PAINTED WOMEN: FRAMING PORTRAITS IN *FILM NOIR* AND THE GOTHIC WOMAN'S FILM OF THE 1940S

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ABSTRACT

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by Helen Hanson

This thesis examines films produced by the Hollywood cinema of the 1940s which contain portraits as a feature of their narratives. Whilst portraits are found in a number of cinematic genres, they are most common in the critical categories of *film noir* and the gothic woman's film. Framed images within cinematic narratives foreground the definitive power of frames, so identifying and interrogating frames is a key argumentative strategy of the thesis. The thesis breaks into two parts; part one focuses on portraits in *film noir* and part two on the gothic woman's film.

Chapter One examines the genre criticism on *film noir*, showing that images of gender (the fatally seductive *femme fatale* and the male investigator) have been key to critical constructions of the category, constructions challenged by a number of films. Close analysis of films such as *Laura* (1944) and *Gilda* (1946) reveals a range of gendered images, showing that male characters are often more questionable than female ones. The visual framing of female characters is also challenged through the contribution of film sound and music to these narratives. Chapter Two continues the examination of *film noir* with examples of films with plots centring on the framing of male characters; films such as *I Wake Up Screaming* (1942), *Phantom Lady* (1944) and *The Dark Corner* (1946). The framed male is freed through the actions of a female investigator. The character who frames the 'patsy' has a pathological relationship with a framed image of a woman; thus a number of frames, textual, narrative, and critical intersect in these films. Part one shows that, contrary to much criticism, a range of female roles and activities are evident in *film noir*.

Chapters Three and Four focus on portraits in the gothic woman's film, films such as *Rebecca* (1940), *Gaslight* (1944), *Dragonwyck* (1947) and *The Two Mrs Carrolls* (1947). Existing genre criticism on these films has defined the heroine as lacking narrative agency, and perceived her as persecuted by the sinister gothic male. Through close textual analysis it is shown that she actively undertakes an investigation of the gothic male through an encounter with a portrait representing either an ancestor, or a woman in the gothic male's sexual past. The portrait is thus associated with a repressed secret, and at the heroines' instigation scenes of confrontation are staged through which the gothic male exposes the repressed secret. Film sound and music play a key role in these scenarios, with the gothic male being haunted by sound. Thus analyses of these films which takes account of sound as well as image reveals a different gender balance than previous critical approaches have allowed.

In working from textual frames outwards to take in the critical frames of genre, gender and theories of the visual and aural pleasures of cinema, the thesis offers a re-reading of two key categories of 1940s Hollywood cinema, and offers approaches through which they can be re-framed to allow a different view.

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INTRODUCTION: FRAMING APPROACHES TO CINEMATIC PORTRAITS

This thesis is framed by a Hollywood publicity image from the 1940s. The title page shows Barbara Hale, an actress who worked for RKO Radio Pictures playing lead roles in what have been described as "routine Hollywood productions of the 30s and 40s".[1] I have chosen this image as a starting point for my examination of portraits in Hollywood films of the 1940s for a number of reasons. The image itself is a portrait, it was produced in the context of the classical Hollywood cinema's studio system, and it is quite typical of Hollywood studio portraits of female stars of the 1940s. But it also allows us to examine some of the questions that arise when examining portraits in films. The image uses frames as props within it, it is at once a photograph, produced by the commercial institution of the Hollywood studio system while it also alludes to the much older tradition of painted portraiture. The immediate impact of the image, our first impressions of it, might be that it paints and frames Hale - the subject of the portrait - as a generic figure of idealised femininity. Her low cut black dress and her pose emphasise the curves of her bust and waist and simultaneously invite the look of the camera and viewer. According to the stills photographer Laszlo Willinger, who worked at MGM Studios, a directness, or obviousness in publicity shots was an important and desirable quality: "The basic thing was to create that poster effect. The photograph has to stand on its own - without caption. If you have to explain it, it's not good."[2] However the more closely one looks at this image, and looks through the various frames that it contains, the less obvious or accessible its message seems to be. The way that this image can function to both present a portrait image, and also to question the process by which a portrait image is formed and presented to a viewer is due to the presence of the multiple frames within it, and due the fact that frames are both material objects within the image, and conceptual objects or structures which shape our view of it. The term 'frame', then, is one with a number of meanings. The term functions as a noun: *a* frame has, what critic Jacques Aumont, terms "phenomenal aspects"[3] it functions materially to define and delineate the image's size and format; but what we might call the conceptual aspects of a frame also have a definitive role in that a 'frame' indicates a view on something, a frame is a way of seeing. However the term frame also functions as a verb, and again definitive properties are clear in the sense in which *to* frame is understood in the sense of presenting a view on something. Frames, then, are both structures and ways of structuring.

We can see the various ways in which frames and framing function if we examine the portrait of Barbara Hale more closely. The frame closest to the camera performs a variety of functions, it initially seems to define a 'portrait' composition of space around Hale, and being the most ornate of the three frames within the photograph, it's gilding and decoration have a connotative function. As Jacques Aumont notes, an ornate gilded frame connotes both the aesthetic and economic status of the picture that it encloses.[4] This frame foregrounds the tradition of painted portraiture, perhaps allying the production of photographic studio portraits with this older tradition which possesses connotations of respectability. But while it strongly alludes to, and even borrows from, the representative modes of portraiture, what we encounter in the photograph is a frame without a canvas. The first frame operates to direct our attention inwards at an image of a woman, but immediately we can see an intersection of framing conventions which set up a tension in the image. The conventions of painted portraiture are operating in and through the medium of photographic portraiture (and the Hollywood publicity shot, with *its* particular conventions). Our look is mediated by a two way process, we may start by looking at Hale but we are not looking *at* a photographed painting, but *through* a painted photograph. This is an image which is synthesised from the different practices of painting and photography, but which is not wholly reducible to either.[5]

The ornate frame which ostensibly encloses Hale within a portrait composition is not the limit-frame of the image, it encloses only a part of the larger space of the photograph and its overall composition. At the points where the first frame intersects with the other frames in the image attention is distracted away from Hale, the strong diagonals of these canted frames seem to offer alternatives to the first frame which is square on to the camera. It is also significant that Hale's feet, covered by the gauzy folds of her dress, protrude out from the first frame, and in fact also just protrude out from the limit-frame of the photograph. These textual elements, the intersections of the frames, and Hale exceeding the frame, are important in that they challenge a classic portrait composition. In multiplying the number of frames in the image there is a suggestion that a single frame around a subject is insufficient, that there are different views on it, different angles and thus ways of seeing. This brings us to the question of the subject represented in the image: a glamourous female star.

What implications do these multiple and intersecting frames have on the way that this image might be read? If we follow a similar process of beginning by looking *at* the first frame we might read the image of Hale as an instance of the way that the Hollywood as an ideological institution produces, or constructs, an ideal of femininity as perfected and glamourised, as inviting the look and desire of men. Here our reading is shaped by a conceptual frame which comes out of much feminist work on Hollywood undertaken in the 1970s and early 1980s, and within which the very influential work of Laura Mulvey might be taken to sum up the problem of "sexual imbalance"[6] between men as viewers and women as viewed. I will discuss Mulvey's work more fully later in this introduction, but I want to note here the way in which her work on the sexual politics of the look in classical Hollywood cinema has functioned both to expose a frame on gender relations imposed by a patriarchal ideology and, through its influence on subsequent feminist criticism, has itself become a frame through which to approach classical Hollywood cinema. This thesis is concerned with examining how portraits function as framed objects within two groups of films from the

Hollywood cinema of the 1940s. I undertake close analyses of the portraits and the ways they are integrated into the films both narratively and cinematographically, what we might term 'intratextual frames'. However I am also concerned with the ways in which conceptual frames impact on the readings of these 'portrait-films', the ways in which critical and theoretical approaches to gender, genre and spectatorship define, and even delimit, ways of seeing and approaching these films. These frames might be termed 'extratextual frames'.

I began my discussion of approaches to the image of Barbara Hale by focussing on what was enclosed in the first frame: an idealised image of a woman inviting the look of a spectator. However, the figure of the woman only constitutes part of the picture, the other frames within this image suggest that this is only one way of framing this woman, they cut across, intersect and distract from the first frame and in fact she is slightly off-centre in the overall composition, the meeting points of the other frames allow us to look through two, or even three different frames at the same time. The fact that this portrait image at once seems to centre on a particular view of gender (idealised and perfected femininity), but that its multiple frames offer or suggest different ways of seeing in relation to Hollywood and its images is relevant to the rest of this introduction where I examine instances it is masculinity not femininity that is put into a frame. I discuss a situation in which a male character – Jeff Markham (Robert Mitchum) in *Out of the Past* (Jacques Tourneur, USA, 1947) is framed for a murder he did not commit; and I examine several different images of masculinity in relation to *Suspicion* (Alfred Hitchcock, US, 1941). Throughout my argument I try to keep an awareness of the multiple functioning of frames to the foreground, and the image of Barbara Hale, its presentation of a subject enmeshed in a complex network of frames, might serve as a conceptual frame for the discussion which is to come.

Narrative Frames and Composing a frame

> "I think I'm in a frame... I don't know. All I can see is the frame. I'm going in there to look at the picture."
> Jeff Markham (Robert Mitchum) in *Out of the Past.*

Jeff Markham's dilemma in *Out of the Past* (Jacques Tourneur, USA, 1947) is helpful in in continuing my investigation into the many meanings that frames have in filmic narratives.[7] The set-up, or frame-up, of a character is a common narrative situation in *film noir*, but what interests me in this particular situation is the way that Jeff's comments so clearly foreground the way that a frame functions. A dark urban milieu, with its characters enmeshed in crime, and in competition with each other to stay in control of their situation, is the predominant setting of *Out of the Past.* In this world there is less a division between characters who are innocent or guilty of committing a crime than there is between smart characters who get away with their actions, and stupid characters who get caught. The victim of a frame-up, the patsy, is one of these stupid characters, manipulated into a position where they appear to be culpable of a crime they actually did not commit.[8] The frame around the patsy puts them at the centre of a crime picture or scene, in other words the patsy is defined by the frame as guilty. Jeff's awareness that such a frame may have been drawn around him, and his determination to step out of the frame, to take a "look at the picture", is an awareness that he is being presented in a particular way, he is being painted as guilty by Sterling. Jeff is smart enough not only to understand the big picture, but also to change its composition, so that he is no longer framed as guilty. He does this by trying to prevent the murder for which he is to be framed, and when he is too late he removes the body, and then obtains papers that allow him to incriminate, frame, Sterling.

I am foregrounding terms such as picture and paint in my discussion as they clearly refer to the idea of creating a picture, they are terms applicable to painting. But they also suggest a power dynamic in relation to the act of creating a picture. It matters to Jeff that he is in a frame and it is clear that this is perceived as a less powerful position than that of the characters outside the frame who are putting it in place. The metaphoric use of terms such as 'frame' and 'picture' show how closely the idea of vision is tied to issues of interpretation, and therefore to the gaining of the knowledge on which to act. The patsy in the frame is at a disadvantage because he (and in *film noir* the patsy is usually a he, though the use of a feminine term to define a stupid man in a disadvantageous position should be noted) cannot see (read understand) the picture in which he is a figure. There is a more powerful eye outside the frame which belongs to the character who is composing the picture and positioning the patsy. In addition to these frames created by the characters' conflict in the narrative, there is another, larger, frame being put in place: the cinematic frame. The scene referred to above takes place in a taxi-cab. Jeff trusts the cabby enough to confide in him. The two men are framed in medium close-up, and the back window of the cab provides a further (internal) frame, giving us glimpses of the night-time streets and headlights of other cars. Jeff's comment adds a strongly self-reflexive flavour, his summation of his character's situation multiplies in meaning, it is applicable to the cinematic frame, and can be interpreted as a comment on it. The tracing of these different frames, from metaphoric narrative frames outward to the cinematic frame itself, reveals their intimate interrelationship. Jeff's explicit identification of his frame draws our attention to the cinematic frame. He therefore not only shows how an intratextual frame works - the frame-up works in a *noir* of the *noir* narrative, he also illustrates that when we become aware of this intratextual frame we also become aware of the operations of extratexual frames, the relationships between framing and the interpretation of the 'picture' that the frame presents. As with the portrait image of Barbara Hale we can see the multiple functions of 'frame', which shift between a structure, a frame, and a process of structuring - framing.

I have used the portrait image of Barbara Hale and the brief moment from *Out of the Past* as they function as 'comments' on framing, and they give me a place from which to begin my discussion of portraits in Hollywood films of the 1940s. These framed painted images are 'out of the past' in the sense that the historical moment of their production is between fifty and sixty years ago; but they are also out of, and framed by, another past: portraits in films bring with them the long history of the portraiture tradition. This tradition has its own codes and conventions of representation, codes and conventions which have varied at different historical moments and in different national contexts. I will go on to explore some of these conventions in relation to *Suspicion*, a film which features a prominent portrait, later in my discussion. My interest in portraits in films stems from the interrelationship that these portraits forge between the different mediums of painting and cinema. I want to investigate what issues arise when a still, silent, painted image and a moving, speaking, photographic (cinematographic) image coalesce in portraying a human subject. This coalescence is a complex process, and the combination of the different mediums sets them in tension as often as it unifies them. Portraits in Hollywood films of the 1940s, whilst evoking the historic forms of the portraiture tradition, are highly mediated, they are viewed through a multitude of different frames. They are marked by the particular codes and conventions of Hollywood production in the 1940s, by the generic codes of the films in which they are contained, and as portraits of fictional characters they are presented through the frame of a specific narrative. Identifying these multiple frames is a way to begin to tease out the complex relationships inherent in the cinematic portraits. These portraits involve an encounter with a portrayed human subject, and their mediation through cinematic and narrative frames means that we encounter 'reel' subjects of Hollywood portraiture rather than the 'real' subjects of historic portraiture. Despite these caveats, the relationship between portraiture and cinema is a fascinating and rich area of investigation, and the multiple frames that need to be identified are not only those of the different representative traditions of Hollywood and of the fine art tradition, frames influencing the production of a portrait image, but also the frames that are put in place by the critical approaches to these different traditions.

The relationships between fine art and the cinema have occupied critics from the areas of art history and film studies, and many varied approaches have been developed in this area.[9] An analogy between the pictorial representation of space according to the rules of Renaissance perspective in fine art, and the represented space in the classical Hollywood film text, has been a potent idea shaping film criticism. The work of Stephen Heath, drawing on and developing debates in French film theory, has been particularly influential in this area:

> The conception of the Quattrocento system is that of a scenographic space, space set out as spectacle for the eye of a spectator. Eye and knowledge come together; subject, object and the distance of the steady observation that allows the one to master the other; the scene with its strength of geometry and optics. Of that projected utopia, the camera is the culminating realization... the images it furnishes become, precisely, the currency of that vision, that space.[10]

Through this analogy the classical Hollywood cinema is seen as benevolent in that it offers the spectator an immediately intelligible narrative space, what Richard Maltby calls the "best view".[11] The principles by which framing operates in the classical Hollywood cinema are principles which draw on a composition of space presented to a centred spectator position. In a static composition the space is arranged as though for the eye of the spectator. Jacques Aumont discusses the history of centred framing as a dominant feature of fine art composition, and indeed points out the way in which the convention of centring has come to function powerfully in classical narrative cinema, particularly in relation to the mobility of the cinematic frame and its particular selection of what is viewed of the diegesis at any particular moment. Aumont writes:

> Framing, or centring, is thus the scanning (and sometimes the fixing) of the visual world by an imaginary visual pyramid. All framing establishes a relation between the fictional eye (of the painter, of the camera, and so on) and a group of objects organised into a scene... The relationship between framing and centring is... evident in cinema. In the vast majority of so-called classical films, the image is constructed around one or two visual centres, often people, to such an extent that 'classic realism' is often synonymous with an essentially 'centred' style.[12]

In mobile compositions, as both Heath and Maltby note, classical Hollywood narrative utilises an interplay between the principles of composition, which work within the cinematic frame, and the continuity of offscreen space, the areas outside the frame:

> Many of the early aesthetic debates about the cinema posed the question of two- or three-dimensionality in terms of whether the cinema frame should be seen as a window opening onto a world which extended into the offscreen space beyond the limits of the frame, or as a border, much like a painting, in which composition was a crucial determinant of meaning. In practice, Hollywood cinema uses the frame in both ways, encouraging us to accept a sense of the continuity of space, while simultaneously focusing our attention on specific points actually represented offscreen.[13]

Maltby and Heath suggest that the interplay between these two uses of the frame constitute the space of the narrative as "safe space"[14] into which the spectator is sutured: "cut in as subject precisely to a process of vision, a positioning and positioned movement."[15] And what

Aumont's work also makes clear is that framing the fictional space from a centred position has come to be synonymous with classical narrative style. Aumont also points out that this framing has ideological implications which come into play when we consider "the relation between the fictional eye... and a group of objects organised into a scene".[16]

Heath's analysis of narrative space takes on some of the ideological implications which arise from questions of its framing. He takes *Suspicion* as his starting point, and his discussion of narrative space includes a consideration of composition and principles of centring as well as the role of a portrait in inflecting the framed space in certain ways. Heath's analysis of the ways in which a portrait functions in a classical Hollywood film is obviously relevant to my own exploration, but I am also concerned with examining the ways in which his analysis of narrative space has been part of a critical frame which has shaped certain views and approaches to classical Hollywood film, and I will be investigating how critical frames shape specific approaches to gender, to genre and to questions of spectatorship.

The scene which Heath chooses to examine in detail is "a climactic point",[17] where Lina Aysgarth (Joan Fontaine) is told of the death of a friend by two police inspectors (Figures i.01-i.04). The news adds to her suspicions that her husband Johnnie (Cary Grant) is untrustworthy, and the situation of the friend's death leads her to fear that Johnnie may have murdered him.[18] Heath introduces the portrait as follows:

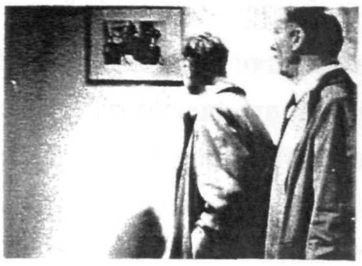
> The scene finds its centre in a painting: the massive portrait of Lina's father which bears with all its Oedipal weight on the whole action of the film - this woman held under the eye of the father... and before which she now positions herself to read the newspaper report of the friend's death and to gather strength enough to face the scrutiny of the law, the look relayed from portrait to police and to portrait again.[19]

Thus Heath makes clear the ways in which a framed representation of a subject – the portrait of General McLaidlaw – carries important connotations. The portrait of Lina's father, dressed in all the regalia of his military uniform, functions as a highly emphasised image of patriarchy and nation. The way that this image contributes to the composition of the shot of Lina is also significant, it looms into the cinematic frame behind her, and as Heath points out, the eyeline of the portrait seems to "relay" a look of scrutiny at Lina. However, the portrait of the General is not the only picture in this scene; as the two police officers arrive and walk through the hallway the attention of one of them, Benson, is distracted by a "post-cubist, Picasso-like painting"[20] (Figures i.05-i.11). Heath reads the attention that Benson pays to this picture as disrupting the otherwise "faultless"[21] narrative space of the scene:

STOP PRESS
ENGLISHMAN FOUND DEAD

Clockwise from top left Figs i.01-i.04

Figure 1.05



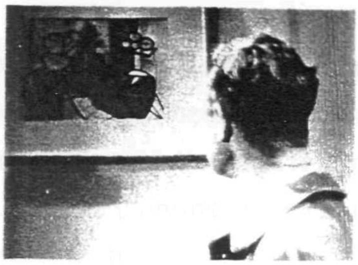
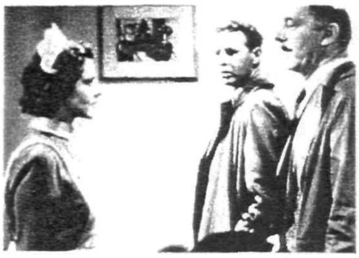


Figure 1.06

Figure 1.07



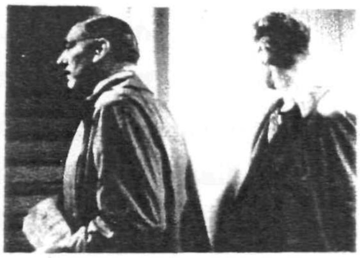
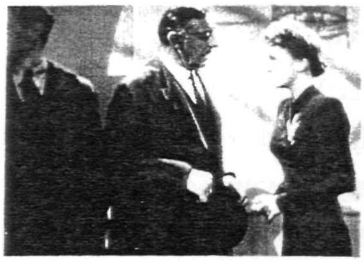


Figure 1.08

Figure 1.09



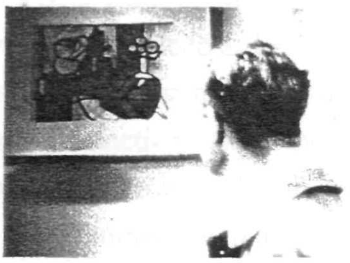
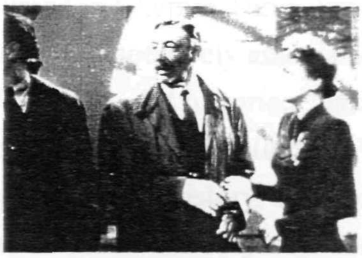


Figure 1.10

Figure 1.11



> Out of the action, breaking the clarity of direction, obstinately turned away, one of the inspectors is pulling to the left, gazing abruptly at something hidden from us, without reason in this scene.
>
> If a painting stands straight at the centre of the scene, the look that holds Lina's reception of the news, that organises the scene itself, it goes askew at the edges of the beginning and end, instants of another painting. What occupies Benson, the gazing inspector, lost in a kind of fascinated panic, is precisely this other painting.[22]

For Heath 'Benson's painting' introduces a problem of interpretation in relation to the gaze, and is particularly problematic in this case as the gaze here is associated with the eye of the law. He suggests that the difficulty of visual interpretation that it introduces only serves to "demonstrate the rectitude of the portrait, the true painting at the centre of the scene, utterly in frame in the film's action."[23] The portrait is therefore taken as a straightforward image from which 'Benson's picture' diverges. There is an analogy being drawn here between a portrait representation of a powerful male subject, the father, and the construction of Renaissance space, which puts the subject at the centre of a scene, arranged and displayed for 'him'. In this schema the portrait as a form of representation is therefore endowed with authority, it is framed as a stable, or in Maltby's term, a safe form of representation. It can be seen, then, that one of the central conceptions in the definition of a classical Hollywood cinema - that of cinematic space drawing on Renaissance perspective, is also extended to include a conception of the subject which shares a notion of the authority of an in-dividual (undivided) and stable self, a notion which is often traced as beginning in the Renaissance.

As I indicated earlier in my discussion, portraits in Hollywood films of the forties are highly mediated by the context of the films' production. Nevertheless, as the use of the portrait of the General in *Suspicion* demonstrates, however highly mediated they are portraits within films bring with them connotative associations which are distinct to the portraiture tradition. This is an issue that I pursue in my examination of portraits of female ancestors in gothic women's films discussed in Chapter Three, but I want to briefly indicate some of the codes and conventions that are connotatively associated with the portraiture tradition in relation to the portrait in *Suspicion*. Art historian Joanna Woodall traces a history of portraiture in the introduction to her edited collection.[24] Woodall indicates the shifts that portraiture has gone through in its long history, and she points out the ways in which they ways in which the portrayal of the human subject is contingent upon differing conceptions of identity. A full discussion of this history is obviously outside the scope of this thesis, but what I do want to draw attention to is the ways in which the incorporation of portraits into cinematic narratives frequently uses a portrayed human subject as a kind of 'shorthand' for a particular take on subjectivity.

Woodall discusses artefacts of the classical period, such as statues, busts and herms, coins, sacrophagi, as early forms of portraiture, drawing the physiognomic likeness of the subjects that they represented.[25] She notes that physiognomic likeness as a way of representing a person's identity, for example their status and position, was less common in the Medieval period, when status might be indicated more schematically by a coat of arms.[26] A shift in conceptions of identity in the Renaissance period led to a return to physiognomic likeness as a representation of the subject. Woodall writes:

> The 'rebirth' of portraiture is considered a definitive feature of the Renaissance... More precisely, the early fifteenth century saw the adoption of intensely illusionistic, closely observed facial likenesses.[27]

These likenesses were frequently produced through the medium of painting, which (as noted above) was undergoing a number of shifts in the style in which space was represented through the development of perspective, and Woodall notes that some artists produced portraits of their subjects which included imperfections – a 'realistic' approach to portraiture, a general trend, particularly of Italian Renaissance portraiture, was to use techniques which idealised the subject:

> ...particularly in Italy, [artists] reconciled attention to the physiognomic pecularities of the subject with more generalising visual devices, such as the profile view (especially for women), or the analysis of face and body in smooth, consistently lit geometrical shapes. Such techniques were traditionally understood to attribute universal and ideal qualities to figures.[28]

The codes and conventions that Woodall refers to here are particularly relevant to the portrait of General McLaidlaw in *Suspicion*. His status is represented through his uniform, and his portrait attributes universal and ideal (male) qualities of authority, governance, and nation. Thus it can be seen that connotations of the Renaissance subject, as an idealised and stable male subject at the centre of a intelligible space accrue to the character of a cinematic narrative through the way that the portrait figures in the narrative.

The work of Heath and Maltby, which I discussed earlier, illustrate the way that critical paradigms, such as the analogy between Renaissance perspective and the representation of a stable male subject and classical narrative space have ordered the film text, and at this point I would point out that this paradigm, drawing so centrally on the visual representation of space and on the visual representation of the subject, is in danger of ignoring the very important role that film sound can have in both contributing to and, in many cases, problematising the narrative space of a film text and the ways which subjectivity are represented. I will briefly consider the ways in which critical paradigms, such as Heath's, effectively organise or frame approaches to the film text in ways in which privilege image over sound. In terms of the model of framing with which I began this introduction these are intratextual frames affecting the ways in which individual elements of the film text are understood. In the discussion that follows I will consider some of the implications of these intratextual frames and I also go on to consider the ways that extratextual frames, such as discussions of genre and its relationship to gender, have played a role in defining and delimiting approaches to film texts.

Framing Film Sound

Film theorists working on sound have noted the general partiality of film theory to visual elements. Kathryn Kalinak finds its origin in a long cultural hierarchy privileging visual over aural perception:

> A historical survey of both classical and contemporary theories of the sound track, especially those which treat film music, reveals the extent to which the visual bias of the culture is reproduced in the ways we think about film. From the most commonplace clichés (seeing is believing) to the syntax and vocabulary of our language, seeing is a more precise and varied experience than hearing. The eye's sensory apparatus functions with the immediacy of the light rays which it uses to identify the stimulus. The ear functions with the acuity of prolonged stimulation; its perception is based on sensitivity to the motion of sound waves which require duration. But the distinction between them has continually been distilled into the superiority of the eye over the ear as a perceptual mechanism.[29]

Rick Altman traces the development of visual emphasis in French film theory from the work of Jean-Louis Baudry and Jean Comolli on the film apparatus, work which "usually defines film apparatus as camera and projector, with the mechanics of sound reproduction left on the margin."[30] Altman suggests that this inherent bias has left limitations in the analytical concepts film theory brings to bear in its analyses:-

> The justification for this approach is said to lie in the Western world's privileging of vision over all other senses; the cinema it is claimed, is no more than a child of Renaissance perspective. According to this approach the spectator is placed, within the film as well as within the world at large, primarily by visual markers; even within the limits of this method of handling spectator placement, however, it is surprising that more emphasis has not been placed on the sound track's role in splitting and complicating the spectator, in contesting as well as reinforcing the lessons of the image track. Recent theory has been pushed even further in a visual direction by the adoption of Jacques Lacan's visual metaphors (first by Baudry and Christian Metz, then by virtually the entire Paris school). Developing a fascinating and logical tie between the "mirror stage" as described by Lacan and the film-viewing experience itself, these critics find themselves limited to visual language alone.[31]

The primacy of visual over aural perception has been secured by film theory's use of the visual metaphors of psychoanalysis, despite the fact that there are many instances in which sound is important in the cases and theories of psychoanalysis.[32] Theories of spectatorship have often evoked a Lacanian parallel between scopophilia and epistemophilia in analysing the drive of the look. The model of visual perception thus aligns itself with evidence and knowledge, distinct from the conceptions of aural perception with emotion and feeling. As such the dominance of visual over aural could suggest a general division in film criticism of knowledge from feeling, the dominance of knowledge over feeling reinscribing a hierarchical division of mind over body. This hierarchy has been most powerfully used in relation to film music, which has been repeatedly assigned a role as merely supporting the images of the film and supplying emotion at any given moment. Film music has been ordered in several ways, the technical term underscore emphasises a conception of its supporting role, and film sound as a whole is often divided into the different components of speech, sound effects and music.

The work of the French film sound critic Michel Chion is important in that he reconceptualises approaches to film sound. In his book The Voice in Cinema he argues that the ordering and dividing of sound puts the critical focus onto the voice in cinema as a mediator of narrative information, which prevents discussion of the sonic qualities of the voice, and he suggests that the notion of *the* soundtrack is one which is critically unhelpful:

> Discussions of sound films rarely mention the voice, speaking instead of "the soundtrack". A deceptive and sloppy notion, which postulates that all the audio elements recorded together onto the optical track of the film are presented to the spectator as a sort of bloc or coalition, across from the other bloc, a no-less-fictive "image track".[33]

Elsewhere Chion asserts that to discuss an audience's experience of a film as though it is possible to separate out the different modes of perception, seeing and hearing, is problematic. Instead of dividing the different modes he conceptualises their interrelationship: "The reality of the audiovisual combination [is] that one perception influences the other and transforms it. We never see the same thing when we also hear; we don't hear the same thing when we see as well".[34] Following Chion's model of the mutual influence of sound and image I use the term audio-viewer throughout this thesis.[35]

In the ordering of film sound, and the modes of perception of film audiences, film music has been repeatedly put at the bottom of the hierarchy. So in the ordering of the text according to the principles of classical narrative space has also involved critics in ordering sound and its different aspects, with the voice privileged over music and sound effects. This is a hierarchy that has been inflected by the gendering of music as associated with the feminine. Caryl Flinn has illustrated that critical accounts of music often make a metonymic link between the meaninglessness of music - it is defined as non-representational - and its simultaneous ability to provide seductive pleasures. In psychoanalytic accounts of the aural experience music has been perceived to have a role in fulfilling a nostalgic fantasy of unity, the pre-subjective immersion "in the sounds, rhythms and voices produced by the mother's body."[36] The work of the sound critics that I have briefly covered shows that visual approaches to Hollywood cinema have attempted to frame *sound* in the ways that they have organised themselves. What I demonstrate in many of my texual readings is the very productive way that the different elements of film sound (voice, music and noise) frequently challenge the critical frames that are drawn around them.

Genre Frames and Portrait Films

As I indicated in my discussions above, portraits in films are enmeshed in a complex of frames: they are framed objects within the film's mise-en-scène, our understanding of them is influenced by the ways in which other textual elements such as film sound and music work with them, and by narrative and cinematographic frames. Our view of these films is further shaped by extratextual, or critical, frames which define issues of gender and genre. In my focus on films which have a portrait functioning centrally in their narratives I use the portrait as a common feature to bring the films together in a group, though the films themselves might be alternatively categorised in different generic brackets. Using the presence of portraits as the organising principle here raises questions about the modes of categorisation that have traditionally organised Hollywood films of the 1940s, particularly canonic and generic categorisation. Some of these 'portrait films' are very well known; films such as *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1940) and *Laura* (Otto Preminger, USA, 1944) have a considerable critical history and belong to a critical canon. Other portrait films are less well known, such as *Nocturne* (Edwin L Marin, USA, 1946) and *House of Strangers* (Joseph L Mankiewicz, USA, 1949). The range of portrait films encompasses the diverse genres of period costume dramas, such as *Kitty* (Mitchell Leisen, USA, 1946) and *Experiment Perilous* (Jacques Tourneur, USA, 1944); family melodramas (*House of Strangers* [Joseph L. Mankiewicz], USA, 1949) and musicals (*That Lady in Ermine* [Ernst Lubitsch/Otto Preminger] USA, 1948). *Rebecca* has often been defined by genre criticism as exemplary of the gothic 'woman's film', and *Laura* is frequently discussed as *film noir*. A key strategy in my argument will be to balance the common and heterogeneous elements of the portrait films, to explore how portraits come to function centrally in different film narratives and what the relationships are between the repeated narrative scenarios involving portraits and their different generic inflections.

Examining both the similar and different elements in portrait films across different genres raises questions about how the process of generic categorisation works in film criticism. I have signalled my reservations about the categorisations of both *film noir* and the gothic woman's film by genre criticism above, and these are reservations which will be discussed more fully in later chapters. First I want to consider the implications of taking a single element, the portrait, as an organising principle for my group of films. Steve Neale clearly demonstrates the possible problems inherent in taking formal elements of films, or their treatment of various themes, as definitive of a coherent category in his discussion of *film noir*.[37] In taking portraits as a central feature of my thesis I am not arguing that films with portraits in them constitute a coherent category, rather I am using the presence of portraits as a way of imposing a frame on my area of study. Neale warns that many of the 'definitive' features used to constitute *noir* actually lack the specificity necessary to support the critical claims made for the category. An example from his argument is his discussion of the flashback and voice-over, as used by critics to characterise the complex narrative mode of *film noir*.[38] Neale argues that "complexity is built into most stories of detection",[39] pointing out that while flashback and voice-over became more commonly used in Hollywood in the 1940s the use was generically much wider than the category of *film noir*.[40]

> ...while flashback and voice-over are certainly common in *films noirs*, the number of films that deploy them is in any list or version of the canon always outweighed by those that do not. It is simply inaccurate to claim that the narratives in *noirs* are 'typically' presented 'in a non-chronological order' (Hirsch, 1981:72). What matters, however, is not the extent to which these particular devices are employed but the uses to which they are typically put, the effects they typically produce, and the extent to which other devices are put to these uses as well.[41]

Neale's argument usefully emphasises the typical functions and effects of particular filmic elements, so that the flashback becomes meaningful in the way it is used rather than being an automatic marker of a film's generic identity. Portraits, like flashbacks or voice-overs, are not themselves generic markers, but like these other elements they become meaningful through "the uses to which they are typically put"[42] and these "uses" are one of the areas of investigation in this thesis. Portraits are found in a generically diverse group of films in the 1940s, and a larger study than this one could examine the full range of films with portraits. However through my research I have found that portraits are most common in films which have been critically defined as *film noir* and the gothic 'woman's film', and it is these two categories that I focus on. In choosing to focus on portraits as a common element in two categories of films that have been defined as different I am working across the frame of genre definition. My specific inquiry is into the complex relationship between the framed images in these films, how they paint the characters they portray in a certain way, and the ways in which these portrayals conflict with critical perspectives on gender in both *film noir* and the gothic woman's film. My approach thus moves between close textual readings of the portraits and sound in these films and larger critical frames - debates on film sound, spectatorship, gender, and genre.

This thesis breaks into two parts, the first dealing with portraits in *film noir* and the second with portraits in the gothic woman' film. In Chapter One I examine genre criticism on *film noir* and investigate the use that critics have made of a gendered image, the *femme fatale*, in attempting to define *film noir* as a genre category. I take two films, *Laura* and *Gilda* (Charles Vidor, USA, 1946) as case studies through which I examine the processes by which female characters are framed as *femmes fatales* by the characters who surround them, and further by the processes of image construction in film promotion. I explore the role that film sound and music has in contesting the framing of Laura and Gilda, and the part that framed male images have in complicating the parallel between "spectacle" and "femininity".

In Chapter Two I examine narrative strategies of framing in *I Wake Up Screaming* (Bruce Humberstone, USA, 1942), *Phantom Lady* (Robert Siodmak, USA, 1944) and *The Dark Corner* (Henry Hathaway, USA, 1946). These films contain a complex relationship between portraits of female characters and the narrative framing of male characters. Like the character of Jeff in *Out of the Past* the framed male characters find themselves in a dilemma, part of picture composed around them by a character outside the frame. In all three films a female character undertakes an investigation in order to help the framed male character. Through my exploration of the complex of frames I show that the figure of the female investigator challenges the definition of women in *film noir* as either destructive and fatal or redemptive and passive, and demonstrates that the sphere of investigation in *film noir* is not exclusively male.

Chapter Three concentrates on film texts which have been categorised as gothic women's films, such as *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1940), *Gaslight* (George Cukor, USA, 1944) *The Two Mrs Carrolls* (Peter Godfrey, USA, 1947), and *Dragonwyck* (Joseph L Mankiewicz, USA, 1947). I explore critical perspectives on the central female protagonists of these films, suggesting that they have considerably more narrative agency than some criticism has allowed. I examine the ways in which they undertake investigations of their husbands, the gothic male figure, in these narratives. Portraits play a key role in these films in representing a woman in the gothic male's past, and it is the heroine's investigation that determines the relationship between the woman in the portrait and the gothic male.

Chapter Four focuses on the same set of texts as Chapter Three. I continue my examination illustrating that an uncanny return of the past occurs through the association that is set up between the portraits, sound and music. Scenarios in which the past returns to haunt the gothic male raise questions of his position at the head of his estate, they show the control of land and power slipping through the fingers of the gothic male and thus these women's films can be read as critiquing patriarchy in its most tyrannical form.

A close focus on aspects of the framing of portraits and sound in *film noir* and the gothic woman's film at narrative and critical levels allows me to work across critical frames which define genre and gender roles in these two film categories. In my concluding chapter I suggest some alternative ways in which the portrait films might be framed.

In the remainder of this introduction I investigate different images of masculinity in *Suspicion* and the implications that these representations have within theories of spectatorial pleasure and identification. I want to question the schema that is set out in Heath's reading of the film: the interplay between the General's portrait and 'Benson's picture'. The interplay of images in the film does not only occur between these painterly images, it also involves two photographic images of Johnnie. Both these images are in a society magazine - *The London Illustrated News*, and both are viewed by Lina alone. The first image is seen when Lina meets Johnnie on the train, it is a photograph of Johnnie at a race meeting in the company of one of his society friends. The photograph serves to identify the glamorous but rather dissolute young man that has barged into Lina's first class carriage on the train, and she surreptitiously compares him with his image. Johnnie looks her over with a roving point-of-view shot and the following reaction shot registers his disappointment at her sensible shoes, serious book and glasses which reflect the passing landscape, shielding her eyes from his potential flirtatious engagement. A sharp contrast is drawn between the characters in this first scene, Johnnie possessing the connotations of glamour, and through his photograph even of spectacle, while Lina is coded as frumpy and closed to his advances. In the next scene, though, Lina is presented as glamourised, the setting is a hunt meeting, the establishing shot of the hunting set and their horses milling around gives way to a forward tracking shot which centres on Johnnie and his friends dressed for hunting. A society photographer composes them for a photograph (Figure i.12) specifically singling out Johnnie to be at the centre, and much play is made of making Johnnie the star of the photograph: the photographer says; "Mr Aysgarth, please, I wonder if I could have a little bit more of your smile?" The shot he is about to take is interrupted by more of Johnnie's women friends clustering around him, and the photographer moves around them to try again, coaching Johnnie for the shot: "That's very good, that's very good. Now could I have that little bit of a smile?" However he is thwarted a second time, as Johnnie's attention is distracted by the sight of Lina competently controlling her horse, which has reared up. Here the focus of the scene seems to shift, from male to female, from framed man to spectacular woman. The frame zooms in to a close-up of Johnnie's evident interest in her, giving the audio-viewer what the still photographer could not capture, and then a rhyming shot shows Lina in close-up, decked out in riding hat and veil, smiling as she soothes her horse. The contrast in her appearance is underlined by Johnnie's remark that "it can't be the same girl", underpinned by a utilisation of different codes of lighting, costume and make-up. This raises many interesting questions, particularly concerning the way that her transition to sexualised spectacle is implicitly rewarded by the attention of the male look. However these are questions that I will be addressing in relation to a number of different film texts in later chapters. In this scene I want to remain focused on the way that *Johnnie* is so centrally positioned as spectacle by the photographer. The interchange permits the cinematic camera to display its star, and elements of Cary Grant's star image (the handsome playboy with the famous smile) are utilised through this narrative situation. Similarly the photograph through which Lina identifies Johnnie in the train also works as a scenario in which a star is identified in public. In these first two scenes of the film Johnnie/Cary Grant is offered as spectacle, and the culmination of this process is when Lina comes across a full page photograph of Johnnie in a magazine (Figure i.13). Indeed the background to this shot shows many magazines open showing different society photographs and suggesting, perhaps, that Lina has been searching for just this image.

In Heath's reading of the interplay of painted images, the General's portrait is the stable, intelligible and centred representation of the subject and 'Benson's painting' "skews" attention from the centre of the frame, pulling it off to the side. However, this reading is complicated by the early scenes of the film which position Johnnie as spectacle. The photographic portraits of Johnnie introduce another dynamic into these image relationships, a dynamic which disrupts Heath's dichotomy in several ways. As I have suggested above, the photographs of Johnnie make allusions to the production of star publicity portraits by the Hollywood studio system. The portrait that Lina finds in the magazine, in its pose of the figure, and the smooth texture that is produced through a careful manipulation of lighting and retouching, is particularly resonant of Hollywood glamour shots. What is more unusual is that the figure that is glamourised is a male one.[43] I am not suggesting that publicity portraits of male stars in Hollywood are exceptional, but that the overt attention that this photograph receives in the narrative is that which, in classical film theory, is more frequently defined as belonging to representations of the female subject. As this has been such an important area of discussion, particularly to feminist film theory, I will outline its terms before coming back to the way that the images of Johnnie present a specific problem to the system of looking in *Suspicion*.

The definition of woman-as-spectacle, man-as-spectator as characterising the gendered relationships in the classical Hollywood cinema has been most influentially outlined by Laura Mulvey in her 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. The questions that she sets out in this work are ones which have become the starting point for subsequent discussions of spectatorial gender relations. Drawing on psychoanalytic theories of subject formation Mulvey proposes:

Figure i.12

Figure i.13

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects it phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness.*[44]

In her analysis the female position is constituted as image, as framed, female is defined as passive and lacking the spectatorial pleasures of narrative agency which are accorded to male characters within the fiction, and through the processes of cinematic identification, to the male cinematic spectator:

> In contrast to *woman as icon*, the active male figure (the ego ideal of the identification process) demands a three-dimensional space corresponding to that of the mirror-recognition in which the alienated subject internalized his own representation of this imaginary existence. *He is a figure in a landscape.*[45]

Mulvey's analysis is influenced by a similar conception of narrative space that is set out in Heath's work. She actually refers to the parallel between cinematic and Renaissance space at the end of her article: "The camera becomes the mechanism for producing an illusion of Renaissance space, flowing movements compatible with the human eye, an ideology of representation that revolves around the perception of the subject; the camera's look is disavowed in order to create a convincing world in which the spectator's surrogate can perform with verisimilitude".[46] The conception of the space of the classical cinema as one which sets out an intelligible space for the subject can, through Mulvey's reading of it, be seen to be one where "space [is] set out as spectacle for the eye of a spectator"[47] who is male, "*He* is a figure in a landscape".[48] The Quattrocentro system, therefore, provides a "projected utopia"[49] in patriarchal terms. The extensions of the values connoted by Renaissance space to a definition of a stable, individual, "safe" subject, that I noted earlier, can also be seen to have important ideological implications in relation to the gendering of that subject. The perspective the Quattrocentro system offers, Mulvey would argue, is a male one. In this model the classical text is one which is organised or ordered according to a set of principles which extend the intelligibility and control of the space to the male subject. However the male subject's spectatorial control of the space is precarious. Mulvey suggests that the male control of the look is insecure in that male depends on female to constitute itself as a dominant term:

> Ultimately, the meaning of woman is sexual difference, the absence of the penis as visually ascertainable, the material evidence on which is based the castration complex essential for the organisation of entrance to the Symbolic order and the Law of the Father. Thus the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and

> enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified.[50]

The insecurity of the spectator's position, as suggested here, is important. Whilst the framing of a woman as image may be seen as patriarchy's psychic strategy for the containment of femininity, this containment is predicated on the contradiction of disavowal. The framing is therefore constantly under threat, and the patriarchal meanings of femininity are not stable, or safe, but actually oscillate and overflow their original terms, thereby putting the patriarchal subject himself in danger.

In 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Mulvey's main concern is with a specularization of femininity. In *Suspicion*, however, it is *male* characters who are framed, Lina's father (General McLaidlaw - Figure i .14) in his portrait and through the photographs of Johnnie discussed above. Mulvey suggests that the narrative agency she sees as typical of the classical text is not challenged by the visual attributes of male characters, because she asserts that the identification between male cinematic spectator and male character afford pleasures of control rather than those of a scopic regime:

> As the spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he projects his look on to that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence. A male movie star's glamorous characteristics are thus not those of the erotic object of the gaze, but those of a more perfect ideal ego conceived in the original moment of recognition in front of the mirror.[51]

This strand of Mulvey's argument posits security for a male spectator identifying with a main male protagonist. Critics such as Richard Dyer and Steve Neale have responded to her work by initiating debates around the processes by which male stars and characters can be displayed as spectacle while an ideal of activity is maintained.[52] Their focus is on the processes by which images of masculinity are offered to a spectator while displacing and repressing the dangers of, in the case of Dyer, the passivity implicit in being constituted as image, and, in the case of Neale, the eroticism of a male exchange of looks, a particular risk in narrative situations of combat such as the shoot out in the western or war film. Again it can be seen that the concept of a safe representation is one which is a central issue. How does *Suspicion*, with its glamourising of a male character, relate to these debates? The situation is different in that the look at Johnnie is channelled not through a male character's look within the diegesis, but through a female character, and this immediately raises a host of other theoretical questions.

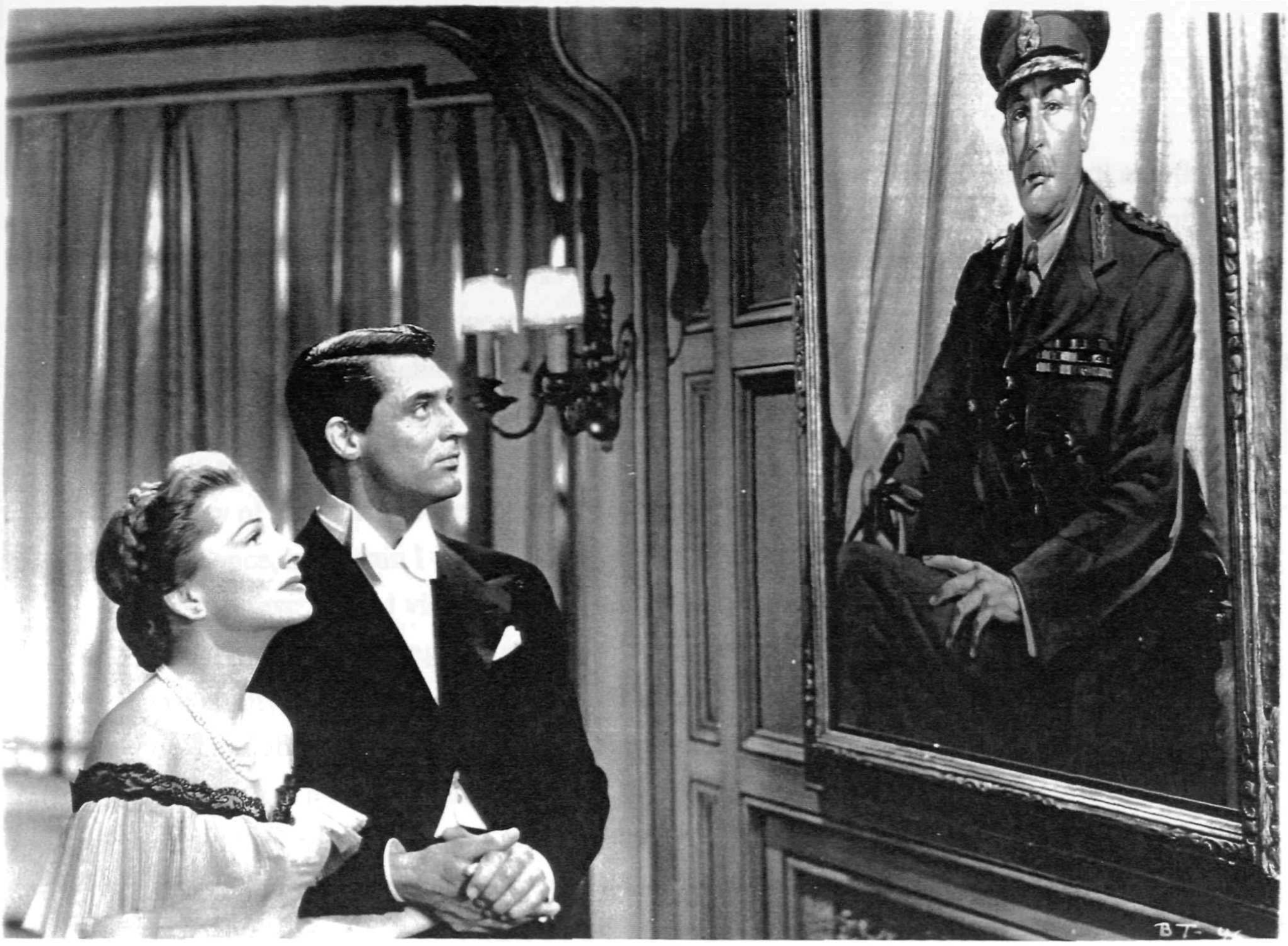


Figure i.14

The problem of the female spectator's relationship to the classical text, and the unpleasure the text offers her through identification with the narrative positioning of the female character in the fiction, has been central to feminist film theories. Feminist discussions of the female spectator take a wide variety of different approaches.[53] I am not going to paraphrase debates at length here, as issues of female spectatorship will be discussed in later chapters, but what I do want to question is whether the model of male identification that is set out by Mulvey always gives the *male* spectator a secure place in the fiction. The security of this place is predicated on the male character fulfilling an 'ideal' of narrative dominance, and again I want to stress the continuity that is traced in the model of the classical text: central viewpoint (perspective), central safe subject, central male narrative protagonist. I am taking this approach not because I want to privilege an investigation into masculinity, confirming its position at the centre of things, but because I think that asking questions about the security of this centring can allow feminist issues to be raised. In addition, as I noted earlier, theories of the sexual division in spectatorial pleasure have posited that male constitutes itself through the difference of female, and so an interrelationship of gender positions needs to be taken into account.

Several questions might be asked of the safety of male identification: What happens to this model of identification if there is a female character at the centre of the narrative, or if the male character does not fulfil the ideal of narrative dominance? Ian Green has explored the concept of cinematic identification, his intention being to move on from Neale's article 'Masculinity as Spectacle', by suggesting that spectatorial identification may *not* be always ordered according to gender. Both Neale and Green cite the work of John Ellis in Visible Fictions, who provides an idea of identification which is more sexually fluid than Mulvey's argument provides:

> Cinematic identification involves two different tendencies. First there is that of dreaming and phantasy that involve the multiple and contradictory tendencies within the construction of the individual. Second, there is the experience of narcissistic identification with the image of a human figure perceived as other. Both these processes are invoked in the conditions of entertainment cinema. The spectator does not therefore 'identify' with the hero or heroine: an identification that would, if put in its conventional sense, involve socially constructed males identifying with male heroes, and socially constructed females identifying with women heroines. The situation is more complex than this, as identification involves both the recognition of self in the image on the screen, a narcissistic identification, and the identification of self with the various positions that are involved in the fictional narration: those of hero and heroine, villain, bit-part player, active and passive character. Identification is therefore multiple and fractured, a sense of seeing the constituent parts of the spectator's own psyche paraded before her or him.[54]

While Neale acknowledges Ellis's argument, he qualifies the "shifting and mobile"[55] aspects of identification by arguing that:

> there is constant work to channel and regulate identification in relation to sexual division, in relation to the orders of gender, sexuality and social identity and authority marking patriarchal society. Every film tends both to assume and actively work to renew those orders, that division. Every film thus tends to specify identification in accordance with the socially defined and constructed categories of male and female.[56]

Neale then concentrates specifically on the narcissistic aspects of identification, which are linked by him to "phantasies of power, omnipotence, mastery and control"[57]. It is taken as read that these phantasies are what the ideal male protagonist of classical narrative provides, and indeed that these are the phantasies that are sought. However, Ian Green's argument refocuses attention on the mobile aspects of cinematic identification for male spectators. Returning to Ellis's work Green asks "whether films offer some kind of space to open up multiple, fluid and even contradictory identifications and phantasies, *whether or not* one says their ultimate ideological project is to close off or regulate such possibilities."[58] He continues:

> one can say that male heterosexual viewers can and do 'identify' with characters in film in 'multiple and fractured' ways. Overriding any channelling or regulating of identification in relation to *sexual division* are identifications with the vicissitudes of a particular narrative and with characters as the mechanisms of narrative, factors that I find Neale and Mulvey underestimate in their pursuit of the norms of phantasy and identification. Viewers trade off their identifications in relation to the economy of the plot. Men will admit to identifying with Charlotte Vail(sic)/Bette Davis in *Now Voyager* (1942) or Mildred Pierce/Joan Crawford in *Mildred Pierce* (1945) far beyond any 'available' male characters in the films and perhaps as much as male characters in other films.[59]

Green sets out three reasons that make this identification possible. The first is that these women characters "are the main characters who motivate the narrative, however one argues their relative activity/passivity."[60] Green suggests that the struggles that the characters of Charlotte and Mildred go through can have potent meanings for men in the audience as well as for women, precisely because these characters and their struggles are central to the plot, "They are issues around which they suffer and are signs of their sensitivity and vulnerability - within the conventions of tragedy and melodrama, they are available for fashioning ideal images, even cross-gender ones."[61]

The second reason Green puts forward for cross-gender identification in these films is the absence of "available material in the form of male characters/ideal images suitable for men to identify with."[62] Green argues that the male characters in *Now Voyager* cannot compare with Charlotte's "central narrative involvement".[63] He sees Jerry (Paul Henreid) as a rather ineffectual and indecisive character, and Dr Jackwith (Claude Rains) as "not fully rounded enough".[64] Green points out the significance that this has to debates about identification: "If this is so it emphasises all the more the importance that needs to be attached to character as part of narrative and genre as a main channel of identification processes".[65] The third issue that Green examines as a factor in male-female identification focuses on the particular ways that the central female characters are often presented in terms of visual styling:

> It could be argued, more controversially, that the classic mainstream signs of eroticism usually attached to women in the cinema... are held off or lessened in the characters/figures of Charlotte/Davis, Mildred/Crawford; that the concerns of 'woman' in these films are of independence and motherhood and thus a possible sexual disturbance in the cross-gender identification of heterosexual male viewers (i.e. by identifying with the object of desire rather than its subject) is avoided.[66]

Suspicion is a film which Green uses to explore these issues of identification further. The interrelationship between Lina and Johnnie plays out an exchange of erotic visual styling, which shifts from male to female character. The scene at the hunt meeting that I discussed earlier is a strong example of a case when "the classic mainstream signs of eroticism usually attached to women in the cinema... are held off or lessened",[67] and those signs of eroticism are attached or reassigned to Johnnie. In keeping with this negative sexual visualisation, as the narrative develops it becomes clear that Johnnie does not embody the ideal of narrative dominance and centrality. Yet significantly the struggles that Lina's character goes through are not those of motherhood or independence found in films such as *Now Voyager* or *Mildred Pierce*, but are centred on the problems that Johnnie presents for her interpretation:

> In *Suspicion* Johnny is the mystery as a man and as a male image. The narrative requires Lina/Joan Fontaine to judge him by his appearances... and we are required to do the same, as we only gain access to him via Lina's point-of-view.[68]

Green sees the mystery that Johnnie presents as coming out of the ambiguities of his origins, his motives for marrying Lina, and most powerfully, the suspicion that gradually develops and takes hold of her that Johnnie is planning to murder her. Johnnie presents the antithesis of patriarchal authority and responsibility embodied by Lina's father, the General, the qualities that are symbolically grounded and centred in the portrait:

> It is Johnny's identity and passivity that are under investigation in the film. He is suspect as a man. He is like a child in relation to the real world, with which he spontaneously reacts.[69]

The narrative presents Johnnie's constant refusal to take on the proper attributes of patriarchal authority throughout the film, he repeatedly lies about his work, and is feckless with money and possessions, shown when he sells the chairs given to Lina and himself as a wedding present and uses the money to gamble on a horse race. Green suggests that the ambiguity of the film comes out of a failure on the part of Lina to understand him, since the interpretative structure which she seeks to apply to him is flawed:

> ... he is not understood by Lina who misinterprets his acts according to the norms of masculine activity: he wishes to be supported rather than support, to be passive rather than active, and because he does not fit what is expected of him as a male, to murder himself rather than others. What he does have to offer, actively, to others - love- to Lina and to Beaky, is 'misread' according to the norms of male conduct, by Lina, by us and by critics...[70]

While I find that Green's main arguments on identification open up interesting and important questions on the possibilities of cross-gender viewing pleasures, his final analysis of Johnnie's character is problematic for a feminist approach. *Suspicion* is a film which has been critiqued by writers such as Mary Ann Doane and Diane Waldman for presenting a scenario in which a central female character attempts, and fails, to carry out an investigation of her husband, and they suggest that this failure demonstrates the condemnation of a woman who tries to usurp and carry the male gaze,[71] i.e. to transgress her given position under patriarchy. *Suspicion* is thus a film which dramatises the theoretical 'problems' of female spectatorship and identification in and through its narrative. But could it not be argued that the film also presents problems for *male* spectatorship and identification? Green explores this in relation to other films, but his analysis of *Suspicion* halts before he suggests that a male spectator might be identifying with Lina's character. The ways in which the film might actually *critique* Johnnie as a character could be explored through the identification with Lina's suffering, which despite the unexpected ending (Johnnie reveals that he really *does* love Lina, and that he was planning not her murder but his own suicide), is no less potent for the main part of the narrative.

Much of the potency of Lina's suffering is conveyed through the extent to which the narration of the film is subjectively marked by her character. The threat that Lina perceives in Johnnie is clearly presented in a number of moments of the film through the mutual influence of image and sound. When Johnnie tries to kiss her the combination of an extreme long shot of the two of them struggling, and hectic, high-pitched violin instrumentation in the film score, portrays the impression of violence. In a scene showing Lina's fears that Johnnie has murdered Beaky she pauses outside their house before entering. The lighting dramatically and rapidly changes from a uniform bright daylight effect to a murky low-key even before Lina enters the large hallway of the house. The score has also conveyed her suspicions through dark, menacing undertones of strings over which a distinct and disturbing flurry of oboe sounds is heard. On her way across the hallway to the drawing room Lina freezes as she hears Johnny whistling a waltz tune. The same waltz is "their tune", and was played diegetically at the ball at which they got engaged. It is the "romance" motif of the film and was heard (again diegetically) on their return from their honeymoon. Then it connoted happy memories, in this scene it signals Lina's dread of what she is about to discover. As Lina reaches the drawing room door she hears Johnnie giving instructions to Beaky offscreen, telling him to plug in the gramophone player. Thus the moment that Lina realises that Beaky is alive and that Johnnie is (temporarily) free from suspicion is simultaneous with a joyous welling up of the waltz. The music is diegetically motivated, but the volume and closeness or immediacy with which it is perceived by the audio-viewer suggests that it is non-diegetic.

The two different inflections of the waltz in this scene (Johnnie's slow whistling of it and the full and lush orchestration of it) show the connection between the musical motif and the subjective narration of the film. The shifting impressions that the music conveys is directly related to Lina's feelings about Johnnie, and the intimate relationship between lighting, framing and sound shows that the space of the film is made to be expressive of Lina's "point of experience".[72] The most striking example of this is a sequence which is clearly signalled as internal narration. It occurs as Beaky and Lina play an anagram game in which Lina spells out the word MURDER. Sound and image are manipulated in a fantasy sequence in which Lina imagines Johnnie pushing Beaky from a cliff. An image of Beaky falling is superimposed over Lina's horrified face, and is accompanied by a distortion of Beaky's voice from a high pitched laugh to a scream, and the "threat" motif of hectic violins, heard earlier in the film, is repeated here. The repetition of this "threat" motif in Lina's fantasy sequence links this sequence, which is unambiguously signalled as subjective, with the ostensibly objective narration of the film. Thus the narrative space of the film is refracted through Lina's perception, and this strongly promotes identification with her point of experience.

However the identification with Lina that the film virtually dictates through the vivid construction of subjective space through sound and image is not explored by Green. He describes Lina as "not underst[anding]"[73] Johnnie, and puts the blame onto her "[she] misinterprets his acts".[74] The strategy that Green uses here frames Lina in a way which is not dissimilar to the framing of Jeff in *Out of the Past*, and this points up the power that critical approaches have to present texts to view in certain specific ways. It seems that for all his willingness to set out forms of identification and phantasy that are shifting and mobile, there are positions that are *more* shifting and mobile, more possible than others, and ultimately Green's argument performs precisely the regulation of spectatorial positions that he criticises in other critics, such as Neale and Mulvey.

In my earlier discussion of Heath's reading of *Suspicion* I suggested that a paradigm of centring was being applied to the text. In this paradigm the General's portrait was an instance of the centring of vision according to a classical model of perspective and of the subject at the centre of intelligible narrative space. Opposed to this portrait was 'Benson's picture', which prompted a "breaking [of] the clarity"[75] associated with the portrait and its space. 'Benson's picture' thus represented the distraction of the look, pulling it off to the side of the narrative space in the instance of the inspector looking "askew".[76] In Heath's schema two different painterly works of art therefore present a tension in the classical text, and the way they are positioned by the cinematic frame is most important in creating this tension.

The centrality of the portrait, and its connotations of authority inherited from the portraiture tradition, frames the masculine subject as doubly safe. The central arrangement of General McLaidlaw's portrait in the cinematic frame mirrors the centrality of the subject in the portrait frame, thus the audio-viewer's attention is directed to the portrait at the centre of the intelligible space. In Heath's analysis it is not only the content of 'Benson's picture' that is unintelligible, its abstract modernist style jars with the portrait, but its position at the side of the scene pulls attention out of the central frame. However the authority of masculinity is challenged not only by 'Benson's picture', but by the way that the narrative presents Johnnie as spectacle. He is portrayed in the photographs as a leisured society man. In the magazine shot which Lina finds he is leaning backwards, displayed as spectacle. These images *show* him as unwilling to take on the responsibilities of patriarchy. The contrast of Johnnie's images with the General's portrait, which shows him in uniform, signifying a life of duty is clear. Further, the narrative presents these images of Johnnie as sought out by a female look, and consumed by Lina in a private moment. In its presentation of a variety of male images *Suspicion* undermines centrality as an ideal which necessarily fits into the signifying chain, male-central-dominant-active. 'Benson's picture', the instances of Johnnie as spectacle, and the subjective inflections from Lina's point-of-experience indicate that the space of *Suspicion* is not a space where "eye and knowledge come together",[77] but a space where both the male look ('Benson's picture') and male spectacle (Johnnie's images) function to frustrate rather than to assure a "satisfying sense of omnipotence"[78] for a male spectator. This is a space which is inflected by a female point of experience, and access to it is more sexually fluid than Heath's model allows. Entrance to it necessitates an understanding of the ways that audition as well as vision position both character and audio-viewer.

My discussion of *Suspicion* has involved invoking frames which work in the text and my analysis of it at a number of levels. The images themselves, both painterly and photographic, are presented through the frame of the fictional narrative, and through the cinematic frame. However, as I suggested earlier portraits bring with them their own histories, the portraiture tradition and the histories of art criticism. Issues of cinematic framing also have a critical history - the differing debates of spectatorship and its relationships to gender that I have discussed above. Investigating portraits in Hollywood films of the 1940s involves being aware of, and negotiating a way through these different frames, and the different positions that they present on the texts under discussion.

To conclude this introduction I want to refer to the work of André Bazin who discusses the problems and possibilities arising from filming paintings in his essay "Painting and Cinema".[79] In this essay his focus is films concerning real artists and their works, and Bazin uses the differences between painted images and the photographic properties of the cinematic image to underline his belief in cinema as a realistic medium, an assertion that he consistently makes in other work.[80] Although this approach is quite different to the ones that I will be developing throughout my thesis, I think that Bazin's observations on the ways in which filming paintings brings together two different mediums are helpful in revealing that different frames can work in tandem *and* in tension.

Bazin begins by setting out objections to filming paintings, objections gathered from painters and art critics. The complaints are multifarious, but in essence "however you look at it the film is not true to the painting".[81] This arises because "the viewer, believing that he is seeing the picture as painted, is actually looking at it through the instrumentality of an art form that profoundly changes its nature."[82] Bazin continues to catalogue the changes that film makes to paintings: film cannot truly render the paintings' colours, and film represents time differently, "the sequence of a film gives it a unity in time that is horizontal and... geographical, whereas time in a painting, so far as the notion applies, develops geologically and in depth.".[83] Most significant of all, however, is that "...space, as it applies to a painting, is radically destroyed by the screen."[84] What is set out at the beginning of Bazin's argument is the mediation of looking at paintings through film; this is a mediation that Bazin explicitly disapproves of as his interest is in the cinema as offering access to works of art in what he sees as an unmediated way, without being a "betrayal of the painter [and]... a betrayal of the painting."[85] Bazin sees this mediation as particularly having an effect on a painting in instances where the cinematic frame intersects with, or moves inside of, the frame of the painting.

> The outer edges of the screen are not, as the technical jargon would seem to imply, the frame of the film image. They are the edges of a piece of masking that shows only a portion of reality. The picture frame polarizes space inwards. On the contrary, what the screen shows us seems to be part of something prolonged indefinitely into the universe. A frame is centripetal, the screen centrifugal. Whence it follows that if we reverse the pictorial process and place the screen

> within the picture frame, that is if we show a section of a painting on a screen, the space of the painting loses its orientation and its limits and is presented to the imagination as without any boundaries. Without losing its other characteristics the painting thus takes on the spatial properties of cinema and becomes part of that "picturable" world that lies beyond it on all sides.[86]

The frames of painting and cinema can be seen here to be intersecting and overlapping. A process has been set in motion where the defining functions of the painting's frame-as-limit undergo a redefinition through the mobility of the cinematic frame entering the framed painted space and taking over a delineation of its limits. The bringing together of two different media together allows a potential crossing and intersecting of frames as boundaries. In the mobility of the cinematic frame, and its ability to enter and explore the frame of a painting means that the definitive functions that separate the realms of cinematic image and painted image might be transgressed. It is this potential that I am interested in exploring in my work of portraits in classical Hollywood films, but it is also precisely the loss of definition that Bazin is critiquing in his essay. Both Bazin's critique and my own discussion are therefore framing the cinema/painting relation in different ways. As I suggested in my outlining of spectatorship debates in relation to *Suspicion*, it is important to recognise the analogy of criticism as a frame which can examine the same object or issue from another angle. Critical discussions thus work as frames in this way, different approaches re-presenting the same object in such a way that it is made different, or made to be seen differently. Although my approach is different to Bazin's there is an intersection of critical frames which share some common ground and diverge at other points.

I suggested above that researching portraits within films entails becoming aware of a series of frames, and I want to refer back to the portrait of Barbara Hale with which I began my introduction. The image visibly demonstrates, or portrays, the dual functioning of frames; frames as key objects within a text influence the way that we can frame that text through key critical concepts. As I indicated at the beginning of my introduction, frame as a term of reference can perform a semantic shift: it is both a structure and a process of structuring. However, as the framing of Jeff Markham/Robert Mitchum in *Out of the Past*, and the images of Johnnie/Cary Grant in *Suspicion* suggest, the spectacular practices by which Hollywood puts its 'reel' subjects on display do not always involve a framing of femininity. Images of masculinity are not necessarily stable, and do not always occupy the centre of a frame. Further, the processes by which these reel subjects are viewed are complex and often contradictory, and these processes have been discussed through a number of intersecting critical and theoretical frames. I am not arguing for a removal of these frames, since without these organising principles no coherent discussion is possible. Nor am I implying that it is possible to gain access to what is being studied without a mediating frame in place. What I am interested in exploring is the way that in examining portraits within Hollywood films of the 1940s the frames that surround them and shape our view on them *can* be read in tension, and that the intersections of contesting frames are productive points at which the re-framing of film sound, gender and genre might be considered.

NOTES

[1] Ephraim Katz, The Macmillan International Film Encyclopedia, Third Edition (London: Macmillan, 1998), Revised by Fred Klein and Ronald Dean Nolen, p. 581. Hale starred in films such as *Lady Luck* (1946) and *The Window* (1949).

[2] Quoted in Hollywood Glamor Portraits - 145 Photos of Stars 1926-1949, ed. by John Kobal (New York: Dover Publications, 1976), p. xii.

[3] Jacques Aumont, The Image, trans.by Claire Pajaczkowska (1990; London: BFI, 1997), p. 106.

[4] Aumont, The Image, Lp. 106.

[5] The image of Hale is literally a painted photograph which has been substantially retouched. Comments from stills photographers confirm how important this practice was: "The retouchers were the real artists in my opinion. They had about 22 or them working at MGM alone. They helped make the reality a dream." (Eric Carpenter [MGM]); "Pictures would be nothing without the skill and excellence of the retouchers. It is such an important skill - you could do a complete reconstruction job on somebody that way." (Bill Walling [Paramount and Universal]) Both in John Kobal (ed.) Hollywood Glamor Portraits: 145 Photos of Stars 1926-1949 (New York: Dover Publications, 1976), pp. xi-xii.

[6] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16 (3) (1975), 6-18, reprinted in The Sexual Subject: A *Screen* Reader in Sexuality (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 27, all subsequent references to this article will be to this edition.

[7] **PLOT SYNOPSIS**

Markham is a retired private detective who, at the beginning of the film, has made a new life for himself in the small quiet town of Bridgeport, running a garage under the new identity of Jeff Bailey. His past has caught up with him though. One of the heavies of his former employer, racketeer Whit Sterling (Kirk Douglas) visits him to tell him his old boss wants to see him. On the way to Sterling's mansion Jeff relates the story of his past to Ann (Virginia Huston) his sweetheart. He tells of how he to find Sterling's mistress, Kathie Moffet (Jane Greer) who had left Sterling with $40, 000. Jeff tracked Kathie down in Mexico, she denied stealing the money and they fell in love. They lived anonymously in San Francisco, but were tracked down by Fisher, former partner of Jeff's. Kathie shot Fisher and Jeff discovered that Kathie had lied about Sterling's money; Jeff left Kathie and moved to Bridgeport. When they meet again Sterling blackmails Jeff, ostensibly to obtain tax records from Sterling's accountant, Eels (Ken Niles). But in fact Jeff is being set up to take the blame for the murder of Eels. Kathie once again living with Sterling, and it is she that tells Jeff about the plan to frame him. Jeff tries unsuccessfully to prevent Eel's murder and is pursued to Bridgeport by the police. He eludes them, and persuades Sterling to reveal Kathie as Fisher's murderer, but she kills him and tells Jeff that they should flee to the country together. He agrees, but alerts the police, and they are both killed when Kathie tries to drive through a roadblock. Jeff's assistant at the garage frees Ann from mourning for Jeff by conveying to her that Jeff loved Kahtie all along.

[8] Longman Dictionary of the English Language gives one of the possible sources of the term 'patsy' as the Italian '*pazzo*' meaning 'fool'.

[9] The works on this area include Jacques Aumont, The Image (1990; London: BFI, 1997), Translation Claire Pajackowska; Angela Dalle Vacche, Cinema and Painting - How Art Is Used in Film (London: Athlone Press, 1996); Francette Pacteau, The Symptom of Beauty (London: Reaktion Books, 1994); John A Walker, Art and Artists On Screen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993). The 1996 exhibition *Spellbound - Art and Film* at the

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Hayward Gallery, London was an important contribution to debates about the interrelationship between art and film, see Spellbound: Art and Film, ed. by Philip Dodd with Ian Christie (London: BFI and Hayward Gallery, 1996).

[10] Stephen Heath, 'Narrative Space', *Screen,* 17 (3) (1976), 68-112, reprinted in Questions of Cinema (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 30.

[11] Richard Maltby, Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995). p. 190.

[12] Aumont, The Image, pp. 113-115.

[13] Maltby, Hollywood Cinema, p. 194.

[14] Maltby, Hollywood Cinema, p. 190.

[15] Heath, Questions of Cinema, p. 27.

[16] Aumont, The Image, p. 114.

[17] Heath, Questions of Cinema, p. 19.

[18] Heath, Questions of Cinema, p. 19.

[19] Heath, Questions of Cinema, p. 19.

[20] Heath, Questions of Cinema, p. 23, Heath compares the painting to Picasso's 'Nature morte au pichet, bol et fruit' 1931 (Picasso Collection).

[21] Heath, Questions of Cinema, p. 21.

[22] Heath, Questions of Cinema, p. 21.

[23] Heath, Questions of Cinema, p. 23.

[24] Joanna Woodall (ed.) Portraiture: Facing the Subject (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997).

[25] Woodall, 'Introduction' in Facing the Subject, p. 1.

[26] Woodall, 'Introduction' in Facing the Subject, p. 1.

[27] Woodall, 'Introduction' in Facing the Subject, p. 1.

[28] Woodall, 'Introduction' in Facing the Subject, p. 2.

[29] Kathryn Kalinak, Settling the Score - Music and the Classical Hollywood Film (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p. 20.

[30] Rick Altman, Introduction, *Yale French Studies*, 60 (1980), Special Issue - 'Cinema/Sound', p. 4.

[31] Altman, 'Introduction to Cinema/Sound', p. 4.

[32] One such example is Freud's 'A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to the Psychanalytic Theory of the Disease' (1915), where the fears of the analysand are based on both her aural and visual perceptions. In Penguin Freud Library Volume 10: On Psychopathology, ed. by Angela Richards (London: Penguin, 1993).

[33] Michel Chion, The Voice in Cinema, ed. and trans. by Claudia Gorbman (1982; New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 3.

[34] Michel Chion, Audio-Vision: Sound On Screen, ed. and trans. by Claudia Gorbman (New York, Columbia University Press. p. xxvi.

[35] There are obvious exceptions where I am engaging with critical work in which the term "spectator" is used.

[36] Caryl Flinn, 'The 'Problem' of Femininity in Theories of Film Music', *Screen*, 27 (6) (1986), 57-72, p. 59.

[37] Neale focuses on the claims for *film noir*'s ideological significance, its treatment of gender and sexuality, its use of hard-boiled crime fiction to portray anxieties specific to the 1940s, its mode of narration and its visual and aural expressionism. (Steve Neale, Genre and Hollywood (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 155-175).

[38] Neale, Genre and Hollywood, p. 166.

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[39] Neale, Genre and Hollywood, p. 166.
[40] Neale cites *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942) - a biopic, *The Adventures of Mark Twain* (1944), *Citizen Kane* (1941), *How Green Was My Valley* (1941), *Random Harvest* (1942), *The Uninvited* (1943), and *All About Eve* (1950). (Genre and Hollywood, p. 168.)
[41] Neale, Genre and Hollywood, p. 168, my emphases. Neale cites Foster Hirsch, *Film Noir*: The Dark Side of Hollywood (New York: Da Capo, 1981), p. 72.
[42] Neale, Genre and Hollywood, p. 168.
[43] There is a large body of writing on issues of male spectacles, work on this area includes: Richard Dyer, 'Don't Look Now: The Male Pin-Up', *Screen*, 23 (3-4) (1982), 61-73, reprinted in The Sexual Subject: A *Screen* Reader in Sexuality (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Steve Neale, 'Masculinity as Spectacle', *Screen*, 24 (6) (1983), 2-16, reprinted in The Sexual Subject; Ian Green, 'Malefunction: A Contribution to the Debate on Masculinity in Cinema', *Screen*, 25 (4-5) (1984), 36-48; Rowena Chapman and Johathan Rutherford (eds.) Male Order: Unwrapping Masculinity (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1988); Miriam Hansen, Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film (Cambridge (Mass.) and London: Harvard University Press), 1991; Kaja Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins (New York and London: Routledge, 1992); Yvonne Tasker, Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema (London: Routledge, 1993); Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (eds.) Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema (London: Routledge, 1993); Constance Penley and Sharon Willis (eds.) Male Trouble (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Pat Kirkham and Janet Thumim (eds.), You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies and Men (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993) and Me Jane: Masculinity, Movies and Women (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995); Gaylyn Studlar, This Mad Masquerade: Stardom and Masculinity in the Jazz Age (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Steven Cohan, Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).
[44] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16 (3) (1975), 6-18, reprinted in The Sexual Subject, p. 27, original emphases. All subsequent references to this work will be made to this edition.
[45] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', p. 28, my emphases.
[46] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', p. 33.
[47] Heath, Questions of Cinema, p. 30.
[48] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', p. 28, my emphases.
[49] Heath, Questions of Cinema, p. 30.
[50] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', p. 29.
[51] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', p. 28.
[52] Richard Dyer, 'Don't Look Now: The Male Pin-Up', reprinted in The Sexual Subject and Steve Neale, 'Masculinity as Spectacle', reprinted in The Sexual Subject.
[53] Laura Mulvey, 'Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)', *Framework*, 15-17 (1981),12-15, reprinted in Visual and Other Pleasures (London: Macmillan, 1989); Mary Ann Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator', *Screen*, 23 (3-4) (1982), 74-87, reprinted in The Sexual Subject; Annette Kuhn, Women's Pictures: Feminism and the Cinema (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982); Jackie Stacey, 'Desperately Seeking Difference', *Screen*, 28 (1) (1987), 48-61, reprinted in The Sexual Subject; E Deidre Pribram (ed), Female Spectators - Looking at Film and Television (London and New York: Verso, 1988); Janet Bergstrom and Mary Ann Doane, 'The Female Spectator: Contexts and Directions', *Camera Obscura*,

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'Special Issue: The Spectatrix', ed. by Janet Bergstrom and Mary Ann Doane, 20-21 (1989), 5-27; Judith Mayne, The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Judith Mayne, Cinema and Spectatorship (London and New York: Routledge, 1993); Jackie Stacey, Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

[54] John Ellis, Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video, Revised Edition (1982; London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 43, cited in Neale, 'Masculinity as Spectacle', pp.278-279 and in Green, 'Malefunction', p. 38 and p. 43.

