet (Tpt.), Woodwind (W.W.), Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Horn (Hn.), Trombone (Tbn.), and Tuba (Tba.). The second system includes a staff for a string section (marked with a '3' and a triplet symbol) and a staff for the Flute (Fl.). The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Dynamics include *sim.* (sforzando) and *7* (seventh). The music features a mix of melodic lines and rhythmic patterns, including triplets and slurs.

Example 3.7: "Voice of the Guns" march

music or else by diegetic (or quasi-diegetic, which will be explained later) music meant for militaristic purposes—functional, unemotional music that aligns itself with traditional masculinity.<sup>70</sup> These musical moments are few and far between, such as early in the film when Lawrence listens to his own echo in the desert while singing the popular nineteenth-century

<sup>70</sup> English culture has a history of associating music with the feminine, and thereby considering musical pursuits to be unmanly. Linda Phyllis Austern, whose work on Renaissance conceptions of the connection between music and women have previously been noted in chapter 1, has written more specifically on the supposedly feminizing effect of music in English theoretical literature of the Renaissance. Music was thought by some to cause the “weakening the intellect by leading to pure physical pleasure—making one more like a woman.” She quotes one English writer from the late sixteenth century as claiming that learning music causes men to turn “softe, womannishe, unclean, smothe mouthed . . . as it were transnured into a Woman.” Austern, “‘Alluring the Auditorie to Effeminacie’: Music and the Idea of the Feminine in Early Modern England,” *Music & Letters* 74, no. 3 (1993): 350, quoting Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomy of Abuses* (London, 1583), f. 110v.



British music hall tune “The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo,” or later in Part II when a Scottish brigade is accompanied by off-screen bagpipes.

The music Jarre assigned to Arabia created a musical landscape that could not be more different than that of the British Empire, both in its material content and usage. This music reflects popular assumptions of the Middle East as a land of passion, sensuousness, and primitivism, aligning it with traditional depictions of femininity and Orientalist representations of the East. Three main themes, along with a recurring drum pattern (played by the timpani and tuned timbales), make up much of the melodic content of the music during the film’s many desert scenes. Referred to here as “Arab I,” “Arab II” (Examples 3.8–3.9), and “Desert,” each theme uses a different kind of musical exoticism to depict stereotypical aspects of the Orient (Figure 3.7):

Theme Name	Musical Characteristics
“Arab I”	Syncopated and rhythmic, fast paced, sharply articulated, harmonized in parallel tritons
“Arab II”	Monophonic and pseudo-modal in character (Aeolian with occasional sharp 7th and sharp 4th), forward moving
“Desert”	Slow tempo, lushly harmonized, pseudo-major with frequent use of “iv,” “vii,” and other borrowed chords, uses melodic augmented 2nd, passionate A section and calmer B section

Figure 3.7: Significant themes from *Lawrence of Arabia*

The score helps to paint a broad, colorful musical picture of the Arabian desert as a place of non-specific, generically exotic and primitive sounds rather than using the actual musical language or instruments of the many cultures found in that region. This undefined exoticness is reflected both in the harmonic language, with an emphasis on pseudo-modal scales featuring augmented seconds and nonfunctional harmonies, as well as in his choice of instrumentation. In addition to the traditional Romantic orchestra Jarre included in his lush textures a zither and three Ondes

W.W.  
Tpt.  
Vc., cb., tbn.  
Drums

Example 3.8: "Arab I"

Orch. tutti  
Cym.

Example 3.9: "Arab II"

Martenots, which are often employed to emphasize the otherworldly aspects of the desert sun.

Desert scenes often feature continuous musical scoring that is primarily non-diegetic, as Arabian

music need not be functionally motivated. Instead, like romantic or dangerously passionate female characters in the classical Hollywood film, the desert itself seems *essentially* musical (and feminine).

Alongside these two musically opposed worlds of British imperialism and the Arabian desert is the music discussed at the beginning of this section, the “Lawrence” theme introduced in the film’s flash forward prologue. The whimsical “Lawrence” theme’s harmonic language and instrumentation may belong to the world of the British Empire, but in all other respects it behaves far more like the Arabian themes, acting as a bridge between Lawrence’s English and Arabian sides. It mixes easily with the Arabian themes during his desert scenes and need not be diegetically motivated like most other music for Englishmen—in fact it is only ever heard as non-diegetic scoring. It even takes on signification for characters other than Lawrence, including accompanying Farraj and Daud’s sweetly joyful reunion when Lawrence returns from having rescued Gasim. It disappears in Part II after Lawrence has fully taken on an Arab identity and given in to his previously hidden bloodthirsty nature, and so the theme also symbolizes the character’s innocence that is eventually lost. Even once he puts on his English clothes again and abandons his Arab identity, he still does not regain access to the whimsical “Lawrence” theme.

Despite its use of such clichéd musical and narrative tropes to depict the Arab characters and landscape as undeniably Other, *Lawrence of Arabia* departs from the previously established tradition of films celebrating the British Empire such as *The Four Feathers*, *Gunga Din* (both from 1939), and others discussed by Chapman and Cull in *Projecting Empire*. Chapman and Cull argue that *Lawrence of Arabia* marked the beginning of “a pronounced shift away from [the narrative of the projection of imperialism as a force for political and social stability] towards a

more critical representation of the imperial project.”<sup>71</sup> Part I of the film presents the somewhat typical “heroic and triumphalist” narrative in which Lawrence becomes the Great White Savior to the disorganized Arabs;<sup>72</sup> Part II reveals the darker, anti-heroic side of the story as Lawrence falls victim to his own inflated hubris and naïveté. The music develops in ways that mimic and reinforce this narrative trajectory: a first half drenched in exotically tinged, sensuous music and ending with a triumphant British march, followed by a less glorious and increasingly violent second half in which an overall lack of scoring reflects the music-less world of the British Empire as it pushes further into Arabia and the disillusionment of Lawrence’s dreams of assimilation into the world of the Arabs.

In key sequences of the film Jarre’s scoring helps to construct and draw attention to Lawrence’s masculine identity crisis while adding to the mystery of his character by leaving significant moments ambiguous and questions unanswered. These questions will be organized around three of the film’s major narrative themes: the Orientalization of both the desert and Lawrence, Lawrence’s transformation into a masculine Arab hero in Part I of the film, and his ultimate failure in Part II. These narrative themes outline not only the transformation of Lawrence’s gendered identity, but also the underlying Orientalist discourse that shapes the film’s gender ideology.

*“El Aurens:” The Orientalization of Lawrence*

Lawrence’s first scenes in the desert are some of the most striking and memorable images of the entire film. The film’s Academy Award-winning cinematography was much commented upon at

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<sup>71</sup> Chapman and Cull, *Projecting Empire*, 87.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

the time of its release, although not always approvingly. Critic Penelope Gilliatt wrote about the off-putting “cleanliness” of the film:<sup>73</sup>

This is something I missed in the way the film is shot: in the photographs that were used in a recent TV documentary about [Lawrence] the sense of bleakness was overpowering, but in F. A. Young’s camerawork the same seems almost sumptuous. Sometimes it is red, sometimes deep blue, with a ground mist of sand dust blowing across it: when the camels are running they look magnificent, like caparisoned ostriches. In one scene at a well a rider suddenly comes out of the horizon and the shot turns into an abstract, a black shape shivering down a veil of dripping yellow like a load of new paint on a Sam Francis.<sup>74</sup>

In comparing the “bleakness” of the TV documentary to the lushness of the Super Panavision 70 epic, Gilliatt seems unwilling even to entertain the notion that the filmmakers might have intended the desert to appear beautiful, to say nothing of the stark differences in Young’s cinematographic approach to the desert in Parts I and II. Whereas Gilliatt seems to have regarded the Middle East as a dangerous and savage place that should not be made to look beautiful, the film’s Orientalist and subtly anti-imperialist agenda calls for a different conception of the Arabian desert. In Part I, instead of a bleak and threatening backdrop to the action, the desert—both in its appearance and musical accompaniment—acts as a sensual, feminized character in its own right that seduces Lawrence even as he allows himself to become further feminized by it.

The Orient in the Western cultural imagination has long comprised a number of widely accepted images, associations, and assumptions.<sup>75</sup> As explained by Ralph Locke, “Today [“the

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<sup>73</sup> This also recalls Lawrence’s response, early in Part II, to the journalist Bentley’s question as to what he likes about the desert: “It’s clean.” Lawrence’s words are ironic, as by this point Lawrence has already been made “unclean” by bloodshed. The uncleanliness of the desert in Part II contrasts with the way cinematographer Freddie Young photographed it in Part I, emphasizing its austere, seemingly untouched beauty.

<sup>74</sup> Penelope Gilliatt, “Blood, Sand and a Dozen Lawrences,” *Observer*, Dec. 16, 1962.

<sup>75</sup> Other useful studies of the exotic and Orientalism in music include Jonathan Bellman’s collection *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998); Mervyn Cooke’s *Britten and the Far East: Asian Influences in the Music of Benjamin Britten* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Britten-Pears Library, 1998); Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh’s *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), with notable essays on Orientalism by Jann Passler, John Corbett, and Martin Stokes; Timothy Dean Taylor’s *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007); and W.

Orient”] is often used as a (non-scholarly) designation for East Asia. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, ‘the Orient’ often designated a portion of the globe much closer to Europe: North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, with the possible addition of Persia and India.” Because a number of unique and entirely distinct cultures are bound up in the designation “Oriental,” Western attitudes regarding these Others vary greatly. But for the Arabian world portrayed in *Lawrence of Arabia*, as Locke describes, the stereotypes include “Middle Eastern impulsiveness, the institution of the harem, philosophical reflection . . . , vengeful blood lust, religious fanaticism, and slow treks on camelback across a silent desert.”<sup>76</sup> With the notable exception of the harem, all of these are recognizable tropes in *Lawrence*, and several of them (impulsiveness and blood lust especially) are important traits that become mapped onto Lawrence as he adopts an Arab identity. In addition to these clichéd tropes, the film’s plot also closely resembles “a single paradigmatic plot [that] drives many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Orientalist operas” described by Locke: “Young, tolerant, brave, possibly naive or selfish, white-European tenor-hero intrudes (at risk of disloyalty to his own people and to colonialist ethic, with which he is identified) into mysterious, brown- or (less often) black-skinned colonized territory represented by female dancers of irresistible allure and by deeply affectionate, sensitive lyric soprano, thereby incurring wrath of brutal, intransigent priest or tribal chieftain (bass or sometimes baritone) and latter’s blindly obedient chorus of male savages.”<sup>77</sup> *Lawrence of Arabia*’s similarities to this plot as well as its deviations are significant. Lawrence is easily recognizable as the young hero who defies orders to take charge of the Arab resistance. Female dancers and a lyric soprano are replaced by feminine men whose allure comes not simply

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Anthony Sheppard’s *Revealing Masks: Exotic Influences and Ritualized Performance in Modernist Musical Theater* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>76</sup> Ralph Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 177.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

from their exotic difference but also from Lawrence's identification with them. The feminine aspects of the stereotypical Oriental world of *Lawrence of Arabia* become tied up with the film's focus on Lawrence's gender/sexuality confusion: Lawrence is seduced by the feminine world of the Bedouin not because he desires an exotic Arab woman, but because he both desires and *desires to be* an Oriental feminine man.<sup>78</sup> In fact, it is that world's lack of women and yet excess of femininity that appeals to Lawrence as a substitute for the asexual yet self-consciously masculine world of the English.

The early scenes in the desert with the guide Tafas demonstrate Lawrence slowly beginning to exert his influence over the feminized desert even as it slowly does the same to him, introducing variants of themes that will become more important later and that will eventually shift their allegiance to show the changing nature of his character and gender identity. These musical moments establish the exotic, feminized world of Arabia and show how Lawrence takes to that world, setting up his eventual attempt at assimilation.

After Lawrence receives his assignment and asserts to Dryden that his mission in the desert will be "fun," we get our first glimpse of the world outside the British headquarters in Cairo.<sup>79</sup> An empty vista with the first glimmer of the rising sun appears, with low rumblings in the soundtrack and a quiet ascending chromatic scale on the zither. Other instruments join the

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<sup>78</sup> Lawrence resembles to some extent Locke's "*homme fragile*," an Oriental opera character type epitomized by Nadir in *Les pêcheurs de perles*, whom Locke describes in terms that could also easily describe Lawrence: "poetically reflective, sensually overwhelmed" (ibid., 195). Like Lawrence, Nadir "resembles not so much the typical operatic hero as he does certain dreamy aristocratic rulers in the *Thousand and One Nights*, including Harun Al-Rashid of Baghdad, the fifth Abassid caliph (c. 763–809), renowned for his scholarly and poetic efforts. Being 'an Oriental,' Nadir can participate—more than most tenor heroes of Orientalist operas, because they are Westerners—in the foreign-fantastic sound world that is a fresh and inventive feature of many numbers in this opera. Nadir is somewhat feminized by his association with Oriental style, and this further emphasizes his lack of manly swagger. Both aspects—his Easternness and his dreaminess—are on full display in his fragrant Act I *romance* 'Je crois entendre encore.'" Ibid., 194.

<sup>79</sup> In another jab at Lawrence's supposed deviance, Dryden remarks to Lawrence in this scene, "It is recognized that you have a funny sense of 'fun.'"

zither, leading to a fully orchestrated statement of the “Desert” theme as the visuals change to sloping sand-covered hills and distant peaks. We hear nothing but “Desert” for these first few shots, which show an extreme long shot of two camels, looking like nothing more than tiny pin pricks, appearing from behind a sand dune (Figure 3.8), and other shots of Lawrence and his guide Tafas riding and talking. The men stop briefly and Tafas instructs Lawrence to take a drink. When Lawrence sees that Tafas does not yet need to drink, he pours the water back in his



Figure 3.8: Our first glimpse of the desert

canteen and says, “I’ll drink when you do,” to which Tafas enigmatically replies, “I am Bedou.” As Lawrence pours the water, we hear a brief tag of the “Desert” theme played *marcato* on the solo trumpet, foreshadowing later statements of the theme that will mark Lawrence’s increasingly masculine (in the context of a supposedly Arab conception of masculinity) identity.

After we have heard several statements of the lush “Desert” theme over beautiful shots of the desert, we start to see more of Lawrence’s actual progress in the desert. Over a medium shot of him riding somewhat awkwardly on his camel we hear a lightly orchestrated statement of “Lawrence,” featuring the tinkling sounds of the glockenspiel. This leads directly into a shot of Tafas looking back at Lawrence skeptically, accompanied by a more rhythmic and less lyrical





Figure 3.9: Lawrence and Tafas begin to ride side by side, showing Lawrence gradually becoming his equal.

arrangement of “Desert.” Despite Lawrence’s enthusiasm and eagerness to adopt the ways of his Bedouin guide, he still retains his whimsical Englishness, as contrasted with the rough and exotic sound of Tafas’s “Desert” scoring. A much grander, not lyrical arrangement of “Desert” with timpani beats on every quarter note follows as we see the men riding side by side, a heroic statement that starts to suggest Lawrence as a possible equal to Tafas (Figure 3.9).

The scene that follows reveals more about Lawrence’s feelings of not belonging in his native English culture while the music continues to emphasize his participation in his own Orientalization. During a quiet and lyrical nighttime interlude, Tafas curiously questions Lawrence about his background. The Bedouin’s questions reveal his charming ignorance of the world outside the desert; he asks Lawrence if his home country of Oxfordshire is “a desert country?” Lawrence’s answer sets up the film’s overarching theme of his somewhat arrogant belief in his own difference that prevents him from fitting in. No, he replies, it is “a fat country, full of fat people,” to which Tafas counters quizzically, “You are not fat.” With wearied look of self-importance Lawrence agrees, “I’m different.” Throughout this scene a quiet, murmuring backdrop of flute, zither, and ondes martenot, supported by other instruments too quiet to

identify, riff on the “Desert” theme and an exotic flute solo (which will recur later in the film). As Lawrence insists upon his own “difference,” the delicately exotic music invites him into Tafas’s world, marking the beginning of his attempt at assimilation.

A slightly later sequence demonstrates how Lawrence’s Orientalization is rapidly progressing, as the particular type of exotic music Lawrence gets begins to change. Shortly after this nighttime interlude, we hear a grand, stately arrangement of “The Voice of the Guns” over yet another shot of the camels, followed by another statement of “Desert,” demonstrating the not-yet-sinister but still powerful influence of Empire that Lawrence unwittingly brings with him into Arabia. Dissonant, non-thematic danger music reminiscent of the kinds of sounds used in westerns to connote Indians on the warpath plays as Tafas points ominously at the distance and mutters, “Bedou!” indicating that he has spotted far-off unfriendly Arabs that Lawrence’s English eyes cannot see. But when Lawrence demonstrates his knowledge of the country and ability to distinguish between different tribes of Bedouin, the thus far little heard “Arab II” sounds, as Tafas laughs delightedly. Lawrence’s feeling of accomplishment does not last long, however, as the following scene showing Tafas instructing Lawrence on how properly to ride a camel ends with dissonant chord and Lawrence on the ground next to his camel. But immediately after this we see Lawrence showing a greater ability at riding, and even racing Tafas with the accompaniment of a fast-paced arrangement of “Desert” combined with “Lawrence” played on the solo trumpet, along with motives from “Arab II.” This, the end of Lawrence’s association with Tafas (in the next scene, which has no music, he will be shot and killed by Sherif Ali), shows that in a short time and with a few comical exceptions, Lawrence has taken to the ways of the desert and has begun to adopt more masculine variants of both his own theme and the exotic themes meant for the supposedly more feminine Arabian desert. For as Lawrence becomes more

at home in Arabia, his effeminate Englishness becomes translated to a masculine Arabness in a culture that, in the logic of the film, organizes its gender discourse differently than do the English. With Ali's arrival and the introduction to Prince Feisal, Lawrence will have the opportunity to immerse himself even more into this Oriental world, where he hopes to discover a kind of masculinity more suited to his peculiar nature.

*"Nothing is written": Lawrence creates his own destiny*

As Lawrence begins to take on a new identity, he becomes defined by both his affinity for Arab culture and the things that distinguish him from it, allowing him to rise above the supposedly lesser Bedouin—"a little people, barbarous and cruel"—to become an even greater Arab than the true Arabs. The proverbial Great White Savior, Lawrence not only learns how to be a man (if not truly in the English sense), but how to be a better Arab than the Arabs themselves; in addition to achieving mastery over them, and unlike the Arabs who believe their fates to be already "written," Lawrence has the power to create his own destiny.<sup>80</sup> The trajectory of Part I takes him from an awkward outsider who doesn't fit into the brand of masculinity promoted by his English cohorts to a triumphant leader who is able to embrace a different kind of masculinity that is not defined by heterosexuality. Ordinarily, the hero would need to assert his heterosexuality by choosing an appropriate female counterpart to reinforce his manliness, as heroes have time and again in all manner of adventure and swashbuckling films. Instead, Lawrence gets to be an

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<sup>80</sup> This is a trope common to liberal westerns discussed in "Scoring the Indian" by Claudia Gorbman such as *Broken Arrow* (1950), *A Man Called Horse* (1970), *Dances with Wolves* (1990), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992 and earlier versions), and even the recent fantasy-adventure epics *Avatar* (2009) and *John Carter* (2012). Despite their sympathetic attitude toward the native characters, such films demonstrate that while the native culture does not come naturally to the white hero, once mastered he becomes superior to and a natural leader of those natives.

Arabian hero who, despite being considered peculiar by English standards, is celebrated in the homosocial, veiled homosexual, and mythical world of the Bedouin.

When Lawrence first traveled through the desert with his doomed guide Tafas, his whimsical theme combined comically with the Arab themes to highlight both his eagerness to conquer the desert and his clumsy attempts to live the life of a Bedouin. By the time he has proven himself to the other Arabs by rescuing Gasim from the desert, the function of this theme has changed somewhat and, although the musical materials are essentially the same, they tell us a very different story of this man and his relationship with the desert. This scene uses familiar themes and variations on these themes to show how Lawrence's relationship to the desert and to the Arabs has changed, shifting him to a more masculine subject position and the Arabs, particularly Ali, to a more feminized one.

The sequence opens with Farraj perched on a hilltop overlooking the camp, watching nervously for Lawrence and Daud, who had ridden ahead to look for Lawrence. In a subsequent shot we see Ali sitting unhappily on his bedroll in the middle of camp. As soon as Farraj spies the faint figures of two camels far in the distance, we begin to hear the expected Arab themes in arrangements that fit first the tension and suspense of the scene, and then the frenzied excitement: first "Desert," rumbling in the low strings supported by snare drums, and then "Arab I" played very fast by the strings and xylophone as Farraj, stumbling in his excitement, falls and rolls down the hill toward the approaching riders. Back at camp, Ali and the other men hear the commotion and get to their feet as the "Desert" theme enters again in the mid-range strings. As Farraj and Daud reunite happily we hear not Arab music but the "Lawrence" theme, playfully arranged with dotted rhythms, ironically associating the boys—experienced desert natives—with Lawrence's earlier clumsiness and inexperience. So far we have heard nothing particularly out of

the ordinary as far as associating Arab characters with the sensual, exotic-sounding Arab themes, aside from the unexpected assignment of Lawrence's English theme to the Bedouin boys (perhaps displacing Lawrence's deviance as perceived by the English onto the coded-as-gay Daud and Farraj).

When the camera returns to Lawrence, his weary face bundled in his head scarf, we hear the "Desert" theme again, but not in its sensual legato form as it had been when we glimpsed Ali; instead it is played *marcato* by the brass. Already we begin to see how Lawrence is changing: the previously tough and intimidating Ali gets a more feminized and romantic version of the theme, the native Bedouins Farraj and Daud get comical music originally intended for the native English Lawrence, but Lawrence himself is starting to get music that is comparatively more heroic, masculine, and Arabian.

Meanwhile, the rest of the men hurry toward the approaching Lawrence, but Ali strides purposefully and more slowly in the center of the frame, carrying his water skin. A fully orchestrated, lyrical, extended variant of the "Desert" theme enters, sounding less exotic than it does in its original form but lending a romantic majesty to the scene. As this theme continues we see that Farraj has caught up to Lawrence and offers him his water skin, which Lawrence stoically refuses as the *marcato* variant of "Desert" (Lawrence's) plays over the more lyrical one (Ali's). Once the men reach the camels and joyfully accompany Lawrence and Daud on their return to camp, a stately, fully orchestrated, and lyrical arrangement of "The Voice of the Guns" sounds, connecting Lawrence to the imperial agenda he is barely conscious of performing but also in a way validating his manliness from a British perspective. On screen, Ali reaches Lawrence's side and gazes up at him steadily as they continue forward, with Lawrence matching



Figure 3.10: Lawrence (center, on camel), shares an intense gaze with Ali (left of camel).



Figure 3.11: "Nothing is written."

Lawrence's side and gazes up at him steadily as they continue forward, with Lawrence matching his gaze from above (Figure 3.10). With Lawrence literally looking down on Ali and the rest of the Arabs, he has fully achieved mastery over them, solidifying his position as the bringer of Empire to the desert peoples. He has brought the supposedly civilizing influence of the British, symbolized by the use of "The Voice of the Guns," showing that unlike the Arabs who would

have left Gasim for dead, Lawrence shows a greater capacity for compassion and self-sacrifice. This display of humanity is important, as Lawrence's behavior in Part II will show a marked contrast. The British theme is quickly answered with a brief, brass variant of the Arab II theme. Lawrence might be a bringer of Empire, but he is still an Arabian hero.