[55] Neale, 'Masculinity as Spectacle', p. 279.

[56] Neale, 'Masculinity as Spectacle', p. 279.

[57] Neale, 'Masculinity as Spectacle', p. 279.

[58] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 38, original emphases.

[59] Green, 'Malefunction', pp. 38-39.

[60] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 39.

[61] Green, 'Malefunction', pp. 39-40.

[62] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 40.

[63] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 40.

[64] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 40.

[65] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 40.

[66] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 40.

[67] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 40.

[68] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 45.

[69] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 45.

[70] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 46.

[71] Diane Waldman, '"At last I can tell it to someone!": Feminine Point of View and Subjecivity in the Gothic Romance Film of the 1940s', *Cinema Journal*, 23 (2) (1983), 29-40, p. 32 and p. 34; Mary Ann Doane, The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 149.

[72] Claudia Gorbman suggests that music in film narration frequently creates a point of experience which the audio-viewer can share with a character. She suggests that the term "point of view" is prone to "visual chauvinism". Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 2.

[73] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 46.

[74] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 46.

[75] Heath, Questions of Cinema, p. 21.

[76] Heath, Questions of Cinema, p. 21.

[77] Heath, Questions of Cinema, p. 30.

[78] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', p. 28.

[79] André Bazin, 'Painting and Cinema', in What Is Cinema?: Volume I, Essays selected and trans.by Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

[80] See André Bazin, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', 'Theatre and Cinema: Part One', and 'Theatre and Cinema: Part Two', in What Is Cinema?: Volume I.

[81] Bazin, 'Painting and Cinema', p. 164.

[82] Bazin, 'Painting and Cinema', p. 165.

[83] Bazin, 'Painting and Cinema', p. 165.

[84] Bazin, 'Painting and Cinema', p. 165.

[85] Bazin, 'Painting and Cinema', p. 165.

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[86] Bazin, 'Painting and Cinema', p. 166.

PART 1: *FILM NOIR*

CHAPTER 1: FRAMING FEMININITY - THE PAINTED WOMEN OF *FILM NOIR*

My introduction explored the multiple frames that are involved in approaching portrait films. In this chapter I focus on the role that gender has had in framing *film noir* as a generic category. In the first part of the chapter I argue that both filmic and critical images of femininity have played a particular role in the constitution of the category by genre criticism. The second part of the chapter explores the construction and ascription of the image of the *femme fatale* to female characters in *Laura* and *Gilda*. Both films contain central women who are framed as fatal by a combination of narrative and critical frames. I examine the important role that film sound and music has in challenging the framing of these central women as fatal.

Much of the critical exertion in discussions of genre is to be found not simply in categorising and defining groups of texts, but in examining the processes of categorisation. Genre criticism in film studies has moved through various paradigms. The conception of it as a relatively fixed set of conventions or frames within which a director can fulfil or frustrate audience expectation[1] has shifted through Steve Neale's work on genres as part of the cinema's apparatus,[2] to his recasting and redevelopment of this work in a model of genre which takes account of the roles that the different processes of production, marketing and consumption play, and the 'evolution' of the conventions themselves.[3]

In her work on *film noir*, gender and genre, Elizabeth Cowie outlines a critical history to the concepts of genre in film studies, asserting that they are derived from literary and dramatic traditions. Cowie points out that the generic categories of the literary and dramatic traditions were not static when film emerged as a new artistic medium at the end of the nineteenth century. New literary forms, such as the novel, and movements, such as Romanticism, were constantly changing and modifying these forms. This mutability had an impact on the use of the term "genre" which had been appropriated from its context in nineteenth century classification systems of sciences such as botany.[4] She suggests that the use of the term genre in literary studies "marks the point at which the classes can no longer be assumed, but must be explained, described and differentiated".[5] She continues to link genre criticism in film and literary studies as she cites Todorov's work on the genre of fantasy: " 'Genres are precisely those relay-points by which the work assumes a relation with the universe of literature' ",[6] and goes on to demonstrate that the "relay-points" between a genre and its larger context are not fixed but constantly being moved by the internal variety of each genre.

> A major aspect of genre and hence of genre study is therefore the extent to which any particular work exceeds its genre, how it reworks and transforms it, rather than how it fits certain generic expectations. The theorist constructs an ideal type in order to show not only how any particular work fulfils its criteria of the ideal, but also how it deviates from it.[7]

Cowie's analysis of genre criticism as undertaking textual differentiation and the construction of ideal types is particularly relevant to my focus on gender and *film noir* in this chapter. I argue that in much genre criticism on *film noir* issues of textual differentiation and the construction of the ideal text have become inseparable from sexual difference (mapped as the differentiation of gender), and the construction of gender ideals.

The term *film noir* has proved to be extremely difficult to define in discussions of genre. James Naremore suggests the attraction of the term for genre critics is that it is seemingly easily recognisable, but when an attempt is made to tie down a definition of the term, or category, it proves to be problematic:

> It has always been easier to recognize a film noir than to define the term. One can imagine a large video store where examples of such films would be shelved somewhere between gothic horror and dystopian science fiction: in the center would be *Double Indemnity*, and at either extreme *Cat People* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. But this arrangement would leave out important titles. There is in fact no completely satisfactory way to organize the category; and despite scores of books and essays that have been written about it, nobody is sure whether the films in question constitute a period, a genre, a cycle, a style or simply a "phenomenon".[8]

In the ongoing critical debate the term *film noir* slides between specific definitions, being variously period, genre, cycle, style or simply phenomenon; the work of textual differentiation, then, is difficult to achieve in this case. The slipperiness of *film noir* as a term, and the difficulties in defining it have not impeded the proliferation of debates about what constitutes it over the last twenty years; it has encouraged discussion. Cowie suggests that despite being "the genre that never was... *film noir* has been extraordinarily successful as a term."[9] As critics have noted, the term *film noir* was coined by French film critics in the 1940s and 1950s,[10] and as such the term that they applied to films made in Hollywood in the mid 1940s, such as *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, USA, 1944) and *Farewell, My Lovely* (Edward Dmytryk, USA, 1944), was not being used contemporaneously as an industrial genre category.[11] Frank Krutnik argues that the difficulties of defining *film noir* arise from its critical status:

> As a post-constructed category (it was not a generic term recognised by the industry and the audiences of the 1940s) *film noir* has given rise to acute taxonomic problems. Across the critical and historical accounts there is little agreement not only about what characteristics it takes to make a particular film

> *noir*, and thus which films actually constitute the corpus, but also... about the precise status of the category itself.[12]

Whilst *film noir* as a critical category is "post-constructed", Elizabeth Cowie points out that there was a contemporaneous recognition of a new style, by producers and filmmakers of both low budget productions and by major studios.[13] The style was also discerned by film commentators, such as John Houseman and Lloyd Shearer.[14] Cowie argues that the productions that were self-consciously utilizing a *film noir* style in the 1940s were wide ranging, referring to *Reign of Terror* (Anthony Mann, USA, 1949), photographed by celebrated cinematographer John Alton, and two films directed by Max Ophuls, *Caught* (USA, 1949) and *The Reckless Moment* (USA, 1949). Since *Reign of Terror* is a period drama, set in Paris during the French Revolution, and *Caught* and *The Reckless Moment* are examples of women's pictures, Cowie is suggesting, then, how broadly *film noir* style was used in the 1940s, and this broad use should be considered when attempts are made to define *film noir* as a category.

Naremore argues that the critical definitions of *film noir* "have 'as much to do with criticism itself, especially with the varying ways that we define film genres,' as they do with our putative objects of study."[15] This argument is significant because it foregrounds the critical stakes implicit in different genre debates. These may vary with the positions of the critics, and over time, and in my subsequent argument I identify some of the critical stakes in discussions of *film noir*. I do not attempt to give a complete history of the debate, as this comprises a very large body of criticism, but I am particularly concerned with the enduring interest that *film noir* has held for feminist film criticism, and with the importance that gender has had to critics in undertaking different definitions of *film noir* as a category.

Many critical discussions of *film noir* are concerned with carefully delineating the boundaries of it as category, even though this is often a difficult, even precarious process. Steve Neale gives a very detailed discussion of the large body of critical work on *film noir* in Genre and Hollywood.[16] He notes that some critics, seeking to define *film noir*, find themselves in a double bind where they admit the problems with definition, but persist in trying:

> A key feature of nearly all [the] essays, articles, chapters and books is an acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of the films, and hence the potentially problematic nature of the 'phenomenon'... (Krutnik, 1991: 24), coupled with an insistence, nevertheless, that there *is* a phenomenon, that it can be described accounted for, and that it is in one way or another - aesthetically, culturally, ideologically or historically - important.[17]

Neale identifies that there is a kind of critical disavowal occurring in the relation of the critic to the category of *film noir*, and a similar line of argument is put forward by Marc Vernet:

> As an object or corpus of films, *film noir* does not belong to the history of cinema; it belongs as a notion to the history of film criticism, or, if one prefers, to the history of those who wanted to love the American cinema even in its middling production and to form an image of it. *Film noir* is a collector's idea that, for the moment, can only be found in books.[18]

Film Noir A Male Genre?

In Cowie's work the critical disavowal and the "collector's idea" are reflected in her observation that much (male) *film noir* criticism has constructed the category as one in which "a particular masculine fantasy of sexual difference is played out."[19] The slipperiness, or "tenuousness" of the term has been offset or secured by the "tenacity" of its critical usage, and this tenacity is motivated by desire:

> ...a devotion among *aficionados* that suggest a desire for the very category as such, a wish that it exist in order to 'have' a certain set of films all together. *Film noir* as a genre is in a certain sense a fantasy: it is something that is never given a pure or complete form...Though only ever realised in some incomplete form, the 'true' form is nevertheless discerned across a series of films... What is centred by this fantasy is almost always a masculine scenario, that is, the *film noir* hero is a man struggling with other men, who suffers alienation and despair, and is lured by fatal and deceptive women.[20]

Cowie reveals the close interrelationship between the critical construction of categories and their gendering, which exposes a presumption of *film noir* as a male form. The strategy of "critical disavowal" allows *film noir* to be defined despite its slipperiness, and a similar strategy of disavowal is in play in the use of gender to structure the "masculine scenario". The description of the dominant gender relationship of *film noir* as that of a male hero "lured" by women who are "fatal and deceptive" has come to be shorthand in critical discussions for *all* the relationships between the sexes in *film noir*, despite the variety of gender relationships that can be found in the films. This is a point that I return to and oppose throughout the argument of this thesis. Foster Hirsch provides Cowie with a clear example of critical disavowal; to him *film noir* is the location:

> ...where beautiful spider women proliferate. There are other kinds of women in [*film noir*], meek wives infected with a fuddy-duddy morality, strong women like Lauren Bacall who achieve something like parity with the men they fall for. *But* the dominant image is the one incarnated by Barbara Stanwyck in *Double Indemnity*: woman as man-hating fatal temptress.[21]

One of the projects of the 1978 Women in Film Noir collection was to account for the image of the *femme fatale* as of political interest to feminist film critics. Christine Gledhill explains how deploying neo-Marxist criticism in the study of genre reveals the contradictions in a dominant ideology, and that this approach can form a reading strategy of use to feminism:

> ...the generic conventions and stereotypes of classic Hollywood can be seen as offering highly formalised and foregrounded sets of codes which can be set into play one against another, or against the grain of the film's thematic material, to expose the contradiction it is the film's project to unify, in a kind of *aesthetic subversion.* Thus a criticism operating according to a perspective at odds with the ideology privileged as the film's 'message' or 'world-view' may be able to animate these effects to produce a progressive reading of an apparently reactionary film, or... an ideological reading of an apparently radical film.[22]

The strategy of 'reading against the grain' has been extremely influential to feminist film criticism, and it facilitated a shift in feminist visual analysis, which Gledhill outlines as follows: "the *progressive or subversive reading,* which shifts the focus of criticism from the interpretation of immanent meaning to analysis of the means of its production, seeks to locate not the 'image of woman' centered in character, but the woman's voice heard intermittently in the female discourse of the film."[23] Janey Place demonstrates 'reading against the grain' in her examination of archetypal representations of women in *film noir.* Place asserts that *films noirs* draw on an enduring myth of women as either embodied in the "dark lady, the spider woman, the evil seductress who tempts man and brings about his destruction"[24] or by "her sister (or *alter ego*), the virgin, the mother, the innocent, the redeemer".[25] She argues that *film noir* allows a contradictory attitude towards women to be played out through the spectacular glamour of the *femme fatale* figure, but simultaneously contained through her destruction in the films' narrative closures: "the myth of the sexually aggressive woman (or criminal man) first allows sensuous expression of that idea and then destroys it. And by its limited expression, ending in defeat, that unacceptable element is controlled."[26] However this control is seen by Place as rather limited, and she asserts that the *femme fatale* derives her power from her 'control' of the image:

> The strength of these women is expressed in the visual style by their dominance in composition, angle, camera movement and lighting. They are overwhelmingly the compositional focus, generally centre frame and/or in the foreground, or pulling focus to them in the background. They control camera movement, seeming to direct the camera (and the hero's gaze, with our own) irresistibly with them as they move... The *femme fatale* ultimately loses physical movement, influence over camera movement, and is often actually or symbolically imprisoned by composition as control over her is exerted and expressed visually.[27]

Although the *femme fatale* figure "ultimately loses physical movement", it is the first relationship of *femmes fatales* to the image, their visual dominance, that Place emphasises:

> It is not their inevitable demise we remember but rather their strong, dangerous, and above all, exciting sexuality....[The] operation of myth is so highly stylised

> and conventionalised that the final 'lesson' of the myth often fades into the background and we retain the image of the erotic, strong, unrepressed (if destructive) woman. The style of these films thus overwhelms their conventional narrative content, or interacts with it to produce a remarkably potent image of woman.[28]

The centrality of the *femme fatale* in the cinematic frame therefore reflects her centrality in feminist genre criticism on *film noir*, and indeed we can see this centrality functioning in Place's argument. She posits the visual dominance of the *femme fatale* figure as ultimately uncontained, or only partially contained by the operations of the narrative. For Place the look of the male characters at these women is a sign of their sexual power and threat; there is a divergence here from the scenario that Laura Mulvey sets out, discussed in my introductory chapter, where being the object of the look is associated with passivity and a lack of agency. Place's *femmes fatales* actively draw the look of the camera, and of the male character *to them* as part of an exercise of their powers.[29]

The work of Gledhill and Place demonstrates the innovative ways in which feminist film criticism has responded to *film noir*. Their readings of genre and of the *femme fatale* figure are distinct from the "masculine fantasy" that Cowie identifies, and which is illustrated by Hirsch. The work in Women in Film Noir recognises that the archetypal representations of the *femme fatale* and the nurturing woman are products of male fantasy, but the critics also find ways in which those representations are meaningful for a feminist politics through the contradictions that surround them. The political possibilities that reading *film noir* against the grain offers have not been taken up by much (male) *film noir* criticism, and the image or idea of the *femme fatale* has tended to dominate critical discussions, but importantly without the emphasis on gender politics that is so central to Gledhill, Place and other feminist critics contributing to Women in Film Noir. Thus the *femme fatale* does not only dominate the visual style of the *films noirs* where she is present: her image has also dominated the writings of genre criticism writing on *film noir*. Critics writing on *film noir* have often put the *femme fatale* at the centre of the frame, where she exemplifies an object of temptation and threat to the male protagonist. The *femme fatale* figure could be described as a dominatrix of *film noir* criticism. In Marc Vernet's words, if critics desire to "form an image" of *film noir*, then there is no image that seems to crystallise its seductive elements so well as the fatal and glamorous woman. The fact that genre criticism can participate in forming and perpetuating an image of *film noir* is important. It shows that as well as engaging in the analysis of iconography, genre criticism also participates in the construction of that iconography, and in so doing it frames and shapes the view of the object that it sets out to analyse.

Despite the "sexy, exciting and strong"[30] appeal of the "spider woman", and her importance in feminist discussions of *film noir*, Cowie traces a trajectory of criticism that is primarily concerned with preserving and defining *film noir* as a category which addresses the concerns of central male characters. She cites the work of Frank Krutnik and Richard

Maltby as examples.[31] Krutnik's work on *film noir* is an important contribution to the ongoing debate around definition in that he traces historical issues of genre construction through an examination of hard-boiled detective fiction, and the popularisation of psychoanalysis in America in the 1940s. But while I think that the material that Krutnik reveals and explores is important, I disagree with some of the conclusions that he forms. Krutnik's approach places gender as a constituting factor of what he terms the "core" of *film noir*. In his introduction he sets out his approach to forming, or re-forming, the category of *film noir*:

> I shall first distinguish between the 'hard-boiled' forms of the *film noir* - which I shall refer to as 'tough' thrillers - and the other forms of 1940s crime film which have often been included within the category.[32]

Krutnik suggests that the 'tough' thriller characteristically portrays a scenario of testing for the male hero: "the *noir* 'tough' thrillers reveal an obsession with male figures who are both internally divided and alienated from the culturally permissible (or ideal) parameters of masculine identity, desire and achievement. Regarded in this light, *film noir* - or at least a significant proportion of the films so termed - emerges as a particularly accentuated and pressurised mode of hero-centered fiction."[33] While I acknowledge that Krutnik's analysis of the 'tough' thriller usefully emphasises the contradictions and fragmented nature of masculine identity formation, I am concerned that he excludes "other forms of 1940s crime film". These "other forms", discussed by Krutnik in his appendix, include gangster films, police procedurals, social problem films, and "the 'women's picture crime thriller"[34]. Women's picture crime thrillers centre on a woman protagonist and comprise a great variety of films. Krutnik includes gothic influenced films, such as *Rebecca* and *Gaslight* where women figure as the victims, or potential victims of crime; films where the central woman is the "lawbreaker"[35] such as *Leave her to Heaven* (John Stahl, USA, 1945), *Ivy* (Sam Wood, USA, 1947) and *The Velvet Touch* (John Gage, USA, 1948); and films such as *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtiz, USA, 1945), *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers* (Lewis Milestone, USA, 1946) and *The Reckless Moment* which Krutnik sees as "represent[ing] a more manifest hybrid between the 'women's picture' melodrama and the 'tough' thriller".[36] Krutnik's intended project is to "highlight the specificity of the 'tough' thriller",[37] and thus to clarify and define one manifestation of *film noir* in the face of what he calls "a bewildering heterogeneity of crime-film cycles and generic hybrids."[38] There are two strains of his argument that I object to here: firstly that the 'tough' thriller is analysed in 'male' terms, and secondly that *film noir* is emptied out of the range and variety of crime films, including those with central female protagonists.

The category that Krutnik carefully delineates around *film noir* is a response to what he sees as the tendency of the category to become unwieldy and unmanageable. I noted the difficulties of definition that *film noir* has created for critics earlier in my argument, but I think that the response to its pervasiveness need not be a strategy of criticism which focuses on narrowing down a list of film titles which are variously seen to be inside or outside the category boundaries. Two early pieces of English language criticism note that *film noir* seems to have an inherent cross-generic quality,[39] and the work of James Naremore and many of the critics contributing material to the 1998 Edition of Women in Film Noir demonstrate an approach to *film noir* which makes a virtue out of the pervasiveness of the category. In the introductory chapter to his full length study of *film noir* Naremore takes on the critical discourse that has developed around it, and the tendency for the themes and styles of *film noir* to be continually reused and transformed in works produced after the end of the Hollywood studio era. He suggests that this has led to the contradictory aspects of *film noir*. It is a style which retains a distinctly (post) modern edge while it evokes feelings of nostalgia for Hollywood in the 40s and 50s; it therefore contains an inherent paradox: "film noir is both an important cinematic legacy and an idea we have projected onto the past."[40] Naremore's book ranges widely in its examination of the many and various connections that *film noir* has with other art forms, such as literature and the fine arts, and with artists and writers working in European as well as American contexts:

> We might even say that noir itself is a kind of mediascape - a loosely related collection of perversely mysterious motifs or scenarios that circulate through all the information technologies, and whose ancestry can be traced at least as far back as ur-modernist crime writers like Edgar Allan Poe or the Victorian "sensation novelists". Of course, not everyone in the world is aware of the term *film noir*, and people find different uses for the things they read or see. Even so, self-conscious forms of noirish narrative continue to appear all around us, blurring the line between our fictional and real landscapes and contributing profoundly to the social *imaginaire*.[41]

In her introduction to the 1998 Edition of Women in Film Noir, E Ann Kaplan writes that in the 1990s "noirness seems to be back in style in both the movies and American culture more generally". She finds a recycling of *noir* themes and styles in media forms such as newspaper columns and websites, a process through which "noir becomes generic, beyond film."[42] The analyses of *film noir* that Naremore and Kaplan offer suggest that its pervasiveness extends far beyond crossing the boundaries of cinematic genre categorisation, which is my focus in this chapter, and they engage with questions of stylistic recirculation across a much longer historical period than I am covering. However the paradigm that they offer, of *film noir* as a form that inherently flows across boundaries, and one capable of undergoing stylistic transformations, is one which I will draw on.

Now I want to return to the perception of *film noir* as a 'male' genre. This has been justified by critics by pointing to the literary heritage of the detective film in crime fiction of the 1930s and 1940s, by writers such as Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, James M Cain and Cornell Woolrich.[43] However it is also important to note that although the literary detective genre is a male dominated one, the work of Angela Martin and Lizzie Francke reveals the significant but largely overlooked contribution to many *films noirs* made by women producers and scriptwriters in the 1940s,[44] which challenges ideas that these films must be seen to speak predominantly about male problems and anxieties. Despite this fact Krutnik co-opts the term *film noir* to define the 'tough' thriller; given the overdetermination of the term, and the privileged critical status that it has accrued, any definition of it which serves to exclude women is, I think, problematic.

Thus in much *film noir* criticism we encounter a paradox: while the *femme fatale* has become the iconographic emblem of the category of *film noir* (as suggested above) an in-depth discussion of the *variety* of women in these films has been absented from much (male) criticism. This is the theme of Angela Martin's work on *film noir*. She illustrates by citing the work of several genre critics as follows:

> ...despite feminism (and after the first appearance of Women in *Film Noir*), we continue to find a perpetuation of the mythic stereotype: 'the simply evil (perhaps psychopathic) *femme fatale* of 1940s *noir* films.' (Maxfield, 1996:9); 'women in film noir tend to be characterised as *femmes fatales, intent on castrating or otherwise destroying the male hero*' (Belton, 1994: 199); and 'No situation depicted was without its *femme fatale*' (Taylor, J. R., 1991:171). And the depiction is carried through to the women who played the '*femme fatale*': for example, McArthur claims that 'The Circe figure... is usually played by actresses of startlingly unreal sensuality' (1972:46).[45]

In suggesting that the *femme fatale* figure is the only female one that is considered by many critics, Martin makes clear the absenting of women from the category of *film noir*. She discusses the assumptions of the category as male as follows:

> Critical texts often deal with the genre/cycle question; the problem of style or historical moment; or that of misfitting films: films with certain crucial (generic) elements missing, or films which also belong to another genre - particularly (though not always and this is never signalled as such) when they have central female characters. These films with central female characters constitute perhaps the greatest source of 'misfit' in 'film noir' because they all in some way problematise the conventional film noir discourse in which, as Elizabeth Cowie puts it: 'a particular *masculine* fantasy of sexual difference is played out."[46] These films are very often called melodramas or examples of the 'woman's film' as if to keep them in their 'proper' and lesser place.[47]

As Cowie's work on the process of differentiation in genre criticism (cited earlier) shows often the models constructed as the "ideal type" of a genre exclude many films,[48] and Martin's comments confirm that this ideal type is a male one. Cowie's example of a misfit or partial fit film is *Laura*, where the film possesses certain 'typical' features repeatedly used by critics to define the category of *noir*, an investigation, a convoluted narrative, use of voice-over, shifts in point of view, a dark Expressionist visual style, and "psychologically perverse" motivations of its main male characters.[49] However the character of Laura is not deceptive or *'fatale'* in the way that Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck) is in *Double Indemnity*. Like the character of Mildred (Joan Crawford) in *Mildred Pierce* she is ambitious, and financially and sexually independent. Out and out *femmes fatales* like Elsa Banister (Rita Hayworth) in *The Lady from Shanghai* (Orson Welles, US, 1948), Helen Grayle (Claire Trevor) in *Murder, My Sweet* and Kitty Collins (Ava Gardner) in *The Killers* (Robert Siodmak, USA, 1946) are tempered by characters like Laura (Gene Tierney), Gilda (Rita Hayworth in a different role) in *Gilda*, Lucia Harper (Joan Bennett) in *The Reckless Moment*, and Martha Ivers (Barbara Stanwyck) in *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers*. It is significant that these films whose titles put their characters at the centre of the narrative are defined by critics as shading into the woman's film, something that has been noted in many discussions of *Mildred Pierce*.[50] These films contain women who, in Angela Martin's term, are 'central' but who do not conform to the image of the *femme fatale*. Being 'woman-centered' these films offer an alternative to Krutnik's definition of *film noir* as "hero-centered".[51] As the iconography of the *femme fatale* has been of such importance to the definition of sexual relations by genre criticism on *film noir*, I will now go on to examine some examples where portraits contribute to the definition of gender in films which have been defined as *film noir*, films such as *Laura* and *Gilda*. Portraits seem to foreground in a particularly direct way the relationship between gender and spectacle that has been a central issue in spectatorship debates. The seeming equivalence of portrait and framed frozen and fetishised femininity is the relationship set out by Mulvey in 'Visual Pleasure':

> In their traditional exhibitionistic role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to striptease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire.[52]

But it is my argument that whilst the portrait belongs to a long tradition of representation that has frequently sought to define and frame femininity as the image of male desire, cinematic portraits often represent precisely the difficulty of framing and containing femininity. There are repeated scenarios in which the painted image is allied with particular uses of film sound and music which complicate the framing of woman as "to-be-looked-at-ness", and it is these scenarios that I will explore in more detail in the rest of this chapter. The way that the women have been framed within the films is reflected in the framing of them by genre criticism; and hence I explore the way that the definition of *film noir* as a category has often hinged upon framing a woman as fatal.

Laura and *Gilda*: Putting the Frame on Mame

The narratives of both *Laura*[53] and *Gilda*[54] are driven by the question that hangs over the status and identities of their "central"[55] female characters. This question is posed by the male characters who have a key role in attempting to construct and define the images of the female characters. These acts of image making to which Laura and Gilda are subjected are foregrounded by the presence of portraits and other material images as objects in these films' narratives. So although there is an attempt to naturalise the male perceptions of femininity within the narratives, Laura and Gilda have roles in considerably complicating, resisting and deconstructing these perceptions.

Laura - The Image of a Woman, the Voice of a Man

The centrality of the portrait in *Laura* is emphasised by the rhyming opening and closing shots of the film, in which the painting is seen in medium shot with the opening and closing credits in the foreground. We might say that the painted image of Laura (Gene Tierney) frames the narrative in which she is central, however the narrative is framed not only through the visual parallels at its beginning and end, but also through the aural parallels of Waldo Lydecker's (Clifton Webb's) voice. At the beginning of the film the shot of Laura's portrait fades to a blank black screen, and Waldo's voice-over narration is heard. At the end of the film his (pre-recorded) voice is heard on the radio as he silently sneaks back into Laura's apartment. Although parallel, these two instances contain differences, which have implications for the narration of Laura's story:

> *Waldo*: I shall never forget the weekend Laura died. A silver sun burned through the sky like a huge magnifying glass. It was the hottest Sunday in my recollection. I felt as if I was the only human being left in New York. For Laura's horrible death I was alone. I, Waldo Lydecker, was the only one who really knew her.

As Waldo's voice is the first we hear (before we see any of the film's images), he assumes a prominent narrative position. Sarah Kozloff points out that a narrator whose voice-over opens a film is often taken by the viewers to occupy a position usually inhabited by the larger narrating agency of the film as a whole - what Kozloff refers to as the "image-maker".[56] Kozloff notes that the image-maker is often taken as a powerful and controlling narrative presence because s/he remains "unseen, unearthly".[57] She argues:

> ...we find it easiest to accept voice-over narrators as primary, framing storytellers when the voice-over is simultaneous with the film's opening shots, when one has seen as little as possible of the story world, and certainly before one sees the

> narrating character. If this occurs, viewers can believe that the images have been created by the unseen voice, rather than the voice by the image-maker.[58]

Waldo's prominent narrative position is reflected by the style of his discourse, which is highly imagistic and full of literary flourishes. His narration continues "I had just begun to write Laura's story when another of those detectives came to see me; I had him wait." and he even appears to claim the position of image-maker through his declarative statement that "I, Waldo Lydecker, was the only one who really knew [Laura]", a statement which stakes his claim to be the only person who can write, or authorise her story. The connection that is made between writing and creating images at the beginning of the film is of crucial importance to the relationship of Waldo and Laura throughout the narrative. Waldo's bid for control at the beginning of the film through his explicit statement that he will tell the story shows that he not only seeks to speak of Laura, but for her. Michel Chion finds traces of a long tradition of storytelling in voice-overs: "Since the very dawn of time, *voices have presented images*, made order of things in the world, brought things to life and named them.... In every master of ceremonies and storyteller as well as every movie voiceover, an aspect of this original function remains."[59] The potential power of a narrator to present and name the images that they call forth is a particularly important issue in *Laura* and *Gilda* (where Johnny Farrell's [Glenn Ford's] voice-over opens the narration of the film) because these films contain central women characters named in the title. Where there is a parallel between the central woman and the narrative of the film, issues of narrational control are particularly important as an attempt to usurp the narration constitutes a usurpation and silencing of the woman herself.[60]

While Waldo's narration seems to place him in the place of image-maker, which appropriately reflects his highly developed aestheticism, his narration is not typical of voice-over narration of the time. Voice-over narration, usually associated with flashback, became more common in Hollywood films during the 1940s, so much so that Karen Hollinger calls the 1940s "the golden age of filmic first person voice-over narration".[61] Hollinger notes that voice-over was found in a variety of genres in the 1940s, refering to war films, semi or pseudo-documentaries, literary adaptations and *films noirs*.[62] Both Hollinger and Kozloff note that the popularity of voice-over fell in the 1950s, and again in the 1960s.[63] First-person narration is often assumed to give the narrating character narrative control, especially where the narrator is male, and as facilitating close identification between the character and the audio-viewer through direct address. However, as Cowie points out, the narrative authority often associated with voice-over narration is not necessarily found in all genres, with *film noir* illustrating her point:

> The authority of the voice-over tends to be assumed by convention; but it also conventionally includes the voicing of hesitations and doubts about the hero's

> perception and interpretation of events, including self-doubt (notably in *Gilda* and *Dead Reckoning*).[64]

Hollinger also pursues this issue, pointing out that voice-overs in war dramas, semi-documentaries and literary adaptations "are associated with authority, heroism, and power - either authorial, narrative or both."[65] She continues:

> *Films noirs*, however, do not attempt this association; instead, they most often contain weak, powerless narrators who tell a story of their past failures or of their inability to shape the events of their lives to their own designs.[66]

Hollinger suggests that a scenario of confession is a common one in *film noir*, and that through their confessions, frequently framed by an older paternal figure who listens to them, the male narrators search for a revelation about femininity.[67] These narrators are represented by characters like Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray) in *Double Indemnity*, Rip Murdock (Humphrey Bogart) in *Dead Reckoning* (John Cromwell, USA, 1947), and indeed Johnny Farrell in *Gilda* which I will discuss later. Hollinger's analysis continues to assert that the powerful visual presence of a *femme fatale* character represents a direct challenge to the narrational control of the male voice-over,[68] Hollinger therefore identifies a textual tension between image and sound. This is a tension which is based not only upon femininity being constructed as a baffling enigma that a male narrator must make sense of; the tension also exists in the inability of the male narrator to embody the 'masculine' qualities of narrative dominance, hence Hollinger's characterisation of "weak, powerless narrators".[69] My line of argument differs from Hollinger's in that I want to question the framing of femininity as fatal in *film noir*. Nevertheless in *Laura* and *Gilda* there are not only tensions between the image of a woman and male narration, there are also tensions between male and female narration.

Waldo's voice-over is different to the confessional style found in many 40s films, and Waldo has a different relationship to femininity. His narration does not set out femininity as an enigma that he has attempted (and failed) to resolve, in fact Waldo has a role in understanding and even constructing Laura's glamorous image. Waldo's voice-over shows his intention to appropriate and shape Laura's story. What he does have in common with the confused male narrators is that his narration is signalled as partial and dubious, as not giving the whole story. While Waldo may begin the film in a privileged position of narration, he is marked out early on in the narrative as a potentially unreliable narrator. Detective Mark McPherson (Dana Andrews) visits Waldo's luxurious apartment ("it's lavish, but I call it home"), and in the process of questioning him McPherson recalls a column in which Waldo wrote about "the Harrington murder case".[70] Waldo mistakenly stated that the murder was committed with a shotgun loaded with buckshot (the way Laura was killed), but McPherson tells Waldo that the murderer actually used a sash weight. Waldo's response to McPherson's criticism is at first typically barbed and stand-offish: "Are the processes of the creative mind now under the jurisdiction of the police?" But then his response becomes more revealing; learning of the real facts he states: "How ordinary, my version was obviously superior. I never bother with details you know." Even though the scene in which McPherson questions Waldo takes place early in the film everything that is learnt about Waldo in the first few moments, and in the subsequent narrative, contradicts his statement. His ornate apartment, his fussiness over McPherson's handling of his precious art objects, and his attention to the way that he dresses all underline a heightened attention to detail, what Richard Dyer describes as "fastidiousness."[71] Dyer points out that in *film noir* sexual iconography indicating gayness often works through the creation of overt contrasts. He argues that "the central image of sexuality in these films [is] the femme fatale",[72] whose appearance is carefully constructed through costume, make-up and lighting as both sensual and highly artificial. In contrast to this central image hard boiled masculinity is characterised by a carelessness about appearance, and opposed to the attention that gay-coded male characters give to matters of dress.[73] The contrasts that Dyer describes are set up between McPherson and Waldo in the first scene of *Laura*, and the coding of the characters' sexuality through the discourse that they use and through signifiers such as dress and possessions is important because, as Dyer points out, characters such as Waldo are "defined by everything but the very thing that makes [them] different."[74] In this context Waldo's denial that he "never bother[s] with details" takes on the function of being a doubly incriminating statement: it not only contradicts his actions, it catches him out in the act of telling a lie and trying to conceal it. Waldo's unreliability as a narrator is therefore connected in the narrative with his coded sexuality, naturalising a link between homosexuality and criminal transgression, and between heterosexual masculinity and the law.[75] The opening shot of the portrait of Laura, and the first scene showing Waldo attempting to control the story of Laura trying to effectively construct his image of her verbally, indicate an early tension in the narrative roles of image and sound, between spectacle and narrative, focused on the central female character of the film.

These tensions are evident in the first scene that takes place in Laura's apartment. McPherson goes there in the course of his investigation and he is accompanied by Waldo and Shelby Carpenter (Vincent Price), Laura's fiancé. McPherson studies the entrance to the apartment, tallying the police report of the position of the body with the location. Waldo is disgusted with this matter-of-fact approach, and he tries to alter the tenor of McPherson's investigation from a forensic inventory to a poignant encounter with the dead woman by mobilising her portrait, and the traces of her in her apartment and possessions. The extent to which Waldo tries to direct the way that McPherson sees Laura is clear in the following exchange:

> *Waldo*: McPherson, tell me, why did they have to photograph her in that horrible condition?

> *McPherson*: When a dame gets killed she doesn't worry about how she looks.
> *Waldo*: Will you stop calling her a dame! Look around, is this the home of a dame? Look at her!
> *McPherson*: Not bad.
> *Waldo*: Jacoby was in love with her when he painted it. But he never captured her vibrance, her warmth. Have you ever been in love?
> *McPherson*: A doll in Washington Heights once got a fox fur out of me.
> *Waldo*: Ever know a woman who wasn't a doll or a dame?
> *McPherson*: Yeah, once, but she kept walking me past furniture stores to look at the parlour suites.

As he talks McPherson goes over to a gramophone player and puts on a recording of Laura's theme. The theme was first heard accompanying the opening title shot of the film, and while it is generally associated with Laura as a character it is important to note that the theme is most specifically used to indicate Laura in her absence. It is tied to her painting in the opening shots, it is prevalent in Waldo's flashback, and it functions most powerfully in the scene where McPherson is alone in Laura's apartment and falls asleep under her portrait only to wake to find his fantasy fulfilled and Laura standing under her portrait. In scenes where Laura is present, ie. after her return, the theme is used more sparingly. This shows the difference between Laura as presented in the second half of the film, and as re-presented through her portrait, her musical theme and the subjectively inflected memories of Waldo's flashback in the first half of the film. The diegetic identification of Laura with her theme in this scene is consequently most important in contributing to the construction of her by the male characters. Film music critic Kathryn Kalinak suggests that the comment made by Shelby, that the music was Laura's favourite, "facilitat[es] a reading of the sequence in which the music becomes a signifier of Laura herself".[76]

It is the fact that she is associated with a recording of her theme that is most crucial. There are several key moments in the film which involve the recording and playback of sound. One of the details that will prove the veracity of Laura's alibi (that she was at her country house at the time of Diane Redfern's murder) is that the radio at her house was broken while she was there, meaning that she did not know that she had been reported as dead. When McPherson goes out to the house - tailing Shelby - he is disappointed to find that the radio works perfectly, a fact which casts doubt over Laura's innocence. In the final scene of the film Laura listens to a recording of Waldo's voice, his radio programme on "Great Lovers of History" plays as he silently sneaks back into her apartment, under the cover of his voice. Waldo is a listener to his own recorded voice, and he even times his entrance to Laura's bedroom to coincide with his reading the final lines of a poem. The separation between the image of Waldo's body and the recording of his voice gives an uncanny effect in the film, and the separation of image and sound, body and voice is an indication of Waldo's psychological instability, his dividedness. The contribution that sound makes to the creation of uncanny effects is an issue that I return to in later chapters, particularly in my discussion of the gothic woman's film. The association of Laura's recorded theme with her image can therefore be seen in the context of the film's foregrounding of aural motifs, particularly the use of the voice. And while recorded music is clearly different from a recorded voice, the function that Laura's theme performs in the first scene in her apartment is to work with her portrait to restore the presence of her character to the space where she lived. The portrait, an idealisation of Laura while she was alive, is now a memorial to her, preserving and fixing her image from her bodily death. As a result the association of the recording with the painting symbolically gives a voice to the silent image of the woman. Thus in *Laura* the central woman is surrounded by a number of different framing devices, the painting, the music and the fantasies of Waldo, McPherson and Shelby. These framing devices conflict with each other at several points during the film, and they serve to overdetermine an interpretation of Laura from the point of view of the male characters, and it is these varying interpretations of her which have led to a perception of ambiguity surrounding her character.

Fabricating Images of Femininity: Framing Laura and Gilda

My earlier discussion of *femme fatale* figures identified the importance of these figures as images of resistance for feminist criticism. I also identified the way that this image has dominated *film noir* genre criticism. However given that *Laura*'s status as a *film noir* has been hotly debated precisely over the issue of whether or not Laura is a *femme fatale* I want to register my wariness over assuming that 'the' image of a *femme fatale* is immediately obvious or transparent. Often images of *femmes fatales* are discussed in terms of their portrayal of highly sexualised and glamorised femininity, but not all *femmes* are fatal, and there is a repertoire of images of "desirable but dangerous"[77] women rather than a definitive version.

There is considerable variety in the images used both in *Laura*, and its promotion, and attempting to distinguish between images formed 'inside' the film and those circulated 'outside' it is, in fact, a false division. These images by turns both support and contradict one another in shaping narrative and character expectations. In her account of movie promotion in the 1940s Mary Beth Haralovich reveals that promotional campaigns were integral parts of Hollywood production. Particularly relevant to a consideration of the creation of images of femininity is her description of the final part of the campaign process. During the last stages of shooting production stills and poster-art photographs were taken by studio photographers. The still, photographic images were used to originate posters and illustrations for advertising. I cited the words of stills photographer Laszlo Willinger in my introduction. He talks about producing what he calls the "poster effect",[78] continuing, "The photograph has to stand on its own - without caption. If you have to explain it, it's not good."[79] John Kobal remarks on the ability of still photographers to condense "the accumulative impact of the whole movie"[80] into a photograph. The stills were then passed on to poster-artists, who further shaped these images. The promotion process, where a still image is produced and goes on to be circulated through the commercial paintings of poster-artist and advertising illustrators, has obvious resonances in relation to *Laura* whose narrative centres on a portrait of an advertising executive.

Critics have offered a variety of interpretations of Laura's portrait. Several read the portrait as one of the generic markers which place the film in the category of *film noir*. Raymond Durgnat and Janey Place (both in her collaborative essay with Lowell Peterson, and her work 'Women in film noir'), see portraits as representing women according to the fascination/fear duality that has so often defined gender relations for critics of *film noir*.[81] Place and Peterson refer to "those omnipresent framed portraits of women (which) seem to confine the safe, powerless aspects of feminine sexuality with which the *noir* heroes invariably fall in love".[82] This is a view with which Kalinak concurs, for her the portrait "reflects the double-bind of female sexuality in film noir: it attracts and threatens."[83] She continues:

> Laura is simultaneously cast as sexual temptress and passive object of male desire. She is caught in the portrait in the position of being beheld; her gaze is not directed outward, meeting the eyes of the implied spectator, but rather remains focused indiscriminately, at an oblique angle. The very picture frame around her serves to contain the power of her threatening sexuality. Frozen into a moment of time, immobile, she is literally on display, forever to be beheld in the moment of sexual anticipation.[84]

I noted earlier that portraits are not exclusive to *film noir*, featuring in a number of different genres, and I also registered my hesitation over *Laura* as *film noir*. It is interesting that both Place and Peterson and Kalinak mention the function that portraits have in framing and containing an otherwise (potentially) fatal woman. It is significant, though, that the critics cited above talk about the portrait in general terms but do not analyse its style in any detail. Eugene McNamara does discuss the style, and begins his study of the film by giving the portrait a classical heritage: "The portrait of Laura is a Sargentesque study, evoking glamour and elegance as well as beauty... It is meant to function as a contemporary version of Poe's Helen, an icon of eternal beauty which remains forever out of reach."[85] Towards the end of his book he roots it more clearly in the genre of photographic studio portraits and glamour pin-ups discussed above:

> Knowing that the portrait of Laura is a studio glossy of Gene Tierney, blownup and brushed over to give it the effect of paint does not spoil our (sic) appreciation of it. Keats said it in "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Dead perfection is superior to living passion, which is caught in time. The portrait's final effect is romantic, idealized, derealized.[86]

McNamara, it seems, wants to include studio portraits in a high art tradition, but his argument is problematic for a feminist analysis of the production of images by the Hollywood industry. His attempt to marry classical art traditions of portraiture with the work of still photographers would be interesting if he pursued questions of how that work draws on an idea of portraiture, and the ways in which Hollywood adapts and appropriates elements of a classical idiom. However he argues that the two modes are the same, or that an effect of idealisation is the same despite the differences in the idealised objects. I would prefer to see the portrait considered alongside the other images associated with it, such as poster-art and press book images and the advertising images that are seen in the film. Annette Kuhn and others provide a useful feminist critique of the tradition of glamour photography in Hollywood in the 1930s and 1940s.[87] They assert that the photographic portraits promote an impossible image of inaccessible glamour, which is then displaced onto products advertised by the stars, to the female audience. They trace the deceptiveness of these glamorous images to the construction of the women in them from constituent parts into a perfect whole:

> A good deal of the groomed beauty of the women of the glamour portraits comes from the fact that they are 'made-up', in the immediate sense that cosmetics have been applied to their bodies in order to enhance their existing qualities. But they are also 'made-up' in the sense that the images, rather than the women, are put together, constructed, even fabricated or falsified in the sense that we might say a story is made up if it is a fiction.[88]

The analysis of Kuhn and others demonstrates the role of glamour photography in "fabricat[ing]"[89] images of femininity. The analogy that they make between the cultural construction of femininity and a fictional narrative is one which has resonance to *Laura* and *Gilda*, where the central female character is constructed out of different parts, or different narrative points of view. What is also interesting is that while we can clearly see the influence of glamour photography and its conventions for representing gender in Laura's portrait, this image varies considerably from the figure of Laura used in some of the poster-art publicity for the film.

If we compare Figure 1.01, a production still which shows both the portrait and Gene Tierney, with Figure 1.02, one of the posters used to promote the film, this variation can be clearly seen. Laura's portrait is painted with a softness to the brush strokes giving the impression of diffused lighting on the character's face, and of a halo of light surrounding her figure. Richard Dyer discusses the gendered and racial connotations that lighting carry in his book length study White. He suggests the power of lighting to connote and construct idealised femininity as follows: "Idealised white women are bathed in and permeated by light. It streams through them and falls on to them from above. In short, they glow."[90]

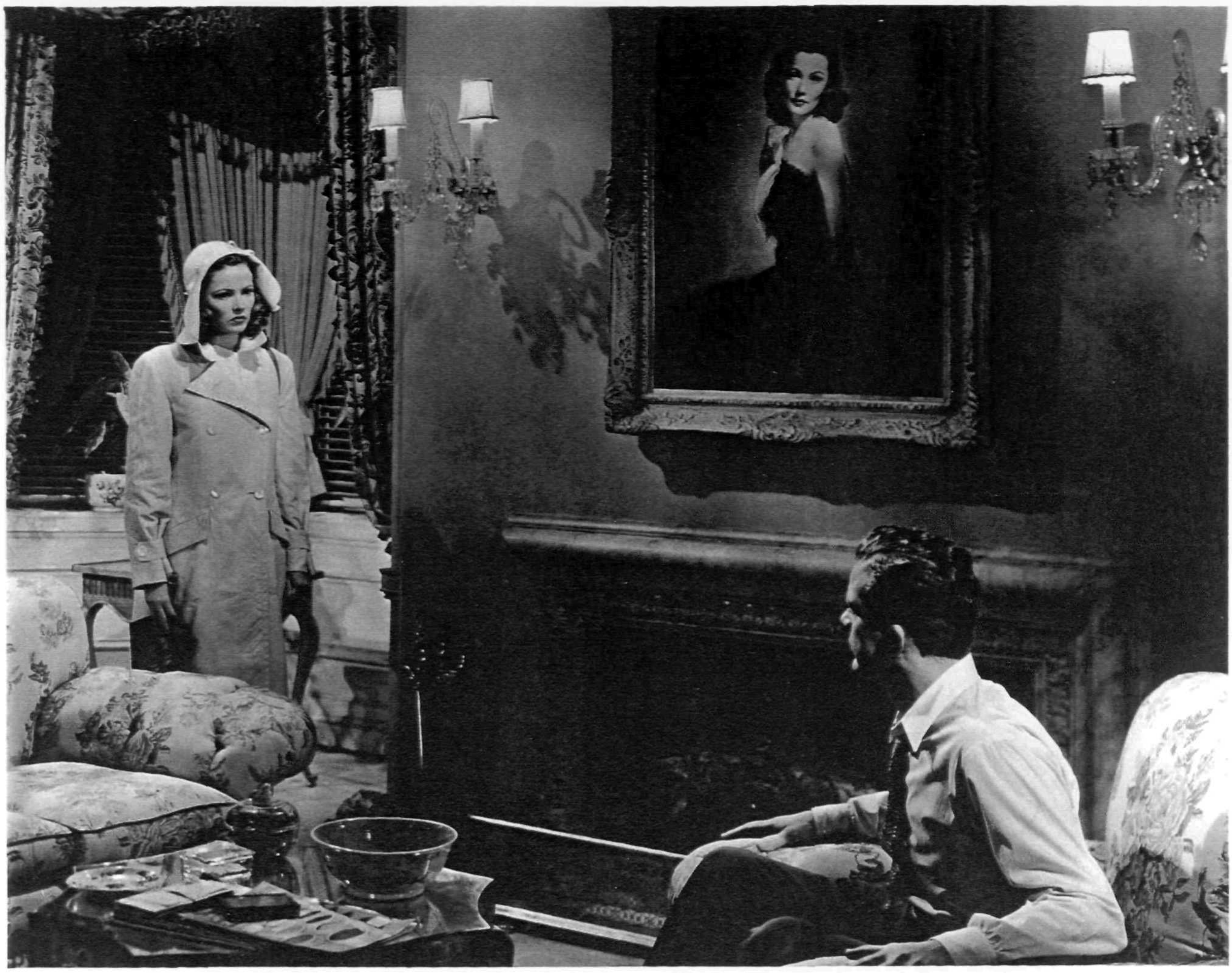


Figure 1.01

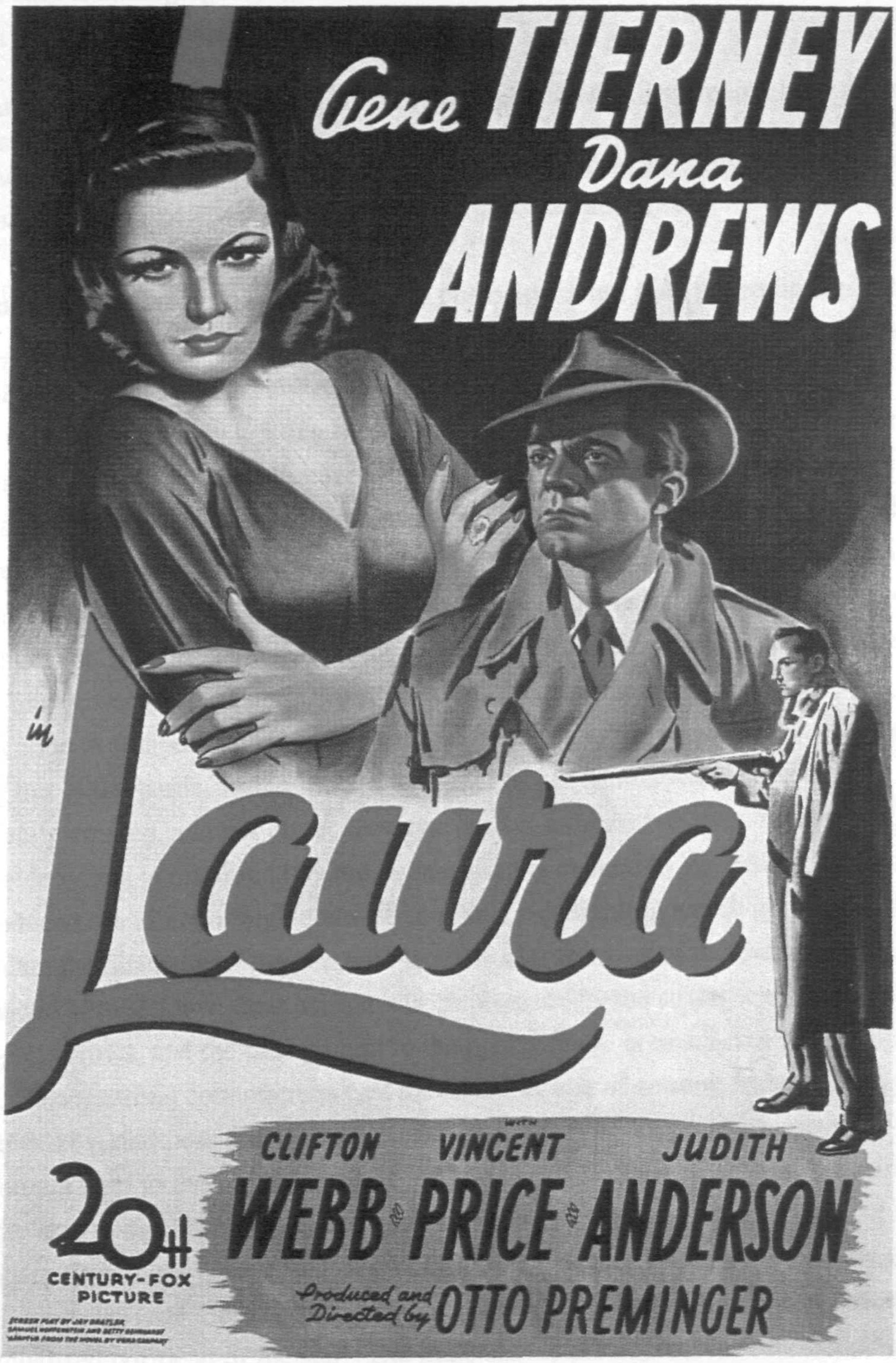

Gene TIERNEY
Dana ANDREWS
in
Laura
with
CLIFTON WEBB
VINCENT PRICE
JUDITH ANDERSON
20th CENTURY-FOX PICTURE
Produced and Directed by OTTO PREMINGER

Figure 1.02

The soft diffuse top lighting that produces a halo effect can idealise the figure that it falls on as Dyer suggests it carries with it celestial and spiritual connotations.[91] The softness of the portrait's face is iconographically distinct from the lighting and make up that Place and Peterson identify as constructing *noir* heroines:

> Far removed from the feeling of softness and vulnerability created by... diffusion techniques, the *noir* heroines were shot in tough, unromantic close-ups of direct, undiffused light, which create a hard, statuesque surface beauty that seems more seductive but less attainable, at once alluring and impenetrable.[92]

Place and Peterson are discussing cinematic close-ups rather than the painted-photograph that is Laura's portrait, nevertheless the portrait is produced out of the same representational codes of the cinema industry, and so their discussion is relevant to it. Furthermore *Laura* utilises relatively high-key lighting throughout most of its scenes, and Gene Tierney is lit accordingly. The pose and costume of the portrait figure do promote the character as sexualised, in particular her dark dress and pose draw attention to her bare white shoulder. However I do not agree that the portrait carries the connotations of threat that Kalinak mentions. The woman represented in the painting as passive and desirable is the woman with whom Mark McPherson falls in love. Whether this woman is Laura is another question.

The poster image (Figure 1.02) positions Laura's character emphatically as a fatal woman. She is compositionally prominent, towering over the male figures in the poster, and leaning out of the partial frame formed by the 'L' of her name towards the viewer. Her pose, arms firmly crossed, and her direct stare present her as assertive, even threatening, an impression which is reinforced by the lighting that is evoked by the artist. The poster artist has produced the effect of high contrast, low key, side lighting which gives a much harder effect than the diffusion of the portrait. In particular the eyes of the poster figure are surrounded with shadow, their darkness is emphasised by the strong lines of the woman's arching eyebrows, and the background to the poster figure is much darker than the portrait figure. The resulting connotations cast the figure as one of coming from, or being surrounded by, darkness rather than light, the antithesis of the portrait's idealised lightness. The colours used in the poster accent the figure's sexual power. Her grey-blue dress contrasts with her skin colour showing off the style which is low cut, and the bright red of her lips and long sharp fingernails rhymes with the colour of her name. While the poster figure is recognisable as Gene Tierney its generic quality of 'poster-art seductress' competes with an individualised portrayal of the star. The male characters depicted are more difficult to identify. The figure in the trenchcoat and hat presents two possibilities: it could be Dana Andrews, although this poster representation is different to the way that he is styled in some of the other posters offered to exhibitors in the Campaign Book. Alternatively it could be a younger version of Clifton Webb, minus the moustache that he sports in the film. The smaller figure holding the shotgun is also difficult to identify, since again there are two possibilities: the head appears to be styled to resemble Vincent Price's high forehead, but the events of the narrative would make us conclude that it is Webb. Haralovich sees poster ads as crucial in circulating narrative and star images:

> Poster ads transmitted the essential attributes of the film, generating viewer expectations and forming what Barbara Klinger has termed "a tentative contract between producer and consumer." Posters identified the genre of the film and placed its stars/characters at a point of narrative suspense. Poster graphics often linked head shots of stars/characters to each other and to a central narrative enigma through glances and tag lines.[93]

However the poster for *Laura* with its ambiguous male figures raises some questions over how we might determine what these "essential attributes" are. The genre markers of the poster indicate that the film features Gene Tierney as a glamorous and dangerous woman. The billing of the poster brackets Tierney and Andrews as the two biggest stars, and as the title of the film brackets the woman with the male figure in the hat it signals that this is the heterosexual romance pairing of the film.[94] The pose of Webb's/Price's poster figure signals the narrative element of murder but the ambiguity of the figure keeps the identity of the murderer in doubt. An indeterminacy over the representation of poster figures is an issue that Haralovich raises in her study of the promotion of *Mildred Pierce*. She describes a primary image for the film as a "figure of a woman who is not immediately recognisable as Joan Crawford."[95] and she goes on to argue that the poster image shapes a particular reading of the film's central female character which is not necessarily confirmed through the narrative as a whole:

> Through this focus on *film noir* and the dominance of the title character, Mildred is assigned direct responsibility for aggressive sexuality and for violence. While not precisely faithful to the film, this ad strategy was efficient and effective since it promoted the title of the film and emphasized the lead character (and star) rather than the secondary character of Mildred's daughter, Veda. In both the novel and the film, Veda may have had the more obvious *femme fatale* status and the greater narrative agency (as an adulteress and also as the murderer being sought by the police). But her name was not tied to the title, nor was the actress playing Veda, the relative newcomer Ann Blyth, likely to appeal to potential moviegoers.[96]

In other words the status of fatal woman is transferred from Veda to Mildred in order to promote the film's promise of star values and maximum narrative excitement. I think that we can see a similar strategy being utilised in the promotion of *Laura* (and *Gilda*) where the central woman is portrayed, or framed, as dangerously sexual. In the poster for *Laura* the ambiguity over the portrayal of the male character holding the gun actually works to suggest

Laura's guilt rather than to implicate the male character. All the fatal and pathological qualities of the men who surround Laura in the narrative of the film are condensed and transferred to her in her portrayal in the poster figure of *femme fatale*.

The creation of a condensed image of character and narrative is what John Ellis describes as the "narrative image".[97] He sees the narrative image of a film as contributing to the production of "a series of enigmas"[98] which the film will resolve. But in the case of films such as *Mildred Pierce*, *Laura* and *Gilda* where the central women *are* the narrative, the promotional campaigns frame the women as the enigma *of* that narrative. This is clear in the trailer for *Laura*, which opens with the titles "Who is Laura?" "What is Laura?" A voice-over implicitly answers the questions with the following: "You have rarely met a girl like Laura. Few women have been so beautiful, so exotic, so dangerous to know." A selection of scenarios from the film are shown as the voice-over continues to frame Laura as glamorous and dangerous. In particular her relationship to the three male characters is emphasised as images of Laura with Waldo, Shelby and McPherson are accompanied by the voice-over: "Every woman will feel that when it comes to men Laura gets by with murder. Every man will feel that when it comes to murder it couldn't involve a more enticing girl." Thus the trailer for *Laura* centres the "narrative enigma" firmly onto Laura's identity, while also contriving to frame her according to a promise of sexual excitement and violence.

One of the poster images for *Gilda* functions in a similar way to the images and trailer for *Laura*. A comparison of Figure 1.03 with Figure 1.04 shows the translation of a photographic production still into a painted poster image. As in the case of *Laura* there are significant differences between the two images. Although her pose is the same, the woman's figure has been reversed in the poster perhaps to provide space for - and draw attention to - the title and credits of the film. The use of colour in the poster allows the artist to render the woman's bare arms, shoulders and neck in warm flesh tones, and to paint in Rita Hayworth's famous strawberry blonde hair, an important part of her star image. The lighting used in the photograph sets Rita Hayworth off from the dark background, and emphasise the shape of her body and the textures of her hair, gown and the fur coat she drags behind her. A combination of a relatively high key light with strong back and top lighting and very little fill results in an outline to Hayworth's figure, while the shadow cast by her leg points gives shape and dimension to her body, and suggests that she is stepping forward towards the viewer. For the most part the poster image replicates the lighting of the photograph, where it is modified is in reducing the contrast of the lighting on the face so that the shadows are very faint. The poster also increases the intensity of the lighting around the woman's legs, and in fact re-draws the photograph so that the skirt of the gown appears to hug the woman's figure much more closely than in the photograph exaggerating the sexual display of the image. But the most important difference between the photograph and the poster image is in the woman's face.

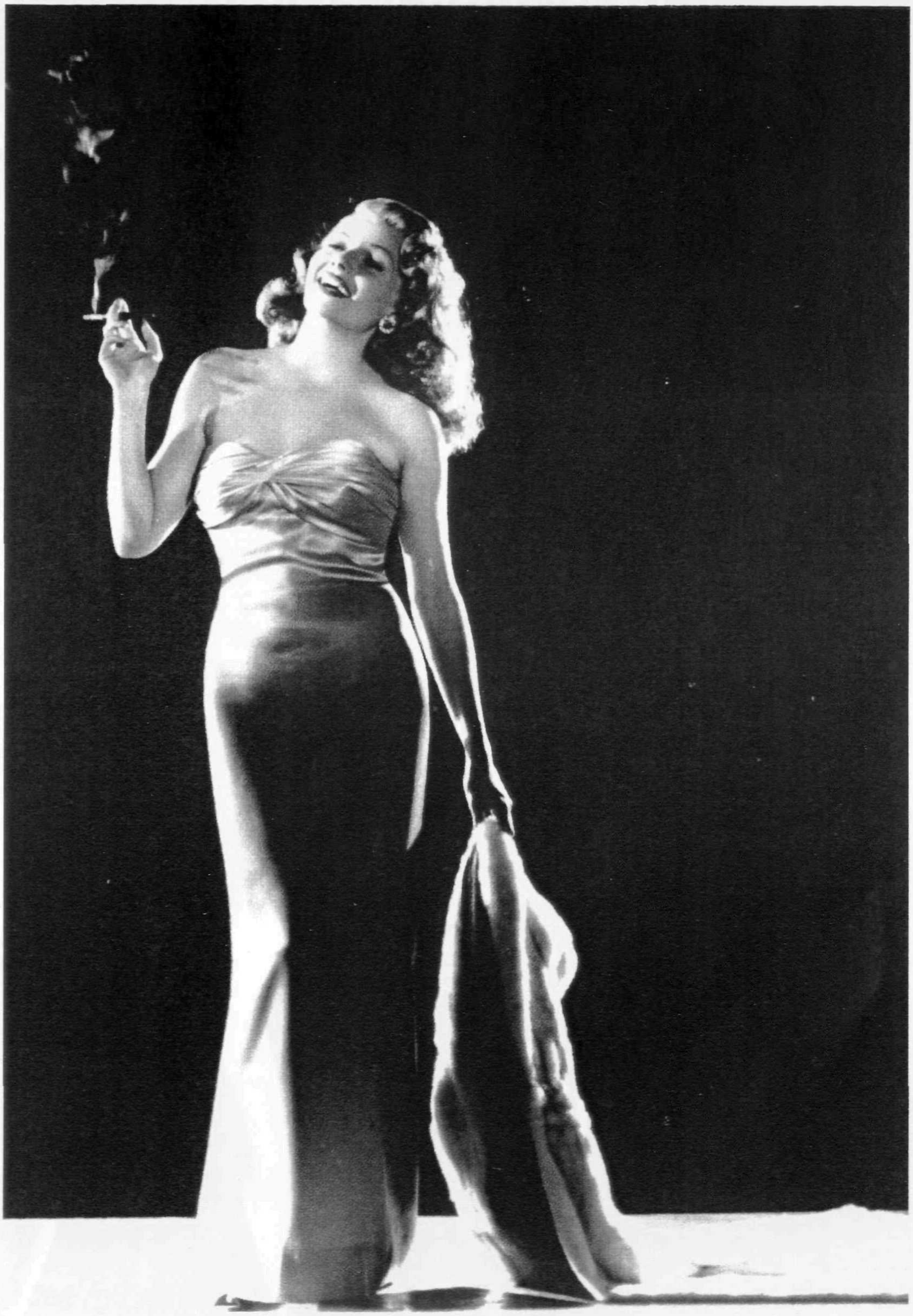
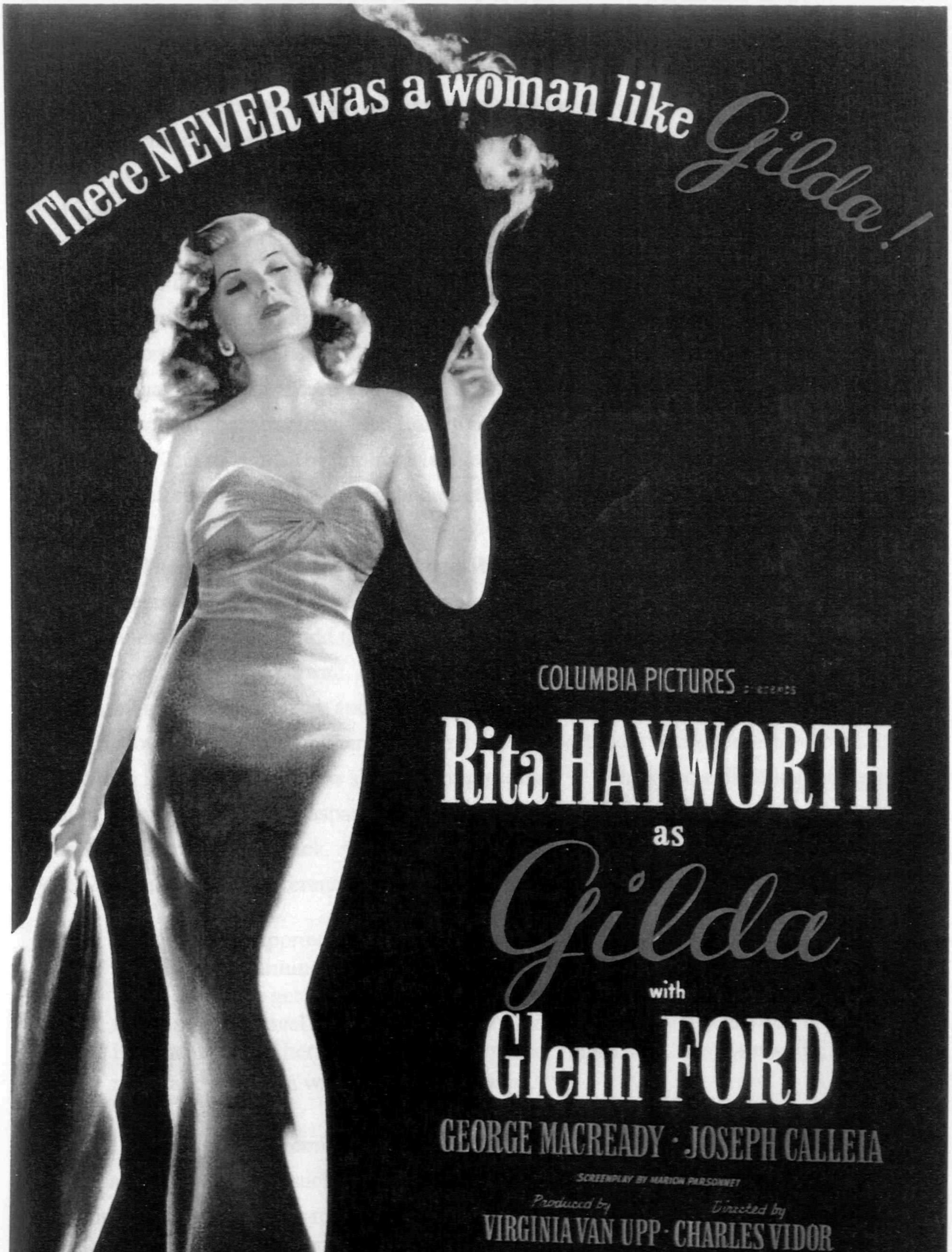


Figure 1.03

Figure 1.04


There NEVER was a woman like Gilda!
COLUMBIA PICTURES presents
Rita HAYWORTH
as
Gilda
with
Glenn FORD
GEORGE MACREADY · JOSEPH CALLEIA
SCREENPLAY BY MARION PARSONNET
Produced by
VIRGINIA VAN UPP
Directed by
CHARLES VIDOR

In the translation from photograph to poster the woman's expression is changed from smiling to a look which we might describe as appraising, or even calculating. As with *Laura* the poster paints the central woman of the film as a *femme fatale*, "Defined by [her] sexuality, which is presented as desirable but dangerous."[99] The tag line on the poster "There NEVER was a woman like Gilda!" sells the uniqueness of the film, implying its central female character is unsurpassed, incomparably sexy and glamorous, but it can also be read as foregrounding the fact that such an idea of a woman is a fantasy. The marketing hyperbole overreaches itself, giving a strong suggestion of a division between Gilda as image and as narrative enigma, and Gilda as character who will ultimately fail to, or will refuse to occupy the position assigned to her by the male characters around her. My examination of the promotional images for *Laura* and *Gilda* thus shows that there are a number of images of femininity being constructed which leads to a tension in its definition as simply lethal temptress. The repertoire of feminine images associated with the central women in these films therefore problematises a single definition of femininity.

Laura's Theme: Composing the Central Woman

The different versions of Laura that are evident in the film, and in the images circulating in its surrounding publicity, add to the narrational tensions that I identified between Waldo's voice-over and Laura's portrait. The production history of the film's screenplay, examined in the work of Kathryn Kalinak and Eugene McNamara, indicates that there was considerable conflict over the balance of character narration, and particular disagreement over the extent to which Laura's point of view should be represented.[100] There were differing conceptions of her character by Vera Caspary (the author of the source novel), director Otto Preminger and producer Darryl Zanuck. Caspary met with Preminger for a story conference, and Kalinak relates their differences as follows:

> Preminger disapproved of Laura because of what he perceived as her promiscuity, claiming that she had 'no 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-- the novel terms her a 'modern woman - and suggested that it was an important part of her attraction for the reader. Her Laura was 'wonderful, warm, sexy,' and a woman who 'enjoyed her lovers.'"[101]

Darryl Zanuck shared Preminger's unease with references to Laura's sexual experience and Kalinak concludes that "such vastly disparate attitudes toward Laura's sexuality as Caspary's, Preminger's, and Zanuck's resulted in a confusing characterisation for her on the screen."[102] The varying conceptions of Laura by the people involved in producing the film are compounded in its narrative structure. In Caspary's novel Laura is the final narrator of three from whose points of view the story is told, the others being Waldo and McPherson. As the final narrator Laura has the "the prerogative of narrative resolution".[103] The original draft of the screenplay had voice-over narration for all three characters but re-writes gradually reduced, then removed Laura's voice-over narration altogether. McPherson's voice-over narration was also removed.[104]

Earlier I suggested that the strong association between Laura's theme and her portrait meant that the music had a considerable role in giving a voice to the silent woman. The variations between novel and film, and the removal of Laura's voice-over narration through the course of the production, are also significant in considering the music's function as a restored voice for Laura as a reconstructed character. The inconsistent conceptions of Laura by Caspary, Preminger, Zanuck and Raksin also raise questions of who is telling her story, who is the authorial figure. As Kalinak points out, David Raksin's score for *Laura* contributes to the inconsistent conceptions of Laura as character, evident in the variety of images within and surrounding the film and in the different characters' conceptions of her. Kalinak writes that "the role of the score has not been explored in this connection despite the fact that music has a crucial function in the film's textual system and represents a major component in the film's ambiguous ideology and structure."[105] The music Raksin composed diverges from the typical conventions used to represent femininity in 1940s Hollywood:

> Like Caspary, Raksin saw Laura as a sensitive romantic and not as the fallen woman envisioned by Preminger and Zanuck; he wanted to compose a score reflecting this conception of her. In attempting to do so he challenged prevailing musical conventions for representing female sexuality. Certain stereotypes evolved as a type of shorthand for sexual experience, subconsciously affecting spectator response through a kind of musical censorship... These conventions included brass and woodwind instrumentation, unusual harmonies, and bluesy rhythms.[106]

In an earlier piece of work Kalinak argues that although feminist criticism has been quick to examine and discuss the use of visual stereotypes in Hollywood cinema, the role of musical stereotypes has been somewhat overlooked.[107] She argues that because film music is considered to work "subliminally for most of the audience"[108] its structural role has been ignored. But it is this subliminal quality that Kalinak argues is important: "it is precisely because music works on a level that the audience may barely be aware of, that affords it so much power to influence information perceived on a more conscious plane."[109] Raksin himself was very aware of the tendency towards stereotyping female characters, and Kalinak interviewed him on this issue:

> You see, in the old days, there would've been a muted trumpet, the prostitute's music and all the rest of that... It's principally the nature of the tune and the harmonization that does it. And then it's the kind of colors you use for it and the manner of playing... It was, in a small way, let's say, a plague.[110]

It is clear that Preminger intended to follow these conventions in choosing a theme song for Laura. When his first choice, 'Summertime'[111] was unavailable he considered Duke Ellington's 'Sophisticated Lady'. Kalinak comments on the cultural bias embedded in the links between female sexuality and jazz influences in the score, and reveals that Raksin resisted using 'Sophisticated Lady' because it demonstrated "the usual Hollywood approach to a woman of relatively easy virtue."[112] This is the background to Raksin's composition of Laura's theme, "a theme which represents a direct reaction against the classical score's formulaic conventions for the representation of female sexuality."[113]

Kalinak sees the score as presenting a conception/characterisation of Laura that is at odds with (her reading of) the image track. She traces the first occurrence of this tension at the main title, where the overtly sexual portrait of Laura pulling against Raksin's "musical flourish" ("string *glissandi* and a cymbal crash) which Kalinak reads as prompting audience expectations about a narrative content, "heroic, romantic, epic - which rest uneasily with the ideological message of the portrait."[114] At the outset of the film, then, the musical portrayal of Laura is at odds with her painted portrayal. We might say that the musical composition of Laura offers an alternative to the framing of her through her portrait, and through the poster images of the film. Kalinak reads the portrait as an image of "temptress", I read it as a picture of passivity, the poster image paints Laura as "fatal woman". The music cuts against the conventional representation of a *femme fatale* character, and creates interest and expectation in the audio-viewer. Furthermore because, as Kalinak notes, the score that Raksin composed for the film is almost completely dominated by Laura's theme, she is placed centrally by the score throughout the film.[115]

The ambiguity surrounding Laura's character is explored through the relationship that detective McPherson develops with her. He first sees her portrait when Waldo 'introduces' it to him (in the scene discussed above) and his reaction is a non-committal "not bad". However as McPherson's investigation into her death continues he becomes increasingly interested in the dead woman, reading her letters and diaries, and in a long scene which he spends alone at her apartment it is clear that he has become obsessed with her. This is the scene where Laura 'miraculously' reappears, as if coming back from the dead to fulfil McPherson's fantasy, and the music for the scene plays a particularly important role in suggesting this aspect of the scene. On McPherson's entrance to the apartment from the rainy street Laura's theme plays in a melancholy tone, the instrumentation is predominantly strings marking emotion. His first action after entering is to stand, rapt with attention in front of Laura's portrait (Figure 1.05). McPherson roams around the apartment, looking through Laura's most intimate possessions - her clothes and perfume. He pours himself a drink and knocks it back. Variations on Laura's theme begin instrumentally with horns, marking McPherson's presence, and with "darker" bass tones suggesting his anxiety over solving the case and his all consuming preoccupation with it.

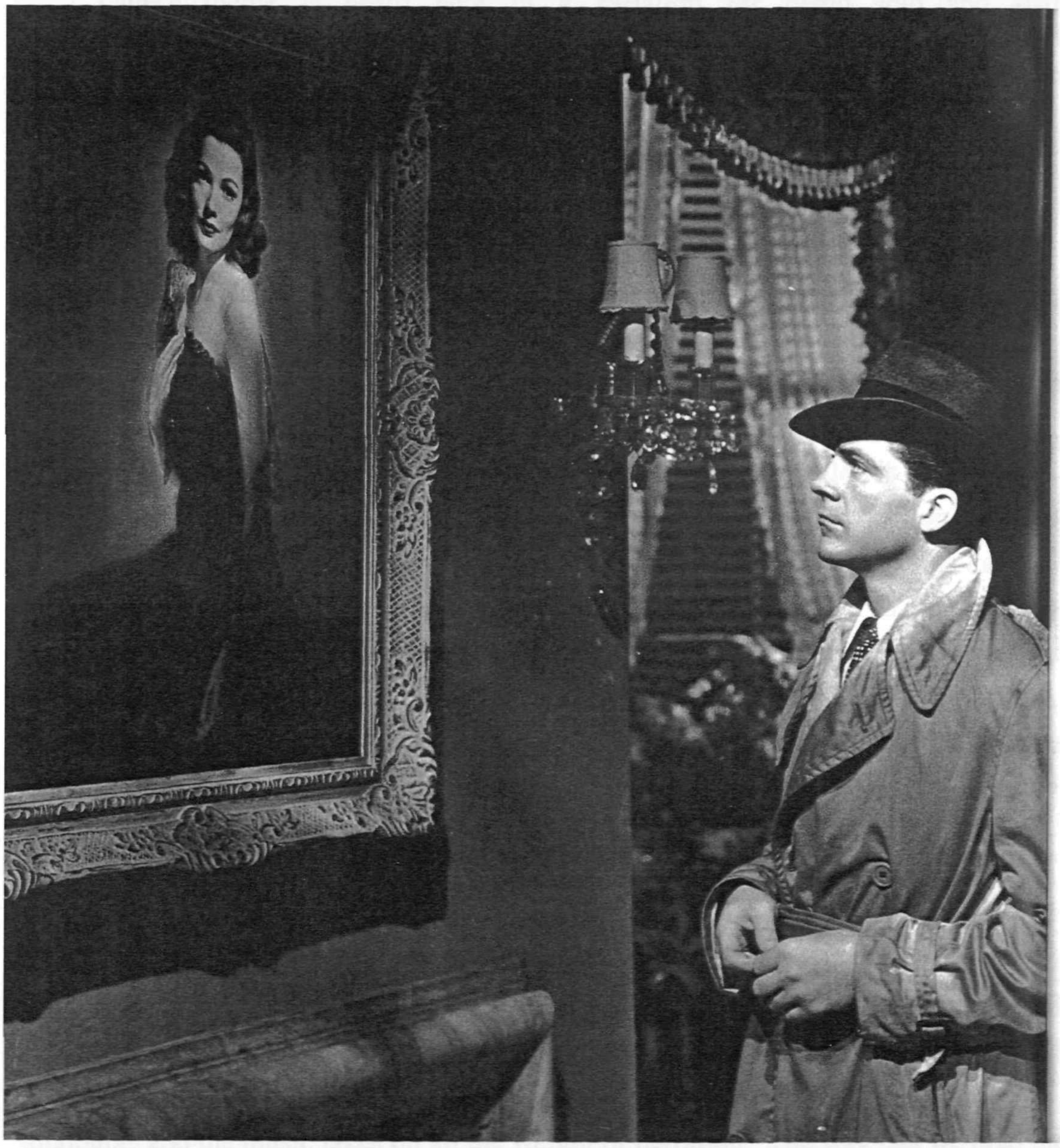


Figure 1.05

Raksin introduces tension markers, strings playing against and in contrast to the dominant theme as McPherson seems increasingly agitated. His movements around Laura's apartment circle back round to Laura's portrait which is the central point of McPherson's attention. As Kalinak suggests the musical accompaniment to McPherson's look at the picture clearly sets out his feelings for Laura:

> Laura's theme is heard here in a variation for piano solo and string accompaniment, encoding McPherson's romantic longing through classical conventions of instrumentation and harmony. Even Laura's actual reappearance, a few moments later lacks the potency of this moment.[116]

After marking this moment of intensity the music fades away as McPherson makes a phone call to his deputy in the basement, and there is no music scoring the brief interruption by Waldo. He comes to the apartment and caustically comments on McPherson's growing interest in Laura, evidenced in his plan to buy Laura's portrait. McPherson, taciturn as ever, makes no comments during Waldo's speech but as soon as Waldo leaves McPherson is reframed by a short curving tracking movement and Laura's theme wells up again. The fact that the interruption by Waldo is not scored serves to connect the overall scoring of this scene very closely to McPherson, and this close connection is shown in the music that marks the moments leading up to Laura's reappearance. McPherson pours himself another drink and slumps in an armchair, he looks up at Laura's portrait before his head rests back and he falls asleep. The camera movements (a short track in to frame him in close up and then a track out to reframe him with the portrait in the background), could be read as indicating that what follows occurs within McPherson's dream. Indeed Kalinak indicates that Zanuck had planned that the whole of the second part of the film would take place as a dream narrative.[117]

The mysterious, echoing timbre of the piano contributes to the ambiguity overhanging the sequence, "the score is here complicit with narrative and cinematic cues for the dream and facilitates a reading of the scene as McPherson's hallucination."[118] The very close association between the music and McPherson's dream state means that it is a key element in narrating his fantasy of Laura's return. With the exception of Waldo's interruption, this scene takes place without any dialogue, and the music takes on all the weight of narration. The way that we read the music as narrating, telling us what McPherson cannot say, indicates that we perceive the music not as an extra diegetic element, but centrally involved in the space of the action. Claudia Gorbman notes that film critics often try to carefully define musical space as either diegetic (source seen, sound heard by characters), or nondiegetic (source outside the film, sound not heard by the characters). She suggests that in cases where music has a particular association with a character's inner life the music might be read as neither diegetic nor nondiegetic but metadiegetic. She illustrates with a hypothetical example: a protagonist (X) whose great romance has ended tragically talks about the past with a friend (Y). When Y mentions the name of X's lost love, "a change comes over X's face, and music swells onto the soundtrack, the melody that had played earlier in the film on the night that X had met her."[119] Gorbman continues:

> On which narrative level do we read this music? It is certainly not diegetic, for the forty-piece orchestra that plays is nowhere to be seen, or inferred, in the filmic space... In a certain sense, we may hear it as both nondiegetic - for its lack of a narrative source - and metadiegetic - since the scene's conversation seems to trigger X's memory of the romance and the song that went with it; wordlessly, he "takes over" part of the film's narration and we are privileged to read his musical thoughts.[120]

Gorbman's concept of metadiegetic music is relevant to the scene discussed. As I have indicated the music plays a key role in narrating McPherson's "musical thoughts".[121] But because Laura's theme is so strongly associated with her portrait, Kalinak suggests that "the music becomes a signifier of Laura herself".[122] And because the score as a whole is structured around the single theme, the music speaks for Laura too. This raises the question as to how far the score defines Laura's character. Kalinak argues that Raksin's score operates against the portrait to give a more "romantic" characterisation of her, but this is one characterisation amongst several in this film. I have pointed out that an iconographic confusion is evident in the contrasts between portrait, poster and cinematic images of Laura, and whilst I think that the score is crucial in offering a further version of Laura I would want to be careful about regarding the music as automatically signalling the essential or authentic woman. I think that this distracts us from recognising the work that the score does in contributing to a complex network of representation. Film music has traditionally been seen as nonnarrative and nonrepresentational, and Caryl Flinn points out that the perceived meaningless emotionality of music is frequently equated with the feminine by critics writing on music.[123] However, as my examination of the metadiegetic music has shown, music can and does take on a role in narration, and critics such as Gorbman and Flinn also argue that the definition of film music as always nonrepresentational is overdetermined. Gorbman argues that a musical theme can take on a representational function as follows:

> A theme can be extremely economical: having absorbed the diegetic associations of its first occurrence, its very repetition can subsequently recall that filmic context. This means that although music in itself is nonrepresentational, the repeated occurrence of a musical motif in conjunction with representational elements in a film (images, speech) can cause the music to carry representational meaning as well.[124]

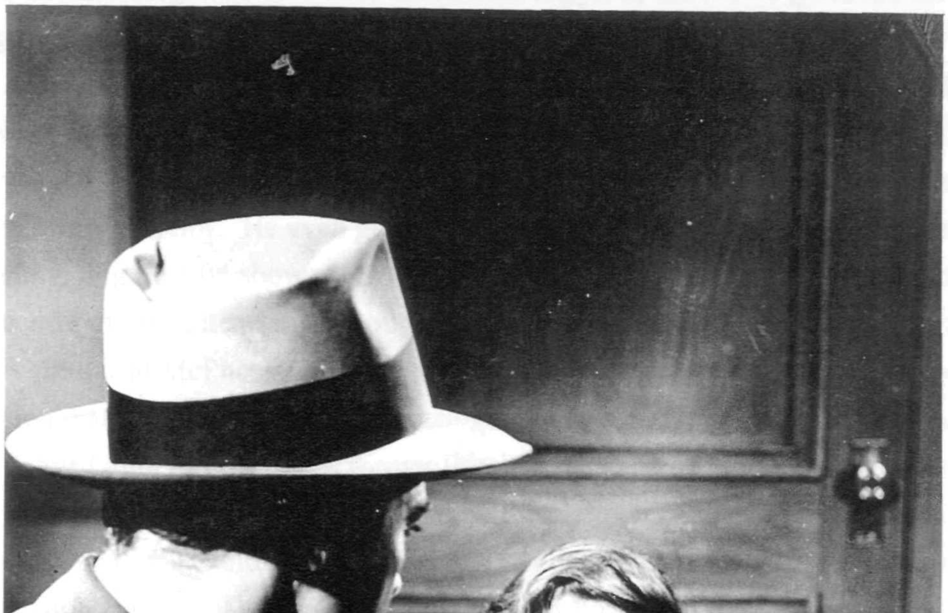


Figure 1.06

The repetition of a theme as a motif, and the conjunction of music with an image element, set out by Gorbman, have obvious relevance to *Laura* where the theme score is associated with a painted image. Hence the music in *Laura* is involved in narration and representation, but its involvement actually complicates rather than resolves the ambiguity over Laura's character. In the scene in Laura's apartment McPherson's longing for Laura is narrated through the metadiegetic music and, as Kalinak suggests, the music gives the moment of longing more potency than Laura's actual reappearance.[125]

Once Laura has returned McPherson, Waldo and Shelby try to reconcile their fantasies of Laura, idealised through her "death" with Laura the "rather ordinary, if pushy, young woman".[126] McPherson's confusion is clearly shown as he tries to determine Laura's feelings towards Shelby. He even goes so far as to take Laura into the police station for questioning. Figure 1.06 shows McPherson interrogating Laura; he uses a light to scrutinize her face with minute attention as though it contains the secret of her guilt or innocence. This action is similar to McPherson's scrutiny of Laura's portrait earlier, and adds to our impression that he finds it difficult to distinguish between the woman and her idealised image. Thus Laura returns to her former life, but she is forced to inhabit it alongside the fantasy versions of herself that are created by the male characters who surround her. The tension between image and sound, evident in Waldo's voice-over, is sustained and developed by the tension between the film score and different images of femininity. Ambiguity is created through the different modes which represent versions of Laura, film publicity, portrait, cinematic image and music, and this ambiguity is transferred to Laura herself who is framed as both the highly sexual and fatal woman, and as the romantic heroine.

Gilda **- voice-over, music and narration**

Gilda is a film whose narrative revolves around the question of whether the central woman is defined by her image as highly sexual, and it is also a film which contains a portrait. As in *Laura* the voice-over of a male character (Johnny) shows an attempt to control and shape the narration of the woman's story whilst that very attempt at control is gradually undermined throughout the film. A textual tension between image and sound is signalled through the partial and ultimately incomplete narration. Both Hollinger and Richard Dyer note that Johnny's attempt to frame the audio-viewer's perspective of Gilda through his voice-over is unsuccessful.[127] Hollinger asserts that Johnny 'protests too much' about his dislike of Gilda, suggesting that "the visuals show repeated instances of their mutual attraction"[128] and that Johnny "seems curiously unaware of his feelings for Ballin".[129] Thus the tension between male narration and female image is important not only because Johnny's voice-over is an attempt to shape Gilda's image for the audio-viewer. Dyer analyses Johnny's voice-over as undermined through a combination of "private moments"[130] that the audio-viewers experience with Gilda's character, and the utilisation of Rita Hayworth's star image. Dyer discusses Gilda's first rendition of 'Put the Blame on Mame' as an example of such a private moment. This moment is crucial in the audio-viewers' understanding of Gilda's character, but I think that this understanding has already been established in the scene in which Gilda is introduced. Johnny's boss Ballin Mundson (George Macready) has been away on a business trip, during which time Johnny has been in charge of his nightbclub. On his return Ballin summons Johnny to his house and, saying that he has a surprise, he introduces Johnny to Gilda.

The structure of the sequence which introduces the central woman character generates considerable suspense. Johnny's expression (shown in an extended close up) shifts from amusement at Ballin's excited anticipation of his "surprise" to confusion as he hears Gilda humming 'Put the Blame on Mame' offscreen. Johnny's reaction to the music shows his recognition of it, and signals its narrative importance. Critical discussions of the introduction of Gilda often concentrate on the first visual image that we see of the character, the famous shot in which the frame is positioned as waiting for Gilda/Hayworth to move up into it, tossing back her head, and laughing.[131] This critical focus is widespread despite the fact that Gilda's visual introduction has been preceded by the sound of her voice, and indeed has already shaped the audio-viewer's expectations of Gilda as a highly sexual character, and of Gilda's relationship with Johnny (which has been signalled by his expression as he listens to Gilda). However before I explore the important tensions that Gilda's voice raises for the framing of her character I want to consider some of the tensions evident in discussions of Gilda as spectacle.

Mary Ann Doane has discussed Gilda's introduction as positioning her as spectacle, but her reading means that she has to negotiate between the notion of classical Hollywood cinema as fixing woman as image and the dynamic movement which marks Gilda's introduction. Doane does this by comparing Gilda's introduction with that of Johnny, which opens the film. In the latter the camera moves upwards from a position below floor level to reveal Johnny throwing a winning score with dice. Doane maintains that in the introduction of Gilda the movement of the camera works differently. She reads the camera movement in Johnny's introduction "acting here as a metonymy for the cinematic apparatus itself"[132] as being displaced in Gilda's "to a movement within or into the frame on the part of the woman."[133] She continues:

> The visual pleasure associated with the non-diegetic signifier in its moment of revelation bleeds over into the diegesis in the second shot and attaches itself to the figure of the woman. The spectacle constituted by the cinema imperceptibly becomes the spectacle of the woman by means of a certain sliding of signification.[134]

In interpreting Gilda's introduction via this "sliding of signification" Doane produces a reading which accords with a Mulveyian definition of localised spectacle, despite the fact that Gilda's movement provides possibilities for resisting this definition. In fact Doane closes down an investigation into the meanings that this movement offers as she concludes her analysis of Gilda's introduction as follows: "The affective value of Gilda's introduction is correlated with her localization as spectacle; her movement into the frame then is, *paradoxically, the "moving" representation of stasis.*"[135] Doane seems unnecessarily insistent on producing a reading of Gilda's character which conforms to, and restates, a view of the classical Hollywood cinema as monolithically antipathetic towards women. While the instances of the classical Hollywood cinema limiting women in spectacular ways are numerous I think that *Gilda* provides an exception. Further, it is important to be alive to the possibilities that different texts present rather than shape a textual reading to a previously existing critical frame. The progress of Doane's argument, which I have laid out above, shows that she has to negotiate a complex structure to frame such a reading of Gilda/*Gilda*. Surely it would make more sense to focus on Gilda's movement *as* movement and to focus on the textual possibilities that this allows, rather than framing this movement "paradoxically", as Doane does?

Dyer's analysis of Gilda *does* focus on the role of movement in her introduction, when he argues that the dance performance numbers in *Gilda* are important in constructing Gilda's sexuality. The fact that she dances alone, not with a male partner, means that her dances function as important areas of "self expression".[136] Dyer points out that "Although 'self-expression' is a problematic concept in relation to the arts, as a notion informing artistic practices, and especially dance, it is extremely important, and especially in the context of a character who is generically constructed as having no knowable self".[137] He argues that the Latin American style of Gilda's dance numbers which exploit connotations of "that culture's more 'authentic' erotic expressivity"[138] and the identification of Hayworth with this style "makes it possible to read her dancing in terms of eroticism for herself as well as for the spectator."[139] Dyer continues to spell out the challenge this offers to the definition of woman as immobile spectacle. He points out the frequency with which women are held in static poses in the classical Hollywood cinema, arguing that many of the choreographic traditions of the musical such as "Busby Berkeley's patterned chorines, the slow haughty parade adopted from Ziegfeld, the use of the fashion show",[140] stage movement so as to control female sexuality. Gilda/Hayworth, however, presents an exception:

> Hayworth... is first seen cut in on a movement (tossing her hair back), a particularly dynamic effect, and her dance numbers are important moments in which the film dwells on her sexuality. In terms of the narrative, they are also moments of escape (borrowing generically from the musical), the first was from Johnny in Buenos Aires, the second defiantly and finally against him in his night club.[141]

Dyer's analysis clearly illustrates the tension between male narration and female image indicated above. Through her control of her movement, and her pleasure in it, Gilda resists and defies Johnny who watches and listens helplessly.

The mobility that Gilda has contrasts with the relative immobility of Johnny and Ballin. Johnny is in thrall to his boss Ballin, and although Ballin promotes him to the position of manager of his nightclub the responsibility seems to limit rather than free Johnny. One aspect of Johnny's job is to "look after everything that belongs to the boss", which includes Gilda. Thus it is Johnny, not Ballin, who interrupts a dance that Gilda shares with an Argentinian man, and it is Johnny who waits up at night in order to pick Gilda up and take her home. Johnny wants to shield Ballin from what he takes to be Gilda's infidelities (revealed at the end of the film to be her attempts to make him jealous). In numerous films from different genres in the classical Hollywood cinema, including westerns, home front dramas, and melodramas, a female character waits, confined to the domestic realm, while her husband and children go out into the world and have adventures. This suggests that the position of waiting is culturally naturalised as a feminine one, and explains the approbation that Gilda invites with her decisive mobility. Thus it is Johnny's mobility which is shown to be quite limited, he has to wait around for Gilda who (he assumes) is having a great time on the town.

Ballin's mobility is also curiously limited, despite the fact that we are told, and shown, the extent of his wealth and business influence. Ballin is characterised as manipulative, a threat looming on the sidelines of the film's main action. His first "appearance" is in an intervention from offscreen space, when he saves Johnny from being mugged by using the lethal blade concealed within his trademark cane. Ballin is also shown to be an observer and listener from the sidelines: his office at the nightclub features mechanised louvre blinds through which he can watch the revellers, and a special sound system which allows him to listen in to particular areas of the club. However, Ballin remains rather undeveloped in the film - he is depicted as rather two-dimensional, like his portrait which I discuss later. Doane has described Ballin having "the two-dimensionality of the classical villain in melodrama",[142] a description which is useful for underlining Ballin as marginal to the central drama which is played out between Gilda and Johnny. Ballin is therefore structurally rather than emotionally important. This is evident in the sequence which introduces Gilda, when Johnny's reaction is signalled as important by the sustained close up of him as he enters Gilda's dressing room. The barbed exchange that ensues between Gilda and Johnny is focused entirely on the two of them through a shot/reverse shot sequence in which the ex-lovers look only at each other, despite the fact that Gilda directs several comments to Ballin. He is excluded by the structure of the sequence, and only makes his presence felt through a voice-off.

Music, Voice and Narration: Singing and Telling

Gilda's mobility, her glamorous image and the 'charisma' that Hayworth brings to the role[143] problematise the extent to which Johnny's voice-over narration can tie Gilda down to the frame of guilty woman. What is interesting in terms of the prevailing conception classical textual structure is that it is through a spectacular utilisation of her image that Gilda usurps Johnny's narration and tells her own story. She narrates partly through her performances of 'Put the Blame on Mame' and 'Amado Mio'. 'Put the Blame on Mame' is heard three times in the film. The first time is in Gilda's introduction, discussed above, and she is heard singing along with the tune as Johnny listens. When Johnny and Ballin enter her dressing room Gilda turns off the music, but after they leave she defiantly plays it again - loudly. The strong association of the song with Gilda from the moment that she is introduced into the film means that it becomes her signature tune, and the lyrics take on a significant role as she uses them to tell an age-old story: the blame that men put on women for the wrongs of the world. Both Gilda's performances displace Johnny's position as the narrator of the film. The first performance takes place in the nightclub after closing time, and the sequence which introduces it presents Johnny's control over the narration of the film as decidedly shaky. Johnny has been waiting for Gilda to return home, she pulls up in her car with a young man as passenger (again emphasising her control over her mobility in comparison to Johnny's fixedness), and a row ensues when Gilda invites the man indoors. Johnny beats him up and tells Gilda that he doesn't care what she does, but that he is going to make things "look alright" to Ballin. After Gilda's exit Johnny's voice-over bridges a dissolve from an exterior shot of Ballin's house to an interior shot of the nightclub office. In the voice-over Johnny protests that "I hated her so I couldn't get her out of my mind for a minute. She was in the air that I breathed and the food that I ate." As the dissolve clears to show Johnny asleep in his office at the nightclub Gilda's voice is heard humming softly, warming up to singing 'Put the Blame on Mame'. The medium shot of Johnny asleep cuts to a close-up as the music wakes him: Figure 1.07. Johnny's voice-over continues "At first I thought I was just dreaming it. I'd been hearing her voice in my sleep for nights anyway," and it tails off: "then I realised...". The surveillance/eavesdropping system is turned 'on' and there is an interesting parallel between the sound of Gilda's voice pervading a space of masculine control and power (the office) and the invasion of Johnny's consciousness through his ears. Even before the audio-viewer sees the performance of the song Gilda's singing voice is competing with, and overtaking, Johnny's voice-over narration, pervading the space of the diegesis. Johnny looks down into the nightclub, a high angle eyeline match shows Gilda playing a guitar and Uncle Pio (Steven Geray), the cloakroom "philosopher", listening to her.

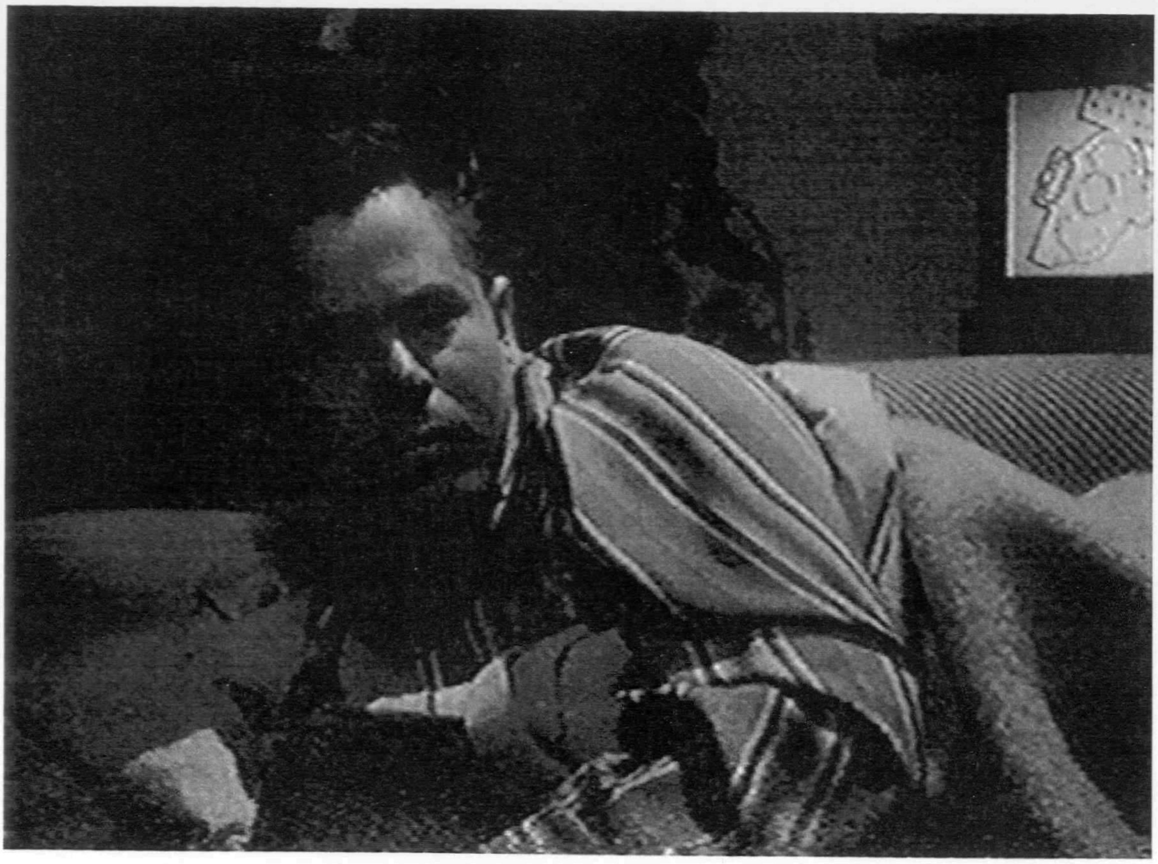


Figure 1.07

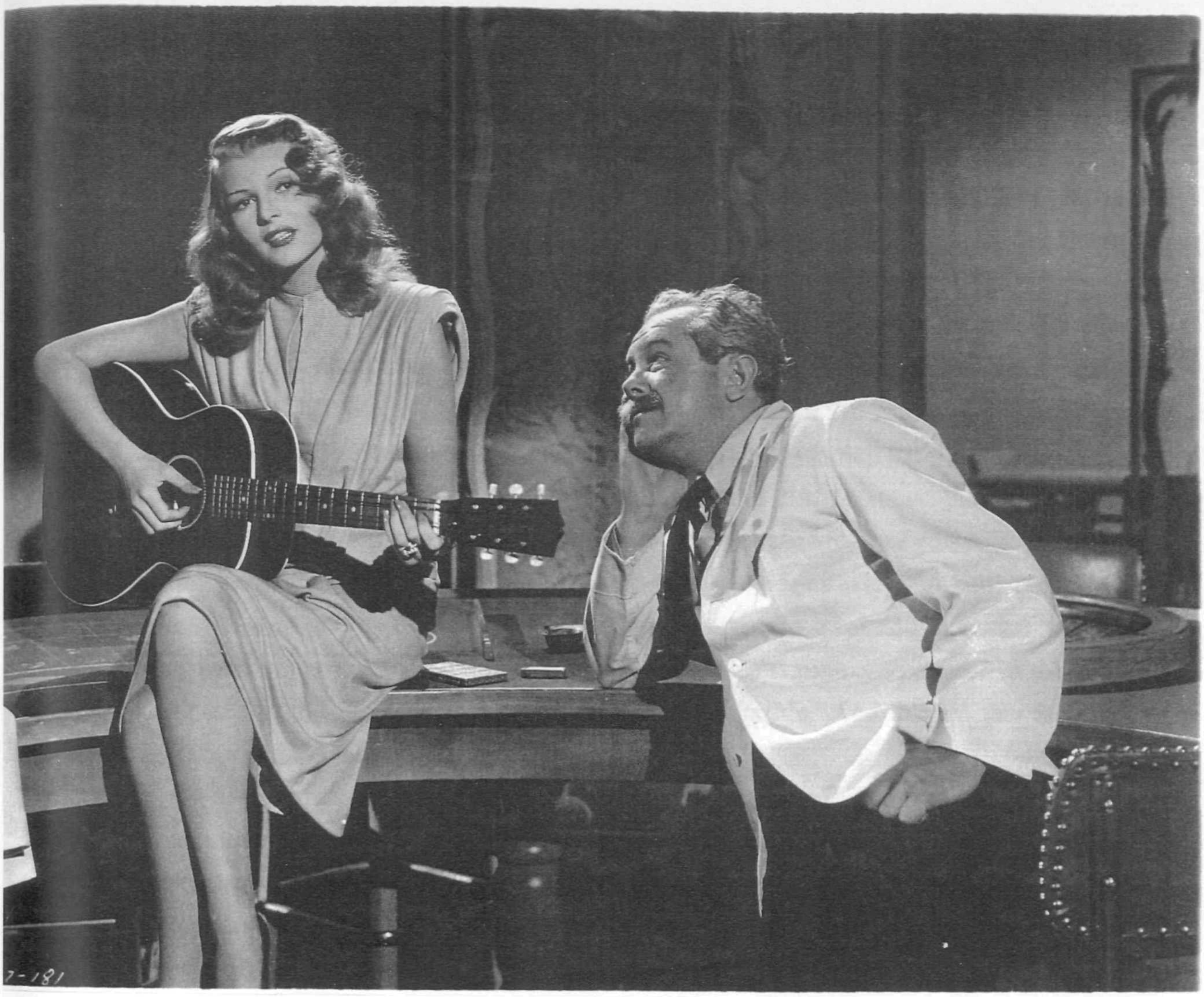


Figure 1.08

The transition from the office to the performance space below completes the move from Johnny's narration to Gilda's. A slowly moving crane shot moves the point-of-view away from Johnny, the camera position shifts down into the club to frame Gilda and Uncle Pio in a medium shot in preparation for the performance of the song (Figure 1.08). A series of close-ups joined in a shot/reverse shot sequence emphasises the intimacy and understanding between Gilda and Uncle Pio. Gilda/Hayworth performs the song in an understated manner, the timbre of her voice is soft and full of pathos and Uncle Pio smiles and nods several times, acknowledging the message in the lyrics: the framing of women for the evils and disasters of the world. This performance sequence, with its use of close-ups and the creation of empathy between Gilda and Uncle Pio, is an example of a "private moment"[144] through which the audio-viewer gets an intimate view of Gilda's character, one which directly contradicts Johnny's view and opinion of her. It is significant that both sound (voice-over becoming song) and image (point-of-view shot moving away from Johnny's position in the scene) are distanced from Johnny in order to bring us closer to Gilda. And further, that this shift in narration occurs through a musical number.

Adrienne McLean argues that the musical numbers in *Gilda* contribute significantly to an understanding of the narrative, proposing that the definition of such moments as distracting spectacle in which narrative progression is held up is too limited.[145] She proposes that "even in a genre of alienation like *film noir*, the musical number not only causes narrative rupture but by so doing, may provide a place where very significant "action" can occur."[146] In exploring the power that the singing voice has in these numbers she cites the work of Mark Booth in The Experience of Songs. Booth's work offers a perspective on the identification the singing voice can foster with the audio-viewers:

> ...identification with a singing voice, *any* singing voice that signifies as human (whether heard live or not) is 'a remarkably strong force sweeping us past the stage of aesthetic contemplation and even past the fantasy that the words are directed to us.'[147] Booth also notes that 'the more vigorously such songs declare lonely alienation, the better they function as rituals of solidarity.'[148]

McLean refers to an analogy that Booth makes between singing and narration, he describes the singing voice as acting as a "teller" that the audience identifies with through the medium of the song.[149] This perspective on the convergence between singing and telling is relevant to *Gilda* where Gilda takes over the narrating voice from Johnny through her performance, and the song - her signature tune - tells her story. As noted above, 'Put the Blame on Mame' is repeated in the film, and the second performance of it contains different lyrics to the first which adds to the narrating function of the song: it is not simply repeated material but another instalment in the story. The musical numbers in *Gilda* therefore do much more than provide moments of diverting spectacle, the narrative is disrupted but not suspended. In the numbers Gilda takes over the role of narrator from Johnny, and this shift in narrative focus discourages the audio-viewer from completely trusting or "assent[ing] to his view of Gilda."[150]

The distance between the audio-viewer and Johnny is further encouraged through his reactions to Gilda's performance of the musical numbers. In the first performance, discussed above, Uncle Pio listens intently and even comments to Johnny on the meaning of the song's lyrics ("Did you hear about that poor little cow who got blamed..."). His presence is important in encouraging the audio-viewers to take on the message of the song. Uncle Pio's attention contrasts with Johnny's distractedness: he *hears* the song, but does not *listen* to it. After being woken by the music (Figure 1.07) he makes his way down to the nightclub, and in fact interrupts Gilda's performance. The contrast between Johnny's reaction, and Uncle Pio's is important. The audio-viewer is more strongly allied to Uncle Pio's sympathetic reception of the song, and understands Gilda's bid to make peace with Johnny. But she is brusquely rejected by him - he has not listened to the song and understands it only as an irritation. The performance forges an alliance between the audio-viewer and Gilda, with Uncle Pio functioning as a surrogate listener within the scene. McLean explores the way that listening to a performance raises questions for theories of cinematic spectatorship as follows:

> The role of music and particularly singing in film spectatorship remains underexplored. Music is widely believed to foster not only a sense of "unity" in the listener but of "community" between listener and performer. And although poststructuralism tells us that the unified subject is always illusory, what is important about music's audience/performer "communality" is that it is not only amorphously "emotional" but *constructed* through rhythm and synchronization.[151]

I want to qualify this statement by stressing that while music and sound can work in this way, that music, sounds and voices possess the potential to disrupt the "unity" of the listener - a potential that is evident in the gothic films that I examine in Chapters Three and Four. In the musical numbers in *Gilda*, however, the sense of "community" is clearly signalled through Uncle Pio, and in the second performance of 'Put the Blame on Mame', through the reactions of the nightclub audience to Gilda's performance. The 'striptease' sequence has been treated as an infamous example of femininity as spectacle within some feminist criticism,[152] and I have already argued that Gilda's/Hayworth's mobility offers a different way to read her character. I want to add that the performance of the song is also part of her narration. Where her first performance was full of pathos, the style of her second is now defiant, and it *is* undeniably highly sexual. But Gilda/Hayworth also importantly brings humour to the number, and during the performance there are cut-aways from Gilda to shots of the audience which show women, as well as men, laughing along with her. The lyrics of 'Put the Blame on Mame' can, and do, work in Gilda's/Hayworth's two presentations of them as both a sad reflection on women's lot, and as a wry comment on the way that patriarchy exaggerates and inflates the sexual threat of women. In her second performance Gilda makes the audience laugh by demonstrating the exaggeration, not by flaunting the threat. Thus in both performances of 'Put the Blame on Mame' the "community" between performer and listener also includes listeners within the diegesis, Uncle Pio and the nightclub audience. Importantly Johnny's reaction to both performances shows his exclusion from this "community" and demonstrates his distance from an understanding of Gilda.

Spectacles of Masculinity in *Laura* and *Gilda*

Earlier in my discussion of the promotional images for *Laura* and *Gilda* I suggested that the repertoire of images problematised a single definition of femininity. Now I want to consider the images of masculinity in the two films. Issues of spectacle do not only occur in relation to femininity: both films question masculinity as a knowable and self-evident entity through the way they exhibit images of Waldo and Ballin, and through the male-male relationships in the films.

I discussed the significance of Waldo's attention to his appearance earlier in my argument. In the first scene of the film Waldo is questioned by McPherson while he bathes and dresses. He is coded as exhibitionistic, he stands in front of a mirror and directs McPherson to examine his image: "If you know anything about faces look at mine... How singularly innocent I look this morning. Have you ever seen such candid eyes?" However McPherson is unwilling to be directed in this way, and the frames of Waldo commenting on his mirror image are interspersed with two cut-away shots showing extreme close ups of McPherson's baseball game, perhaps attempting to allay the dangers that Waldo's overt call to "look" might represent to the detective's hard-boiled masculinity.

Waldo is also shown to pay minute attention to Laura's image. This is evident as he relates the development of his relationship with Laura to McPherson in an extended flashback sequence. A montage sequence shows Waldo's supervision of Laura's transition from ingenue to glamorous socialite. He is seen accompanying her to select clothes and to the hairdressers. He comments that Laura "became as well known as Waldo Lydecker's walking stick and his white carnation." Waldo's attention to Laura's image is of a piece with his attempt to assume the position of "image-maker" in his voice-over at the beginning of the film. His comment is most revealing in this context, not only for the proprietorial air that Waldo cultivates towards Laura, but the way he talks about Laura in relation to his own (public) image. Waldo's flashback of their first meeting shows that Laura is an agent in the construction of his image, approaching him for a product endorsement (for the "Flow-Rite Pen"). Waldo refuses at first, but later relents and visits Laura at her office. Figure 1.09 is a production still of Waldo endorsing the use of his image in an advertisement that Laura has created. The mock-up advert, featuring Waldo's image is more clearly visible here than it is in the flow of the film.

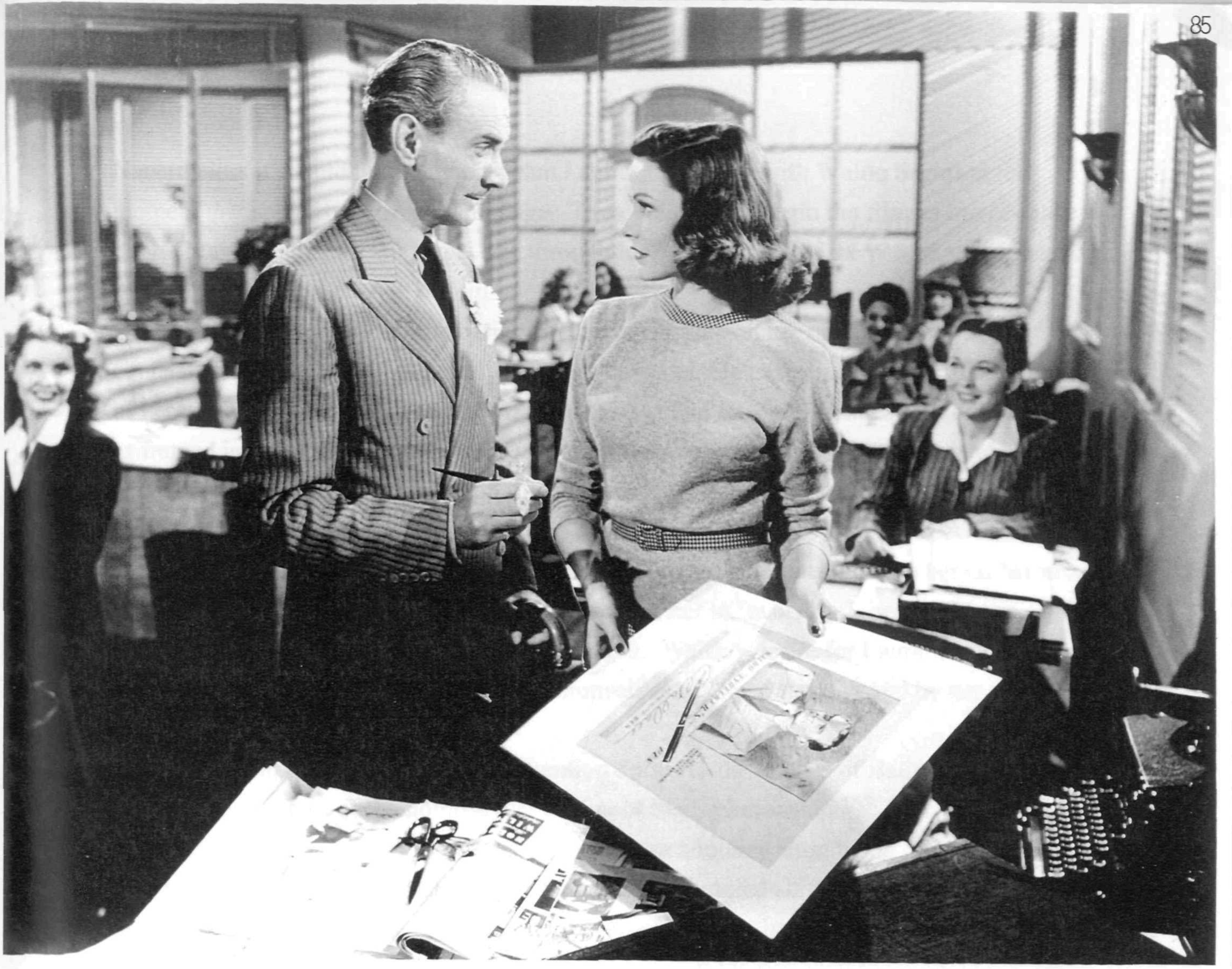


Figure 1.09

Nevertheless it should not be ignored that Laura's friendship with Waldo begins at the moment that she turns him into an image. Thus Waldo may begin the film as image-maker, but he is also made into an image, and through his endorsement of the pen he subscribes to the image Laura has created of him.

Laura's career as an advertising executive is based on her understanding of the connotations that images hold, and she shows considerable expertise in this, rising to the "top of her profession" (Waldo's words). It is interesting that so much criticism focuses on Laura as framed image rather than as (also) image framer; her competency in understanding images only adds to the tension surrounding the promotional images for the film and her portrait in the film. There is a reciprocal relationship of Laura and Waldo to the construction of each other's image: she puts him on public display through the advert, he advises her on her new image, they go out together in public, he introduces her to "everyone", her "authentic magnetism" (Waldo's words) reflects well on him. Waldo's desire for Laura is bound up with his narcissism, his desire for the image of himself as reflected through and by her as his 'flower'.

In *Gilda* there is considerable attention drawn to the images of Ballin and Johnny, and their images are part of the homosexual coding of their relationship.[153] They first meet, in the shady atmosphere of the docks, when Ballin saves Johnny from being mugged. Johnny is very scruffily dressed in a thick and ill fitting jacket, rumpled shirt and non-descript trousers, his hair is tousled, whereas Ballin epitomises 'grooming', his hair is smoothed back and his dark clothes are expensive and impeccably tailored. On his first visit to the nightclub that Ballin has recommended Johnny has tried to smarten himself up, but is shown to be rather gauche as he straightens his very loud black and white tie in the nightclub washroom. He shows himself to be street-smart and exhibits his muscle to Ballin by taking on the heavies that work at the club. Johnny persuades Ballin to give him a job by convincing him that there are no women in his life, and telling him suggestively "You've no idea how faithful and obedient I can be, for a nice salary". As a relationship between them develops Johnny goes through something of a transformation: under Ballin's influence he acquires polish. His suits are darker, of finer material and fit him well, his hair is sleeked back and he is generally more poised. In fact Johnny is made-over to look much more like Ballin and it is clear that he aspires to be like Ballin. As he is promoted to nightclub manager Johnny begins to adopts a high handed attitude to those working beneath him, such as Uncle Pio. However Johnny does not manage a pose of authority and he is infuriated when Uncle Pio refuses to respect him, referring to him as a "peasant". Dyer sees a distinct change in star image for Glenn Ford in *Gilda*, suggesting that he has undergone "a definite glamorisation"[154] which complements that of Hayworth. He continues:

> Where his previous appearances (mainly in westerns and other action films) use harsh lighting, close cropped hair and rough costuming, in *Gilda* he is softly lit

> (with his weakly sensual mouth in particular highlighted), his hair is brilliantined (thus rendered an interesting visual surface) and he is fastidiously dressed. In these respects then Ford-as-hero is none the less structurally placed and to a degree visually constructed as an object of desire.[155]

Where Johnny exhibits his physical strength to Ballin, the older man exhibits the representations of his wealth and power. After an attempt on his life at the nightclub Ballin takes Johnny to the private study at his home and explains to Johnny that he owns a monopoly on tungsten. Ballin's exhibition of his power corresponds with his exhibition of his portrait image, and the scene is structured around the painting (Figure 1.10). Ballin directs Johnny's attention to it saying "Remember this Johnny", before rolling it up to reveal a safe which he opens instructing Johnny to "Remember this too". He effectively bequeaths the legacy of his business empire to Johnny, telling him "If anything should ever happen to me... " that Johnny should "carry on". In this context it is significant that Johnny's image has been shaped to be similar to Ballin's, and that what Ballin offers Johnny in this scene are two-dimensional representations of his power: papers and a portrait.

Subsequent events in the film lead to Ballin's disappearance, and as agreed Johnny does "carry on", standing in for Ballin as his representative - even replicating the loveless marriage that Gilda and Ballin had by wedding Gilda himself.

A triangular structure to relationships is a feature of both *Laura* and *Gilda*, and in both films complicated cross currents of desire exist between each set of three characters: Waldo, Laura and McPherson; Ballin, Gilda and Johnny. Dyer analyses the relationship of gay-coded male characters to the women with whom they have "primary relationships" in *film noir*. He discusses characters such as Waldo, Ballin and Hardy Cathcart (also played by Clifton Webb) in *The Dark Corner* (a film I examine in Chapter Two) as follows:

> ...there is much to indicate that Waldo, Ballin and Hardy are queers and yet they have primary relationships with women. All, however, have the same relationship with women: they aestheticise, 'adore', them, without really desiring them sexually.[156]

Dyer makes clear that *film noir* queers, like Waldo, have a relationship to the construction of femininity which marks them out as effeminate:

> Queers generally in film noir are not evil just because homosexuality is abnormal or wrong. Nor is it even because they are 'like' women, something which is abhorrent either because they are like the sex they are not supposed to be like, or because, women being on the whole *fatales*, then so must be any man like them. Queers are also evil because the aesthetic gives them an access to women that excludes and threatens the normal male. On the one hand, the very feeling for the aesthetic is coded as feminine in the culture; on the other hand, its asexuality allows queers a closeness with women uncomplicated by heterosexual lust.[157]

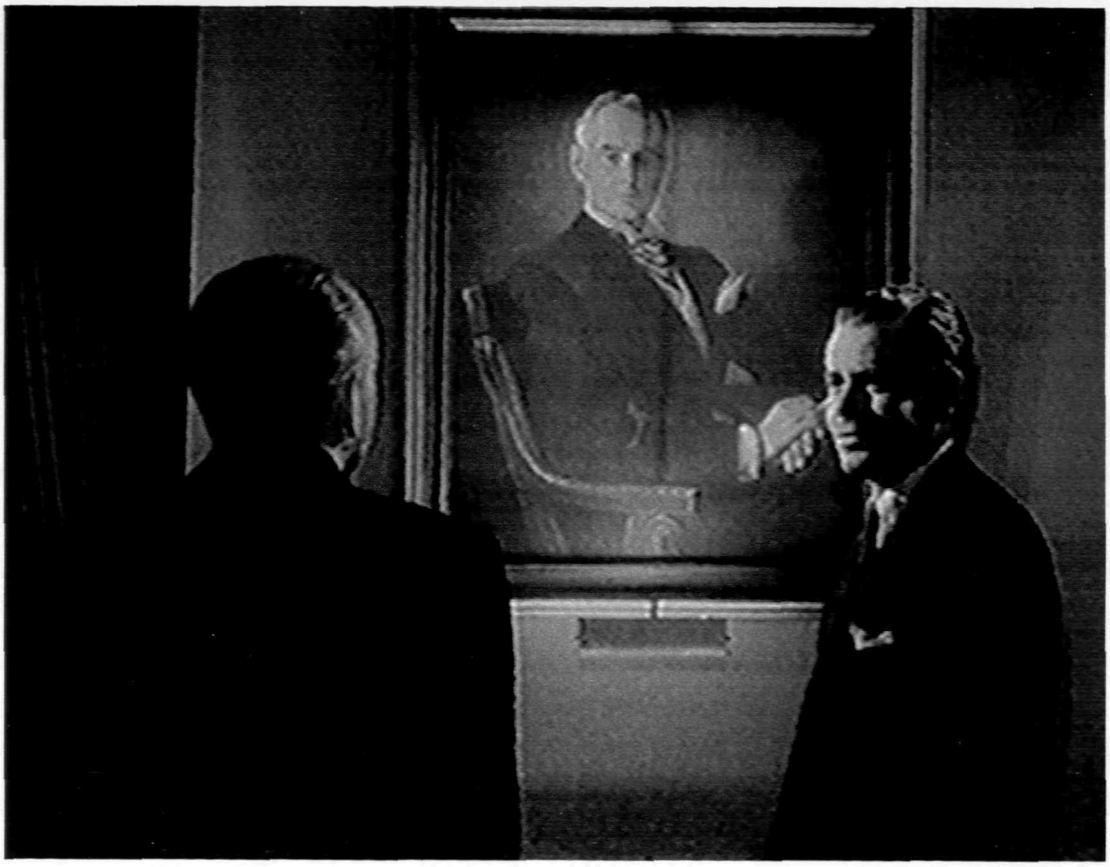


Figure 1.10

A narrative containing a love-triangle is cited by several critics as a feature of *film noir*,[158] and usually the triangle is discussed from the point of view of the heterosexual, hard-boiled male character who becomes entangled with another man's wife or lover. This approach is undertaken to support what I have argued against above: that *film noir* is a masculine form. Dyer's analysis offers us a fresh view, so that we might consider all the cross currents and complexities of desire across the triangle, rather than seeing it as two men competing for the ownership of one woman.

While Waldo and Ballin may have a relationship with Laura and Gilda "uncomplicated by heterosexual lust"[159] it is evident that within and across the triangular structures the characters understand these differently directed desires. Waldo's perspective on Laura's relationships with other men is made clear at several points during the film: he scornfully refers to Shelby as a "male beauty in distress" and abhors the fact that Jacoby, the painter of Laura's portrait, "is so obviously conscious of looking more like an athlete than an artist". Part of his flashback sequence relates his role in breaking up Laura's romances, but by the end of the film it is evident that Waldo's ability to manipulate Laura's sexual relationships is waning, and in a scene at her apartment Waldo and Laura argue about her developing romance with McPherson. Waldo says to Laura "You have one tragic weakness, with you a lean strong body is the measure of a man", and even after McPherson arrives Waldo continues: "It's the same obvious pattern Laura. If McPherson weren't muscular and handsome in a cheap sort of a way you'd see through him in a second." It is at this point that Laura throws off Waldo's influence, telling him that she doesn't want to see him again. As Waldo leaves his parting shot is "I hope you'll never regret what promises to be a disgustingly earthy relationship!" Waldo's understanding of Laura's desire for McPherson is interesting in that it gives voice to two socially proscribed desires - homosexuality and feminine sexuality - and through it Waldo makes a spectacle of hard-boiled masculinity.

In *Gilda* desire is given voice by Gilda, who makes it clear that she understands the relationship between Johnny and Ballin quite well. After the introduction scene Ballin rebukes Gilda for being rude saying he wants her to like Johnny, she questions "Are you sure about that? He's a very attractive man if you like the type". Ballin responds that Johnny is a "boy", to which Gilda comes back: "Boys have the darn'dest way of growing up... almost when you're not looking." Gilda's comment to Ballin about Johnny is mirrored by a comment she makes to Johnny about Ballin. The first time they are alone and able to talk Johnny asks Gilda "Why did you marry him?" to which she replies "My husband is a very attractive man" and later in the same conversation she draws a parallel between their respective relationships to Ballin.

The spectacles of masculinity that I have discussed in this section add to the iconographic ambiguity which frames femininity in *Laura* and *Gilda*. Both films contain complicated sets of gender relationships and desires, and the immaculate, fastidious and glamorised queer male characters productively problematise definitions of the feminine in making us reconsider its sphere and scope. Earlier in this chapter I considered the importance that the *femme fatale* figure had had to feminist film criticism of the 1970s. She represented a figure of resistance, facilitating readings against the grain and showing up the ideological contradictions of patriarchy. Critical frames for considering gender and sexuality have shifted since then, but as Dyer suggests the "recurrent conundrum"[160] for feminism still remains: whether femininity can be seen as powerfully disruptive or as a constricting cultural projection. He expands:

> Film noir is interesting not because it resolves this conundrum, but because it foregrounds it, and not least by the presence of its queers. Film noir queerness suggests that the feminine is not coterminous with womanhood - that there are different ways of being feminine, that some men can be feminine, that some women can be effeminate. And in doing all this, it may make us wonder what is so very masculine and straight about heterosexual male sexual desire for the feminine.[161]

Throughout my discussion of *Laura* and *Gilda* I noted the ambiguity that was ascribed to the central woman in the narratives. The shifting narrational voices of the films and the variety of images produced in the publicity process allow different aspects of the narratives to be mobilised and exploited. The narrative images of the films, epitomised in the tag lines: "Who is Laura? What is Laura?" and "There Never was a Woman Like Gilda!", foreground enigma as the quality of the feminine in these films. However Dyer's argument suggests a reframing of femininity, widening its sphere and recognising its different inflections. This would allows us to see the variety of femininity in *film noir*, and to rethink definitions of 'the' *femme fatale*. As the complex iconographic and aural elements of *Laura* and *Gilda* have demonstrated, not all femmes are fatal, and not all fatales are femmes.

NOTES

[1] For example: Leo Braudy (1976), 'Genre: The Conventions of Connection', in Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings, Fourth Edition, ed. by Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen and Leo Braudy (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 440.

[2] Steve Neale, Genre (London: BFI, 1980), p. 19.

[3] Steve Neale, 'Questions of genre', *Screen*, 31 (1) (1990), 45-66 and Genre and Hollywood. Neale's Genre and Hollywood fully explores many of the 'questions of genre', set out in his earlier article.

[4] Elizabeth Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', in Shades of Noir, ed. by Joan Copjec (London: Verso, 1993), p. 128.

[5] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 128.

[6] Tsvetan Todorov, The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve, 1973), p. 8, cited in Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 128.

[7] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', pp. 128-9.

[8] James Naremore, More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 9.

[9] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 121.

[10] The first use of the term is attributed to Nino Frank, 'Un Nouveau Genre 'Policier': l'Aventure Criminelle', *L'Écran Français* (August, 1946), reprinted in Film Noir Reader: 2, ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 1999), p. 18. Jean-Pierre Chartier also uses the term in his essay 'Les Américains aussi font des films "noirs"', *La Révue de Cinéma* (November, 1946), trans. by Alain Silver and reprinted in Film Noir Reader: 2. Both these essays differentiated *film noir* from other films: Frank saw the 'new' films as breaking with a previous Hollywood style, both visual and in terms of character representation. Chartier compares the American films to French *films noirs*, and finds that the American *films noirs* present a darker perspective on human relationships. On French *films noirs* as preceding the American ones see Ginette Vincendeau, 'Noir is also a French Word, the French Antecedents of Film Noir', in The Movie Book of *Film Noir*, ed. by Ian Cameron (London: Studio Vista, 1992). The first critical work that attempted a definition of *film noir* is usually taken as being Raymond Borde and Étienne Chaumeton's book Panorama du *Film Noir* Américain (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1955).

[11] Many critics comment on *film noir* as a critical rather than industrial category, see David Bordwell, 'The Bounds of Difference', in The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960, by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson (London: Routledge,1988), p. 75. Steve Neale argues for a distinction to be made between genre studies which focus on the meanings of genre which accrue from institutional discourses and audience expectation, and those of categories like *film noir*, which are critically defined, Neale, 'Questions of genre', p. 52. James Naremore argues that "*film noir* is an unusually baggy concept, elaborated largely after the fact of the films themselves.", More Than Night, p. 5.

[12] Frank Krutnik, In a Lonely Street: *Film noir*, genre, masculinity (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 17.

[13] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 127.

[14] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 127, cites Richard Maltby, The Politics of the Maladjusted Text', in The Movie Book of Film Noir, who quotes two articles by John Houseman, 'Today's Hero: A Review', in *Hollywood Quarterly*, 2 (2) (1947), and *Vogue*, 15 January, 1947, which he found quoted in Lester Asheim, 'The Film and the Zeitgeist', *Hollywood Quarterly*, 2 (4) (1947). See also Lloyd Shearer, 'Crime Certainly Pays On Screen', *New York Times Magazine*, August 5, 1945, reprinted in Film Noir Reader: 2.

[15] Naremore, cites J. P. Telotte, Voices in the Dark: The Narrative Patterns of *Film Noir* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. 3, in More Than Night, p. 5.

[16] Neale, Genre and Hollywood, pp. 151-178.

[17] Neale, Genre and Hollywood, p. 152, original emphases.

[18] Marc Vernet, '*Film Noir* on the Edge of Doom', trans. by J Swenson, in Shades of Noir, ed. by Joan Copjec, p. 26.

[19] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 145.

[20] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', pp. 121-122.

[21] Foster Hirsch, The Dark Side of the Screen: Film Noir (San Diego: Da Capo Press, 1981), pp. 20-21, my emphases.

[22] Christine Gledhill, '*Klute* 1: a contemporary film noir and feminist criticism', in Women in Film Noir, ed. by E Ann Kaplan (London: BFI, 1978), p. 11, original emphases.

[23] Gledhill, '*Klute* 1', p. 12, original emphases.

[24] Janey Place, 'Women in film noir' in Women in Film Noir, p. 35.

[25] Place, 'Women in film noir', p. 35.

[26] Place, 'Women in film noir', p. 36.

[27] Place, 'Women in film noir', p. 45.

[28] Place, 'Women in film noir', p. 36.

[29] Drawing, as it does, on theories of psychoanalysis Mulvey's argument does account for the potential threat within the female form, which always contains the possibility of revealing the spectacle of castration, "the look, pleasurable in form, can be threatening in content", Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', p. 26. Place's argument does not refer to Mulvey, nor does Place set out an explicit theoretical agenda, nevertheless the way that Place attributes *both* the traits of glamorous spectacle *and* active agency to the *femmes fatales* is a significant departure from many feminist perspectives which draw directly on Mulvey.

[30] Place, 'Women in film noir', p. 54.

[31] Krutnik, In a Lonely Street, and Maltby, 'The Politics of the Maladjusted Text'.

[32] Krutnik, In a Lonely Street, p. xiii., see also Krutnik, pp. 24-25, where he develops his argument about the centrality of the 'tough' thriller in his definition of *film noir*, he states that his "focus will be on the 'tough' thriller not merely as a sizeable subset of 1940s *film noir* but as the core of the 1940s '*noir* phenomenon'."

[33] Krutnik, In a Lonely Street, p. xiii.

[34] Krutnik, In a Lonely Street, p. 193.

[35] Krutnik, In a Lonely Street, p. 195.

[36] Krutnik, In a Lonely Street, p. 196.

[37] Krutnik, In a Lonely Street, p. 188.

[38] Krutnik, In a Lonely Street, p. 188.

[39] See Raymond Durgnat, 'Paint it Black: the Family Tree of *Film Noir*', *Cinema* 6-7 (1970), 49-56, reprinted in Film Noir Reader, ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 1996), p. 38. Durgnat's approach is resolutely cross-generic; he cites *King Kong* (Merian C Cooper, USA, 1933), *The Blue Angel* (Josef von Sternberg, Ger, 1930), and *High Noon* (Fred Zinneman, USA, 1952). Paul Schrader, 'Notes on *Film Noir*' (1972), reprinted in Film Noir Reader. Schrader states that "most every dramatic Hollywood film from 1941 to 1953 contains some *noir* elements.", p. 54.

[40] Naremore, More Than Night, p. 11.

[41] Naremore, More Than Night, p. 255.

[42] E Ann Kaplan, 'Introduction', in Women in Film Noir, New Edition, ed. by E Ann Kaplan (London: BFI, 1998), p. 1.

[43] David Bordwell asserts that adaptations of hard-boiled novels constitute almost 20% of *film noir* made between 1941 and 1984, 'The Bounds of Difference', p. 76. Krutnik undertakes a detailed examination of the influence of hard-boiled crime fiction on film, In a Lonely Street, pp. 33-44.

[44] Angela Martin, '"Gilda Didn't Do Any of Those Things You've Been Losing Sleep Over!": The Central Women of 40s Films Noirs', in Women in Film Noir, New Edition; Lizzie Francke, Script Girls: Women Screenwriters in Hollywood (London: BFI, 1994).

[45] Martin, 'Central Women of 40s Films Noirs', p. 206. Martin cites James Maxfield, The Fatal Woman: Sources of Male Anxiety in American *Film Noir*, 1941-1991 (London: Associated University Presses; Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), p. 9; John Belton, American Cinema/American Culture (New York: McGraw Hill, 1994), p. 199; J R Taylor, Hollywood - 50 Great Years (Godalming: Colour Library Books, 1991), p. 171, and Colin McArthur, Underworld USA (London: Secker and Warburg/BFI: 1972), p. 46.

[46] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 145, cited by Martin, 'Central Women of 40s Films Noirs', p. 205, Martin's emphasis.

[47] Martin, 'Central Women of 40s Films Noirs', p. 205.

[48] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 126.

[49] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 126.

[50] See Joyce Nelson, '*Mildred Pierce* Reconsidered', *Film Reader*, 2 (1977), reprinted in Movies and Methods Volume II, ed. by Bill Nichols (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985); Pam Cook, 'Duplicity in *Mildred Pierce*' in Women in Film Noir, ed. by E Ann Kaplan; Annette Kuhn, Women's Pictures: Feminism and the Cinema (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982) pp. 29-31 and Mary Ann Doane, The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 78.

[51] Krutnik, In a Lonely Street, p. xiii.

[52] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', p. 27.

[53] **PLOT SYNOPSIS, *LAURA*:** Mark McPherson (Dana Andrews) is investigating the murder of advertising executive and socialite Laura Hunt (Gene Tierney). McPherson questions the victim's circle of friends, her mentor Waldo Lydecker (Clifton Webb) a famous newspaper columnist and radio personality, her rich aunt Ann Treadwell (Judith Anderson) and her fiancé Shelby Carpenter (Vincent Price). All of Laura's close circle have a motive

for killing her. Waldo regards Laura as his protégé, and is fiercely possessive of her, discouraging her potential suitors, but in the case of Carpenter he failed. Ann Treadwell is in love with Carpenter, Carpenter professes to love Laura, but he has also been seeing Diane Redfern, a model. McPherson's investigation leads to his fascination with the dead woman who he comes to know through her diaries, letters, and the reminiscences of Waldo. The focus of his fascination is Laura's portrait; he is at Laura's apartment late at night when she comes back in a seemingly miraculous reincarnation. She explains to the amazed detective that she spent the weekend at her country house, deciding whether or not to marry Carpenter. The dead woman turns out to be Diane Redfern, who the murderer mistook for Laura in the dark. Carpenter admits that he was with Diane the night she was killed, and McPherson questions Laura, who is now a suspect. She convinces him of her innocence, and McPherson finds the murder weapon hidden in a clock given to Laura by Waldo. Romance blossoms between the detective and his dream woman, but after McPherson has left Laura's apartment Waldo returns to try to kill her a second time. Laura eludes him long enough for McPherson to arrive and shoot Waldo.

[54] **PLOT SYNOPSIS, *GILDA*:** Johnny Farrell (Glenn Ford) uses his loaded dice to clean up in a Buenos Aires dive. Ballin Mundson (George Macready) saves him from a thief, and later hires Johnny to run his casino. Johnny becomes a trusted friend of Ballin, but things change when Ballin returns from a business trip having married Gilda (Rita Hayworth). This breaks their pact to avoid women, and worse, Gilda and Johnny were lovers in the past. Tensions between Gilda and Johnny mount. Ballin tells Johnny to watch over Gilda, she attempts to make Johnny jealous and humiliate Ballin by attracting the attentions of a string of men. Ballin heads a Nazi cartel which has a monopoly on tungsten, but these interests put him in danger when he kills a man. He intends to flee the country with Gilda but on arriving home he finds her in a love/hate embrace with Johnny. Ballin leaves alone, and boards a plane which crashes into the sea, witnessed by Johnny and detective Obregon (Joseph Calleia) who has been tailing Ballin for some time. They believe Ballin is dead but he has escaped by parachute before the crash. Johnny, upset by Ballin's death, marries Gilda planning to punish her for her apparent betrayal of Ballin. Gilda escapes to Montevideo but is deceived into returning to Buenos Aires by a man hired by Johnny. Gilda and Johnny have a public row after she performs her signature song "Put the Blame on Mame" in the casino, and she plans to return to the USA. Johnny hands over Ballin's business papers to Obregon who reproaches him for his treatment of Gilda telling him that her behaviour was only an act. Finally realizing that he loves Gilda Johnny goes to find her. As they are reunited Ballin appears, intending to murder them both, but they are saved by the cloakroom attendant, Uncle Pio (Steven Geray), who kills Ballin. Gilda and Johnny leave the casino together.

[55] Martin, 'Central Women of 40s Films Noirs', p. 202.

[56] Sarah Kozloff, Invisible Storytellers: Voice-Over Narration in American Fiction Film (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 44.

[57] Kozloff, Invisible Storytellers, p. 74.

[58] Kozloff, Invisible Storytellers, p. 50.

[59] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 49, original emphases.

[60] Pam Cook and Annette Kuhn have discussed issues of narrational control in relation to *Mildred Pierce*, a further example of a film whose title and story is a central woman. Cook and Kuhn find that the framing of Mildred's subjectively marked flashbacks by the detective's flashback which resolves the enigma of the film is an example of the marginalisation of

female discourse. Cook, 'Duplicity in *Mildred Pierce*', p. 74; Kuhn, Women's Pictures, pp. 50-52.

[61] Karen Hollinger, '*Film Noir*, Voice-over and the Femme Fatale', in Film Noir Reader ed. Silver and Ursini, p. 243.

[62] Hollinger, '*Film Noir*, Voice-over and the Femme Fatale', p. 243.

[63] Kozloff, Invisible Storytellers, pp. 31-40, Kozloff includes a comprehensive filmography which illustrates this point, pp. 141-153.

[64] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 138.

[65] Hollinger, '*Film Noir*, Voice-over and the Femme Fatale', p. 243.

[66] Hollinger, '*Film Noir*, Voice-over and the Femme Fatale', pp. 243-244.

[67] Hollinger, '*Film Noir*, Voice-over and the Femme Fatale', p. 244.

[68] Hollinger, '*Film Noir*, Voice-over and the Femme Fatale', p. 246-7.

[69] Hollinger, '*Film Noir*, Voice-over and the Femme Fatale', p. 243.

[70] The entrance of McPherson, the hard-boiled, lower-middle class detective, into the luxurious living quarters of a rich and decadent character has parallels with other scenarios in *film noir*. *The Big Sleep* (Howard Hawks, 1946, USA) has Philip Marlowe (Humphrey Bogart) entering the decadent milieu of the Sternwood family, and *The Dark Corner* has private investigator Brad Galt (Mark Stevens) framed for murder by art dealer Hardy Cathcart who has many similar character traits to Waldo Lydecker and is also played by Clifton Webb.

[71] 'Homosexuality and film noir', in The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations (1977; Routledge: London, 1993), p. 60.

[72] Dyer, 'Homosexuality and film noir', p. 62.

[73] Dyer, 'Homosexuality and film noir', p. 60.

[74] Dyer, 'Homosexuality and film noir', p. 61.

[75] On the coding of Lydecker as homosexual see Kathryn Kalinak, Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p. 164. Lee Edelman undertakes a fascinating and detailed discussion of Lydecker in 'Imagining the Homosexual, *Laura* and the Other Face of Gender', in Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory (New York and London: Routledge, 1994). See also Richard Dyer's work on sexuality and *film noir*: 'Homosexuality and film noir', 'Resistance Through Charisma: Rita Hayworth and *Gilda*', in Women in Film Noir (1978), and 'Postscript: Queers and Women in Film Noir', in Women in Film Noir: New Edition (1998).

[76] Kalinak, Settling the Score, pp. 169-170.

[77] Kaplan, 'Introduction', in Women in Film Noir, pp. 2-3.

[78] Laszlo Willinger quoted in Hollywood Glamor Portraits ed. by John Kobal, p. xii.

[79] Willinger quoted in Kobal (ed.) Hollywood Glamor Portraits, p. xii.

[80] Kobal (ed.) Hollywood Glamor Portraits, p. viii.

[81] Raymond Durgnat, 'Paint it Black: the Family Tree of *Film Noir*', p. 47; Janey Place and Lowell Peterson, 'Some Visual Motifs of *Film Noir*', *Film Comment*, January-February (1974), reprinted in Film Noir Reader, p. 68; and Janey Place, 'Women in *Film Noir*', in Women in Film Noir, p. 48.

[82] Place and Peterson, 'Some Visual Motifs of *Film Noir*', p. 68.

[83] Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 168.

[84] Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 168.

[85] Eugene McNamara, *Laura* As Novel, Film and Myth (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), p. 1.

[86] McNamara, *Laura* As Novel, Film and Myth, p. 82.

[87] Frances Borzello, Annette Kuhn, Jill Pack and Cassandra Wedd, 'Living dolls and "real women"', in Annette Kuhn, The power of the image: Essays on representation and sexuality (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985).

[88] Kuhn and others, 'Living dolls and "real women"', p. 13.

[89] Kuhn and others, 'Living dolls and "real women"', p. 13.

[90] Richard Dyer, White (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 122.

[91] Dyer, White, pp. 116-121.

[92] Place and Peterson, 'Some Visual Motifs of *Film Noir*', p. 66.

[93] Haralovich, 'Selling *Mildred Pierce*: A Case Study in Movie Promotion', in Thomas Schatz, Boom and Bust: The American Cinema in the 1940s (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997), p. 197. Haralovich cites Barbara Klinger, 'Much Ado About Excess: Genre, Mise-en-Scene, and the Woman in *Written on the Wind*", *Wide Angle*, 11 (1989), p. 4.

[94] This is also supported by the fact that *Laura* marked a 'come back' to Hollywood for Clifton Webb. He had appeared in minor roles in silent films in the 1920s, but was best known for his work playing dramatic roles on Broadway. (David Thompson, A Biographical Dictionary of Film (1975; London: André Deutsch, 1994), p. 798; Ephraim Katz, The Macmillan International Film Encylcopedia: Third Edition (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 1447.

[95] Haralovich, 'Selling *Mildred Pierce*', in Boom and Bust, p. 199.

[96] Haralovich, 'Selling *Mildred Pierce*', in Boom and Bust, p. 199.

[97] John Ellis, Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video: Revised Edition (1982; London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p 30.

[98] Ellis, Visible Fictions, p. 31.

[99] E Ann Kaplan, 'Introduction', Women in Film Noir, pp. 2-3.

[100] Kalinak, Settling the Score, pp 161-168; McNamara, *Laura* as Novel, Film and Myth, pp. 37-53.

[101] Vera Caspary, "My 'Laura' and Otto's", *Saturday Review*, 26 June 1971, p. 37, cited in Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 162.

[102] Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 162.

[103] Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 162.

[104] McPherson's voice-over survived until later in the re-writing and shooting process than did Laura's, the final shooting script still contained his narration, and Dana Andrews actually recorded a voice-over for the film. Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 163.

[105] Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 161.

[106] Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 166; see also Claudia Gorbman, Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 2-3; Kathryn Kalinak, 'The Fallen Woman and the Virtuous Wife: Musical Stereotypes in *The Informer*, *Gone with the Wind*, and *Laura*', *Film Reader*, 5 (1982), 76-82; and Caryl Flinn, 'The 'Problem' of Femininity in Theories of Film Music', *Screen*, 27 (6) (1986), 57-72.

[107] Kalinak, 'The Fallen Woman and the Virtuous Wife', p. 76.

[108] Kalinak, 'The Fallen Woman and the Virtuous Wife', p. 76.

[109] Kalinak, 'The Fallen Woman and the Virtuous Wife', p. 76.

[110] David Raksin, interview with Kathryn Kalinak, August 1980, cited in Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 166.

[111] George and Ira Gershwin.

[112] Raksin, interview with Kalinak, p. 167. Kalinak also relates an anecdote Raksin tells about his meeting with Preminger to discuss the theme for Laura's character:-

> "At our first conference Preminger announced that he was going to use 'Sophisticated Lady.' I suggested right away that it was wrong for the picture, whereupon Preminger said, "What do you mean, dear boy, the wrong piece? Don't you like it?" I assured him that I liked the piece and its composer, but that did not make it the right theme for his film. He wanted to know why not, so I said, "Because it already has so many associations in the minds of people that it will arouse feelings that are outside the frame of this picture. I also think that you have made some connection between the title 'Sophisticated Lady,' and your conception of this girl." At this, he blew a fuse and almost shouted, "The girl is a whore - she's a whore." I said, innocently like a child tormenting a parent, "By whose standards, Mr Preminger?"

David Raksin, from "A Conversation with David Raksin, Part II," Elmer Bernstein, *Filmmusic Notebook* 2, 3 (1976):II, p 12, cited in Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 167.

[113] Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 168.

[114] Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 168.

[115] Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 171.

[116] Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 177.

[117] Kalinak cites Mel Gussow, Don't Say Yes Until I Finish Talking (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971), p. 137. Kristin Thompson reads *Laura* as closing within a dream narrative in 'Closure Within a Dream: Point-of-View in *Laura*', *Film Reader*, 3 (1978), 90-105.

[118] Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 178.

[119] Gorbman, Unheard Melodies, pp. 22-23.

[120] Gorbman, Unheard Melodies, p. 23.

[121] Gorbman, Unheard Melodies, p. 23.

[122] Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 170.

[123] 'The 'Problem' of Femininity in Theories of Film Music', pp. 57-72.

[124] Gorbman, Unheard Melodies, pp. 26-27; see also Flinn, 'The 'Problem' of Femininity in Theories of Film Music', pp. 70-72 for a discussion of films where music takes on a representational role.

[125] Kalinak, Settling the Score, p. 177.

[126] Dyer, 'Queers and Women in Film Noir', p. 124.

[127] Dyer, 'Resistance Through Charisma: Rita Hayworth and *Gilda*', in Women in Film Noir, ed. by E Ann Kaplan (London: BFI, 1978), pp. 94-95; Hollinger, '*Film Noir*, Voice-over and the Femme Fatale', p. 250.

[128] Hollinger, '*Film Noir*, Voice-over and the Femme Fatale', p. 250.

[129] Hollinger, '*Film Noir*, Voice-over and the Femme Fatale', p. 250.

[130] Dyer, 'Resistance Through Charisma', p. 95.

[131] Janey Place, 'Women in film noir', p. 48; Mary Ann Doane, '*Gilda*: Epistemology as Striptease' in Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 99-101.

[132] Doane, '*Gilda*: Epistemology as Striptease', p. 101.

[133] Doane, '*Gilda*: Epistemology as Striptease', p. 101.

[134] Doane, '*Gilda*: Epistemology as Striptease', p. 101.

[135] Doane, '*Gilda*: Epistemology as Striptease', p. 101, my emphases.

[136] Dyer, 'Resistance Through Charisma', p. 97.

[137] Dyer, 'Resistance Through Charisma', p. 97.

[138] Dyer, 'Resistance Through Charisma', p. 97.

[139] Dyer, 'Resistance Through Charisma', p. 97.

[140] Dyer, 'Resistance Through Charisma', p. 97.

[141] Dyer, 'Resistance Through Charisma', pp. 97-98.

[142] Doane, '*Gilda*: Epistemology as Striptease', p. 111.

[143] Dyer, 'Resistance Through Charisma', pp. 95-96.

[144] Dyer, 'Resistance Through Charisma', p. 95.

[145] Adrienne L McLean, '"It's Only That I Do What I Love and Love What I Do": *Film Noir* and the Musical Woman', *Cinema Journal*, 33 (1) (1993), 3-16, p. 3. McLean cites Alan Williams, "The Musical Film and Recorded Popular Music", in Genre: The Musical, ed. by Rick Altman (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul/BFI, 1981), p. 153 and Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', reprinted in Issues in Feminist Film Criticism, ed. by Patricia Erens (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 33 as evidence of this view of the musical number.

[146] McLean, '*Film Noir* and the Musical Woman', p. 3.

[147] Mark W Booth, The Experience of Songs (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 17, cited in McLean, '*Film Noir* and the Musical Woman', p. 4.

[148] Booth, The Experience of Songs, p. 17, cited in McLean, '*Film Noir* and the Musical Woman', p. 4.

[149] Booth, The Experience of Songs, p. 17, cited in McLean, '*Film Noir* and the Musical Woman', p. 4.

[150] Dyer, 'Resistance Through Charisma', p. 93.

[151] McLean, '*Film Noir* and the Musical Woman', p. 13, note 8.

[152] See Doane, 'Epistemology as Striptease', discussed above.

[153] Dyer cites John Kobal, 'The Time, the Place and the Girl: Rita Hayworth', *Focus on Film* (10), p. 17, who asserts that Glenn Ford and George Macready were aware of the "homosexual angle" of their characters' relationship; 'Resistance Through Charisma', p. 93.

[154] Dyer, 'Resistance Through Charisma', p. 94.

[155] Dyer, 'Resistance Through Charisma', p. 94.

[156] Dyer, 'Queers and Women in Film Noir', in Women in Film Noir: New Edition, p. 124.