When the big moment of Ali's reconciliation with Lawrence arrives, the grandest statement yet of the original "Desert" theme sounds from the orchestra, and Ali steps forward from the crowd of Arab men to hand Lawrence his own water skin, from which Lawrence drinks after meaningfully rasping, "Nothing is written" (Figure 3.11). He has proven that he has the power to create his own destiny, which also (as Ali will later infer) gives him the power to create his own name ("El Aurens") and identity. The orchestra cuts out on Lawrence's line of dialogue but the theme continues quietly on the zither, an instrument that increasingly comes to signify the poignancy of Lawrence's relationship with Arabia (and with Ali). The scene continues with fragments of various Arab themes as Lawrence walks purposefully to Ali's bedroll and collapses onto it still fully dressed. This is the last time we see Lawrence dressed in his British clothes until much later in the film, as Ali thereafter orders Daud and Farraj to burn Lawrence's clothes and dresses Lawrence in his pristine white Arab costume the very next day.

The increasing use of the Arab themes, especially more militaristic, masculinized version of these themes, as well as the adoption of the "Lawrence" theme for Farraj and Daud, help to solidify Lawrence's new position of belonging in the Arab world. The lyrical "Desert" theme acts, much like Danny and Willie's music in *The Great Escape*, as feminizing music that momentarily shifts Lawrence's and Ali's relative gendered roles: if Lawrence had previously been the more feminine and less authoritative of the two, Ali gladly relinquishes his masculine authority and allows Lawrence to be the man.

If this scene serves to show how Lawrence has achieved mastery over the Arabs and has fully adopted their ways as his own while also showing his own innate superiority, his return to Cairo at the end of Part I demonstrates how his transformation is understood by the British officers, and how they will come to use this new-and-improved Lawrence for their own purposes. Just as the Arabs find Lawrence useful as a leader whose ability to negotiate between the British and Arab spheres will help them defeat their Turkish enemies, the English realize they can use him to further their imperialist aims; rather than condemning Lawrence for giving in to his perverse nature and “becoming” an Arab, he is celebrated as a conquering hero, if an eccentric one. In this next sequence, the brief use of non-diegetic Arab music and diegetic English music in a British space both validates Lawrence’s Arab identity in a British context and reinforces the masculine authority of the British, as Lawrence reaches the point where he believes he has reconciled his English and Arab identities.

Following the victory at Aqaba, Lawrence sets off for Cairo with Daud and Farraj. The former is killed in the desert when Lawrence accidentally leads him into quicksand, and by the time Lawrence and Farraj reach the city they are exhausted and traumatized. Upon arriving at an abandoned post by the Suez Canal, a grand and triumphant statement of “The Voice of the Guns” sounds, followed by a brief tag of the opening notes of “La Marseillaise” (perhaps referencing the French-built canal). Whereas the natural and untamed desert epitomizes Arabness, the carefully constructed and tamed canal symbolizes the control and might of the British Empire. Having arrived at the army headquarters, Lawrence and Farraj are harassed by the shocked British officers, who are horrified at both Lawrence’s costume and the presence of the Arab boy. But finally Lawrence reveals to Col. Brighton the news of their victory over the Turks at Aqaba and the other men start to show interest and wonder rather than revulsion at Lawrence’s startling



appearance. The newly arrived General Allenby at first shows anger at Lawrence's inability to follow orders, but then suddenly promotes him and shows approval at the latter's initiative. Lawrence initially turns down the promotion and order to return to the Arabs, finally revealing that he had "enjoyed" killing Gasim and does not feel he is suited to the task. Allenby brushes aside Lawrence's self-doubts, reinforced by Brighton who is now completely supportive of Lawrence.

Throughout these scenes there is no music, as we would expect from scenes in British spaces. Lawrence's startling admission that he enjoys killing is therefore left unscored, leaving the viewer/listener to consider the root of this sadistic impulse. When music does finally enter, it is subtly done: as an officer opens the door and enters Allenby's office, we suddenly hear, faintly in the background, the strains of a military band playing "The Voice of the Guns," almost as though it could be rehearsing outside. It does not fade, however, when the door closes, and when the four men leave the office and stride through the halls of the military complex the volume increases suddenly, as though the music has shifted from diegetic to non-diegetic and is now accompanying their grandiose promenade through the building. Similarly, the volume always decreases slightly whenever anyone speaks, only to increase when dialogue ceases. The presence of this music here would seem to be incidental, a mere instance of diegetic music intruding upon the men's conversation. But film music, even when it is diegetic, is never incidental. The use of militaristic, ostensibly diegetic music to score this scene brings into question Lawrence's Arab identity, casting doubt on his ability to play both sides of this political game and reinforcing the artificiality of his Arab dress. It also emphasizes the stark contrast between the passionate, lyrical world of the desert and the disciplined, conventionally masculine world of the British Empire.

If this initial use of “The Voice of the Guns” undermines the progress Lawrence has made thus far, what happens in the music later in the scene reinforces it, allowing Lawrence to believe that he has found a coherent sense of self that will support his feminine excess. Having returned to the officers’ mess, the men settle down to talk business and the music ends on a final cadence. Now, however, Lawrence has regained his swagger and confidence, affirming that he will of course return and continue his work. He warns Allenby that he has promised the Arabs that the British have “no ambitions in Arabia.” Allenby’s and Dryden’s assurances ring false, but the prideful and naive Lawrence takes them at their word; now that he is once again the conquering hero, he believes himself to be invincible. The next entrance of music supports this point. As the senior officers exit the room, leaving Lawrence alone but watched by several dozen curious junior officers, Lawrence places his Arab headdress once again on his head and wraps the cloths around his neck expertly, and the flute enters, supported by a deep drone. Playing the slinky, chromatic line that had played earlier during the nighttime scene with Tafas, the flute solo, so incongruous in its current context, recalls the exotic sounds of the desert that had initially seduced Lawrence. He slowly approaches the group, who suddenly and enthusiastically greet and congratulate him, as the music abruptly shifts back to “the Voice of the Guns” and a brief and upbeat quotation of the “Desert” theme. Lawrence has finally learned to be a man, even though he took a different path, and is accepted by his English associates. His power to negotiate across cultural and gendered boundaries is such that he can invoke non-diegetic music, both Arab and British, in this decidedly British space.

The final scene of Part I uncovers the lies behind the British participation in the Arab Revolt: Dryden, Allenby, and Brighton, strolling through the halls together, reveal that despite their promises to Lawrence, they will not be giving artillery to the Arabs: “Give them artillery

and you've made them independent," Dryden quips. "Then I can't give them artillery, can I?" replies Allenby easily. Lawrence's triumph can now be seen as a hollow one, and the glorious British music that had heralded his newfound acceptance by the British officers becomes an ironic comment on Lawrence's naive assertion that "Arabia is for the Arabs now." Part I ends on this falsely optimistic note as the Intermission music opens on a grand statement of the "Desert" theme, followed by what is essentially a reprise of the Overture. But now this outpouring of exoticness signals the end rather than the beginning of Lawrence's sweeping rise to greatness. When we return to the desert in Part II, it will no longer be the beautiful, dreamy place promised by the Overture music, but a darker and more frightening one. Whether it is Lawrence's changing character that alters our perception of the desert, or the shifting climate of the desert that changes Lawrence is unclear—the relationship between the two seems to be a symbiotic one in which neither can affect the other without the original agent also being affected. Regardless, by Part II Lawrence's new identity has developed into a caricature of ruthless barbarism, and the glorious music of his idealized Arabia no longer has a place in this new world that he has helped to create.

*"Arabia is [not] for the Arabs now": The failure of an Arab masculinity*

Part I of the film, as previously explained, presents Lawrence as enacting a typical narrative of the triumph of empire. As he moves through different roles—from awkward outsider to glorified leader—the music supports the exoticizing of the Orient and Lawrence's mastery over it, allowing him finally to be a man in relation to the feminine desert he has conquered, even as he enacts a kind of masculinity that is not defined by heterosexuality. Part II presents the fallout of Lawrence's unsustainable position as his self-mythologizing, overwhelming hubris, and inability

to understand the motives of others lead to his downfall and ignominious departure from Arabia, and it does this in part by shifting the role of music from highlighting the beauty and sensuousness of the Orient to creating a more savage, ugly, and inhospitable environment mirrored by Lawrence's increasingly violent and delusional frame of mind. Because an excess of music had, in Part I, signified the beauty of the desert, now an absence of music signifies the loss of that beauty.

Part II presents us with not only a new sound to the Arabian desert, but a new look as well. There are fewer sumptuous shots of camels traversing never-ending rolling sand dunes under impossibly blue skies. Instead, the desert now looks dirtier, less inviting, spoiled by the introduction of technology and Lawrence's ravaging hordes as they sabotage Turkish railways. Accordingly, there is less opportunity for glorious outpourings of the sensuous "Desert" theme. In fact, Part II has far less music than Part I, and its first musical statement makes clear the changes that have occurred between Lawrence's victory at Aqaba and his new role as a guerilla leader.

Part II opens with the American war correspondent Bentley's arrival, with the aim of finding a hero to make Americans more interested in the war. The first instance of music does not occur until later, well into Lawrence's first scene, at which point we immediately notice the change in tone from Part I. This scene shows a successful guerrilla attack on a Turkish train and subsequent enthusiastic looting by the Arab fighters, who apparently are in it only for money. Encouraged by Bentley, Lawrence climbs atop the ravaged railway car to the cheers of the crowd, who chant "Aurens! Aurens!" (Figure 3.12). The spectacle is accompanied by the "Desert" theme, which creeps in quietly and leads to a grander statement, but is colored by off-sounding harmonies, alarming dissonance, and an ominous timpani accompaniment. This is not

the beautiful, seductive “Desert” music of before, but a dark and menacing statement that makes both Lawrence and the desert backdrop seem frightening and dangerous. Both the off-sounding music and Lawrence’s exhibitionist behavior mark this scene as evidence of his growing deviance, which rather than being tempered by his assimilation into Arab culture is now being fueled by it. This change in Lawrence’s behavior is reinforced shortly thereafter when Ali and Brighton arrive, showing disapproval upon finding that Lawrence has been wounded—he had carelessly allowed himself to be shot by a wounded Turkish officer—Lawrence brushes aside their concern, claiming that “They can only kill me with a golden bullet.” The adulation of the



Figure 3.12: “They can only kill me with a golden bullet”: Lawrence as a spectacle underscored by a dissonant, menacing arrangement of the once beautiful and seductive “Desert” theme.

masses, and Lawrence’s longstanding belief in his own special difference, has given him the delusion that he is a god. Having taken his successful search for a masculine identity too far, Lawrence can now no longer communicate on a plane of masculinity that is comprehensible to any other character. While having supposedly feminine traits had helped him initially in his Orientalization, now his histrionics and self-spectacularizing will prove a detriment in the ultimately masculinist discourse of the film.

Subsequent scenes showing more attacks on the Turks, Lawrence’s difficulty with retaining his soldiers, and the tragic death of Farraj, are sparsely peppered with music. There are

no more long and drawn out statements of the triumphant “Desert” theme, the whimsical “Lawrence” theme, or even “The Voice of the Guns.” Instead, we hear brief statements of various Arab themes, including a theme for Auda first heard in Part I, and non-thematic dissonant exclamations such as when Lawrence is forced to shoot Farraj after the latter is mortally wounded by a detonator. Throughout these scenes we see developing the crueller side of both Lawrence and the Arabs, with little music to help us understand from where this cruelty comes. Meanwhile, Lawrence’s hubris and delusions grow ever stronger, culminating in a reckless act that forever changes him and his entire outlook on the Arab Revolt.

At this point Lawrence has lost even more men to desertion, including Auda, and is scaring even the devoted Ali with his recklessness. When Ali warns him not to expect the impossible of his men, Lawrence shrugs off the concern and says, “Do you think I’m just *anybody*, Ali? Do you?” He then tells the remaining men that he plans to infiltrate the Turkish-held city of Deraa, a suggestion that is met with shocked resistance. Lawrence insists that he will be able to pass unnoticed in the city, a claim proven to be patently false when he makes a spectacle of himself and is immediately captured (another instance of male spectacle shown to be not only morally wrong but dangerous). He is taken before the lecherous Turkish Bey, who chooses him from a selection of four prisoners and has him stripped down. Recoiling at being touched, Lawrence lashes out at the Bey and is consequently beaten while the Turk listens from a nearby room. None of this entire sequence is scored, and there is no music at all until we see Ali, who anxiously waits outside for Lawrence’s release. When Lawrence is finally dumped unceremoniously in the gutter, we hear the mocking sound of the zither, which had previously been used delicately to add nuance to Lawrence and Ali’s relationship, playing a fragmented “Desert” theme.

Lawrence's experience at Deraa is the most overt representation of homosexuality in the entire film, and the filmmakers chose to represent this sexual deviance with no music at all. The scene plays out very differently than would a comparable one featuring a threatened female character, in which either anguished villain music would indicate the young ingénue's distress and unwillingness (as in Maid Marian's capture by Guy of Gisborne in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*) or else passionate love music would reveal the woman's broken-down resistance (as in Lewt's rape of Pearl in *Duel in the Sun*). Instead, all of Lawrence's reactions, from his initial contempt and defiance to his later horror, are left unscored, leaving his state of mind once again difficult to read. In Rattigan's contemporaneous play *Ross* the rape at Deraa had been put forward as the explanation for Lawrence's discovery of his homosexuality and subsequent recoiling from those desires. *Lawrence of Arabia* leaves this point somewhat more ambiguous, opening up the possibility that it is not only the sexual violence against him but also his subconscious desire for that violence that breaks Lawrence. The lack of music in this scene helps to highlight this point, leaving Lawrence's sexuality once again ambiguous and mysterious.

The scene that follows continues with this ambiguity and lack of musical exposition. After Ali has rescued and nursed him back to health, Lawrence tells him that he no longer wishes to take part in the Arab Revolt and intends to return to Cairo. He has been made to realize not only that he is not "extraordinary" after all, but that his white skin is the decider of his fate. His horror at being made to confront his own homosexuality has made him recoil from the entire Arab world that had initially allowed him to embrace a different kind of masculinity that did not preclude homosexual desire. His rejection of Ali as a lover as well as a fellow fighter is clear when Ali angrily asks, "Have you no care for them?" Although ostensibly referring to the Arab tribes Lawrence is trying to unite, Ali indicates his own heart on the word "them," revealing the

double meaning of his words. Again, unlike comparable scenes between heterosexual couples torn asunder, these scenes with Ali are unscored, downplaying the romantic aspects of the relationship and refusing to pin down Lawrence's feelings to anything that the musical language of the score could express. At the same time, the lack of music in these scenes further differentiates Lawrence and Ali from normative male-female couples, accentuating the failure of Lawrence's masculinity to help him achieve a functional romantic relationship.

Despite Lawrence's change of heart, he is made to reverse his decision after meeting with Allenby in Jerusalem, now in his British officers' clothes. The aural world of the British headquarters, we find, has not changed: our first glimpse of the city shows a marching band playing "The Voice of the Guns," which recurs in the background up until Lawrence arrives to discover Prince Feisal in conference with Allenby and Dryden. It is here that Lawrence begins to understand that he is being kept in the dark about various political maneuverings, including the secretive Sykes-Picot Agreement that will divide Arabia up between the French and British (and which Allenby and Dryden assure Feisal does not exist). When Lawrence expresses to the general his desire to have an ordinary job, Allenby appeals to Lawrence's damaged ego: "You're the most extraordinary man I've ever met," he insists, and Lawrence's old bravado begins to return. He will not only lead the Arabs on the campaign for Damascus, but he promises Allenby that they will reach the city before the British do.

The remainder of the film shows Lawrence's ultimate failure as an Arab man, ironically played out alongside the victorious taking of Damascus (which takes place off-screen). Having already realized that his new life is untenable after the experience at Deraa, he is forced to play it out to its inevitable end in increasingly violent and vengeful acts, including the cold-blooded massacre of a Turkish column, with hardly any music at all, allowing the supposedly savage,



exotic world of the Arabs to sound increasingly like the supposedly civilized world of the British Empire. We hear the familiar drumming motive when Lawrence returns to his army from Jerusalem, complete with bodyguards whom Ali recognizes as condemned criminals, along with brief reprises of the Arab I and II themes that accentuate the savage rather than seductively exotic nature of the Arabs. There are no more passionate outbursts of the “Desert” theme and no grand statements of “The Voice of the Guns.” Scenes in Damascus unfold with no music at all. Lawrence tries to play his part in the Arab National Council, the tenuous union of Bedouin tribes that proves unfit to the task of running a modern city like Damascus, devolving into petty arguments and eventually relinquishing much of its control to the British, whose takeover of the musical soundscape is matched by their takeover of the city.

The lack of music in these scenes can also be tied to Lawrence’s loss of a coherent sense of self. Early in the film his evolving identity was tracked by his musical scoring—the development of the heroic “Desert” variant and his eventual relinquishing of the “Lawrence” theme. Now his lack of an identity is mirrored by the lack of music; there can be no music for Lawrence now, because in many ways Lawrence is no more. His state of mind during these last few scenes is perhaps best summed up by Ali to Auda, after Ali takes his leave of Lawrence for the last time. Auda asks Ali if he loves Lawrence, to which Ali responds that he fears him. Finally he contends, “If I fear him, who love him, how must he fear himself, who hates himself?” Lawrence is so full of self-hatred, most likely due to having been confronted with his own homosexual desires, that he can no longer find happiness with his Arab identity. Forced to return to his original English identity, but still unable to reconcile his deviant sexuality with an English masculinity, he is even more lost than before he was able to be an Arab.

The end of the film reinforces this point, but it does so through musical scoring rather than with an absence of scoring, hearkening back to the film's beginning and leaving the audience full of questions. Lawrence, who has now been promoted Colonel, is finally leaving Arabia, much to the relief of both Allenby and Prince Feisal; Lawrence had proven useful to both men, but now he is more of a liability than a help. Without even saying goodbye to his friends he departs. In the final scene, Lawrence is once again in the desert, but now he is riding in a car with a junior officer, and both are wearing their British uniforms. They pass a group of Arabs leaving the city by camel and for a moment Lawrence looks at them hopefully, but of course they do not recognize him. Faintly we hear a group of British soldiers singing the music-hall song "Goodbye Dolly Gray," the British soundscape having once again intruded onto Lawrence's once pristine desert. But a moment later, the familiar strains of the "Desert" played on the zither enter, joined by other instruments as the "The End" appears on the screen, leading into "The Voice of the Guns" over the end credits. The film's end leaves us with the unanswered question: who is this Lawrence that leaves Arabia? No longer recognized by Arabs and only dubiously respected by British officers, he has not only lost his brief moment of sexual utopia that Arabia seemed to offer—he has lost his identity altogether. Now he must return to England, but as what kind of a man?

Despite the film's deft and nuanced handling of Lawrence's masculine identity crisis, and Jarre's complex tapestry of musical themes that help to tell that story, many critics reviewing the film upon its release did not "get it," or perhaps just didn't *want* to. Some were noticeably bothered by Lawrence's effeminacy; Penelope Gilliatt, for example, noted that in O'Toole's performance "there seem to be at least 10 incompatible men living under the same skin, and two or three women as well." Gilliatt goes on to write condescendingly of Lawrence's lack of

manliness, inventing a scene of her own imagination (it is unclear what scene she believed herself to be describing) in which Lawrence, asking to join two other officers in the mess, “flutter[s] his hands behind his back like a girl and sound[s] much too urgent for their languid spirits. He is not a man with much sense of humour, and what there is of it is rather Arabian: you feel he would certainly see the joke of slicing off someone’s ears.” Further comments are also coded with gendered language, suggesting that part of her disapproval of the character is that he behaves more like a woman than like a man, particularly in his propensity for making himself into a visual spectacle: “When he sits with a book while he is paddling his toes in an oasis, it isn’t really believable except as a piece of exhibitionism. Easily elated and biliously suspicious, he seems to be clever only to score points, rather like the misogynist’s idea of a woman don. When he puts on a Sheriff’s robes for the first time and does an entranced ballet with himself in the desert, it made me think more than ever that one of the reasons for Lawrence’s passion for Arab life might have been that it allowed him to wear a skirt.”<sup>81</sup> Whether Gilliat’s comments were meant to suggest that Lawrence was a homosexual is unclear, but she never mentions outright the character’s sexuality, and instead of trying to understand why the film presents Lawrence as such an unusual character, she resorts to veiled homophobic (and less veiled racial) slurs. Another critic was more direct, although he seems unsure whether the filmmakers intended the character to be gay or not: “Hardly a female is glimpsed from start to finish. Perhaps symbolically—though the few hints that Lawrence may have been homosexual are as ambiguous as the rest of him.”<sup>82</sup> Without attending to the story being told by the music, perhaps it was easier for audiences uncomfortable with a film featuring a gay hero, as Hollywood and mainstream filmmaking had done for years, to deny its existence altogether than to deal with its implications.

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<sup>81</sup> Penelope Gilliat, “Blood, Sand and a Dozen Lawrences,” *Observer*, Dec. 16, 1962.

<sup>82</sup> Philip K. Scheuer, “‘Lawrence’ Superb but Exasperating,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 17, 1962.

**“Do you think it was worth it?”**

Near the very end of *Lawrence of Arabia*, Prince Feisal, General Allenby, and Mr. Dryden are discussing the role that the British will play in the governance of Damascus. Feisal clearly wants the Arabs to appear to be autonomous, despite his confessed need of assistance from the British. “Well,” Dryden says resignedly, “it seems we’re to have a British waterworks . . . with an Arab flag on it. Do you think it was worth it?” His words were curiously echoed less than a year later at the end of *The Great Escape*, when Hendley, having learned that fifty of the seventy-six men who escaped have been executed by the Gestapo, bitterly asks Senior British Officer Ramsey (James Donald), “Was it worth it?” Both films, in portraying men struggling with maintaining masculinities in the face of circumstances out of their control, inadvertently question accepted constructions of masculinity by suggesting that taking part in grand masculine gestures such as imperialism and a large-scale escape intended mainly to distract the enemy might not, in fact, have been “worth it” after all.

By scoring these films with music that questioned and added nuance to embattled masculinities, the filmmakers allowed cracks in the once untarnished surface of cinematic masculinity to demonstrate not simply deviance and Otherness, but complexity. These characters are sympathetic despite their flaws, not simply two-dimensional “queers” such as those who appeared in films noir of the 1940s. Like the lack of sympathy and understanding that met female characters like Julie and Pearl (see chapter 2), in the case of *Lawrence of Arabia* this complexity was not necessarily always accepted or understood by critics. In the case of *The Great Escape*, the possibility of Danny and Willie’s homosexuality has not yet entered mainstream public discourse surrounding the film. That the films continue to enjoy lasting popularity and critical success—particularly *Lawrence of Arabia*, which routinely appears in top ten lists including the American Film Institute’s 2007 list of 100 Years . . . 100 Movies (#5) and

their Top Ten Epic Films of All Time (#1)<sup>83</sup>—and that both films and their iconic scores have been extensively referenced and parodied in films such as *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977), *Spaceballs* (1987), *The Simpsons* (episode from 1992), *Chicken Run* (2000), *Prometheus* (2012), and many others suggests that there is room for many kinds of masculinities in the discourse of heroism.

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<sup>83</sup> From the American Film Institute official website, accessed July 5, 2012, [www.afi.com](http://www.afi.com).

#### Chapter 4: Musical Performativity and Unnatural Femininity

Mrs. Manion: You're a funny kind of a lawyer. The music, I mean.  
Paul Biegler: What, aren't lawyers supposed to like music?  
Mrs. Manion: Well . . . not *that* kind of music.  
Paul Biegler: I guess that settles it, I'm a funny kind of lawyer.

—*Anatomy of a Murder*, 1959

Then I had this meeting with [Otto] Preminger, who was going to use “Sophisticated Lady” [in *Laura*]. And I had a big argument with him about that, telling him it was wrong. . . I said, “It’s not right for your picture. Don’t you realize that you may be confusing your conception of the girl with the title of that song?” And he looked . . . at me, and he said, “She’s a whore!” So I said, “By whose standards, Mr. Preminger?”