[157] Dyer, 'Queers and Women in Film Noir', pp. 124-125, original emphases.

[158] Cowie refers to James Damico, '*Film Noir*: A Modest Proposal', *Film Reader*, 3 (1978), p. 54; and Marc Vernet, 'The Filmic Transaction: On the Openings of *Films Noirs*', *Velvet Light Trap*, 20 (Summer 1983), p. 8, in her '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 122.

[159] Dyer, 'Queers and Women in Film Noir', p. 125.

[160] Dyer, 'Queers and Women in Film Noir', p. 127.

[161] Dyer, 'Queers and Women in Film Noir', p. 129.

PART 1: *FILM NOIR*
CHAPTER 2: THE ART OF MURDER: NEGOTIATING THE FRAMES OF *FILM NOIR*

In the previous chapter I discussed the centrality of the image of the *femme fatale* in genre debates about *film noir*. I showed that criticism has had a role in constructing a dichotomy of feminine representations; an opposition between fatally seductive and virtuously redemptive femininity. However my analysis of films with central women characters (*Laura, Gilda* and *Mildred Pierce*) showed that the image that was ascribed to the central woman framed her as fatal; I noted a transfer of guilt from another character to the central woman. There was therefore a slippage between the presence of a portrait image and the narrative trope of a frame-up or set-up. In this chapter I examine three films where this slippage is also evident: *I Wake Up Screaming,*[1] *Phantom Lady,*[2] and *The Dark Corner.*[3] . All three of these films contain framed portrait images of female characters and they also involve the narrative situation of framing, but in these films the character who is framed is male. These films are interesting, then, for the slippage that is evident between visual and narrative frames through which a parallel is drawn between framed femininity and implicated masculinity; a reversal of the transfer of masculine guilt to framed feminine image in *Laura* and *Gilda*. Furthermore in all three films it is a female character who investigates and helps to resolve the dilemma that the male character finds himself in. *Phantom Lady*, *The Dark Corner* and *I Wake Up Screaming* therefore provide further clear examples of a variety in gender roles in *film noir*. My focus in this chapter is how the complex relationship between the image of framed woman and an implicated male character is negotiated by the investigating woman. My discussion will fall into two parts: firstly the slippage between narrative frames and framed images, and secondly the investigative role the woman plays and the ways in which this role challenges the genre definitions or frames in *film noir* criticism.[4]

I discussed the narrative situation of the set-up or frame-up in my introductory chapter, in the context of *Out of the Past*. I suggested that a character who is inside a frame has great difficulty in interpreting their situation, or even their location in the bigger picture of the narrative. In *Out of the Past* Jeff Markham is trying to interpret his position on his own. I also suggested that in the narrative frame-up the framed character is painted as guilty by another character. In other words in the narrative frame-up there is a 'framer' who, we might say, composes the picture, and a 'framee' the one who is in the frame. In *Out of the Past* Whit Sterling is the framer and Jeff the framee. As I indicated earlier, in *Phantom Lady*, *The Dark Corner*, and *I Wake Up Screaming* the relationship between framer and framee is parallelled by a relationship between the framer and a portrait image of a secondary female character. The secondary female characters who are framed in these portraits are characterised differently to the female investigator, the framed woman is represented as highly sexual, and manipulative. In *Phantom Lady* and *I Wake Up Screaming* the framed woman has a past connection with the hero which must be looked into by the female investigator. In *The Dark Corner* it is not the framed woman who is directly connected to the hero, but her connection is with the framer Hardy Cathcart (Clifton Webb) and a male character from the hero's past Anthony Jardine (Kurt Krueger) who represents a danger to the hero. In all three films the woman investigator has to determine the nature of a relationship, which precedes hers, with the hero.

Phantom Lady: "too spoiled and too beautiful"

In *Phantom Lady* Scott Henderson (Alan Curtis) is framed for the murder of his wife Marcella by his best friend, Jack Marlow (Franchot Tone). Scott's personal assistant Kansas (Ella Raines) is the character who investigates the murder and clears Scott's name. On the night of the murder Scott has been with a mystery woman, the 'Phantom Lady' (Fay Helm) of the film's title. When Scott returns to his apartment a group of policemen, headed by Inspector Burgess (Thomas Gomez), are waiting for him. In order to observe his reactions they allow him to enter the bedroom and find Marcella dead. They then question him about his movements that evening, and the last time that he saw his wife alive. It is during the questioning sequence that Marcella's portrait is seen for the only time in the film. Scott walks over to the portrait of Marcella, and looks at it intently, he stands in front of it as he talks about their marriage. (Figure 2.01)

> *Scott*: For a long time things hadn't been right between us. It was our anniversary, I thought maybe we could start all over again so I came home from the office early, we had friends in for cocktails... They didn't stay long, and she seemed glad that we were alone....I noticed that she wasn't getting dressed. She just sat there and laughed, she told me she had no intention of going out with me, she kept laughing at me.
> *Cop*: Nothing makes a man sorer than that.
> *Scott*: Then I knew that I'd been kidding myself, I knew that it wouldn't work. I asked her for a divorce.
> *Burgess*: She refused?
> *Scott*: Yes, she said she wouldn't be my wife, but she wouldn't give me a divorce.
> *Cop*: Making a patsy of you eh?
> *Scott*: Don't say that! We'd been happy once, it was just (looking round at the portrait) that she was too spoiled and too beautiful.

The shot is composed so that Marcella appears to be looking down at Scott and her expression, as captured in the portrait, does give the impression that she is still laughing at him as he said she did while she was alive. This impression is augmented by the sceptical expression on the face of the cop to the right of Scott. Scott's account of his marriage gives us the sense that he was completely dominated and eventually trapped by his wife. One of the cops draws attention to the demeaning relationship when he calls Scott a "patsy", a term which connotes the fall-guy or blame-taker. This scene offers considerable motivation for Scott to have murdered Marcella, and it offers the possibility that he is capable of it.

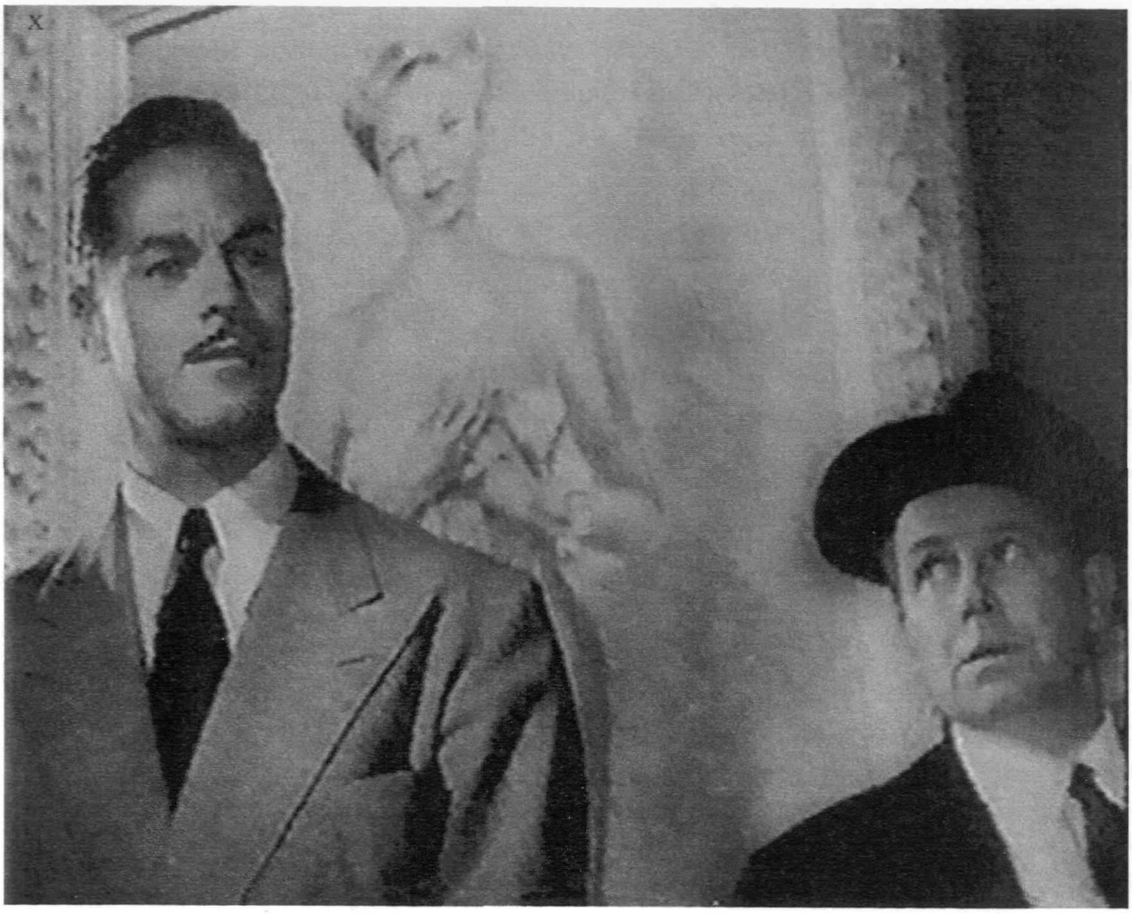


Figure 2.01

He may be guilty of wishing Marcella dead to escape the suffocating non-marriage from which she will not release him. The initial impression that we get of Scott, the framed man, is that our picture is correct, that he is guilty. The frame on Scott as the murderer is challenged and shifted by Kansas's conviction that he is innocent. She undertakes to track down all the people who saw Scott with the Phantom Lady on the night of Marcella's murder. Her investigation eventually leads her to the Phantom Lady, Ann Terry, who confirms Scott's innocence and gives Kansas a key piece of evidence: an unusual and highly conspicuous hat that she wore the night she met him. The evidence will resolve the investigation and Kansas goes to the apartment of Marlow to await Inspector Burgess (Figure 2.02). While she is there she discovers evidence that Marlow is guilty. A scene follows in which Kansas has to confront Marlow who is both murderer and framer. Before he attempts to murder Kansas, Marlow confesses to her about his relationship with Marcella. His description of her is remarkably similar to Scott's, cited earlier. As Kansas tries to escape from the apartment Marlow says:

> *Marlow*: She was sitting at her dressing table... but she wasn't frightened as you are. Marcella was never frightened. I said 'You'd better hurry, the boat leaves in an hour, then she told me she never had any intention of going, she was just amusing herself. I'd never allowed myself to love anybody before. I didn't want anything to interfere with my work. I was always naive about women. She was laughing at me. She kept on laughing. I had to stop her laughing.

Both men express their anger as they recall similar scenarios where Marcella laughed at their powerlessness. It is significant that in the accounts of her husband and her lover there is a repetition of the setting in which Marcella is seen: at her dressing table. Janey Place has pointed out that a *femme fatale* character often directs her attention inwards, she is devoted to satisfying her own desires rather than those of the man/men in her life:

> The independence which film noir women seek is often visually presented as self-absorbed narcissism: the woman gazes at her own reflection in the mirror, ignoring the man she will use to achieve her goals.... Self-interest over devotion to a man is often the original sin of the film noir woman and metaphor for the threat her sexuality represents to him.[5]

Both the accounts of Marcella in the film suggest that she has sexually humiliated the male characters. Scott has stated that Marcella wanted to stay married but "She wouldn't be my wife", in other words she would possess him but not allow him to possess her. Marlow also talks on this theme when he says that Marcella "was just amusing herself" with him, he is humiliated by becoming her sexual plaything. Marcella thus manipulates the men through their sexual relation to her, Scott suffering a dearth and Marlow a surfeit of activity.

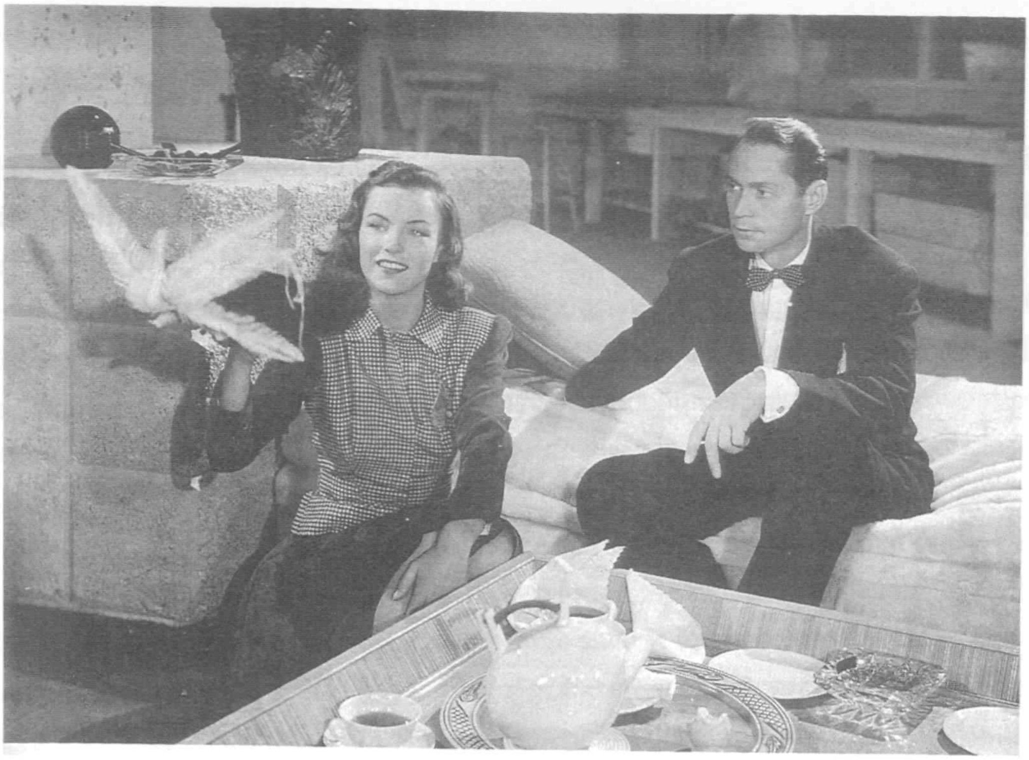


Figure 2.02

It is in her influence on Scott and Marlow that Marcella is most evident. In fact the film's allusion to the figure of a 'Phantom Lady', who has great influence but who remains elusive, could apply to Marcella as well as to Ann.

Marcella is therefore paradoxically both elusive and strongly influential, and this is further emphasised by the fact that we only have the brief and partial character sketch of Marcella given to us by Scott and Marlow. The visual counterpart to their description is her portrait image, which also has a quality of sketchiness: it appears to be a pastel drawing and some of the lines are quite faint. The slippage between the sketchy narration and sketch-as-portrait echoes that between the narrative scenario of the frame-up and that of the framed woman, and the trope of art association is extended in the fact that the framer is an artist. Marlow is a renowned sculptor who creates large statues in a modernist style to be exhibited in public places. Several critics have noted that the artist as cinematic character often carries connotations of eccentricity, irrationality or downright dangerousness, and Marlow is no exception.[6] He makes a number of comments throughout the film which confirm his position as the "mad genius" and which provide motivation for his actions. For instance he comments to Kansas on the "brilliance" with which the murderer has managed to outwit their investigation, and later when he confesses to Marcella's murder he explains why he must frame Scott: "I knew they'd arrest me, I couldn't let them do that. When you're born with my gifts you can't afford to let them get in your way." And he continues: "I'm fond of Scott, we're friends. But what's his life compared to mine?... What's any life compared to mine?"

As Marlow holds forth he is framed in a medium shot and a reproduction of a Van Gogh self portrait is visible in the background. Kent Minturn traces the heritage of the "image" of the artist in popular culture as follows:

> At the popular level these films [with artists as characters] revived the nineteenth century Romantic notion of the artist as a tortured genius, a trope essential to the rise of modernism in both Europe and America. At the core of this trope is a tendency to associate creativity with mental illness, which predates even the Romantic era... Plato's theory of the *furores*... holds that the true artist creates in a state of inspired madness. When this notion surfaced again in the Renaissance, it was coupled with the medieval idea of the *divino artista*, a corporeal version of God the Architect of the universe, creator and destroyer. By the late nineteenth century, however, morbidity and death were added to the beliefs about the unique temperament of the artist. Consumed by uncontrollable passions, artists were seen as individuals likely to murder or commit suicide.[7]

And Minturn suggests that Van Gogh was an artist who came to condense this image of "tortured genius",[8] an image that was a possible cultural influence on 1940s film production through a MoMA retrospective show of Van Gogh's life and work in 1936.[9] The framing of one artist (Marlow) through (and with) the image of another (Van Gogh) is narratively important: the scene where Marlow reveals his diabolical genius ("When you're born with my gifts...") demonstrates the imbrication of the meanings and uses of frame: cinematic and painterly frames overlap and mutually influence narrative and cultural frames.[10] The ending of the film illustrates a shifting in frames. Despite the fact that Marlow has composed a frame in which he paints Scott as guilty his vision is shown to be flawed, illustrated through the exposure of him as the mad genius figure. There is a shift in the process of framing, and as the narrative restores law and order to the picture the framer becomes the framed.

The Dark Corner: "The passion of the true collector"

In *The Dark Corner* there is a more complex narrative structure of framing than in *Phantom Lady*. The hero is private detective Brad Galt (Mark Stevens) who has a backstory of being a framee. When he discovered that his business partner Tony Jardine (Kurt Kreuger) was running a blackmail racket Jardine framed him for manslaughter. Brad makes a new start in New York, but soon suspects that he is being followed by 'White Suit' (William Bendix) who tells him that he has been hired by Jardine. But the interrelationships between these three characters is being arranged and manipulated by art dealer and collector Hardy Cathcart (Clifton Webb). Hardy discovers that Jardine is having an affair with his wife Mary (Cathy Downs) and he uses the former relationship between Brad and Jardine in order to incite Brad into killing Jardine. He is unsuccessful however and so he gets 'White Suit' to kill Jardine, framing Brad for the crime. During the narrative, then, Hardy puts a former framer (Jardine) in the frame with his former framee (Brad), composing a perfectly plausible murder scene.

While the levels of characters framing and being framed is more complicated here than in *Phantom Lady*, a relationship between a framed image and a framed character is evident. The framed image is a portrait that Hardy has acquired as a likeness of his wife Mary. He takes a group of people down to his vault (Figure 2.03) and describes his acquisition as follows:

> *Hardy*: I saw it a great many years ago and thought it enchanting. When I couldn't buy it I became obsessed with owning it.
> *Woman*: So like you Hardy.
> *Hardy*: Merely the passion of the true collector my dear. The other members of the Perugini family would have sold it long ago, but the old Count refused every offer. I knew I couldn't buy it while he was still alive, so fortunately he decided to die.
> [He whisks back the curtain to reveal the picture].
> *Mary*: Oh!
> *Jardine*: Why, it's Mary!
> *Hardy*: The resemblance isn't mere accident.
> *Woman*: You mean it was retouched?
> *Hardy*: Certainly not. I found the portrait long before I met Mary. And I worshipped it. When I did meet her it was as though I'd always known her - and wanted her.

Hardy's description of the portrait is very revealing about his relationship both to his wife and to the framed artistic image, and Richard Dyer has explored Hardy's character in his consideration of sexuality in *film noir*. Hardy Cathcart is discussed alongside Waldo

Lydecker from *Laura* and Ballin Mundson from *Gilda*.[11] I have discussed these characters at length in my previous chapter and it will be evident that there are parallels between Ballin, Waldo and Hardy, particularly in relation to images of femininity. Dyer points out the similarity of characterisation and Clifton Webb's performance of Waldo Lydecker in *Laura* and Hardy in *The Dark Corner*: "Hardy is in many ways a re-run of Waldo, an art dealer apparently most relaxed in the company of old women (whom he patronises) and a blond gigolo, Tony Jardine."[12] Dyer points out that Hardy is rather a paradoxical character. He carries many of the signifiers of 'queerness', his dialogue is "A queer cocktail of snobbery, misogyny and unkindness masquerading as wit",[13] he is impeccably turned out and lives in ornate surroundings (Figure 2.04) but his framing actions are in retaliation for his wife's affair. Dyer continues:

> Yet the film pivots on his revenge for the infidelity of Mary, his wife, in the arms of Jardine. In other words there is much to indicate that Waldo, Ballin and Hardy are queers and yet they have primary relationships with women. All, however, have the same relationship with women: they aestheticise, 'adore', them, without really desiring them sexually.[14]

Dyer continues to analyse the implications of this aestheticising impulse in the marriage of Hardy and Mary:

> He tells [Mary] that he never wants her to grow old, a sort of transferral on to her of the crypto-queer desire to fix beauty recounted in *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*. Mary tells her lover Jardine that, though Hardy gives her 'everything a man can give a woman', yet 'still it isn't enough' - a fascinatingly ambiguous pronouncement which surely strongly suggests that Hardy does not give her the one thing that it is most commonly assumed men give women within marriage, sex. For Hardy, Mary is a work of art, adored to the point of sickness, providing a grim undertow to his quip to a party guest that 'the enjoyment of art is the only remaining ecstasy that is neither illegal or immoral'; he kills not to have his work of art robbed.[15]

Hardy has chosen Mary because she is like the Raphael portrait, as Dyer puts it "its living embodiment".[16] His self acknowledged obsession with an artistic image has completely taken over and reversed the usual relationship of portrait and subject. Instead of a portrait being taken from life and functioning as a likeness the living woman is chosen for the collection because she is the likeness of a painting; Hardy has made life/wife imitate art. Dyer's analysis of the aestheticising but non sexual relationship between characters like Hardy and the women they adore is so pertinent because it describes a relation to the woman at one remove. It is the image that Hardy loves rather than the woman, he wants Mary but as a perfected and ageless work of art. "The passion of the true collector" is for the image, desired all the more for the long period that he has waited for it. Action at a distance also marks Hardy's demeanour as the framer: he hires 'White Suit' to murder Jardine for him.

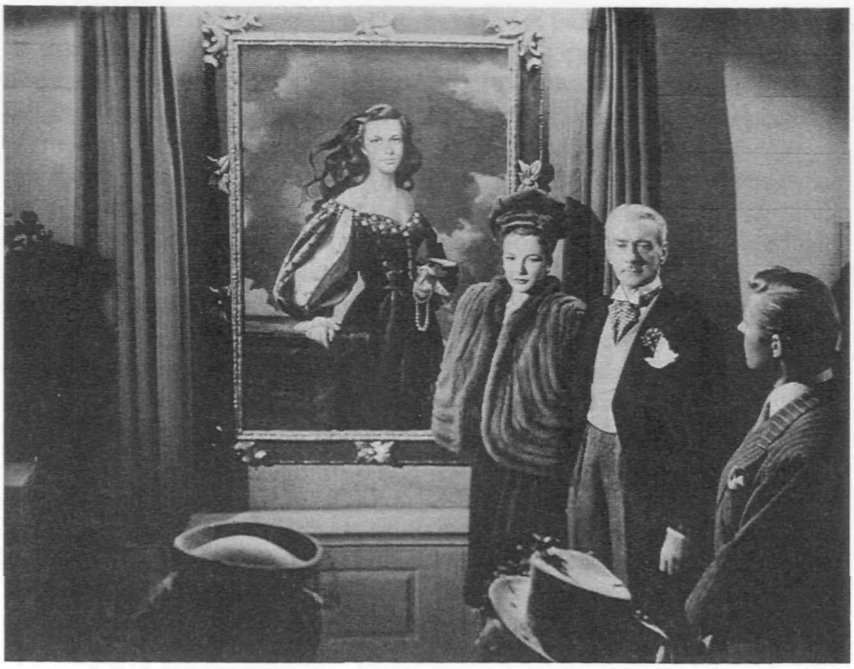


Figure 2.03

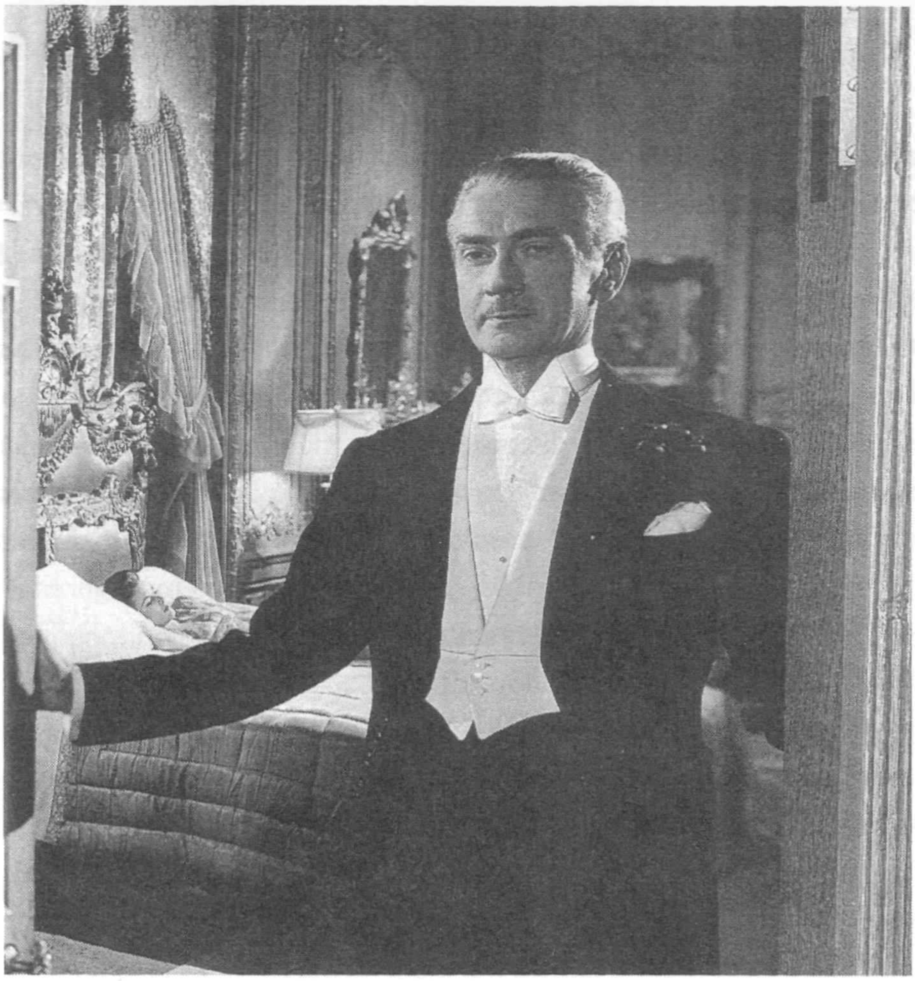


Figure 2.04

He therefore kills, as he loves, at one remove. Hardy's occupation as an art dealer and collector is also of a piece with his remote ruthlessness: as Marlow's psychological instability was marked by the image of the cinematic artist, so Hardy's obsession with the aesthetic is marked by the image of the cinematic art collector. The suspicion with which 1940s Hollywood films treat "high" art culture is often most clearly portrayed through the association of decadence or villainy with an elitist male character who, as Dyer has pointed out, frequently carries connotations of homosexuality.[17] The struggle of the "normal" male hero to understand a high culture milieu in which he finds himself further contrasts the decadent villain, interested in art and culture but not actually partaking in its creation, with the hard working, hard-boiled male.[18]

This opposition is clear in the confrontation that concludes *The Dark Corner*. Through the investigative and deductive skills of his faithful secretary Kathleen (Lucille Ball) Brad realises that Hardy is framing him. He is particularly perturbed by the knowledge that he is being framed a second time (the first occasion being his framing by Jardine), but admitting that he has a motive that implicates him in Jardine's murder he ruefully remarks "I could be framed easier than Whistler's mother." This wisecrack signals the presence of the multiple narrative frames in the film. When Brad does get to see Hardy, by pretending to be a wealthy customer at Hardy's gallery, there is a similar level of black humour. Their confrontation occurs as Hardy marches Brad down to the vault at gun point; in one of the most theatrical scenes of the film the two men trade quips about art and murder, or the art of murder. The word play is worth quoting at length, as it clearly foregrounds the slippage between the narrative theme of the frame around Brad, and the artistic associations of framing bound up with Hardy's career as an art collector:

> *Hardy*: You came to see me Mr Galt. About the Donatello wasn't it?
> *Brad*: Actually I'm interested in a piece of modern art. Something as stiff as a statue by now. It was finished the night before last, I think it belongs in your collection - a Tony Jardine.
> *Hardy*: Nonsense - I never handle anything as worthless as a Jardine!
> *Brad*: No - You mishandled it!
> *Hardy*: Did I? When it was found in your apartment?
> *Brad*: Perhaps it was delivered to the wrong collector. Sure you can't claim it?
> *Hardy*: Positive.
> *Brad*: Actually this Jardine really belongs to you - you paid to have it done.
> *Hardy*: Did I Mr Galt?
> *Brad*: Somebody paid that muscle artist to brush him off. Or didn't you ever pay him? Perhaps you launched him out of the window down to the street to get what was coming to him.
> *Hardy*: Mr Galt, your imagination is beginning to bore me. [Gestures to the vault]. Step in there.

Hardy backs Brad into the vault at gun point, telling him that all his protestations are useless, Jardine's body was found in his apartment and "that's the end of it". As they move into the vault the Raphael portrait is clearly visible behind Brad, indicating Hardy as both the framer and art lover. As Hardy holds Brad at gun point it appears that he will act directly to kill Brad, in a way that he has not earlier in the film. But he is somewhat distracted by the pleasures of trading word play with Brad. This gives Mary time to come round from the faint she fell into on hearing that Jardine is dead, and to avenge her lover's death by shooting Hardy in the back.

I Wake Up Screaming: Composing the Crime Scene

In *I Wake Up Screaming* detective Ed Cornell (Laird Cregar) is obsessed with Vicky Lynn (Carole Landis) a waitress who is discovered and promoted in a modelling and acting career by Frankie Christopher (Victor Mature). Cornell's secret plans for a future with Vicky are disrupted as she begins to be famous, and he blames Frankie for "taking Vicky away" from him. When she is murdered by Harry Williams (Elisha Cook Jr), the doorman in her building, Cornell gets his revenge by framing Frankie for the murder. A portrait of Vicky opens *I Wake Up Screaming*; a man buys a newspaper in a busy street and the camera moves in to frame the front cover page of the paper: a picture of Vicky and large headline "Beautiful Model Found Murdered". The context in which Vicky's image is first seen is quite different to the other two films that I have considered. In *Phantom Lady* the portrait of Marcella is the only image that is seen of her in the film, and it is in the apartment where she lived perhaps indicating the narcissism that is ascribed to her. The Raphael portrait in *The Dark Corner* is introduced as a priceless masterpiece, and it is presented as the jewel of a private collector and housed in a vault for safekeeping. Vicky's photographic portrait, as seen in the newspaper, is clearly associated with the genre of Hollywood publicity shots, discussed in the previous chapter. Its display in the newspaper foregrounds the theme of promotion that runs through the film: Vicky's rise to minor star status and the role of Frankie, and actor Larry Evans (and Robin in starting her career).

As a part of the theme of promotion Vicky's attitude to her own image is examined in the film. One of the flashbacks of the film, narrated by Vicky's sister Jill (Betty Grable), shows Vicky's return from her first night out in high society. Vicky is very excited, tells Jill of her determination to pursue a career as a model: "Why should I go on slinging hash when I can sling other things?" Jill is more sceptical about such a career, saying "One week your face is on the cover of a magazine, the next it's in the ash can." The sisters are clearly differentiated by their attitudes towards celebrity and what it demands to succeed in public, based on one's image. It is not only the opinions that they state, it is also their costume and performances which reinforce this. Jill is seen several times performing domestic tasks, for instance, the morning after Vicky's debut at the nightclub Jill cooks breakfast and answers the door to Frankie while Vicky slinks around the apartment in her house-robe and negligee. In the later flashback showing Vicky's announcement to Frankie, Robin and Larry that she is leaving for Hollywood Jill is busy typing while Vicky sits buffing her fingernails. These seemingly small markers of difference in action, performance and costume actually delineate the two female characters into different types. Vicky is focused on herself, her image and her career; the scene where she tells the three men she is leaving for Hollywood shows how quickly she has learnt to scramble up the ladder of opportunity. At first she is contrite about going after a contract behind Frankie's back, but when he shows his annoyance she asserts her independence, "I have some brains too, it was me they were interested in. Some people think I'm a very attractive girl, you didn't create that!" Vicky's self-focused ambition and independence are portrayed as indications of a rather ruthless character, attributes which often mark the *femme fatale* figure, as discussed earlier in relation to *Phantom Lady*. In contrast Jill is represented as selfless, she is focused outwards on other people rather than inwards on herself, and this becomes developed in her investigation on Frankie's behalf.

Frankie's attitude to Vicky's image, which he has had a role in constructing, distinguishes his different feelings for the sisters:

> *Frankie*: Vicky was pretty, gay and amusing, she had lots to offer and I wanted to put her in the right place on the map, after all that's my business. But when a man really loves a woman he doesn't want to plaster her face all over the papers and magazines. He wants to keep her to himself.

For Frankie Vicky's image is a successful product that he positions "in the right place on the map", but he maintains a distinction between this image which he classes as business and which is widely and publicly disseminated from the image of Jill, classed as pleasure and which is preserved as private. In making this discrimination Frankie differs from Ed Cornell, and it is interesting that the difference between the two men (the framee and the framer) is discernible in their relations to the framed image of a woman. At the end of the film Frankie goes to Cornell's apartment to confront him about his attempts to blame him for Vicky's murder. On entering the apartment Frankie finds that it is full of Cornell's private collection of Vicky's image. Framed photographs and even adverts from magazines cover the walls and tables, and most prominent is a large photographic portrait of Vicky with vases of flowers placed beneath it as if in offering. When Cornell returns Frankie watches him replacing the flowers before confronting him, and Cornell confesses to framing Frankie while he gazes, captivated, at Vicky's portrait (Figure 2.05).

This is not the only occasion in the film where Cornell gazes in this way. In an earlier flashback Jill relates that she saw Cornell looking intently at Vicky through a restaurant window, and how he followed the two of them on their way home. Jill correctly interprets Cornell's look, and its intensity, as a signal of trouble. The relation of this event is part of a scene where Jill is questioned about possible suspects in Vicky's murder case, but her evidence is disparaged by the police who will not believe that Cornell could be guilty. The events of the film prove that he is, if not guilty of the murder, then guilty of framing Frankie.

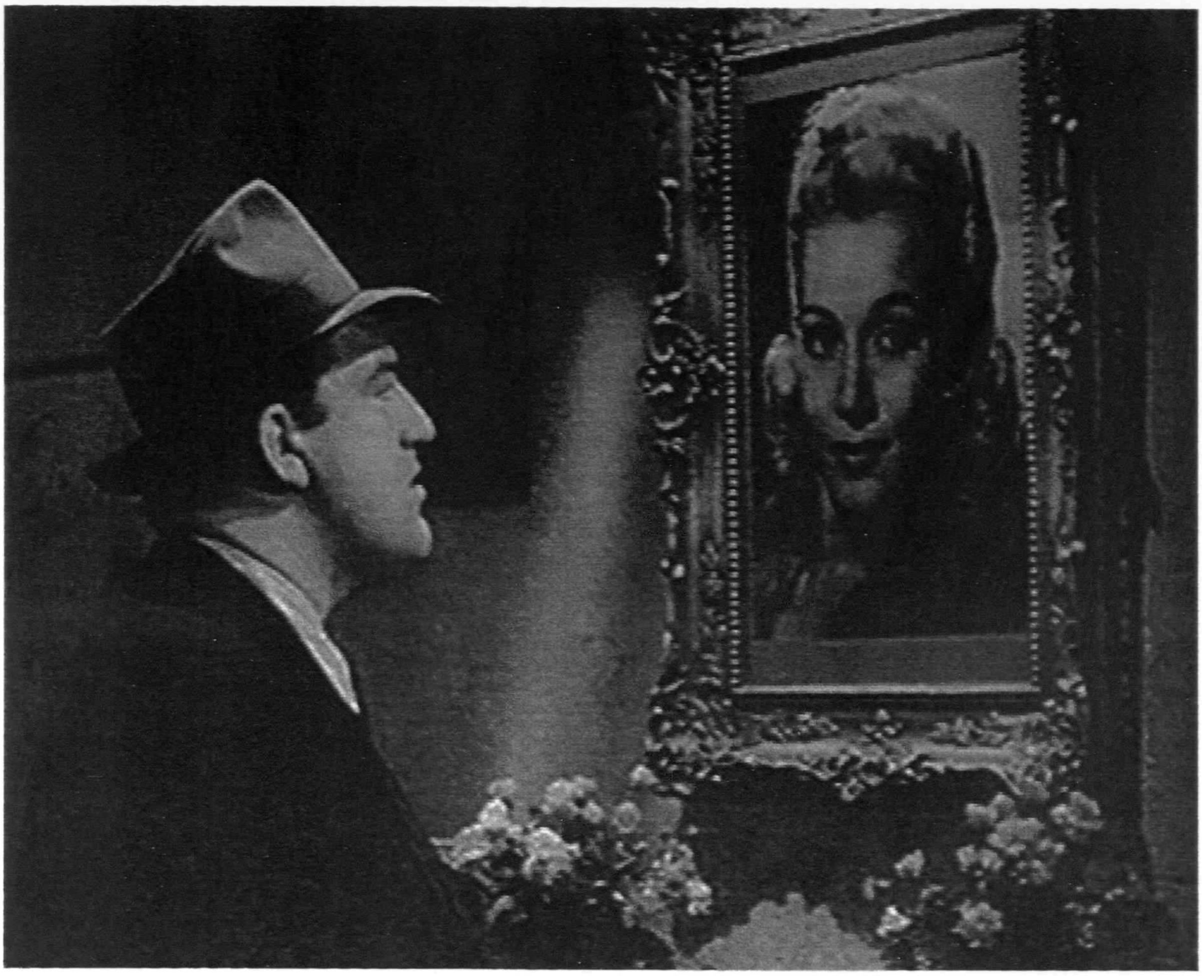


Figure 2.05

His perversion of his commitment to law and order as a police officer is matched by the perversion of an investigative gaze into a desiring fetishistic one.

All three films examined show a slippage of framed images into narrative frames. And while the specific plots of the films vary the framer in all the films is shown to have a pathological relationship to a female image, despite the fact that their occupations ostensibly fit them to understand images. The artist, the art collector and the detective all fail in their visual interpretation of the women whose images haunt the films. They mis-take the women for the idealised images, and are thus shown to lack perspective. The attempt to frame another man for a crime is analogous to their attempt to restore control in a register where seeing is equivalent to knowing and understanding. All three men compose a murder scene with the framee as the central figure but their lack of perspective undoes them, and they are ultimately framed as guilty.

Genre Frames and the Female Investigator

I now want to move onto the second part of my discussion, the role that the female investigator plays in uncovering the narrative frames and in freeing the hero character from the frame. Her negotiation of this relationship directly challenges much genre criticism of gender roles in *film noir* which defines the investigative role as male, and so I will begin by examining the frame that genre discussions present on these films.

While the image of the *femme fatale* has been central in defining gender relations in many critical accounts of *film noir* she has frequently been partnered by the figure of a male investigator. For Richard Maltby the male investigator plays a crucial role in elucidating the *noir* world for the viewer:

> The hero of these films, who was not always the central protagonist, was the investigator, the man assigned the task of making sense of the web of coincidence, flashback and unexplained circumstance that comprised the plot. Uncertainly adrift in a world of treachery and shifting loyalties, the investigator of the *noir* movie was himself less than perfect, frequently neurotic, sometimes paranoid, and often managed to re-establish a stable world in the film only by imposing an arbitrary resolution on the other characters.[19]

In Foster Hirsch's analysis of the narrative patterns of *film noir* a male investigator is also a central figure: "The private detective film is the best-known of the *noir* story types. For most moviegoers *film noir* may well summon up the image of Bogart in a trench coat and fedora asking tough dames and hoods with punched-in faces a lot of questions."[20] A further perspective is offered by Frank Krutnik who asserts that "women occupy a problematic place in regard to the masculine testing which characterises the 'tough' thriller."[21] It is the structure of 'testing' and the male protagonist's role in a 'narrative of investigation' that is central to Krutnik's analysis of generic patterns, and I have discussed his work in detail in the previous chapter. The focus that Maltby, Hirsch and Krutnik put on the investigating figure is related to the tradition of detective fiction that is historically strongly linked with *film noir*. As I have acknowledged, the historical connections between popular fictions and *film noir* are important, but it is how these connections are seen as defining both gender and genre that I find problematic.

In fact there are a number of films where female characters undertake investigative roles. As well as the films I have looked at in this chapter Elizabeth Cowie refers to *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes* (Marvin Mirsh, USA, 1948), *Woman on the Run* (Norman Foster, USA, 1950) and *The High Wall* (Curtis Bernhardt, USA, 1947).[22] But the approaches of *film noir* criticism have not acknowledged these films in the same way as they have acknowledged films with male investigators. In Krutnik's discussion of 'the woman's picture crime thriller', one cycle of crime films excluded from his definition of the *noir* category, he analyses why he finds the position of the investigating woman a problematic one:

> It is rare to find female detectives in 1940s thrillers. Two apparent exceptions... bear this out. In both *The Stranger on the Third Floor* (1941) and *Phantom Lady* a woman embarks upon an investigation in order to clear her lover of a murder charge. However, in both films, the woman is ultimately discounted as an active investigative 'hero' along the lines of her numerous male counterparts. In *Phantom Lady*, Kansas (Ella Raines) is subjected to a tawdry sexualisation as she masquerades as a 'B-girl' in order to extract information from Cliff (Elisha Cook Jr). Whereas in the male-centred investigative thrillers, the detective-hero's impersonations serve often to demonstrate his control over the external world, as a manipulator of appearances, Kansas's masquerade sets her in a context of sexual danger. Not only this, but her detective activity is constrained by the fact that she is 'supervised' by a male figure of law, Inspector Burgess (Thomas Gomez)... Furthermore in each film the woman's placement in the conventional masculine role as detective is motivated by, and ultimately bound within, her love for the wrongly-convicted hero.[23]

I would contest Krutnik's direct comparison of female investigating characters with male 'career' detectives. Clearly such a comparison is bound to reveal both a larger number of male investigators than female ones, and to point up the different ways that the male and female characters undertake their investigations, precisely because it is a comparison that does not compare like with like. Cowie tackles the issue of the comparability of male and female investigators in her discussion of *film noir*. She notes that although female career investigators, ie. female detectives, are rare in 1940s thrillers, there are a number of films where "women do feature in the position of the investigator who 'seeks to restore order'."[24] She asserts that women characters *do* play investigative roles, but that the way that these roles are read in *film noir* criticism usually de-emphasises their importance:

> Such examples of female investigators are usually dismissed on the grounds that the women are never shown to be 'as good as' equivalent male figures in some way (all of which reminds me of cases brought by women for equal pay in which the exact equivalence of work is always disputed, again to the woman's

> disadvantage). Not only does this beg questions of the comparability of criteria - each film gives rise to new criteria for assessment - but it also privileges an implied ideal of narrative dominance that the female protagonists always lack, yet which is frequently absent where the protagonist is male.[25]

It is not an assertion of essentialism to say that the female characters investigate in different ways to the male characters. Genre criticism has often framed the actions of female characters as outside the realm of investigation. Either the fact that a woman investigates classes the film as external to the *noir* canon, or the way she investigates is classed as not adequate to the male ideal. If we are to recognise the variety of roles that female characters play in *films noirs*, including investigative ones, then it is important that the way the female investigators respond to the demands of their narrative situations is identified.

Kansas, Kathleen and Jill play key roles in helping Scott, Brad and Frankie to identify and escape the frames around them. The male characters cannot see the bigger picture that they are part of on their own, and so the actions of the female investigators are crucial in interpreting and dismantling the frames for them. The female investigators show several strategies through which they take forward the investigation, and these strategies show their distinct differences to the framed women in the films. All three framed women could be defined as having the qualities of *femmes fatales*. I have discussed the different characterisation of Jill and Vicky above; in *The Dark Corner* Kathleen is clearly differentiated from Mary - a woman involved in sexual intrigue, and who plots to leave her older husband for her gigolo lover. Kathleen is painted very differently, she is warm, pragmatic, funny and smart: she figures out the important connection between 'White Suit' and Hardy. But the strongest contrast is in the fact that she is devoted to Brad's well being, she is focused on him, rather than as the *femme fatale* figure tends to be, on herself. Kansas is differentiated from Marcella through her concern for Scott and her refusal to give up on the investigation. All three female investigators have aspects of the "nurturing woman" that Janey Place finds opposed to the *femme fatale*, but this is only part of their character and these films are interesting for the mixing of roles that are allowed. While the framed women do signal dangerous femininity they are background *femmes fatales*, their importance (which is significant nevertheless) is the destructive effect they have on the male characters, but they do not possess the dominance and high glamour of the "A" team *femmes* such as Helen Grayle (*Farewell My Lovely*), Elsa Bannister (*The Lady from Shanghai*), or Phyllis Dietrichson (*Double Indemnity*). Place describes these women as possessing a lot of mobility in the cinematic frame, and using that mobility to sexually threaten the male characters in thrall to them.[26] The framed women obviously do not possess this mobility through the very fact that they are framed as images. In contrast the female investigators do possess mobility and this is evident in their actions. A further contrast is in the visual styling of the female investigators. Whilst they could not be described - as the nurturing woman is by Hirsch - as "meek wives infected with a fuddy-duddy morality",[27] their costume and make-up is not coded for maximum glamour. With a couple of exceptions,[28] Kansas, Jill and Kathleen wear a wardrobe of smart, tailored suits which give them the business-like air pertinent to their positions as career women. In his analysis of the styling of Charlotte Vale in *Now Voyager* and Mildred in *Mildred Pierce*, Ian Green argues that "that the classic mainstream signs of eroticism usually attached to women in the cinema... are held off or lessened".[29] This argument might also be applied to Kansas, Jill and Kathleen. Green asserts that it is this "holding off" which allows Charlotte and Mildred to be central protagonists, and their dramas of independence and motherhood to be available to cross gender sympathy and identification. Green also suggests that the impetus for cross gender identification in *Now Voyager* and *Mildred Pierce* is prompted by a lack of "any 'available' male characters in these films".[30] It might also be argued that the framee male characters are similarly unavailable for identification, their actions are limited by the fact that they are framed and they therefore do not possess the ideals of agency or dominance desirable in a hero figure. It is Kansas, Jill and Kathleen that provide figures and actions which are 'available' for cross gender identification.

"Down these mean streets..."

As I argue above, Kansas, Kathleen and Jill possess considerably more mobility than the framed woman, and they are also more mobile than the framee male. This mobility is shown in two ways: the ways in which the characters move around the urban settings of the films, and the ways in which they deploy an investigative look. In their explorations of the *noir* city they enter a male-dominated space far divorced from the private domestic sphere usually defined as a safe space for women to inhabit. Their investigations bring them up against threats not only from male criminal characters (*Phantom Lady*, *I Wake Up Screaming*), but sometimes from masculine figures of the law as well (Cornell in *I Wake Up Screaming*).

In *Phantom Lady* Kansas begins her investigation by observing Mack (Andrew Toombes Jr), the barman at the place where Scott met the 'Phantom Lady'. She goes to the bar several nights running and fixes him with a steady stare (Figure 2.06). When Mack starts to betray his nerves Kansas follows him. In a remarkable sequence she trails him on a train journey and then through the city streets at night. Eventually he turns around and confronts her and she accuses him of holding back information that would free Scott (Figure 2.07). Humiliated by her accusation Mack becomes violent, is restrained by two men, but escapes and is run down by a car. After this event, which shows Kansas initiating a re-investigation into Marcella's murder, she is visited by Inspector Burgess. He tells her that he believes that Scott is innocent but that he has no evidence to prove it, and he offers to collaborate with her "unofficially". Krutnik argues that the presence of Burgess amounts to Kansas' investigation being "'supervised'",[31] but I would argue that the collaboration actually lends weight to the investigation that Kansas has already initiated.

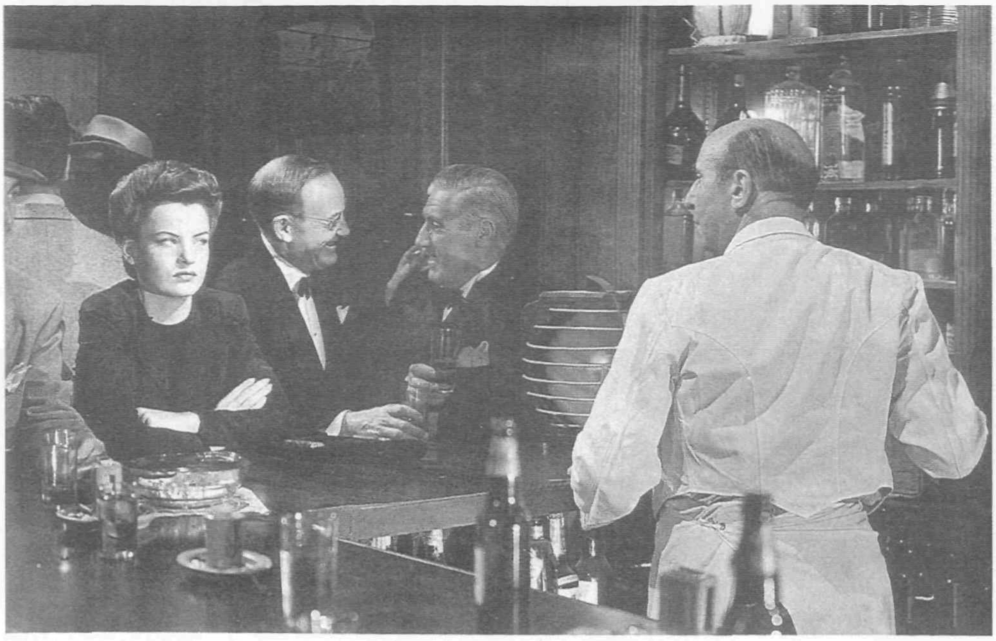


Figure 2.06

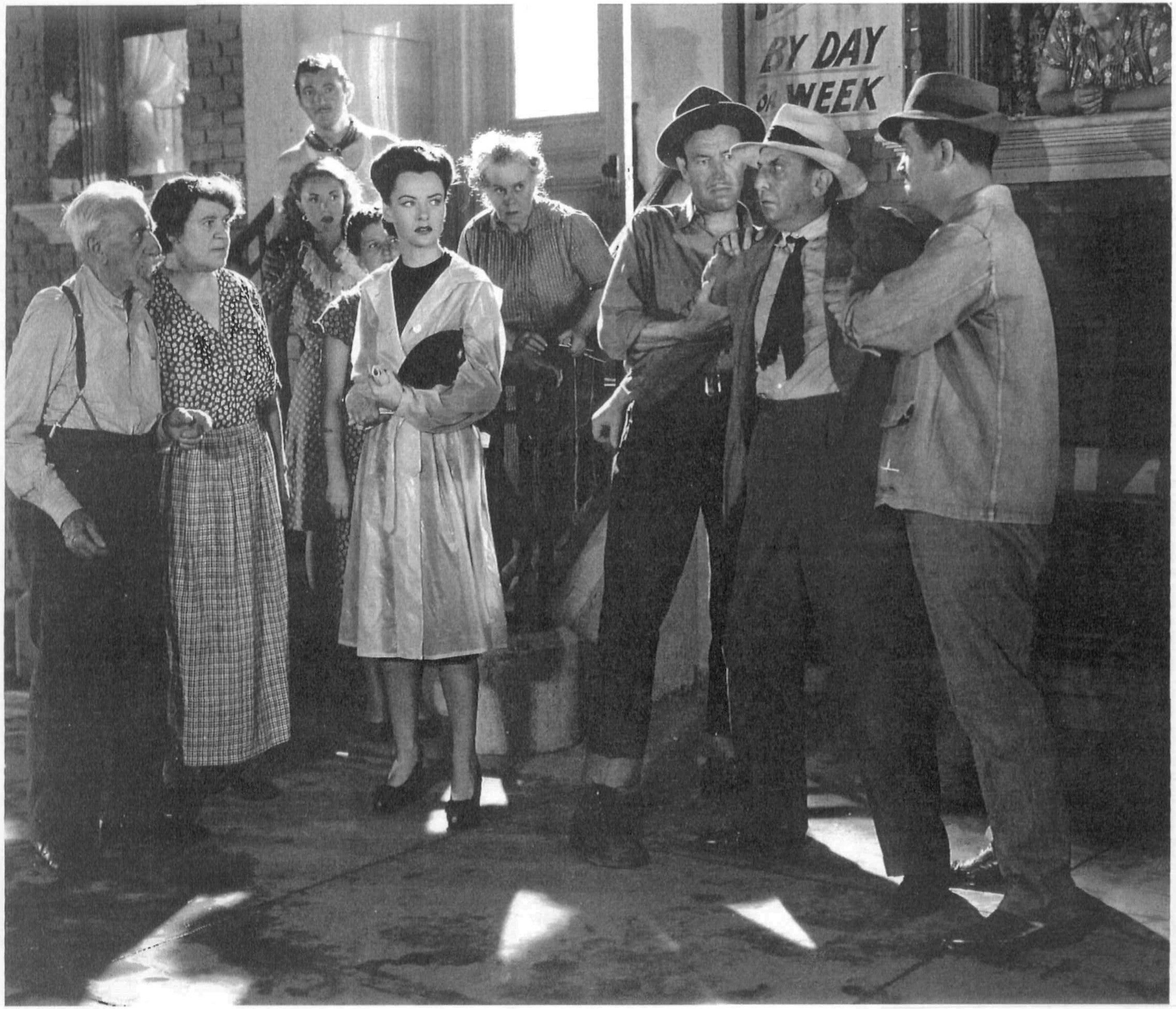


Figure 2.07

Furthermore Burgess actually plays a relatively minor role, he is more like a sounding board for investigative ideas, and as the search of the 'Phantom Lady' drags on he becomes despondent about their lack of progress. It is Kansas who sticks with the investigation, and who brings in the key piece of evidence: the 'Phantom Lady's' hat.

A second example of Kansas's mobility and investigative skills is in her assumption of a disguise as "Jeannie" in order to get information out of Cliff. Kansas invents the persona of 'Jeannie' a flirtatious 'good-time girl'. As Jeannie she goes to the same show that Scott attended with the 'Phantom Lady', and Jeannie makes eyes at the drummer of the band, Cliff. He signals to her to meet him at the stage door and they go out for the evening, first to a dingy jazz club, where Cliff joins in a jam session, and then on to Cliff's apartment where Kansas's cover is blown. She has to flee Cliff and call Inspector Burgess from a nearby coffee shop. There is a marked difference between the way that Kansas is characterised and performed in the film, and the performance of Jeannie. Ella Raines produces a performance at two levels, that of Kansas, and of Kansas masquerading as Jeannie, and this layering is important in foregrounding Jeannie's sexual availability as a performance.

The first shot that we see of Kansas/Jeannie is a medium close-up shot which begins at her feet tapping to the music and shod in open-toed, high heeled shoes decorated with a bow. The shot tilts upwards, travelling over her body to reveal her legs, sheathed in black fishnet stockings, her torso clad in a tight shiny dress with ruffles on the shoulders, and then her head and shoulders, revealing her small hat with veil and the many glittering pieces of costume jewellery that Kansas/Jeannie is wearing: bracelets, rings, earrings and necklace. She twiddles one of the strands of the necklace in time with the music. In her role as Jeannie Kansas wears heavier make-up than she does in the rest of the film, including a prominent beauty spot on her chin, and the clothes that she wears as Jeannie are very different from Kansas's 'own' clothes, discussed earlier. The structure of the shot sequence that introduces Kansas as Jeannie, and her gaudy, sexy costume, might initially be read as conforming to a classic definition of a cinematic fetishisation of femininity, as theorized by Mulvey in relation to the films of Josef von Sternberg:

> The beauty of the woman as object and the screen space coalesce; she is no longer the bearer of guilt but a perfect product, whose body, stylized and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look.[32]

However on closer inspection there is an overdetermination of Kansas/Jeannie as a sexualised and desirable object that disrupts her positioning as passive spectacle in a Mulveyian schema. Her costume does not so much draw attention to the visual pleasures that the female form might offer to a male gaze, it exaggerates those possibilities. The costume consists of an over-abundance of detail: there is a glut of textures, the fishnets, the smooth satin dress and the gauzy hat. Both dress and shoes are decorated with detail and her arms and neck are encrusted with costume jewellery. There are two aspects of Kansas/Jeannie's costume that are important in contesting the definition of her as perfected spectacle, as set out above. Firstly the styling of Kansas/Jeannie's costume has none of the expensive perfected glamour typical of the "A" team *femmes* discussed earlier. Kansas/Jeannie is overtly sexy and accessible, and she embodies quite different qualities than the cool and forbidding allure of the *femme fatale*. Jeannie is a 'doll', and her clothes and accessories carry connotations of cheap, low quality mass produced items, indeed Cliff remarks that her outfit is "cheap" and promises her "something better", "I could make you look class".

Secondly, the sheer surfeit of detail distracts from rather than adorns Kansas/Jeannie's body, and it is this element of distraction that Kansas utilises to continue her investigation. Every element of her costume which signals fetishised femininity is also simultaneously an element of disguise. Kansas might draw a male gaze towards her with her costume, but she does so to distract and arrest that gaze, and she effectively works under its cover. So while Kansas as Jeannie takes on elements of spectacle these elements are used to mask her continuing investigative role, and a strategy of masquerade is *not* the same as a female character 'using' her sexuality to manipulate a male character, the territory of the *femme fatale*. It is a strategy of distraction and camouflage. The double role that Kansas plays as Jeannie is emphasised at several points during her night out with Cliff. The scene at the jazz club is filmed so that Kansas's uncertainty over the unfamiliar and decadent environment are clearly registered as well as her performance of Jeannie's exuberant pleasure in the music. Kansas is shown looking around guardedly when Cliff cannot see her, while she carefully plasters on a wide smile and dances to the music when he is looking. Her disgust in having to go along with Cliff's sexual advances is made evident: the shot is framed so that Kansas's clenched fist can be seen as Cliff grabs her roughly and kisses her on the mouth, and her expression as she moves away from him leaves us in no doubt that her performance as Jeannie is hard work. There are similar framings of Kansas at Cliff's apartment, where she steers their conversation around to the subject of the 'Phantom Lady' while making Cliff believe that she really likes him. Cliff lets slip that a man has paid him five hundred dollars to say that he never saw the 'Phantom Lady'. The privileging of these private moments and views of Kansas reveals the work that she is putting in to trying to get information out of Cliff despite it being a humiliating and ultimately dangerous enterprise. They create a lot of sympathy for her pluck and resourcefulness. Thus when Krutnik argues that Kansas's masquerade is "a tawdry sexualisation... [which] sets her in a context of sexual danger"[33] I think that he ignores the way that Kansas's performance of Jeannie is always foregrounded through privileged moments. While it is true that Kansas's safety is jeopardised by her investigation of Cliff, her willingness to take on dangerous situations is evidence of her plucky and determined character. She has already been threatened, and survived, in her confrontation with Mack, and at the end of the film she has to elude the murderer Marlow.

These dangers are inherent in the territory of investigation but it is unlikely that *noir* genre criticism would frame the dangers to a male investigator in the same way. As Cowie points out women playing investigative roles suffer from an unequal "comparability of criteria"[34] with male figures.

In *The Dark Corner* and *I Wake Up Screaming* Kathleen and Jill also pursue investigations in the city. In some of their actions they are accompanied by the framee, the men they are freeing from criminal accusations. An early sequence of *The Dark Corner* has Kathleen going to an amusement arcade with her boss Brad Galt. Kathleen notices that they are being followed by 'White Suit', and they leave the arcade and arrange a plan to find out who has hired him. Brad forces 'White Suit' up to his office for "questioning" at gun point while Kathleen waits in a cab to follow 'White Suit' after Brad has finished with him. Figure 2.08 shows Brad looking out of his office window and it is partnered by the shot in Figure 2.09 which shows Kathleen watching for 'White Suit' from the cab. The equal partnering of the looks reflects the way that Kathleen becomes a partner in the investigation of 'White Suit'; Brad effectively promotes her from secretary to co-investigator, and she continues in this role till the end of the film. Figure 2.10 shows her returning to the office after the 'White Suit' trail has gone cold.

In *I Wake Up Screaming* Jill takes on Frankie's case after they have been out for an evening together. During the evening Jill has established the truth about Frankie's relationship with Vicky, and therefore trusts him. When they return to Jill's apartment Cornell is waiting to ambush them and he arrests Frankie as Jill is returning a letter to him that he wrote to Vicky the day before she died. Jill helps Frankie escape by hitting Cornell over the head with a frying pan and sending a police officer chasing in the wrong direction. Jill and Frankie become an outlaw couple; Jill cuts Frankie's handcuffs off and they hide out at an all night cinema, watching the same film (the provocatively titled *Flames of Passion*) over and over again. The next day the police catch up with Jill, but Cornell persuades them to release her in order to lure Frankie out of hiding. However Jill shows a good deal of cunning as she eludes the officers staking out her building and climbs up the fire escape and over rooftops, meeting Frankie back at the cinema with a new lead in the investigation (Figure 2.11).

In all three films, then, the female investigator is shown moving around in an urban setting, and while she may encounter dangers the city also provides excitement and an environment where she is independent.

In her study of gender and the city, Elizabeth Wilson points out that although there is an emphasis in many cultural narratives on the city as a public sphere of masculine endeavour, it is also a space which is ambivalently gendered, a space which has possibilities for women too:

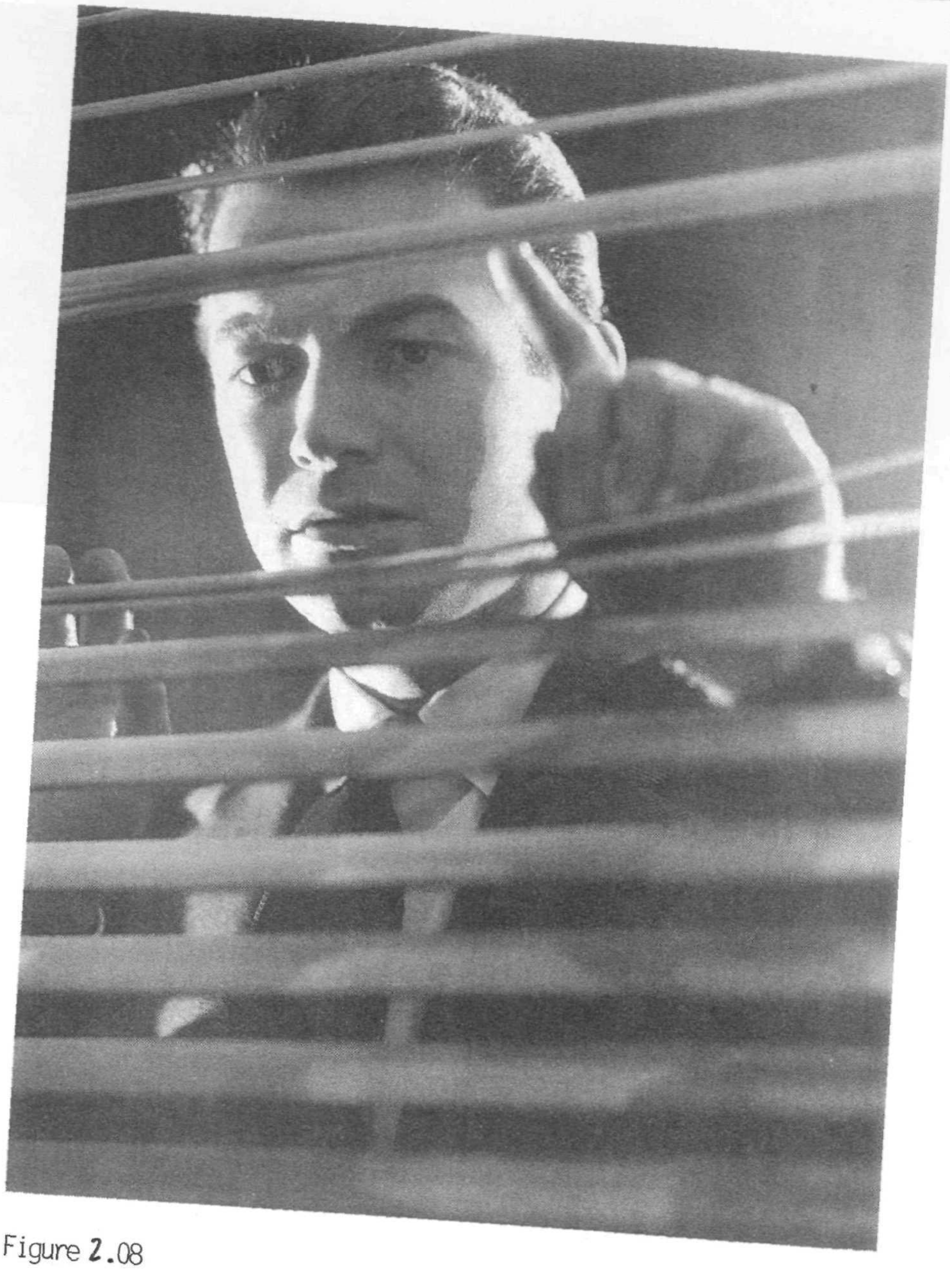


Figure 2.08

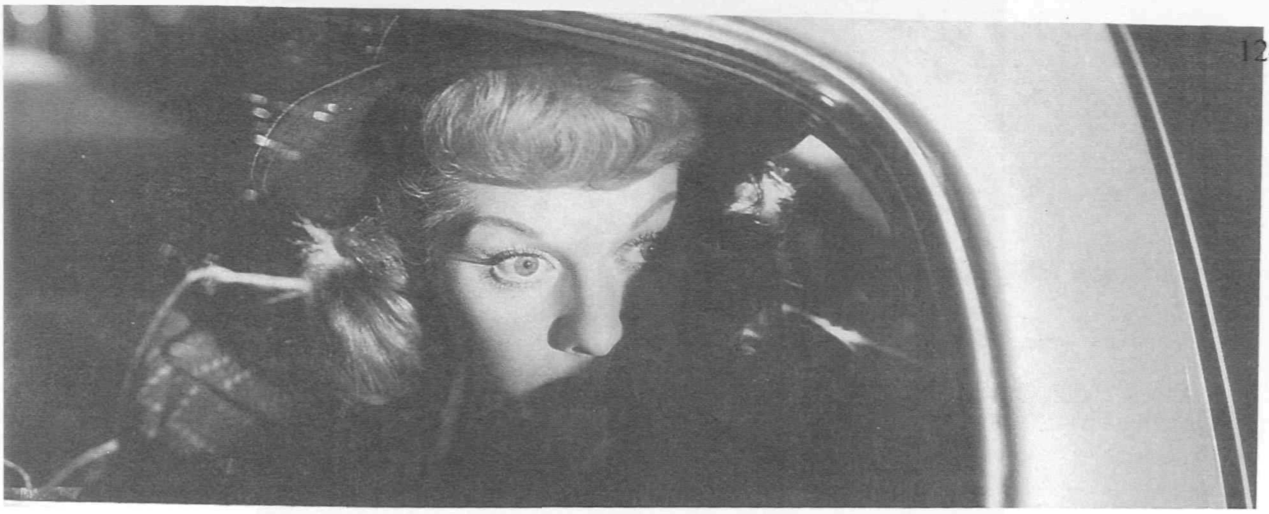


Figure 2.09

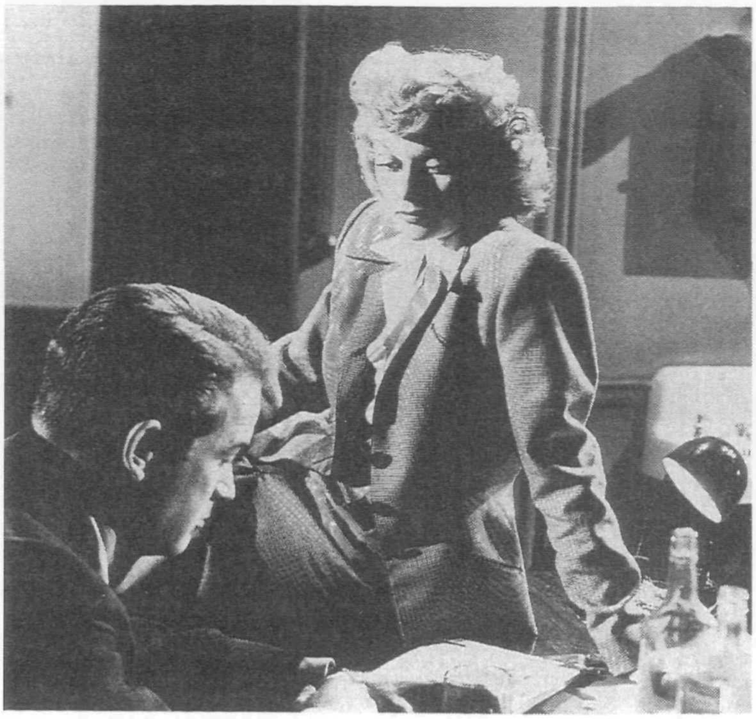


Figure 2.10

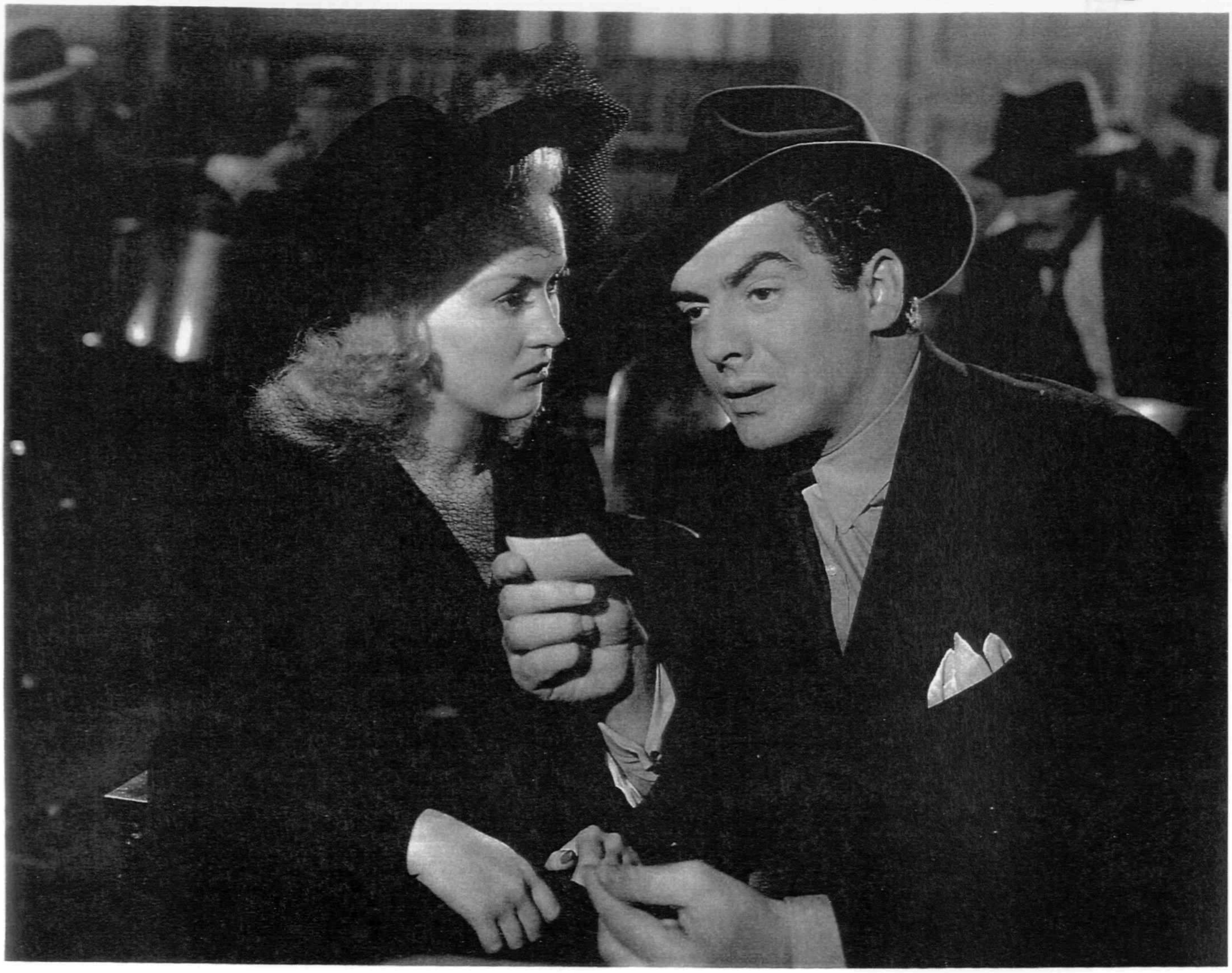


Figure 2.11

> ...the city, a place of growing threat and paranoia to men, might be a place of liberation for women. The city offers women freedom. After all, the city normalises the carnivalesque aspects of life.... despite its crowds and the mass nature of its life, and despite its bureaucratic conformity, at every turn the city dweller is also offered the opposite - pleasure, deviation, disruption. In this sense it would be possible to say that the male and female 'principles' war with each other at the very heart of city life. The city is 'masculine' in its triumphal scale, its towers and vistas and arid industrial regions; it is 'feminine' in its enclosing embrace, in its indeterminacy and labyrinthine uncentredness. We might even go so far as to claim that urban life is actually based on this perpetual struggle between rigid, routinised order and pleasurable anarchy, the male-female dichotomy.[35]

Wilson argues that many feminist discussions of the city have focused only on the dangers to women in the urban context, without also taking into account the pleasures that are available, and the many and various strategies that women living in cities have developed:

> Women's experience of urban life is even more ambiguous than that of men, and safety is a crucial issue. Yet it is also necessary to emphasise the other side of city life and to insist on women's right to the carnival, intensity and even the risks of the city. Surely it is possible to be both pro-cities and pro-women, to hold in balance an awareness of both the pleasures and the dangers that the city offers women, and to judge that in the end, urban life, however fraught with difficulty, has emancipated women more than rural life or suburban domesticity.[36]

Wilson's perspective on the city as the dual location of danger *and* potential excitement for women is useful in countering approaches to female investigators which stress only the perils that these women are in. I would argue that scenarios in which the female investigators put themselves in positions of danger are a *feature* of these narratives. Rather than regarding these female investigators as mistakenly or unwillingly finding themselves manipulated into dangerous situations by the ambivalent male characters that they encounter, a reconsideration might reveal that the repeated scenarios of danger are part of 'adventure' narratives, in which the female investigators experience both the dangerous *and* exciting constituents of their roles.

"Playing for keeps"

In all three films a romance between the framee male and the female investigator concludes the film. In *Phantom Lady* this is less fully developed than in the other two films. Kansas's feelings for Scott are clear throughout the film and the final scene shows them back at work together. But Scott appears to treat Kansas simply as his personal assistant, giving her a string of instructions before leaving the office for the day. When Kansas checks the dictaphone Scott has left a message to her saying that they are having dinner together "tonight, tomorrow night and every night." The dictaphone sticks on "every night", confirming the message as a rather oblique proposal of marriage. In *The Dark Corner* and *I Wake Up Screaming* the relationship between the couple develops out of their collaboration and rather than reading the presence of the male character as diminishing the role of the woman - a presumption that a male character will naturally assume a role of narrative control and dominance - there is an interesting interplay between the sexes. It is often argued, as Krutnik does, that when women characters investigate in films they only do so for the benefit of a male character to whom they are romantically attached. The closure of the films in marriage is also cited as a "repressive" one for the female investigator.[37] But in these films it is clear that the attachment comes out of the investigation, and that there are many pleasures and excitements for the women on the way. Furthermore the investigations that Kansas, Kathleen and Jill undertake give them ample opportunity to check out the men they marry before they marry them. Rather than seeing the investigation as romantically motivated we might see the romance as assured through the investigation. The investigation involves the female investigator determining the relationship between the male framee and an aspect of his past. In *Phantom Lady* and *I Wake Up Screaming* it is the relationships of Scott and Frankie to the framed women (Marcella and Vicky), women whose relationships to the male framee have preceded that of the female investigator. In *The Dark Corner* Kathleen determines Brad's relationship to a previous framer (Jardine) as well as to Hardy. These pre-marital investigations put the women in strong positions to judge the suitability of a partner and these narratives find a reverse parallel in the "whirlwind" romance of the gothic woman's films where a woman has to undertake an investigation into her husband post-marriage. In the gothic women's films with portraits featuring in the narrative the portrait represents a woman in the gothic male's past, and the heroine is involved in determining this relationship. It is the gothic woman's film that is my focus in the next two chapters.