—David Raksin, interview by Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music*

Before she became a popular star of mainly comedic and musical films in the mid-to-late 1940s and early 1950s, June Allyson starred in the Warner Bros. short film *All Girl Revue* (1940). Allyson plays the temporary Mayor of a town that has decided to let the “girls” take charge of the city for a single day. Opening with a close-up of a newspaper with a headline reading “Girls Take Over: Fairer Sex to Rule City for a Day” (Figure 4.1), the eight-minute musical short is a light-hearted look at what typical women (specifically upper-middle-class white women) would supposedly do if given jobs traditionally held by men for a day. With almost no spoken dialogue and featuring three songs and two dance numbers, *All Girl Revue* begins with a song in which the Mayor, along with her trio of close-harmony-singing assistants, establishes her agenda for her single day in power. “I thought that it would be a lark,” she sings in a pseudo-recitative, “I thought that I’d have fun. But I’ve been whistling in the dark, for there’s work to be done!” The work is summed up in the title of the first song: “We’ve Got to



Figure 4.1: Opening shot of *All Girl Revue* (1940)

Make the City Pretty!” In response to her sung query, “Tell me, what would you suggest?” her advisers (played by the Harrison Sisters) make several suggestions, including curling their hair, acquiring better pantyhose, hanging

drapes on the garbage cans, and putting top hats on the city’s homeless men (Figure 4.2). Later the Mayor and her assistants hurry to the railroad station to greet Madame Beverly, a “famous opera star” (played by Beverly Kirk). While the female station attendant laments the difficulty of her job (the next number, “Information Please”), a chorus line of beautiful young women executes an impressive Busby Berkeleyesque tap routine in which they imitate a train pulling out of the station. Meanwhile on the train, Madame Beverly sings in an operatic style to amuse herself (“I Love to Sing a Long Note”) while the train’s other all-female passengers express their wish that she would sing something in a more popular idiom. Finally the train arrives, Madame Beverly is surprised at being met by the perky blonde mayor, and in a grand finale all congratulate themselves on having succeeded in making the city pretty in a reprise of all three of the film’s songs.

While it is certainly a silly example of classical Hollywood filmmaking, *All Girl Revue* demonstrates nicely how femininity was often “performed” by actresses in films of that era. Whereas under normal circumstances the city would be run by serious-minded white men



Figure 4.2: Allyson and the Harrison Sisters plan their busy day: "I suggest that we wear curls in our hair. That would make the finest fair!"

concerned with important matters like taxes, crime prevention, and so on, women are apparently more interested in projecting beauty and youth, and of course in singing, dancing, and making spectacles of

themselves. Femininity is expressed by the artificial excess these women exhibit: their clothes, hair and makeup, singing and dancing, primary interest in frivolities and appearance, and by the mere *act* of making themselves into a spectacle. Masculinity means doing normal things; femininity is unnatural, artificial, and Othered. The film becomes a parody of femininity, with the women taking every opportunity to express and perform their exaggerated femininity no matter how inappropriate and absurd such behavior would be under ordinary circumstances.

An analysis of *All Girl Revue* suggests not only how gender and music interact in classical Hollywood film, as I have argued in previous chapters, but also how gender itself can be understood as a performance that is partially constructed through music. Instead of looking at specific strategies of scoring and creating gender, this chapter examines the performative and performance aspects of gender in film and how music plays a role in its construction. Rather than understanding the gender of cinematic characters as being intrinsic and internal to the bodies of the actors portraying them, this chapter considers gender as something that is created (and often



overdetermined) by the multitude of factors that go into creating film characters: script and storyline, direction and lighting, editing and cinematography, costume and makeup design, acting and musical accompaniment. The character of the music as well as its relationship to specific characters (how it is used in the film) will help determine how music serves as a gendering performative.

In this chapter I will draw some of the ideas and issues brought up in earlier chapters further into the light of feminist theory by articulating more fully the intersections of music and gender performativity, a concept that, while always in the margins of the previous case studies, has not yet been fully addressed. The goal of this chapter is threefold: to demonstrate that (1) gender in film is created through performative acts; (2) music is one of the most important of these performative acts; and (3) masculinity and femininity are created differently by performatives, with the result that masculinity appears both natural and intrinsic to the male body while femininity appears imposed and constructed from without.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, a man simply being male is considered normative and requires few performative extras to complete the illusion of masculinity on the male body. Simply being female isn't enough to appear feminine—this requires external performatives, and while femininity is of course normative for women, it is not normative outside the domestic realm of women. As suggested in chapter 3, men in film are considered the norm (part of the natural order of things); women are only necessary in order to add romance or, as a character in Robert Traver's *Anatomy of a Murder* puts it, "Technicolor."<sup>2</sup> Femininity requires help from outside agents, such as makeup, special clothing to enhance

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Butler defines "a performative" (used as a noun) in the context of speech act theory as "that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names. According to the biblical rendition of the performative, i.e., 'Let there be light!', it appears that it is by virtue of the *power of a subject or its will* that a phenomenon is named into being." Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London: Routledge, 1993), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Traver, *Anatomy of a Murder* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1958), 132.

feminine assets, lighting, and musical accompaniment. It is also created by the treatment the woman receives from others—the “gaze” of the camera and male characters within the diegesis, having doors opened for them and hats removed in their presence, and being called infantilizing names like “doll,” “sweetheart,” and “little lady” are only a few examples. This imbalance creates a disadvantage to the formation of women’s subjectivity; because femininity’s artificiality is exposed, the female character seems to have less agency in forming her own character than does her male counterpart. Of course, characters in film do not, in actuality, have real power of agency in forming their identities and shaping their destinies—all that is decided by the various entities involved in creating the film. But by *seemingly* giving male characters the power of agency through control of music, which helps them to control not only the way music genders them but how it genders others, the films analyzed in this chapter demonstrate that women’s subjectivity is essentially different from that of men, formed as it is primarily by others—whether those others are the filmmakers or male characters within the film—rather than themselves. By controlling women’s subjectivity, *All Girl Revue* spectacularizes the incompatibility of women in positions of authority and makes it comic rather than threatening through its fantastical plotline: rather than showing women trying and failing to run the city, instead they succeed at their absurd goals, allowing the film to trivialize both its female characters and, by extension, real women’s actual abilities to engage in serious, male-gendered activities.

### **Gender Performativity**

The argument presented in this chapter is heavily informed by theories of gender performativity, particularly by Judith Butler’s work in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993).

According to Butler, gender is not something that someone *is*, but something that someone *does*: “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within the highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.”<sup>3</sup> Butler understands gender not as a natural category describing a state of being produced by chromosomes and genes, but as a process that can begin even before birth and that continues throughout one’s lifetime. Butler argues that gender is a process of creating something that appears to be natural and already there. It is “performative” because it creates the appearance of what we call genders, or as Sarah Salih explains, “Gender is an act that brings into being what it names: in this context, a ‘masculine’ man or a ‘feminine’ woman.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, behaving in a certain way (e.g., playing with dolls, having pigtails or braids, wearing dresses and the color pink) creates “girlness,” not just the biological parts that make one female and a child. These acts, whether they are initiated voluntarily or involuntarily, and whether they are performed by the subject or by someone else, are gender performatives, bringing into being the gender identity they signify.

Agency is an important issue for Butler; she does not suggest that people consciously choose the gender they enact. Rather, cultural indoctrination conditions a person to perform gender either according to or against the cultural script. The correct performance of gender helps to naturalize traditional sex and gender roles, whereas exhibiting incorrect gendered behavior marks one as deviant. For example, for most of the twentieth century (and to some extent even today) behavior such as men wearing women’s clothing or women behaving aggressively and wielding power over men have been considered deviant, as the behaviors they exhibit are

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<sup>3</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 45.

<sup>4</sup> Sarah Salih, “On Judith Butler and Performativity,” in *Sexualities & Communications in Everyday Life*, ed. Karen E. Lovaas and Mercilee M. Jenkins (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2007), 56.

gendered the opposite of their physical sex. Salih paraphrases Butler, writing, “Gender is a ‘corporeal style,’ an act (or a sequence of acts), a ‘strategy’ which has cultural survival as its end, since those who do not ‘do’ their gender correctly are punished by society.”<sup>5</sup>

Butler’s work on performativity was strongly influenced by J. L. Austin’s linguistic theories of speech acts and performative utterances (or illocutionary acts), which can help us better to understand Butler’s goals. Performative utterances, according to Austin, are statements that do not merely report a fact, but that actually *do* something: “To name a ship *is* to say (in the appropriate circumstances) the words ‘I name &c.’ When I say, before the registrar or altar &c., ‘I do’, I am not reporting on a marriage, I am indulging in it.”<sup>6</sup> Butler and Salih use the analogy of the performative utterance “It’s a girl!” to show how gendering (or “girling”) begins at the moment of birth (or in the modern world, often at the ultrasound). Writes Salih: “‘It’s a girl!’ is not a statement of fact but an interpellation that initiates the process of ‘girling,’ a process based on perceived and *imposed* differences between men and women, differences that are far from ‘natural.’ To demonstrate the performative operations of interpellation, Butler cites a cartoon strip in which an infant is assigned its place in the sex-gender system with the explanation ‘It’s a lesbian!’ ‘Far from an essentialist joke, the queer appropriation of the performative mimes and exposes both the binding power of the heterosexualizing law *and its expropriability*,’ writes Butler.”<sup>7</sup> Announcing the baby’s gender, then, is not only to reveal a preexisting fact of nature, but it is also to assign that baby a number of cultural expectations and roles encompassed by the category of “girl.” Such performative statements and acts are not uncommon in Hollywood—a good example happens in *Giant* (1956), in which young Jordan Benedict (played by Dennis Hopper as an adult) fails to live up to the gendered and social expectations of being a man. His

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 58; Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 139–40.

<sup>6</sup> J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), 6.

<sup>7</sup> Salih, “On Judith Butler and Performativity,” 61, quoting Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 232.

father Jordan “Bick” Benedict (Rock Hudson) encourages and attempts to force his son from the moment of his birth to exhibit traditionally masculine behavior and to grow into the same kind of tough, manly rancher that Bick is. Jordan instead is delicate and lacks athletic prowess, preferring to leave the ranch and attend medical school, much to the outraged dismay of Bick. Jordan fails to fit into the categories of “boy” or “man” as imagined by his father despite the many performative acts that influence him throughout his childhood, including an embarrassing incident when he is made to ride a horse at a very young age despite being terrified. Jordan demonstrates the artificiality of culturally drawn gender norms, as he is unable to conform to his assigned category despite it having been performed onto him perpetually.

Performativity can also help us better understand the character of Pearl Chavez from *Duel in the Sun*, discussed in chapter 2. Butler suggests (and Salih takes the point further) that race might also be an “interpellated performance” rather than a natural state of being.<sup>8</sup> In Pearl’s case, her character is formed in part by expectations not only of what women are meant to do, but most especially what women of part-Indian heritage are meant to do. Although the film often suggests that her behavior is natural and intrinsic to her inner being *because* of her mixed race, the message is inconsistent and, as I have argued, it occasionally becomes clear that her behavior is influenced and shaped by the expectations of and treatment she receives by the white people around her. After she is raped by Lewt and rejected by Jesse, there is a pivotal scene in which Pearl cries in despair as she hears Lewt serenading outside her window. “Trash, trash, trash!” she calls herself, echoing the sentiment implied by Jesse before he left. Gradually the “Lewt” theme takes over and reaches a climax at the same moment when Pearl seems to shake herself out of her dejection, tosses her head proudly, and makes the decision to fully own the trashy identity she has acquired through her sexual encounter with Lewt. This scene dramatizes a process that is

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<sup>8</sup> Salih 63–65.

described by Butler as happening unconsciously and over a long period of time: just as a female infant is “girled” with the announcement “It’s a girl!” and with all the subsequent conditioning that transforms an infant into a gendered child, Pearl is “trashed” by Lewt’s sexual objectification of her, Jesse’s disgust with and rejection of her, and her own understanding that this event has transformed her into a bad girl, the kind of girl everyone expected her to be all along due to her ethnicity. Race obviously plays a role, but not the instinctive one the film wants us to believe is responsible: rather, Pearl is shaped by the performatives of race and gender that fashion her into exactly the kind of person she is expected (according to the racist white discourse of the film) to be.

Butler’s work focuses on the creation of a seemingly natural and consistent gender identity in real life, on real individuals. In applying the concepts of this theory to the cinema and to fictional, obviously constructed characters, we are no longer talking about real-life events and linguistic practices but the specific workings of Hollywood studio practice. Every aspect of filmmaking intersects with issues of gender, from screenwriting and directing to casting and costuming. Screenwriters rely on notions of gender difference to create narratives that demonstrate normative gendered behavior, such as the heroic Robin Hood and gentle, romantic Marian in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, or else feed on fears of deviant or threatening gender identity, as in the overly aggressive and self-confident Sandra in *The Great Lie* or the affected and homicidal Bruno (Robert Walker) in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Strangers on a Train* (1951).<sup>9</sup> Editing, cinematography, lighting, and direction help to underscore and emphasize gender roles and gender identity while at the same time naturalizing them. Consider the two stills below

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<sup>9</sup> The UK version of *Strangers on a Train*, which was not released widely until the 1990s, includes deleted footage in which Bruno is more clearly coded as a homosexual, heightening the homoerotic tension that characterizes the original novel by Patricia Highsmith.

showing Jennifer Jones in two of her most iconic roles: Pearl Chavez in *Duel in the Sun* on the left, and the title character in *The Song of Bernadette* (1943) on the right (Figure 4.3):



Figure 4.3: Jennifer Jones as Pearl Chavez in *Duel in the Sun* (left) and as the title character in *The Song of Bernadette* (right)

In the still on the left, the low key lighting bathes Jones's face and arm in light while keeping the rest of her body in shadow. She looks flirtatiously over her shoulder straight into the camera, her mouth slightly open but hidden somewhat by her shoulder. The position and careful lighting of her body, along with her revealing blouse and loose curls suggest that she is inviting the viewer to want to see more of her, as though her body itself holds a secret. Her naturally fair skin tone was noticeably darkened for the film, suggesting non-white heritage that in the contemporary discourse would connote an exaggerated sexuality. This photo is full of coding for sexual liberation and a desire on the woman's part for sexual gratification. The photo on the right, on the other hand, could not be more different in how it positions Jones as a feminine character. Fully lit and looking above and to the right of the camera, Jones's face no longer invites the viewer in, but causes us to wonder what *she* is looking at. Her dress covers her body completely, her arms held protectively in front of her. Clothed almost like a nun and lacking the feminine trappings of long flowing hair, makeup, jewelry, and other features that accentuate femininity,

and demonstrating no hint of inappropriate sexual desires, Jones performs (and has performed *on* her) a completely different gender identity as Bernadette than she did as Pearl.

### **Music as a Gender Performative**

In both *Duel in the Sun* and *The Song of Bernadette*, music plays a part in either supporting or working against the gender portrayals described above. As the previous chapters have argued, composers can use coding and cultural signification to create music that represents various signifiers of gender, from the gentle love theme of the FRC to the sultry blues feeling of Lewt's theme. By applying a musical theme (or several) to a character, the music in fact changes our perception of that character, and therefore it changes the character her- or himself. It is not, however, only the type of music used, but also *how* that music is used that matters. In *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, Robin's and Marian's themes differed greatly, but their manner of presentation was practically identical, as both appear exclusively as non-diegetic music in the soundtrack, typically underscoring the character's entrance on screen or an important moment of dialogue. Marian's music gendered her as a feminine love object, and Robin's gendered him as the dashing masculine hero, but neither theme allowed the character significantly more or less agency than the other.<sup>10</sup> In *Jezebel* Julie's music often highlighted her self-motivated decisions and actions, helping to underscore her own considerable agency both in motivating plot developments and in shaping her own gender identity. By contrast, Pearl's music in *Duel in the Sun* highlighted her lack of agency by emphasizing how easily she is influenced and shaped by others.

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<sup>10</sup> An active, heroic theme certainly does imply a greater ability for agency within the narrative, but neither character's theme is presented in such a way that the character actually seems more in control of the music than the other.



In this chapter, we will look not only at what music is used, but *how* music is used differently for male and female characters within a single film, resulting in vastly contrasting appearances of agency as well as in the impression that masculinity is somehow more natural and self-motivated than femininity. In *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959, music by Duke Ellington) and *Laura* (1944, David Raksin), we will find that the male characters are not represented by music outside their control to the same extent as are the female characters, with the result that the femininity of the female characters seems to be beyond their own control, externally produced by gender performatives. This musical strategy is reinforced also by the cinematic external performatives, which are far more obvious on female characters than on male characters. Although in reality the gender of male characters is just as constructed as that of their female counterparts, they are not as *obviously* shaped by external performatives, with the result that their gender *seems* to be natural and intrinsic to their bodies. If, in Butler's words, people "do" rather than "are" their gender, male characters in these films more obviously "do" their masculinity than women, whose femininity is even more obviously "done" to them.

Why would it be significant that femininity and masculinity be constructed differently by music in film? Not only does this construct mirror real world gender dynamics, in which women are encouraged to enhance their femininity by introducing foreign objects and appearance-altering tools to their bodies—such as makeup, nail polish, fake eyelashes, high heels that change the shape of the foot and leg, to name a few common tools of femininity—and in which heterosexual men who attend excessively to their appearance are accused of being "metrosexual," a word used often as an insult; it also reveals more of the power dynamics that existed in Hollywood film in which female characters were constantly denied power and subjectivity. Like the protagonist Gillian (Kim Novak) in *Bell Book and Candle* (1958), a witch

who must decide whether to hold on to her power or to allow herself to fall in love, women in film often find that the price of femininity and acceptance within the patriarchal gender system is to relinquish their power and subjectivity to the men around them.<sup>11</sup> Thus by allowing women to be powerfully constructed through performatives that seem to be enacted by other characters or even by the audience's gaze, the filmmakers can exhibit control over these women. While naturally this control also extends to the construction of male characters, it is not generally as apparent in their cases, allowing male characters to seem to have greater power of agency and subjectivity than do their female counterparts.

In both *Anatomy of a Murder* and *Laura*, two films directed by Otto Preminger and based on popular novels, the source material was altered such that the cinematic characterizations of all female characters become far more stereotyped and, in the case of each film's main female character, more negatively portrayed. The musical score, we will find, either overdetermines that characterization, in the case of *Anatomy*, or confuses it, in the case of *Laura*. But Preminger's intention in both cases is clear: to create bad women whose questionable natures emanate mainly from their liberated sexuality and who tempt men of strong character to go astray. In both films, music plays a performative role in shaping the dangerous femininity of these women, but not the men. By manipulating the presentation and diegetic appearance of the gender performatives that shape their characters, the filmmakers create the illusion that male characters have greater agency and subjectivity in formulating their own identities than the female characters, who are

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<sup>11</sup> In *Bell Book and Candle*, Gillian is a modern witch who falls in love with her neighbor, played by James Stewart. But as witches cannot fall in love without losing their power, Gil must decide between love and an ordinary "humdrum" life, or the life of the powerful, independent woman. Her powers are expressed in part through her ability to control her cat Pyewacket—her familiar—by singing to him, with her song serving as a seemingly internally produced performative that helps to establish her unusual and dangerous feminine character. Ultimately she decides on love and sacrifices everything about her that had previously constituted her personality. Gil thus gives up her self-directed subjectivity and allows herself to be dictated by society's norms, losing along the way both Pyewacket and her power of song.

far more obviously constructed by external performatives. These performatives are sometimes completely non-diegetic, determined by the choices made by the filmmakers. Sometimes, however, they seem to be controlled by other, male characters. Paul Biegler (James Stewart), the hero of *Anatomy of a Murder*, seems to be able to control music and its gendering power, an ability not extended to Laura Manion (Lee Remick); in *Laura*, music represents Laura Hunt (Gene Tierney) to such a strong degree that the use of music outside her control determines her identity.<sup>12</sup> But the film's effeminate male antagonist, Waldo Lydecker (Clifton Webb), demonstrates that even a man who is not traditionally masculine still has the apparent power to use music to gender other characters.

### ***Anatomy of a Murder: Jazz and the Double Standard***

*Anatomy of a Murder* was based on a 1958 novel of the same name, which itself was based on a true story.<sup>13</sup> The book was enormously popular, remaining on the *New York Times* best-seller list for more than a year after its publication; this despite, as one skeptical reviewer put it, “the fact that to some readers it seemed to be written with a literary trowel.”<sup>14</sup> Penned as it was by a non-professional writer—Michigan attorney John D. Voelker under the pseudonym of Robert Traver—the book lacked the sophistication and slickness of typical popular novels of that time,

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<sup>12</sup> By coincidence, both films' female leads are named “Laura”: Laura Manion is the overly flirtatious alleged rape victim in *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959) and Laura Hunt is the career woman and possible murder victim in *Laura* (1944).

<sup>13</sup> The book's author, John Voelker, was in fact the defense attorney in the real-life murder trial on which the novel and film are based. In 1952 in Big Bay, Michigan, Voelker defended a U.S. Army lieutenant accused of murdering a bartender who had supposedly raped the lieutenant's wife. As in the novel and film, the jury found the defendant “not guilty by reason of insanity.” Gene D. Phillips, *Out of the Shadows: Expanding the Canon of Classic Film Noir* (Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 161.

<sup>14</sup> Fanny Butcher, “Fiction Flourishes in 1958 against Fact Trend,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 30, 1958.

but it was marked by an intensity and honesty that many found nonetheless exciting and engaging. Another reviewer expressed well the appeal of the novel:

Robert Traver writes with gusto, with a mildly ribald sense of humor, with unflagging invention and narrative pace. These are substantial virtues that insure that “Anatomy of a Murder” is immensely readable and continuously entertaining. But Mr. Traver always writes in a free-and-easy crudely colloquial fashion that has nothing whatever to do with literature. He lets his split infinitives fall where they may and they fall all over the place. He credits his hero with witticisms celebrated for generations. He doesn’t worry overmuch about probabilities. Would a defense attorney in the middle of a sensational murder case on which his own future as well as his client’s fate depended spend the night getting drunk in a roadhouse and playing the drums in a jazz band? Perhaps one would. But Paul Biegler is a conscientious lawyer. Ugly doubts arise.

But doubts and artistic shortcomings are immaterial and irrelevant in the case of the People vs. Frederick Manion. What matters is what will happen next and that is going to matter to a lot of satisfied customers.<sup>15</sup>

As James M. Cain, author of such novels later made into popular films as *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *Double Indemnity*, and *Mildred Pierce*, would write in his own review, “Rarely have I been so entertained as I have been by this strange novel, and for the life of me I can’t tell why.”<sup>16</sup> The novel’s popularity meant high expectations for the film, which were for the most part met. The film received mostly positive reviews, although its unprecedented and frank treatment of the subject of rape meant that it faced fierce censorship and controversy—which was undoubtedly the intent of the film’s envelope-pushing director, Otto Preminger.<sup>17</sup>

The film’s plot, which closely follows that of the novel, concerns attorney Paul Biegler as he tries to recover his passion for the law after having been voted out of the office of as prosecuting attorney of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Paul is enlisted to take on the defense of Lieutenant Manion (Ben Gazzara), who shot and killed a man called Barney Quill in front of a

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<sup>15</sup> Orville Prescott, “Books of the Times,” *New York Times*, Jan. 6, 1958.

<sup>16</sup> James M. Cain, “Counsel for the Defense,” *New York Times*, Jan. 5, 1958.