In the two chapters that form part one of this thesis I have examined a range of portrait images in films which loosely belong to the critical category of *film noir* - although I have registered the extreme difficulties in clearly delineating the boundaries of the category. By examining an interplay between critical images of femininity that have dominated genre discussions of *film noir*, the range of framed images of femininity within films such as *Laura* and *Gilda* and the range of narrative roles undertaken by female characters, I have suggested the multiple ways in which it is possible to frame femininity in *film noir*. As Angela Martin points out it is necessary for critical approaches to *film noir* to re-frame their focus on gender representations and to recognise the variety of roles that female characters perform:

> There is no question, where the *femme fatale* is truly present, of her deadliness. What is in question here is the seeming inability of (male) film noir theory to recognise female characters as performing other narrative functions - to see them as other than expressions of female sexuality which threaten the hero (or express the total opposite: passivity and benignity).[38]

NOTES

[1] PLOT SYNOPSIS, *I WAKE UP SCREAMING*:

I Wake Up Screaming opens with the questioning of promoter Frankie Christopher (Victor Mature) in relation to the murder of Vicky Lynn (Carole Landis) an actress he had 'discovered'. Vicky's sister Jill (Betty Grable) is also being questioned, particularly about the relationship between Frankie and her sister. Other suspects include ex-actor Robin Ray (Alan Mowbray) and gossip columnist Larry Evans (Allyn Joslyn), associates of Frankie's who were helping to launch Vicky's career. One of the detectives on the case, Ed Cornell (Laird Cregar), is biased against Frankie, and determined to frame him for Vicky's murder. Convinced that Jill is shielding Frankie, Cornell lies in wait at her apartment. When they return from a date, Jill returns a potentially incriminating letter to Frankie, written by him to Vicky before she was killed. Cornell and another officer burst in, seize the letter and arrest Frankie. Jill helps Frankie escape and is determined to clear him by helping him find the real murderer. Outwitting the police, who have staked out her apartment, she meets up with the fugitive Frankie and they investigate a mystery figure who has been sending flowers to Vicky's grave two weeks after her funeral. It is Larry who has been withholding information about the day Vicky was killed. Through this lead Frankie and Jill deduce that the murderer is Harry Williams (Elisha Cook Jr), the caretaker of the building where Jill and Vicky lived. Harry was obsessed with Vicky, and when Jill makes a call to him, pretending to be her dead sister, he breaks down confessing to the murder. Frankie and a police officer witness Harry's reaction to the call. Harry also tells them that Cornell had hushed up his confession because he wanted to frame Frankie. Frankie seeks Cornell, and on entering his apartment he finds it full of photographs and magazine covers of Vicky. Frankie hides and watches Cornell come in with flowers to put under the largest portrait of Vicky, as a kind of 'offering' to her. Frankie confronts Cornell who takes a draught 'medicine' (really poison) and in his final moments he tells of his obsession with Vicky. Cornell blames Frankie for "taking Vicky away from [him]", Vicky's career as an actress and model meant she "started getting too good for [him]". Cornell dies and Jill and Frankie are reunited, the film ends with them newly married dancing to 'their' tune.

[2] PLOT SYNOPSIS, *PHANTOM LADY*:

In *Phantom Lady* Carol "Kansas" Richman (Ella Raines) determines to prove that her boss Scott Henderson (Alan Curtis) is innocent of his wife's murder. On the night of the murder Scott meets a woman in a bar where he had gone to drown his sorrows after an argument with his wife. He talks the woman into accompanying him to a show, she agrees on the condition that they would not exchange names or any personal details. At the end of the evening Scott returns home to find that the police are waiting for him; his wife, Marcella, has been strangled with one of his ties. Scott tries to convince the police that he was out at the time of the murder, and he re-traces his movements with the investigating officer, Inspector Burgess (Thomas Gomez). But none of the people that he saw that night, the bartender, taxi driver or musical performer can (or will) recall seeing him, or the woman that was with him, despite the fact that she was wearing a very distinctive hat. Scott is convicted of the murder, and he cannot afford to appeal. Kansas is convinced of Scott's innocence, and decides to find the real murderer herself. Her first port of call is the bar where Scott met the 'Phantom Lady'. Suspecting that the bartender is holding something back she goes to the bar and watches him. He betrays his nervousness and she follows him on his way home. After confronting her, the bartender (Andrew Toombes Jr) is so eager to get away that he runs out in front of a car and is killed. Kansas returns to her apartment to find Inspector Burgess waiting for her, telling her that he knows that Scott is innocent he offers to help "unofficially" in continuing the investigation. Kansas disguises herself as a prostitute and picks up Cliff (Elisha Cook Jr), a drummer in the band at the musical show the 'Phantom Lady' had attended with Scott. After going to a jazz club they end up at Cliff's apartment, where Kansas gets Cliff to admit that he has been paid off to 'forget' he ever saw the mysterious woman. Unfortunately Kansas's cover is blown when Cliff finds a police sheet on him in her purse, she manages to escape his apartment unhurt, and alerts Burgess. By the time Kansas and Burgess return to Cliff's apartment he has been strangled by Jack Marlow (Franchot Tone). Marlow is a psychologically unstable artist, and Scott's best friend. He was secretly having an affair with Scott's wife, and killed her when she refused to run away with him. Marlow meets Kansas when she visits Scott in prison, and offers to help in the investigation. They track down the 'Phantom Lady' - Ann Terry (Fay Helm) through the milliner who designed the conspicuous hat, Ann gives them the hat. Kansas is thrilled to get this key piece of evidence which will prove Scott's innocence, but while they are waiting for Burgess back at Marlow's apartment she discovers evidence that Marlow is the murderer. He is about to strangle her when Burgess arrives, and Marlow throws himself from the window. The final scene shows Kansas back at work for Scott; he has been freed from prison, and he proposes to her via a message on the dictaphone.

[3] **PLOT SYNOPSIS, *THE DARK CORNER*:**
Private detective Brad Galt (Mark Stevens) has recently moved to New York from San Francisco to make a fresh start. In California he had been framed, and imprisoned, for the manslaughter of a truck driver by his ex-partner Tony Jardine (Kurt Krueger). The film opens soon after his arrival in New York, he notices that he is being followed by a man in a white suit (William Bendix), and he suspects Jardine is behind it. He confronts Jardine who denies hiring 'White Suit', and they come to blows. 'White Suit' is actually working for art dealer and collector Hardy Cathcart (Clifton Webb). Jardine is having an affair with Hardy's wife Mary (Cathy Downs), and Hardy hires 'White Suit' to murder Jardine and hide the body in Galt's apartment. Confounded as to who is manipulating him, Brad tries to trace the man behind 'White Suit'. He is helped a great deal by his secretary Kathleen (Lucille Ball) who helps him conceal Jardine's body, and the planted 'evidence' intended to implicate him. They discover the address of 'White Suit' but he has already moved out, Brad tracks him down to a meeting with Hardy, but when Brad arrives at the location he sees 'White Suit' is dead. He has been double-crossed by Hardy and pushed from a skyscraper. Brad despairs, he now has no leads to work on, but Kathleen is more determined, she makes the link between Hardy and 'White Suit', and Brad goes to Hardy's gallery to confront him. Hardy holds Brad at gun point, intending to hand him in to the police, but his wife, Mary, now knowing that Hardy had her lover, Jardine, killed, shoots her husband. The final scene shows Kathleen and Brad together at the gallery. With her help Brad is now cleared of Jardine's murder, and is back on good terms with the police. The investigating officer Lt Reeves (Reed Hadley) wants to meet them the next day to clear up the paperwork. Kathleen tells him that the meeting will have to be in the afternoon, as they have an appointment at City Hall in the morning to get married. Brad is pleased, and submits to this plan and they walk out of the gallery arm in arm.

[4] The relationship of image to sound is not as evident in these films as it is in *Laura*, *Gilda* and in the gothic women's films that I examine in the later chapters, and so my focus will be directed to the issues of framing outlined.

[5] Place, 'Women in film noir', p. 47.

[6] Diane Waldman, 'The Childish, The Insane and the Ugly: The Representation of Modern Art in Popular Films and Fiction of the Forties', *Wide Angle* (2) (1982), 52-65; John Schultheiss, 'The *Noir* Artist', *Films in Review*, Jan (1989); John A Walker, Art and Artists On Screen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 91-142; and Kent Minturn,

'Peinture Noire: Abstract Expressionism and *Film Noir*' in Film Noir Reader: 2, ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 1999).

[7] Kent Minturn, 'Abstract Expressionism and *Film Noir*', pp. 282-283.

[8] Minturn, 'Abstract Expressionism and *Film Noir*', p. 283.

[9] Minturn, 'Abstract Expressionism and *Film Noir*', p. 283, Vincente Minelli's biopic of Van Gogh, *Lust for Life* (1956) is also part of the cultural circulation of Van Gogh's image.

[10] In fact Marlow as artist is doubly framed, by his association with Van Gogh as discussed, but also through the modernist style in which he works. Diane Waldman has argued that the popular representation of modern art in the 1940s denigrated it as incomprehensible, as appealing to a narrow elite, as parallelled with the work of children (or the insane) or as politically subversive. (Waldman, 'The Childish, The Insane and the Ugly: The Representation of Modern Art in Popular Films and Fiction of the Forties', pp. 52-65).

[11] Dyer, 'Postscript: Queers and Women in Film Noir', in Women in Film Noir: New Edition, pp. 123-129.

[12] Dyer, 'Queers and Women in Film Noir', p. 123. Perhaps there was also an attempt to capitalise on the success of Webb's performance in *Laura* in the production and writing of *The Dark Corner*. Webb was nominated for an Oscar for his performance in *Laura*, as was Jay Dratler, a writer who worked on the screenplay for *Laura* and later on *The Dark Corner*.

[13] Dyer, 'Queers and Women in Film Noir', p. 124.

[14] Dyer, 'Queers and Women in Film Noir', p. 124.

[15] Dyer, 'Queers and Women in Film Noir', p. 124.

[16] Dyer, 'Queers and Women in Film Noir', p. 124.

[17] Dyer, 'Homosexuality and film noir', pp. 60-63.

[18] Some examples of films where this happens are *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *Murder, My Sweet* (1944), *Laura* (1944), and *The Big Sleep* (1946).

[19] Richard Maltby, 'The Politics of the Maladjusted Text', in The Movie Book of Film Noir, p. 39.

[20] Hirsch, The Dark Side of the Screen: Film Noir, p. 170

[21] Krutnik, In a Lonely Street, p. 193.

[22] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 133, *The Stranger on the Third Floor* (Boris Ingster, USA,1941) provides a further example of an investigating woman.

[23] Krutnik, In a Lonely Street, p. 194.

[24] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 133.

[25] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 133.

[26] Janey Place, 'Women in film noir' p. 45.

[27] Hirsch, The Dark Side of the Screen: Film Noir, pp. 20-21.

[28] Kansas masquerades as "Jeannie" to get information out of Cliff Milburn (Elisha Cook, Jr), a character who can corroborate Scott's account of his evening out with the 'Phantom Lady'. Jill is briefly seen in her wedding dress at the end of the film, and there is a scene at an all night swimming baths which allows the film to exhibit Betty Grable's famous legs *and* Victor Mature's famous body.

[29] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 40.

[30] Green, 'Malefunction', p. 38.

[31] Krutnik, In a Lonely Street, p. 194.

[32] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure', p. 30.

[33] Krutnik, In a Lonely Street, p. 194.

[34] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 133.

[35] Elizabeth Wilson, The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women (London: Virago, 1991), pp. 7-8.

[36] Wilson, The Sphinx in the City, p. 10.

[37] Tony Williams, '*Phantom Lady*, Cornell Woolrich, and the Masochistic Aesthetic', *CineAction!* 13-14 (1988), reprinted in Film Noir Reader, pp. 139-140; Michael Walker, 'Robert Siodmak', in The Movie Book of Film Noir, p. 115.

[38] Martin, 'Central Women of 40s Films Noirs', p. 209.

PART 2: THE GOTHIC WOMAN'S FILM

CHAPTER 3: UNCANNY PORTRAYALS: INVESTIGATING LIKENESS IN GOTHIC WOMEN'S FILMS

In the previous two chapters I examined questions of genre categorisation according to gender in relation to *film noir*. With reference to portrait-films such as *Laura*, *Gilda*, *Phantom Lady*, *The Dark Corner* and *I Wake Up Screaming* I showed that defining *film noir* as a male genre, whether it is seen as centring on the actions of a male character, or focusing on exclusively male concerns, is problematic. The films discussed displayed a rich variety of female characterisation and action, with women characters undertaking adventures and investigating crimes in urban spaces. In the next two chapters I examine films with portraits in gothic women's films of the 1940s, focused in particular on the following examples: *Rebecca,*[1] *Gaslight,*[2] *Dragonwyck,*[3] and *The Two Mrs Carrolls.*[4] The gothic heroine is an investigator who explores her new husband's past in order to understand her own relationship with him. A crucial site of her exploration is the portrait of a woman in the gothic male's past, it may be a family member, or his first wife, in both variations the woman is the heroine's predecessor in the gothic house. I will be particularly concerned with the ways in which the young heroine's own image is framed through her exploration of her predecessor. But first I want to contextualise these films, critically and generically, in order to understand more fully how portraits function across diverse genres.

Genre and the Gothic Woman's Film

While the category of *film noir* has suffered from a critical overdetermination, as noted in my discussion earlier, the category of the gothic woman's film has been variously defined. Films such as *Rebecca* (1940), *Suspicion* (1941), *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), *Dark Waters* (1944), *Experiment Perilous* (1944), *Jane Eyre* (1944), *Gaslight* (1944), *Dragonwyck* (1946), *The Two Mrs Carrolls* (1947), *The Spiral Staircase* (1946), *Secret Beyond the Door* (1948), *Caught* (1949), and *Under Capricorn* (1949), have been described by different critics as "Freudian feminist melodrama[s]",[5] "Gothic romance films",[6] "the 'gaslight' genre",[7] "paranoid woman's films",[8] and "the persecuted wife cycle".[9] Like the critical adoption of the term *film noir* all the terms above are critical or "post-constructed"[10] categories rather than terms used contemporaneously by the industry in promotion, or by reviewers in trade journals and newspapers. This is not to deny the existence of the group of films as a category but it means that, as in the case of *film noir*, the critical stakes in the varying definitions of the category must be taken into account. Steve Neale argues that there needs to be a distinction between genre categories as created and circulated in critical circles and those with an industrial origin which are more clearly part of Hollywood's intertextual relay: "it is probably best to distinguish theoretical genres from genres proper by renaming the former 'theoretical categories'."[11] While I agree that such a distinction is important my specific focus is precisely the role that criticism has played in constructing textual categories. In the process of arguing for genre as institutional and widely circulating Neale cites the work of Todorov, who finds that the historical perception of genre also exists "in discourse dealing with genres (metadiscursive discourse)".[12] So although "genres proper" have a life outside critical constructions, there is a specific circulation of concepts of genre in "the writings of critics and theorists, and the discourse produced by academies, universities, and other institutions of a similar kind."[13] In my discussion of the theoretical category of the gothic woman's film I follow the focus I undertook on *film noir*, that is the responses of feminist film criticism to the gothic woman's film, and the importance that gender has had to critics undertaking definitions of the category.

Tania Modleski signals *Gaslight* (1944) as a potent example of the group in her description of the films as "the 'gaslight' genre". She adds that *Rebecca* is important in initiating the cycle of gothic films, and while *Rebecca* was very influential in the Hollywood context, other critics have pointed out the importance of the British version of *Gaslight* (1940) which came out in the same year as *Rebecca*.[14] Modleski also draws attention to the literary tradition of gothic fiction in which women writers have played an important role. Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho (1791) was important in developing a plot where a young woman marries an older man only to be disappointed in her expectations of the marriage, and find her husband's behaviour increasingly threatening to her. The work of Ann Radcliffe created what Ellen Moers termed the "Female Gothic":[15] "What I mean by Female Gothic is easily defined: the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic."[16] She says of the narrative created by Radcliffe: "As early as the 1790s, Ann Radcliffe firmly set the Gothic in one of the ways it would go ever after: a novel in which the central figure is a young woman who is simultaneously persecuted victim and courageous heroine."[17] Moers' definition of the gothic plot as requiring its central woman to simultaneously play two roles is interesting, and something that will be pursued throughout this chapter and the next. As well as The Mysteries of Udolpho critics have cited Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre (1847) as a narrative whose influence can be seen on gothic romance fiction and filtering through to the gothic woman's film.[18] This is evident in the emphasis on the romance between a young heroine and an older, moody and mysterious gothic male who has a secret in his past, often relating to another woman. It is the suspense created by the heroine's suspicions and the ramifications for the relationship between the couple on her discovery of the secret that provide the main action of the narrative. A further narrative influence can be traced to fairytale narratives, the stories of Cinderella and Bluebeard in particular.[19]

Modleski asserts that gothic fiction was revived by the publication of Daphne Du Maurier's novel Rebecca in 1938, itself a novel drawing strongly on the Jane Eyre narrative.[20] The popularity of novels such as Rebecca and Anya Seton's Dragonwyck was capitalised on by producers such as David O Selznick and Darryl Zanuck in producing film versions aimed at a female audience,[21] and a number of gothic or gothic-influenced women's films were produced in Hollywood during the 1940s.[22] Diane Waldman notes that there are recurrent features in the plots of these films which "fall under the rubric of the Gothic designation".[23] She outlines what this entails as follows:

> ...a young inexperienced woman meets a handsome older man to whom she is alternately attracted and repelled. After a whirlwind courtship (72 hours in Lang's *Secret Beyond the Door*, two weeks is more typical), she marries him. After returning to the ancestral mansion of one of the pair, the heroine experiences a series of bizarre and uncanny incidents, open to ambiguous interpretation, revolving around the question of whether or not the Gothic male really loves her. She begins to suspect that he may be a murderer.[24]

The attraction/repulsion dichotomy which Waldman sees as characterising the relationship between the heroine and the gothic male is important, and suggests the influence of the Jane Eyre narrative on 1940s gothic 'women's films', particularly the characterisation of Rochester. In his analysis of *Secret Beyond the Door* Michael Walker outlines the following narrative elements as typical:

> - the heroine's point of view; - the whirlwind courtship and marriage to the hero; - the return to his family mansion, arrival at which is traumatic; - a past secret of the husband's, which causes him to behave strangely towards the heroine, and which relates to a dead wife, whom the husband may have killed; - the heroine's investigation of this secret, which focuses in particular on a forbidden (locked) room, her penetration of which causes the husband to become murderous; - a jealous rival of the heroine already inside the house, who sets fire to the house at the end, seeking to kill the heroine.[25]

While both Waldman's and Walker's analyses outline some of the recurrent narrative features of the category I think that the narratives could be considered under a rather broader scheme as characterised by passing through several stages which are: romance, suspicion, investigation/discovery, confrontation or confession, and resolution. The romance stage shows the attraction of gothic male and heroine, rapidly culminating in marriage. The stages of suspicion and investigation and discovery may vary in terms of which comes first in the narrative depending on the individual plot of each film; often there is a high degree of interrelationship. Suspicion relates to the "repulsion" side of the relationship dichotomy that Waldman identifies, and at the point of investigation/discovery the heroine learns about the gothic male's past. In some plots it is suspicion which comes first: the unpredictable and threatening behaviour of the gothic male plants doubts about her husband in the mind of the heroine, leading her to explore her suspicions through learning about his past. Discovery occurs through various means (other characters may tell the heroine stories about her husband's past, which can mislead her). In other plots the investigation and discovery stage, a key element of which is the gothic male's relationship to another woman, prompts the heroine's suspicions. Confrontation or confession involves a revelation of the gothic male's 'true' character to the heroine. In some cases the confession is made willingly by the gothic male (*Rebecca*), in others the heroine forces the confession by entering her husband's forbidden space (*Dragonwyck*, *Secret Beyond the Door*). The confession or confrontation affects what happens in the resolution stage, in *Rebecca* and *Secret Beyond the Door* the heroine and gothic male overcome the past and are united against a common enemy (Mrs Danvers in *Rebecca*, Miss Robey in *Secret Beyond the Door*). In other cases (*Gaslight*, *Dragonwyck*, *The Two Mrs Carrolls*) the heroine's suspicions are confirmed and the gothic male is revealed as a murderer. The resolution often has the heroine forming a couple with a secondary male character, who may have a role in helping the heroine escape from the gothic male. The progress of the narrative through these stages is portrayed from the heroine's point of view: she is the central protagonist of the story.

The number of gothic-influenced films made decreased towards the end of the decade, while gothic fiction maintained a large readership.[26] Modleski suggests that the gothic films allowed an expression of the anxieties around shifting gender roles that accompanied the social upheaval of World War II, anxieties that critics often see clearly expressed from a male point of view in *film noir*. Modleski reads the gothic women's films as allowing these anxieties to be explored from a woman's point of view:

> Beginning with Alfred Hitchcock's 1940 movie version of *Rebecca* and continuing through and beyond George Cukor's *Gaslight* in 1944, the gaslight films may be seen to reflect *women's* fears about losing their unprecedented freedoms and being forced back into the homes after the men returned from fighting to take over the jobs and assume control of their families. In many of these films, the house seems to be alive with menace, and the greedy sadistic men who rule them are often suspected of trying to drive their wives insane, or to murder them as they have murdered other women in the past. The fact that after the war years these films gradually faded from the screen probably reveals more about the changing composition of movie audiences than about the waning of women's anxieties concerning domesticity. For Gothic novels have continued to this day to enjoy a steady popularity.[27]

Modleski's analysis uncovers a positive, even progressive critique of gender relations in these films which directly opposes the readings other feminist critics, Mary Ann Doane in particular, and this brings me to the question of feminist criticism on the gothic woman's film. The gothic woman's film has raised important issues for feminist film criticism. Despite the fact that these films feature a central female protagonist this character has often been read as lacking narrative agency, being unable to undertake an investigation or interpretation of events. And there is a sense in some criticism of these films that this represents an issue over which there is a certain critical hesitation. It is the 'problem' that the gothic woman's film represents to feminist criticism that I consider in the next section.

Feminist Film Criticism and the Gothic Woman's Film

Diane Waldman's discussion is illustrative of a critical hesitation about the gothic woman's film. She writes:

> ...the central feature of the Gothics is ambiguity, the hesitation between two possible interpretations of events by the protagonist and often, in these filmic presentations, by the spectators as well. This it shares with other filmic and literary genres, for example, the horror film and the fantastic.[28]

Waldman thus suggests that an uncanny effect is a generic feature of the gothic woman's film. However as she continues to discuss the protagonist and spectator of the film in more detail, and to identify the sexual politics at stake, she begins to perceive this effect as problematic for feminist criticism:

> Yet in the Gothic, this hesitation is experienced by a character (and presumably a spectator) who is female. Within a patriarchal culture, then, the resolution of the hesitation carries with it the ideological function of validation or invalidation of feminine experience.[29]

Waldman's 'yet' pulls the discussion up short and diverts her perspective from generic effect to a critique of gender relations, and what she identifies is that femininity is being shaped and defined by patriarchy. This hesitation is echoed in Doane's work, for her the treatment of a woman's point of view in the films is directly related to issues of female spectatorship. Her discussion of the gothic woman's film in The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s reads these films through spectatorship theories. She posits an intimate relationship between the suffering of the heroine and her inability to see and interpret events, calling gothic women's films "'paranoid woman's films,' the paranoia [is] evinced in the formulaic repetition of a scenario in which the wife invariably fears that her husband is planning to kill her - the institution of marriage is haunted by murder."[30]

The scenario that Doane outlines in these films is one in which the heroine is both despecularised and fears that she is being watched: while she has no agency in relation to the gaze, she is subjected to an aggressive look from the male character - often her husband. Doane's work raises the issue of a central female character's narrative agency that I explored in the previous chapter, and in my introduction. The victimisation of the heroine that Doane sees as a feature of the gothic group is here linked to the pattern of gendered subject positions that are set out in Mulvey's essay 'Visual Pleasure'. As I indicated in my introduction, although Mulvey's work has encouraged a proliferation of discussion about spectatorial pleasures, it has also framed debates so that certain questions are repeatedly debated and examined, whilst others are marginalised. Mulvey's work has often been taken as a starting point from which to address questions of a female look and female spectatorial pleasure. This has led to the subject positions of active/male/looker and passive/female/looked-at becoming robust concepts, so that in relation to the classical Hollywood cinema male has become synonymous with active and pleasure, and female with passive and unpleasure. In the concluding chapter of her work Doane comments on the fact that such a reading of the woman's film is discouraging, but asserts that for her the gothic woman's film is problematic in its treatment of the female character in relation to the look:

> ...it is in the paranoid gothic films that the attempt to attribute the epistemological gaze to the woman results in the greatest degree of violence. Due to the difficulty in localizing, confining, and restraining the representation of paranoid subjectivity in the cinema, the cinematic apparatus itself is activated against the woman, its aggressivity an aggressivity of the look and the voice, directed against her.[31]

Through this critical trajectory the gothic heroine's position is defined as masochistic and passive in relation to an active sadistic masculine one. There are two points which arise from this in relation to my discussion, the first is that there is a fairly rigid structuring of subject positions being advanced, the second relates to perceptions of gender and narrative agency.

The male and female characters of the gothic woman's film are read as conforming to the binary oppositions that Mulvey (drawing on Freud's 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality') sets out. This tends to fix a reading of these characters according to the assumption male-active-sadistic, female-passive-masochistic. However although Freud himself traces the roots of sadism to a masculine norm ("The sexuality of most male human beings contains an element of *aggressiveness* - a desire to subjugate"),[32] he later points out that the perversions of sadism and masochism are often marked by a mutability:

> ...the most remarkable feature of this perversion [sadism] is that its active and passive forms are habitually found to occur together in the same individual.... A sadist is always at the same time a masochist, although the active or the passive aspect of the perversion may be the more strongly developed in him and may represent his predominant sexual activity.[33]

This suggests that there may be much more fluidity in subject positioning within the character representations than has been previously allowed, and as I have pointed out above in my analysis of gothic narrative stages there are actually two female and two male figures: the heroine and gothic male, the woman in the past and the secondary male. The possibilities for a fluidity and mobility in positions are therefore multiplied considerably. Pam Cook has argued that gothic women's films complicate notions of gendered subject positions in her 1998 discussion of the women's picture. She takes up Doane's discussion as follows:

> [Doane's] adherence to a negative notion of female masochism, defined in terms of passive suffering, ignores the extent to which many of the films she discusses

> have as their backstories dramas of male masochism. That is titles such as *Rebecca* (1940), *Secret Beyond the Door* (1947), *Jane Eyre* (1943) and even, perhaps, *Now Voyager* (1942) feature damaged male characters who in the past have been punished and/or abused by dominant, powerful women who continue to exert a hold over them. In these films, then, the hero is not the only sexual aggressor, and he is also a victim. Thus, in the course of the woman's picture narrative the heroine confronts not only her own victimization, but that of the hero as well (and sometimes that of subsidiary characters). In the Gothic influenced films in particular, female pathology is matched and often outdone by male psychosis in a kind of overlapping of male and female desire.[34]

Cook's insights have important implications in reading the gothic woman's film. She identifies a mobility of subject positions and pleasures in relation to gender, and this brings me on to the second issue that has often been raised in relation to the gothic woman's film: that the central female protagonist is seen to lack narrative agency. The settling down of subject positions has established an ideal of narrative dominance which has come to be seen as the preserve of male characters. Cowie points out that one of the arguments in constructing *film noir* as a male genre depends upon a male character driving a narrative of investigation, noting that critics cite the relatively small number of *noir* narratives with female characters in such an investigative role as evidence of this. But, as she continues to argue, and as I have shown in my discussions of *I Wake Up Screaming*, *Phantom Lady* and *The Dark Corner*, there *are* examples of women in investigative roles, but these roles are read against an ideal of male narrative dominance. What these arguments clearly demonstrate is that the rigid subject positions, discussed above, have become a frame which is seen to be setting out the status quo rather than critiquing that status (Mulvey's original intention), and an examination of the various narrative roles that female characters might perform becomes inhibited. Because, as Cowie suggests in relation to *film noir*, there is a problem around "the comparability of criteria"[35] of narrative roles, female characters are seen as not *as* narratively dominant as male characters. This is, as Cowie points out, in spite of the fact that male characters frequently fail to fulfil an ideal of narrative dominance, as my discussions of Scott Henderson, Frankie Christopher and Brad Galt in the previous chapter illustrate.

The heroines of the gothic women's films that I will examine in this chapter and the next do dominate their narratives and they undertake investigations of the gothic male character. That this investigation necessitates them going through ordeals which involves them in confronting danger and overcoming it does not automatically mean that they are passive victims. Similarly the gothic male characters shift between exhibiting sadistic and masochistic impulses, but ultimately they do not dominate the narrative, their position being secondary to the heroine's. And in the progress of the narrative through the different stages outlined, the heroine's 'success' or 'failure' should not always be related back to questions of spectatorship. Although I will be discussing the heroine's investigation of the woman in the past through portrait images, many of the key scenes of discovery and confrontation between the heroine and the gothic male are structured through particular uses of sound and music.

Romance and Suspicion: Prince Charming as Bluebeard

Due to the "whirlwind courtship"[36] that is typical of the gothic woman's film narrative the romance stage of the story is often very brief. As Walker points out the event of the wedding in the gothic woman's film is de-emphasised or "deromanticis[ed]"[37]. It is either only partly shown, as in *Rebecca* where Maxim de Winter (Laurence Olivier) and the heroine (Joan Fontaine) are seen coming out of the room where they were married, only to find that they have forgotten the marriage certificate, or elided completely as is the case with the other films cited. Often the gothic male's moodiness and unpredictability are established as early as the romance stage, signalling potential danger to the heroine even before she marries. In *Rebecca* Maxim's abrupt answer to the heroine's question of why he chose her company is harsh enough to make her cry, which in turn makes him contrite. In *Gaslight* there are several occasions where Gregory Anton (Charles Boyer) lurks just beyond the frame in offscreen space. When he waits for Paula Alquist (Ingrid Bergman) to come out from her music teacher's house he calls her name from offscreen and an edit then reveals him standing partially concealed behind an ornate metal grill. As he urges her to marry him she protests "I don't know you, I don't know anything about you!" They agree that she will go away for a week to think about things, and the film shows Paula's train journey with the busybody Miss Thwaites (Dame May Whitty). When Paula gets out of the train at her destination a hand silently reaches into the frame to firmly take her arm. The shot reframes Paula to show that Gregory is waiting for her. The way that Gregory unexpectedly emerges from offscreen space, and his domination of all Paula's movements are developed as increasingly threatening as the film progresses. In *Dragonwyck* Nicholas Van Ryn (Vincent Price) tries to develop the "feelings" that he and Miranda (Gene Tierney) have for each other on the night that he has poisoned his first wife Johanna (Vivienne Osborne). Hearing the bell tolling for her death he remembers his wedding day, and how unhappy he felt. Although at this stage of the story Miranda does not suspect him it is hardly an encouraging start to a love affair. In *The Two Mrs Carrolls* Sally Morton (Barbara Stanwyck) discovers that Geoffrey Carroll (Humphrey Bogart) is married when a letter to his wife falls out of his jacket. Even though he protests that the letter is to ask for a divorce she feels betrayed. The film elides their reconciliation and marriage.

The rapid move from the romance stage of the narrative to one of suspicion and investigation shows the transition in the heroine's perception of her husband. Her whirlwind romance with a glamourous and charismatic Prince Charming gives way, as she learns more about him, to fears about what his past might conceal. The *Bluebeard* narrative is played out through the heroine's investigation into her new husband's past, the exploration of a forbidden room of his castle in his absence leads her to find evidence that he has murdered his previous wife or wives. In the course of the investigation, then, Prince Charming may turn out to be really Bluebeard the ogre. In her discussion of the frequent use of fairy tale narratives in film Marina Warner discusses the motif of marriage as a rite of passage experience for female heroines. The texts that she specifically refers to are *The Wizard of Oz* (Larry Semon, US 1925), *La Fille de l'eau* (Jean Renoir, France, 1925) and *L'Atalante* (Jean Vigo, France, 1934), but her discussion is still directly relevant to the gothic women's films with their allusions to fairy tale narratives:

> *The Wizard of Oz* and *La Fille de l'eau*, like many fairy tales, tell the story of an all-important move in women's lives: the departure from the natal or paternal house and its exchange with another man's house. The stories begin with the heroine in one place and end with her in another, and in this respect are women's stories, founded on the social principle of female exogamy or marrying-out for women. The Beast's castle in such tales (both on film and in print) commands as much attention and awe as the Beast himself, whether it is Bluebeard's castle or Jean's barge in *L'Atalante*. In fact, in many ways *L'Atalante* most closely resembles the Beauty-and-Beast cycle of fairy tales. The coffin-shaped barge Juliette enters is a confined bridal chamber, one in a long tradition of marital cells which fairy tale brides enter in stories like *Bluebeard* or *Beauty and the Beast*, and where they have to come to terms with their husband - or flee him.[38]

The young heroine of the gothic woman's film enters a phase of change through her marriage. The narrative often dramatises her process of self redefinition or even reinvention that is required of her as she tries to develop the attributes necessary for the role of mistress of her husband's estate, Manderley (*Rebecca*), Dragonwyck (*Dragonwyck*), or sometimes the property she owns but reinhabits with her new husband, Thornton Square (*Gaslight*). Warner makes clear the way that the heroines' changing social status is imbricated with a change of sexual status, the transition from bride to wife involving both fear of, and fascination with, the sexual other:

> The terrors and excitements of the bride's state are metonymically contained in the groom's house, his castle. The transferral from one to the other constitutes the central experience of the fairy tale heroine, as it in turn constituted the most crucial event in women's lives until the present century made a greater degree of independence possible. Sexual initiation combined with a change of social identity, a new family and a new domicile.[39]

Learning about the new family and house that she has entered is an essential part of the transition that the heroine makes. Thus fairy tale narratives are not only incorporated into the gothic woman's film narrative, the telling and receiving of stories actually progresses the narrative, and in the case of *Rebecca*, structures it.

Fairytale Narratives, Narration and *Rebecca*

In *Rebecca* the heroine hears stories about Maxim's first wife Rebecca de Winter from the majority of the characters in the film. Even at the beginning of the heroine's relationship with Maxim Mrs Van Hopper makes a string of comments about Rebecca, "I suppose he just can't get over his wife's death. They say he simply adored her", "She was the beautiful Rebecca Hayridge you know", and "She drowned poor dear, while she was sailing near Manderley. He never talks about it of course, but he's a broken man". Comments which are repeated and replayed in the heroine's sleep. Once she arrives at Manderley stories about Rebecca abound; they come from Maxim's sister Beatrice (Gladys Cooper), the unfortunately named "Barmy Ben" (uncredited) a vagrant figure who spends time at Rebecca's deserted cottage on the beach, Manderley's estate manager Frank Crawley (Reginald Denny), and most potently from the keeper of Rebecca's memory Mrs Danvers (Judith Anderson). All the stories that the heroine receives from these characters support the sketchy idealisation of Rebecca that has already formed in her mind in Monte Carlo. The one person who is silent about her is Maxim himself, until the night that he confesses to the heroine about his part in Rebecca's death, and his version of his first marriage comes flooding out. Maxim's confession is examined in detail in the next chapter, but I want to note here the number of times the heroine listens to, receives, stories about Rebecca. The characters have an audience with her and the film's audio-viewers are an audience through her.

There are explicit references to fairytales in the film's screenplay. On an occasion when Rebecca's former lover Jack Favell (George Sanders) visits Mrs Danvers in Maxim's absence, the heroine overhears Mrs Danvers warning him to leave the house quietly; Favell is heard to wryly observe that "(they) must be careful not to shock Cinderella". Later in the film the heroine sits in Maxim's car, recovering from a fainting fit she has suffered through the stress of the inquest. Favell approaches jokingly telling her that he is not really "the big bad wolf". The heroine is thus implicitly positioned as Cinderella to Maxim's Prince Charming, and Red Riding Hood to the wolfish Favell. These rather wry references by Favell are not merely arbitrary; the structuring presence of fairytale narratives in *Rebecca* is discussed by François Truffaut in his interview of Hitchcock. Truffaut observes that "the story of *Rebecca* is quite close to 'Cinderella."[40]. To which Hitchcock replies: "The heroine *is* Cinderella, and Mrs Danvers is one of the ugly sisters."[41] These perspectives on the production of *Rebecca* are significant in showing how the narrative was threaded through with fairytale allusion. However there are further influences evident in the narrational structure of the film.

It is the heroine's voice-over that begins the narration of the film:

> *Heroine*: Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again. It seemed to me I stood by the iron gate leading to the drive, and for a while I could not enter for the way was barred to me. Then, like all dreamers, I was possessed of sudden, supernatural powers and passed like a spirit through the barrier before me... And finally there was Manderley,

> Manderley secretive and silent, time could not mar the perfect symmetry of those walls... And then a cloud came upon the moon, and hovered an instant like a dark hand before a face. The illusion went with it, I looked upon a desolate shell with no whisper of the past about its staring walls. We can never go back to Manderley again, that much is certain but sometimes, in my dreams, I do go back, to the strange days of my life that began for me in the South of France.

This preface to the film is very important in setting its mood and for the generic markers of the gothic that it sets out. The languorous, dreamy tone to the heroine's voice telling her dream is accompanied by the first view of Manderley, its splendour already fallen into ruin. The fluid movement of the camera is made explicitly subjective and associated with the heroine as the subject of her dream, as she speaks of at first being unable to enter through the gates of Manderley, and then being "possessed of supernatural powers" and "pass[ing] like a spirit through the barrier before me". This preface is strongly marked by an interiority of sound and image, and Manderley is not so much presented from the heroine's point-of-view, as produced by and through her dream narration. The oneiric opening frames the narrative mood and concerns of the film. There is a simultaneous desire for and dread of the past, strongly evoked in the uncanny gothic house, and although the dream narrator states that "we can never go back to Manderley again", the subsequent narrative of the film is wholly presented in flashback and facilitates the backward move easily. It is also significant that the heroine speaks of the changes that the past has wrought on Manderley, and the analogy that she draws is between a dreamer and spirits possessed of supernatural powers, two important narrative threads. The heroine's journey into Maxim's past brings about a change in both of them, and involves her in confronting the hold, or possession of him, by his first wife, Rebecca.

The final part of the heroine's dream sets up the flashback in which the rest of the film is told. As she says "sometimes, in my dreams, I do go back, to the strange days of my life that began for me in the South of France", there is a change in the pace and tone of her voice, from the soft and slow delivery of the dream and its setting in the imaginary Manderley, to a tone which marks the opening of the narrative. The flashback opens with a precipitous view of waves crashing on the rocks at the bottom of a cliff, and the sound of the sea loudly dominating the sound mix. The rest of the film is told within this flashback structure, and while we are never returned to a present narrative from the flashback the heroine does indicate that this flashback belongs to a past, referring to the main narrative events of the film as "the strange days of my life". Thus the heroine's flashback opens from her dream and indicates a continuation of the dreamlike quality of the film's preface over the film's main events, marking them as the production of fantasy and subjectively marked.[42]

As I indicated in my earlier discussion of voice-over in *Laura* and *Gilda*, the elements of voice-over and of flashback often raise questions as to the degree of narrative control that the narrating character has. First-person narration, displayed here by the heroine, is often taken as giving the narrating character a significant measure of narrative control (especially where the narrator is a male character), and as facilitating close identification between the character and the audio-viewer. However, as the case of *Gilda* made clear the narrative authority often associated with voice-over narration cannot be automatically assumed and critics, such as Cowie, have noted that *film noir* provides an example of a category where the hero is narratively central but can still "voic[e] hesitations and doubts" relating to his "perception and interpretation of events",[43] but if the central character is a woman, as in the gothic women's films, any "hesitation and doubt" particularly about the "perception and interpretation of events" is seen as problematic, illustrating a subjection and silencing of a female discourse, rather than being read as a generic feature.

The flashback is also a feature through which subjective female discourse might be represented. Susan Hayward examines the interesting and complex relationship between subjectivity and memory that flashbacks can offer in cinematic narration. With reference to the work of the semiotician Emile Benveniste, and to Lacan's work on misrecognition, Hayward sets out the dividing of the subject that occurs in subjective narration suggesting that "the flashback... can be a moment when the psyche has control of its unconscious. So flashbacks of whatever gender should represent an ideal moment of empowerment."[44] However in Hayward's survey of the way that flashbacks typically function she finds that this potential is often foreclosed:

> if we look at classical narrative cinema it is with little surprise that we find that male flashbacks dominate, including male flashbacks narrating a woman's story - as is ultimately the case in *Mildred Pierce*... Women's flashbacks in the films of the 1940s and 1950s, which are often triggered off by a male 'expert' (doctor, detective), are used to 'explain away' their psych(ot)ic disorders (suicide attempts or just plain insanity). In other words, they tend to be frameworked by the male protagonist, so that it is he who is reaching into the unconscious of the woman, not the woman herself. In these instances, clearly the female protagonist remains the subject of the enounced - her unconscious is therefore 'beyond' her (read: her comprehension).[45]

The flashback that opens *Rebecca* is not framed by a male "interpreter" of events, the doctor or detective figure that Hayward refers to, and as the film opens within a dream narrative, which then moves into flashback, the narrative is not "frameworked by the male protagonist". In fact a fluidity of subjectivity *does* operate in the way that *Rebecca* opens. The heroine is initially invisible, her dream voice-over allows her voice to be heard without her body being seen. This disembodying, coupled with the unspecified narrative time of her dream means that the looking back that occurs in the flashback, which constitutes the main narrative of the film, is a looking back from an unspecified point in time: it is a memory within a dream.

Above I suggested that the heroine is both a teller and a receiver of stories, and this is emphasised in the opening of her voice-over "Last night I dreamt...", which is strongly evocative of the traditional fairytale opening of "Once upon a time". In the shift from dream preface to flashback there is a simultaneous shift from the heroine as the teller of the tale to a position of character within it. This shift in subjectivity often typifies the narratives or scenarios produced by the dreaming and fantasizing subject where the subject dreams/fantasizes herself into a range of positions. Warner discusses the use of a dreaming protagonist in films which draw on fairy tales as follows:

> The gateway to fantasy (and especially erotic fantasy) when translated to screen is opened in sleep or dreams. The dreaming woman becomes a key figure in fairy tale movies. It is through fantasy, through the uses of enchantment, that she achieves her passage from one state to another, that she manages to tame or otherwise come to terms with the Beast.... We are shown her terror from her point of view by entering a dream state... The dreaming heroine, often considered a mere passive victim, shouldn't be underestimated. There is a sense that she is voyaging, and that the film we are watching (or the story we are hearing) emerge from her fantasy.[46]

Warner's emphasis on the process of fantasy as a "voyag[e]"[47] for the female protagonist who is not a "mere passive victim"[48] opens up ways of approaching the film which do not exclusively focus on an analysis of spectatorial control, or a lack of this control on the part of the female protagonist. The scenarios of listening to stories, and the interpretation of these stories by the heroine are really crucial to *Rebecca*, and while I am not suggesting that the film's visual images should be neglected or ignored, a deeper analysis of these scenarios, and attention to the film's soundtrack and music could offer alternative lines of inquiry.

Fairy tale narrative elements, and the telling and receiving of stories are also important in the other gothic women's films cited. In *Gaslight* the heroine Paula Alquist both listens to and tells the story of the murder of Alice Alquist, her aunt; an event which took place when she was a child. She listens to the story from Miss Thwaites, a fellow passenger on a train journey. Miss Thwaites is reading a lurid gothic novel based on the Bluebeard story and as she reads she gasps and exclaims in a combination of delight and horror. The subject matter leads her to strike up a conversation with Paula about a "real life murder" which occurred in Thornton Square, where Miss Thwaites now lives. She tells the story to Paula not realising that Paula is effectively a character in the story, and as Miss Thwaites speculates about the crime Paula becomes more and more uncomfortable. There is a parallel between this scene and Paula's telling of the murder story to her new husband Gregory Anton, not realising his position as character: the murderer. These versions of the story offer the murder story from different perspectives, Miss Thwaites playing the part of the nosy neighbour interested in the sensational aspects of the story and not directly involved in it. Paula tells of discovering her aunt's body, her first person narration indicating her direct involvement in the tragedy. There is then a third version of the story which is told to the detective Brian Cameron (Joseph Cotten) by Paula, and this version develops through the questions that Brian asks Paula. He helps Paula to recognise the parts that she herself and her husband have played in the story of Alice Alquist, knowledge that she has repressed in trying to forget the night of the murder. Brian gains Paula's trust by bringing with him a glove that was given to him by Alice Alquist when he attended one of her concerts as a boy. Paula has the other glove, and reuniting the pair evokes the Cinderella story.

In *Dragonwyck* the story that is told and received is about Azeald, the great grandmother of Nicholas Van Ryn, the current Patroon of Dragonwyck. On the first night that Miranda spends at Dragonwyck she remarks on a large portrait that hangs above a harpsichord in "the red room" (Figure 3.01). Nicholas plays the harpsichord and tells her that it is Azeald. Miranda romanticises the story, asking "Did they fall in love at first sight?" to which Nicholas replies tartly that "No Van Ryn does anything at first sight", but Miranda persists "She must have been happy to live here." Nicholas, however, reveals the story's sad ending; Azeald died soon after her son was born. The harpsichord was her prized possession, brought with her from her home in New Orleans. Nicholas says that "She played it always" and his wife Johanna remarks "If you listen to the servants they'll have you believe she still does." Nicholas reacts angrily to this, saying that they should not pay any attention to the servants' "superstitions". These superstitions are expanded upon in the differing version of Azeald's story that is told to Miranda by Magda (Spring Byington), the housekeeper of Dragonwyck. Magda tells Miranda that the red room has a special quality, "it's what she brought to this room, and what will never leave." They stand looking at the portrait of Azeald and there is the following exchange:

> *Miranda*: Was she very young?
> *Magda*: About as young as you.
> *Miranda*: She must have been very proud to be mistress of Dragonwyck.
> *Magda*: He never loved her, he never wanted her at all. He wanted their son, he kept her from him, he forbade her to sing and play, he broke her heart, and drove her to.... She prayed for disaster to come to the Van Ryns, and she swore that when it came she'd always be here to sing and play. She killed herself in this room.

As Magda shows Miranda up to her bedroom she continues the story, saying that Miranda will never hear Azeald play because she has no Van Ryn blood, but that Nicholas and his daughter Katrine (Connie Marshall) will. Magda is developed as a rather strange character, observing Miranda's ambition to better herself, and noting her love of the luxuries that she has not been able to have before her arrival at Dragonwyck. While she is not as threatening to Miranda as Mrs Danvers is to the heroine in *Rebecca*, both characters play similar roles in reminding the heroines that they are not born to Dragonwyck and Manderley, and they both are keepers of family secrets. As both versions of Azeald's story are told to Miranda it is clear that she has romantic preconceptions, and she identifies with the idea of filling the role of "mistress of Dragonwyck".

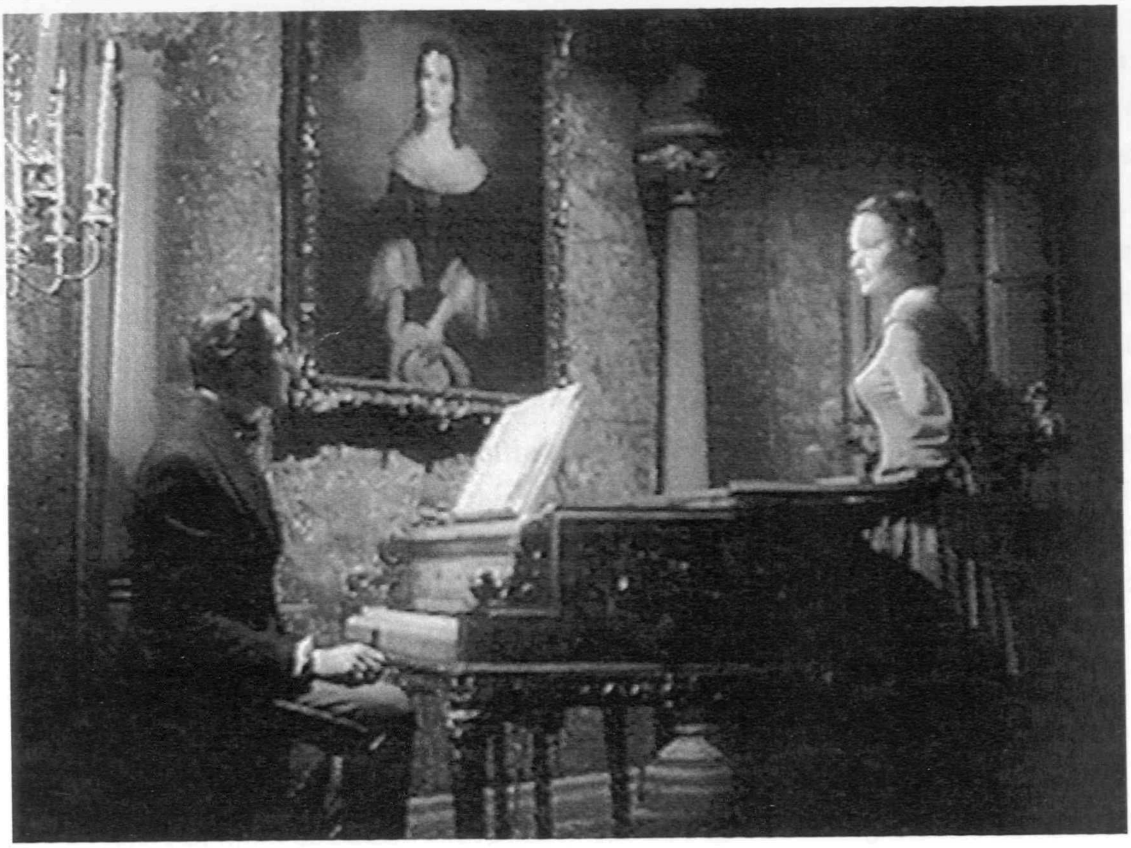


Figure 3.01

It is these preconceptions and identification that will lead her to marry Nicholas later in the film, and the parallels between her story and Azeald's become uncomfortably close. As in *Gaslight* the heroine has to come to recognise herself as a character in a story which reveals to her the manipulations of her husband.

This is also a feature of the storytelling in *The Two Mrs Carrolls*. The realisation that her artist husband Geoffrey Carroll (Humphrey Bogart) is slowly poisoning her hits Sally Carroll (Barbara Stanwyck) at the moment that she learns about the death of his first wife. This insight comes through a conversation between Sally and Geoffrey's daughter from his first marriage, Bea (Ann Carter). Geoffrey has always told Sally that his first wife was an invalid, but when Sally talks to Bea this turns out to be untrue. Bea describes her mother as very energetic and capable, "wonderful at sports" and describes how she was "in perfect health" until Geoffrey returned from a Scottish fishing trip. This was the trip on which Sally accompanied Geoffrey. Bea continues to describe how her father administered tender care to his first wife, "he insisted on taking care of her, bringing her the milk himself". Sally undergoes the shock of recognition as she see a repeating pattern emerging between Geoffrey's murder of his first wife, and his intention to murder her.

The examples discussed above show that through the telling and receiving of stories the gothic heroine tries to determine her relationship with her husband. A feature of all these stories has been "the woman in the past". In *Rebecca* and *The Two Mrs Carrolls* the woman is the gothic male's first wife, in *Gaslight* she is the heroine's aunt, but there are suggestions that she has also had a relationship with Gregory Anton/Sergis Bauer. In *Dragonwyck* there are two "women in the past", the first is Azeald, the unhappy wife of Nicholas' great grandfather who is said to have put a curse on the Van Ryn family, the second is Nicholas' first wife, Johanna, who is poisoned by him so that he can marry the heroine, Miranda. In the gothic women's films that I have chosen to discuss in this chapter a portrait of "the woman in the past" features in the narrative, and these portraits have an important role in the young heroine's process of trying to determine her own relationship with her husband, effectively a process of self determination. In this process of self determination the heroine has to determine her own image as distinct from the image of "the woman in the past".

Portraits: Image and Self-Image

"What was Rebecca *really* like?"

In *Rebecca* there is a play around the revealing and concealing of Rebecca that is perpetuated through a tantalising trail of visual clues. The strong "R" of her signature begins the credit sequence of the film, and it is found on every domestic item that the heroine touches. It also ends the film, the final shot featuring the camera tracking in to frame the "R" on the embroidered nightgown case (made for Rebecca by Mrs Danvers) as it is engulfed in flames.[49] In the scene where the heroine visits Rebecca's bedroom the dead woman's personal possessions are ceremoniously displayed before her by Mrs Danvers, who even re-animates Rebecca's empty clothes with her hands.[50] However despite the prevalence of Rebecca's signature, possessions and the frequency with which she is mentioned by other characters, there is no visual representation of her in the film. Modleski attributes much of Rebecca's power to haunt Manderley and its inhabitants to her invisibility. She notes that the system of suture where "typically, a shot of a woman is followed by a shot of a man - a surrogate for the male spectator - looking at her",[51] does not function in the usual way to contain Rebecca:

> ...in *Rebecca* the beautiful, desirable woman is not only never sutured in as object of the look, not only never made a part of the film's field of vision, she is actually posited within the diegesis as all-seeing - as for example when Mrs Danvers asks the terrified heroine if she thinks the dead come back to watch the living and says that she sometimes thinks Rebecca comes back to watch the new couple together.[52]

If Rebecca is never fully present in the film, then equally she is never fully absent either. Modleski suggests that she "lurks in the blind space of the film",[53] and she cites Pascal Bonitzer, who accounts for the power of offscreen space, and the potential it has to contain the horrific and the frightening:

> Specular space is on-screen space; it is everything we see on screen. Off-screen space, blind space, is everything that moves (or wriggles) outside or under the surface of things, like the shark in *Jaws*. If such films 'work', it is because we are more or less held in the sway of these two spaces. If the shark were always on screen it would quickly become a domesticated animal. What is frightening is that it is not there! The point of horror resides in the blind space.[54]

There is a tension between the presence of Rebecca through character dialogue and the assumption by the heroine that Maxim is still mourning for Rebecca, and that she should therefore not be mentioned. In fact she is constantly mentioned and a theme of the unsuccessful repression of the past runs strongly through the film. The return of the repressed is symbolised by the ever present possibility that Rebecca will come back, an uncanny return of the dead to haunt the living. Her return is explicitly signalled by Mrs Danvers' chilling question to the heroine "Do you think the dead come back and watch the living?", a question asked when the heroine visits Rebecca's bedroom (Figure 3.02). And later in the film when Rebecca's boat is found Frank Crawley remarks on the effect it will have on Maxim: "It's going to bring it all back again... and worse than before."

Although Rebecca is never actually pictured in the film the possibility of her return is emphasised through a play of nearly revealing her. There are two episodes in the film which contribute to this play around revealing and concealing and both are also concerned with the heroine's attempt at determining her own image.

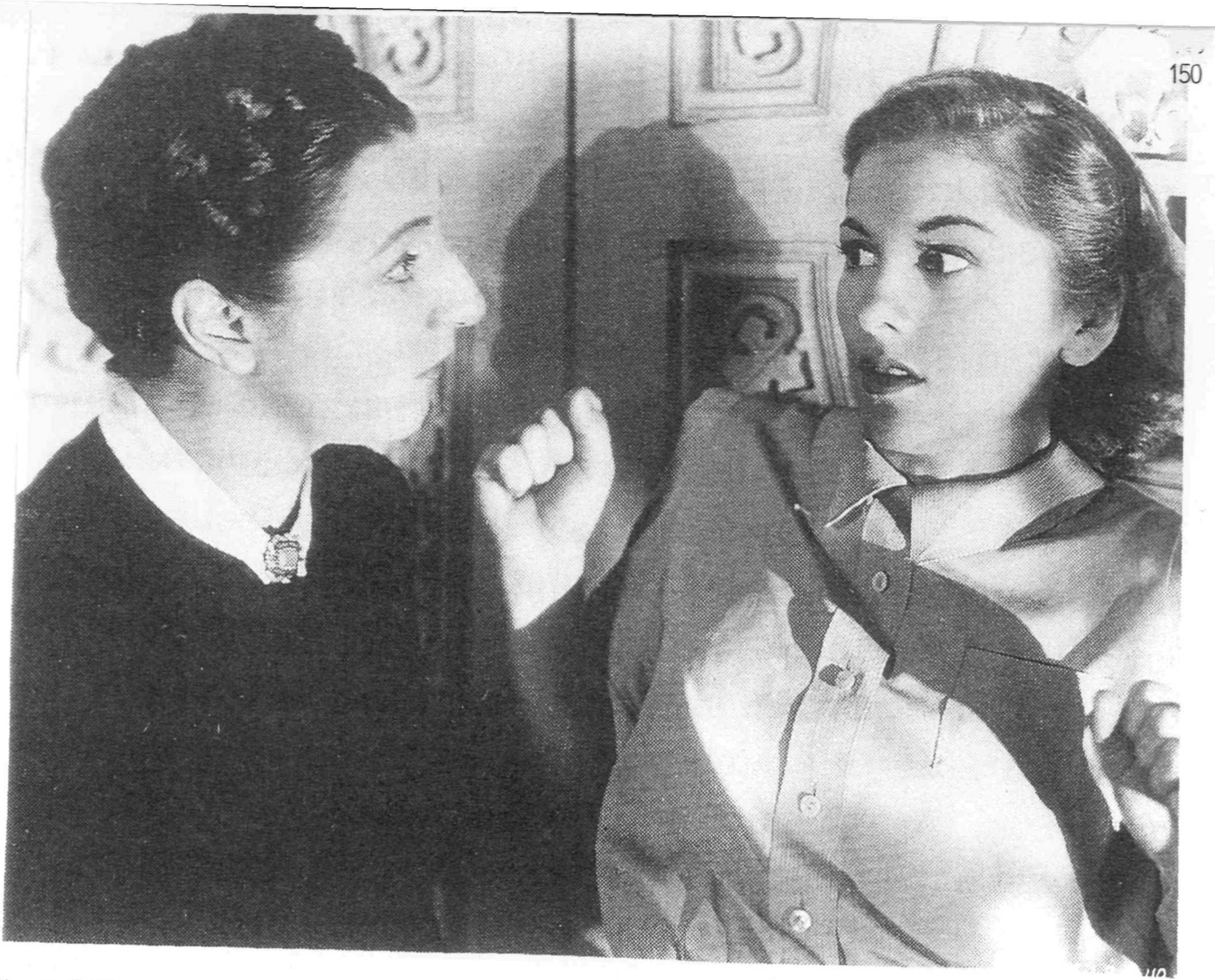


Figure 3.02

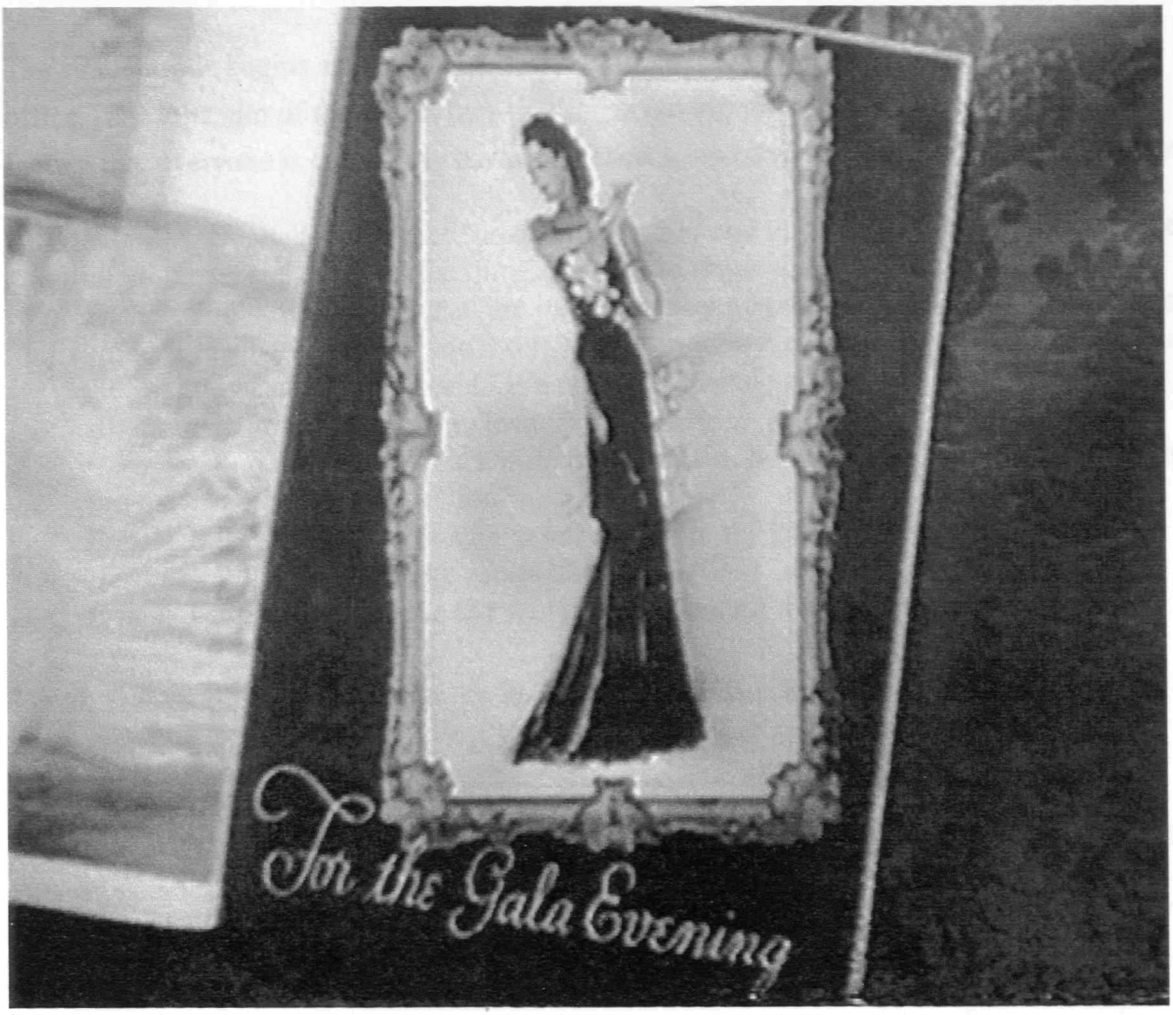

For the Gala Evening

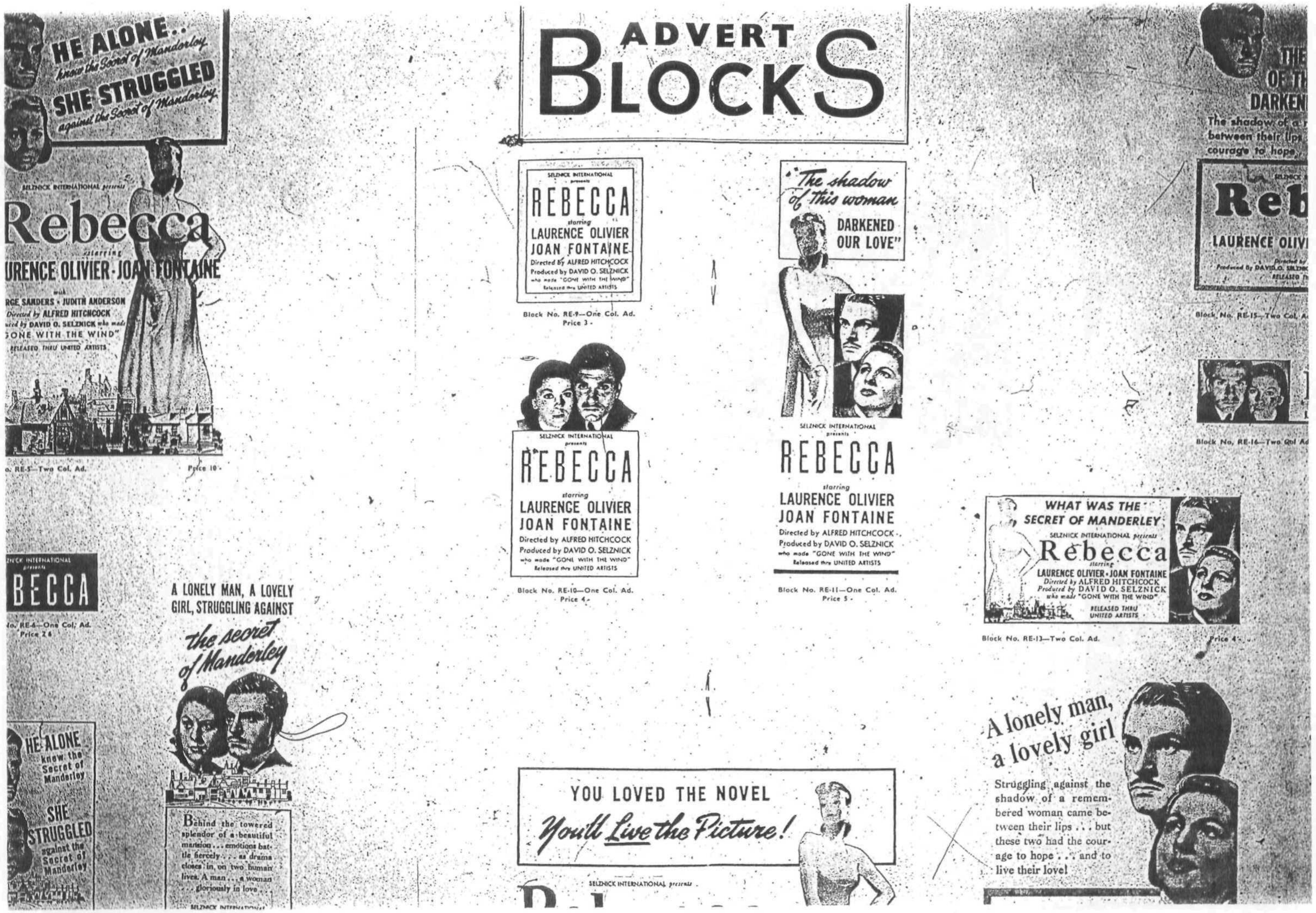
Figure 3.03

The first episode begins as the heroine spends time talking to Frank Crawley in the estate office. She tells him of the difficulties that she is having settling into life at Manderley, feeling that everyone is comparing her with Rebecca, and they have the following exchange:

> *Heroine*: Everyday I realised things that she had and that I lacked, beauty and wit and intelligence, and - oh - all the things that are so important in a woman.
> *Frank*: You have qualities that are just as important, more important if I might say so, kindliness, sincerity and if you'll forgive me, modesty, mean more to a husband than all the wit and beauty in the world. We none of us want to live in the past, Maxim least of all, it's up to you, you know, to lead us away from it.
> *Heroine*: I promise you I won't bring this up again, but before we end this conversation can I ask you one more question?
> *Frank*: If it's something I'm able to answer I'll do my best.
> *Heroine*: What was Rebecca *really* like?
> *Frank*: I suppose, I suppose she was the most beautiful creature I ever saw.

For all Frank's encouraging platitudes his answer to the heroine's question only confirms the difference between her and Rebecca in her own mind, and the edit at the end of this scene takes us to the heroine looking at a magazine entitled "Beauty: The Magazine for Smart Women". The image she has selected is of a sophisticated woman in a black dress, and the image is drawn with a frame around it (Figure 3.03). This image is very similar in style to the image of an unidentified woman in the publicity materials in the film's pressbook (Figures 3.04 and 3.05). Several of the posters hint that this woman is a visualisation of Rebecca. Her figure towers over a close-up two shot of the faces of Joan Fontaine and Laurence Olivier, one hand on her hip and with her face significantly in shadow. The tag-lines of the posters, "The shadow of this woman darkened our love" and "A lonely man, a lovely girl, struggling against the secret of Manderley" place Rebecca as mysterious and to-be-discovered or uncovered. They emphasise that the mystery surrounding her appearance is part of the narrative image of the film.

A dissolve from the magazine image to the heroine shows her in the same dress, making her way carefully down the hall steps and looking self conscious but pleased with her new look. She enters the library where Maxim in setting up a projector, and draws his attention to her. His reaction is less than favourable: "What on earth have you done to yourself?" and "Do you think that sort of thing is right for you? It doesn't seem your type at all." When he realises that the heroine is trying to please him, he clumsily forces a compliment "Oh I see, you look lovely, lovely, very nice... for a change." But the cut to the reaction shot of the heroine shows that the damage has been done, she looks deflated and hurt. Doane reads this sequence, and the following scene where Maxim and the heroine watch home movies of their honeymoon, as illustrating both a failure of female spectatorship and a "deficiency in her image".[55]



HE ALONE..
knew the Secret of Manderley
SHE STRUGGLED
against the Secret of Manderley

SELZNICK INTERNATIONAL presents
Rebecca
starring
URENCE OLIVIER · JOAN FONTAINE
with
RGE SANDERS · JUDITH ANDERSON
Directed by ALFRED HITCHCOCK
uced by DAVID O. SELZNICK who made
GONE WITH THE WIND"
RELEASED THRU UNITED ARTISTS

o. RE-5—Two Col. Ad. Price 10-

ZNICK INTERNATIONAL
presents
BECCA

No. RE-4—One Col. Ad.
Price 2 6

HE ALONE
knew the
Secret of
Manderley
SHE
STRUGGLED
against the
Secret of
Manderley

A LONELY MAN, A LOVELY GIRL, STRUGGLING AGAINST
the secret of Manderley

Behind the towered splendor of a beautiful mansion . . . emotions battle fiercely . . . as drama closes in, on two human lives. A man . . . a woman . . . gloriously in love . . .

SELZNICK INTERNATIONAL

ADVERT
BLOCKS

SELZNICK INTERNATIONAL
presents
REBECCA
starring
LAURENCE OLIVIER
JOAN FONTAINE
Directed by ALFRED HITCHCOCK
Produced by DAVID O. SELZNICK
who made "GONE WITH THE WIND"
Released thru UNITED ARTISTS

Block No. RE-9—One Col. Ad.
Price 3-

"The shadow of this woman
DARKENED OUR LOVE"

SELZNICK INTERNATIONAL
presents
REBECCA
starring
LAURENCE OLIVIER
JOAN FONTAINE
Directed by ALFRED HITCHCOCK
Produced by DAVID O. SELZNICK
who made "GONE WITH THE WIND"
Released thru UNITED ARTISTS

Block No. RE-11—One Col. Ad.
Price 5-

SELZNICK INTERNATIONAL
presents
REBECCA
starring
LAURENCE OLIVIER
JOAN FONTAINE
Directed by ALFRED HITCHCOCK
Produced by DAVID O. SELZNICK
who made "GONE WITH THE WIND"
Released thru UNITED ARTISTS

Block No. RE-10—One Col. Ad.
Price 4-

YOU LOVED THE NOVEL
You'll Live the Picture!

SELZNICK INTERNATIONAL presents

THE
OF TH
DARKEN
The shadow of a
between their lips
courage to hope

SELZNICK
Reb
LAURENCE OLIV
Directed by
Produced by DAVID O. SELZNIC
RELEASED TH

Block No. RE-15—Two Col. A

Block No. RE-16—Two Col Ad

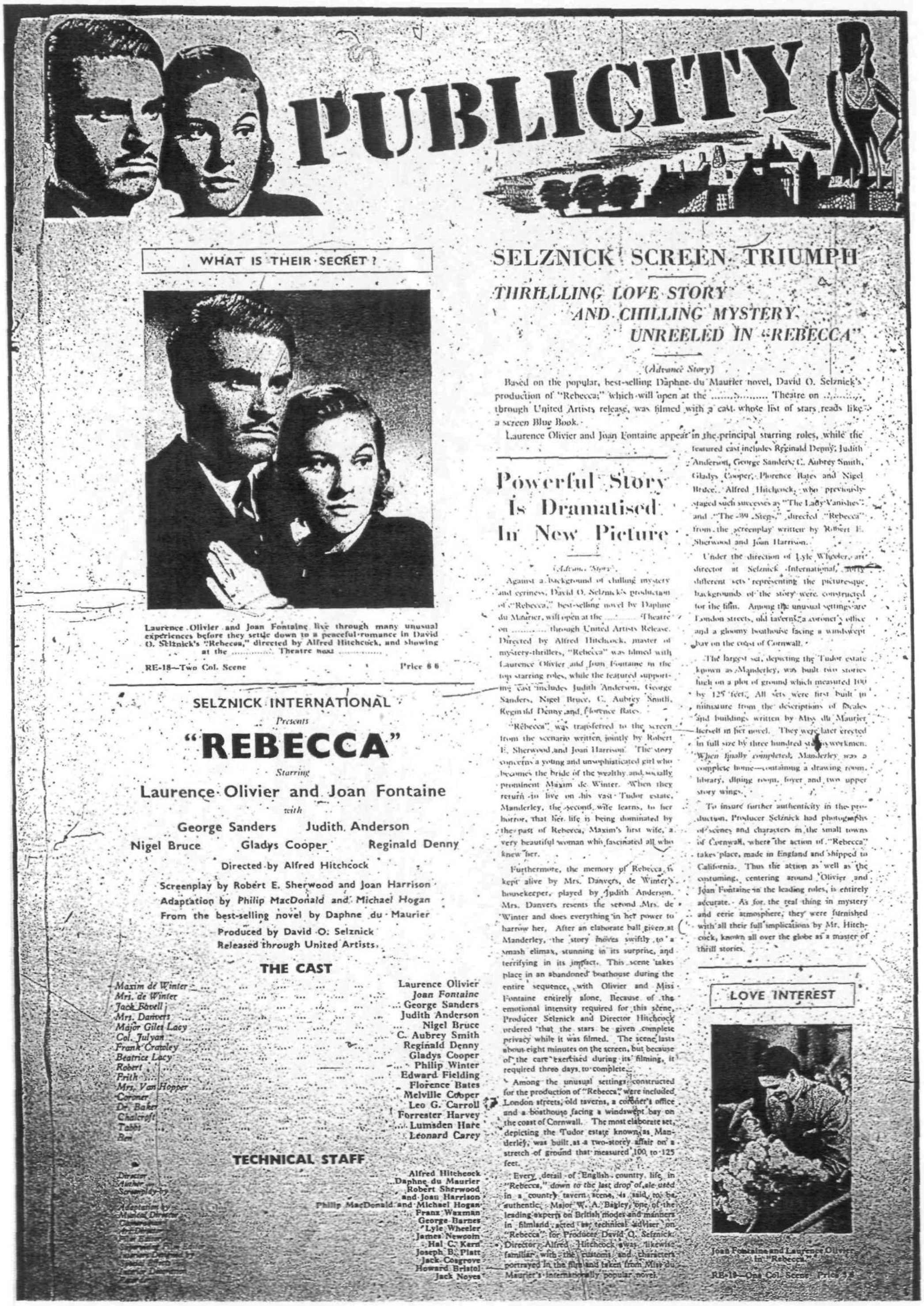
WHAT WAS THE SECRET OF MANDERLEY
SELZNICK INTERNATIONAL presents
Rebecca
starring
LAURENCE OLIVIER · JOAN FONTAINE
Directed by ALFRED HITCHCOCK
Produced by DAVID O. SELZNICK
who made "GONE WITH THE WIND"
RELEASED THRU
UNITED ARTISTS

Block No. RE-13—Two Col. Ad. Price 4-

A lonely man,
a lovely girl

Struggling against the shadow of a remembered woman came between their lips . . . but these two had the courage to hope . . . and to live their love!

Figure 3.04



WHAT IS THEIR SECRET ?

Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine live through many unusual experiences before they settle down to a peaceful romance in David O. Selznick's "Rebecca," directed by Alfred Hitchcock, and showing at the .... Theatre next ....

RE-18—Two Col. Scene Price 6 6

SELZNICK INTERNATIONAL

Presents

"REBECCA"

Starring

Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine

with

George Sanders Judith Anderson

Nigel Bruce Gladys Cooper Reginald Denny

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay by Robert E. Sherwood and Joan Harrison

Adaptation by Philip MacDonald and Michael Hogan

From the best-selling novel by Daphne du Maurier

Produced by David O. Selznick

Released through United Artists.