<sup>17</sup> In 1953 Preminger directed the groundbreaking *The Moon Is Blue*, which was considered so controversial that it was denied a seal of approval by the Production Code Administration. Preminger refused to edit the film and released it without a seal. Later the director would court controversy again with *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), which included scenes showing explicit drug use. James L. Baughman, *The Republic of Mass Culture: Journalism, Filmmaking, and Broadcasting in America since 1941* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 82.

room full of witnesses, claiming that the man had raped his wife Laura (Lee Remick). Paul takes on the case with the help of his alcoholic ex-lawyer friend Parnell McCarthy (Arthur O'Connell) and acerbic secretary Maida Rutledge (Eve Arden), crafting a defense of not guilty by reason of temporary insanity. As Paul looks for evidence that Manion's wife really was raped, he is hindered by Laura's own wild and wanton behavior, which casts serious doubt on her character and her story—for no one can believe that a woman who dresses and behaves the way Laura does wasn't actually "asking for it." The trial seems to be going poorly when Parnell makes a startling discovery regarding a mysterious young woman, Mary Pilant (Kathryn Grant), who had been working at the murdered man's hotel. Paul uses this discovery to his benefit and convinces Mary, revealed to be Quill's illegitimate daughter, to provide a crucial piece of evidence supporting Laura's story. Manion is eventually found not guilty, but the victory is bittersweet for Paul and Parnell when they discover that the couple has skipped town, avoiding paying their fee and leaving behind a note hinting that Manion was guilty all along.

Although the novel had portrayed Paul Biegler as a complex man—basically a decent guy who dabbles in unethical behavior and questions his actions and motivations throughout the process—the film establishes a clearer dichotomy between Paul as the righteous and upstanding lawyer and Laura as the flirtatious, overly sexualized tramp who tries to corrupt him. The film's music is key in its construction of the two characters and their strongly gendered roles within the narrative, not only in terms of what kind of music is used, but also in how it is employed. The score, written by famed jazz composer and bandleader Duke Ellington and performed by Ellington and His Orchestra, helps to overdetermine Laura Manion as an essentially vapid, sexualized woman while at the same time working to provide Paul Biegler with a means for self-expression and enhanced subjectivity. From the perspective of Judith Butler's theory, the

performatives that enact Laura's gender and sexuality are made visible and are obviously externally performed on the body of actress Lee Remick. The performatives that enact Paul's gender and sexuality, on the other hand, are obscured and made invisible, seeming to come from the character's own interior subjectivity and agency—agency that of course the character *himself* lacks. Nonetheless, Paul is made to seem to be a man with greater control over himself and the choices he makes than Laura.

Unlike the traditional use of jazz or jazz-like music in classic Hollywood films, including other films directed by Otto Preminger (i.e., *The Man with the Golden Arm* [1955, Elmer Bernstein]), the use of jazz in *Anatomy of a Murder* was not intended to connote criminality and low-life behavior in a dangerous urban landscape.<sup>18</sup> Jazz is never associated with the film's true villain, Lt. Manion, and the setting is not a big city but instead charming and picturesque small towns in rural Northern Michigan. Rather than using elements from jazz to add color to a traditional film score, as had been done previously by white composers like Bernstein, Ellington used jazz resources in ways similar to how other film composers used the materials (instruments and harmonic language) of the neo-Romantic classical orchestra. In a profile of Ellington that appeared in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* after the film premiered, the writer described the music not in terms of jazz's usual stereotypical function in film scoring but in the same kind of language that would apply to any film score of that time: "Duke's musical job, of course, was to capture the mood, the excitement, the expense [sic] of the story and create sounds which would add

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<sup>18</sup> In films such as *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), *The Wild One* (1953), and *The Man with the Golden Arm*, traditional film scoring using certain elements from jazz such as instrumentation and harmonies was used to connote, respectively, urban poverty and uncontrolled sexuality, dangerous youth motorcycle gangs, and drug addiction and illegal gambling. The jazz elements were used as exotic, coloristic devices within the context of a typical film score. *Anatomy of a Murder*, which as Harvey G. Cohen points out "followed recent trends of directors using 'crime jazz,'" nonetheless differs from these films in that jazz is associated not with the criminal element but primarily with Paul Biegler, the side of the law. See Cohen, *Duke Ellington's America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 340.

electricity in proper spots, subdue the emotions in proper spots, help move the story along, keep the theatre patron rooted to his seat, entertained to his bones.”<sup>19</sup> The score does, however, use the familiar connotation inherited from the classical Hollywood tradition of certain *types* of jazz sounds to represent feminine sexuality—as we shall see below, “Flirtibird,” the theme for Laura Manion, features sounds and instrumentation that, when combined with her visual imagery, overdetermine and align her with stereotypical, racialized notions of jazz and the blues as representing sex and promiscuity. In the case of Paul Biegler, on the other hand, the music allows for a diegetic relationship with jazz that differs entirely than Laura’s. While the musical performatives that inundate Laura with signifiers of deviant female sexuality are obvious and externally motivated, Paul’s are not. Instead of music having the power of gendered character construction over him, he is seemingly granted the power to create and participate with the soundtrack, even to the extent that the score’s jazz idiom reflects *his* musical tastes and no one else’s.

Critical opinions have been mixed on the effectiveness and quality of the music, with the score’s function as film music often ignored as jazz and Ellington scholars debating the relative merits of the soundtrack album without always acknowledging its place in the movie. While some critics found the score to be generally ineffective in the film—a *Washington Post* critic

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<sup>19</sup> S. A. Doc Young, “Duke Ellington’s New Career,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, Aug. 27, 1959. While the mainstream press showed interest in the film and its score at the time of its promotion and release, black newspapers showed far more interest in promoting Ellington and his role, even to the extent of seemingly exaggerating or fabricating evidence of its success. Although this was Ellington’s first film score, a writer for the *Chicago Daily Defender* (previously called the *Chicago Defender*, the newspaper changed to a daily publication in 1956) tried to play up his experience composing film music: “Writing chores such as this are not unusual for Ellington. He has done the music for several pictures that turned out to be hits. The most outstanding music score written by Ellington was for the stage play ‘Beggar’s Holiday’ that ran on Broadway and later took to the road.” See “Ellington Writes for Murder Pix,” *Daily Defender*, March 4, 1959. Another writer later announced that Ellington had been nominated for the Academy Award for best score for *Anatomy of a Murder*, which unfortunately is not true. See Chester B. Bahn, “Duke Ellington, Queen Ella in Spotlight,” *Chicago Defender*, April 2, 1960.

admitted that it had “great thematic interest,” but complained nevertheless that the music “got in the way” of the film itself<sup>20</sup>—others ignored the film altogether and treated the album as an autonomous work. Stanley Crouch called the score “one of Ellington’s grandest accomplishments,” putting it forward as evidence of Ellington’s growth as an artist even after his “all too brief golden period.”<sup>21</sup> His brief discussion of the music, however, demonstrates no appreciation of or interest in its role *within the context of the film’s narrative*; the fact that this music is a film score is irrelevant in the context of this critique. Krin Gabbard takes a similar approach, treating the score as a musical masterpiece unfortunately attached to an inferior work of art:

There is . . . little pleasure for the initiate in hearing Ellington’s music pushed far into the background behind plots that seem to become more dated each time the films are viewed. For the Ellington devotee the music is already *anchored* in a series of associations that are not so easily banished to the margins. For those of us who listened repeatedly to the soundtrack LP for *Anatomy of a Murder*, the music conjures up images of Ellington and specific sidemen such as Johnny Hodges, Paul Gonsalves, and Ray Nance. How demeaning that the film anchors the “Flirtibird” theme primarily with Laura Manion (Lee Remick), the kittenish wife of the defendant in a murder trial. Although I would argue that Remick gave a fine performance in *Anatomy* and numerous films after, Johnny Hodges’s typically lush solo for “Flirtibird” is reduced to what sometimes may seem the inevitable function of the jazz saxophone in Hollywood—the signification of “sleaze.” . . . This is hardly the context in which to present a “vernacular American symphony,” the phrase that Tom Piazza (1988) has used to describe the music for *Anatomy*.<sup>22</sup>

Like Crouch, Gabbard considers the soundtrack album to be more legitimate than the film itself.<sup>23</sup> While Gabbard does do more than any other author to address critically the relative inadequacies of the music as a film score, he seems unwilling to acknowledge that the film is

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<sup>20</sup> Tony Gieske, “Accent on Jazz,” *The Washing Post and Times-Herald*, Jan. 3, 1960.

<sup>21</sup> Stanley Crouch, “Stanley Crouch on *Such Sweet Thunder*, *Suite Thursday*, and *Anatomy of a Murder* (1988),” in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 442.

<sup>22</sup> Krin Gabbard, *Jammin’ at the Margins: Jazz and the American Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 187–89.

<sup>23</sup> English jazz critic Max Harrison has expressed similar views, treating in his 1991 revised review of the album as an inferior contribution from Ellington rather than a different kind of work that cannot be treated like a typical album. See Harrison, “Max Harrison on *Anatomy of a Murder*,” in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 313–15.



not, as Piazza would have it, “a vernacular American symphony”: it is a film score.<sup>24</sup> By setting aside the broader context of jazz music in which, as Gabbard claims, the music is already “anchored” and putting it back into its context as a film score composed in a jazz idiom, we can better uncover how the choices that were made and Ellington’s idiosyncrasies as a film composer created a unique atmosphere in which musical performatives play a vital role in constructing the film’s principal characters.

One reason why Ellington scholars have been, the whole, dismissive of the film and its music—many fail to mention it at all, apart from listing it on the composer’s discography—is the fact that the album contains *far more* music than was included in the film.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the evidence of the album by itself suggests that Ellington’s music may not have been used in the way he had intended. Wynton Marsalis, in his liner notes for the re-release of the soundtrack album, wrote simply, “The way that they put the music into the film is not what [Ellington] would have wanted.”<sup>26</sup> Had it been, I argue that Paul Biegler’s relationship to music might have been somewhat more comparable to Laura Manion’s, and the ways in which their characters are constructed through musical gender performatives might have been more similar. Instead, it seems that someone—perhaps Preminger, perhaps his music editor Richard Carruth—suppressed an important theme intended to have been associated with Paul, changing the score’s dynamic

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<sup>24</sup> This argument also recalls attacks on the use of classical music in film, which Jeongwon Joe has treated especially well in her essay “Reconsidering Amadeus: Mozart as Film Music,” in *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film*, ed. Phil Powrie and Robynn Stilwell (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2006), 57–73. Joe discusses the tendency of musicologists and critics to dismiss the use of classical music in biopic films such as *Amadeus* as lacking “musical integrity,” which Joe challenges as “a workable criterion for evaluating a film’s soundtrack” (58).

<sup>25</sup> *Anatomy of a Murder* is barely acknowledged by A. H. Lawrence in *Duke Ellington and His World* (New York: Routledge, 2001) and James Lincoln Collier’s *Duke Ellington* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), and it goes unmentioned in Stanley Dance’s *The World of Duke Ellington* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1970).

<sup>26</sup> Wynton Marsalis, “Music by Duke Ellington,” in *Anatomy of a Murder*, Duke Ellington & His Orchestra, Columbia, Columbia Legacy CK 65569, 1999, originally released 1959, (compact disc).

and allowing for a reading of the film that places music front and center in its treatment of gender and sexuality construction.

The careful placement of and attribution of musical themes to characters in *Anatomy of a Murder* allows music to act as a gender performative that ascribes gendered traits to different characters in the film in separate and unequal ways. Laura Manion, as a result, is overloaded with an externally imposed gender identity, one of the strongest of these performatives being her musical accompaniment. Paul Biegler, on the other hand, escapes being pinned down by obvious external musical performatives for two important reasons: (1) the filmmakers seemingly suppress the theme Ellington wrote and intended for the character (Ellington referred to it as “Polly” and it appears in a number of different tracks on the soundtrack album),<sup>27</sup> preventing the viewer from making any connection between the character and the theme, and (2) Paul is shown to have the agency to influence and at times control the use of music in the film, a power Laura lacks. This appearance of greater agency helps to reinforce both Paul’s behavior and personality traits as being completely internally generated and not the result of external performatives.

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<sup>27</sup> In a second essay included on the soundtrack album, Phil Schaap writes that Ellington implied that “Polly” was a theme intended for Judge Voelker, the author of the novel on which the film was based. See Schaap, “From the Soundtrack of the Motion Picture,” in *Anatomy of a Murder*, Duke Ellington & His Orchestra, Columbia, Columbia Legacy CK 65569, 1999, originally released 1959 (compact disc). Ellington does indicate in an interview (also re-produced in the liner notes) that he wrote a theme for the Judge, but as Voelker is not a character in the film and in fact Paul Biegler seems to be based on the author himself, and especially since Ellington gave the theme the name “Polly” (Paul Biegler’s nickname in both the novel and film), it is safe to assume that in fact, this music is intended for Paul Biegler. “Polly” appears on the tracks “Grace Valse” (in an almost unrecognizable arrangement), “Haupé,” “Low Key Lightly,” and “Midnight Indigo.” Neither “Grace Valse” nor “Midnight Indigo” is used in the film; the “Low Key Lightly” cue ends right when the “Polly” theme would have entered. A cue similar to “Haupé” plays softly in the background during Paul Biegler’s conversation with Mary Pilant late in the film when he convinces her to reveal testimony damaging to Barney Quill. An extra cue called “Polly” also appears on the soundtrack album.

*Laura Manion and Paul Biegler: A “flirty bird” and a “funny kind of a lawyer”*

The way in which the filmmakers chose to portray the characters of Paul Biegler and Laura Manion is important to our look at how external musical performatives help to shape their gender identities. While the particulars of the novel’s plot were retained by the filmmakers, many of the details, including aspects of the characters themselves, were noticeably changed. As in *Duel in the Sun*, whose female characters were drastically simplified and made into recognizable archetypes for its filmed version, all three principal female characters of *Anatomy of a Murder*



Figure 4.4: Laura Manion (with her dog, "Muff") displays herself before Paul Biegler, but it is the camera's gaze that emphasizes her as a spectacle.

(Laura, Maida, and Mary) were also made into stereotypes. In translating the character of Laura Manion, the filmmakers transformed what had been a mysterious, ambiguous, emotionally complex woman into a vapid, stereotypical tramp (Figure

4.4). As described in the book, Laura is a mature woman in her forties who is beautiful and sexy enough to be mistaken by Paul for a Hollywood starlet. In his first meeting with her, he describes her as follows:

I caught my breath. Her eyes were large and a sort of luminous aquarium green. Looking into them was like peering into the depths of the sea. I had never seen anything quite like them before and I was beginning, however dimly, to understand a little what it was that might have driven Barney Quill off his rocker. The woman was breathtakingly attractive, disturbingly so, in a sort of vibrant electric way. Her femaleness was blatant to the point

of flamboyance; there was something steamily tropical about her; she was, there was no other word for it, shockingly desirable.<sup>28</sup>

Describing her “femaleness” as “flamboyant” suggests that Paul understands Laura’s beauty to be a sort of exaggerated performance. And although he describes Laura as something of a siren, she is not portrayed as a thoroughly bad or excessively sexual woman, as a comparable character in a film would (due to Production Code stipulations that sexual deviance not be portrayed in a positive light). In fact, rather than being portrayed as a woman who behaves like a harlot in the book, Laura explains to Paul that it is her husband who makes her feel cheap: “Manny’s really a grand person,” she says, “but he’s strangling my feeling for him. How can you continue to love a man who constantly makes you feel like a—a common street-walker?”<sup>29</sup>

Laura Manion was originally meant to have been played by Lana Turner, who at thirty-nine (in 1959) would have been about the right age for the character. Turner, who had successfully and memorably played a femme fatale in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946) and a glamorous movie star in *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1952), would have lent gravitas and dignity to the character. When Turner abruptly left the production, she was replaced with the much younger Lee Remick (twenty-three at the film’s release), a rising star who was best known then for her supporting role of a baton-twirling nymphet in *A Face in the Crowd* (1957).<sup>30</sup> Instead of playing the character as a woman whose beauty makes her the target of nearly every man’s personal fantasies but who, regardless, maintains a sense of dignity about her, Remick’s performance highlights Laura Manion as an airheaded, childish woman who invites and enjoys the attention of other men to a fault.

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<sup>28</sup> Traver, *Anatomy of a Murder*, 67.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>30</sup> The Hollywood rumor mill had claimed that Turner left the production because of disagreements over her wardrobe, a claim the actress dispelled in a March 24 gossip column, in which she claimed “that Mr. Preminger has a violent temper.” Hazel A. Washington, “This Is Hollywood,” *Daily Defender*, March 24, 1959.

The question of whether Laura was raped is central to the film's negative construction of her character. Whereas in the novel the evidence overwhelmingly supports Laura's version of events, things are murkier in the film, in which by the end it seems more likely that she might have willingly had sex with Barney and was subsequently beaten up by her jealous husband. On the same score, the treatment of the rape subject differs dramatically between the novel and film. The film plays up the entertainment value of the rape, suggesting that ordinary adults living in a small town in Michigan would find the idea of a woman being assaulted amusing. In a comical scene invented by the filmmakers, the judge and attorneys have a hushed discussion about whether a less lurid word than "panties" can be used in the proceedings. The audience in the courtroom is shown to find references to rape highly amusing; they burst out laughing when a witness describes Laura's appearance directly after the attack ("She—she was a mess!") as well as at the mention of her torn panties.<sup>31</sup> Whether this was because the filmmakers themselves found rape funny or because they wished to cast further doubt and scorn upon Laura's character is unclear, but the novel treats the subject with less levity. In all respects, Laura Manion is portrayed as a vapid, silly, overly provocative woman who, the film seemingly would have us believe, invited her attack with her own inappropriate behavior.

If the filmmakers pushed Laura Manion's character in a negative direction in their translation from novel to film, they did the opposite with the protagonist Paul Biegler, whose character owes much to the casting of Jimmy Stewart. By the late 1940s, Stewart had begun to

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<sup>31</sup> In the novel the same line "She—she was a mess" is treated seriously with no laughter from the courtroom. See Traver, *Anatomy of a Murder*, 265. Furthermore, after the audience in the film bursts into laughter, the judge, having seemingly expected their reaction, chastises them and urges them to take the proceedings more seriously, finishing with this reproach: "There isn't anything comic about a pair of panties which figure in the violent death of one man, and the possible incarceration of another." He does not extend this reasoning to the fact that the "panties" also figure in the possible violent rape of a woman. It is unclear why the audience in the courtroom finds these words funny (and most likely uncomfortable for a modern audience to watch), but the implication is that the lurid and spectacularized aspect of the trial leads the audience to treat it as a form of entertainment rather than as a serious event.

play edgy, morally ambiguous characters in films such as Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948) and *Vertigo* (1958), but he was best known for playing wholesome, ordinary men turned into heroes due to extraordinary circumstances in films like *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) or occasionally a morally upstanding western hero in *Destry Rides Again* (1939) and *Broken Arrow* (1950). In his study of Stewart's star persona over the course of his career, Dennis Bingham suggests that Preminger may have had an ulterior motive in casting Stewart:

Otto Preminger said that Stewart's appearance in *Anatomy of a Murder* made the Production Code-busting producer-director's film "acceptable," despite unprecedentedly explicit sexual language. . . . This is because of the charm and magnetism of the screen ego-ideal. It is also because Stewart's exemplary real life sanctions the film's public airing of subjects that, in the Kinsey Report atmosphere of the 1950s, the public considered impolite to discuss but really wanted to hear. Stewart's presence makes safe and permissible a thrill of transgression in knowing in 1959 that behind the irrepressible screen character sits a paragon of official virtue—Brig. Gen. James Stewart of the U.S. Air Force Reserve, a rank to which he was promoted the very month of the film's release.<sup>32</sup>

Paul automatically comes off as a nice, honest guy thanks to his embodiment by Stewart (Figure 4.5). The Paul Biegler of the novel, however, is somewhat different. Told in the first person by the character himself, the novel exposes what Traver found to be problems with the American legal system, including the occasional lack of ethics shown even by good guy lawyers like Paul Biegler. Although Paul is the hero and undoubtedly a sympathetic character, he is no saint (and certainly no "paragon of official virtue"). The novel's Paul makes it clear to the reader that he takes on the case not because he idealistically believes his client to be innocent, but in order to make a reputation for himself and jumpstart his congressional campaign against the new prosecuting attorney, Mitch Lodwick. In a moment of rueful self-reflection Paul thinks to himself: "How crafty and double-crossing could a man get? And all to save the skin of a man

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<sup>32</sup> Dennis Bingham, *Acting Male: Masculinities in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson, and Clint Eastwood* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 52.

who, for simple honor and dignity and the plain virtues, probably wasn't fit to shine [the jail keeper] Sulo's shoes. But was I doing any of it for Lieutenant Manion? Wasn't it really all for Polly Biegler?"<sup>33</sup> Neither of these points comes up in the film, in which Paul seems to take on the case for more sympathetic reasons: in part due to Parnell's encouragement and in part just because he needs clients.

The other aspect of Paul's character that appears to have been cleaned up for the film is



Figure 4.5: James Stewart portrays Paul Biegler as a down-to-earth, honest small-town lawyer.

his misogynistic attitude toward women. As portrayed in the novel in Paul's mind there are two types of women: disgusting ugly women, and sex objects.<sup>34</sup> Most of his comments on women are disparaging, from his dismissive remarks of Maida's intelligence to his condescending comments on the "faithful lady students of homicide" who religiously attend the trial.<sup>35</sup> While this attitude would probably not have been considered inappropriate or reprehensible in 1959, Paul's interest in women is toned down considerably for the film, making him seem even more

<sup>33</sup> Traver, *Anatomy of a Murder*, 51.

<sup>34</sup> His secretary, Maida, is a mystery to him because he does not find her attractive, but neither does he find her repulsive—therefore he doesn't know what to make of her and makes up for this confusion by constantly insulting her intelligence.

<sup>35</sup> Traver, *Anatomy of a Murder*, 408.

wholesome and innocent compared to Laura Manion. In contrast to his own characterization of Barney Quill, whom he calls a “wolf” due to his woman-chasing ways, movie-Paul shows practically no interest in women and even acts embarrassed when Laura flirts with him (although his reactions to her appearance *do* reveal him to appropriately heterosexual—just shy and gentlemanly, and in line with Stewart’s star image as a stuttering, endearingly humble leading man). Whereas the novel presents Mary Pilant as an alluring, complex love interest for Paul, this plot element is removed entirely, and instead Mary becomes a naive girl-next-door. The Paul of the movie is transformed into an almost asexual monk, heightening the contrast between him and wolf Barney Quill, as well as between him and sex kitten Laura Manion.

But Stewart’s Paul Biegler is still not an *entirely* likeable character. He encourages Lieutenant Manion to invent a phony defense in a scene in which Paul explains that Manion must find an “excuse” for having killed Barney. Manion thinks and finally responds tentatively, saying, “Maybe I was mad.” Once he clarifies that he means mad as in crazy, Paul leaves the room looking incredulous at his client’s sudden (and frankly unbelievable) revelation but later takes up the defense anyway. After the trial is over and Paul and Parnell fail to receive Manion’s payment, Paul exhibits no dismay or regret about having saved him from his rightful punishment (or about having delivered Laura back into the hands of her abusive husband). Both lawyers seem disappointed only about the unsigned promissory note Maida is eagerly expecting, and Paul consoles Parnell by revealing that they do, in fact, have a new client: Mary Pilant has hired them to take care of Barney Quill’s estate. While Paul and Parnell chuckle at their stroke of luck, the viewer might be left feeling uneasy about what has transpired. The wailing, minor-tinged trumpet solo that ends the film, rather than creating a sense of triumphant finality in the manner of a typical Hollywood ending fanfare, certainly does nothing to reassure us that justice has



prevailed. Closing with a melancholy statement of “Flirtibird,” recalling the emotional trailer park scene between Laura and Paul, the instruments then take up and sequence upward the vamp melody, ending with an almost hysterical final statement by the trumpet in its upper register, followed by a series of gasping stratospherically high notes over a quiet, dissonant harmony from the ensemble. As the orchestra disassembles and pushes Laura’s characterizing music to its limits, are we supposed to understand Paul to be an entirely sympathetic character, in the tradition of Stewart’s iconic Mr. Smith? Or is his behavior meant to elicit empathy, only to leave us with a bad taste in our mouths when the film ends? His relationship with jazz music provides some clues.

Early in the film, Laura Manion describes Paul Biegler, upon meeting him for the second time, as a “funny kind of a lawyer.” The description is apt. After failing to be reelected as prosecuting attorney, Paul spends more time off fishing on his own and drinking with Parnell than working actual cases. His secretary, Maida, laments his dwindling client list and wonders



Figure 4.6: Paul and Pie-Eye (Duke Ellington) jam together at the piano. Like Laura, and unlike the white masculinity exemplified by Paul, Pie-Eye is overdetermined by his music and interactions with Biegler, which are characterized by the use of hepcat slang and take place entirely within a plot space where non-white characters would be “allowed”—a roadhouse bar.

when he will ever be able to pay her again. But when Laura makes the comment, she is referring specifically to Paul’s record collection, which Maida describes as everything from “Dixieland to Brubeck.” According to Laura, lawyers aren’t supposed to like jazz. Paul, nevertheless, seems to like all

kinds of jazz, from whitened subgenres and performers such as those mentioned by Maida, to the harder-edged, swinging sounds of Ellington's own ensemble, which appears onscreen in one notable scene in which Biegler jams at the piano with Ellington himself (playing a character named "Pie-Eye") (Figure 4.6). The fact that Paul connects himself with Ellington's own music demonstrates that not only does he enjoy the film's diegetic music, but also the non-diegetic score—the music that he ostensibly cannot hear. This affinity for jazz was not entirely invented in the adaptation from book to moving picture, but it was certainly heightened. In its four-hundred-plus pages, the book contains only three references to music: the first is when Paul sits down to listen to a recording of Debussy, and the others are brief mentions of two visits to a bar where Paul listens to (and eventually plays drums with) a "small Negro combo," which was mentioned by one of the reviewers quoted at the beginning of this section.<sup>36</sup> The latter two events are shown to be responses to the growing level of stress with which Paul struggles as the case wears on, whereas the Debussy is the only instance in which Paul specifically *chooses* a piece of music, and it is notably *not* jazz.

The role of music in the film could hardly be more different. When Paul is not accompanied in the non-diegetic soundtrack by hot trumpet riffs or cool piano solos (generally only in scenes showing him traveling—walking or driving), he is producing the music: on his own piano at home, or jamming with Pie-Eye at a crowded roadhouse. His musical performances occur both before and during the trial; playing jazz is not a response to stress, but rather a favorite hobby. In addition to Laura Manion's comment regarding his record collection, Parnell at one point remarks reproachfully on Paul's idiosyncratic musical tastes, asking him to play something other than "that rutti tutti jazz." Paul's position as the film's hero and the careful casting of a Hollywood icon known for his wholesome appeal would seem to be an attempt at

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<sup>36</sup> Traver, *Anatomy of a Murder*, 110–111, 154, 248.

rescuing jazz from its bad reputation in the Hollywood soundtrack: ordinarily a signifier of moral deviance, more recently jazz had been heard as the stuffy, old-fashioned music of a fuddy-duddy high school teacher against the more hip new sounds of rock 'n' roll in *Blackboard Jungle* (1955). But the position of jazz in this film is far too complex to be merely an example of a jazz artist (Ellington) trying to elevate his music's reputation.

Ellington's score gives each of these two characters a unique musical theme, but it is the way in which the film manages the characters' access to music that creates the important disparity in how the characters and their subjectivities are portrayed. The film creates the illusion that Paul has power over music, signifying his control over his own masculine character, whereas Laura clearly has none and is constructed entirely by performatives outside of the diegetic control of the character.

*"Flirtibird," "Polly," and everything from Dixieland to Brubeck*

Laura Manion's brief appearance in the first scene of *Anatomy of a Murder*, in which she attempts to enlist Paul Biegler to defend her husband, does not reveal much about her. Paul struggles to hear her over the phone as a raucous jazz tune featuring an enthusiastic horn section and saxophone solo is barely audible, emanating as diegetic music from the bar where Laura is using the telephone. Once the image changes from Paul Biegler's study to Laura Manion herself the music has calmed down to a cooler tune featuring a languid solo shared by the saxophone and piano, but the audience is not invited to pay particularly close attention to the music. Instead, we are struggling to hear the conversation over the ruckus. We will hear this music again, however, and when we do, its presentation and the level of attention drawn to it could not be more different.

Preminger waits until Paul sees Laura in person to reveal the essential information we need to know about her, through both her visual imagery and the music. When this happens, in the scene where Paul meets Laura outside the county jail, the first shot of her leaning provocatively up against her car coincides with her theme's entrance (Figure 4.7). This music, nicknamed "Flirtibird" by Ellington,<sup>37</sup> features a swinging vamp primarily in C minor, but its most memorable feature is the wailing alto saxophone solos (played by Ellington band member



Figure 4.7: Paul Biegler meets Laura Manion as "Flirtibird" plays in the non-diegetic soundtrack.

Johnny Hodges) that answer the vamp, pausing on a high G and before falling down to be met by the vamp. Laura Manion wears trousers and blouse, both of which reveal her lack of restricting undergarments that were commonly worn by women at that time.<sup>38</sup> She smiles seductively at Paul as he greets

her. "You're tall!" she coos appreciatively as they walk side by side into the jail. The careful choreography of Laura's introduction along with her scoring serves immediately and with no

<sup>37</sup> A vocal score included in the archives at the Smithsonian has the spelling "Flirty-Bird," but the other spelling is used on the soundtrack album. Ellington's explanation of how he came upon the "Flirtibird" theme and its name is revealing: "I saw the rushes the first Sunday in Ishpeming [Michigan] and then the minute I saw her leaning against that car I knew that I was on the right track with my Number 1 theme of "Flirty Bird" because she was the picture—I mean it was a thing with her eyes and she absolutely appeared to be, you know, sort of flirting all the time which could easily be mistaken by someone and it was." Ellington, "Open-End Interview & Special Musical Platter with Duke Ellington."

<sup>38</sup> This point is likely to be lost on younger audiences today, but contemporary viewers would have recognized that Mrs. Manion is not wearing a girdle, a fact that becomes an important plot device as well as signifying her lack of modesty.

subtlety to establish and overdetermine her with signifiers of moral depravity. We are to be left with no doubt in our minds that Laura is a sexually liberated, flirtatious, wanton woman with no control over her behavior toward men, and thereby planting in our minds a seed of doubt: was this woman really, as she claims, savagely raped by Barney Quill? Or did she seduce and willfully commit adultery with Barney, only to be later beaten by her jealous husband who then shot Barney in revenge? After all, here is a woman who dresses in order to increase men's desire for her, who flirts incessantly with her husband's lawyer, who went out alone at night to a bar where she drank alcohol and played pinball with a man she later claimed to have raped her. And above all, her musical theme is a swinging, sexy jazz tune featuring the instrument most closely identified in film scoring with female sexuality—the alto saxophone—meant specifically to help construct her excessively sexual (and therefore deviant) behavior.

Before going into how “Flirtibird” and the rest of the film’s music is used, it bears considering here how Laura’s theme compares with “Polly,” the theme originally intended for Paul. For if the sexual excess and wild abandon of “Flirtibird” was meant to characterize Laura, what kind of music was meant for Paul? The album track “Haupe,” one of the most beautiful arrangements of the “Polly” theme, begins with an easy-going piano riff supported by the bass and light percussion, before it is joined by the alto saxophone. Although this is again Hodges, who played the wild and outrageous “Flirtibird,” the two solos could hardly sound more different.<sup>39</sup> With its slow tempo, leisurely backbeat, and lack of forward-moving groove, the atmosphere of “Polly” is one of gentle relaxation. Ellington describes it as “a deep emotional

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<sup>39</sup> In his liner notes accompanying the album, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis points out that the melodies for “Polly” and “Flirtibird” are actually quite similar. He writes that “‘Flirtibird’ . . . is at the root of that second theme: the theme you hear with the working title, ‘Polly.’ . . . Of course, ‘Polly’ and ‘Flirtibird’ are not exactly the same, there’s even an element of playing it backwards and forwards between the two. But they’re the same.” It does seem that they are variations on a similar idea, but their presentation represents two different gendered affects that, at least in the case of “Flirtibird,” fit with the filmmakers’ conception of the character. Marsalis, “Music by Duke Ellington.”

theme,” representing “a smoldering and sophistication.” If there is a key difference between the character types portrayed by these two themes, it is certainly that sophistication. The saxophone melody opens with a G held for five beats, followed by a turn on E-flat and F before returning to G. This motive repeats but the melody starts to reach upward to C and then D-flat before falling down to A-flat, refusing to pin down a keynote. Hodges’s tone here is gentle and soft, with delicate vibrato and meaningful scoops on certain pitches, resulting in a beautiful and soulful tune that would have done much to shape the audience’s perception of Paul had it been used differently in the film. For compared with Laura Manion’s wild and bluesy “Flirtibird,” the cool, sophisticated “Polly” might have been enough to suggest the differences between the two characters’ sexuality and moral standards, just as Robin Hood’s music in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* establishes him as a masculine hero against Marian’s romantic FRC.

But for reasons that remain unclear, “Polly” was not ultimately used as Paul’s theme. Unlike the very over-the-top and obvious presentation of “Flirtibird,” neither Paul’s theme nor any other single piece of music is used in a way that associates it directly with his character. Instead of having non-diegetic, omniscient music performing a certain kind of sexuality or gender identity onto his character, Paul instead is portrayed as a person whose subjectivity comes from within, and *not* from music—instead of music overdetermining him, he is shown to have some measure of diegetic (and even, arguably, non-diegetic) control over music. Unlike Laura Manion, whose only instance of having power over music is when she plays Paul’s records (which is notably cut off by Paul upon his entrance), Paul provides much of his own musical accompaniment by playing the piano that sits in his house, and in fact the entire jazz idiom of the score seems to be inspired by *his* musical tastes. For Paul, the score represents not, as *Jezebel* did to Julie, his interiority, but rather his agency. He is not subject to overdetermining non-diegetic

musical accompaniment provided by the filmmakers but rather seemingly has the agency to create his own personal soundtrack. In addition to owning records that align him with all sorts of jazz styles, Paul can play music himself. The scoring resists associating him with a specific jazz theme, instead allowing him to cultivate a more general, almost objective relationship to jazz. He listens and plays it, but his inner essence is not directly tied to a specific piece of music.

Paul's special relationship to music begins as early as the very first scene, in which he resists becoming linked with the opening theme through his apparent diegetic control over the music. One might initially interpret the film's exciting opening music as Paul's theme, at least upon a first viewing.<sup>40</sup> The film's opening credit sequence, showing black cutouts of crudely drawn body parts over a gray background, is scored with a gestural, mid-tempo number featuring wails from a muted trumpet, constant input from the toms and crash and ride cymbals, and support from the ensemble playing sharply articulated, tight harmonies. After less than a minute of development, the tempo picks up and goes in a more rolling section with a steady groove and the saxophone section playing a repeating figure underneath a melody from the brass instruments. The muted trumpet returns to solo, and as the credits fade we see a car driving along a country road heading into a typical small rural town. The volume fades but the music continues, and we recognize Jimmy Stewart as the driver of the car. The change in volume signals that this could be diegetic music coming from Paul's car radio. It is easy to disregard this music as somehow representing Paul for several reasons. The fact that the music seems to be emanating from the car radio, at least at first, means that it lends a slightly different sort of meaning to the character than would non-diegetic music. Onscreen it appears that he *chose* this music (i.e., he turned on the radio and switched it to this station) rather than serving to represent

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<sup>40</sup> In fact, Ellington intended this music as Pie-Eye's theme, a connection that is never established in the film. Ellington, "Open-End Interview & Special Musical Platter with Duke Ellington."

his interiority. But more importantly, Paul resists being linked with this music because his appearance does not fit the stereotypical conception of what this music usually means. My understanding of the scene echoes Gabbard's view that "Ellington's music does not seem at all compatible with the appearance of Stewart at the beginning of the film."<sup>41</sup> Compare this with Laura's obvious connection to her music: had Laura Manion, in the scene in which she leans seductively against her car (see again Figure 4.7), been replaced with a dowdy librarian wearing thick glasses and sensible shoes, and clutching a stack of library books to her chest, the audience would either be confused (how can this music relate to this kind of woman?) or else understand the juxtaposition as being ironic and howl with laughter. The connection works in part because we *expect* this association to be made. Paul's appearance does not fit the opening theme, and as that music is never again associated directly with him, instead being used as a sort of filler traveling music, we do not interpret it as being his theme but, more likely, rather music *seemingly of his choosing*. We should also compare this scene to Laura's first appearance, trying to be heard on the phone under the roar of diegetic music, in which she is literally overwhelmed by music beyond her control. Paul is never overwhelmed by music because of the absence of an overdetermining theme for him, and because he controls how the music around him is used.

The "Polly" theme, rarely heard at all throughout the film, only becomes directly associated with Paul once. This happens toward the very end of the film when he improvises on the tune at the piano (along with several other melodies, including "Flirtibird" and "Danny Boy"). By this point it is too late to associate this theme with the character, and the fact that Paul plays the tune diegetically makes it appear that it comes from his own subjectivity and power of choice, not from the omniscient control of the filmmakers (although, in fact, of course it does). The result of all this is that Paul's inner essence is not overdetermined by music. Because he is

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<sup>41</sup> Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins*, 191.



represented as a character who controls his music diegetically, Paul is able to distance himself from it in a way not possible for other characters. As such, the suppression of the “Polly” theme not only helps Paul maintain his trustworthy, honorable image despite the highly questionable nature of some of his behavior, but it makes his masculine subjectivity appear motivated from within rather than imposed upon him from without—the artifice behind his masculine character is made invisible.

Laura’s musical characterization is far more simply done, its goals more straightforward and obvious even to the casual viewer. In fact, there is no aspect of her characterization, from her provocative clothing to the violent relationship with her jealous husband to the way the camera focuses on her body, that is inconsistent with the message provided by her music. And importantly, Laura is shown never to have any sort of ability to affect or influence how music portrays her at any point in the film, unlike Paul and his ability to shape the music happening around him.

The relatively slow tempo and call-and-response with the throaty alto sax solo featured in “Flirtibird” recall the blues origins of jazz, connecting Laura to the tradition of female blues singers whose lyrics were often highly sexual in nature. The theme is an obvious signifier of female sexuality, but it is *how* it is used that demonstrates the performative nature of Laura Manion’s constructed female sexuality. When we first see Laura leaning up against her car, the pieces of information we are receiving about her character are all external performatives that are apart from her interiority, and yet they purport to represent that interiority. The music, the pose, and the provocative costume *become* Laura’s subjectivity in a way that Paul’s music and appearance never become his. Instead, Paul’s masculine character seems to come primarily from the choices he makes—his speeches in court, his musical performances, his active role in the



Figure 4.8: Laura Manion in her demure "faithful wife" costume in court with Paul and Manny (seated), with Maida looking on.

murder trial. The few, but memorable, uses of "Flirtibird" in the film help to demonstrate just how music helps to construct and overdetermine Laura Manion's subjectivity in way that would not have been possible for Paul Biegler considering the way that the filmmakers chose to use

music in the film.

Laura's theme is heard six times, four of which occur in the first hour of the film before the trial begins. Thereafter we see much less of Laura herself and, as per Paul's orders, she sits demurely in the courtroom wearing proper feminine clothing (a modest suit with a girdle), glasses, and a hat hiding her wavy blonde hair—another performance demonstrating the artificiality of her feminine appearance at the same time that it shows male attempts at controlling her femininity and sexuality (Figure 4.8). The first two uses of "Flirtibird"—Laura's phone call to Paul and her memorable introduction to him leaning against her car—establish her character. With the continued use of the theme, we start to see just how strongly music controls our understanding of this woman. Unlike much of Paul's music, which tends to be diegetic, "Flirtibird" is usually non-diegetic (and the non-diegetic uses of the theme are more noticeable to the viewer). Non-diegetic scoring, as in Laura's introduction to Paul, most strongly features

characterizing music as an external performative imposed upon the character by the filmmakers. But even when “Flirtibird” is diegetic, we can still see how it differs in presentation from Paul’s music. In the first scene, when Laura struggles to be heard over the phone, the music literally overpowers Laura’s voice. Not only does she not have any control over it, but she can’t even make herself heard over it. In a later scene, we hear “Flirtibird” performed live during the scene at Pie-Eye’s roadhouse. After finishing their first number, called “Happy Anatomy,” the combo launches into a sped-up arrangement of “Flirtibird,” found under the title “More Blues” on the soundtrack album. Even in this scene, Laura does not choose this music herself and does not know that it represents her.<sup>42</sup> In fact as the music begins, Laura is being forcibly removed from the roadhouse by Paul, emphasizing her lack of power and agency as once again she is being controlled against her will by a man.

While all the uses of “Flirtibird” inundate Laura with redundant signification, telling us over and over again what kind of a woman she is and allowing for practically no ambiguity or nuance, the very next scene allows her a hint of complexity that is subtly undercut by the music itself. After Paul removes Laura from the roadhouse he drives her home, at which point Laura shows him where she was supposedly attacked by Barney Quill. In the previous scene Paul had reprimanded Laura for her inappropriate behavior and mode of dress, telling her that from now on she’s going to be “a meek little housewife with horn-rimmed spectacles.” His further instructions, including that she visit her husband regularly in jail to help sell her image as a devoted wife, include the following: “And you’re gonna stay away from men and juke joints and booze and pinball machines. And you’re gonna wear a skirt and low-heeled shoes and you’re gonna wear a girdle. And *especially* a girdle.” They return to the trailer park, where Laura,

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<sup>42</sup> This, of course, is typical in film scoring but is still notable when the way in which music represents various characters differs to the extent that it does in this film.

chastened and acting far less flirtatious, tells Paul of her loneliness and her ambivalent feelings toward her husband—she admits that she almost hopes Manny doesn't beat the murder rap, as it would be “one way of ending it.” As she talks, as a slowed-down, sultry arrangement of “Flirtibird” plays. The saxophone solos are omitted and the vamp is transformed into a smooth melodic line played in a medium-low register of the trumpet. Almost shyly, Laura invites Paul in to the trailer, but he declines, seemingly almost regretfully. As he walks away, Laura slumps in the doorway holding her dog “Muff,” a look of profound sadness and desperation on her face. The dialogue of this scene reveals Laura as a woman whose behavior is rooted in a deep loneliness and unhappiness, most likely caused by the abusive behavior of her husband. The music, on the other hand, plays up her subtle flirtation toward Paul, making her pitiable confession seem like a ruse to lure the lawyer into her feminine trap. Even when Remick succeeded in adding depth to Laura's character despite her overall lack of complexity, the music maps exaggerated sexuality onto her and continues to overdetermine her with signifiers of female sexual deviance.

The last two uses of “Flirtibird” happen almost as an afterthought and without Laura even present: the first has Paul improvising briefly on the tune while he and his associates wait for the verdict to be announced, and the second is an especially slow and sultry arrangement at the very end of the film when Paul and Parnell discover that the Manions have skipped town without paying their bill. Almost seeming to suggest Laura's irrelevance, that she need not even be present in order for her evocative theme to appear, the former scene also further supports Paul's ability to control Laura not only through altering her appearance and behavior but by accessing her music—a point that is not emphasized in *Anatomy of a Murder* but that will prove key to how the score from *Laura* works. *Anatomy of a Murder* demonstrates that deviations in

characters' apparent access to music, and the kind of music that interacts with their gendered characterizations, not only means the difference between good and bad characters or feminine and masculine characters but has a powerful effect on the how subjectivity is formed, and how characters can be granted the appearance of agency by the filmmakers. A character like Paul Biegler who seems to have a deeper and more natural subjectivity than does Laura Manion also seems more human. Laura is a function of the plot, a cartoon bad girl whose every move is carefully crafted to create a story through which the hero moves. Paul, on the other hand, is portrayed as a real person whose choices and actions have consequences. Whereas many of the female characters discussed in this dissertation have had their interiorities constructed in part by their overdetermining or oversimplifying themes, Paul's interiority, particularly his love of jazz, seems to resonate in the film's use of music—and *not* the other way around.

### ***Laura: (De-)constructing Laura***

Like Laura Manion in *Anatomy of a Murder*, the femininity of the title character of *Laura* is performed onto her through her musical scoring. But unlike the previous film, Laura Hunt's music complicates and confuses her characterization, reflecting the mystery surrounding her as the detective assigned her murder investigation attempts to understand his victim and, in the process, falls in love with her.

The famous "Laura" theme from the film was so successful that it inspired a slew of "theme song" film scores during the late 1940s and 1950s, not to mention a popular song based on the melody with words by Johnny Mercer. Almost all the music in the film derives from this theme, and it becomes so closely identified with Laura's character that it easily stands in for her absence, making it all but superfluous when she makes a surprise return in the latter half of the

film. But what makes *Laura* unique is that it also gives us a male character gendered as feminine, but whose gendering is not created in the same way as it is for a female character. Waldo Lydecker does not have apparent power over diegetic music the way Paul Biegler does in *Anatomy*, but his role as narrator and ability to influence other characters (and the audience) allows him to construct Laura's character as it is presented to the audience while at the same time seeming to do the same for his own deviant-gendered character.

When Vera Caspary's novel *Laura* was published in 1943,<sup>43</sup> the publishers at Houghton Mifflin coined the term "psychothriller" to describe it, and the term was seized upon by critics fascinated by the implications of this new genre.<sup>44</sup> Reviews of the novel were positive and it was not long before the rights were purchased by Twentieth Century Fox. The production, however, underwent more twists and turns than its clever plot before it premiered in theaters in October of 1944. In June 1943 the *New York Times* announced that Fox had bought the rights and planned to cast George Sanders as the detective Mark McPherson and Laird Cregar as the writer (and murderer) Waldo Lydecker. Sanders, a British actor best known for playing debonair and dandified characters such as a jewel thief in the series *The Saint* (1939–41) and a detective in the very similar *Falcon* series (1941–42), had also recently played the title character's devious lover in *Rebecca* and a devil-may-care reporter descended from the English aristocracy in *Foreign Correspondent* (both from 1940). He seems an odd choice for the down-to-earth, sensitive, baseball-loving American detective McPherson, suggesting that the studio might have considered taking the story in a different direction at this early stage. Cregar, another British

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<sup>43</sup> *Laura* was originally published in *Collier's* in 1942 as a seven-part serial called "Ring Twice for Laura." Eugene McNamara, *Laura: As Novel, Film, and Myth* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 21n.