THE CAST

Maxim de Winter	Laurence Olivier
Mrs. de Winter	Joan Fontaine
Jack Favell	George Sanders
Mrs. Danvers	Judith Anderson
Major Giles Lacy	Nigel Bruce
Col. Julyan	C. Aubrey Smith
Frank Crawley	Reginald Denny
Beatrice Lacy	Gladys Cooper
Robert	Philip Winter
Frith	Edward Fielding
Mrs. Van Hopper	Florence Bates
Coroner	Melville Cooper
Dr. Baker	Leo G. Carroll
Chalcroft	Forrester Harvey
Tabbs	Lumsden Hare
Ben	Leonard Carey

TECHNICAL STAFF

Director	Alfred Hitchcock
Author	Daphne du Maurier
Screenplay by	Robert Sherwood and Joan Harrison
Adaptation by	Philip MacDonald and Michael Hogan
Musical Director	Franz Waxman
[illegible]	George Barnes
Art Director	Lyle Wheeler
Film Editor	James Newcom
Supervising Film Editor	Hal C. Kern
Interiors Designed by	Joseph B. Platt
Special Effects	Jack Cosgrove
Interior Decorations	Howard Bristol
[illegible]	Jack Noyes

SELZNICK SCREEN TRIUMPH

THRILLLING LOVE STORY AND CHILLING MYSTERY UNREELED IN "REBECCA"

(Advance Story)

Based on the popular, best-selling Daphne du Maurier novel, David O. Selznick's production of "Rebecca," which will open at the .... Theatre on ...., through United Artists release, was filmed with a cast whose list of stars reads like a screen Blue Book.

Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine appear in the principal starring roles, while the featured cast includes Reginald Denny, Judith Anderson, George Sanders, C. Aubrey Smith, Gladys Cooper, Florence Bates and Nigel Bruce. Alfred Hitchcock, who previously staged such successes as "The Lady Vanishes" and "The 39 Steps," directed "Rebecca" from the screenplay written by Robert E. Sherwood and Joan Harrison.

Under the direction of Lyle Wheeler, art director at Selznick International, forty different sets representing the picturesque backgrounds of the story were constructed for the film. Among the unusual settings are London streets, old taverns, a coroner's office and a gloomy boathouse facing a windswept bay on the coast of Cornwall.

The largest set, depicting the Tudor estate known as Manderley, was built two stories high on a plot of ground which measured 100 by 125 feet. All sets were first built in miniature from the descriptions of locales and buildings written by Miss du Maurier herself in her novel. They were later erected in full size by three hundred studio workmen. When finally completed, Manderley was a complete home—containing a drawing room, library, dining room, foyer and two upper story wings.

To insure further authenticity in the production, Producer Selznick had photographs of scenes and characters in the small towns of Cornwall, where the action of "Rebecca" takes place, made in England and shipped to California. Thus the action as well as the costuming, centering around Olivier and Joan Fontaine in the leading roles, is entirely accurate. As for the real thing in mystery and eerie atmosphere, they were furnished with all their full implications by Mr. Hitchcock, known all over the globe as a master of thrill stories.

Powerful Story Is Dramatised In New Picture

(Advance Story)

Against a background of chilling mystery and eeriness, David O. Selznick's production of "Rebecca," best-selling novel by Daphne du Maurier, will open at the .... Theatre on .... through United Artists Release. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock, master of mystery-thrillers, "Rebecca" was filmed with Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine in the top starring roles, while the featured supporting cast includes Judith Anderson, George Sanders, Nigel Bruce, C. Aubrey Smith, Reginald Denny and Florence Bates.

"Rebecca" was transferred to the screen from the scenario written jointly by Robert E. Sherwood and Joan Harrison. The story concerns a young and unsophisticated girl who becomes the bride of the wealthy and socially prominent Maxim de Winter. When they return to live on his vast Tudor estate, Manderley, the second wife learns, to her horror, that her life is being dominated by the past of Rebecca, Maxim's first wife, a very beautiful woman who fascinated all who knew her.

Furthermore, the memory of Rebecca is kept alive by Mrs. Danvers, de Winter's housekeeper, played by Judith Anderson. Mrs. Danvers resents the second Mrs. de Winter and does everything in her power to harrow her. After an elaborate ball given at Manderley, the story moves swiftly to a smash climax, stunning in its surprise, and terrifying in its impact. This scene takes place in an abandoned boathouse during the entire sequence, with Olivier and Miss Fontaine entirely alone. Because of the emotional intensity required for this scene, Producer Selznick and Director Hitchcock ordered that the stars be given complete privacy while it was filmed. The scene lasts about eight minutes on the screen, but because of the care exercised during its filming, it required three days to complete.

Among the unusual settings constructed for the production of "Rebecca," were included London streets, old taverns, a coroner's office and a boathouse facing a windswept bay on the coast of Cornwall. The most elaborate set, depicting the Tudor estate known as Manderley, was built as a two-storey affair on a stretch of ground that measured 100 to 125 feet.

Every detail of English country life in "Rebecca," down to the last drop of ale used in a country tavern scene, is said to be authentic. Major W. A. Bagley, one of the leading experts on British modes and manners in filmland, acted as technical adviser on "Rebecca" for Producer David O. Selznick. Director Alfred Hitchcock was likewise familiar with the customs and characters portrayed in the film and taken from Miss du Maurier's internationally popular novel.

LOVE INTEREST

Joan Fontaine and Laurence Olivier in "Rebecca."

RE-19—One Col. Scene Price 5/6

Figure 3.05

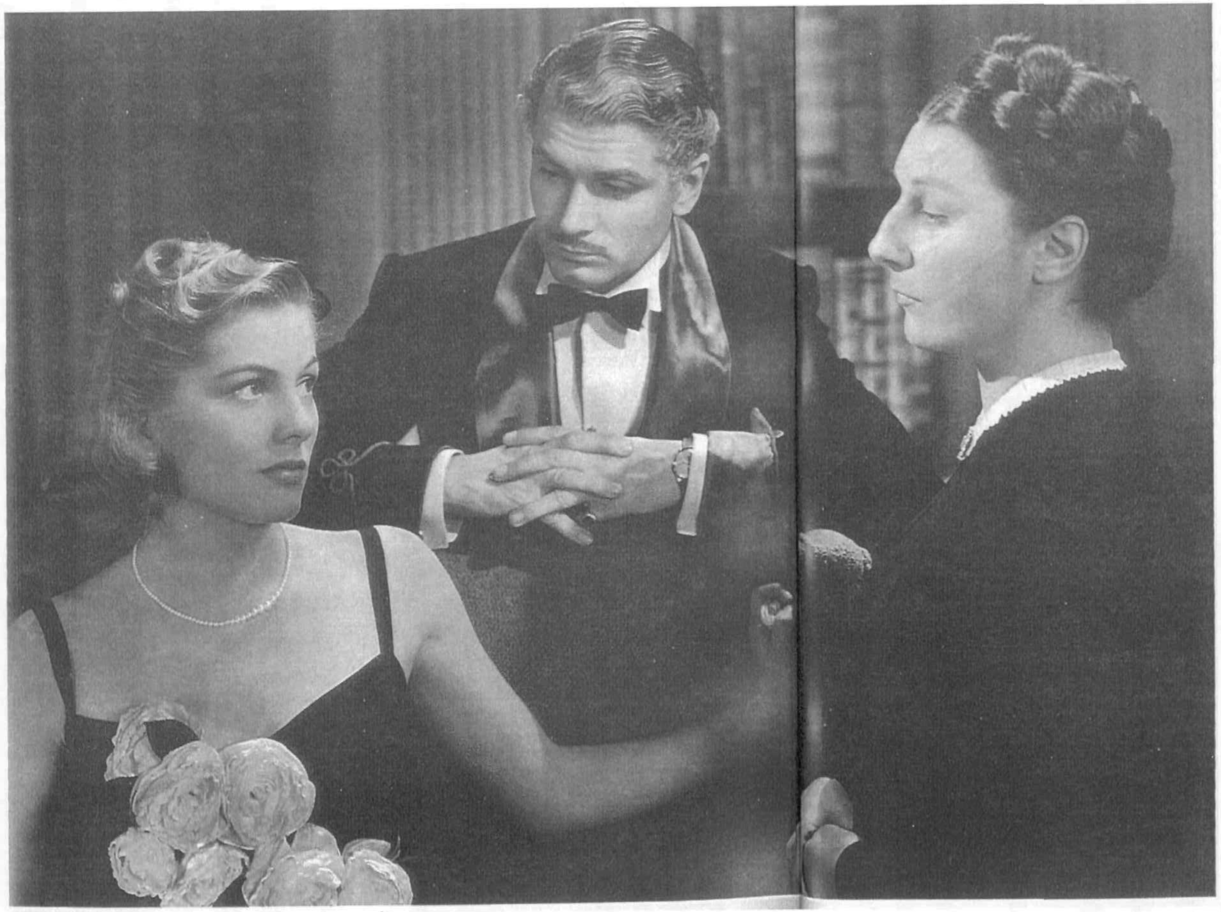


Figure 3.06

The home movie sequence is interrupted twice, the first time by Mrs Danvers reporting that a valuable china statuette of a cupid figure has gone missing (Figure 3.06). In fact the heroine herself broke the cupid on her first morning at Manderley and hid the pieces in her desk. She is too afraid of Mrs Danvers to tell Maxim while she is there, and her timidity annoys Maxim so much that they argue, leading to the second interruption in the screening. Doane argues that the interruptions in the screening result in an aggressive rather than desiring male gaze being directed at the heroine, and she asserts that this is particularly threatening because of the context of a screening means that her position as spectator is undermined and turned against her.[56] Doane sees this aggression as particularly problematic in a woman's film:

> The women's films as a group appear to make a detour around or deflect the issue of spectacle and the woman's position (an obsession of the dominant cinema addressed to the male spectator), and hence avoid the problem of feminine narcissism. Yet, this narcissism returns and infiltrates the two texts by means of a paranoia which is linked to an obsession with the specular. The projection scenes in both films are preceded by the delineation of a narcissistic female desire - the desire to become the image which captures the male gaze. Nevertheless, it is as though the aggressivity which should be attendant on that structure were detached, in the projection scenes, and transferred to the specular system which insures and perpetuates female narcissism - the cinematic apparatus. Thus the aggressivity attached to her own narcissism is stolen and used against the woman; she becomes the object rather than the subject of that aggression.[57]

However there are two issues that offer different approaches to the one outlined by Doane. Firstly the publicity materials foreground the paradox of Rebecca's menacing presence but the simultaneous elusiveness of her image as a narrative feature. And secondly the heroine of *Rebecca*, and of the other films examined in this chapter, is engaged in a process of self-determination which includes an experimentation with taking on different images and roles. Modleski reads the film as dramatising the story of a woman's entry into the social and Symbolic order, seeing it as a female oedipal drama. In this approach she differentiates her position from critics who have seen Hollywood narratives as primarily concerned with the development of male social and sexual identity:

> I am taking exception to the notion of the influential French film theorist Raymond Bellour that all Hollywood narratives are dramatisations of the male oedipal story, of man's entry into the social and Symbolic order. In rejecting Bellour's thesis and arguing that there is at least one film dealing with woman's "incorporation" into the social order... I do not mean to suggest that *Rebecca* is thereby a "progressive" film for women; the social order is, after all, a patriarchal order. I do, however, maintain that all kinds of interesting differences arise when a film features a woman's trajectory and directly solicits the interest of a female audience.[58]

Modleski makes clear that a central part of this trajectory involves the heroine's attempts to detach herself from a powerful female figure, symbolising her mother, in order to attach herself to a man.[59] "*Rebecca* is the story of a woman's maturation, a woman who must come to terms with a powerful father figure and assorted mother substitutes (Mrs. Van Hopper, Rebecca, and Mrs. Danvers)."[60] She suggests that for this transition to be successfully achieved the heroine "must try to make her desire mirror the man's desire".[61] However this is not a simple process; Modleski continues: "the film makes us experience the difficulties involved *for the woman* in this enterprise. In order for her to mold her image according to the man's desire, she must first ascertain what that desire *is*."[62] Modleski shows that a key part of the female oedipal trajectory in *Rebecca* is an investigation of the mystery of the male character by the heroine:

> ...given the complex and contradictory nature of male desire, it is no wonder that women become baffled, confused. Feminist critics have noted, for example, the conflicting attitude towards the female expressed in film noir: on the one hand, the domestic woman is sexually nonthreatening, but she is boring; on the other hand, the *femme fatale* is exciting, but dangerous. From the woman's point of view, then, man becomes an enigma, his desire difficult to know. Although women have not had the chance to articulate the problem as directly as men have, they could easily ask Freud's question of the opposite sex: what is it men want?[63]

In trying on and masquerading in different identities the heroine of *Rebecca* experiments with the effect of different images of femininity on Maxim's desire. Her next attempt is cruelly influenced by Mrs Danvers. The heroine persuades Maxim that they should hold a costume ball, to convince people that "Manderley is just the same as it ever was." The heroine's words are grimly prophetic however, and Mrs Danvers contrives to make Manderley "the same" through tricking the heroine into impersonating Rebecca, or more precisely in inhabiting one of Rebecca's disguises, dressing up as Lady Caroline de Winter. Mrs Danvers' appears to be helpful, offering the heroine advice on her costume for the ball (Figure 3.07). She shows her the portrait of Lady Caroline de Winter, one of Maxim's ancestors, telling the heroine that this portrait is one of Maxim's favourites. The heroine looks forward to her husband's delighted reaction to her costume, but instead she experiences what Modleski describes as "a cruel reversal of the Cinderella myth",[64] as Maxim tells her to change her dress. It is only after his horrified reaction that the heroine realises that she has been framed by Mrs Danvers (Figure 3.08). The housekeeper has framed the heroine through making her resemble a framed image, and she has brought Rebecca back to life temporarily through the heroine's unwitting masquerade.

The portrait of Lady Caroline de Winter is not a true portrait of Rebecca; it is at once an indication of an image of Rebecca and still distanced from what she was "really like".

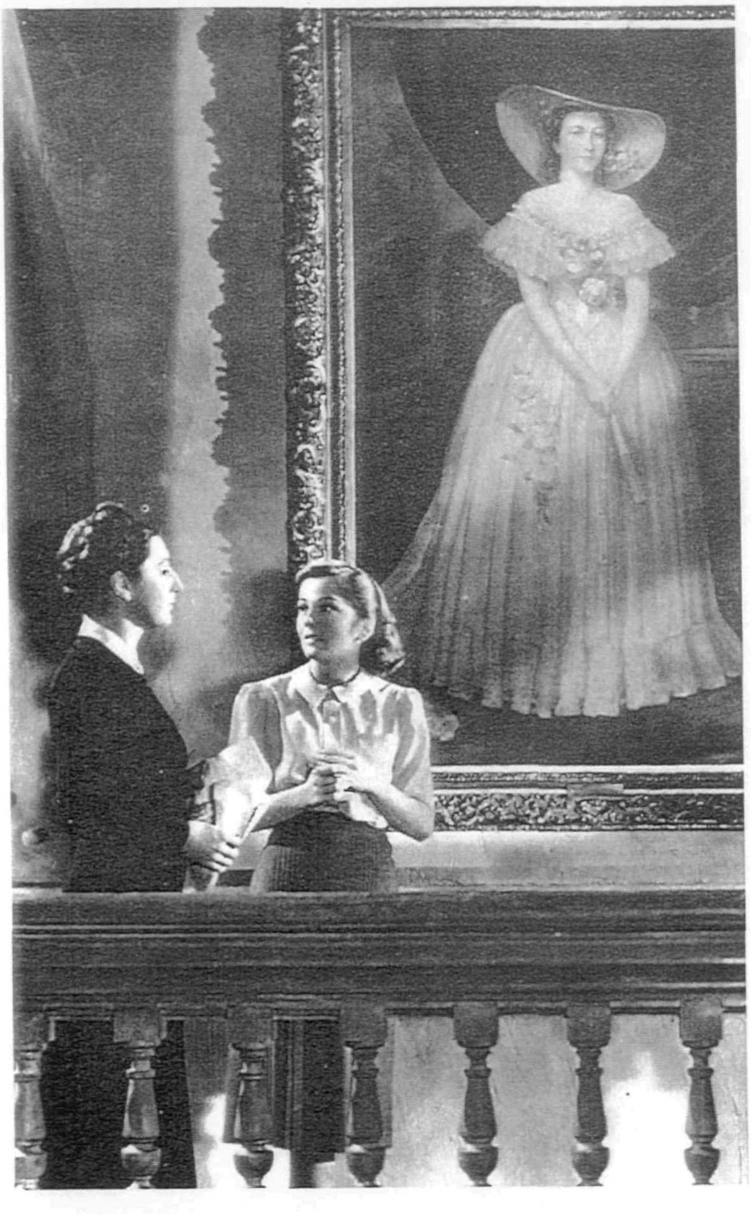


Figure 3.07

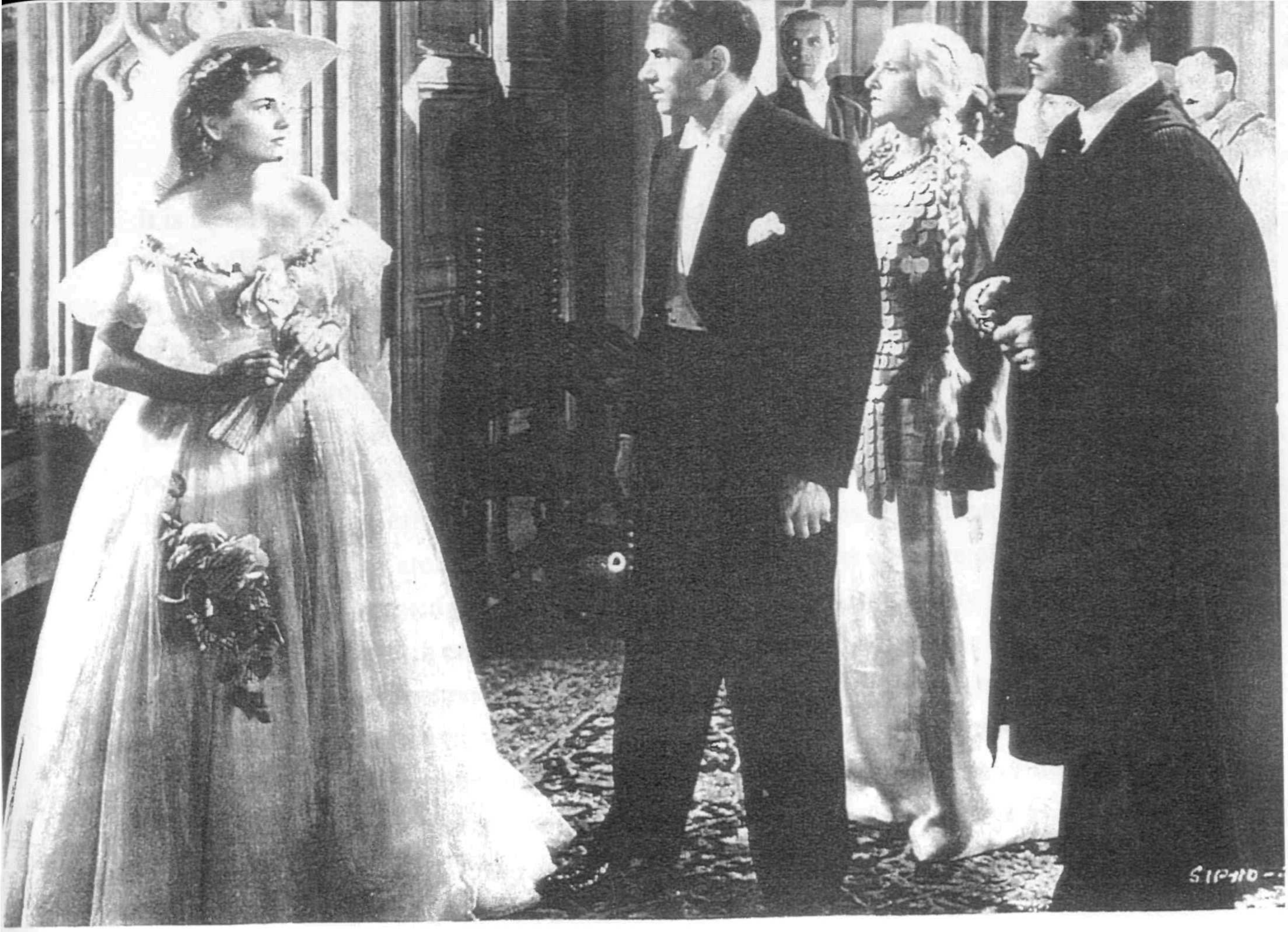
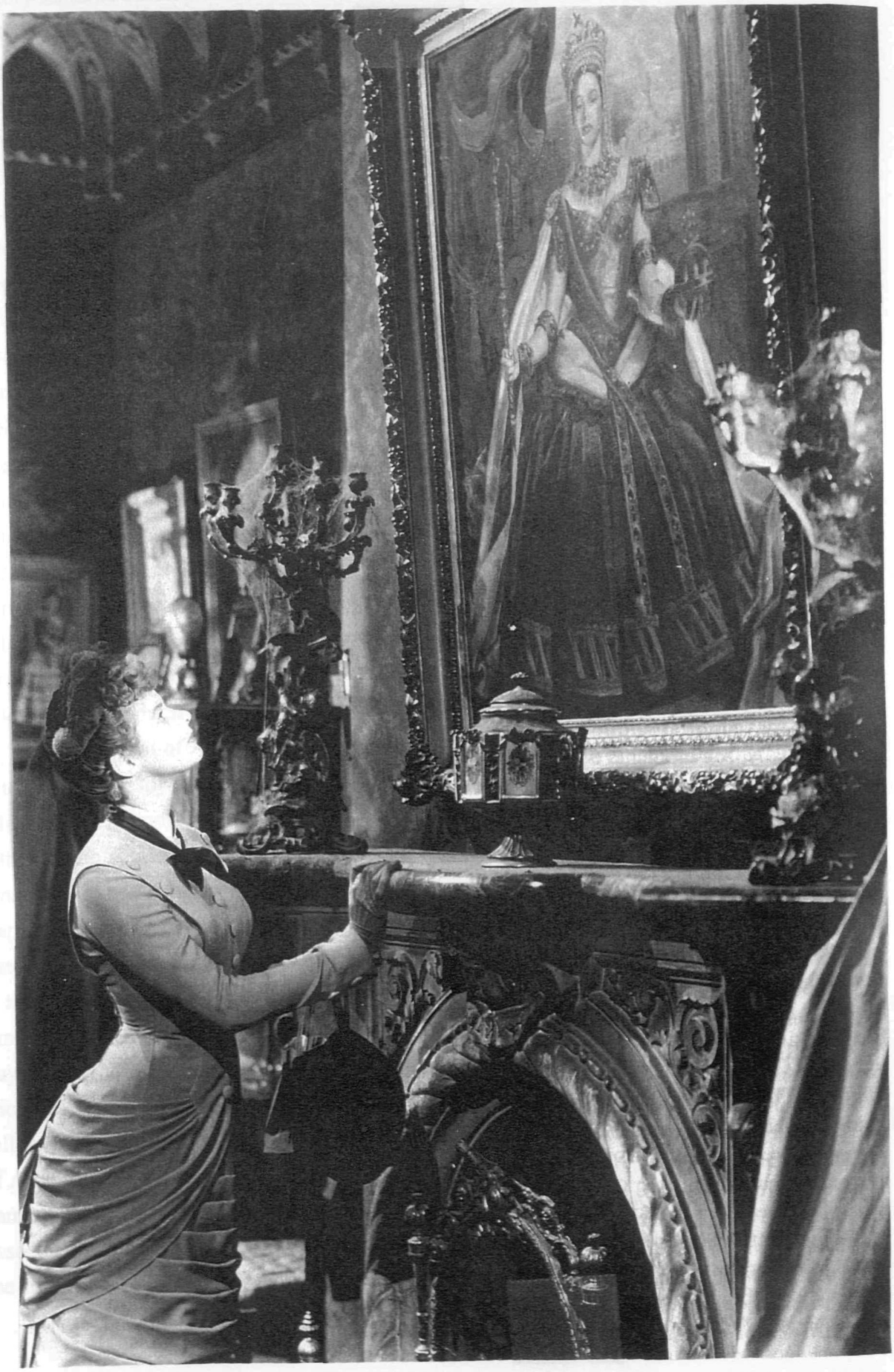


Figure 3.08

It is therefore similar to the magazine image and publicity materials of the film in the way that it offers, but also withdraws, Rebecca as spectacle. The way that the portrait functions in the film complicates one of the defining features of a portrait as being the painted likeness of a subject. *Rebecca* sets up a play of likeness/similarity and difference/distance because neither Lady Caroline de Winter nor Rebecca are ever seen in the film. The portrait is a painted likeness of one of Maxim's ancestors that Rebecca has appropriated, and thus the portrait while not representing Rebecca's likeness is the nearest location to an image of Rebecca that we are offered by the film. When the heroine is tricked into reproducing her version of the Lady Caroline de Winter/Rebecca image she is unaware of the connotations that have already accrued to the portrait. She does not know the family history of the de Winters well enough. In putting on her costume the heroine is unaware that she is donning a double mask, Lady Caroline de Winter overlaid with Rebecca. Through the double masquerade Maxim experiences the shock of "seeing" Rebecca return, and contrary to the heroine's expectations the moment that she anticipates that she will receive the desiring gaze of her husband turns instead into "visual unpleasure". Frank Crawley says that it is up to the heroine to lead them away from the past, but she must investigate and discover that past before she can.

The portrait of Lady Caroline functions as an image that at once represents and conceals. As discussed, the portrait image itself represents one of Maxim's ancestors, a former great Lady of Manderley; but its adoption by Rebecca reinflects it, and it is further inflected by its imposition on the heroine. Thus there is a tension between the portrait's proper position, as the representation of Maxim's illustrious family history, and the subsequent reinflection of the image. This tension rendersthe usual relationship of subject represented and image representation unstable. A similar tension marks the portraits in *Gaslight* and *Dragonwyck*. In *Gaslight* the subject of the portrait is Alice Alquist, the heroine's aunt, but its introduction into the film indicates a tension around its function as representative likeness. The portrait is revealed in the scene which shows Paula and Gregory entering Thornton Square for the first time as a married couple; but unbeknownst to Paula Gregory has actually been there before as the murderer, Sergis Bauer. Paula is shocked at the change in the atmosphere of the drawing room, she says "It's all dead in here. The whole place seems to smell of death." Her aunt's possessions bring back memories of the house at the height of Alice Alquist's fame, full of people and music. Gregory, pretending that he never knew Alice Alquist, remarks: "I wish I could have seen her." Paula immediately responds: "Oh let me show her to you!" She goes up to the fireplace and pulls down the covering from the painting, unveiling it (Figure 3.09). A crescendo of music marks this action. A cut in shows a close up of the portrait's face showing its similarity in appearance to Paula/Ingrid Bergman, and then there follows a close up of Gregory's face, his eyes glittering. Paula tells that the portrait shows her aunt as the Empress Theodora: "it was her greatest role, when she sang it in St Petersburg the Tzar used to come to every performance."

Figure 3.09



Gregory remarks on the likeness between Paula and her aunt, a likeness that had also been pointed out by Paula's singing teacher, Signor Guardi (Emil Rameau), earlier in the film. Gregory/Sergis has murdered one female member of the Alquist family, and so Paula's likeness to the portrait is chilling. It indicates the frame that her husband will put her in, aligning her with the murdered woman as he attempts to repeat his murderous actions on Paula.

As well as indicating a tension in representative likeness to its subject, the portrait of Alice Alquist has elements in common with the portrait of Lady Caroline de Winter/Rebecca. It represents a character that we never see in the film and captures her in the process of performing a role. As we later learn in the film as Alice Alquist played the role of Theodora on stage she was wearing the jewels belonging to the Russian Emperor, with whom she was having an affair and who came to watch every performance. So the portrait captures two levels of performance: the first is overt, the performance of Theodora, and the second is covert, the costume of the star hides the imperial jewels as it displays them. As Brian Cameron remarks after Gregory has found the jewels sewn into Alice Alquist's costume: "Alice Alquist hid them where all the world could see them and yet no-one would know where they were except the man who gave them to her, watching from the royal box." The portrait provides the clue to Alice Alquist's murder, the jewels signal her illicit relationship with the Tzar and the motive for Gregory/Sergis Bauer to murder her. As in the Lady Caroline portrait, connotations have accrued to the image that the heroine does not yet fully understand, but which become clear to her as she discovers more about her husband's past.

The portrait of Azeald in *Dragonwyck* represents a figure from the Van Ryns' family history, a great Lady from the past (Figure 3.01). Miranda's identification with Azeald as "Mistress of Dragonwyck" is significant in showing the way that she reads Azeald's portrait. Although she is told of Azeald's unhappy life, and the curse that she put on the Van Ryn dynasty, Miranda haughtily dismisses Magda's version of the story. The portrait of Azeald reappears several times during the film, and in each appearance it is evident that the family history is threatened by secrets in its past. On the night that Nicholas' first wife Johanna falls ill and dies the portrait is shown lit by a flash of lightning from through the gothic mullioned windows (Figure 3.10). Nicholas has arranged events so that Dr Jeff Turner (Glenn Langan) stays the night at Dragonwyck, and after taking his wife the poisoned cake that kills her Nicholas joins Miranda and Jeff in the red room to take them to dinner. The camera pans to follow the three characters walking across the room, as they cross the camera's view in front of Azeald's portrait the camera stops moving. The characters walk out of the frame and the camera tracks in to frame a closer view of the portrait as the musical theme that becomes associated with Azeald wells up on the sound track. There is an edit to the window to show the stormy weather outside, and the a cut back to the view shown in Figure 3.10.

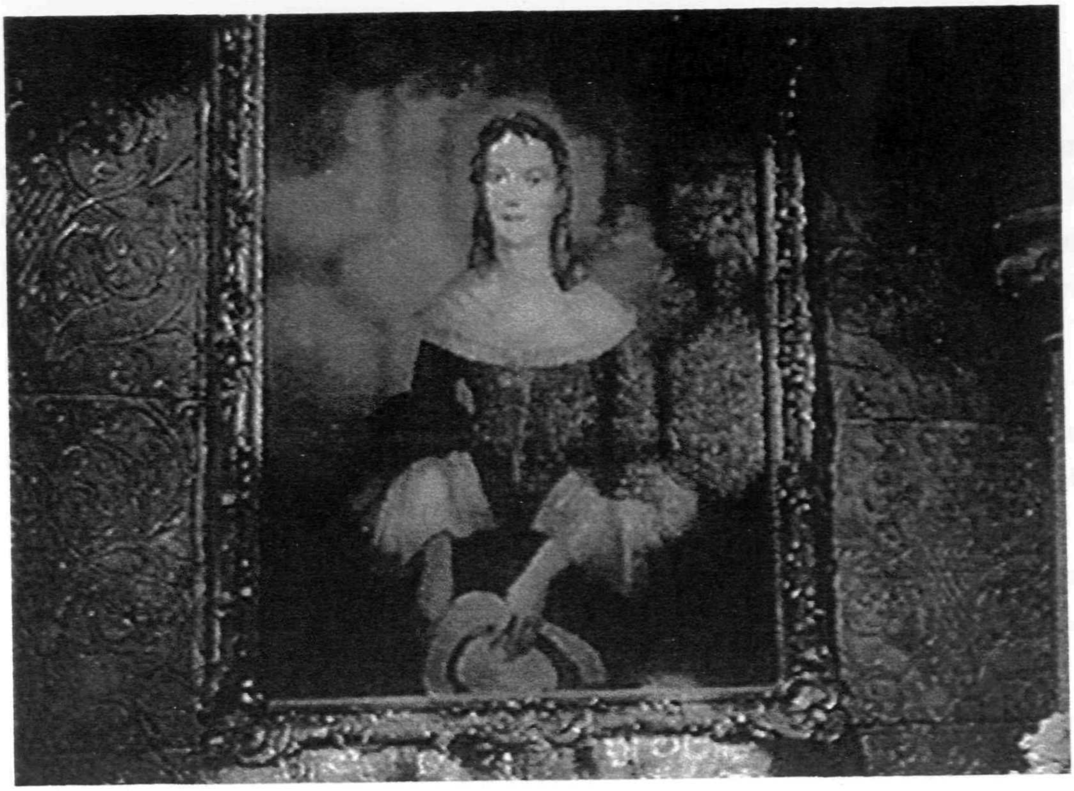


Figure 3.10

This view of the portrait is unusual in that it is not motivated by the diegetic look of a character, in fact it is as though the narrating camera is waiting for the exit of the three characters in order to present an unmediated view of the portrait accompanied by it's subject's musical theme. The view of Azeald reminds the film's audio-viewers of Magda's story and the curse that has been put on Dragonwyck, and the dramatic lighting, motivated by the storm outside, is a device which creates a strong sense of impending doom.

In the scene which follows the portrait of Azeald is strongly associated with the film score, and this is an issue that I pursue in greater detail in Chapter 4. I mention it here for the issues that it raises about the function of portraits in family histories. The view of Azeald dissolves to a clock showing the time as three a.m. and the theme that was heard in the previous scene is picked up in the sound of a woman's voice softly singing accompanied by a harpsichord offscreen. The camera tracks to show Nicholas young daughter Katrine coming down the stairs in her nightgown, followed closely by Miranda. Katrine is being lured by the singing and playing of Azeald which she describes to Miranda at first as beautiful and then as it gets louder and more discordant she becomes frightened. Miranda cannot hear the music, and tries to explain it away as Katrine's dream, but the film's audio-viewers can also hear the singing and music from Katrine's point of experience, and so experience the chilling fusion of music and sound effects that are utilised. The portrait is not shown as the source of the singing and music, but the dissolve from the image of Azeald to this scene, the recurrence of Azeald's theme and the direction of Katrine's attention all indicate that this is an uncanny moment where the dead mistress of Dragonwyck is fulfilling her promise to sing and play whenever disaster comes to the Van Ryns.

Only members of the family with Van Ryn blood can hear the portrait "sing", and the sound is a clear indication of the pathology that has infected the aristocratic identity of the family. Miranda watches Katrine listening to the portrait but she cannot hear it herself. While she does not yet fully comprehend what this means in terms of the Van Ryn dynasty, she notes the incident and uses it to decode Nicholas' behaviour later in the film. Thus the status of family relationships are indicated through the portraits mentioned in *Rebecca*, *Gaslight* and *Dragonwyck*, and this is an issue that is explored in detail in *The Two Mrs Carrolls*, where the gothic male character is an artist. The following section is used to bring together, and consider further, the questions raised above in relation to the use of portraits in gothic women's films.

Family Portraits: *The Two Mrs Carrolls* and "The Angel of Death"

There are several portraits in *The Two Mrs Carrolls*, and Geoffrey Carroll as artist brings issues of portraiture as a representative tradition to the foreground of the narrative. The first painting that we see in the film is an unfinished portrait of Geoffrey's first wife, who is very ill. It is seen during a discussion that Geoffrey has with his daughter Bea about his career as an artist; he complains that the "definite promise" he is reputed to have does not translate into financial success. As they stand and look at the painting Bea says that she thinks that this painting will put him on the map (Figure 3.11). The painting is entitled "The Angel of Death", and Bea thinks that it shows her father's "genius"; she says that the painting is "frightening of course. It makes [her] shiver sometimes, but it's so definitely mother." Although the shot of the picture is brief, Bea's words interpret and direct what we see, and it is clear that it is an unusual portrait. The woman, dressed in a low cut black dress, is staring upwards in terror. The portrait is gothic in style, and quite different from the naturalistic portraits in the other films discussed, but there are similarities in that Mrs Carroll, although still alive at this point in the film, is never seen, and so a comparison of her with her picture is not possible. This is a situation which has parallels with the portraits in *Rebecca*, *Gaslight* and *Dragonwyck*.

Bea's exposition of the painting is disturbingly mature for a child of her age. She not only reads her mother as the 'Angel of Death', but calmly discusses her mother's imminent death with her father : "We both want her to live because we love her so much, but that doesn't mean she will live does it?". The painting is thus strongly identified with her mother and as she has been kept visually absent; in what Bonitzer calls "the blind space"[65] of the film, a strange triangular relationship is set up between Bea, Geoffrey and the painting. The 'Angel of Death' ("so definitely mother"), stands in for her in the family structure, and her husband and daughter converse about the state of the painting in parallel with a discussion about the state of her health. The way that the 'Angel of Death' painting is a representation for a character in the family structure has parallels in other portrait-films and is particularly strongly signalled in gothic-influenced films.

As Joanna Woodall points out in the introduction to her edited collection on portraiture, the way that portraiture has represented the human subject has always been contingent with the historical period in which the portraits were produced; there is no single universal model for what a portrait does or is.[66] Nevertheless there are identifiable and typical ways that portraits have been used in particular periods. In examining the ways that portraits work in gothic women's films we are dealing with the mediation of painted images through cinematic ones: the way that Hollywood produces its idea of portraits and how the cinematic medium shapes the audio-viewers' perception of those portraits. In the production of the gothic films, ideas of portraiture as a representative tradition are drawn on and become part of the cinematic narratives. This means that the specific differences in portraiture at different periods that are identified by art historians may become generalised in the mediation of portraits through films. This is evident in the fact that the family portraits that are found in the gothic women's films allude to an old tradition associated with the collection and display of family portraits, but this allusion is filtered through the presence of the portraits in films of the 1940s.

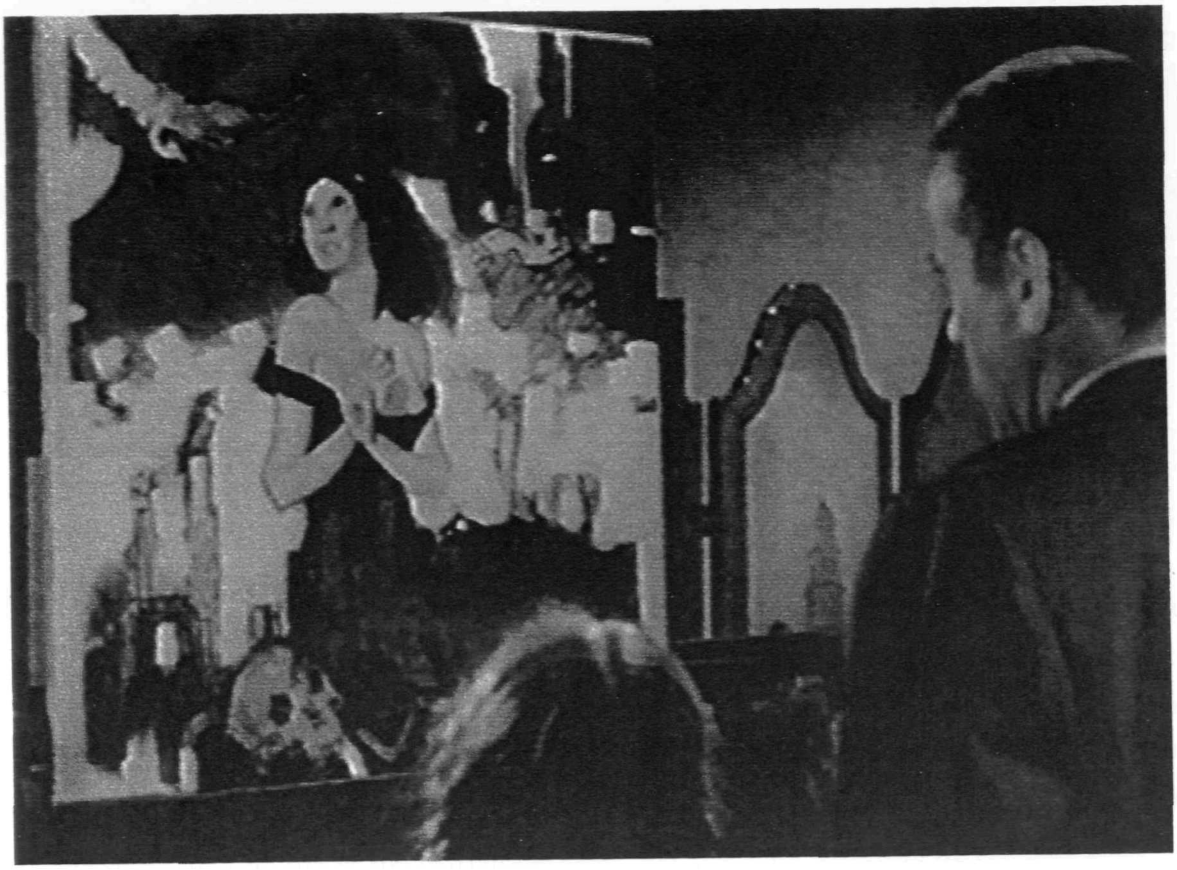


Figure 3.11

Woodall suggests that portraiture had a key role in supporting and disseminating an aristocratic ideology in sixteenth century Europe:

> Portraiture... articulated the patriarchal principle of genealogy upon which aristocratic ideology was built. The authorising relationship between the living model and its imaged likeness was analogous to that between father and son, and processes of emulation presumed identity to be produced through resemblance to a potent prototype... Their uses included arranging dynastic marital alliances, disseminating the image of sovereign power, commemorating and characterising different events and stages of a reign, eliciting the love and reverence due to one's lord, ancestor or relative.[67]

She also points out that the possession of a collection of portraits authorised membership in a noble culture: "the identity of the owner was produced through identification with authoritative predecessors."[68] It is significant that Woodall shows that portraiture supports a patriarchal genealogy, the line of inheritance from "father to son";[69] the portraits in the gothic women's films are all of female ancestors who have had troubled relationships to the line from "father to son". Instead of authorising and stabilising the families' aristocratic or noble identities the gothic cinematic portraits tend to lead to the revelation of family secrets which show the fragility of the patriarchal line. The portraits therefore do not guarantee patriarchal authority, but threaten it.

The notion that images of femininity threaten masculine authority is central to theories of cinematic spectatorship, which draw on Freud's concept of the castration anxiety that the female body represents to the male. In the gothic women's films the portrait images are potentially even more threatening as they represent women who are dead, and the painting of "The Angel of Death" in *The Two Mrs Carrolls* fuses the threat that both death and femininity pose to masculinity as its theme. In Elisabeth Bronfen's influential work on death, representation and femininity she explains how the twin impulses of desire and anxiety are evident in art portraying death. Bronfen suggests that the enduring fascination with images of feminine death is rooted in their portrayal as other, as an alterity away from the self:

> The aesthetic representation of death lets us repress our knowledge of the reality of death precisely because here death occurs *at* someone else's body and *as* an image.
>
> Given, then, that representations of death both articulate an anxiety about and a desire for death, they function like a symptom... any symptom articulates something that is so dangerous to the health of the psyche that it must be repressed and yet so strong in its desire for articulation that it can't be. In a gesture of compromise, the psychic apparatus represents this dangerous and fascinating thing by virtue of a substitution, just as the aesthetic enactment represents death, but at the body of another person and at another site; in the realm of art.[70]

Bronfen shows the fetishistic function of deathly artistic images in covering over and disavowing not just the castrated female body, but death itself as the ultimate castration. Her emphasis on representation as symptom also makes clear the precarious "compromise"[71] that is engaged in: the "dangerous and fascinating thing"[72] is repressed through being represented "at another site",[73] but is always threatening to return through the very representation which structures that repression. In the first brief view that we get of "The Angel of Death" we can see the process of substitution has begun. Geoffrey has painted his first wife as a figure who threatens death to him, and so in his art he draws a correlation between Mrs Carroll in the process of dying and the work of art in progress. The painting disturbingly freezes his wife in the throes of a terrifying and sexualised death; and although it is not yet finished the destination of both the picture and the woman are chillingly clear.

Likeness and Re-presentation

The second view of "The Angel of Death" is motivated by the look of Charles "Penny" Pennington (Pat O'Moore), an old friend of Sally's who was in love with her before she married Geoffrey. Penny comes to visit Sally, and as he waits for her in the living room his attention is drawn by the picture (Figure 3.12). The picture is now finished, and the first Mrs Carroll is dead; Penny's look allows us to resolve our earlier brief impression into a clearer image. The late Mrs Carroll is looking up at two large vultures which are swooping over her, the background shows the ruins of a gothic-style building, and in the left foreground a skull is present. As we watch Penny looking at the painting, Bea's voice is heard from off-screen. We were unaware that she was in the room.

Our view of Penny looking at the painting is from Bea's point-of-view but without the normal cinematic convention of establishing the viewing subject. As in the first view of the painting, Bea's interpretation influences our reading of it. Penny remarks that the painting is "slightly creepy", to which Bea replies that "you get accustomed to it, then you think it's wonderful." She tells Penny that the painting is of her dead mother, and analyses the style of the painting: "It isn't exactly like mother because it isn't a portrait. Yet it is like her too. Father says its representational."

Bea's discussion of the extent to which the painting is a likeness of her mother becomes a discussion of its status as art. Likeness is one of the defining characteristics of portraiture; Woodall defines naturalistic portraiture as "a physiognomic likeness which is seen to refer to the identity of the living or once-living person depicted"[74] and later in her discussion she cites classical and neo-classical understandings of the way that portraiture can re-present an absent subject:

> The desire which lies at the heart of naturalistic portraiture is to overcome separation: to render a subject distant in time, space, spirit, eternally present. It is assumed that a 'good' likeness will perpetually unite the identities to which it

> refers. This imperative has been appreciated since antiquity. For Aristotle, portraiture epitomised representation in its literal and definitive sense of making present again: re-presentation.... For him, a proper illusion of the bodily self necessarily entailed a sense of the presence of the person depicted.[75]

In all four gothic women's films examined the portraits' function as a likeness for the woman in the past is complicated by the fact that the portrait is also like the gothic heroine; it is a double representation. It is also complicated by the way the portraits commemorate a female ancestor but by doing so they recall a secret in the past which has been repressed. The power of a portrait to re-present the subject filtered through the gothic narrative what is "ma[de] present again"[76] is not (in terms of the gothic family dynasty headed by the gothic male) pleasurable but a terrifying return of the repressed.

What is clear is that the power to re-present a subject, considered a desirable feature of the classical portrait, is framed differently in the way that portraits are seen in the gothic women's films. In these films the gothic theme of a past which intrudes on the present is exploited through an ambivalent attitude to imagistic representation. The commemoration or even preservation of the dead through images is traced by art historian David Piper back to ancient Egyptian beliefs "that if the physical identity could be preserved after death, the spirit might enter back into it."[77] He elaborates:

> The very ancient Egyptian tradition is clearly rooted in magic and religion; in the belief specifically that the spirit of the dead would be in need of a lasting physical identity, to which it could return, and re-inhabit. For this it would need a familiar home, so the necessity for a likeness if not a facsimile (or the actual body mummified) was paramount.[78]

The themes of the dead returning to a "familiar home",[79] and the double's relationship to death, are themes that are tackled in Freud's work 'The Uncanny'. Freud's essay is a detailed exploration of the uncanny in literature, but his work is much more than a taxonomy of uncanny objects, or uncanny themes in stories, as he progresses from an examination of definitions of the uncanny to a discussion of how the uncanny works as a process of producing feelings in the reader. In other words Freud moves between discussing what the uncanny *is* and the way that the uncanny *works* as a textual strategy. This move between definition and shaping strategy is one which has parallels with the semantic shift that I identified in relation to frames and framing in my introductory chapter.

Freud suggests that the theme of the double in literature often indicates an ambivalent relationship of subjects to themselves, and to death. He refers to Otto Rank's work on the double,[80] and suggests that "the 'double' was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an 'energetic denial of the power of death', as Rank says; and probably the 'immortal' soul was the first 'double' of the body."[81] Freud refers to ancient Egyptian practices of image-making as a way of 'denying' death, and draws a parallel with childhood conceptions of immortality, "such ideas... have sprung from the soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissism which dominates the mind of the child and of primitive (sic) man".[82] However, the ambivalence of this relationship comes into play later in the child's development, "when this stage has been surmounted, the 'double' reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death."[83]

The shift that Freud identifies as occurring between the double as reassuring and the double as threatening is relevant to the use of portraits in the gothic films. As I indicated with reference to Woodall's work, portraiture has been perceived as a guarantee against separation but its power to make-present-again is, in the gothic context, an uncanny and disturbing power. Generic elements of the gothic narrative allow this shift to take place, they frame the representative functions of portraiture in an uncanny light. The double is of the same order as the "substitution" that Bronfen finds commonly used in aesthetic representations of death, so that the double is similar to the fetish object in that it provides a 'cover' which allows the subject to disavow a terrible prospect, in the case of the fetishist the disavowal is of female castration, in the case of artistic representations of death the disavowal is of the subject's own death. However, the process of disavowal is always accompanied by an element of danger; the very presence of the 'cover', as fetish object or deathly artistic representation insistently signals the possibility of revealing or returning the subject to what 'he' has repressed. Bronfen discusses this return as follows, and she illustrates that death and femininity have been interconnected as central symbols of what is disavowed, since "both involve the uncanny return of the repressed, the excess beyond the text".[84] This excess is stabilised through representation, and Bronfen explores the double meaning of the term, which is both metaphorical in the sense that "a symptom, a dream or an artistic image ...stands for, by making present again, another concept"[85] and metonymic "in the political sense of standing in for, in lieu of, someone or something else".[86] Bronfen continues:

> The threat that death and femininity pose is recuperated by representation, staging absence as a form of re-presence, or return, even if or rather precisely because this means appeasing the threat of real mortality, of sexual insufficiency, of lack of plenitude and wholeness. And yet the 're' of return, repetition or recuperation suggests that the end point is not the same as the point of departure.[87]

The work of Bronfen and Piper suggests that the return of the repressed in the gothic women's films begins at the site/sight of the paintings. In *The Two Mrs Carrolls* this return is acutely defined through the style of the pictures of the first Mrs Carroll, and a later picture that Geoffrey paints of Sally (Figure 3.13). Carroll's representation of his wives are portraits, but their inexact likeness to their subjects, functions to allow Carroll to represent death "at the body of another person and at another site; in the realm of art".[88] His wives' deaths are directly related to his life as a painter, the 'life' in his work.

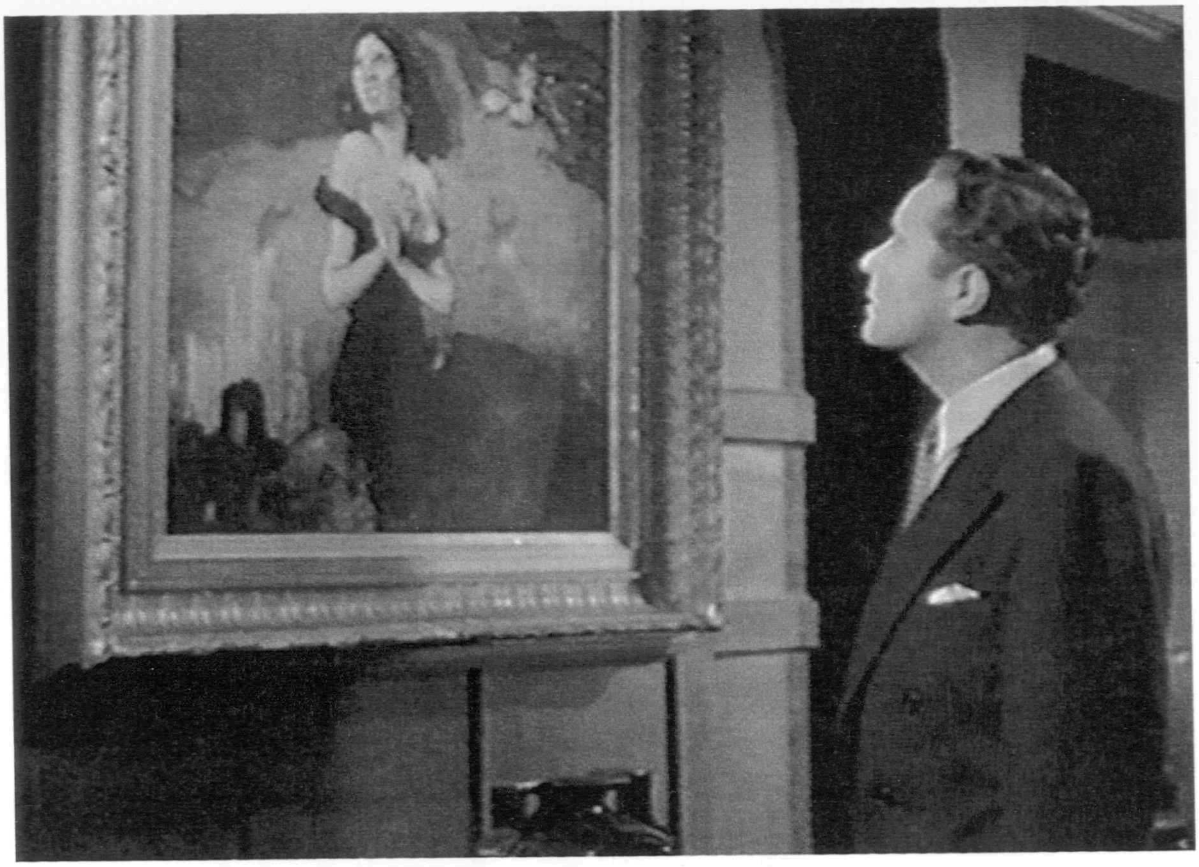


Figure 3.12

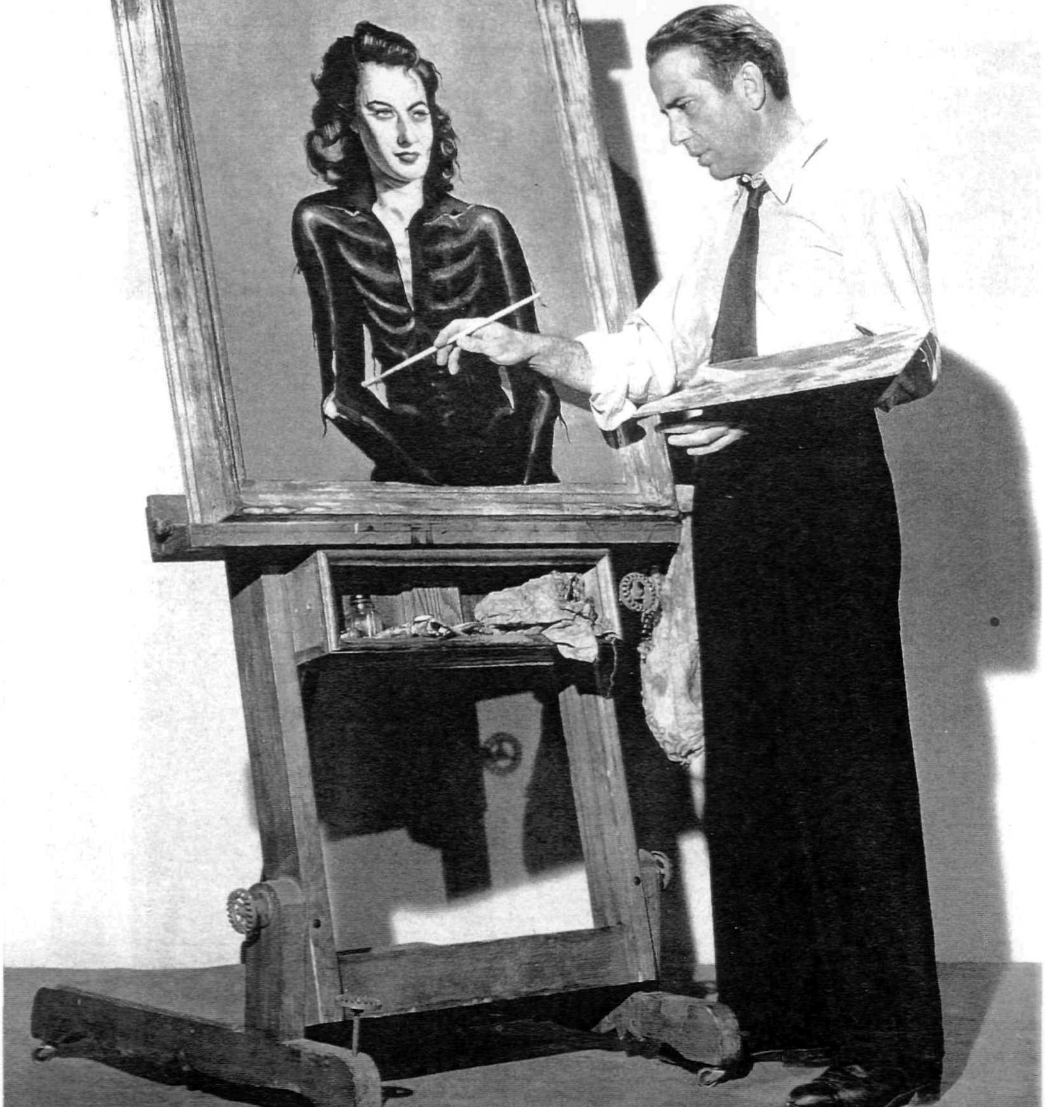


Figure 3.13

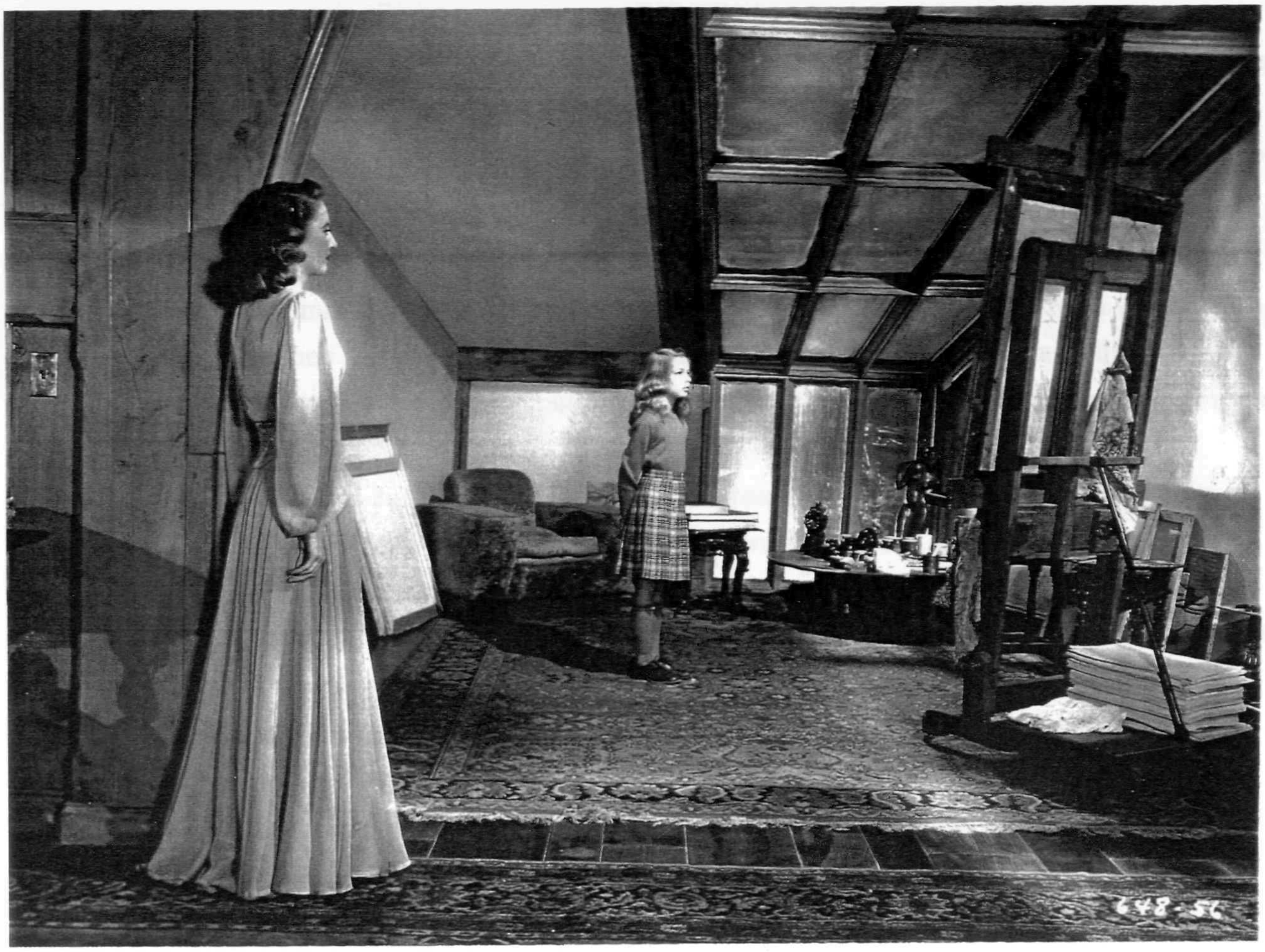


Figure 3.14

At the denouement of the film Sally pleads for her life offering Carroll "anything (he) wants", but he says "You must understand, it happened before, then I found you and you made my work live again. But now there's nothing more from you so I must find someone new." Carroll's wives must die, their deaths in reality represented in paint, for Carroll's work to "live again". Once Sally has seen his new painting of her, and learned more of the death of the first Mrs Carroll, the repeating pattern of portraying and murdering becomes clear (Figure 3.14).

The paintings curiously reverse the usual process of having a memorial painted to remember the loved dead person *after* their death, prefiguring the deaths of the two Mrs Carrolls. These are not paintings as memorials (looking back), but as anticipations (looking forward). Carroll is longing to be rid of Sally so he can travel to South America with his new love Cecily Latham (Alexis Smith), but he is looking forward to *forgetting* his previous wives. This is indicated in his representation of both women as gaunt, wasting figures suffering a kind of living death, their bodily decay (the decay of Geoffrey's love for them) already occurring in the portrait-double before their real deaths in the narrative. A similar relation is evident in the 1940s film *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Albert Lewin, 1945, USA) where the picture anticipates (takes on) Dorian's physical decay. Geoffrey is hastening the deaths of his wives as his process of painting them, and poisoning them, progress at the same time; they die for his art. Here his art is not preservative, but destructive. There are also interesting parallels here with Edgar Allan Poe's story 'The Oval Portrait', which tells of an artist who is married to his art, to the extent that when he undertakes to paint a portrait of his new bride his absorption in her recreation in paint completely takes him over, and his 'real' wife pines away.[89] Bronfen gives a fascinating reading of the paradoxical shifts that occur in Poe's story between the artist as creator and destroyer:

> Poe's story comes to express the tragic paradox that the resulting portrait alternates between destruction and preservation. The woman, representative of natural materiality, simultaneously figures as an aesthetic risk, as a presence endangering the artwork, so that as the portrait's double she must be removed. She is after all his second, not his first bride. At the same time it is the woman's material-body upon which the effect of the aesthetic risk is carried through. A form of creation which seeks to recede from the ephemerality and death of bodily materiality can achieve this only by deanimating the organic body. For the masculine artist, incorporating the feminine power of creation engenders and requires the decorporalisation of the woman who had inspired the artist as model and whose capacities to give birth are what the painting sessions imitate.[90]

The two Mrs Carrolls are similarly both created and destroyed in the image of their portraits. Instead of a portrait being a likeness taken from a living subject, the portraits become more lifelike as the subjects that they represent enter into death. The representation of them as in the throes of a sexualised death, both terrified and terrifying, suggests the function of the pictures as symptoms; Geoffrey paints his wives as embodiments of death (their own), but also symbolically as the threat they pose to his artistic and masculine authority.[91] The dominance of the picture of the first Mrs Carroll in the mise-en-scène suggests this threat, and the way that symptoms insistently signal the repressed: "any symptom articulates something that is so dangerous to the health of the psyche that it must be repressed and yet so strong in its desire for articulation that it can't be."[92]

In the gothic women's films the issue of the portraits as a likeness of the woman in the past is complicated by the fact that the portrait is also a likeness of the heroine. The return of the woman in the past thus takes place through the heroine, who is in her place. The image of the woman in the past thus threatens to overtake and obliterate the heroine's own image. The living woman is thus shaped towards the portrait image, as evident in *Rebecca*, and in a more sinister way *The Two Mrs Carrolls*. A reversal takes place where the heroine is made like the portrait, rather than the portrait being made as a likeness of the heroine. Further, the gothic male often has murderous plans to put the heroine in the present into the place of the women in the past, to make her suffer the same fate, as in *Gaslight*, *Dragonwyck* and *The Two Mrs Carrolls*. In encountering the portrait of her predecessor, or in the case of *The Two Mrs Carrolls* her own portrait, the gothic heroine is engaged in a bitter struggle for self-determination, a struggle not to be overcome by the re-emergence of the woman in the past. She survives this struggle and breaks the pattern that her husband threatens to repeat with her by determining his relationship to the woman in the past, and this occurs through scenarios of confrontation or confession examined in the next chapter.

NOTES

[1] PLOT SYNOPSIS, *REBECCA*:

A young woman (Joan Fontaine), who is never named in the film, is employed as the companion of an older woman, Mrs Van Hopper. While they are visiting Monte Carlo the young woman meets the handsome and mysterious widower, Maxim de Winter (Laurence Olivier). His wife, Rebecca, has died in a sailing accident. Maxim befriends the young woman, and abruptly proposes marriage to her to prevent her leaving for America with Mrs Van Hopper. They wed and return to Maxim's large, and to the inexperienced young woman, forbidding, country estate - Manderley. Settling in to life as the lady of a great house is made even more difficult for the young woman by the constant reminders of Rebecca that surround her everywhere; and Rebecca's devoted housekeeper, Mrs Danvers (Judith Anderson) does all she can to remind the young woman of the heritage of "the first Mrs de Winter". The heroine becomes convinced that Maxim is still mourning for Rebecca, and that he regrets his second marriage to her, and the discovery of Rebecca's boat with her body in it will bring memories of her back all the more forcefully. But during a confrontation in Rebecca's cottage on the estate Maxim tells the heroine that Rebecca was a manipulative and promiscuous woman with whom he was very unhappy. He also tells her that on the night of Rebecca's death they had argued, and striking Rebecca he had been indirectly involved in her death, which he covered up by putting her body in her boat and scuttling it. A second inquest into Rebecca's death has to be held, Maxim's case seems hopeless, especially as Rebecca's cousin, Jack Favell (George Sanders) with whom she was having an affair, suspects that Maxim is involved in her death. Maxim is cleared when it emerges that Rebecca had visited a doctor the day that she died, who had diagnosed that she was terminally ill with cancer. Knowing she was going to die, Rebecca had provoked Maxim into violence in order to frame him for her murder. With the past resolved the way looks clear for the heroine and Maxim to finally be happy together, but Mrs Danvers seeks vengeance and sets fire to Manderley, intending to kill the heroine. She escapes, and Mrs Danvers perishes in Rebecca's bedroom, but the de Winter dynasty lies in ruins.

[2] PLOT SYNOPSIS, *GASLIGHT*:

Paula Alquist (Ingrid Bergman) grows up in the London house of her aunt Alice Alquist, a famous opera singer. Alice is murdered in mysterious circumstances, leaving her estate to the young Paula. Paula leaves London and spends some time in Italy, where she falls in love with and quickly marries Gregory Anton (Charles Boyer) the accompanist of her singing tutor, Signor Guardi (Emil Rameau). They return to London and open up Paula's house in Thornton Square which has been closed for several years. At first Paula is happy, and Gregory seems devoted to her, but as time passes he becomes more possessive and convinces her that she is going mad. Treasured possessions of Paula's seem to disappear, she hears strange sounds from the attic where Alice's things have been stored, and the gaslights in the house die down and flare up unexpectedly. Brian Cameron (Joseph Cotten), an admirer of Alice Alquist and a detective, has spotted Paula on a rare excursion outside the house. Struck by her similarity to her aunt he inquires about her and finds that the case of Alice's murder was never solved. He becomes suspicious of Gregory, who spends every evening out of the house, and eventually gains access to the house to see Paula. She is very nervous, but he gains her trust when he too hears the noises from the attic and sees the gas go up and down. He realises that it is Gregory searching through Alice's possessions for a set of priceless jewels given to her by a Russian Tsar. Brian arrests Gregory, but before he takes him away Paula insists that she speak to him alone. She berates him with his cruel treatment of her, and then calls Brian to take him away. The ending of the film hints of the possibility of a romance between Brian and Paula.

[3] **PLOT SYNOPSIS, *DRAGONWYCK*:**
Miranda Wells (Gene Tierney) is the daughter of a farming family living in Connecticut in the mid nineteenth century. She longs to escape the puritanism of her country life and so when a letter arrives from a distant aristocratic cousin (by marriage) Nicholas Van Ryn (Vincent Price) inviting her to act as governess to his daughter at his family estate, Dragonwyck, she is very excited. Nicholas initiates her into the society and customs of the Patroon. The Patroons are Dutch settlers in America, bringing with them feudal customs including an annual payment of a tithe and a pledge of loyalty to the Patroon, which their tenant farmers bitterly resent. When Johanna Van Ryn (Vivienne Osborne) dies suddenly Nicholas intimates to Miranda that he loves her, but she returns to her family. However she does not settle back to life in Connecticut, and Nicholas soon comes to win her back. They marry and Miranda becomes mistress of Dragonwyck, the position she has coveted. Soon she is expecting a child, but the baby boy dies a few hours after he is born. Nicholas begins to spend days alone in his tower room. With the support of her faithful maid Peggy O'Malley (Jessica Tandy) Miranda goes up to the tower room to confront her husband. He tells her that he is addicted to drugs which allow him to indulge his fantasies of omnipotence. Their relationship deteriorates further, and Miranda falls sick in a similar way to the first Mrs Van Ryn. Peggy summons Dr Jeff Turner (Glenn Langan) who realises that Nicholas is poisoning her the same way that he poisoned his first wife, with an oleander plant. Jeff and Nicholas fight, and Nicholas escapes and goes to the ancient stone throne of the Patroon, hallucinating the presence of his tenant farmers. Jeff and Miranda arrive with help to arrest Nicholas but when he fires a gun at the group he is killed. The conclusion of the story indicates a developing romance between Jeff and Miranda.

[4] **PLOT SYNOPSIS, *THE TWO MRS CARROLLS*:**
Sally Morton (Barbara Stanwyck) accompanies artist Geoffrey Carroll (Humphrey Bogart) on a painting trip to Scotland, unaware that he is already married. When she discovers a letter to his wife he explains that she is an invalid and that he is asking for a divorce. Sally leaves him, and Geoffrey returns to London, where his wife falls seriously ill. Geoffrey has nearly completed a strange painting of her entitled 'The Angel of Death', which he views with his daughter Bea (Ann Carter). The action moves on to show Sally and Geoffrey now married and living in Sally's house in Ashton. They socialise with an old friend and sweetheart of Sally's, Charles 'Penny' Pennington (Pat O'Moore) and a client of his the glamourous Cecily Latham (Alexis Smith). Cecily and Geoffrey start an affair and she wants him to leave Sally and come with her to South America, but Geoffrey seems tied as Sally has been suffering from an illness which her doctor cannot adequately diagnose. He is also painting a picture of her that he will not show to anyone. Geoffrey decides to send Bea away to school, and while Sally is helping her pack they talk about Bea's mother. Bea reveals that she was a very healthy woman, except for her final illness, not an invalid, as Geoffrey had told Sally. Sally realises that Geoffrey is slowly poisoning her, as he did his first wife, and she and Bea go to his studio to see the new painting of Sally. It is in the same strange gothic style as the 'Angel of Death' painting, and indicates Geoffrey's intention to kill Sally. When Geoffrey realises that Sally knows the truth he tries to strangle her, but Sally has called Penny, who arrives just in time with the police They arrest Geoffrey and decline his offer of a glass of milk before they take him into custody.

[5] Thomas Elsaesser, 'Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama', *Monogram*, 4 (1972), 2-15, reprinted in Christine Gledhill, ed. Home is Where the Heart is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film (London: BFI, 1987), p. 59.

[6] Diane Waldman, '"At last I can tell it to someone!": Feminine Point of View and Subjectivity in the Gothic Romance Film of the 1940s', *Cinema Journal*, 23 (2) (1983), 29-40, p. 29

[7] Tania Modleski, Loving with a Vengeance: Mass Produced Fantasies for Women (New York and London: Methuen, 1984), p. 21.

[8] Mary Ann Doane, The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s (London: Macmillan, 1987) p. 123.

[9] Andrew Britton, *Movie* 31/32 (1990), cited by Michael Walker in '*Secret Beyond the Door*' *Movie*, 34/35 (1990), 16-30, p. 17.

[10] Krutnik, In a Lonely Street, p. 17.

[11] Neale, Genre and Hollywood, p. 43.

[12] Tzvetan Todorov, Genres in Discourse, trans. C. Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 17, cited in Neale, Genre and Hollywood, p. 42.

[13] Neale, Genre and Hollywood, p. 43.

[14] Michael Walker, '*Secret Beyond the Door*', p. 16. Other critics citing *Rebecca* as initiating the group are Doane, The Desire to Desire, p. 123; John Fletcher, 'Primal scenes and the female gothic: *Rebecca* and *Gaslight*', *Screen*, 36 (4) (1995), 341-370, p. 345; and Thomas Schatz, Boom and Bust, p. 233.

[15] Ellen Moers, Literary Women (1963; London: The Women's Press, 1980), p. 90.

[16] Moers, Literary Women, p. 90.

[17] Moers, Literary Women, p. 91.

[18] See Walker, 'Secret Beyond the Door', p. 17.

[19] See Walker, 'Secret Beyond the Door', p. 18-19; and Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', pp. 150-154.

[20] Modleski, Loving with a Vengeance, p. 21. See also Alison Light, '"Returning to Manderley" - Romance Fiction, Female Sexuality and Class', *Feminist Review*, 16 (1984), 7-25.

[21] The pressbooks for both films encourage exhibitors to emphasise the connection between book and film, and several of the poster designs include a small image of the novel. Thomas Schatz discusses Selznick's plans to produce a version of Jane Eyre: "Selznick's interest in the property began with Rebecca, which he considered a veiled adaptation of Jane Eyre. The success of Du Maurier's novel and Selznick's adaptation inspired a series of film melodramas, to the point where a "Jane Eyre" formula was emerging in Hollywood during the early 1940s although the novel itself had yet to be adapted. A succession of moody love stories, including *Suspicion*, were created in Hollywood that turned on the same basic premise: a naive young heroine falls in love with a wealthy, captivating, but mysterious older gentleman who seems to be hiding something - not only in his past but is some secluded wing of the family mansion as well." The Genius of the System: Hollywood Film-making in the Studio Era (1989; London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. 327. Schatz also documents the negotiations for the acquisition of Rebecca as a property by Selznick, and a history of the film's production, pp. 273-294; see also Leonard J Leff, Hitchcock and Selznick (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987) pp. 37-84.

[22] The following is not a definitive list of all gothic or gothic-influenced films produced in the 1940s, but it is a list of films most frequently cited by critics as typical of the gothic woman's film. It is therefore a compilation of citations from Waldman, '"At last I can tell it

to someone!'", p. 39; Doane, The Desire to Desire, p. 194; and Walker '*Secret Beyond the Door*', p. 16. I have also indicated * where women were involved in the writing of a film's screenplay or source material.

Rebecca (dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1940)*
Screenplay by Joan Harrison and Robert E Sherwood from the novel by Daphne du Maurier, adaptation by Philip MacDonald and Michael Hogan.
The Man I Married aka *I Married a Nazi* (dir. Irving Pichel, 1941)
Screenplay by Oliver Garret from the novel Swastika by Oscar Shisgau.
Suspicion (dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1941)*
Screenplay by Joan Harrison, Samson Raphaelson and Alma Reville from the novel Before the Fact by Francis Iles.
Shadow of a Doubt (dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1943)*
Screenplay by Sally Benson, Alma Reville and Thornton Wilder based on an original story by Gordon McDonell.
Dark Waters(dir. Andre de Toth, 1944)*
Screenplay by Marian Cockrell and Joan Harrison from a story by Frank and Marian Cockrell.
Experiment Perilous (dir. Jacques Tourneur, 1944)*
Screenplay by Warren Duff, from a novel by Margaret Carpenter.
Gaslight (dir. George Cukor, 1944)
Screenplay by John Van Druten, John L Balderston and Walter Reisch based on the play by Patrick Hamilton.
Jane Eyre (dir. Robert Stevenson, 1944)*
Screenplay by Aldous Huxley, John Houseman and Robert Stevenson based on the novel by Charlotte Bronte.
The Uninvited (dir. Lewis Allen, 1944)*
Screenplay by Dodie Smith based on the novel by Dorothy McCardle.
Notorious (dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1946)
Screenplay by Ben Hecht.
Shock (dir. Afred Werk, 1946)
Screenplay by Eugene Ling.
Dragonwyck (dir. Joseph L Mankiewicz, 1946)*
Screenplay by Joseph L Mankiewicz from the novel by Anya Seton.
The Spiral Staircase (dir. Robert Siodmak, 1946)*
Screenplay by Mel Dinelli from the novel Some Must Watch by Ethel Lina White.
The Stranger (dir. Orson Welles, 1946)
Screenplay by Anthony Veiller adapted by Decla Dunning and Victor Trivas from an original idea by Victor Trivas.
Undercurrent (dir. Vincente Minelli, 1946)*
Screenplay by Edward Chodorow with contributions from Marguerite Roberts (and uncredited George Oppenheimer) from the novel You Were There by Thelma Strabel.
Sleep My Love (dir. Douglas Sirk, 1947)
Screenplay by St Clair McKelway and Leo Rosten with contributions by Decla Dunning and Cyril Enfield, from the novel by Leo Rosten.
Secret Beyond the Door (dir. Fritz Lang, 1947)*
Screenplay by Silvia Richards.
The Two Mrs Carrolls (dir. Peter Godfrey, 1947)
Screenplay by Thomas Job from the play by Martin Vale.
Sorry Wrong Number (dir. Anatole Litvak, 1948)*

Screenplay by Lucille Fletcher, from her radio play.
A Woman's Vengeance (dir. Zoltan Korda, 1948)
Screenplay by Aldous Huxley from the story and play 'The Giaconda Smile' by Aldous Huxley.
Caught (dir. Max Ophuls, 1949)*
Screenplay by Arthur Laurents, from the novel Wild Calendar by Libbie Block.
Under Capricorn (dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1949)*
Screenplay by James Bridie, John Cotton and Margaret Linden, based on the novel by Helen Simpson, adaptation by Hume Cronyn.
Whirlpool (dir. Otto Preminger, 1949)
Screenplay by Lester Barlow (=Ben Hecht) and Andrew Solt from novel by Guy Endore.