<sup>44</sup> Charles Collins, "Bookman's Holiday," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan. 17, 1943; "New Mystery Stories: LAURA," *New York Times*, Jan. 31, 1943; Paul Jordan-Smith, "I'll Be Judge, You Be Jury," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 7, 1943.

actor, had not appeared in many films but had recently had a supporting role along with Sanders playing a pirate in the Tyrone Power swashbuckler *The Black Swan* (1942). Along with Hungarian newcomer Eva Gabor as an early choice for the role of Laura, this potential casting would have made for a very different film than the one that eventually resulted. Eventually all three roles were recast with American actors, with relatively unknown to Hollywood theater actor Clifton Webb as Waldo Lydecker and up-and-comer Dana Andrews as Mark McPherson.<sup>45</sup> Soon after Jennifer Jones, recent winner of the Academy Award for her first starring role in *The Song of Bernadette*, was said to be taking on the title role, gossip columnists announced that Gene Tierney would instead be playing Laura.<sup>46</sup> Controversy continued to plague the production. Several weeks into filming, director Rouben Mamoulian was replaced by then-producer Otto Preminger, with whom he had had several disagreements. By all accounts the troubled production should have been a disaster, particularly in light of disputes over Laura's character involving director Preminger, author Caspary, and composer David Raksin, which will be discussed below. But the film was a great commercial and critical success and has, in more recent years, received more attention from film music scholars than any other score discussed in this dissertation.<sup>47</sup>

The film opens with a murder investigation; Lt. Mark McPherson (Andrews) is investigating the grisly shooting death of advertising career woman Laura Hunt (Tierney), who was killed in her posh New York City apartment. His suspects include Waldo Lydecker (Webb), a famous critic responsible for Laura's success and introduction into society; Shelby Carpenter

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<sup>45</sup> Monty Woolley was also mentioned as a substitute for Cregar in the role of Lydecker. A heavy-set American actor, Woolley would have been a better fit physically for the role as described in the novel by author Caspary. "Screen News Here and in Hollywood," *New York Times*, Oct. 28, 1943.

<sup>46</sup> Hedda Hopper, "Looking at Hollywood," *Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 1944.

<sup>47</sup> See e.g., Kathryn Kalinak, Royal S. Brown, Roy Prendergast, and George Burt. *Laura* is also included in most film music textbooks and histories, including James Buhler, David Neumeyer, and Rob Deemer; Roger Hickman; Larry S. Timm; Mervyn Cooke; and James Wierzbicki.

(Vincent Price), Laura's gigolo fiancé; and Ann Treadwell (Judith Anderson), Laura's selfish and sexually aggressive aunt who has set her cap at Shelby. The more Mark learns about the enigmatic Laura Hunt—and the more Waldo's narrated flashbacks give us supposedly trustworthy access to her character—the more he becomes enthralled with her, until he finds himself completely obsessed with her. Much to his and everyone's surprise, Laura unexpectedly returns to the scene of the crime, revealing that it was not she but a young woman named Diane Redfern, who was possibly having an affair with Shelby, who was killed. At this point Laura herself becomes a suspect, even as Mark's obsession with her grows and continues to cloud his judgment. At the same time that the jealous Waldo realizes that Laura returns Mark's feelings for her, Mark realizes that Waldo is the killer, and he arrives just in time to save Laura from a second attempt on her life. Waldo is shot in the scuffle that ensues and dies with Laura's name on his lips.

The score from *Laura* and its main theme, while not nominated for an Academy Award, became enormously popular in its own right upon the release of the film.<sup>48</sup> The song “Laura” has since been recorded hundreds of times by artists ranging from Frank Sinatra to Charlie Parker to Percy Faith. Apart from having a beguiling melody and sweeping, ambiguous harmonic motion that denies the listener a sense of closure, the theme is notable for how Raksin employed it in the film. The *Laura* score has been described by film music scholars as “monothematic,” meaning that nearly all the musical materials used in the film are based on a single theme.<sup>49</sup> A second theme associated with Waldo is also used several times, but even “Waldo” derives from the snake-like melody of “Laura.” The main theme works well to construct Laura's complicated

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<sup>48</sup> Twenty films were nominated for the Academy Award for Best Score in a dramatic or comedy picture that year—veteran film composer Max Steiner took the Oscar for his music for the World War II home-front drama *Since You Went Away*.

<sup>49</sup> The earliest authors to use this term include Roy Prendergast, Royal S. Brown, and George Burt, but nearly everyone who has written about the film since then has also used this term.



character in part because it is quite complex, tonally ambiguous, and is never heard in its entirety, leaving the ear to wonder where it would go, were it finally to reach a cadence of some sort. In his analysis of the theme, George Burt argues that the tonal structure of “Laura” is of particular significance, particularly in light of its ambiguous tonal center. “Some feel,” Burt writes, “that the piece is in G and ends in the subdominant. Raksin himself is of this opinion. Others contend that C major is the overriding tonality. In either case, most will agree that from the outset of the piece, the ultimate harmonic destination is not readily known.”<sup>50</sup> Trying to identify the tonal center is somewhat of an exercise in futility, as it seems that the harmonic interest of “Laura” lies not in its eventual achievement of tonal closure, but in its constant refusal to be tied down to any area of rest, a trait that resonates greatly with the character Laura herself. For unlike *Anatomy*’s Laura Manion, who was overdetermined by her straightforward and easily understood theme, the title character of *Laura* is instead complicated and made ambiguous by her theme.

Differences between the original novel (and subsequent stage play published in 1942) and the feature film play a significant role not only in Laura’s characterization but also in the specific role that music plays. In Caspary’s novel, Laura is a sympathetic character described by the author as “wonderful, warm, sexy,” a “modern woman,” and a woman who “enjoyed her lovers.”<sup>51</sup> The novel is divided into sections narrated by different characters: first Waldo tells the story as part of an unfinished newspaper column, then Mark as a police report, and then Laura as a diary entry. The novel’s denouement is written from Mark’s perspective again as a police report. The structure of the film, however, takes away agency from Laura by literally taking

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<sup>50</sup> George Burt, *The Art of Film Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994), 170.

<sup>51</sup> Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 162, quoting Vera Caspary, “My ‘Laura’ and Ottos,” *Saturday Review*, June 126, 1971.

away her voice: the film opens with narration from Waldo and a large portion of the first act is told entirely from his perspective, giving Waldo a disproportionate amount of power in the telling of the story and taking away Laura's ability to take any part in the telling of her story.

Both the novel and play incorporate music into characters' perceptions of Laura, but the use of music in all three versions of the story differs greatly. In the novel, Waldo associates the song "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" (from the popular 1933 musical *Roberta* by Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach) with Laura. In the play, it is not a particular song but hot jazz that colors our understanding of Laura. One subplot includes Laura's neighbor Danny (who appears only in the play), a teenage boy who shares Waldo's and Mark's obsession with her and repeatedly sneaks into her apartment to steal her Wingy Manone records. Other characters exhibit surprise that the cultured and sophisticated Laura would listen to such low-brow hepcat music. "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" does get mentioned late in the play when Laura and Waldo are reminiscing, but it lacks the strong presence it has in the novel.<sup>52</sup> A romantic ballad sung by a character who has been spurned by her love, "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" works on multiple levels in the novel; symbolizing a happier time in Laura and Waldo's past friendship, at the same time its own nostalgia for the singer's lost love reinforces Waldo's nostalgia for a relationship that he believes he has lost but in fact probably never existed. As a popular song by a respected songwriter from the legitimate theater, "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" also contrasts with the music that Laura herself prefers (as evidenced by her record collection), supposedly low-brow jazz, allowing Waldo to fantasize about Laura's personality and believe her to have more in common with the idealized fantasy he has created of her. Something similar will happen in the film, in which

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<sup>52</sup> Despite its limited use in the play, its meaning there is perhaps even more pointed—whereas the novel never suggests Waldo and Laura had had a romantic or physical relationship, the play makes explicit that long ago something happened between them, the nature of which is now contested. While Waldo claims that Laura spurned his advances, Laura remembers that it was he who rejected her, calling her "wanton." Waldo remembers the song as mirroring what he believes happened between Laura and himself.

Waldo's vision of Laura will clash with the film's construction of her through the overpowering "Laura" theme, which stands in for Laura's presence for much of the film.

The film creates an entirely different dynamic between Laura the myth, Laura the person, and Laura the music, in part due to Preminger's very different interpretation of the character, which was a great point of contention between Preminger and Caspary. According to A. B. Emrys, in an essay included in the recent Feminist Press edition of *Laura*, Caspary's intention in writing all her novels was to reveal the complexity of realistic women who struggle to establish an identity for themselves in a world that so often categorizes them based on their sexuality and connection to men. "Her novels," Emrys writes, "revolve around women who are menaced, but who turn out to be neither merely victimized dames nor rescued damsels. Independence is the key to the survival of such protagonists as Laura; lack of choice engineers the downfall of her victims, among whom *Bedelia* is paramount."<sup>53</sup> Caspary's protagonists might seem odd to the modern-day feminist because they are alternately weak (Laura) and wicked (the titular character of *Bedelia*, who struggles because of a lack of opportunities in life outside of marriage). But Caspary was not interested in women who are perfect or fall into familiar archetypes, but rather those who are trapped by society and forced into difficult situations by the men (and women) around them. Her women do not fit into a dichotomy of Good Woman/Bad Woman, and thus the translation of a Caspary novel into a Hollywood film was doomed from the start to result in a gross misrepresentation of the heroine.

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<sup>53</sup> A. B. Emrys, afterword to *Laura*, by Vera Caspary (New York: First Feminist Press, 2005), 196.

As has already been suggested by previous examples in this dissertation, contemporary philosophies about women's role in this era held that to be good and virtuous, women must be



Figure 4.9: Kalinak describes the main theme as being at odds with the “ideological message of the portrait,” shown here in the opening titles.

chaste, not conscious of sexual desires, and beholden to the man who introduces sexuality to her through the institution of marriage (and for the purposes of childbearing and the husband's pleasure, not her own). It should not

therefore be surprising that Preminger disliked the character of Laura; he considered her to be an unsympathetic character, practically a prostitute due to her relationship with Shelby (and presumably with other men, including the artist Jacoby).<sup>54</sup> According to Kalinak, “Preminger disapproved of Laura because of what he perceived as her promiscuity, claiming that she had ‘no

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<sup>54</sup> According to Preminger biographer Chris Fujiwara, prostitution was a central theme to the director throughout his career, as evidenced by the quotation from David Raksin that opens this chapter. Many of Preminger's female leads shared this quality, as Fujiwara writes in his discussion of *Carmen Jones*: “Like Laura, Amber, Mrs. Erlynne in *The Fan*, Bess in *Porgy and Bess*, Laura Manion in *Anatomy of a Murder*, Mona in *The Cardinal*, and Ann in *Bunny Lake is Missing*, Carmen puts herself outside the norms governing women's sexual conduct and thus loses the protections afforded women by patriarchy and becomes vulnerable to patriarchal violence. All these characters, while not prostitutes, are sexually experienced, and a central concern of these films is to show how women are victimized by patriarchal discourses that castigate them for extramarital or polygamous sex, in effect putting them into the category of prostitute.” Fujiwara, *The World and Its Double: The Life and Work and Otto Preminger* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2008), 168–169.

character' and pointing out that she had 'to pay a gigolo' to get a lover. Caspary, on the other hand, admired Laura's sexual freedom."<sup>55</sup> Caspary never intended for Laura to be interpreted as a bad woman and fought against Preminger's misreading of the character. Preminger, as the director, won out, but the fight spilled over into the creation of the score, according to a possibly apocryphal oft-told story by composer David Raksin and quoted in this chapter's second epigraph. According to Raksin, Preminger thought that Laura's femme fatale character would be best illustrated by the Duke Ellington song "Sophisticated Lady."<sup>56</sup> Raksin, who seems to have come down more on Caspary's side with regard to Laura's characterization, disagreed and urged Preminger to allow him to compose an original theme for Laura. In a conversation Raksin recounted many times, Preminger grudgingly allowed him to give it a try, and Laura's theme was born.

Because of the confusion over the nature of Laura's character, the film is not consistent in its treatment of her and scholars disagree as to what Laura's theme means. Kalinak interprets Laura's theme as being at odds with the threatening sexuality represented by Laura's portrait, and important visual leitmotif throughout the film. The film, she argues, defies consistent readings due to its confused ideological implications. "*Laura*," she writes, "has become an archetypal example of the ways in which female sexuality threatens classical narrative and of the processes by which classical stratagems both contain and fail to contain that threat."<sup>57</sup> Her analysis of the film's opening title music accompanying the image of Laura's portrait (Figure

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<sup>55</sup> Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, 162, quoting Caspary, "My 'Laura' and Ottos," *Saturday Review*, June 26, 1971.

<sup>56</sup> This interview appears in Brown's *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), and similar interviews appear in other sources, including Prendergast's *Film Music: A Neglected Art* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992).

<sup>57</sup> Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, 161.

4.9), which plays an important role in the plot, supports her understanding of the ideological confusion surrounding the film and its score:

The score opens with a typical technique for attracting the spectator's attention and signaling the nature of the images which follow: string *glissandi* and a cymbal crash. . . . This musical flourish activates certain expectations about the narrative content—that it is heroic, romantic, epic—which rest uneasily with the ideological message of the portrait. The melody of Laura's theme and the style in which it is performed further widen the gap between music and image track. Although Laura's theme incorporates chromaticism in its melodic contour, and the brass accompaniment to the string theme is marked **rubato** . . . , it is also very lyrical and rooted in performance techniques of Hollywood's neoromantic tradition.<sup>58</sup>

Brown takes issue with Kalinak's interpretation, particularly with her claim that the title music has "heroic, romantic, epic" qualities, and points out its obvious roots in popular music that Kalinak overlooks: "In spite of its full symphony-orchestra setting and dramatic introduction, the elaborate melody itself, though quite sophisticated, has strong roots in the melodic and rhythmic traditions of popular music. Its reemergence within the film's diegesis in a variety of popular guises, from a cocktail-lounge trio (accordion, violin, and piano) to a dance band, certainly reinforces this identity. Even the recording turned on by McPherson early in the film, described by Kalinak as a 'symphonic arrangement,' is in fact more the kind of big-band-cum-violins reworking that was enormously in vogue in the forties than it is a symphonic scoring."<sup>59</sup>

Furthermore, Brown believes that Laura's music helps remove her from the saint/whore dichotomy that imprisoned so many female characters from Hollywood's classical era. Kalinak, in her discussion of the "ideological ambiguity" of the music, claims this same music puts Laura firmly under the male gaze, whereas Brown identifies this same ambiguity as being the source of Laura's liberation:

Even though its principal theme has a strongly popular quality to it, Raksin's score does in fact tend to blur the distinctions between the classical and the popular idioms, and in so doing it helps modify viewer/listener perceptions in a way that further liberates the

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 168–69.

<sup>59</sup> Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, 89–90.

character of Laura from the male gaze, both visual and, oxymoronically, aural. Lydecker wants to desexualize Laura by drawing her into the domain of the highbrow, which stereotypically (for the American audience) includes classical music. Others, including director Preminger, would hypersexualize her by drawing her into the domain of the lowbrow, which stereotypically includes popular music. Neither the classical saint nor the popular whore, the character of Laura manages to shake free of the various perceptions, including musical, that would make her a prisoner of the male eyes and ears.<sup>60</sup>

While I find Brown's argument slightly more convincing than Kalinak's, I also believe that Brown fails to take into consideration the lack of agency that Laura has musically; rather than "shaking free" of the male gaze, the music serves to show just how much the men around her control her image and access to her character, to the point that she seems more real when she is dead and her music is playing than she does when she is alive and her music is absent.

The use of music to help create an idea of Laura's character rather than the woman herself helps to illustrate how gendering can be "performed" onto a character. Mark McPherson's obsession, after all, is not with Laura herself, but rather with this idea of Laura constructed external to Laura's physical self by Waldo's subjective memories, Laura's portrait that hangs on the wall of her apartment, and her beguiling theme that appears throughout the film in various guises. This "Laura" theme permeates the score, symbolizing Laura's absence during the first half of the film and mourning it during the second half; only when we believed Laura dead did we really feel that we knew her, and when she appears as a real woman and not a memory her theme no longer seems like hers anymore. Because Laura is introduced entirely through flashbacks from an unreliable narrator and through her ever-present theme, this music is essential to our understanding of who she is, even if it is a lie. The following analyses of Laura and Waldo and their relationships to music will demonstrate the way external performatives

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 90.

shape and construct Laura's character, whereas Waldo's gendered character seems to be motivated entirely from his own powerful subjectivity.<sup>61</sup>

*Laura Hunt: "Not exactly classical, but sweet"*

Despite Caspary's insistence that the title character be a complex, realistic, sophisticated but sympathetic woman, Laura is instead portrayed in a way typical to the representation of a femme fatale. The femme fatale is a woman who seduces the male protagonist (or anti-hero), turns out to be not who she seems to be, and either is destroyed or must pay for her crimes. Classic examples from contemporary films include Brigid O'Shaughnessy (Mary Astor) in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck) in *Double Indemnity* (1944). Brigid is arrested at the end of *The Maltese Falcon* after unsuccessfully trying to seduce Sam Spade (Humphrey Bogart) one time too many, and Phyllis Dietrichson is killed by anti-hero Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray) after double-crossing him. In the case of *Laura*, the film suggests that like these women, she is enigmatic, irrational, possibly dangerous, and never really understood by the men around her despite their constant attempts to control and possess her. For the first half of the film, Laura is constructed through descriptions by other characters and flashbacks that are later found to be unreliable due to the untrustworthy nature of the teller's memories. The constant presence of music stands in for Laura's absence, convincing the viewer/listener that this music *is just like* Laura rather than a thin substitute invented by men who all have something to hide. Three different scenes or plot elements sketch out Laura's character as constructed by someone or something else, all taking place before the surprise reveal midway through the film that she is still alive. These three elements are the portrait, featured in the opening titles as

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<sup>61</sup> As in *Anatomy of a Murder*, this apparent power of subjectivity and control is not real but rather is crafted by the filmmakers. Waldo's character is also constructed by the filmmakers but *seems* to emanate from his own interiority.



discussed by Kalinak as well as in a later scene during which Laura's theme is introduced diegetically; Waldo's flashback, which uses the theme extensively while illustrating the version of Laura that exists in Waldo's imagination; and finally Mark's scene in Laura's apartment, in which we learn that the detective has become obsessed with the Laura of *his* imagination.

The film begins with an opening credit sequence featuring a steady shot of the Laura portrait, which shows Laura in a strapless, dark evening gown, looking coyly over her shoulder at the viewer. Flanked by ornamental lamps, the image of the portrait suggests an elegant, almost aristocratic but still sexualized woman but tells us little else. Royal S. Brown writes that this image fetishizes Laura by way of Tierney's image, as Tierney "lends her fetishized, star status to Laura, since the audience does not even know the character yet."<sup>62</sup> In a later scene featuring this portrait, Waldo objects to Mark's glib use of the word "dame" to characterize Laura (Mark has only just started working on the case and has not yet fallen under Laura's spell). "Look around," he says, gesturing to Laura's immaculately decorated apartment. "Is the home of a dame? Look at her." He gazes up at Laura's portrait, and Mark turns and sees "her" for the first time. Waldo continues: "Jacoby [the painter] was in love with her when he painted it. But he never captured her vibrance, her warmth." Even here, the meaning of the painting and its ability to capture Laura's essence is a point of contention. We will return to this scene in a moment.

Let us return to the opening credits, where the audience is given its first vague and possibly misleading glimpse into who Laura *might* be. Over the image of the portrait we hear Laura's theme played by the full orchestra, which as Brown has pointed out sounds more like the kind of ensemble that would play sweet jazz than classical music. The melody cycles through the string, woodwind, and brass sections, refusing to be tied down to any single instrumental trope. This music is described later in the film by Shelby as "not exactly classical, but sweet," a line

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<sup>62</sup> Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, 87.

that suggests a possible description for Laura herself. “Laura” is written as a sort of pop song with hints of jazz stylings in the chromatic harmonies and almost syncopated rhythms. The meandering melody opens with its highest pitch, stating it twice before faltering hesitatingly on a lower chromatic neighbor. In composing this melody Raksin seems to have been trying not only to appease Preminger’s need to portray Laura as a bad woman by associating her with jazzy, low-brow music, but also to acknowledge Caspary’s belief that Laura is merely a modern woman with her own desires and no evil motivations. By juxtaposing the theme over the portrait, the film immediately begins to build the mystery of “Who is Laura Hunt?” In this way these external factors begin to shape the way the audience understands who Laura is, a job that will be continued by other characters.

The second time we hear Laura’s theme after the opening credits is in the aforementioned apartment scene when Mark first visits Laura’s apartment, accompanied by Waldo and Shelby. After he glances noncommittally at Laura’s portrait, Mark switches on the record player and the “Laura” theme begins playing, sounding almost identical to how it appeared in the credits. Waldo irritably tells him to turn the music off, but Shelby offers that “it was one of Laura’s favorites, adding the aforementioned description of “not exactly classical, but sweet.” Waldo is perturbed by this description, as well as by the implication that this music is a part of *his* Laura. This low-brow, unsophisticated tune, which recalls popular and big band music more than it does classical, does not match the version of Laura he has proposed to Mark, and suddenly we have several suggestions as to who Laura was: a sophisticated society woman according to Waldo, simpler and more in tune with popular tastes according to Shelby, and a mere dame according to

Mark. All these descriptions occur completely externally to Laura's physical self, and in fact her physical body is not needed at all in order for her presence to be felt.<sup>63</sup>

One of the most important sequences in which Laura's character is sketched for the audience is the extended flashback sequence, from Waldo's perspective, that follows the scene in Laura's apartment. Waldo and Mark sit in a café listening to a violin, accordion, and piano trio play Laura's theme; the flashback consists of several different scenes as well as a montage, all recounting Waldo's friendship with Laura. It is scored almost continuously, switching between the diegetic trio instrumentation, non-diegetic orchestral instrumentation, and even a beguine arrangement during one part of the flashback. It is during this scene that we, and Mark, finally "see" Laura for the first time. Of course, Mark is not actually seeing her because he is merely listening to Waldo's story. But because of possibility for a full visual flashback in the film medium, Waldo's memories of Laura seem just as real to the audience as the real time sequences featuring Mark and the investigation. The fact that these scenes come from Waldo's subjective memory is concealed since they look just like the objective scenes (the ones taking place in the present that are not filtered through Waldo's subjectivity); furthermore it is easy to ignore the fact that Mark does not actually see what we are seeing—he is listening. Instead, we can easily infer that the magic of moviemaking allows Mark to see what we are seeing, giving him equal access to this seemingly flesh and blood Laura that Waldo is creating for him.

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<sup>63</sup> In many of the films examined earlier in the dissertation in which musical themes came to represent a character's interiority, and even in "Flirtibird," the theme can come to stand in for the character's physical presence. This happens, among many other examples, at the end of *Anatomy of a Murder*, at certain points in *Captain Blood*, and is especially important in *A Place in the Sun* when George is constantly reminded of Angela in scenes in which she does not appear. In *Laura*, however, this phenomenon is especially important because it happens before the music becomes sutured to the character's physical presence (in all the previous examples, the music is initially introduced with the character), and in none of those examples does the question arise as to whether the woman's physical presence is needed when the music is playing. In *Captain Blood*, Arabella's presence is just as significant as her music (or perhaps more so); I would argue strongly that in *Laura*, the music is more important than Laura herself.

During the flashbacks, Waldo describes Laura mainly in terms of how she related to *him*. In addition to describing the woman herself, he describes what (he believes) Laura thought of him—her supposed dependence on him, her devotion to him. Over a shot of Laura listening to Waldo read aloud (presumably one of his own columns), smoking a cigarette and with a look near to ecstasy on her face, Waldo recounts that “the way she listened was more eloquent than speech.” Waldo was not only Laura’s friend but her mentor, her introduction to society, and the man behind her successful advertising career. When Mark earlier asks Waldo if he and Laura had been in love with each other, Waldo carefully answers: “Laura considered me the wisest, the wittiest, most interesting man she’d ever met. . . . She also thought me the kindest, gentlest, most sympathetic man in the world.” His recollections support this interpretation: in addition to the shot of her listening to him with rapturous attention, Laura is shown hanging onto his arm while attending a society party with Waldo and giggling with glee upon reading a vicious character assassination of the artist Jacoby that Waldo has published after learning that the two have been having an affair. Throughout these vignettes, Laura’s theme continues to play, always returning to the diegetic trio arrangement whenever we return to the present and Waldo’s narration.