[23] Waldman, '"At last I can tell it to someone!"', p. 29.

[24] Waldman, '"At last I can tell it to someone!"', pp. 29-30.

[25] Walker, '*Secret Beyond the Door*', p. 18.

[26] See Modleski, Loving With a Vengeance, pp. 21-22; Karen Hollinger, 'The Female Oedipal Drama of *Rebecca* from Novel to Film', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 14 (4) (1993), 17-30, p. 17; and Joanna Russ, 'Somebody's Trying to Kill Me and I Think It's My Husband', in The Female Gothic, ed. by Juliann E Fleenor (Montreal and London: Eden Press, 1983).

[27] Modleski, Loving With a Vengeance, pp. 21-22, original emphases.

[28] Waldman, '"At last I can tell it to someone!"', p. 31.

[29] Waldman, '"At last I can tell it to someone!"', p. 31, my emphasis.

[30] Doane, The Desire to Desire, p. 123.

[31] Doane, The Desire to Desire, p. 179.

[32] Sigmund Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' (1905), in Penguin Freud Library Volume 7: On Sexuality, ed. by Angela Richards (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 71.

[33] Freud, 'Three Essays', p. 73.

[34] Cook, 'No fixed address: the women's picture from *Outrage* to *Blue Steel*' in Contemporary Hollywood Cinema ed. by Steve Neale and Murray Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 235.

[35] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 133.

[36] Waldman, '"At last I can tell it to someone!"', p. 30.

[37] Walker, '*Secret Beyond the Door*', p. 19.

[38] Marina Warner, 'The Uses of Enchantment', in Cinema and the Realms of Enchantment: Lectures, Seminars and Essays by Marina Warners and Others, BFI Working Papers ed. by Duncan Petrie (London: BFI, 1993), p. 29.

[39] Warner, 'The Uses of Enchantment', p. 30.

[40] François Truffaut, Hitchcock, Revised Edition with the collaboration of Helen G Scott (New York: Touchstone, Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 132.

[41] Truffaut, Hitchcock, p. 132, original emphasis.

[42] Kristin Thompson discusses a similar continuation of dream-like narration in her discussion of *Laura*. See 'Closure Within a Dream: Point-of-View in *Laura*', p. 90.

[43] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 138; see also Hollinger, '*Film Noir*, Voice-over and the Femme Fatale', pp. 243-259.

[44] Susan Hayward, Key Concepts in Cinema Studies (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 86.

[45] Hayward, Key Concepts, pp. 86-87.

[46] Warner, 'The Uses of Enchantment', p. 30.

[47] Warner, 'The Uses of Enchantment', p. 30.

[48] Warner, 'The Uses of Enchantment', p. 30.

[49] Producer David O Selznick had wanted the final shot of the film to be "an image of smoke forming a gigantic *R* against the heavens." Leff, Hitchcock and Selznick, p. 77, but Hitchcock prevailed on this point.

[50] For a discussion of the sexual implications of the connection between Mrs Danvers and her former mistress see Patricia White, 'Female Spectator, Lesbian Specter: *The Haunting*', in inside/out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories, ed. by Diana Fuss (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 167-169; John Fletcher, 'Primal scenes and the female gothic: *Rebecca* and *Gaslight*', *Screen*, 36 (4) (1995), 341-370, pp. 350-355; and Richard Dyer, 'Postscript: Queers and Women in Film Noir', in Women and Film Noir: New Edition, ed. by E Ann Kaplan (London: BFI, 1998), p. 126.

[51] Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 52.

[52] Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 52.

[53] Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 53.

[54] Pascal Bonitzer, 'Partial Vision: Film and the Labyrinth', trans. Fabrice Ziolkowski, *Wide Angle*, 4 (4) (1981), p. 58, cited in Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 53.

[55] Doane, The Desire to Desire, p. 163.

[56] Doane, The Desire to Desire, pp. 163-166, Doane also compares this sequence to a similar one in *Caught* (1949).

[57] Doane, The Desire to Desire, pp. 167-168.

[58] Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 45.

[59] Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 50.

[60] Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 46.

[61] Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 50.

[62] Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 50, original emphases.

[63] Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 50, original emphases.

[64] Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 45.

[65] Bonitzer, 'Partial Vision: Film and the Labyrinth', p. 58, cited in Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 53.

[66] Joanna Woodall, 'Introduction: facing the subject', in Portraiture: Facing the subject, ed. by Woodall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 1.

[67] Woodall, 'Introduction: facing the subject', p. 3.

[68] Woodall, 'Introduction: facing the subject', p. 2.

[69] Woodall, 'Introduction: facing the subject', p. 3.

[70] Elisabeth Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body: Death, femininity and the aesthetic (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. x.

[71] Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. x.

[72] Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. x.

[73] Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. x.

[74] Woodall, 'Introduction: facing the subject', p. 1.

[75] Woodall, 'Introduction: facing the subject', p. 8. Woodall cites Aristotles's *Poetics*, iv 3; iv 8; xv 8.

[76] Woodall, 'Introduction: facing the subject', p. 8.

[77] David Piper, Personality and the Portrait (London: BBC Publications, 1973), p. 11.

[78] Piper, Personality and the Portrait, p. 11. André Bazin also discusses the role of images of the dead in ancient cultures in 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', in What Is Cinema?: Volume I, pp. 9-10.

[79] Piper, Personality and the Portrait, p. 11.

[80] Otto Rank, The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study, ed. and trans. by Harry Tucker, JR. (London: Maresfield Library, 1989).

[81] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), reprinted in Penguin Freud Library Volume 14: Art and Literature, ed. by Albert Dickson (1985; London: Peguin, 1990), p. 356.

[82] Freud, 'The Uncanny', p. 357.

[83] Freud, 'The Uncanny', p. 357.

[84] Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. xii.

[85] Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. xii.

[86] Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. xii.

[87] Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. xii.

[88] Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. x.

[89] Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Oval Portrait', in Tales of Mystery and Imagination (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1993).

[90] Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. 112.

[91] The production of a work of art which portrays the moment of a woman's death has parallels with films made by Mark Lewis (Karl Böhm) in *Peeping Tom* (Michael Powell, GB, 1960).

[92] Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. x.

PART 2: THE GOTHIC WOMAN'S FILM

CHAPTER 4: HAUNTING IMAGES: MASCULINITY AND POSSESSION IN THE GOTHIC WOMAN'S FILM

I ended the previous chapter by examining the trope of the returning past in the gothic woman's film. A secret from the past is signalled to the gothic heroine through the presence of portraits of a woman who has a significant role in the past of her husband, either directly in his sexual past or more indirectly as a figure representing family scandal. In this chapter I continue to examine the way that the gothic heroine uncovers her husband's past by examining scenes of confrontation and confession. Where the previous chapter analysed the use of painted images to figure and re-present the past, this chapter will examine the ways that sound and music contribute to revealing the past.

Confession and Confrontation: Sounding Out the Gothic Male

"Bringing it all back again" Recalling Rebecca

Rebecca's masquerade ball, a disastrous experience for the film's heroine, is interrupted by a ship running aground on rocks near Manderley. When divers go down to recover the ship they find Rebecca's boat with her body in it. Rebecca's uncanny "appearance" at the masquerade ball through an overlaying of her image onto the heroine is thus swiftly matched by the re-appearance of her dead body. But she does not only come back through image and plot, she also returns to haunt the film through the sound and music. The sequence of the film in which Rebecca most potently makes her sonic presence felt is the scene in her cottage where Maxim tells the heroine about the last night of Rebecca's life.

The scene is structured around Maxim's story of his marriage to Rebecca, including the shocking revelation that he didn't love Rebecca, but hated her. Through Maxim's narration she is both revealed and reviled as a demanding, promiscuous woman; he says he was "carried away by her, enchanted by her as everyone was" but that he "never had a moment's happiness with her: she was incapable of love, or tenderness, or decency." Maxim's narration reveals more than Rebecca's real nature, it also reveals how much he was dominated and manipulated by her. The vehemence with which he talks about her, and the "rotten fraud" of their marriage, suggests his shame at his submission to her. He tells of how Rebecca struck a "dirty bargain" with him on their honeymoon, she agreed to "play the part of the devoted wife, mistress of [his] precious Manderley" while he agreed not to "give her away", to expose her love affairs in a divorce case. Maxim's denouncement of Rebecca sets the tone for his confession of his part in her death.

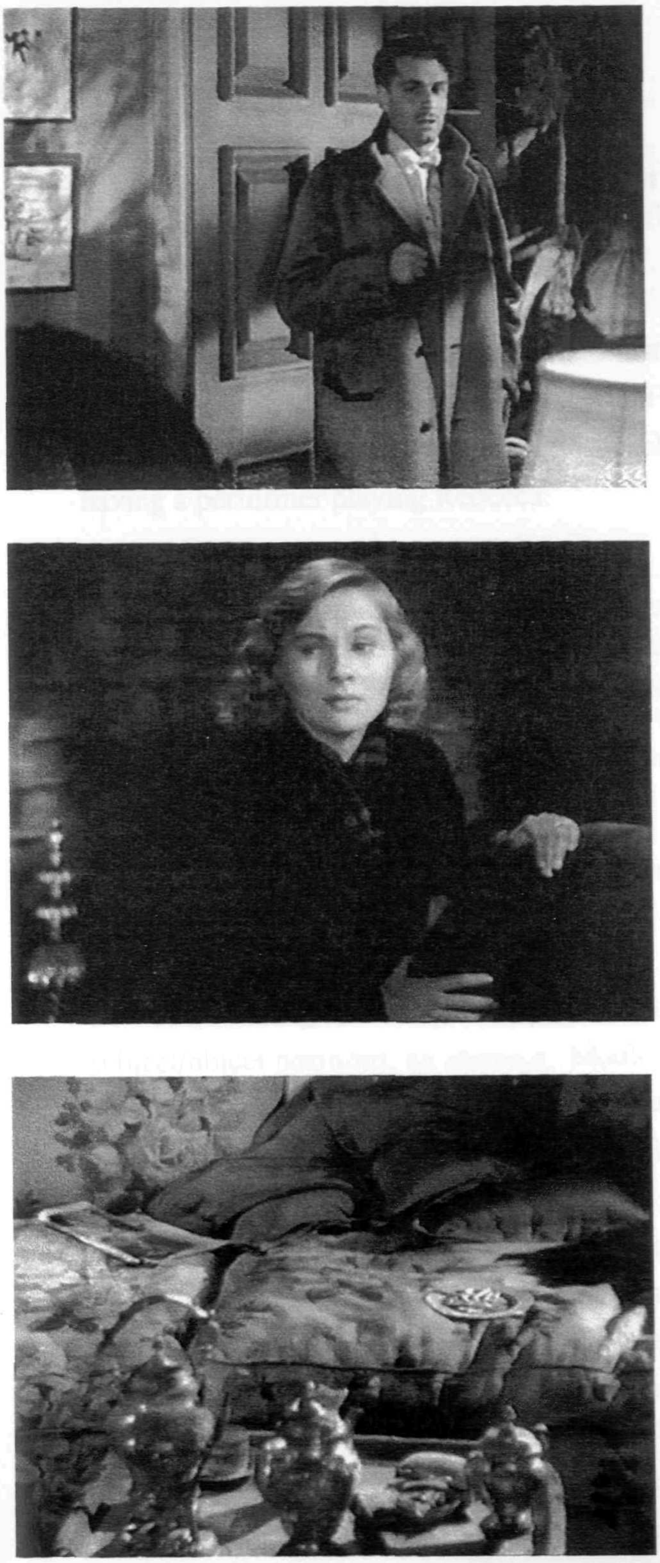
Rebecca's death provides a culmination to the larger story of the marriage, but it also works as a discrete narrative on its own, with a marked opening "One night". It is divided off from the rest of the scene in its narrational and cinematographic style: Maxim's very dramatic voice-over is combined with a long tracking shot which replays Rebecca's movements, but with no embodied character in the frame. This narration is given an immediacy as he becomes completely immersed in his story as if it were replaying for him; he does not simply tell the heroine what happened, he partially acts out the events, moving around to place himself in the scene and gesturing with his hands. At the beginning of the story he moves across the room to stand in the doorway, thus putting himself in position to make his entrance to the murder scene (Figure 4.01), but as he begins to get into the story Maxim starts to act rather strangely. Olivier plays Maxim in parts of the scene as though he is almost in a trance, his eyes darting around, and with frequent catches in his breathing and voice. As he says "she was lying on the divan" the heroine looks towards the sofa (Figure 4.02), and an eyeline match (Figure 4.03) shows how she is centrally involved in the reception of Maxim's story. This edit to Fontaine's character's point-of-view begins the famous sequence where the mobile camera tracks the movements of an absent character. The camera tilts up as Maxim says "suddenly she got up and started to walk toward me" and tracks her movements around the dilapidated and neglected cottage epitomised by the vases full of dead flowers hanging with dust (Figure 4.04). As the camera tracks around Maxim recalls how Rebecca taunted him with the story that she was expecting a child which is not his but which will usurp the proper line of succession to Manderley:

> 'When I have a child', she said, 'Neither you nor anyone else could ever prove it wasn't yours. You'd like to have an heir wouldn't you Max for your precious Manderley?' And she started to laugh, 'How funny, how supremely wonderfully funny. I'll be the perfect mother just as I've been the perfect wife, no-one will ever know. It ought to give you the thrill of your life Max to watch my son grow bigger day by day and to know that when you die Manderley will be his!'

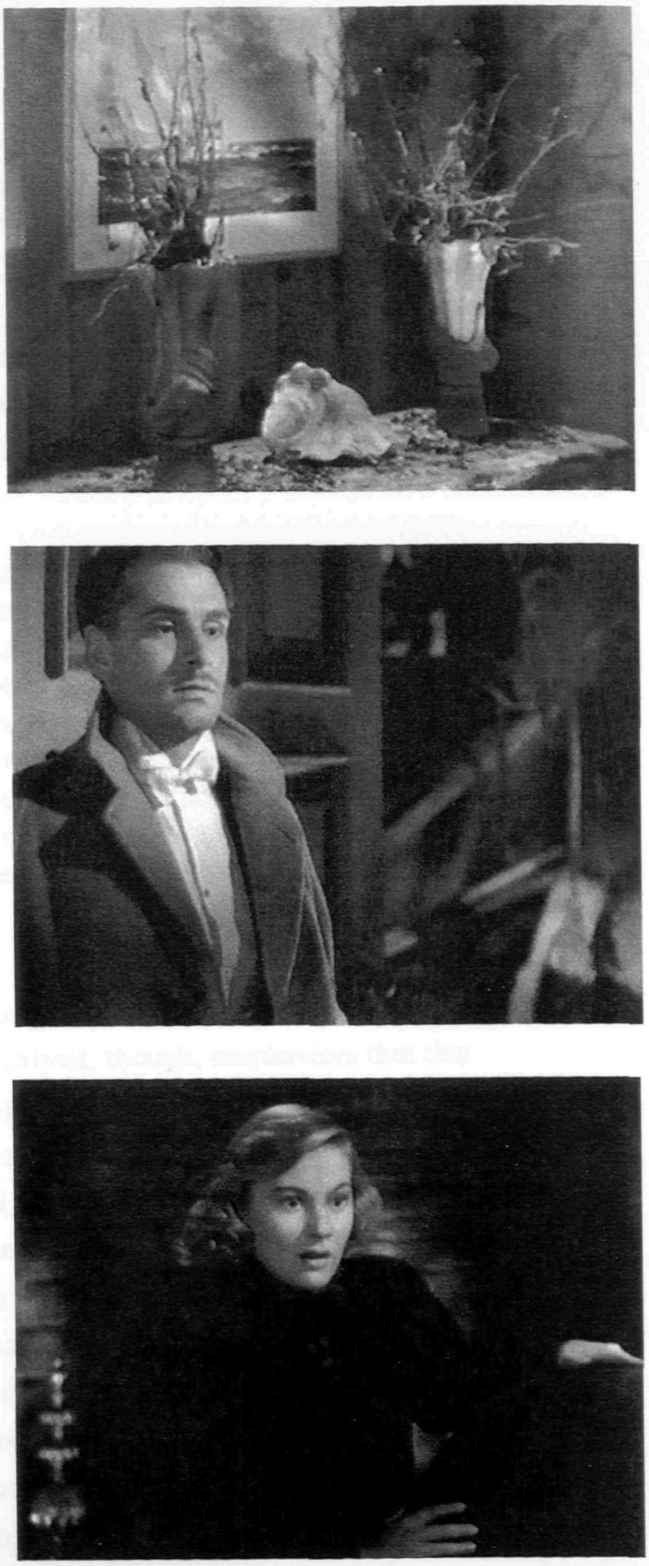
The camera has traced Rebecca's movements full circle now, and comes back to frame Maxim in the doorway as he relates the climax of the story (Figure 4.05):

> She was face to face with me, one hand in her pocket the other holding a cigarette, she was smiling, 'Well Max, what are you going to do about it? Aren't you going to kill me?' I suppose I went mad for a moment, I must have struck her. She stood staring at me, she looked almost triumphant, then she started toward me again, smiling, suddenly she stumbled and fell.

Maxim steps backwards and the camera makes a swooping downwards movement to mimic Rebecca's fall. An edit to show the heroine engrossed in the story (Figure 4.06) and then an eyeline match to the place where Rebecca fell (Figure 4.07) anticipates the resolution of the story by Maxim:



Top to Bottom Figs 4.01-4.03



Top to Bottom Figs 4.04-4.06

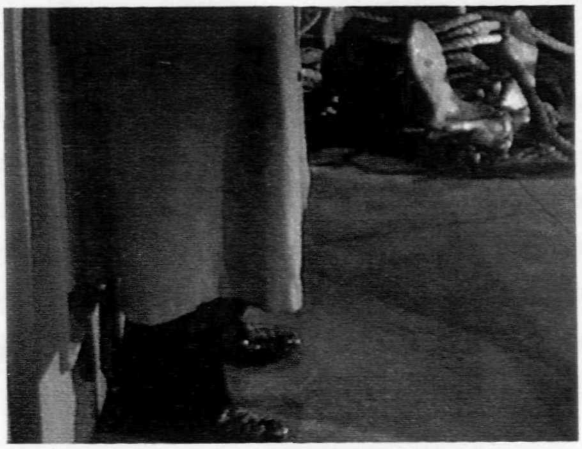


Figure 4.07

> When I looked down, ages afterwards it seemed she was lying on the floor, she'd struck her head on a heavy piece of ship's tackle. I remember wondering why she was still smiling. Then I realised she was dead.

This sequence has been of interest to feminist critics discussing the gothic woman's film. Modleski points out how unusual it is, in that Hitchcock breaks with the convention of representing the narrated events in a flashback, and he therefore escapes the necessity of having a performer playing Rebecca:

> In one of the film's most extraordinary moments the camera pointedly dynamizes Rebecca's absence. When Maxim tells the heroine about what happened on the night of Rebecca's death ("She got up, came towards me," etc.), the camera follows Rebecca's movements in a lengthy tracking shot. Most films, of course, would have resorted to a flashback at this moment, allaying our anxiety over an empty screen by filling the "lack." Here, not only is Rebecca's absence stressed, but we are made to experience it as an active force. For those under the sway of Mulvey's analysis of narrative cinema, *Rebecca* may be seen as a spoof of the system, an elaborate sort of castration joke, with its flaunting of absence and lack.[1]

So what is "brought back again" is, in terms of classical film theory's formulation of gendered subject/object positions, an absence. Modleski's analysis, though, emphasises that this absence need not necessarily constitute a lack of agency for femininity, pointing out that it is experienced as an "active force". She therefore examines how this sequence challenges a gendering of positions of narrative power in visual terms, but I would add that the sequence is also important for the ways that it challenges the control of the male character over the narrative in aural terms. Our attention is drawn to the camera-as-performer, but the tracking of the absent character gives a strong sense of uncanniness not only because we are being asked to visualise an absence, but we are hearing it as well. The "active force of absence" makes itself felt through the combination of the sound and image; Rebecca may be spectacularly absent, but she asserts an insistent auricular presence. I want to consider some of the critical implications of this tension between image and sound, absence and presence.

Narration and the Voice

Maxim has set the scene of his reminiscence, and image and sound work together to build suspense. The camera becomes animated at the moment that Maxim tells of Rebecca's movement ("Suddenly she got up"), and to recount her words. There is also a development in the film score which marks this animation as significant. The low vibrating tremolo of strings, which has created and sustained a level of tense expectation since Maxim said "One night" now increases in pitch and volume, and it develops into what has become recognised as Rebecca's theme throughout the film so far; its signature - the distinctive quavering timbre of an organ - is just audible.

The fact that the sequence is not shown in flashback changes the way that Maxim's offscreen voice is perceived. As discussed earlier *film noir* can question the assumption that narrational control will always follow a gendered pattern, ie. a narrating male character assumes a dominant position: critics such as Hollinger point out that many *films noirs* have "weak, powerless narrators" who may "offer their confessions to patriarchal authority figures".[2] In the cottage sequence in *Rebecca* the male narrator not only struggles to present an authoritative narrational voice, but the person that he confesses to is not a patriarchal authority figure, but the heroine. Throughout the tracking sequence the separation of Maxim's image from his voice, and the replacement of the image with Rebecca's movement, has a destabilising effect on (his) control of the screen. While he speaks over the tracking camera, Maxim's voice does not conform to the conventional relationship of voice-over to image in classical Hollywood films. As Modleski points out, this sequence is exceptional in the way that it confounds the audience expectations of this voice-over leading into a flashback on the image track. The film sound critic Michel Chion discusses the relationship of voices to images at the beginning of flashback sequences. He calls this voice, which is often reflective in tone, and which usually belongs to a character central to the cinematic narrative, the "I-voice".[3] Chion describes this "I-voice" as having specific qualities and narrative functions:

> Often in a movie the action will come to a standstill as someone, serene and reflective, will start to tell a story. The character's voice separates from the body, and returns as an acousmêtre to haunt the past-tense images conjured by its words. The voice speaks from a point where time is suspended. What makes this an "I-voice" is not just the use of the first person singular, but its placement - a certain sound quality, a way of occupying space, a sense of proximity to the spectator's ear, and a particular manner of engaging the spectator's identification.[4]

Chion emphasises the way that the voice-over that is connected to a flashback controls the images which it introduces, it 'conjure[s]' them. The cottage sequence, however, does not give over to flashback, and Maxim as narrator does not have the power to call up images to illustrate his memories. Instead of Maxim's voice commanding the image track to show its secrets, what is experienced is his memory of Rebecca's death, and the 'images' that are conjured up are verbal images through Maxim's narrational voice. This prevents a close relationship between spectator and character, the 'proximity to the spectator's ear' (which Chion suggests occurs in the transition to subjective flashback) does not occur here. In fact Maxim's narration is channelled *through* his wife as listener, it is her point-of-view that the camera takes on starting its movement around cottage, and it is through her ears that the audience hears Maxim's story, rather than being given a privileged and 'direct' visual and auditory rendition of it in flashback. The cottage sequence is reminiscent of the film's opening, but while the opening images, narrated by the heroine, do melt into flashback, Maxim's narration does not. In the film's opening the heroine commands the camera movement, calling forth images of Manderley and its moonlit setting, and it is her look that dictates the movement of the tracking camera in the cottage sequence as she follows the recalled events. The story can only then come to light through her reception of it, and audience identification, auditory as well as visual, stays with her as mediator of the story.

Maxim's narration is a voice-off rather than a flashback voice-over, and Doane suggests the potential destabilising effect that a voice-off can have:

> As soon as the sound is detached from its source, no longer anchored by a represented body, its potential work as a signifier is revealed. There is always something uncanny about a voice which emanates from a source outside the frame.[5]

Doane suggests that usually this instability is contained by establishing that the speaker of the voice-off is present in the diegesis, but just outside the frame of the shot: "He/she is "just over there," "just beyond the frameline," in a space which "exists" but which the camera does not choose to show. What Doane makes clear is that establishing the source of a sound is central to the sound-image relationship in classical cinema; the potential for an uncanniness in a voice-off is that it is a voice which is "no longer anchored by a represented body"[6] which she sees as threatening to disrupt the operations of the classical text.

Spatial Relationships: Sound and its Source

Rick Altman points out that when we consider a relationship between sound and image in cinema, the different ways in which sound and light are perceived in everyday life come into play. He explains that the physical differences between light and sound means their spatial relationship is perceived differently by the viewer/listener. Because light travels in straight lines "only highly polished surfaces like mirrors will reflect light regularly enough to carry a recognizable image around a corner."[7] But sound "travels as a point rather than as an area",[8] so it can be reflected off a greater variety of surfaces than light can, "any surface will reflect rather faithfully any kind of sound."[9] Altman explains how these physical differences construct the cultural perceptions of the modes of hearing and seeing:

> It is this difference which gives us the illusion of "hearing around corners" when we cannot see around corners. The consequent restriction of sight to those things present (and conversely, the definition of presence in terms of visibility) has an important counterpart in the non-restriction of hearing to visibly present sources. The ramifications of sound's relative freedom as compared to the image are many; two in particular concern us here: 1) sound's ability to be heard around a corner makes it the ideal method of introducing the invisible, the mysterious, the

> supernatural (given that image = visible = real); 2) this very power of sound carries with it a concomitant danger - sound will always carry with it the tension of the unknown until it is anchored by sight.[10]

The "tension of the unknown"[11] that sound can carry with it means that sounds with visibly absent sources or unknown sources can be exploited to great effect in cinematic narratives, creating a range of expectant emotions in film audiences, suspense, intrigue, unease and even dread. It is through the interrelationship of sound and image that these effects can be created, and this gives the lie to the idea that cinematic sound merely "goes along with" the image, and is inflected by an inherent redundancy. Altman characterises the relationship between sound and image in cinema as being one of question and answer:

> Whereas images rarely ask: "What sound did that image make?" every sound seems to ask, unless it has previously been categorized and located: "Where did that sound come from?" That is, "What is the source of that sound?" Far from ever being redundant, sound has a fundamental enigmatic quality which confers on the image the quality of a response... *The image, in terms of sound, always has the basic nature of a question.* Fundamental to the cinema experience, therefore, is a process - which we might call the *sound hermeneutic* - whereby the sound asks *where*? and the image responds *here*![12]

Where the source of a sound is concealed, the answer to the question that sound asks of the image is withheld from the audience, producing suspense. A sound heard without the audience seeing the source is termed "acousmatic sound" by Michel Chion, and he distinguishes this from "*visualized* sound" - sound heard and source seen synchronously.[13] Chion points out the effect of uncertainty that can be produced if a question hovers over the source of the sound, and its location:

> A sound or voice that remains acousmatic creates a mystery of the nature of its source, its properties and its powers, given that causal listening cannot supply complete information about the sound's nature and the events taking place.[14]

Critical emphases thus focus on the desire of listeners to locate a sound in its source, to tie down the sound made to the object making it. This desire is all the more pronounced if the sound that is encountered is a voice, and the source of the voice is an unseen or unknown body. Chion has coined a special term to refer to a voice which comes from an unseen body, which he elaborates as follows:

> When the acousmatic presence is a voice, and especially when this voice has not yet been visualized - that is, when we cannot yet connect it to a face - we get a special being, a kind of talking and acting shadow to which we attach the name *acousmêtre*.[15]

Chion maintains that the voice is accorded a special place by the human listener: "in the torrent of sounds our attention fastens first onto this other *us* that is the voice of another. Call this *vococentrism* if you will. Human listening is naturally vococentrist, and so is the talking cinema by and large."[16] This sets up what Chion calls a "hierarchy of perception"[17] in relation to the cinematic sound mix, with the voice usually privileged over sound effects and film music. Calling attention to the way this vococentrism has affected the development of production practices in the classical cinema Chion remarks that "everything is mobilized implicitly... to favor the voice and the text it carries, and to offer it to the spectator on a silver platter."[18] Chion suggests that in a corresponding visual hierarchy the image would be one of the human face: "...privilege [is] accorded to the voice over all other sonic elements, in the same way that the human face is not just an image like the others."[19] He goes on to cite an interview with Hitchcock on the way that he constructs a storyboard for his films, with Chion using this to formulate his thinking on voices in cinema:

> 'The first thing I draw [in storyboarding], no matter what the framing, is the first thing people will look at - faces. The position of the face determines the shot composition.' I had only to transpose this lucid remark to the aural register: the first thing people hear is the voice. Now I had an axis, a way to talk about *film sound* which was no longer merely a tiresome academic subject. I no longer faced the inert, heterogeneous and undifferentiated mass connoted by the catchall term "sound-track". [20]

Chion links voices and faces as the primary sounds and images that act as indices to subjective identities; they indicate the human subject, are sought out by audio-viewers in cinematic narratives over and above other images and sound. Voices and faces are both central to my investigation of the ways that the categories of *film noir* and the gothic woman's film frame sound and portraits in ways which inflect the subject in particular ways; and in those inflections they ask questions about the representation of subjectivities.

The Source of the Voice is a Body...

If, as Chion suggests, the voice occupies a particularly potent place in film sound, then voices which are acousmatic (voice heard, source unseen), will be able to create a strong effect on the listener. To assert that the body is the source of the voice seems like a redundant statement, until we consider how often films in the gothic and horror genres separate the voice and the body, and the uncanny effect that this separation has on the audio-viewer. It is the interrelationship of body and voice that makes this separation at once so intriguing and so dreadful. But it is not only that we *see* bodies produce voices, we also *hear* voices produce bodies. Roland Barthes' work 'The Grain of the Voice' examines the voice/body relation as one which is reciprocal. Voices contain the materiality of the bodies from which they have emanated; they are marked by these bodies, and voices can produce or re-produce the bodies from which they came. The evidence of the body in the voice is what Barthes terms its "grain": "The 'grain' is the body in the voice."[21] Barthes's work considers listening to recordings of singing voices, and he lays a stress on the way that the voices can carry the very particular qualities of a singer's body to the ears of a listener:

> Listen to a Russian bass...: something is there, manifest and stubborn... beyond (or before) the meaning of the words, their form (the litany), the melisma, and even the style of execution: something which is directly the cantor's body, brought to your ears in one and the same movement from deep down in the cavities, the muscles, the membranes, the cartilages, and from deep down in the Slavonic language, as though a single skin lined the inner flesh of the performer and the music he sings.[22]

The close tying together of body and voice that Barthes finds in recordings of singing voices can be inflected rather differently in the recording of voices in the cinema. When listening to a recording of a singing voice there is no expectation of tying up an image with the voice; but the classical cinematic convention of synchronising speech with an image of the speaker creates an assumption that the voice heard "naturally" belongs to the body that is seen. However Chion maintains that this "natural" relation of voice to body has actually always been arbitrary, and he refers to subject formation:

> We are often given to believe, implicitly or explicitly, that the body and voice cohere in some self-evident, natural way, that becoming human consists for the child of "coming to consciousness," and that's just how it is. All the child has to do is put together the elements given to him (sic) separately and out of order. The voice, smell, and sight of "the other": the idea is firmly established that all these form a whole, that the child needs only to reconstitute it by calling on his (sic) "reality principle." But in truth, what we have here is an entirely *structural operation* (related to the structuring of the subject in language) of grafting the non-localized voice onto a particular body that is assigned symbolically to the voice as its source. This operation leaves a scar, and the talking film marks the place of that scar, since by presenting itself as a reconstituted totality, it places all the greater emphasis on the original non-coincidence.[23]

Identifying the "grafting" of voices to their "symbolic" source in bodies raises the question of the talking cinema's ability to compose the combination of voice and image in particular ways. Chion suggests that the talking picture is "a form that reunites and reassembles",[24] and once this is recognised we can begin to investigate the assumptions that shape these compositions or reassemblages.

One of these assumptions is that an image of a gendered body should be accompanied with an 'appropriately' gendered voice, an assumption that profoundly shapes the way that such gendered body images are read. At the beginning of her work on masculinity and the voice, Gill Branston points out that while critics have become accustomed to critically investigating gendered images in cinema, voices have been more elusive:

> For cinema, the voice in both sexes seems to be more naturalised than, say, the face which is more readily seen as coded, as 'made-up', but in both there are of course systematic codes at work, often inherited from theatrical melodrama, and often in relationship with assumptions about appropriate male and female voices in the rest of our social lives. The 'evidentiality' of masculinity is often signified by a deep voice, and this in itself supports and recreates cultural over-emphases on real biological differences between men and women.[25]

The issue of what kinds of voices become coded as "appropriate" to the gendered bodies from which they emanate is a fascinating one, and I will explore it in relation to the cottage sequence in *Rebecca*. Before we can deal with this question however, we have to investigate the specific voice or voices that we are hearing in the sequence. As I have said, Maxim's voice in the sequence is acousmatic, but what we hear in the sequence is not simply Maxim relating what happened in the moments before Rebecca's death. He actually replays their whole conversation and speaks Rebecca's words in direct speech, inflecting his voice to perform and reproduce hers. Doane reads the cottage sequence as an illustration of the difficulty of female spectatorship in the classical Hollywood cinema. She suggests that although the path of the tracking camera begins with the heroine's point-of-view the fact that the sequence ends framing Maxim shows him usurping the story:

> In the cottage scene in which Maxim narrates the "unnarratable" story of the absent Rebecca to Joan Fontaine, he insists upon a continual use of direct quotes and hence the first person pronoun referring to Rebecca. His narrative is laced with these quotes from Rebecca which parallel on the soundtrack the moving image, itself adhering to the traces of the absent Rebecca. Maxim is therefore the one who pronounces the following sentences: "I'll play the part of the devoted wife"... "When I have a child, Max, no one will be able to say that it's not yours"... "I'll be the perfect mother just as I've been the perfect wife"... "Well, Max, what are you going to do about it? Aren't you going to kill me?" Just as the tracking shot guarantees that the story of a woman literally culminates as the image of a man, the construction of the dialogue allows Maxim to appropriate Rebecca's "I". [26]

Thus Doane asserts that both image and sound are controlled by Maxim, reflecting the fact that a patriarchal control of cinema can be found even in the woman's film. Modleski's discussion of *Rebecca* takes issue with this reading, and she distinguishes how her approach to the film diverges from Doane's:

> Doane is concerned to show "the impossibility of female spectatorship", whereas I want to suggest not only its possibility, but also the film's problematization of *male* spectatorship and of masculine identity in general.[27]

The difference between these two critical approaches can be traced back to the question of narrative agency that I indicated is central to feminist approaches to the gothic woman's film. Doane asserts that because Maxim speaks he controls the narrative, and in fact takes over a woman's story; I disagree with this position and I think that there is an implicit bias towards the image in Doane's critique. She suggests that the quotes from Rebecca "parallel on the soundtrack the moving image",[28] but I would argue that the reverse of this parallel is occurring: it is the movement of the camera that is following the voice.

The situation which is set up in this sequence involves a fascinating use of voices. Maxim's voice is acousmatic, but he oscillates between speaking in "his" voice, and performing Rebecca's voice. The way that Maxim/Laurence Olivier distinctly produces Rebecca's voice as different to his own frustrates a clear and canny tie up of masculine voice and male body: Rebecca's voice occupies, invades and talks *through* Maxim. If we also take into account the visual absence of Rebecca throughout the film, the speaking of her voice by Maxim is the most potent presence that is experienced of her. Rebecca's voice has much in common with Chion's definition of an acousmêtre, a voice which "we cannot yet connect... to a face...a kind of talking and acting shadow",[29] and it is her absence from the image, her invisibility which makes her voice function so powerfully here, as Bonitzer suggests: "The point of horror resides in the blind space."[30] Chion writes that "everything hangs on whether or not the acousmêtre has been seen",[31] and the mystery that the acousmêtre creates can dominate the drive of the narrative: "An entire image, an entire story, an entire film can thus hang on the epiphany of the acousmêtre. Everything can boil down to a quest to bring the acousmêtre into the light."[32]

The process of revealing the acousmêtre is a process by which a voice is put into a body,[33] and the longer the film withholds the sight of the acousmêtre's body the more tension is created in the audio-viewer. As I pointed out in my discussion of sound theories earlier, a sound without a visible source leads the audio-viewer to search and to speculate on the source of the sound. In *Rebecca* we do not have a clear example of an acousmêtre, but we do encounter a situation where Rebecca's voice is spoken by Maxim acousmatically, and I want to suggest that a search for Rebecca's body, which has been so clearly foregrounded as a narrative thread, is dramatised by the tracking camera in the cottage sequence. The questing camera does find a body to house Rebecca's voice, coming back to rest on Maxim, and rather than a resolution which de-acousmatises Rebecca in her own body, what is heard is her voice possessing and speaking through Maxim. Rebecca's voice is put into a body, but instead of a flashback that reunites and reassembles female body and feminine voice we *see* Maxim but *hear* Rebecca. Maxim's reminiscence returns us to the traumatic event of Rebecca's death, preceded by their conversation which makes clear how fully he was in Rebecca's power. Maxim killed Rebecca to rid himself of her possession of him, but as he retells the events he "bring[s] it all back again, and worse than before", and she re-possesses him making him speak *for* her. So, in contradistinction to Doane's reading of the sequence as confirming a control of the narrative by Maxim, my argument is that the conclusion of the tracking camera's movement on Maxim brings Rebecca back at the sight/site of the male body, which is ventriloquised, invaded and possessed. I would like to reappropriate and reverse Doane's argument. It is not that "the tracking subjective shot guarantees that the story of the woman literally culminates as the image of the man, the construction of the dialogue allows Maxim to appropriate Rebecca's "I""[34] but in fact the opposite: "the tracking subjective shot guarantees that the [voice] of the woman literally culminates [in] the [body] of the man, the construction of the dialogue allows [Rebecca] to appropriate [Maxim's] "I"".[35]

The ventriloquism of Maxim by Rebecca's voice is deeply disturbing to the audio-viewer, because this is a possession not just across the division separating male and female, but also across that separating living from dead; it is an acousmêtre doubly marked by its own impossibility. In fact impossibility is central to the way that an acousmêtre can produce tension: if a voice is heard, the supposition is that someone *must be* making the sound. In his discussion of Mrs Bates' voice in *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, US 1960) Chion analyses a situation of acousmêtric possession which is very similar to that in *Rebecca*, and he makes an analogy between the putting of a voice into a body , and an act of burial, remarking that "In French, the term *embodiment* (mise-en-corps) is reminiscent of *entombment* (mise en bière) and also in *interment* (mise en terre)".[36] Chion continues:

> Burial is marked by rituals and signs such as the gravestone, the cross, and the epitaph, which say to the departed, "You must stay here," so that he won't haunt the living as a soul in torment. In some traditions, ghosts are those who are unburied or improperly buried. Precisely the same applies to the acousmêtre, when we speak of a yet-unseen voice, one that can neither enter the image to attach itself to a visible body, nor occupy the removed position of the image presenter. The voice is condemned to wander the surface. This is what *Psycho* is all about.[37]

Here Chion posits the acousmêtre as a kind of homeless presence, a sound with no 'home' in the image, a voice with no body. His emphasis on the rituals around burial of the dead and ideas of a wandering soul are strongly reminiscent of the criticism that I cited earlier on portraiture functioning to symbolically locate the dead and preserve their bodily image in a painted likeness. As I suggested in my discussion of the gothic portraits the power to make-present-again is inflected as an uncanny return of the woman in the past. The commemoration of her image in the family portrait ensures that she will not stay in the past, that she intrudes on the present. There are similarities between the framing mechanisms which function to deal with the past, to locate the dead. We might make an analogy between the body as location for the voice and the ritual signs, such as the grave and the portrait for locating the dead body and for preserving the memory of its living existence. The body, grave and portrait, then, are the structures which are intended to frame, define and contain the subject as represented through the voice and the image (or through sound and image). In the cinematic gothic narratives examined, the framing mechanisms only partially perform this function. Hearing a (dead) female voice in and through a (living) male body in *Rebecca* is an example of a case where we encounter a profoundly uncanny reassemblage of the cinematic subject through sound and image. This suggests that the uncanny is much more than an effect which can be produced by certain textual operations, but that it is a process by which stable categories, such as those governing subjective identity such as male/female and living/dead, are rendered unstable. Bronfen gives a detailed reading of Freud's essay which takes this view:

> In his discussion of the concept *das Unheimliche*, Freud turns the lack of a clear definition into the crux of this concept's rhetorical strategy - namely a semantic subversion based on the blurring of stable concepts. In order to explain the fundamental instability at the core of the uncanny, Freud focuses on two central features. Because the word *unheimlich* refers both to the familiar and agreeable and to something concealed, kept out of sight, it comes to signify any moment where meaning develops in the direction of ambivalence until it coincides with its opposite. Semantic oppositions collapse and a moment of ambivalence emerges that induces intellectual hesitation (*Unsicherheit*). As a situation of undecidability, where fixed frames or margins are set in motion, the uncanny also refers to moments where the question whether something is animate (alive) or inanimate (dead), whether something is real or imagined, unique, original or a repetition, a copy, can not be decided.[38]

Both Freud's original essay, and Bronfen's close analysis of it, pay detailed attention to the way that ambivalence emerges out of what was stable. As Bronfen makes clear above, in the process of Freud's exploration of the meanings of *unheimlich*, what begins as the delineation of a meaning ends in an awareness of how this meaning is constantly shifting. Bronfen calls this "the crux of this concept's rhetorical strategy... a semantic subversion based on the blurring of stable concepts",[39] and what is so compelling in her argument is the way that she elucidates the consequences of this "blurring": "As a situation of undecidability, *where fixed frames or margins are set in motion*, the uncanny also refers to moments where the question whether something is animate (alive) or inanimate (dead), whether something is real or imagined, unique, original or a repetition, a copy, can not be decided."[40]

To return to the cottage sequence in *Rebecca*, the movement across frames that we can chart here is the sound of Rebecca's voice *in and through* Maxim's body. Earlier I suggested that voices can produce or re-produce the bodies that they come from, the "grain" of the voice being its audible bodily trace, and so now I want to examine the sonic qualities of Rebecca's voice, as it is framed by Maxim's body. Maxim/Olivier progressively produces a difference in tone, timbre and accent between his words and voice and his articulation of

Rebecca's voice. Maxim renders Rebecca's voice as flat and rather thin, the tone that he uses to speak her words is a commanding one, and it is interesting that he does not raise the pitch of his voice to signal her femininity. His interpretation of Rebecca's voice portrays her as mean and ruthless, which contrasts with his own voice-style, when Maxim speaks the filling in parts of the story: "she walked towards me" and "she was face to face with me now" his voice is softer and denser, quite breathy and resonating with emotion.

I think that in reading/hearing Maxim's rendering of Rebecca's voice we confront assumptions of the appropriateness of certain voice styles in relation to both gender and to genre. Branston refers to discussions about the "suitability" of voices of certain male stars whose careers were less successful after the coming of sound, citing Alan Williams on the voices of John Gilbert and others as follows:

> ...the 'bad voices' of the most notorious Hollywood stars were probably in part a product of their association with melodramatic *sensibilité*.
>
> It was, most notably, certain of the men who suffered, those whose acting was most expressive, whose screen personas were somehow feminised... It is, for example, around the time of the transition to sound that male characters begin to cry far less frequently - and that crying begins to signify, not admirable sensitivity, but hysteria and sexual ambiguity.[41]

Branston points out that it is not only the sonic qualities of the voice which are informed by assumptions about gender appropriateness, but also the subject matter of what is talked about, that is we are dealing with both voice and speech styles. She explores the way that different masculine voice-styles have evolved in relation to cinematic genres.[42] Her discussion tackles the voice and speech styles of Clint Eastwood, and she suggests that he brings certain elements of voice and speech styles of the western to *In the Line of Fire* (Wolfgang Petersen, US, 1993).[43] Branston finds that the generic iconography of the western can be found in a continuum which includes landscape, masculine body, and voice: "[Jane Tompkins] suggests that men in westerns often look like the hard landscape - and I'd suggest, have voices which are also constructed and/or come to sound like it: hard, parched and strained."[44] She continues to suggest that voices of male stars often have a "perceived status as evidence of the body",[45] a body/voice connection that I explored earlier in relation to bodies as "housing" voices. Branston also considers male voice and speech styles in the thriller genre: "The male voice in thrillers has often had at least the kind of mobility which allows a deadpan wit to be delivered, and it will often work in a brilliant, equal play with the deadly wit of the femme fatale."[46]

How can we approach the dual voices produced by Maxim in the cottage sequence in *Rebecca* in the context of Branston's work on masculine voices and genre? Alan Williams' discussion of the shifting perception of what is an 'appropriate' male voice in melodrama is very interesting to consider in relation to the voice and speech styles that are utilised by

Olivier/Maxim as he tells the story of his terrible suffering at the hands of Rebecca. The difference that is produced between his voice, and the voice that is "Rebecca's" is important here. Branston suggests that the 'tough' masculinity found in genres such as the western speaks in a restricted vocal range, and controls what is revealed of emotion. We encounter a different sound to Maxim's masculinity in *Rebecca.* As he tells of his marital despair Maxim's voice, which has been very full of emotion, and has quavered almost on the verge of tears, becomes very mobile. He asks the heroine for her understanding, saying "You despise me don't you, as I despise myself. You can't imagine what my feelings were... Can you?". Maxim's abject self pity is fully fleshed out in his voice, and his last phrase is delivered as a plea for forgiveness which Olivier emotes through a sliding upward intonation. The edit to the heroine, lit so that her eyes brimming with tears glitter prominently, supplies the visual emotional response which partners her unhesitating and soothing murmur to Maxim that she does understand and forgive him. In contrast, Rebecca's voice, as styled by Maxim, is rigid and immobile, and seems to be on the verge of cracking into triumphant laughter, particularly as she revels in the prospect of Maxim raising an heir to Manderley who was not fathered by him.[47] Branston notes the importance of vocal but non-verbal sounds that are contained in the voice but often ignored in the analysis of speech:

> One fascinating possibility for further research might be the construction, within cinematic and other voices, of a distance from or closeness to vocal but non-verbal releases of the body such as laughter, and what they are perceived to reveal of character. Does a particular voice seem to be often close to or far away from a chuckle, a sneer, a full or a thin laugh?[48]

Other such releases could include the vocal sounds produced when characters suffer grief, or the sighs and groans of pain, or indeed of pleasure.

In the contrasting voice styles that are heard through Maxim we can see a curious reversal being played out; Maxim's voice, marked by the qualities of mobility and emotion, and his speech style of confessing his wrongs and exposing his suffering is much closer to what is considered an appropriate *feminine* style. Rebecca's voice and speech, on the other hand, are characterised by their control of range and lack of emotion. The paradoxical situation that we hear is that Maxim is much more feminised when he presents his own words than he is when he produces those of a Rebecca. The cross-over of voice and speech styles thus gives us a feminised masculinity and a masculinised femininity within the same scene. Through his strange occupation by Rebecca's voice Maxim is "one [who] possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the other... [he] identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is".[49] His suffering is multiplied by the pervasive quality of sound, and the interrelationship between speaking and listening.

When we speak we are always also listeners to our own voices, and Chion describes the "*I-Voice*" as a reassuring confirmation of identity, having the quality of being both, "completely internal and invading the entire universe... the voice owes its special status to the fact that it is the original, definitive sound that both fills us and comes from us."[50] In Maxim's case this pervasiveness is experienced as a haunting possession, and one which is occurring across gender. As both speaker and auditor of his own persecution it can be seen that in this case the gendering of sound and the voice is put into question. Maxim's vivid recounting of the scene, and Rebecca's possession of him via her voice ends with the replaying of her death. Maxim's eyes flit upwards, as if he is going to swoon as he says "I suppose I went mad for a moment. I must have struck her". And he repeats his step backwards to avoid the still moving Rebecca, even reproducing the clattering fall of her body as a sound effect. Both Maxim and the heroine stare transfixed at the place where Rebecca fell, and after Maxim moves out of the doorway he stands in the room staring back at it. It is not (or not only) the female body that is the site of invasion, possession and paranoia in the gothic woman's film, but the male body.

A scenario, discussed in relation to *Rebecca*, where the gothic male is subjected to a kind of punishment through sound which brings back the woman in the past, is also found in the other gothic portrait films. In *Rebecca* the suffering occurs as Maxim is forced to speak in Rebecca's voice. In other examples of this scenario a range of sound, music and voice effects are evident. In *The Two Mrs Carrolls* and *Dragonwyck* the links between the use of sound and the woman in the past are made directly through the portrait.

The Two Mrs Carrolls: Musical and Aural Motifs

In *The Two Mrs Carrolls* a particular musical theme is heard the first time "The Angel of Death" painting is seen. As Bea introduces the painting a swell of music is heard which might be called a "mystery" theme. This theme indicates narrative information to the film's audio-viewer due to the conventions of film scoring. As film musicologist Claudia Gorbman puts it, music signifies "not only according to pure musical codes, but also according to *cultural* musical codes and *cinematic* musical codes".[51] She elaborates:

> Any music bears cultural associations, and most of these associations have been further codified and exploited by the music industry. Properties of instrumentation, rhythm, melody, and harmony form a veritable language. We all know what "Indian music," battle music, and romance music sound like in the movies; we know that a standard forties film will choose to introduce its seductress on the screen by means of a sultry saxophone playing a Gershwinesque melody. As for cinematic codes: music is codified by the filmic context itself, and assumes meaning by virtue of its placement in the film. Beginning and end-title music, and musical themes, are major examples of this music-film interaction. Based on the Wagnerian principles of motifs and leitmotifs, a theme in a film becomes associated with a character, a place, a situation, or an emotion. It may have a fixed and static designation, or it can evolve and contribute to the

> dynamic flow of the narrative by carrying its meaning into a new realm of signification.[52]

The mystery theme can be identified as such through cultural musical codes, the "properties of instrumentation, rhythm, melody, and harmony form a veritable language",[53] the musical phrase says mystery. The motif also contributes to the "dynamic flow of the narrative"[54] by its specific association with the portrait, and it is only heard when the portrait is not only visible on-screen but narratively significant. The score of *The Two Mrs Carrolls*, composed by Franz Waxman, blends with other sound effects to form a whole web of aural motifs, which are given as much prominence as visual ones. On-screen and off-screen sound effects also perform important functions in structuring the diegetic space of the film.

The most dominant aural motif of the film is the sound of bells, associated with Geoffrey from early scenes in the film. As he leaves Blagdon's chemists, where he has bought the poison with which he is slowly murdering his first wife, the shop bell jangles loudly. Later in the film Blagdon (Barry Bernard) blackmails Geoffrey about the poison, which leads Geoffrey to murder him. In the murder scene the shop bell jangles loudly again. In another early scene an alarm bell rings to remind Bea and Geoffrey that it is "time for mother's milk". These alarm bells are both literal and metaphorical, given Geoffrey's method of despatching his wives by poisoning the milk he takes to them. When Geoffrey marries his second wife, Sally, he moves to her house which is near the cathedral in Ashton. The transition of Geoffrey's life from London to Ashton is marked by a montage which introduces the town as a provincial idyll. The rest of the film takes place in Ashton and the cathedral bells are a constant motif in the sonic background. The bells punctuate moments of the plot, and the distinct sound and cultural associations that they carry contribute to narrative development. Bells mark times and ceremonies, such as christenings, weddings and funerals, but they can also indicate psychical instability, even madness. Both these allusions are mobilised in *The Two Mrs Carrolls*, at the beginning of Geoffrey and Sally's marriage Ashton is presented as a sunny happy location and the bells ring joyfully in celebration of their union. But events from the past start to catch up with Geoffrey. Blagdon blackmails him about his first wife's death and he embarks on an affair with Cecily. At various moments when pressures mount on Geoffrey his mental turmoil is marked by a distinct throbbing ring, a sound effect only ever associated with Geoffrey and consequently subjectively marked.

The interrelationship between the portrait, the music and sound effects is evident if we compare two scenes between Cecily and Geoffrey which take place in the room where "The Angel of Death" presides. The first scene is their first meeting: Cecily is introduced to Geoffrey and Sally by Penny, she and her mother have tea in the garden at Geoffrey and Sally's house. Cecily is intrigued by Geoffrey and flirts with him explicitly, asking him to show her his pictures. They go indoors and Geoffrey introduces the painting saying "Here's one that caused a lot of comment: 'The Angel of Death'". The mystery theme is heard as

Cecily and Geoffrey look at the picture and it is clear that it fascinates Geoffrey. He is so absorbed in it that Cecily has to repeat her question as to who the model was as he is rapt with attention. The theme swells as Geoffrey moves towards the picture and fades as he moves farther away, emphasising the link between the theme and the portrait, even perhaps indicating it as the source of the sound. It also marks Geoffrey's fascination with the picture, an eerie scoring of his internal thoughts and emotions. The theme dies away as Geoffrey shows Cecily his more conventional portrait of Sally (Figure 4.08). He says "Here's another one you may like, a little more on the cheerful side." Cecily responds, "Ah! The second Mrs Carroll, very nice, very nice indeed", before turning and saying coquettishly "Tell me Geoffrey, do you always marry the women you paint?" As she asks this she steps across the frame obscuring Sally's portrait and literally placing herself between husband and wife.

The second scene is from later in the film. Geoffrey and Cecily have been having an affair while he painted her portrait. He has also been painting a portrait of Sally as a death figure, which he refuses to show to anyone. Many aspects of the mise-en-scene are very similar: the day time living room setting, and the presence of the pictures in the background are consistent with the earlier scene. However the division of interior and exterior space is far more clearly marked in this scene. In the first extract the bright summer garden, from which Geoffrey and Cecily entered the house, was made to seem accessible through open windows and doors. In the second extract the winter setting and the howling wind outside emphasise the confinement of the characters to the house, and the cooling down of Geoffrey's marriage. The composition of the characters' medium close up shots are again dominated by the presence of the portraits in the backgrounds, and their movement is similarly choreographed to indicate the significance of two wives. The first Mrs Carroll haunts the background, an inescapable presence in Geoffrey's past, and the appearance and disappearance of Sally's portrait as the characters move around suggest she is a continuing "problem" that the desires of Cecily and Geoffrey plan to eliminate.

At the beginning of this extract the film music works to indicates emotion, and there is even a musical joke. Cecily's announcement that she is soon leaving for Rio is initially scored with melancholic violins, but they briefly give way to a Latin flourish to suggest the atmosphere of her destination. Geoffrey's violent anger at her plans is anticipated by a lower, more menacing instrumentation of cello and horns, and a "darker" variation on the predominant theme of the scene. Where the use of music becomes more unconventional is in a theme which is associated directly with Geoffrey's increasing psychological instability. As Cecily suggests that he could be free in South America a high pitched repeated chiming sound throbs on the sound track. Geoffrey puts his hand to his temple suggesting the sound reflects and represents his mental state. Geoffrey's theme is further externalised as Cecily leaves abruptly through the french windows. The room is invaded by the sound of the wind and of bells chiming.

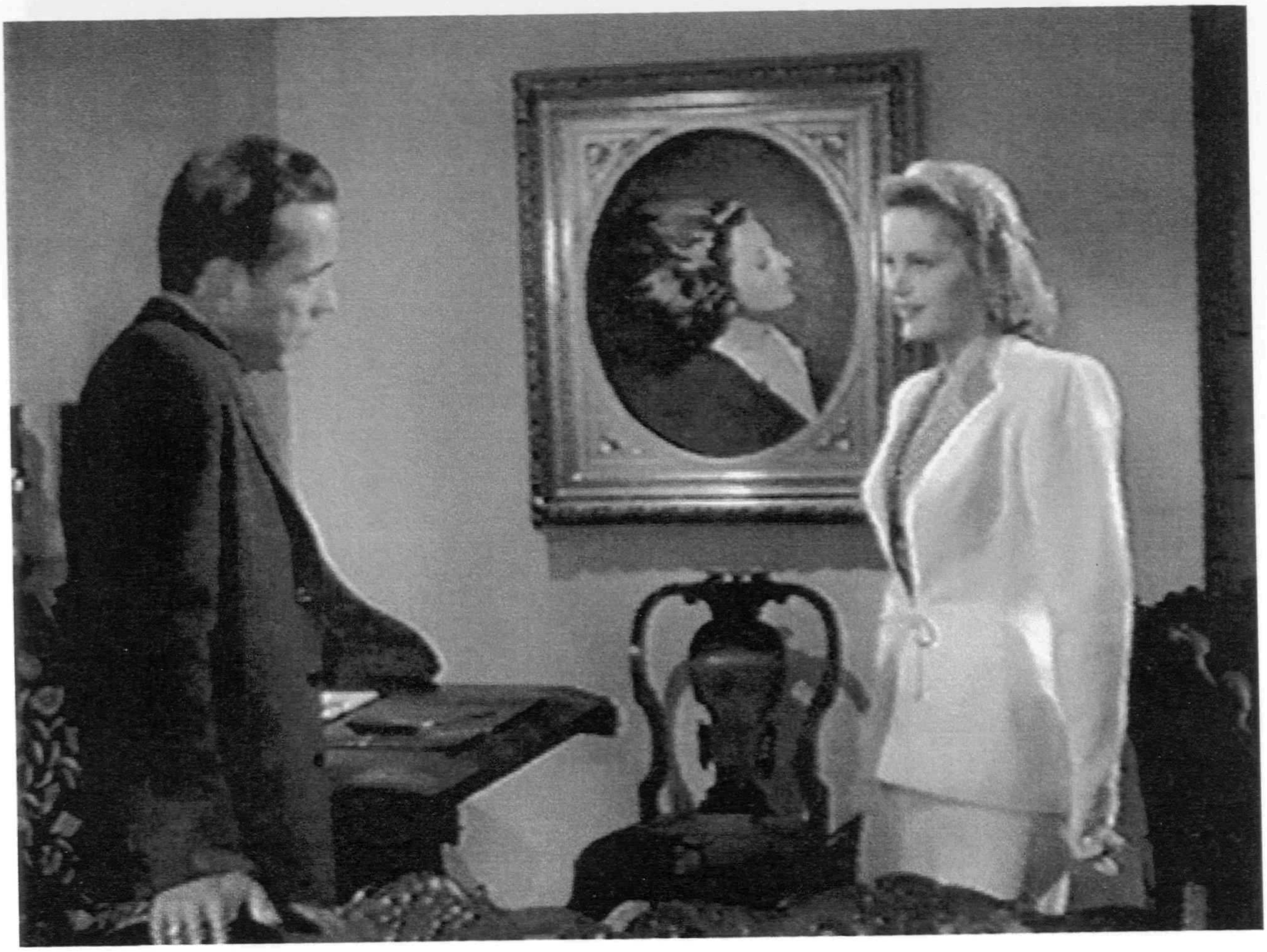


Figure 4.08

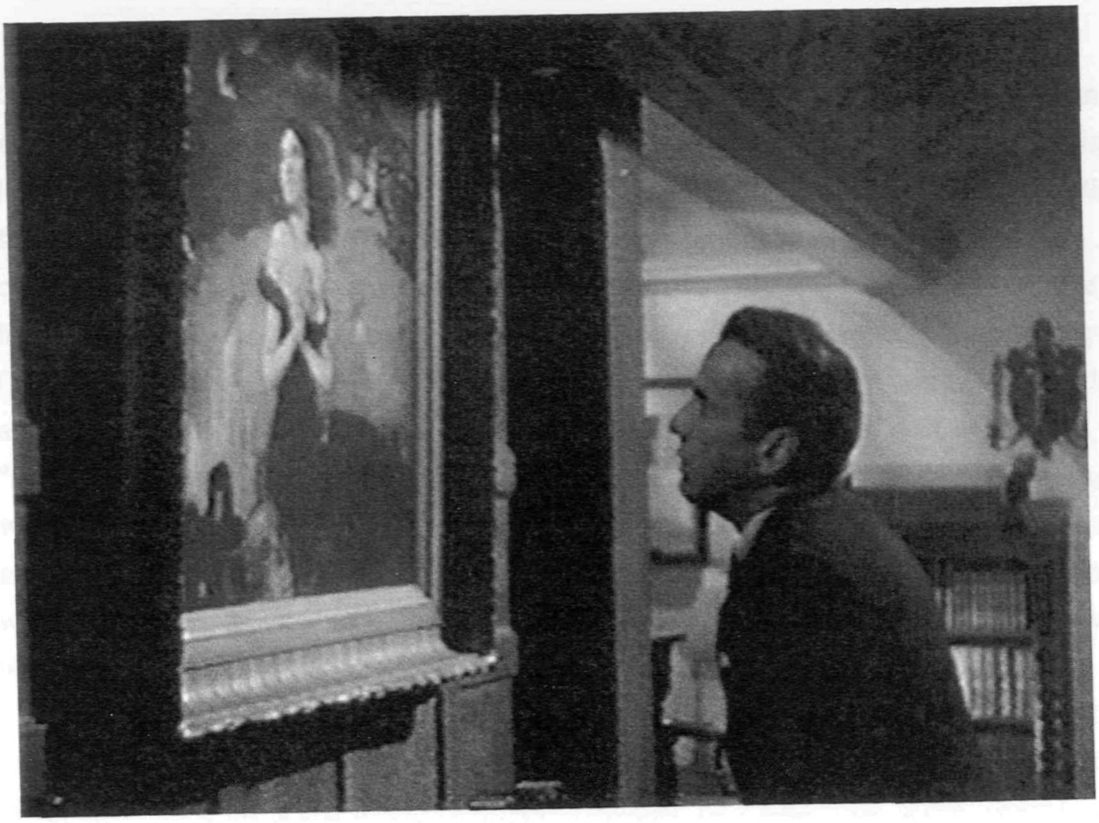


Figure 4.09

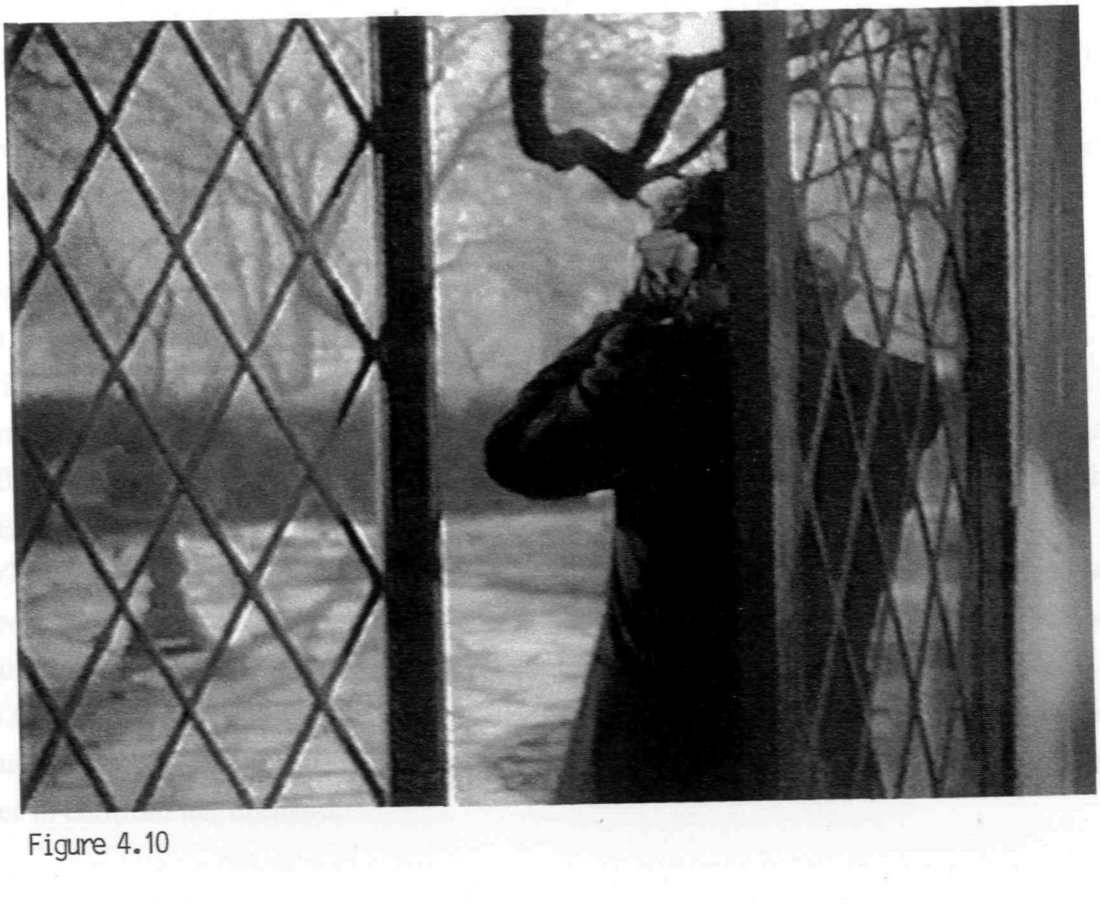


Figure 4.10

Geoffrey moves to look intently at "The Angel of Death" (Figure 4.09), the fascination he revealed in the first scene now looking like a kind of desperation. It is only after his intense look at his picture that he seems to register the sound of bells that is coming through the door from outside. As Geoffrey stands in the doorway, holding his head in his hands, the correspondence between his internal mental instability, and the wind and bells outside the house make it unclear whether the sound is emanating from him or painfully invading him (Figure 4.10). His attempts at escaping the sound by closing the door and leaning his body against it are of little use: he continues to be victimised by the sound. As Doane notes, sound "has a greater command over space than the look - one can hear around corners, through walls",[55] and this is another instance of the unsettling effects of sounds whose visible sources are concealed. What is disturbing in Geoffrey's case is that the pervasiveness of the sound, within him and outside him, perplexes an attempt to locate its source and to identify who or what his tormentor is.

In *Rebecca* the scene of confession was the scene where Maxim was subjected to punishment through the invasion of sound. In *The Two Mrs Carrolls* the plot is structured differently, since the scene where Geoffrey is invaded by sound is the scene where Cecily gives him an ultimatum. At this point Sally does not know that her mystery illness has been caused by Geoffrey poisoning her. She learns the truth when she enters the forbidden space of his studio with Bea; Figure 4.11 shows them approaching the attic studio. The position of the camera anticipates their movement up the stairs and the high contrast lighting create a feeling of dread in the audio-viewer. Although Geoffrey is already slowly killing Sally it is her entry into the attic studio that accelerates his murderous actions. It is not until the final scene that Sally directly confronts Geoffrey with the fact that she has seen her portrait, but she has already confronted his true nature when she sees her portrait. In the style of his death figures Geoffrey has portrayed himself as well as his wives.

Dragonwyck

In *Dragonwyck* there is a scene of confrontation and a scene where the gothic male, Nicholas, is invaded by sound as he looks at a portrait. There are comparisons that can be drawn with both *Rebecca* and *The Two Mrs Carrolls*. The confrontation scene takes place after the son born to Nicholas and Miranda dies. Nicholas begins to spend weeks at a time in his mysterious tower room. One evening as Miranda and her faithful Irish maid Peggy O'Malley (Jessica Tandy) sit sewing, Peggy asks how long Nicholas has been in his tower room "this time". She is quite outspoken in her criticism of him, though Miranda defends him saying "I'm sure it isn't very pleasant for him Peggy." Peggy comes back with "And what is it for you? Shut up there for weeks on end without a word or a sound. If it was any man but him I'd say he kept a bottle up there in that tower room." Peggy's plain speaking prompts her to confront her husband.

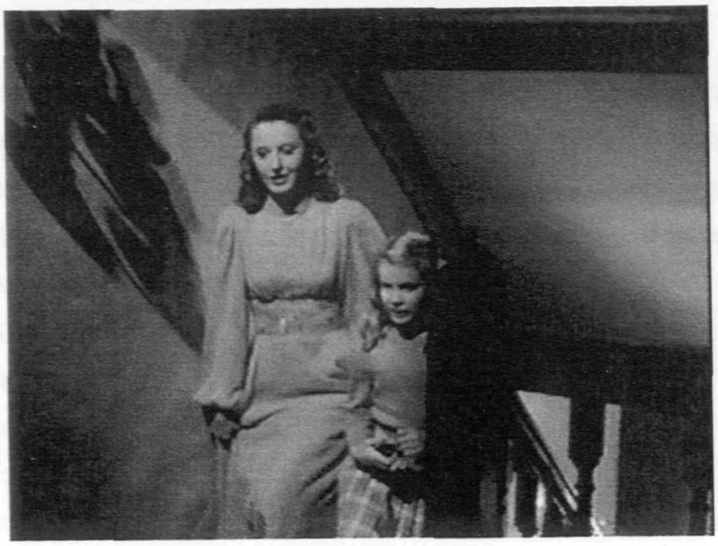


Figure 4.11

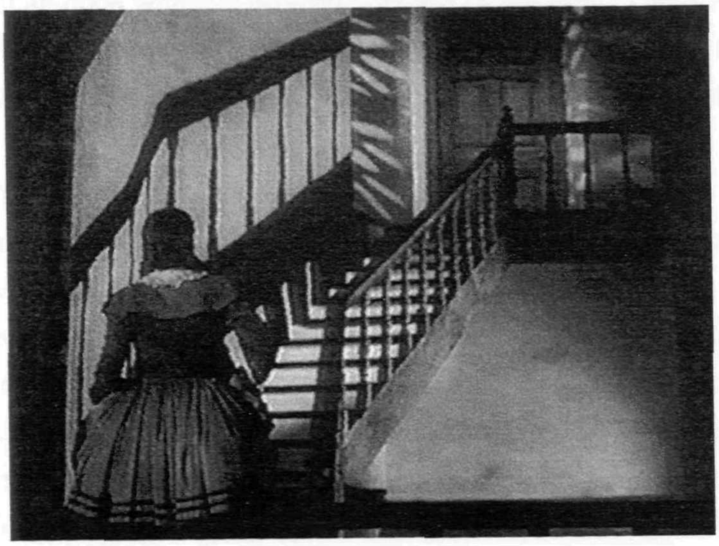


Figure 4.12

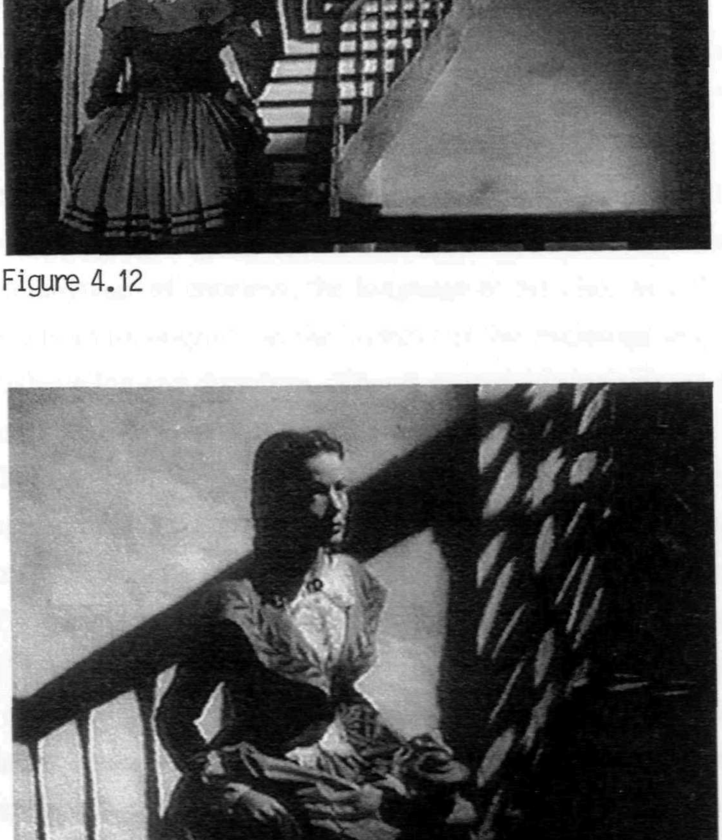


Figure 4.13

Though Peggy begs her not to go alone, Miranda is determined, and sets off up the stairs to the forbidden room. Figures 4.12 and 4.13 show a similar use cinematographic techniques to stage this moment as *The Two Mrs Carrolls*: high contrast lighting, large areas of threatening darkness in the frame and the camera positioned to anticipate the heroine's arrival at the door which marks the boundary to the forbidden room.

The music which accompanies Miranda's approach begins by being very threatening and dark. Low tones of wind instruments create a sense of unease, and these are mixed with sparse and discordant sounds of a harpsichord, the instrument which is directly linked with Azeald and the curse that she has put on the Dragonwyck family. Azeald's theme, associated with the portrait on the night of Johanna's death as discussed in the previous chapter, is heard in the musical mix, played at a very slow tempo. As Miranda progresses up the stairs there is a shift in the instrumentation, strings enter and provide a background to the slightly more evident sounds of an oboe which is brought forward in the mix. These two distinct areas of instrumentation are important during the confrontation which follows. The strings are more closely allied with Miranda and the romance theme of the score, whilst the wind instruments and harpsichord are associated with Nicholas.

Miranda's entry to the tower room is shown in a long shot which allows us briefly to establish its details. The room is dimly lit, soft dim light comes through the vaulted window with gothic style leaded panes of glass, evoking an effect of moonlight. At first we do not discern Nicholas, as he is lying down motionless on a bed which is in the foreground of the shot. The movement that he makes as he sits up is marked by a low pitch discordant rumble of a harpsichord. Nicholas gathers himself to speak to Miranda, and the contrasting voice and speech styles of the pair are evident. He speaks very formally to Miranda, saying "This is an unlooked for pleasure, I wasn't expecting you", but is sardonic, even sarcastic in his tone. Assuming a language of courtesy, the language of his class as a Patroon, he is also insincere and there is an incongruity as the context of the exchange in the tower room, and Nicholas looks dishevelled and dissolute. This is conveyed through the fact he is unshaven and his hair is rumpled, a sharp contrast to the immaculate figure that he has presented in the rest of the film (Figure 4.14). He remarks on Miranda's pluckiness in coming to see him: "You have courage Miranda, I like that about you. It must have taken a great deal to make this pilgrimage up to the mysterious tower room... Tell me are you disappointed in what you 've found here. I'm sure you expected velvet drapes and heathen idols, an altar for human sacrifice at least." Nicholas' tone verges on parody here, and the way he draws attention to a gothic narrative makes this a self-reflexive moment where the generic conventions are put on display. Miranda now comes in, after listening to Nicholas indulge his taste for sarcasm she puts him on the spot with her direct question: "Nicholas, what do you do here?" (Figure 4.15).