We get a very good idea of who Laura was through this flashback montage. But there are some problems with the sequence: Waldo is not present in several of the scenes he describes, in particular Laura’s scenes with Shelby, suggesting that perhaps part of the story is speculation or even pure fiction.<sup>64</sup> The constant inundation of Laura’s theme, Waldo’s single-minded focus on her devotion to him, and his presentation of her classy, sophisticated character overdetermine her with Waldo’s perception of her—a picture that does not exactly match Shelby’s description. At

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<sup>64</sup> Waldo’s narration in the novel also includes scenes in which he is not present, which he justifies to the reader by claiming knowledge of what happened and a good enough understanding of the people involved that he can imagine exactly how the conversations unfolded. This is one of the earliest clues that his memories are not to be trusted.

the end of the series of flashbacks, the music fades out at the same moment that Waldo reaches the point of Laura's murder, once again allowing the theme to stand in for Laura.

Finally, Laura becomes reimagined and fetishized by Mark when he finally reveals his obsession with her in a scene that relies almost entirely on music to get its point across. Raksin has spoken often of this scene as an example of an opportunity for a film composer to provide information to the viewer/listener that is impossible to show in any other way. As he described to Brown: "Now, [producer] Darryl Zanuck had wanted to throw out about 50 percent of that apartment scene, which is the crucial scene in the picture. I persuaded him not to do it. . . . I said, 'If this doesn't make it clear what the detective is feeling, you can always cut the scene and toss out the music later.'"<sup>65</sup> Apart from a brief break in Mark's solitary wanderings through Laura's apartment when Waldo arrives, there is no dialogue in this scene to let us know what Mark is thinking. Waldo's interruption helps the audience by confirming in words what the music has already suggested—as he taunts Mark just before he leaves, "You'd better watch out, McPherson, or you'll end up in a psychiatric ward. I don't think they've ever had a patient who fell in love with a corpse." But because of the lack of dialogue and Dana Andrews's stoic, unemotional performance, it is still primarily up to the music to make this incredible accusation believable. (Kalinak in particular found Andrews's performance less than convincing, admitting that "he looks bored to me.")<sup>66</sup>

As Mark prowls through the apartment—rummaging through Laura's drawers, drinking her alcohol, and glancing meaningfully up at her portrait—different strains of music interrupt each other and always return to the main statement of Laura's theme, which never reaches a cadence or sense of closure. Brown interprets this lack of closure as "suggest[ing] that Laura will

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<sup>65</sup> Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, 283.

<sup>66</sup> Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, 177.

never be any more ‘complete’ than ‘Laura,’” but it also helps illustrate Mark’s sexual frustration at being in love with a dead woman.<sup>67</sup> Raksin used creative instrumentation, including a piano effect that eliminated the sound of the hammer hitting the piano strings, to help produce the ghostly atmosphere of the scene, almost suggesting that Laura truly is present in the room as an invisible spirit.<sup>68</sup> This haunting sound plays under a muted trumpet solo of “Laura” as Mark settles into the armchair beside Laura’s portrait and falls asleep. The incomplete, ghostly sound of the piano also matches well the incompleteness of Laura herself. Raksin’s use of woodwind instruments such as the muted trumpet hearkens to her supposed femme fatale status, and the bassoon’s low and resonant tones help to create an atmosphere of foreboding. By the end of the scene, when Mark falls asleep underneath Laura’s portrait, the sequence’s function is clear—to show that Mark has fallen in love with Laura—but something else has happened. Mark’s obsessive imagination and the haunting music have created, once again, a “Laura” that seems almost as real as if she were really standing there.<sup>69</sup>

Laura’s subsequent reappearance serves as proof of the unreality of Mark’s vision of her, further demonstrating the artificiality and constructedness of the multiple Lauras created through her music by means of the *absence* of music when she finally does reappear. As if in a dream, and with no music at all, Laura walks through the front door and interrupts Mark’s sleep (and his imaginative fantasy), providing the film’s big surprise moment and changing the direction of the

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<sup>67</sup> Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, 88.

<sup>68</sup> Kalinak describes how the effect was created: “What [Raksin] devised was a track with an artificially produced permutation of piano chords. By turning on the recording microphone only after a chord has been played on the piano and at extremely high volume, it is possible to record not the chord itself but the resonance left after the chord has been played. Raksin further manipulated this chord through the ‘Len-a-tone’ process which produced a slight waver or ‘wow.’ This unusual sound was prolonged through a loop. Raksin then used it as a kind of pedal point under Laura’s theme.” *Settling the Score*, 178.

<sup>69</sup> My interpretation of this much-analyzed scene does not differ significantly from what others have said, apart from my argument that this scene constructs a “Laura” who is different from the one described by Waldo, and from the one played by Gene Tierney.

story altogether.<sup>70</sup> Once Laura is discovered to be alive, her theme fades somewhat from the soundtrack, no longer standing in for her presence and occurring less often and for different purposes. For example, when Mark follows Shelby, with whom Laura has met secretly, to Laura's country cabin to hide the shotgun he believes Laura used to murder Diane Redfern, there is no music at all as the men discuss Shelby's relationships with the two women. When Mark briefly turns on the radio to test Laura's story that it had been broken, therefore preventing her from hearing the news of her supposed murder, we hear big band music—*not* Laura's theme. Whereas earlier "Laura" would most likely have crept in either from the non-diegetic orchestra or through the diegetic radio, now that Laura is a flesh and blood woman and no longer a ghost her music is practically unnecessary.

Toward the end of the film, the role of the theme actually changes, behaving no longer as a signifier of Laura's larger-than-life presence, but as a typical love theme. "Laura" plays late in the film when Mark kisses her after having realized that Waldo was the killer, weakly affirming the romance and acting temporarily as a love theme, a role that as we know was not at all uncommon for musical themes associated with female characters. The final statement of "Laura" occurs in the climactic scene in which Waldo sneaks back into Laura's apartment after Mark has left, surprising Laura who has just finished listening to his radio broadcast. Unbeknownst to Laura and Mark, the broadcast was pre-recorded, giving Waldo an alibi while the police believed him to be speaking live on the radio. After the radio show has ended, the "Laura" theme enters the soundtrack, making it sound as though it comes from the radio. Its dramatic use in the scene,

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<sup>70</sup> Apparently, producer Zanuck had wanted the second of half of the film to turn out to be a dream sequence: "Laura's reappearance was thus filmed using a standard convention for the dream: the camera dollies in on McPherson as he falls asleep in Laura's apartment, then immediately dollies out when he loses consciousness. An ending was shot in which McPherson awakens from the very armchair in which he fell asleep. . . . Walter Winchell reportedly talked [Zanuck] out of this ending after a preview, and a new version was shot. But the structural device for the dream version remained." Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, 165.

however, allows it seamlessly to transition from the radio to the non-diegetic soundtrack, moving into a theme associated with Waldo and frantic action music during the struggle. Finally as Waldo dies and the camera focuses on Laura's clock (serving as a visual frame to the opening of the film, which highlighted the identical clock in Waldo's apartment and foreshadowed the importance it would serve in the plot), a muted trumpet sadly plays Laura's theme and is followed by a final statement from the full orchestra. In all these cases, "Laura" functions in a more typical way, emphasizing romance or heightening the drama during the second attempt on Laura's life. But it no longer stands in for her. As the end of the film shows, the real Laura is not only unlike the "Laura" theme, but it can't even really accompany her when she is onscreen. "Laura" signified an entirely different woman altogether.

The real Laura is found to be rather different from how she was previously imagined, and the absence of the music almost makes Laura seem less real. She is not the glamorous model portrayed in the portrait, the fawning devotee described by Waldo, or the fantasy woman imagined by Mark. Instead, she is just a woman. A few lines of dialogue from the stage-play version of *Laura* illustrate best the effect of this new Laura on how the second part of the story proceeds. In this scene, Mark vents his frustration that Laura has turned out not to be the woman he imagined her to be:

Mark: I thought I knew you pretty well when you were the victim in this case. I built up the image of a woman who was very warm and generous and honest—and then you came to life—  
Laura: And I disappointed you?  
Mark: Yes.  
Laura: I'm terribly sorry.  
Mark: So am I.<sup>71</sup>

This sentiment is expressed in the film when Waldo, shocked that Laura prefers Mark to him, stammers, "You're not yourself, darling!" She responds evenly, "Yes I am. For the first time in

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<sup>71</sup> Vera Caspary and George Sklar, *Laura* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1942), 46.



ages I know what I'm doing." Laura disappoints because she fails to live up to the idealized, multiple identities created for her in her absence. To understand Laura better in the context of the film, we now turn to Waldo, the actual villain, to see how the same composer and filmmakers treated a different kind of character—one whose sexual deviance had to be created through coding and implication but who needed to be powerful enough within the narrative to wield power over Laura and her overdetermining music.

*Waldo Lydecker: "I always liked that detective . . . with a silver shinbone."*

Despite Preminger's attempts to fashion Laura into a sort of femme fatale, she does not really fit the profile for several reasons: she does not turn out to be the killer, nor does she knowingly protect the killer (although initially she protects Shelby thinking that Mark suspects him, only to discover that Shelby actually suspects *her*). She also does not try to lead the hero to his inevitable doom. Part of the film's surprise is that for all the mystery surrounding Laura's character, in the end she is *not* the femme fatale. Instead, Emrys suggests that Diane Redfern is the character closest to the femme fatale, as she is the bad girl who nearly leads Shelby Carpenter to a terrible fate.<sup>72</sup> Another possibility is Ann Treadwell, who fits some of the characteristics. As she appears in the film, Ann was made into a younger and more sexually aggressive character in the film than she was in the novel, ironically balancing out the ambiguous Laura and making her seem more wholesome by comparison. But it is not Ann who pursues the film's hero, nor is her character important or destructive enough to merit the fatale label.

I propose instead that the character who most productively can be compared to a femme fatale is, in fact, Waldo Lydecker. Returning to my earlier explanation of the femme fatale, recall that this character type is a woman who seduces the male protagonist (or anti-hero), turns out to

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<sup>72</sup> Emrys, afterword to *Laura*, 205.

be not who she seems to be, and either is destroyed or must pay for her crimes. Waldo's behavior in *Laura* resembles these bad women far more closely than Laura's does. Waldo begins the film by attempting to seduce Mark with his smooth talk and lies, turns out to be not who we think he is, and is killed in the end after being revealed as the villain. He also, like the sexually aggressive femmes fatales, is portrayed as sexually deviant. But because Waldo is a man, his deviance is manifested differently than would be that of a woman, and thus his role in the film differs considerably from that of a typical femme fatale. He is not desired by the male protagonist, and his characterization is far more complex than the typical true femme fatale; while he is associated with a little-used musical theme that features unusual instrumentation and a foreboding, sinister-sounding melodic line to foreshadow his guilt, Waldo is not overdetermined by music and in fact like Paul Biegler in *Anatomy of a Murder*, Waldo occasionally shows the apparent ability to control the use of music to suit his own purposes. His subjectivity is therefore far more powerfully constructed and expressed than Laura's, despite his lack of conventional or sanctioned masculinity.

Although the story of *Laura* presents Waldo Lydecker as a man obsessed with Laura who descends to every level of wickedness, including murder, to keep other men away from her, both the novel and film make it fairly evident that Waldo is gay. According to Kalinak, "The film ostensibly posits Waldo as Laura's lover; yet filmic conventions encode him as homosexual. At least part of this ambiguity can be traced to the source novel. Despite Caspary's disclaimers to the contrary, the novel includes several references to Waldo's sexuality that are ambiguous at best, including a scene in which Waldo enacts a completely convincing imitation of Laura."<sup>73</sup> As would be standard in later film noirs of the 1940s, it seems that the reasons behind Waldo's apparent homosexuality are more due to what homosexuality *signifies* than because Caspary or

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<sup>73</sup> Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, 163.

Preminger wanted to suggest the character desired men. Like the homosexual villains of film noirs mentioned in chapter 3 (Joel Cairo and Wilmer Cook in *The Maltese Falcon*, Baron Kurtz and Dr. Winkel in *The Third Man*), Waldo's homosexuality signifies moral deviance and wickedness; this makes it not incompatible with his perverse obsession with Laura, which in any case (at least in the film) seems to manifest in his desire to keep her away from other men rather than in exploiting his own sexual desires. In fact, he seems more intent on keeping Laura pure and unsullied by earthly pleasures than on becoming her physical lover. And because Laura is conveniently provided with two potential love interests, Shelby and Mark, the film does not need to deal directly with Waldo's own complex sexuality other than by coding him as ambiguously deviant. The casting of homosexual actor Clifton Webb would seem to have supported the idea that Waldo was intended to be gay, although this choice was not supported by all involved—Zanuck apparently disapproved of Webb, presumably because of the actor's effeminate



Figure 4.10: The film's opening shot of Waldo's apartment features an Oriental-looking statue that recalls Orientalist discourses of sexuality [see chapter 3] and resonates with Waldo's lack of traditional manliness.

behavior.<sup>74</sup>

Although the film contains no overt references to Waldo's homosexuality, the filmmakers adopted other readily recognizable methods of indicating his sexuality onscreen. Invoking contemporary notions of decadence, "fastidiousness

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., citing Otto Preminger, *Otto Preminger: An Autobiography* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), 73.

and preoccupation with taste and breeding” as being sure signs of homosexuality in men, Waldo’s sexuality is suggested in the very first scene by his lavish, ornate apartment, which the shooting script described as “too exquisite for a man” (Figure 4.10).<sup>75</sup> His first spoken line of dialogue to Mark in this scene is when he admonishes Mark, who has not yet seen him, to be careful with his expensive collection: “Careful there, that stuff is priceless!” His behavior toward Mark in this first scene is clearly effeminate and not normative masculine behavior. Having realized that McPherson is a well-known police officer who had famously been shot in the leg taking down a gangster, Waldo makes a suggestive remark that, in its delivery, makes clear its double meaning: “I always liked that detective . . . with a silver shinbone.” Mark at least picks up on Waldo’s peculiarity, remarking at one point later in the film, “You like your men less than one hundred percent, don’t you Mr. Lydecker?” Waldo’s sexuality is also reinforced by how the film in turn exaggerates Mark’s normative sexuality. Mark represents normal masculinity through his perfectly controlled behavior, interest in sports, appropriately manly profession, and lack of outward display of emotion (his reactions to emotional jolts and disappointments, such as discovering that Laura has resumed her engagement to Shelby, are extremely small and barely noticeable). This differs somewhat from his characterization in the novel, in which he was not a stereotypical, emotionless detective, but a sensitive and emotional man who not only struggles internally with his feelings for Laura but also reveals them to Waldo. Emrys writes that for Caspary, Mark McPherson “was not hardboiled, but sensitive and imaginative.”<sup>76</sup> One of the weaknesses of the film, in fact, is the relative lack of chemistry between Laura and Mark due to Andrews’s controlled performance and Tierney’s inability to create a strong character for Laura in the latter half of the film, when she is once again “alive.”

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<sup>75</sup> Kalinak, *Settling the Score*, 164, from Jay Dratler, *Laura*, Shooting Final, with revisions by Ring Lardner Jr., Samuel Hoffenstein, and Betty Reinhardt, April 18, 1944, I.

<sup>76</sup> Emrys, afterword to *Laura*, 196.

How does Waldo's characterization as an effeminate homosexual man compare with Laura's as a dangerously feminine woman? Whereas both characters are perceived as feminine, Waldo, as we have already seen in his ability to create and evoke Laura through his words, has the power to control not only how others perceive him, but how others perceive Laura. Waldo genders *himself* as feminine rather than being the powerless object of gendering performatives. And unlike Laura's pervasive theme that stands in for her in her absence and takes over her characterization, Waldo's theme merely serves to color his character with a sense of general creepiness, foreshadowing his guilt but not controlling his gender identity. Having already spent some time looking at how Waldo's memories of Laura and the use of music in those scenes, which has revealed some of his power to construct and gender others, let us look at Waldo's opening scene, in which he has an opportunity not afforded to Laura: to introduce himself and establish his character on his own terms.

Waldo's first scene—in his apartment with Mark—exemplifies his apparent power to



Figure 4.11: "Have you ever seen such candid eyes?" By showing Waldo looking at himself in the mirror, and asking Mark to look at him looking at himself in the mirror, the film emphasizes Waldo's ability to make himself into a spectacle (as opposed to the film spectacularizing him without his knowledge).

shape how he appears to others rather than external aspects of the film characterizing him. When we first meet the cynical writer he is lounging in his gigantic bathtub secretly watching Mark explore his ornately decorated

apartment (“It’s lavish, but I call it home,” he says drily). After revealing his presence to the detective, who has come to question him about Laura Hunt’s murder, he forces Mark to watch him in the tub, ordering him to hand him his robe as he steps out of the tub off camera (causing Mark to snicker slightly after sneaking a glance in Waldo’s direction). His actions, which should remind us of a sultry femme fatale, seem somewhat absurd on the prissy, middle-aged Waldo. His conversation even mimics the flirtatious banter often heard in film noir: “McPherson, if you know anything about faces, look at mine. How singularly innocent I look this morning. Have you ever seen such candid eyes?” (Figure 4.11). The scene differs from the expectations of a comparable film noir scene because Mark, conforming to heteronormative requirements, is utterly uninterested in Waldo’s self-displays and distracts himself by playing with a little baseball-themed pocket puzzle.

In this scene, which uses no music, Waldo’s effeminate affectations are made to appear



Figure 4.12: Mark interrogates Laura at the police station.

more intrinsic to him than are any of Laura’s supposed character traits. In a comparable scene involving a man and a woman, the woman would be the subject of the performative male gaze, as in Mark’s

later interrogation of Laura at the police station (Figure 4.12). Compare this image, in which Laura is subjected simultaneously to the gazes of the camera, Mark, and the audience, and all under the harsh glare of florescent lights, with the image of Waldo in Figure 4.11. In this picture, Waldo is not only looking at himself in the mirror, he is asking Mark to look *at him looking at himself in the mirror*. Waldo makes himself into a spectacle rather than allowing the film or another character to spectacularize him. Waldo genders *himself* as feminine by his desire for Mark to look at him—*not* Mark’s desire to look at him. Even though Waldo demonstrates an effeminate masculinity, he differs from the feminine female. Not only does he have the power to gender other characters in his ability to construct Laura’s character in the first half of the film, but the filmmakers avoid using external performatives like music or other characters to shape his gender. Instead, Waldo seems to play an active role in expressing and constructing his own character and subjectivity. And because his music does not stand in for his presence the way Laura’s does, and so he is not, as Heather Laing has written of other similar female characters, “burdened with . . . musical-emotional representation” the way she is.<sup>77</sup>

Most reviewers of *Laura* wrote little about the title character, perhaps in part to prevent revealing too much about the film’s surprise. Reviews were generally positive, with critics devoting far more space to discussing Clifton Webb, whose performance was well received, than to Gene Tierney, who seems to have been appreciated more for her decorative qualities than her acting. But at least one reviewer expressed some small amount of disappointment in Tierney’s performance:

When a murder mystery possessing as much sustained suspense, good acting and caustically brittle dialogue as “Laura,” which opened yesterday at the Roxy, comes along

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<sup>77</sup> Heather Laing, *The Gendered Score: Music in 1940s Melodrama and the Woman’s Film* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 1.

it might seem a little like carping to suggest that it could have been even better. As the story of a strangely fascinating female who insinuates herself into the lives of three very worldly gents, much depends, of course, upon the lady herself. This is made quite evident in the beginning of the story when considerable interest and curiosity is generated over the murder of Laura Hunt, and the two rivals for her affections make quite a to do about her intriguing attributes to an inquiring detective.

Yes, you get the idea that this Laura must have been something truly wonderful. Now, at the risk of being unchivalrous, we venture to say that when the lady herself appears upon the scene via a flashback of events leading up to the tragedy, she is a disappointment. For Gene Tierney simply doesn't measure up to the word-portrait of her character. Pretty, indeed, but hardly the type of girl we had expected to meet. For Miss Tierney plays at being a brilliant and sophisticated advertising executive with the wild-eyed innocence of a college junior. . . . Perhaps if Laura Hunt had not had such a build-up, it would have been different.<sup>78</sup>

While Tierney's limitations as an actor are certainly in part responsible for this reviewer's criticism, the fact that Laura fails to "measure up" to expectations is also certainly due to the disconnect between the characters' perceptions of Laura and her embodiment by Tierney. Like Laura Manion in *Anatomy of a Murder*, Laura Hunt's embattled character is at the mercy of cinematic performatives and strongly overdetermining music that, in the absence of natural character development, stands in for her internal essence—coming as it does from *without*, it represents what is *within* her at the same time as it maps meaning onto her body.

### **Broader implications of gender performativity**

Certainly not *all* female characters in classical Hollywood are shown to lack agency in constructing their own identities—a prime example is Rita Hayworth as the eponymous *Gilda* (1946), who takes full control of how she appears to others in her famous performance of "Put the Blame on Mame"—but even when they do, their femininity is always enhanced by outside agents to help create the difference between a woman and a *feminine* woman. For even outside cinema, femininity is distinct from masculinity in its overwhelming reliance on external

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<sup>78</sup> "At the Roxy," *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1944.



performatives. Indeed whereas traditional masculinity is defined by a *supposed* naturalness and lack of mediation—a lack of makeup or artificial perfumes, clothing that creates a natural silhouette of the body, independence and physical strength—femininity is the opposite. Femininity is defined by factors such as the wearing of makeup, high-heeled shoes, and clothes that contort the body into unnatural shapes (i.e., historically corsets and girdles, nowadays push-up bras and Spanx); by controlled behavior and expectations of marriage and co-dependent relationships; and by a need for positive reinforcement by others. Femininity appears by this token to be artificial, unnatural. Today popular television shows tell women and girls that by wearing the right clothes and makeup (regardless of the amount of time, effort, expense, or discomfort) they can appear more feminine—back in the classical Hollywood era, movies stars like Gene Tierney provided this example.

Music and gender performativity is a topic that has occupied the subtext of this dissertation from the beginning, from the construction of female love objects through the FRC as seen through the eyes of the male protagonist, to the musical dramatization of Pearl's transformation that confirms Lewt's expectations of her, to the desert's seduction of Lawrence through the performative "Desert" theme. Looking at these cases through the lens of gender performativity allows us to analyze more closely the particular relationships that music can have with the formation of a gendered subjectivity; whereas we previously looked closely at how music constructs Julie's subjectivity in *Jezebel*, performativity tells us more about the power dynamics created in these musical-dramatic relationships, and how the very categories of male and female, masculine and feminine are constructed and expressed to the audience.

## Epilogue: Changing Gender Archetypes in the Twenty-first Century

As we look back now at the films that have followed in the wake of the classical Hollywood tradition, some developments in how gender difference and gendered roles are treated quickly become apparent. In place of the 1940s woman's film that emphasized the importance of a woman's place in the home as the key to domestic bliss we have genres such as the modern romantic comedy and chick flick, which while still generally supporting the ultimate goal of heterosexual coupling often assert that a woman's independence and strength can be more important than landing a man. At the same time, the western, which generally promoted the superior manliness of the self-reliant, independent male hero, has dwindled in popularity and now is just as likely to feature psychologically or physically weak male protagonists who struggle establishing a traditionally masculine identity. One emerging genre that particularly highlights these changing gender ideologies and their challenge to old-fashioned gender archetypes is the fairytale reboot. Generally based on traditional Western fairytales, such as those told by the Brothers Grimm or Hans Christian Andersen, these films take familiar tales and give them a contemporary twist, appealing to modern sensibilities while taking advantage of well-loved characters and stories. From Disney's spin on Rapunzel, *Tangled* (2010), to Warner Bros.' horror take on *Red Riding Hood* (2011), and even venturing onto television with ABC's fairytale-inspired series *Once Upon a Time* (2011–2012), these films and series generally attempt to create more updated, feminist-friendly heroines and complex anti-heroes in place of helpless princesses and steadfast Princes Charming. As a result, these fairytale heroines are not waiting

around to be rescued by their handsome princes anymore. 2012 alone has given us not one but *two* Snow White films: the Julia Roberts comedy *Mirror Mirror* from Relativity Media and the more successful epic fantasy *Snow White and the Huntsman* from Universal Pictures starring Kristen Stewart and Chris Hemsworth in the title roles. The latter film demonstrates the limits of how far mainstream filmmakers of today are able (or willing) to stretch traditional notions of conventional femininity.

*Snow White and the Huntsman* challenges but does not entirely break free of traditional stereotypical thinking about women and sexuality. The filmmakers certainly set themselves a challenge—Snow White’s defining characteristics are, after all, her beauty, kindness to animals, and domestic work ethic. This reworking of the story introduces Catholic-Christian imagery and themes to the classic tale, casting Snow White as a Joan of Arc-like savior-heroine who eventually takes up a sword against her wicked stepmother Ravenna (Charlize Theron) in battle. In many ways, the film succeeds in challenging the traditional gender roles on which the Snow White story is founded. Despite being provided with two potential love interests (the Huntsman and a similarly hunky young nobleman), the story never develops into a real romance and by the film’s end Snow White sits on the throne alone. Even the kiss she receives from the Huntsman that wakes her from her enchanted sleep is difficult to reconcile with the narrative, as there is virtually no attempt at a love story between the two (although this could be due more to Stewart’s limited acting abilities). In fact, apart from her beauty and gentleness this Snow White is presented as basically asexual.

It is here where the film becomes somewhat muddled in its characterization of Snow White: on the one hand Snow is meant to be gentle and sweet, kind to children and birds and able to stop rampaging trolls with only her soulful gaze. This power comes from her inner goodness,

manifested externally in her physical beauty. On the other hand, Snow White is so lacking in femininity and sexuality that a romance between her and either of her leading men is as implausible as it is expected. By the time she awakens from her cursed sleep Snow White is not a woman anymore, but a Christlike figure whose gender has become a non-issue. Having been stripped of her femininity, Snow White acquires the skills she needs to defeat the evil Queen Ravenna, herself the personification of all that is dangerous and scary about powerful and sexy women. And if Snow White draws her power from her unthreatening asexuality, Ravenna, the avowed man hater, is her opposite—her feminine sexuality as dangerous as Snow White’s is benign.

If the narrative does not entirely succeed in challenging traditional notions of femininity, the music (by James Newton Howard) is far more interesting in that it does not lock Snow White into a narrowly defined, essentialized female role. There is no Feminine Romantic Cliché to show her romantic potential (indeed the narrative makes such potential impossible), nor is there a “Laura”-like theme that attempts to capture her essence and thereby make her physical presence unnecessary. The main theme attaches itself early on to Snow White but is also heard in conjunction with the Huntsman’s heroic acts—it is *not*, however, a love theme. A versatile melody that features Aeolian-modal harmonies, it is also occasionally set over more major-leaning harmonies. Initially played by the solo French horn, the melody features an initial leap of a fifth followed by a whole step descent. The use of the horn and bold opening gesture of the ascending fifth give this melody a heroic sound. We also hear this theme played by instrumentation as diverse as the plaintive oboe and the lush full orchestra, emphasizing both its lyrical and epic possibilities. This melody does not emphasize only Snow White’s feminine attributes, nor does it characterize her as inappropriately *unfeminine*. Instead, it provides a more

complex and ambiguous sound for the character who makes a transition from gentle princess to brave warrior to triumphant queen. Such a musical theme has no parallel in the classical Hollywood films discussed in this dissertation, in part because this Snow White is a kind of character who could not have existed in that world.

*Snow White and the Huntsman* suggests that while gender and sexuality still play crucial roles in characterization in films today, many earlier and more conventional expectations for these roles have changed. Today's female characters often still fall into certain kinds of essentialized roles or provide "Technicolor" (Scarlett Johansson as Natasha Romanoff in *The Avengers* of 2012 is a good example), but it seems that composers are less likely to compose music that overdetermines their gendered characters. Instead of creating scores that use music to single out and essentialize specific characters, something that (as we have seen) happened quite frequently in the classical era, it is less common for individual characters to become strongly associated with a particular theme. In fact, in recent award-winning or nominated films such as *Atonement* (2007), *Inception* (2010), and *The Descendants* (2011), musical scoring and sound design often serve more to create an overall mood than to characterize and overdetermine individual characters.

When female characters do have their own music nowadays, it often provides different kinds of information than the FRCs and other themes that characterized Hollywood's leading ladies of old. Instead of illustrating domestic goddesses and wicked femme fatales, themes are more likely to reflect more modern gender ideology, in which expectations for beauty and femininity are still high but ideas regarding female sexuality and power have certainly changed. Some of these changes are reflected in the scoring strategies employed by composer Howard Shore in Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001–3). Shore chose drastically

different ways of scoring the characters Arwen (Liv Tyler) and Éowyn (Miranda Otto), resulting in two unique kinds of feminine characterization. Arwen, the elf princess who eventually loses her immortality as the story progresses, is scored with different music in each film; each piece, however, is similar in its ethereal timbral sound and lack of harmonic development, mimicking the character's unchanging immortality. The lack of unity but overall similarity in Arwen's type of music suggests a paradox in her characterization: subtle changes in harmonic development and a stripping down of the melodic complexities between the first film and the third mirrors her transition from immortality to her eventual fate as a mortal. At the same time, this same lack of unity suggests not conventional character development, but rather a limit on development. Arwen, who exists primarily as a catalyst for the hero Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) to fulfill his heroic role in the story, needs no characterizing theme because, like her musical timbre, she remains constant; she fulfills a primarily symbolic and functional role, and therefore needs no musical symbol standing in for her. Like romantic helpmeets of old, Arwen's status remains immobile, she is defined by her romantic relationships, and she plays almost no active role in the story. She differs from the typical 1930s/1940s love object, however, in that her sexuality is not portrayed as dangerous, but rather a necessity of idealized femininity, reflecting evolving modern attitudes toward female sexuality

Unlike Arwen, who accepts her mostly passive feminine role, Éowyn tries to create her own destiny by integrating herself into the world of men. A spirited woman who wants more from her life than to remain in her feminine-assigned domestic sphere, Éowyn eventually disguises herself as a warrior and plays a crucial role in defeating one of the key villains of the story. She is also one of the few characters in the trilogy who has her own theme, which characterizes her with its uncertain heroism and gracefulness. Like the heroic theme from *Snow*

*White and the Huntsman*, “Éowyn” is not typically feminine or masculine; it is (basically) lyrical and modal in character and derives from the majestic “Rohan” theme, making it more in line with the patriotic, heroic themes typical of male characters. Unlike Arwen’s frothy wash of sound, Éowyn’s theme has an awkwardness and timidity despite its underlying valor. Notwithstanding the character’s innocence and underlying virtue, Éowyn is not portrayed as passionless or asexual like Kristen Stewart’s Snow White; instead she resembles a character type described by Laura Mulvey in her discussion of Pearl in *Duel in the Sun*: the central female protagonist who is “unable to achieve a stable sexual identity, torn between the deep blue sea of passive femininity and the devil of regressive masculinity.”<sup>1</sup> But unlike Pearl, who is unable to reconcile her feminine and masculine tendencies and ends tragically, Éowyn suffers no such fate. She fights for her right to leave her feminine plot-space, becoming a heroic character even as she retains her femininity. Most importantly, her theme allows that unlike Arwen, Princess Leia, and scores of beautiful women before her, she is not primarily defined by her relationships with men. Éowyn’s scoring is certainly due in part to the film’s storyline as originally devised by Tolkien; nevertheless, it is also informed by the modern idea that female empowerment such as Éowyn’s is a positive and not a dangerous thing, and so the film’s Éowyn becomes stronger and more individualized than the character as she appears in the novels.

In the end, both Arwen and Éowyn are allowed by their music to be more complex than the classical model allows. The unconventional use of harmonies and non-specific assignment of meaning to the characters’ themes leaves the music far more open to interpretation than is much of the music heard in classical Hollywood films. Arwen resists definition with her ambiguously sweet yet sexual music but remains an immobile character defined by her relationship to

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<sup>1</sup> Laura Mulvey, “Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ Inspired by King Vidor’s *Duel in the Sun* (1946),” in *Visual and other Pleasures*, 2nd. ed. (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 32.

Aragorn. Éowyn, on the other hand, defies her culturally drawn role as a stay-at-home female to become a war hero, supported by her feminine yet heroic theme.

Changes in how Americans view gender roles that allowed for characterizations such as Éowyn's in *The Lord of the Rings* and Snow White's in *Snow White and the Huntsman* did not happen quickly or immediately following the classical era. Gail Collins has argued that by 1960, television, which had reached an unprecedented level of popularity and exposure, no longer featured stars like Lucille Ball and other female-aimed entertainment, but primarily male actors and male-centric programming. "The more popular and influential television became," she writes, "the more efficiently women were swept off the screen."<sup>2</sup> A few years later, *Star Trek* (1966–69) would wow audiences with its idealistic, utopian vision of a liberal, nearly socialist future in which men, women, aliens, and people of color could all serve together on an intergalactic starship. Notably, the two recurring female characters on the show—Uhura (Nichelle Nichols) and Christine Chapel (Majel Barrett)—were, respectively, a telephone operator ("communications officer") and a nurse, two traditionally female-held jobs.

The advent of second-wave feminism, the gay rights movement, and increased contact between Americans of different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds has nevertheless resulted in an opening up of how many people in this country view gendered behavior and gender expectations. More types of roles for women of all backgrounds are starting to become available, even if Hollywood filmmakers still prefer male-dominated films featuring heavyweight male stars. And while it is still conventionally masculine white men (and also, increasingly, African-American actors) who take on most leading man roles, many types of male

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<sup>2</sup> Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present* (New York: Little, Brown, 2009), 13.



actors have found popular and critical success, from matinee idols like Brad Pitt to unconventional character actors like Philip Seymour Hoffman and Peter Dinklage. This dissertation does not purport to document the many ways in which scoring strategies have changed in the last half century, but evidence suggests that at least to some extent and in some regards, film music practice has been shaped by changing attitudes toward gender and sexuality.

An important reason for the changes in American filmmaking that have affected both gender representation and musical scoring was the influence of independent, European, and British filmmaking in the early 1960s. James Wierzbicki discusses the importance of the rise of these marginalized cinemas, quoting an article from *Film Culture* in 1961 that served as a manifesto from a group of American filmmakers calling for a “New American Cinema”: “We don’t want false, polished, slick films—we prefer them rough, unpolished, but alive; we don’t want rosy films—we want them the color of blood.”<sup>3</sup> These cinemas used a wide variety of musics not yet commonly used in mainstream Hollywood. As Wierzbicki writes, “The Italian idea that there could comfortably be a stylistic ‘gap’ between diegetic music and extra-diegetic musical ‘commentary,’ the British idea that grittily realistic films warranted appropriately ‘melancholy’ underscores, and the French idea that the ‘meaning’ of at least some film music might lay largely in the ears of the beholder—percolated into the work of the defiantly independent filmmakers who had banded together to launch the New American Cinema. Eventually it percolated into Hollywood.” Film music is still created in collaboration between directors, composers, music directors, and anyone else who can get his or her hand into the mix, but the ideological, aesthetic, and political atmosphere has changed over the years to allow for greater variety in what kinds of music can be heard and how it is meant to signify to audiences.

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<sup>3</sup> “First Statement of the New American Cinema Group,” *Film Culture*, Summer 1961, quoted in James Wierzbicki, *Film Music: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 197.

One result of this greater variety, and an important factor in the shaping of today's film music and gender representation, is the use of pop music and other compiled soundtracks. There has never been a time in the history of synchronized-sound film during which previously written songs were not used in film—for example, *Casablanca* (1942) features a large number of contemporary popular songs, including most famously “As Time Goes By” but also “It Had to Be You,” “Shine,” “Perfidia,” and others. But *Casablanca* also contains a good deal of underscoring by Max Steiner. Only by the 1960s did filmmakers start to see compiled soundtracks as an alternative to the composed score, along with scores more rooted in popular styles and jazz. In *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music*, Anahid Kassabian associates compiled soundtracks with feminist filmmaking impulses, arguing that such soundtracks allow for so-called affiliating identifications: “Rather than assimilating perceivers into one particular subject position, these identifications make affiliations that do not require absorption of one subject into another position. Unlike assimilating identifications, affiliating identifications can accommodate axes of identity and the conditions of subjectivity they create. They can permit resistances and allow multiple and mobile identifications.”<sup>4</sup> Composed scores, she counter argues, tend to create “assimilating identifications” that force viewer/listeners into a single, masculine subject position. We can see some of what Kassabian refers to in the scores discussed in the previous chapters; in *Anatomy of a Murder*, for example, the audience perceives Laura Manion's sexualized characterization and her raunchy theme from the subject position of a heterosexual male looker. The title character of *Laura* provides perhaps an even clearer example. Kassabian's argument is somewhat slanted due to her focus on macho action films from the 1980s and 1990s in her discussions of assimilating

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<sup>4</sup> Anahid Kassabian, *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 139.

identifications and independent films by feminist filmmakers in her discussion of affiliating identifications, but her basic point is well taken. Using a variety of popular music as opposed to omniscient scoring that is meant to be heard subconsciously *can* provide for a wider variety of interpretations and more nuanced characterizations. An instructive example of these procedures can be found in the soundtracks for the *Shrek* tetralogy, in which popular songs from various eras are used alongside newly composed music that recalls classical scoring techniques while adapting them to say new and updated things about gender.

At the heart of the *Shrek* franchise (*Shrek*, 2001; *Shrek 2*, 2004; *Shrek the Third*, 2007; and *Shrek Forever After*, 2010) is a character who challenges traditional expressions of manliness and heroism: Shrek the ogre (voiced by Mike Myers), who is neither handsome nor gallant and chivalrous. The series tracks Shrek's progress in becoming a man by teaching him about friendship, love, family, and responsibility. Whereas the traditional bildungsroman model of the hero's journey involves separation from family and becoming independent and non-reliant upon others, Shrek learns that it is when he is part of a family unit that he is strongest. While the films do contain some conventional scoring, most of the music consists of popular songs or covers of older pop songs, usually providing ironic or poignant nuance to the narrative. Rather than composing a heroic theme for Shrek or associating a particular song with him, different types of songs are used throughout the series for him and his friends to illustrate and add shading to situations. Similarly, the series' female protagonist Fiona (Cameron Diaz) also challenges traditional gender archetypes. Already unconventional by token of being a pudgy green ogress rather than a skinny, fair-skinned princess, Fiona defies expectations by breaking free of her initial role as a supposedly helpless damsel in distress when we learn that she is a skilled fighter with an earthy sense of humor; waiting to be rescued seems to be meant more as an ironic

comment on the arbitrary nature of cultural and gender expectations than on her own abilities. Fiona is also associated with an FRC-like theme that appears throughout the films and uses the commonly understood conventions of the FRC to create new meanings. Eventually this theme, which usually refers back to the love story, is transformed into a heroic theme for Fiona when in the final film *Shrek* is thrust into an alternate reality in which Fiona has become a warrior ogress. It is recognizable as a parody of music that signifies femininity because the FRC is a familiar trope to most viewers, but it does not try to make this new Fiona conform to a romantic feminine ideal.

At the same time that the *Shrek* films' heroes challenge traditional gender expectations, their depiction of villains is far more reliant on the same kinds of gender stereotypes that informed earlier Hollywood films. In fact, all four major *Shrek* villains—Lord Farquaad (*Shrek*), Fairy Godmother (*Shrek 2*), Prince Charming (*Shrek the Third*), and Rumpelstiltskin (*Shrek Forever After*) are based on negative gender stereotypes. The male villains are all portrayed as unmanly and cowardly, and the lone female villain is an unscrupulous and controlling businesswoman with an unhealthy relationship toward her son, building on sexist stereotypes about strong single women. The final *Shrek* villain, Rumpelstiltskin (Walt Dohrn), is given as a musical soundscape that mixes Baroque-like organ lines (relating to his eighteenth-century-inspired costume, which to a modern audience carries sissy connotations) and dance music (which in turn connects to his giant disco ball that plays an important role in the narrative). The combination of Baroque ornate-ness with disco's familiar connotations, along with his visual and narrative representation, helps to suggest that Rumpelstiltskin might be homosexual. Perhaps negative character types are most important in creating a comprehensive narrative, particularly one aimed at children, and especially when that same narrative is attempting to deconstruct

*positive* character types. Whatever the reason, the *Shrek* franchise made deeper strides into challenging gender stereotypes in its acceptance of unconventional heroes and heroines than in its lampooning of sissy men and domineering women.

It remains to be seen what scholars in fifty years, looking back on films of the early twenty-first century, will think of the intersections of gender and music in films of today. It takes the passage of time to give us the necessary perspective to look back and see patterns, trends, and archetypes that form the discourse of an era. It is safe to say, however, that the depiction of heroes, dames, and damsels in distress has certainly changed—possibilities for both female and male characters have opened up so that today’s complicated women who resemble characters like Julie and Pearl are no longer necessarily vilified. Race, while still sometimes used as an indicator of vice or virtue, is not necessarily a determining factor in positive or negative characterization. Heroes need not be paragons of uncomplicated masculinity following the models of Robin Hood or Virgil Hilt. Representation of homosexual characters has steadily transformed as well, even if that has not yet led the rise of mainstream gay action movies. In all of these respects, film music not only informs our understanding of film narratives but also confirms how closely music, whether populating film scores or other musical practices, is connected to deeply ingrained notions of gender and sexuality.

Gender isn’t just something extra that we only need to address when we are looking at woman composers or operas like *Carmen* and *Salomé*. Gender shapes our whole reality; it is impossible to disentangle it from other issues in studies of art, culture, history—anything that is a part of who we are and how we relate to the world around us. Film offers a very clear and powerful example of how important gender is in shaping narratives, delegating power, and positioning people in terms of their function and role in society, but everything we study as

music historians is in some way essentially connected to how societies divide up gendered roles and responsibilities, and the kinds of value they place on those roles. I hope my dissertation will serve as an example of how we can understand more about cultural ideologies and discourses by listening to what a given culture thought different genders sounded like. The more we acknowledge its importance in how we understand the world around us, the better we will comprehend that we cannot possibly understand music without understanding gender.

## APPENDIX: FEMININE ROMANTIC CLICHÉ SURVEY

### 1. FRC Survey

#### FRC

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\*#*Captain Blood* (1935)  
\*#*The Informer* (1935)  
\*#*The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936)  
\*\*#*The Garden of Allah* (1936)  
\*#*The Lost Horizon* (1938)  
\*#*The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938)  
\*#*The Young in Heart* (1938)  
\*#*Stagecoach* (1939)  
\*#*The Mark of Zorro* (1940)  
\*#*The Sea Hawk* (1940)  
\*\**Foreign Correspondent* (1940)  
\*\*#*Arizona* (1940)  
\*\**The Great Lie* (1941)  
\*#*Sergeant York* (1941)  
\*#*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1941)  
\*\*#*Casablanca* (1942)  
\*#*The Black Swan* (1942)  
\*#*For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943)  
\**Cloak and Dagger* (1946)  
\**Duel in the Sun* (1946)  
\*#*The Captain from Castile* (1947)  
\**The Luck of the Irish* (1948)  
\*\**Red River* (1948)  
\**Portrait of Jennie* (1948)  
\**The Three Musketeers* (1948)  
\**The Fighting Kentuckian* (1949)  
\**The Flame and the Arrow* (1950)  
\*#*A Place in the Sun* (1951)  
\*#*Quo Vadis* (1951)  
\**On Dangerous Ground* (1952)  
\*#*Ivanhoe* (1952)  
\**Scaramouche* (1952)  
\**The Robe* (1953)  
\**Prince Valiant* (1954)  
\*#*The Silver Chalice* (1954)

#### No FRC

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\*\*#*Anthony Adverse* (1936)  
\*\*#*The General Died at Dawn* (1936)  
\**Romeo and Juliet* (1936)  
#*In Old Chicago* (1937)  
\**Jezebel* (1938)  
\*\**Dodge City* (1939)  
\*\**Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939)  
*The Philadelphia Story* (1940)  
#*Our Town* (1940)  
*The Westerner* (1940)  
*Pride and Prejudice* (1940)  
\*\**High Sierra* (1941)  
#*Citizen Kane* (1941)  
*Ball of Fire* (1941)  
*Suspicion* (1941)  
\*\**How Green Was My Valley* (1941)  
\**Saboteur* (1942)  
*Talk of the Town* (1942)  
*The Male Animal* (1942)  
\*\**Heaven Can Wait* (1943)  
*Destination Tokyo* (1943)  
#*The Song of Bernadette* (1943)  
*The Ox-Bow Incident* (1943)  
\*\*#*It Happened Tomorrow* (1944)  
\**Arsenic and Old Lace* (1944)  
*To Have and Have Not* (1944)  
*Laura* (1944)  
#*Double Indemnity* (1944)  
*Jane Eyre* (1944)  
#*Guest in the House* (1944)  
\*\*#*The Lost Weekend* (1945)  
\**The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945)  
#*Spellbound* (1945)  
*Scarlet Street* (1945)  
\*\**The Stranger* (1946)  
#*The Killers* (1946)

\*\*#*The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946)  
*The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* (1947)  
*The Bishop's Wife* (1947)  
 \**Fort Apache* (1948)  
 \*\**The Adventures of Don Juan* (1948)  
*Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948)  
*Johnny Belinda* (1948)  
 \**She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949)  
*The Fountainhead* (1949)  
*The Heiress* (1949)  
 #*Sunset Boulevard* (1950)  
 \*\**Young Man with a Horn* (1950)  
*The Buccaneer's Girl* (1950)  
 \**Cyrano de Bergerac* (1950)  
*The Thing from Another World* (1951)  
*The Bad and the Beautiful* (1952)  
 \*\*#*High Noon* (1952)  
*Against All Flags* (1952)  
 \*#*Viva Zapata!* (1952)  
*Invaders from Mars* (1953)  
 #*From Here to Eternity* (1953)  
*The High and the Mighty* (1954)  
*Betrayed* (1954)  
 \*\**Them!* (1954)  
 \*#*On the Waterfront* (1954)  
*The End of the Affair* (1955)  
 \*\*#*Picnic* (1955)  
 \*\*#*Battle Cry* (1955)  
 #*The Man With the Golden Arm* (1955)

\* Female love object character (love interest, not main character, portrayed as an object, virtuous, etc.)

\*\* Female love object variant character (has some characteristics of the love object but not all—often character is not objectified, has increased agency, less virtuous but still positively portrayed, etc.)

# Oscar-nominated or -winning score



## 2. Comments on the survey:

- ❖ Of the 100 films I have surveyed so far, the FRC appears 35% of the time.
- ❖ However, the frequency goes up 56% if only films with Female Love Object characters are considered.
- ❖ Female Love Object characters appear in 62% of the films surveyed.
- ❖ Although by far the largest concentration of FRC films occurs in the historical adventure genre, other genres and film types also see a fair number of FRC films.
- ❖ By the end of the period in question, all of the FRC films are historical adventures or biblical epics, suggesting that the device's use was falling out of favor except in that particular genre.

## 3. Films genres and frequency of the Feminine Romantic Cliché

	<u>Uses FRC</u>	<u>Does not use FRC</u>
<b>Genre films</b>		
Historical adventure (includes biblical epics)	15	4
Western	5	6
Women's film/melodrama	1	2
Thriller/mystery/film noir	4	13
Science Fiction/fantasy	2	4
<b>Non-genre films</b>		
Drama (includes war films, romance)	6	29
Comedy/romantic comedy	1	7

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