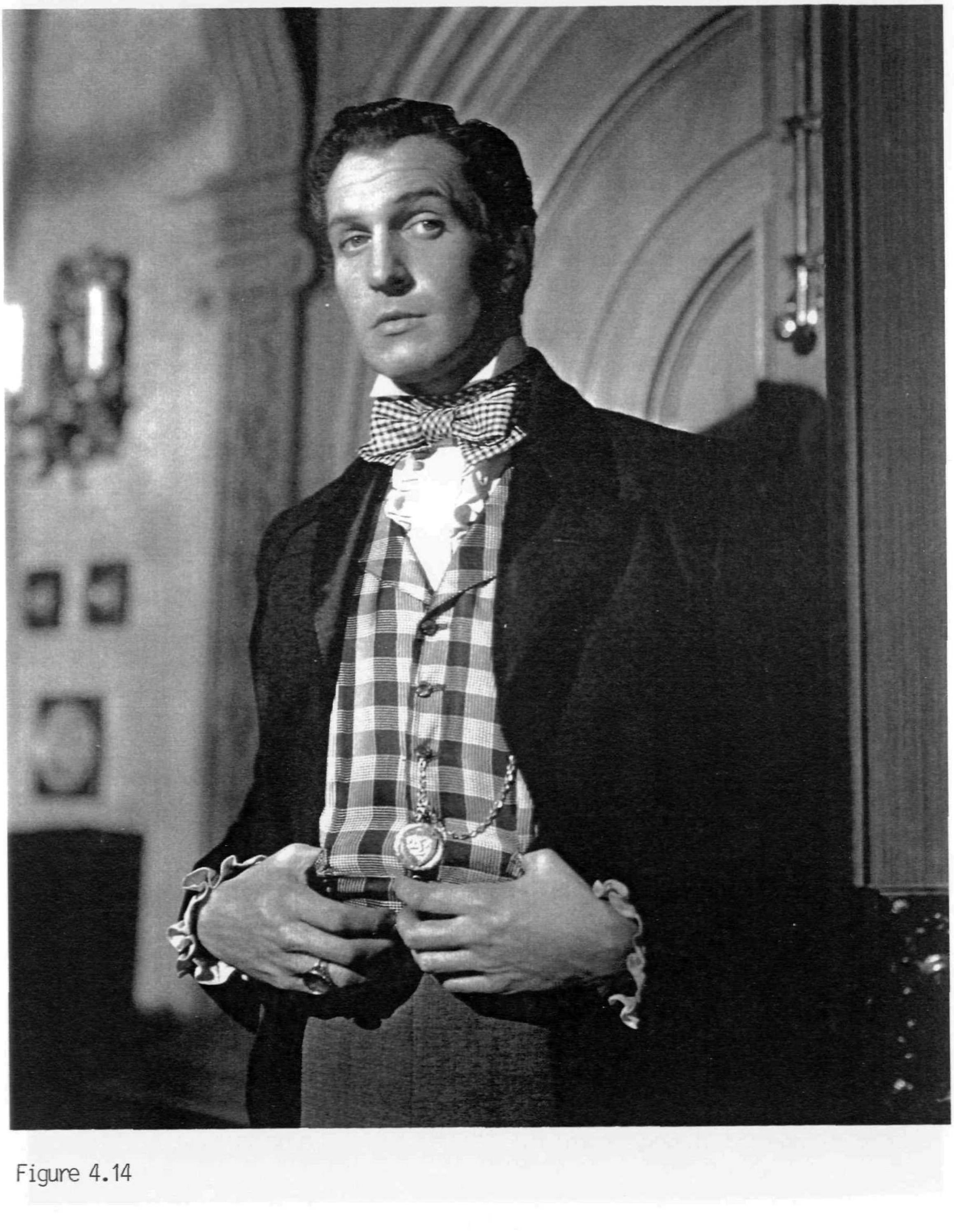


Figure 4.14

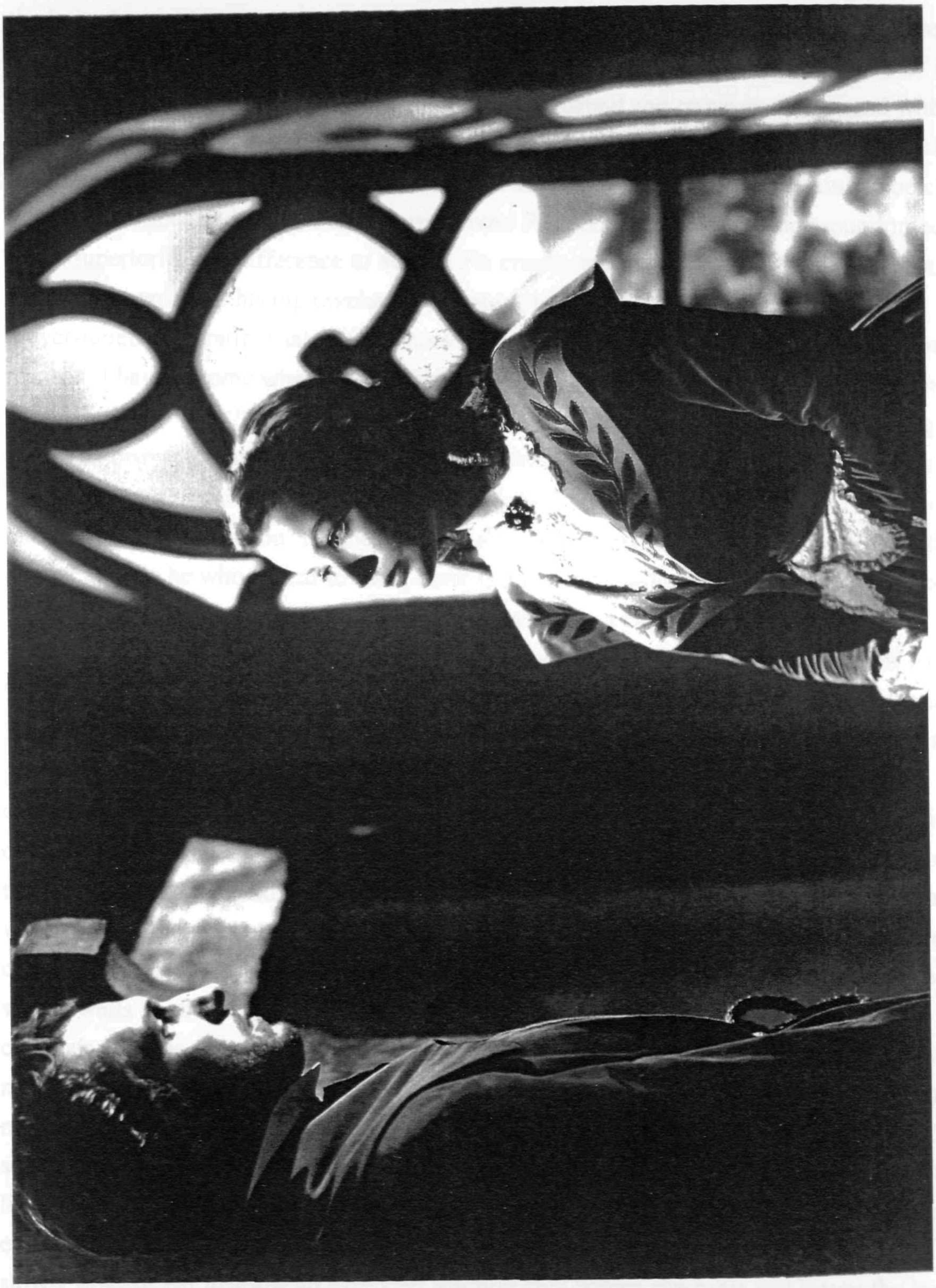


Figure 4.15

Nicholas repeats her question as if non-plussed by its directness, and then leaving a dramatic pause he says with emphasis "I live!" Miranda persists in trying to get at the truth: "I'm sure you mean a great deal by that, but, but it isn't very clear to me." This question gives Nicholas the latitude to express his dangerous fantasies of omnipotence. He vows "I will not live by ordinary standards. I will not run with the pack! I will not be chained into a routine of living which is the same for others. I will not look to the ground and move on the ground with the rest, not so long as there are those mountain tops and clouds, and limitless space!" Nicholas wants to shock Miranda, his tone is defiant and arrogant, but it is also beginning to be clear that his arrogance and posture as the aristocratic Patroon is based on a dangerous conviction of his superiority and difference to others. He cruelly taunts Miranda with her background, and as he approaches his big revelation ("Prepare to have your God-fearing, farm-bred, prayer-fattened morality shaken to its core") his voice increases in pitch and volume until he reaches "I have become what is commonly known as a drug addict". Miranda's calm one-word response: "Why?" completely punctures his pomposity and Nicholas' pose no longer looks so powerfully threatening, but rather bathetic. Nicholas is surprised by Miranda's reaction asking rhetorically: "No tearful reproaches? No attempts to save me, to regenerate me?", his voice quavers on "regenerate" and although he expresses surprise that Miranda doesn't cry it is he who is near to tears, there is a lot of mobility and emotion in his voice.

Miranda's voice and speech styles are marked by a calm tone and a pragmatic approach. While Nicholas uses a number of different registers (sarcasm, drama, self parody), Miranda's speech is marked by directness and sincerity. After Nicholas' revelation she tells him: "I know you better than you think.... I couldn't follow everything you said, but I think its pretty simple you're just plain running away." She assertively takes control of the confrontation and give Nicholas an old fashioned talking to: "I've seen farmers with their crops ruined, and their cattle dead and most of them just go to work, but some of them blame their troubles on God, and get drunk. To forget, to run away, to run away and hide. That's what you're doing Nicholas, whenever you came up against something unpleasant that you couldn't change, like the rent laws." As Miranda speaks the romance theme instrumented in strings wells up, the yearning and emotion signalled in this theme and instrumentation contrasts with the strange unsettled quality of the wind instruments punctuated by discordant notes that has accompanied Nicholas. Nicholas indicates to Miranda that it is "the death of my son" that is the thing he is running away from, to which she objects with emphasis "*Our* son!" Miranda pleads with him to give their marriage another chance but Nicholas will not listen to any more discussion from her, he brusquely dismisses her from the room. The scene ends with Nicholas moving out of the frame away from Miranda, and the camera tracks slowly towards her to allow an extended reaction shot before she turns and leaves the tower room.

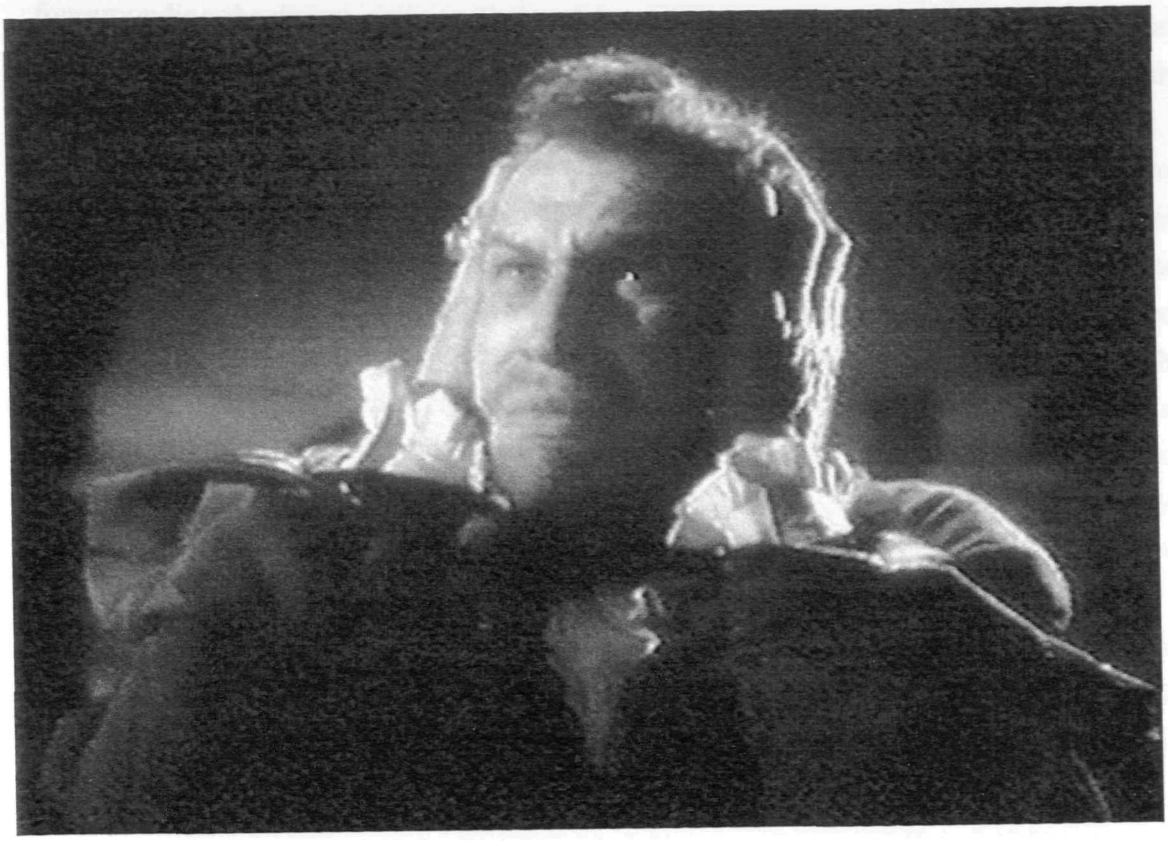


Figure 4.16

The conclusion to the dialogue allows Miranda's theme to come up with much more volume in the sound mix to emphasise her dilemma. Music continues to be a key element in foregrounding the disintegration of Miranda's marriage to the Patroon. This is most notable as Azeald's theme is heard by Nicholas, indicating that the curse of Dragonwyck has a firm hold over the family. After confronting her husband Miranda begins to feel ill and tired. Unbeknownst to her mistress Peggy goes to consult Dr Jeff Turner. When Peggy mentions that Nicholas has given Miranda an unusual oriental plant Jeff suspects that he is poisoning Miranda with oleander the same way that he killed his first wife Johanna. The next scene shows Nicholas coming to Miranda's bedroom. He talks to her in a sarcastic and elevated tone, similar to the one he uses in the confrontation scene. He again draws attention to the difference in their backgrounds telling her ominously: "What you are is the reflection of what I wanted you to be. You live the life that I gave you." Miranda looks at him in horror, and when he asks her what she is thinking she says "Of Johanna". Azeald's theme quietly enters the scene at the mention of Johanna, a theme associated with Johanna as the murdered wife, thus the woman in the past speaks for the woman who has been put into the past through her murder. At the mention of Johanna Nicholas becomes agitated, and seems distracted, the theme becomes more and more insistent, and Miranda realises that he can hear it. The music is augmented by the voice of a woman singing, although it is not possible to distinguish the words of what she sings. Nicholas is lured by the music down to the red room where he stares at the portrait and Azeald's harpsichord which he can hear being played but whose keys are not moving. In a gesture identical to that of Geoffrey in *The Two Mrs Carrolls* Nicholas holds his hands over his ears to try to block out the sound that is invading him (Figure 4.16).

Uncanny Voices: Aural Unpleasure and Narrative Cinema

In the previous chapter I discussed the contradictory relationship that exists around the gothic portraits. They commemorate women that the gothic male wishes to forget and they provide "home" to which this repressed can return. As Elisabeth Bronfen points out visual representations of death function like the failed repression of a symptom, "In the same displaced manner in which art enacts the reality of death we wish to disavow, any symptom articulates something that is so dangerous to the health of the psyche that it must be repressed and yet so strong in its desire for articulation that it can't be."[56] It is interesting that Bronfen uses the term "articulation" to describe the constant tension between denial and acknowledgement that characterises disavowal. Although she is discussing visual representations of death, my discussion of the return of Rebecca's voice showed the woman in the past can also return through sound.

In *The Two Mrs Carrolls* and *Dragonwyck* the threat of the returning repressed insistently "articulates" its presence through themes of score that are narratively associated with the portraits. The trauma that Geoffrey and Nicholas experience as their repressed memories return is shown in the films as their possession and invasion by sound. The musical motifs connected with the pictures of "The Angel of Death" and Azeald uncannily restore a voice to images of the dead, the women in the past "speak" in voices which signify the gothic males' imminent disintegration. In these two films, then, music is being used in a way which is not only narratively significant, it plays much more than a supporting role, and its use also asks questions about the model of cinematic aural perception as one typified by seductive pleasures. Claudia Gorbman explores this model, and in tracing the history of the coming of sound to cinema, she discusses the perception of the role of music in accompanying silent film:

> The argument runs that sound, in the form of music, gave back to those "dead" photographic images some of the life they lost in the process of mechanical reproduction. Words such as three-dimensionality, immediacy, reality, and of course, life recur throughout film music criticism in its attempt to describe the effect and purpose of film music: "the very liveliness of the action in the primitive silent films appeared unnatural and ghostly without some form of sound corresponding to such visual vitality." Music seemed to help flesh out the shadows on the screen.[57]

Gorbman suggests that "music permitted a deeper psychic investment in the grey, wordless, two dimensional world of the silent film."[58] She sees this investment continuing after the coming of synchronised sound in the role that film music has in suturing the audio-viewer seamlessly into the diegetic world of the film, contributing to strategies of cinematic construction, such as shot reverse-shot editing, which take on fetishistic functions, and which "restore belief (or suspend disbelief) in the immediacy and wholeness of the film events."[59] In this model film sound and music is seen as supporting and contributing to the structure of a safe space for the audio-viewer.

In exploring the effects of film music on the cinematic audio-viewer, Gorbman suggests the pleasures of an immersion in music are similar to the pleasures of a nostalgic fantasy of regression to an infantile state. "The infant is born into a sort of 'sonorous envelope,' and is yet unaware of distinctions between self and other, inside-outside the body."[60] Gorbman quotes the work of Didier Anzieu, describing the "auditory imaginary" as coming before the mirror phase which signals the child's entry into language and the symbolic:

> ...the melodic bath (the mother's voice, her songs, the music she plays to the infant) provides... a first auditory mirror which it first uses with its cries.' The imaginary longing for bodily fusion with the mother is never erased; and... the terms of this original illusion are defined in large part by the voice.[61]

Gorbman cites the work of Francis Hofstein who suggests the relationship between the mother's voice and music which exists for the child in its pre-verbal stage: "Speech from which, if you take away the signified, you get *music*... holds there the acoustical image, before 'language restores in the universal [the child's] function of subject."[62] and Gorbman continues:

> The mother's voice is central in constituting the auditory imaginary, before and also after the child's entry into the symbolic. From this - and from even earlier auditory perceptions and hallucinations - musical pleasure may be explained. Of course, music is subsequently a highly coded and organised discourse; but its freedom from linguistic signification and from representation of any kind preserve it as a more desirable, or less unpleasurable discourse... Rosolato... suggests that the pleasure of musical harmony is itself a nostalgia for the original imaginary fusion with the mother's body. "It is therefore the entire dramatization of separated bodies and their reunion which harmony supports."[63]

There are two aspects of Gorbman's discussion that I would like to consider in relation to the gothic portrait films. The first is the association of a specific musical theme with the portraits. The music functions to involve the still and silent painted images into the moving speaking narrative of the film, and as my discussion of the portraits of Azeald and "The Angel of Death" has demonstrated the musical themes function at moments in which the woman in the past is narratively important. The technique used here is not dissimilar to the use of music in silent cinema that Gorbman identifies, the difference coming in the effect on the characters within the diegesis and the audio-viewers in the cinema. Gorbman suggests that "music seemed to help flesh out the shadows on the screen",[64] contributing to the verisimilitude of the fictional space for the audio-viewer. In the gothic portrait films, however, the effect is rather more unsettling, with music standing in for the voice of the woman in the past in the same way that the portrait stands in for her image. The aural presence of the musical theme therefore constitutes yet another route by which the woman in the past uncannily returns and exerts a hold on the characters of the gothic portrait film. In terms of "flesh[ing] out the shadows on the screen" or of "the entire dramatization of separated bodies and their reunion", the music evokes the return of the repressed which the characters, and the gothic male in particular, dreads.

The second aspect of Gorbman's argument that I want to explore is the relationship between the pleasures of listening to music and the pleasure that the mother's voice represents to the pre-verbal child. In the scenarios discussed above the invasion of the gothic male by sound and music is experienced by the characters not as pleasurable nostalgia, but as a terrifying regression into the past. The model of auditory pleasure is adapted in several ways: instead of the feminine voice belonging to a beloved mother (a "good" ancestor), it belongs to a reviled female predecessor (a "bad" ancestor). The invasion of the gothic male by the musical "voice" of the woman in the past takes him back to a state of infantile helplessness and depossesses him of his patricarchal power over the gothic estate. He is occupied and overtaken through sound, and his grip on his ancestral position is threatened by his increasing psychical instability. The aural unpleasure experienced by the gothic male is generically motivated in the gothic portrait films. The use of sound to create fear in the audio-viewer is an adaptation of the "pleasure" model, given that the experience of fear is one of the pleasures of the gothic and horror genres.

Gaslight: From Persecuted Wife to "Goddess of Vengeance"[65]

I have held back my discussion of the confrontation scene in *Gaslight* as it varies from the other portrait films in that it is the heroine who both speaks and forces the gothic male to listen to her, but it still provides an example of the punishment of the gothic male through sound. Despite the very powerful scene of confrontation which comes at the end of the film, *Gaslight* seems to condense many of the problematic aspects of the treatment of the gothic heroine for feminist film criticism. In discussions of *Gaslight* the question of the agency of the gothic heroine arises again. Doane argues that the penetration of the forbidden space by the heroine of the gothic woman's film "effects a major disturbance in the cinematic relay of the look."[66] She argues that *Gaslight* illustrates a strategy for overcoming this disturbance: "the potential danger of a female look is often reduced or avoided entirely by means of a delegation of the detecting gaze to another male figure who is on the side of the law."[67] This secondary male figure is the character of Brian Cameron, a detective who decides to pursue the unsolved Alice Alquist murder case. For Diane Waldman this secondary male provides an important corroboration of Paula's experience. He confirms that the sounds she has heard from the attic and the dimming of the lights are not symptoms of her madness, but her husband rifling through her aunt's possessions in search of the missing jewels (Figure 4.17).[68] Waldman writes, "it is a man who corroborates the heroine's experience, and, in true Gothic tradition, comes to her rescue."[69] Although it is true that Brian resolves the crime that has been committed and physically apprehends Gregory, the full resolution of the film cannot come about until Paula has confronted her husband.

The confrontation scene comes at the end of the film and it shows the transition of the character of Paula Alquist from a figure of suffering to one who takes revenge on her husband for her aunt's murder, and for his treatment of her throughout their marriage. Paula goes up the stairs to the forbidden space of the house, and by doing so she moves across the spaces of the house that have been so emphatically divided from each other by Gregory (Figure 4.18). As in the other gothic portrait films I have discussed the confrontation scene gains much of its power through the deployment of sound, and voices in particular.

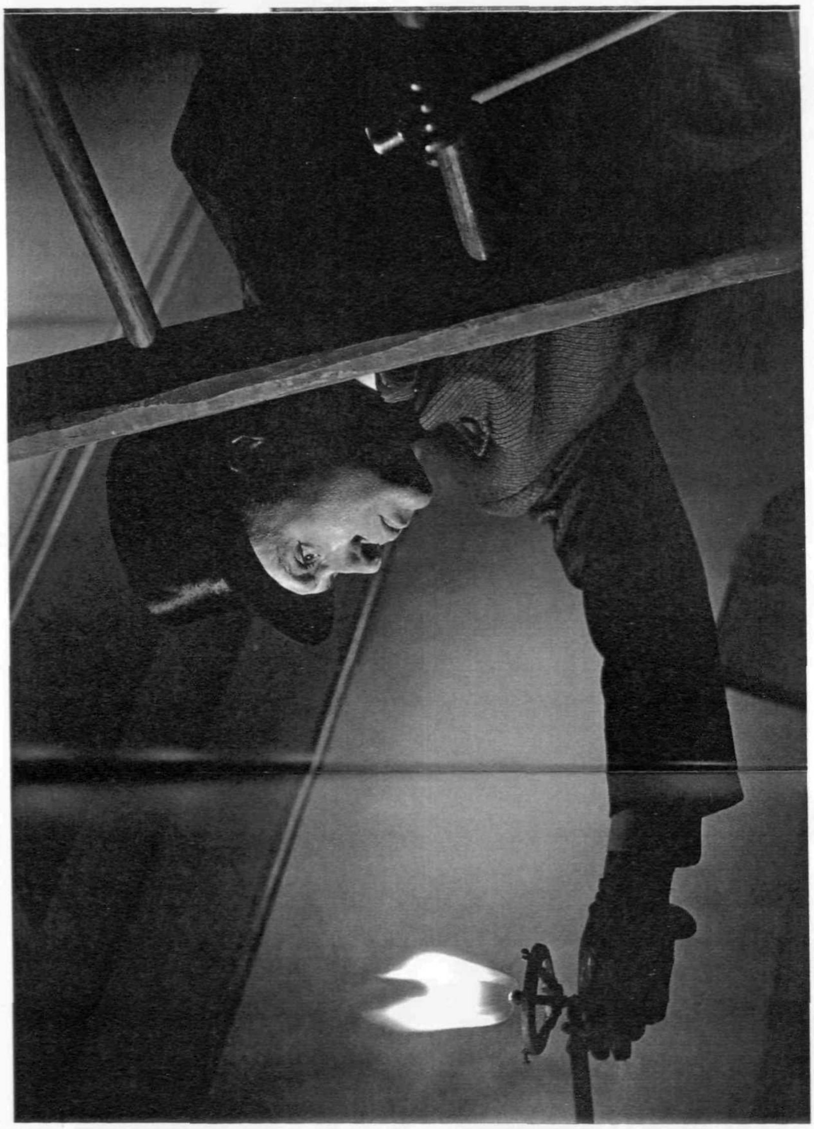


Figure 4.17

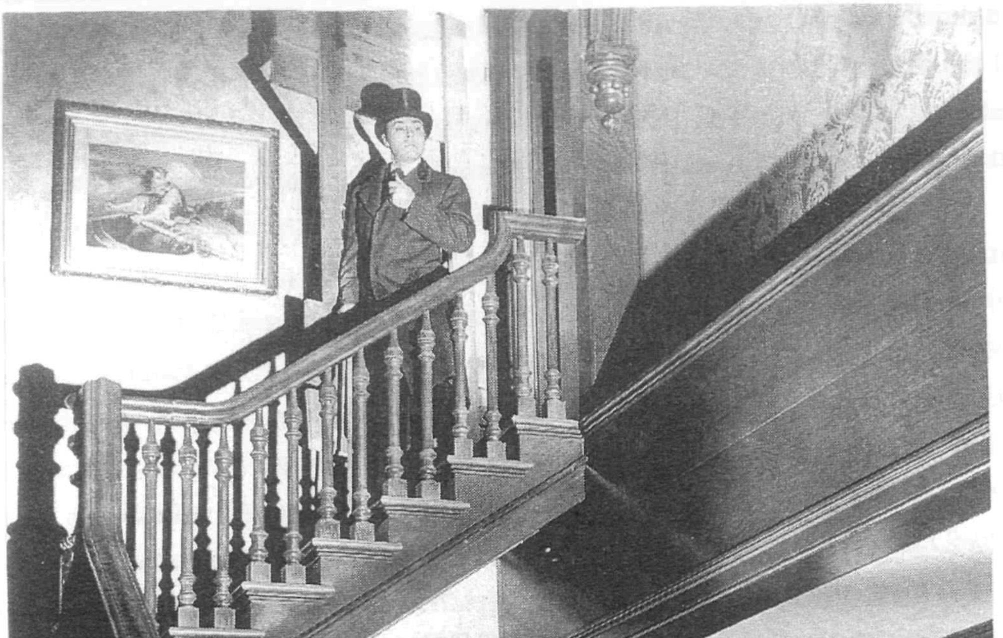


Figure 4.18

Music swells as Paula enters the attic, dark and menacing in feeling with marked low wind sounds, which give over to more dominant violins to create an upward surge of tension as a tilting point-of-view shot reveals where Gregory is. After creating this initial tension the music dies away and in the rest of the scene the voice and speech styles of the two characters carry the emotion of the scene and present different sonic qualities. Gregory's appearance in this scene is greatly changed from the rest of the film. Through the film his costume and make up have given him a groomed and immaculate appearance, which contributes to a sense of him as embodying the qualities of control as well as giving him the characteristics of dangerous desirability associated with the gothic male. Figure 4.19 shows a production still from the film, which condenses the relationship of the couple in *Gaslight* up to the confrontation scene, showing the threat Gregory represents to Paula, but also showing the styling which constructs his image. In the attic scene Gregory has gone through a similar change in appearance as Nicholas in *Dragonwyck*. His carefully groomed appearance is now dishevelled, conveying his loss of control. He has been tied to a chair, and the lighting picks out the sweat on his brow and pin points of light pick out his eyes which glitter with dangerous desperation (Figure 4.20). As soon as Paula enters the attic Gregory tries to manipulate her into helping him. This is clear in the shifting voice styles that Charles Boyer/Gregory uses. As he remarks on Paula's trust in Brian, "You have great confidence in him, he told you a lot of things about me didn't he?" His voice is accusing and sarcastic, and marked with the controlled and controlling tone that we have heard him use to Paula throughout much of the film. As he tries to convince Paula that Brian is lying about him because he is in love with her his voice starts to becomes less controlled; it is insistent but there is a hissing quality to it. Paula's responses at the beginning of the scene are measured, she is taking stock of Gregory's responses and her voice is tinged with the weariness that has characterised it for most of the film, but underneath it there is also a new determination. Gregory's strategy changes as he tries to manipulate Paula by reminding her of the past, their "first days" of marriage:

> Come closer Paula, closer... look into my eyes. If I ever meant anything to you, and I believe I did, then help me Paula, give me another chance. Look, in the drawer of that cupboard over there there is a knife, get it, cut me free. Be quick Paula, get me the knife, cut me free. Will you get it Paula? Would you get it for me?

His voice becomes deeper and more resonant as he tries to deploy a tone of intimacy, and as he believes that he draws Paula into their memories he shifts from the deep tone he uses on "closer" to a whisper as he asks for "another chance", but it is not another chance with her that he wants, but the chance to escape. As Gregory encourages her to help him a greater urgency comes into the whispering hissing tone he is using "Be quick Paula... Will you get it for me?". The range of tones and sonic qualities to Boyer's/Gregory's voice here are very effective, through a delicate but deadly shifting between intimacy, persuasion and veiled threat Gregory tries to hypnotise Paula into carrying out his wishes. As he is tied up his voice is the only weapon he has left in his armoury, but he deploys it with great skill. Paula appears to be completely under the spell of his voice - agreeing to get the knife she goes to the drawer. She tells Gregory "There's no knife here" and "I don't see any knife" and her voice quavers anxiously as she searches for it. Her worried voice and the framing of her so that the audio-viewer cannot see what she is doing give the impression that once again Paula cannot find the object that she is supposed to, that her perceptions are questionable. However her voice and the framing of the shot deliberately mislead the audio-viewer, as Paula turns around saying that she cannot find the knife she holds it triumphantly in her hand (Figure 4.21). Paula has two speeches in which she turns Gregory's persecution of her against him, she becomes a "goddess of vengeance" and he is forced to listen to her:

> *Paula*: Are you suggesting that this is a knife that I hold in my hand? Have you gone mad my husband? Or is it I that am mad? Yes of course, that's it. *I* am mad, I'm always losing things and hiding things and I can never find them, I don't know where I put them. That was a knife wasn't it? I must find it, if I don't find it you'll put me in the madhouse. Where could it be now? Perhaps it's behind this picture. Yes it must be here. No, no where shall I look now? Perhaps I put it over here, yes, yes I must have done that. My brooch! The brooch I lost at the tower, I've found it at last, you see, but it doesn't help you does it, and I'm trying to help you aren't I? Trying to help you to escape. How can a mad woman help her husband to escape.
> *Gregory*: But you're not mad!
> *Paula*: Yes I am mad as my mother was mad!
> *Gregory*: No Paula! That wasn't true!
> *Paula*: If I were not mad I could have helped you. Whatever you had done I could have pitied and protected you. But because I am mad I hate you, because I am mad I have betrayed you and because I am mad I am rejoicing in my heart without a shred of pity, without a shred of regret watching you go with glory in my heart. Mr Cameron come! Come Mr Cameron! Take this man away! Take this man away!

There is a lot of variety in Paula's speech and voice styles in both these speeches. In her first speech her tone becomes increasingly confident and hardens into anger as she performs and parodies her former role as persecuted wife. She moves right up to Gregory and holding the knife threateningly close to his face, as shown in Figure 4.21, and when this still is compared with the production still (Figure 4.20) the transformation from her as terrified heroine to a terrifying woman (to Gregory) is clear. As she says "I'm always losing things" she throws the knife away and then enacts a search for it accompanied by a kind of narration in a fake-worried tone, "Where could it be now? Perhaps..." showing Gregory that she recognises how he has manipulated her behaviour throughout their life at Thornton Square. The first speech also contains other tones: as Paula finds the brooch she thought she had lost, her voice registers her relief and delight, but the brooch is another reminder of Gregory's manipulation and she shifts back to her performance on "it doesn't help you does it".

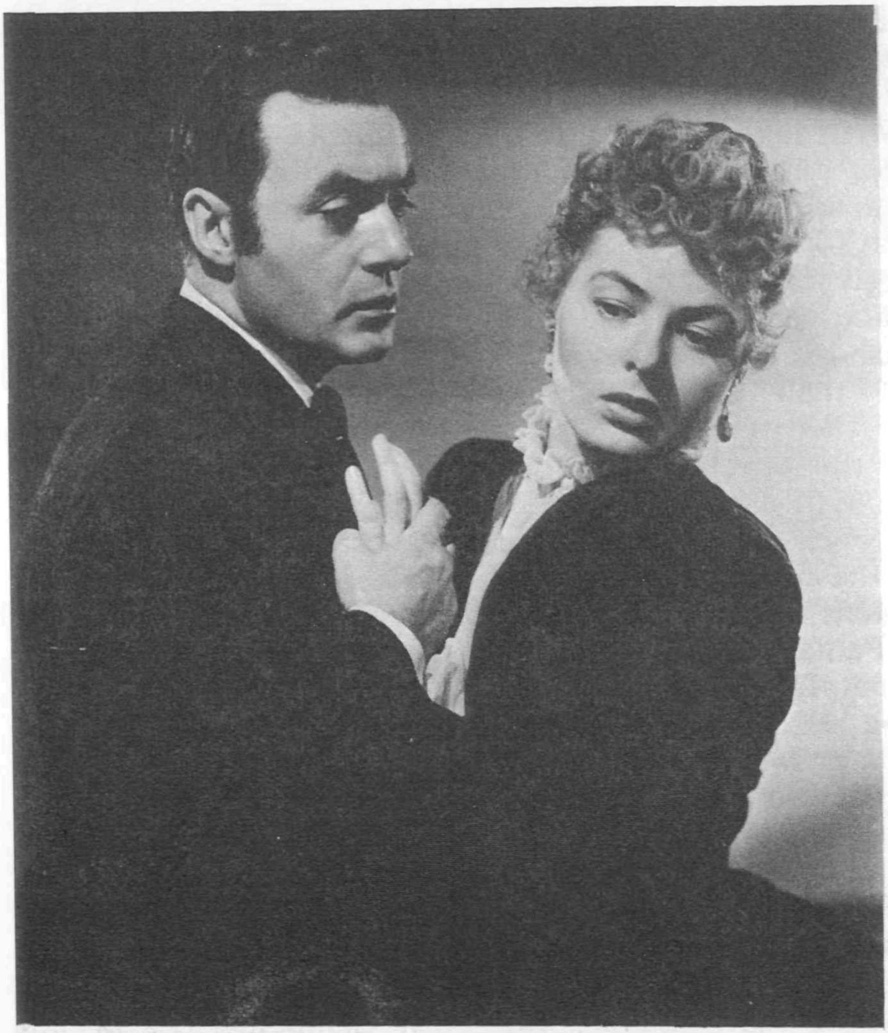


Figure 4.19

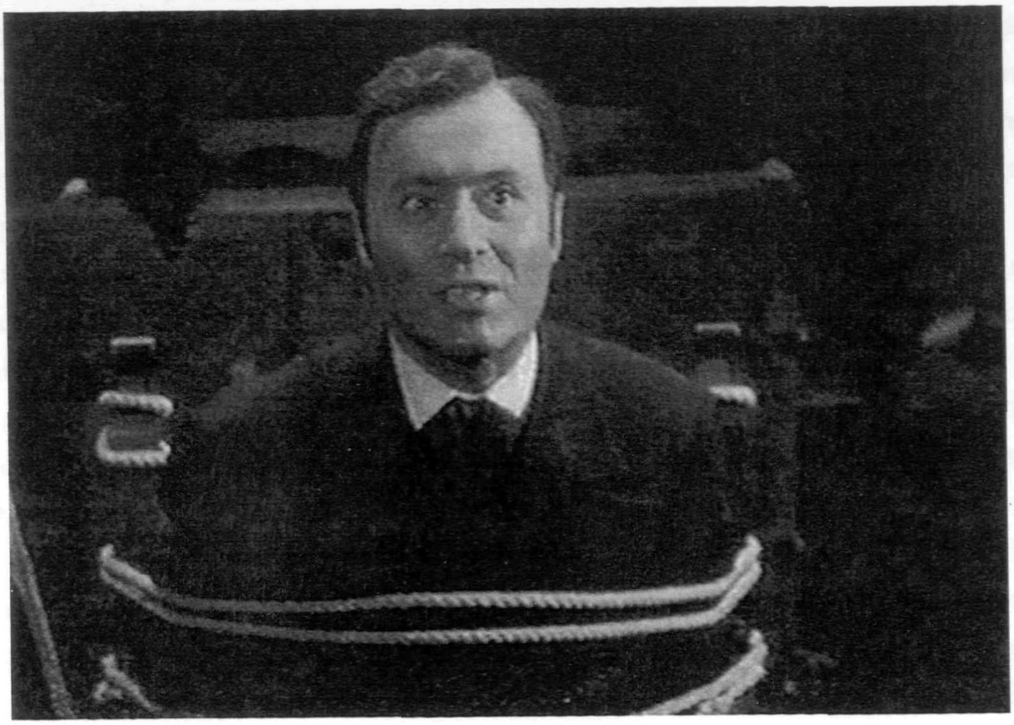


Figure 4.20

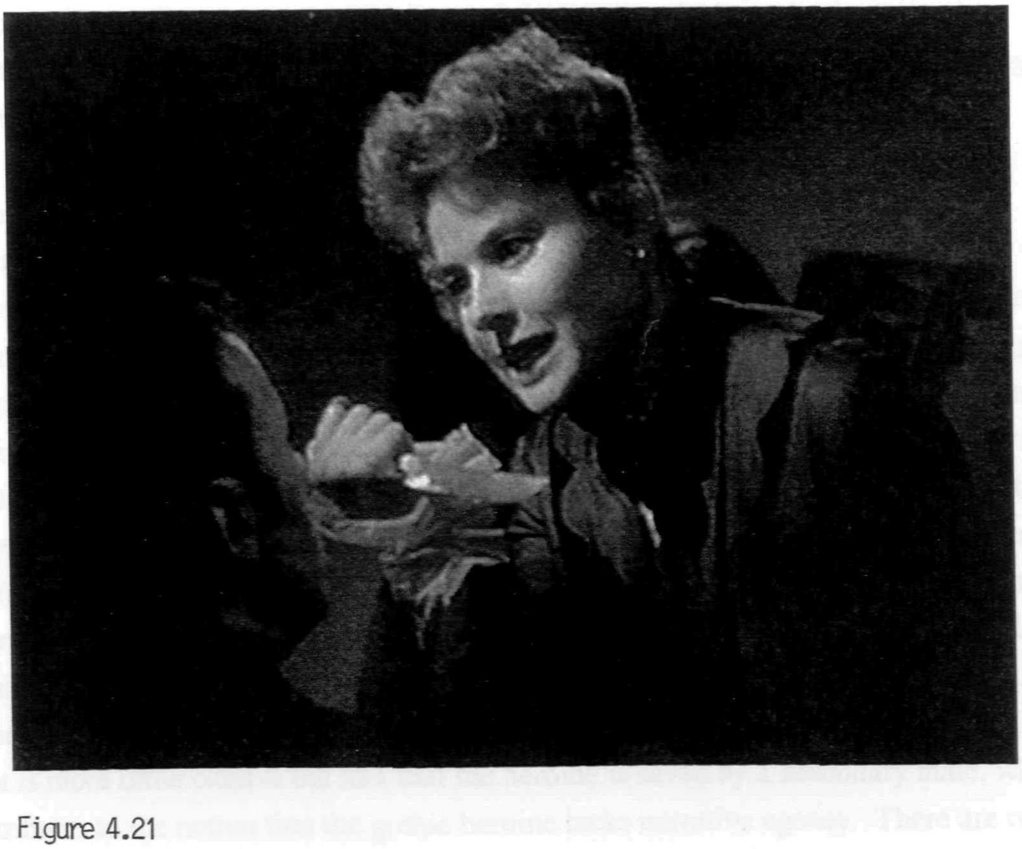


Figure 4.21

The power of her performance as "the madwoman in the attic"[70] prompts Gregory to reveal that he lied when he told her that her mother was mad. But the performance of madness has empowered Paula to take revenge on Gregory and in her second speech she claims madness as an outlet to her anger. This speech concludes the confrontation scene, and the crescendo of emotion is carried entirely by Paula's voice. Her anger is evident in the low hissing whisper which inflects "because I am mad I hate you", and she accents "betrayed", "rejoicing", "pity" working up to the triumph that pervades her pronouncement that she is "watching [Gregory] go with glory in my heart". At the end of the scene Paula effectively dismisses Gregory, commanding Brian to "take this man away".

In *Gaslight* the woman in the past, Alice Alquist, is avenged through the actions of her niece Paula. In the previous chapter I noted that the portrait of Alice Alquist also functioned as a likeness for Paula and I noted that the heroine of the gothic portrait film is often engaged in a struggle for self determination. The confrontation scene in *Gaslight* differs from the confrontation scenes in the other gothic portrait films in that the heroine is the agent for the return of the woman in the past. Paula paradoxically determines her own identity and destiny as different to that of her murdered aunt through temporarily taking on the role of "goddess of vengeance". There are parallels here with her aunt's career as a great performer, and Paula determines her future not through a loss of identity, but through a transition of identity. By becoming a revenge figure which re-presents Alice as well as punishing Gregory for his torture of her Paula breaks the cycle, ensuring that Gregory cannot repeat his past actions by murdering Paula as he murdered Alice. In *Gaslight*, then, the return of the double allows the heroine to move away from the past rather than being overtaken by it.

Resolution: Disintegrating Dynasties

The resolution of the gothic portrait films often involve the presence of a secondary male character: Charles Pennington in *The Two Mrs Carrolls*, Jeff Turner in *Dragonwyck* and Brian Cameron in *Gaslight*. As I have noted above the narrative resolution of *Gaslight* crystallises the "problem" that the gothic heroine presents for some feminist criticism, such as that of Doane and Waldman cited above. They raise concerns over Paula's sufferings and what is perceived as her relative passivity in relation to her scheming and manipulative husband. However the confrontation scene is crucial to redressing the balance of power in *Gaslight*. While Paula undoubtedly does suffer through the machinations of her husband this offers a potent and condensed measure of revenge for his actions. She is vindicated as her suspicions are shown to be correct, and the gothic male is exposed as pathological. This scene is not often referred to when critics (such as Doane and Waldman) examine *Gaslight*, what is more often cited is the fact that the heroine is saved by a secondary male, which only contributes to the notion that the gothic heroine lacks narrative agency. There are two different ways in which the secondary male might be viewed. The first is put forward by Andrea Walsh who points out that the secondary male actually plays a relatively unimportant role, the real drama of these films being what takes place between husband and wife. She discusses examples of the gothic woman's film, including *Gaslight*, as follows:

> ...the male rescuer is relatively peripheral to the emotional intensity of the narrative.... The roots of female madness lie not within, but without - in the identity of threatening men. "Exorcism" is not the answer. Rather, these women must escape or terminate dangerous relationships.[71]

The drama of the narrative hinges on the relationship of the heroine to the gothic male; in Marina Warner's words, the heroine must "come to terms with [her] husband - or flee him".[72] While the role of the secondary male is "peripheral" to the narrative drama the way that this character is represented does serve as a contrasting foil to the gothic male. The characters of Charles Pennington, Jeff Turner and Brian Cameron are more understanding and nurturing models of masculinity than the tyrannical gothic males who are their counterparts.[73] Figure 4.22, from *Gaslight*, shows Brian listening attentively to Paula's story. In *Rebecca* there is no secondary male and the contrasting models of masculinity are both embodied in Maxim, who is a divided character. The cottage sequence dramatises his shift from threatening gothic male to a more caring and nurturing role. The resolution of the gothic portrait films involves the disintegration of the gothic male and his simultaneous fall from his place as patriarch. The gothic woman's film frequently ends with the destruction of the dynasty over which the gothic male has presided. The ancestral house, Manderley, goes up in flames in *Rebecca*;[74] in *Dragonwyck* Nicholas is shot dead while sitting on the ancient stone throne of the Patroon; and in *Gaslight* and *The Two Mrs Carrolls* the gothic male is prevented from perpetuating the cycle of wife-murder by the punishing return of the woman in the past and the heroine's realisation that her suspicions about her husband are correct.

The disintegration of the gothic male is dramatised in the portrait gothics as his invasion by sound. The voices and music-as-voice and the portrait image are the two channels by which the woman in the past, a female ancestor or previous wife uncannily returns and re-presents a challenge to his patriarchal authority. The voice and the portrait are the traces or remains of the woman in the past, and their return to haunt the gothic male, the ancestral house and the diegesis of the film show how powerfully the different elements of image and sound function when narratively associated together. Earlier in this chapter I cited Bronfen's work on death representations. She suggests that visual images can "articulate", speak the contradictory nature of disavowal in relation to anxieties about castration and death. In the interrelationship between image and sound, voices and their sources in bodies that I have traced in this chapter it is clear that sounds and voices can also recall images. The theme of the double runs so strongly through the gothic portrait films because of the interrelationship of sound and image, seeing and hearing, that is presented for the audio-viewer. As Michel Chion suggests: "the reality of the audiovisual combination [is] that one perception influences the other and transforms it. We never see the same thing when we also hear; we don't hear the same thing when we see as well."[75] The audiovisual combination of the portrait and sound works in the gothic narrative to, as it were, double the double. In tracing the theme of the double in Otto Rank's work Freud notes that "the 'double' was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, [in Rank's words], 'an energetic denial of the power of death'"[76] However, he continues to note that once the stage of primary narcissism has been passed through the double ceases to be reassuring: "the 'double' reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death."[77] The association of portraits with sound in the gothic portrait films demonstrates this shift in the double. The family portraits, originally intended to guarantee the "immortality" of the ancestral line (a "denial of the power of death") become a threat to the gothic male.

Through the return of the woman in the past, which is heralded through both image and sound, portrait and voice, the gothic male is dispossessed of his estate (*Rebecca*, *Dragonwyck*) and often his freedom or even his life (*Dragonwyck*, *Gaslight*, *The Two Mrs Carrolls*). The dynamics of the gender relationships in these films thus actually present a critique of the tyrannical patriarchal values embodied in the gothic male character. The gothic woman's film is therefore not under a patriarchal stranglehold, as Doane suggests, but foregrounds the problems of the patriarchal system from the heroine's point of view. Waldman explores this question, but she considers that the secondary male "undermin[es] the Gothic's subversive potential as critique of male domination.... his presence allows the narrative to suggest that the heroine has simply made a bad choice of mate".[78] While there is no denying the presence of this secondary male, the way that he is read is crucial to the perception of the gothic woman's film. I want to cite Walsh's perspective again - that he is "peripheral" to the main drama of the narrative - and to note that Waldman herself concludes her discussion of the gothic woman's film by suggesting that the secondary male potentially represents a negotiation of what are desirable characteristics in a mate. She states that the power of patriarchy is "diffused through the narrative overthrow of the patriarchal tyrant and his replacement by a gentler, more democratic type."[79]

The opposing models of masculinity in the gothic woman's film, the gothic male who is "desirable but dangerous"[80] and the secondary male who is understanding and nurturing, recall the divisions of female character types in discussions of *film noir*. In fact there are many parallels in visual styling, narrative organisation and issues of gender and sexuality that might be drawn between the categories of *film noir* and the gothic woman's film, and it is to these parallels that I will turn in my conclusion.

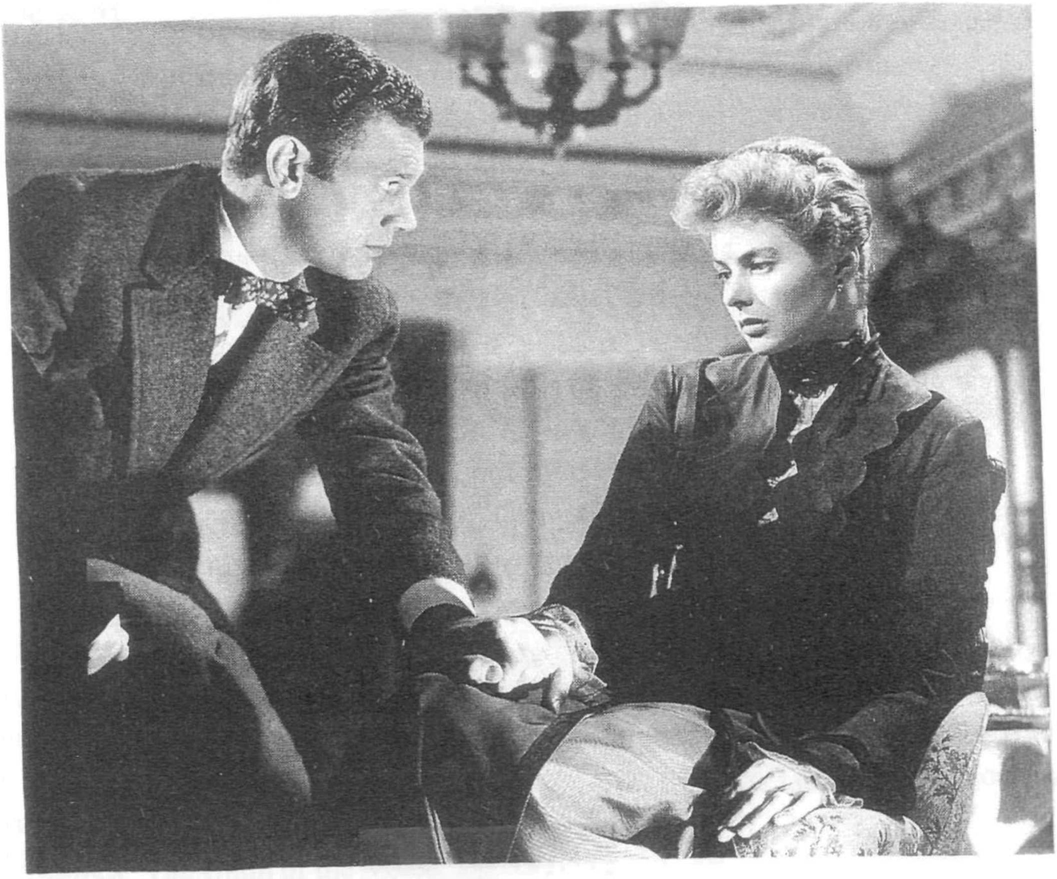


Figure 4.22

NOTES

[1] Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 53.

[2] Karen Hollinger, '*Film Noir*, Voice-over and the Femme Fatale', pp. 243-244.

[3] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 49.

[4] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 49.

[5] Mary Ann Doane, 'The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space', in *Yale French Studies*, 60 (1980), 33-50, p. 40.

[6] Doane, 'The Voice in the Cinema', p. 40.

[7] Rick Altman, 'Moving Lips: Cinema as Ventriloquism', *Yale French Studies*, 60 (1980), 67-79, p. 73.

[8] Altman, 'Moving Lips', p. 73.

[9] Altman, 'Moving Lips', p. 73.

[10] Altman, 'Moving Lips', pp. 73-74.

[11] Altman, 'Moving Lips', p. 74.

[12] Altman, 'Moving Lips', p. 74.

[13] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 18, original emphasis.

[14] Chion, Audio-Vision, p. 72.

[15] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 21, original emphasis.

[16] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 6, original emphases.

[17] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 5.

[18] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 5.

[19] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 6.

[20] Interview with Alfred Hitchcock by Jean Domarchi and Jean Douchet, *Cahiers du cinéma*, 102 (1959), reprinted in Andre Bazin et al. La Politique de auteurs (Paris: Editions Champ libre, 1972), p. 153, cited in Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 6, original emphases.

[21] Roland Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', in Image/Music/Text (London: Fontana, 1977), Essays Selected and Translated by Stephen Heath, p. 188.

[22] Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', pp. 181-182.

[23] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 126.

[24] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 125.

[25] Gill Branston, '...Viewer, I Listened to Him..., Voices, Masculinity, *In the Line of Fire*, in Me Jane: Masculinity, Movies and Women, ed. by Pat Kirkham and Janet Thumim (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995), pp. 38-39.

[26] Mary Ann Doane, '*Caught* and *Rebecca*: The Inscription of Femininity as Absence', *Enclitic*, 5-6 (1981-1982), 75-89, pp. 88-89.

[27] Modleski, citing Doane, '*Caught* and *Rebecca*', p. 89, in The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 130.

[28] Doane, '*Caught* and *Rebecca*', p. 88.

[29] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 21.

[30] Pascal Bonitzer, 'Partial Vision: Film and the Labyrinth', p. 58, cited in Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 53.

[31] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 23.

[32] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, pp. 23-24.

[33] Chion uses a rather unfortunate analogy of defloration to describe the de-acousmatization of the acousmetre, The Voice on the Cinema, p. 23. The exceptions to this are films where the voice of the acousmêtre is revealed as belonging to a mechanical source, such as *The Testament of Dr Mabuse* (Fritz Lang, Germany, 1933).

[34] Doane, '*Caught* and *Rebecca*', pp. 88-89.

[35] Doane, '*Caught* and *Rebecca*', pp. 88-89.

[36] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 140.

[37] Chion, The Voice in Cinema, p. 140.

[38] Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. 113.

[39] Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. 113.

[40] Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. 113, my emphases.

[41] Alan Williams, 'Historical and Theoretical Issues in the Coming of Recorded Sound to the Cinema', in Sound Theory and Sound Practice, ed. by Rick Altman (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 134-135, cited in Branston, 'Viewer, I Listened to Him', p. 42.

[42] On voice and speech styles in the action movie see Yvonne Tasker, 'Tough Guys and Wise Guys', in her Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 73-90.

[43] Branston, 'Viewer, I Listened to Him', p. 44.

[44] Jane Tompkins, West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns (Oxford: Oxford Unversity Press, 1992), cited in Branston, 'Viewer, I Listened to Him', p. 44.

[45] Branston, 'Viewer, I Listened to Him', p. 44.

[46] Branston, 'Viewer, I Listened to Him', p. 46.

[47] The effect of Rebecca's laughter on the men in the film is discussed by Modleski, The Women Who Knew Too Much, p. 54. For a fascinating discussion of the laugh of Bertha Mason, the woman in the past in Jane Eyre, see Cora Kaplan, Seachanges: Culture and Feminism (London: Verso, 1986), pp. 171-174.

[48] Branston, 'Viewer, I Listened to Him', p. 45.

[49] Freud, 'The Uncanny', p. 356.

[50] Chion, Audio-Vision, p. 80.

[51] Gorbman, Unheard Melodies, pp. 2-3.

[52] Gorbman, Unheard Melodies, p. 3, original emphases.

[53] Gorbman, Unheard Melodies, p. 3.

[54] Gorbman, Unheard Melodies, p. 3.

[55] Doane, 'The Voice in the Cinema', p. 44.

[56] Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body, p. x.

[57] Gorbman, citing Roger Manvell and John Huntley, The Technique of Film Music (New York: Hastings House, 1975), pp. 20-21, in her Unheard Melodies, p. 39.

[58] Gorbman, Unheard Melodies, p. 40.

[59] Gorbman, Unheard Melodies, p. 39.

[60] Gorbman, Unheard Melodies, p. 6.

[61] Gorbman cites Didier Anzieu, "L'enveloppe sonore du soi", *Nouvelle revue de psychanalyse*, 13 (1976), 161-179, p. 175, in her Unheard Melodies, p. 6.

[62] Francis Hofstein, "Drogue et musique," *Musique en jeu* 9 (November 1972), 111-115, cited in Gorbman, Unheard Melodies, p. 63.

[63] Guy Rosolato, "La Voix: Entre corps et langage", *Revue francaise de psychanalyse* 38, 1 (Jan. 1974), 75-94, cited in Gorbman, p. 63.

[64] Gorbman, citing Roger Manvell and John Huntley, The Technique of Film Music (New York: Hastings House, 1975), pp. 20-21, in her Unheard Melodies, p. 39.

[65] Patrick McGilligan discusses the production history of *Gaslight* in his biography of George Cukor. He suggests that the scriptwriters, Walter Reisch and John Van Druten were concerned about the casting of Ingrid Bergman in the part of Paula. McGilligan relates that Reisch could not see how "a powerful woman with enormous shoulders, strong and healthy" could play the fragile character. Cukor, however, considered the transformation to be a challenge: "What's the difference? What if we do have a powerful woman? It will be twice as interesting to see whether she will be able to fight back, whether he will be able to really ruin her, or break her." McGilligan also states, "According to Reisch, Cukor gave the ending particular emphasis: where Gregory Anton is strapped to a chair and Paula Alquist becomes for a passing moment, "a goddess of vengeance." (Reisch's words)". (Patrick McGilligan, George Cukor: A Double Life (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), pp. 176-177.

[66] Doane, The Desire to Desire, p. 135.

[67] Doane, The Desire to Desire, p. 135.

[68] The way that Gregory is able to control the sounds and lighting of the gothic house, from his location in the attic give a sense of his omnipotence over the domestic space. There are parallels here with the way that Ballin is able to control the space of the nightclub in *Gilda* from his office.

[69] Diane Waldman, "'At last I can tell it to someone!'", p. 36.

[70] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979).

[71] Andrea Walsh, Women's Film and Female Experience 1940-1950 (New York: Praeger, 1984), p. 182.

[72] Marina Warner, 'The Uses of Enchantment', p. 29.

[73] Through her research on women readers of romance fiction Janice Radway asserts that the hero of the ideal romance is characterised by the nurturing and caring role that he takes on in relation to the heroine. See Janice Radway, Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature (1984; Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 134-147.

[74] As does Blaze Creek, the family house in *Secret Beyond the Door*.

[75] Chion, Audio-Vision, p. xxvi.

[76] Freud, 'The Uncanny', p. 356.

[77] Freud, 'The Uncanny', p. 357.

[78] Waldman, '"At last I can tell it to someone!"', p. 36.

[79] Waldman, 'At last I can tell it to someone!', p. 38.

[80] Kaplan, 'Introduction', in Women in Film Noir, pp. 2-3.

CONCLUSION: "SETTING FIXED FRAMES IN MOTION"

I began this thesis by discussing the different meanings of the term "frame", and frames as textual objects, as narrative strategies and as critical approaches have formed and informed a major part of my argument. I have been concerned not only with what is inside a particular frame, a portrait image, a character, or a category of films, but with that which exceeds its frame, that which complicates a frame as a fixed definition or boundary.

In Chapter One I discussed a variety of images and their construction. The first was the image of the *femme fatale* and its construction by genre critics; this image is used to represent one pole of the fatal woman/nurturing woman opposition that many critics cite as typifying femininity the *film noir* canon. With reference to *Laura* and *Gilda* I argued that, contrary to this view, there is considerable variety in women in *film noir*. These two films are interesting as they have images which figure in their narratives: Laura's portrait, the advertising image of Waldo in *Laura* and the portrait of Ballin in *Gilda*. In addition to these images the promotion of *Laura* and *Gilda* generated further images. The films were promoted by portraying their central female characters as mysterious, dangerous and highly sexual, qualities that are actually challenged in the narratives. This challenge occurs through sound as well as image. In *Gilda* the performance of songs by Gilda/Hayworth diminishes the control of narration through voice-over, and in *Laura* the score presented a different composition of Laura than her portrait image does, or the image of her circulated in the film's publicity. In fact in *Laura* and *Gilda* the dangerous characters are male. There are the confused males (McPherson and Johnny) who mistake the image of the woman for the woman herself; and the deadly manipulative males (Waldo and Ballin) who try to construct and control the images of the central women, and who themselves are framed as images. I noted that in the course of the narratives the fatal and pathological qualities of the male characters were condensed and transferred to the female characters. This transferral is part of a quite complex relationship of frames. Laura and Gilda are framed as "desirable but dangerous"[1] through the poster and publicity images, and through the misconceptions of the male characters, and Laura is further framed through her portrait. In other words there are several processes through which an image is ascribed to these women which (through the course of the narrative) is shown to be partial, incorrect: a fabrication or frame. In *Laura* and *Gilda* the strategy of framing is shown to be mutable.

A movement, or slippage of frames is also evident in the films that I examine in Chapter Two. In *Phantom Lady*, *The Dark Corner* and *I Wake Up Screaming* I identified a series of frames; the frames of portrait images and narrative frames. In the three films I examined portraits of female characters are prominent. There is a slippage between image and narrative frames as framee male characters are implicated, framed, for crimes they did not commit by framer male characters who have a pathological relationship to a framed image of a woman. The narrative frames become evident, and are shifted from the framee males, by the actions of a female investigator. The investigation initiates a romance between the female investigator and the framee male. Through the investigation the female investigator determines the truth about an aspect of the framee male's past, and therefore checks his suitability as a partner. The female investigator negotiates between the image frames and narrative frames, but furthermore her actions challenge the frame that genre criticism has drawn around an investigating figure. The female investigators directly refute the notion that the investigating figure in *film noir* is male, and identify the variety of ways in which femininity operates in *film noir*.

In Chapters Three and Four I examined issues of framing in the gothic woman's film. The way that these portraits function has parallels with the films I examined in Chapters One and Two. They portray women who are important figures in the past of the gothic male characters, a similar relationship to that discussed between the male framers and female images in Chapter Two, and the heroine undertakes an investigative role through which she determines her husband's relationship to the past. In Chapter Three I examined the ways in which the paintings run counter to the notion of portraits as representative likenesses of their subjects. I noted that this happens in two ways: firstly the gothic portraits uncannily reinflect representation as re-presentation, or making present again; they bring back the woman from the past to haunt the marriage of the heroine to the gothic male. Secondly, likeness is complicated by the way that the image of the woman in the portraits is also a likeness of the heroine. I noted that the heroines undergo a process of self determination, through which they realise the perils of occupying the place vacated by the death of the woman in the past, and they often realise that their husbands are planning to murder them.

In Chapter Four I continued to examine the return of the woman in the past, and to account for the important role of film sound and music in marking this return. Although my discussion of portrait images was undertaken in Chapter Three and my discussion of the return of voices and music-as-voice was explored in Chapter Four this division was made only in order to manage the overall argument clearly. As I indicated in my analysis it is the association of voice with painted image, the "audiovisual combination"[2] that makes the return of the woman in the past so loudly resonant and highly visible in these films. The gothic women's films present several challenges to framing: intratextually they dramatise an escape of the portrait frame by the woman in the past. She is supposed to be dead and buried and the portrait marks her memorial but, as I have indicated, there is an unsuccessful repression of her memory due to the pathological relationship of the gothic male to the past. Through the likeness of the heroine to the portrait, and through the power of film sound and music to give voice to the woman in the past, she escapes the immobility of the painting and her bodily location in the grave, and returns to haunt the gothic house and it inhabitants. I have discussed the way that sound and music haunt the gothic male in particular, and we might remember that one of the many meanings of the term "frame" is the body as a frame. In several of the gothic films discussed, the woman in the past forcefully returns to possess the gothic male through sound, entering his frame through his ears.

The flowing of sound across a boundary, or frame, separating dead woman and living gothic male, is a profoundly uncanny shifting of framed elements out of their frames (the grave and portrait) and into other frames (the gothic male's body). It is through the combination of image and sound, the audiovisual combination, that this occurs. What is evident is that in this combination there is a borrowing of properties across the different elements of image and sound. The fluidity of sound and the fixedness of the image become mutually influencing in these scenarios. Sound gains a certain rootedness - as we are dealing in an uncanny analogy we might say a "home" - in the portrait and the painted re-presentation gains a certain mobility through which its subject can move outside the painting's frame and pervade the narrative frame: "the reality of the audiovisual combination [is] that one perception influences the other and transforms it. We never see the same thing when we also hear; we don't hear the same thing when we see as well."[3]

The borrowing of properties across different frames, and the mutual influence of sound and image, hearing and seeing that occurs in the portrait films provides me with a paradigm for the way that other frames operate. The mutual influence of sound and image is an intratextual shifting of frames, but there are other frame shifts that are evident as intertextual shifts, and as cross generic shifts. In my discussions of genre criticism in relation to both *film noir* and the gothic women's films I have been careful to point out the distinction between these critically constructed categories and the use of genre as an industrial definition. I have demonstrated the role of genre criticism in "form[ing] an image"[4] of a critical category, and I showed that a set of assumptions about gender has underpinned the construction of both *film noir* and the gothic woman's film. Thus I have analysed the views that critical frames present on the categorisation of films as well as analysing framed images and narrative frames within the particular film texts. In the introductory chapter to this thesis I referred to the publicity shot of Barbara Hale, surrounded by multiple frames. I pointed out that frames as key objects within a text influence the way that we can frame that text critically, that frames are both structures and processes of structuring. The mutual influence of textual and critical frames is evident in the "portrait films" that I have collected together for discussion in this thesis. I have looked in detail at "portrait films" in the critical categories of *film noir* and the gothic woman's film, but the act of looking in detail at films across these ostensibly different categories actually points up some of the common elements the groups share rather than reinforcing their differences. These common elements ask questions about the way that genre criticism has framed these two groups as distinct, and suggests that they might be approached differently as part of the same group.

In fact there is considerable critical impetus to support this view, but before I engage with the various perspectives I want to underline one of the issues that I raised in Chapter One: that *film noir* has proved extremely difficult to tie down, and that critics such as James Naremore and E Ann Kaplan have suggested the pervasive and cross-generic aspects of it as a category.[5] Angela Martin's work on the position of women as characters in *film noir*, and as writers and producers of *film noir* includes an appendix in which she catalogues a number of films. Her appendix is pulled together from the work of different writers on *film noir*; writers who have quite different approaches in defining the category;[6] and it includes not only urban crime films with central women characters, such as *Mildred Pierce* and *Laura* but films such as *Suspicion*, *Dragonwyck*, *Gaslight*, and *Secret Beyond the Door* which, as I have noted in Chapter Three, have been variously defined. Cataloguing these films as *film noir* directly challenges the gendering of critical genre categories; it problematises their status as examples of the woman's film as well as questioning the definitions of *film noir* as a male genre in what might be a productive way. However, in this crossing of critical boundaries the issues of how a cross-generic approach might affect a reading of these films, and what the implications are for theories of gender and spectatorship are left unexamined. In fact what many of the new essays in Kaplan's 1998 collection Women in Film Noir have in common with Martin is that critics are shown to be working cross-generically, but few of them engage with that issue in detail.[7] In particular Patricia White's chapter, on *Rebecca* and *The Haunting* (Robert Wise, GB, 1963),[8] and Kaplan's on *Cat People* and *The Lady from Shanghai*, [9] demonstrate a bringing together of what have traditionally been considered three different generic categories: *film noir*, the gothic woman's film and the horror film. While I welcome these kinds of approaches being used to think about *film noir* in new ways, nevertheless I am also concerned that *film noir* has gained a privileged status in critical discourses, and Elizabeth Cowie has noted its "tenacity".[10] I think it is crucial therefore to chart the movements that are being made across critical boundaries, not so that readings could be defined as transgressive as against traditional, or marginal as against centred, but so that there is a continuing awareness of the ways in which the term *film noir* is being used in different contexts. David Bordwell provides an example of one of the shifts that the term makes across the boundary, in this case the move is from a critical to an industrial context:

> The term accretes meaning, or rather meanings, only from the history of criticism. This is not to say that the term is thereby phantasmatic or trivial, since once a critical tradition has introduced the term, filmmakers can take their cue from the critics' very struggle to define it positively... recent years have seen the release of such films as *Chinatown* (1974) and *The Big Fix* (1978) which clearly are responses to the critical canonisation of film noir.[11]

The possibilities of undertaking a cross-generic approach to *film noir* and the gothic woman's film have been noted by several critics, who have traced similarities in the films' narrative and visual styles. In her work on the use of flashback Maureen Turim notes that "*noir* and the woman's film are two sides of the same coin in Hollywood's forties symbolic circulation."[12] Murray Smith begins his reading of *Deception* (Irving Rapper, US, 1946) by suggesting that this film is special because it crosses over the boundaries between *film noir* and gothic woman's film:

> The film's interest lies in its unstable position between two popular generic forms of the Forties, two forms which are in a sense the inverse of each other - the film noir and the female gothic.[13]

Smith summarises what he sees as the main features of the two genres. He sees *film noir* as having a male protagonist investigating an enigma, which is often a duplicitous woman, or a woman impedes the unravelling of the enigma. In the gothic woman's film the moody and mysterious gothic male is an enigma. Smith outlines what he sees as the essential elements as follows: "the woman is taken to the ancestral home of the man. The man's unstable (*Rebecca*) or dubious (*Suspicion*) behaviour forces the heroine to question the sanity of the man (and sometimes her own, as in *Gaslight*)".[14] He argues that narrative closure shows the women's perceptions to be "paranoid and incorrect" or alternatively, as being right, in which case they are corroborated by a second (younger) man, who often helps to release her from her husband.[15]

> From this perspective, we can see how the two forms mirror each other, film noir dealing with the investigation of the female, the female gothic with the investigation of the male. The reflection, though, is skewed. In film noir, male perception is rarely under question - there is no doubt that the woman is duplicitous. In the female gothic, female perception is as much scrutinized as enigmatic male behaviour, since frequently the woman's perception is proven erroneous.[16]

While Smith's thesis raises some interesting issues of similarity which point up the fact that *film noir*'s narrative of investigation is not unique to its category, and is not naturally a male role, there is an implicit placing of *film noir* as the proper and stable and male form *from* which the gothic woman's film is seen to diverge into a "skewed" imitation. This again reproduces the division of genre categories along gender lines. In addition, his claim that at the films' closure the heroines' perceptions are sometimes proved to be the product of her paranoia is simply incorrect. It is only in *Rebecca* that the gothic male turns out to really love the heroine. As I have made clear in Chapters Three and Four the heroines' concerns about their husbands are usually proved true in the confession and confrontation scenes, and the secondary male character is peripheral to the main drama. Smith's comparison thus falls under the same "comparability of criteria" problem that besets discussions of female investigators, and once again it is *film noir* that is preserved as a category despite the fact that it is so difficult to define. Cowie notes a similar strategy of male centring occurring where critics suggest correlations between *film noir* and melodrama, "usually in order to distinguish *film noir* as a form of male melodrama, in contrast to the woman's film and female melodrama."[17]

In his history of Hollywood in the 1940s Thomas Schatz finds evidence of *film noir* style across different critical categories. He sees the style as first becoming evident "in dark, expressive dramas like *Rebecca* (1940), *Citizen Kane* (1941) and *The Maltese Falcon* (1941)"[18] he sees these as differentiated from Hollywood's war-related output. "During the war, *film noir* coalesced into a distinctive period style in two distinctive cycles: "'hard-boiled' crime thrillers like *Murder, My Sweet* and *Double Indemnity* (both 1944), and 'female Gothics' like *Suspicion* (1941), *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) and *Gaslight* (1944)."[19] Schatz's perspective is helpful in locating the concurrent use of *film noir* stylistics in both the detective thriller and the gothic woman's film. In continuing to search for a formulation of *film noir* which accounts for its pervasiveness, and allows us to consider the way it works *across* gender and genre categories I would like to refer to the work of David Bordwell, and to again cite Elizabeth Cowie. Both Bordwell and Cowie suggest that *film noir* is not a category *in itself* which contains certain kinds of films, but a way of challenging categories in that it is a method of renewing the familiar. Bordwell's discussion of *film noir* places it in the context of the classical Hollywood cinema:

> ...'film noir' has functioned not to define a coherent genre or style but to locate in several American films a challenge to dominant values. It is not a trivial description of film noir to say that it simply indicates particular patterns of nonconformity within Hollywood.[20]

Cowie examines the hybridity of *film noir*, and also indicates that it is a term which has emerged out of a critical debate, not a term which was coined and used by the filmmaking industry in the 1940s:

> Whilst these films were not recognised by the studios as a genre in the way in which the gangster film was, the hybridity they offered the studios in the forties does seem to have been recognised, even if no single term was used to designate it. Thus what has come to be called *film noir*, whilst it does not constitute a genre itself, does name a particular set of elements that were used to produce 'the different' and the new in a film; hence the term *film noir* names a set of possibilities for making existing genres 'different'. With this view of genre and of *film noir* it is no longer possible to speak of 'the' *film noir*, as so many writers seek to do.[21]

In looking at the ways that *noir* renews the familiar, or "produce[s] the 'different'" from existing genres, it would be possible to consider this process as '*noiring*'. By this I mean that a familiar formulation of a film, such as the urban thriller, could be 'noired' through the use of noir stylistics.[22] However before advocating this term as an answer to the problems of *noir* as a pervasive category I want to consider what impact this would have on the relationship between *noir* and gothic categories. The critical privileging of the category of *film noir* might mean that the gothic woman's film would be subsumed under the definition, and would be relegated to the margins of the *noir* canon, suffering a similar fate as films like *Laura*, *Gilda* and *Mildred Pierce*, discussed earlier. Furthermore I want to consider not simply the influence that *noir* stylistics might have had on the gothic woman's film, an approach that implicitly places *noir* as the originator, but also the influence that the gothic woman's film has had on *noir*, and on other groups of films. If we follow Paul Schrader's dates for the *noir* category as between *The Maltese Falcon* in 1941 and *Touch of Evil* in 1958,[23] we might argue that the gothic woman's film, beginning with *Rebecca* in 1940 actually precedes and influences *film noir*. Indeed *Rebecca* is cited as an influential film by both Robert Carringer and James Naremore in their discussions of *Citizen Kane* (1941). *Citizen Kane* is a film which Schatz lists amongst "dark expressive dramas" of the early 1940s, but it is a film whose place in the canon of film studies has usually placed it beyond considerations of genre. This position, however, should not be assumed to be automatically unassailable. As noted by Carringer and Naremore, the opening shots of *Citizen Kane* use similar camera movements and narrative elements that *Rebecca* does, evoking mystery and suspense at the entry to a large and forbidding house. The closing shots of *Rebecca*, the tracking camera moving in to frame the burning "R" on her nightgown case are also structurally echoed in the track and frame on the burning sled "Rosebud" in *Citizen Kane*.[24] The gothic woman's films of the 1940s were very commercially successful, as well as being nominated for, and winning, numerous academy awards.[25] This evidence suggests that they were highly visible in the industry of the time and far from being marginalised, that they are a major presence in Hollywood in the 1940s, a position not accorded to them by much genre criticism on *film noir*. It would be tempting to argue for a complete reversal of *noir* criticism and to advocate a replacement of *noir* with the gothics as the originators of dark visual and aural styling, anxieties about changing gender roles with the impact World War II, and a narrative emphasis on the disturbed psychological states of the characters. However, as I have argued throughout this thesis I find this kind of exclusive approach to creating genre categories unhelpful and I would like to work towards a strategy which allows us to think about the mutually influencing aspects of visual and aural styles, narrative structures and gender relations in a rather wider frame. To this end we might think about the "gothicising" as well as the "noiring" of the urban thriller and the woman's film in the 1940s. This allows us to look across critical category frames, and we can identify the "borrowing across" of elements that I analysed in relation to the mutual influence of sound and image in the gothic and *noir* portrait films.

Several critics have already been working in a similar direction. Thomas Schatz points out that the disruption in gender relations that critics have frequently ascribed to the *femme fatale* character also occurs in the encounter between the heroine and gothic male, as I have noted in my earlier argument. Schatz writes:

> Each subgenre's central concerns were gender difference, sexual identity, and the "gender distress" which accompanied the social and cultural disruption of the war and post-war eras. Each had an essentially good although flawed and vulnerable protagonist at odds with a mysterious and menacing sexual other: the *femme noire*, who invariably initiates both the detective's case and an uneasy romance with the hero; the suave, enigmatic husband or lover in the female Gothic, almost always an older man with a past and something to hide.[26]

But the clearest statement of the common elements shared by the gothic woman's film and *noir* is made by Steve Neale. In his chapter on *film noir* in Genre and Hollywood he works through the features that critics have defined as specific to *noir*, and points out that these definitive features are actually shared by other groups of films in particular the gothic woman's film. He absolutely refutes a strategy of criticism that privileges one critical group over another, writing:

> It would therefore seem as though any absolute division between *noir* and the gothic woman's film is unsustainable, as though they have, in fact, a great deal in common: they frequently centre on an element of potentially fatal sexual attraction; they stress the risks, emotional and physical, this may entail for the central protagonist; they lay a great deal of emphasis on the protagonist's perceptions, feelings, thoughts and subjective experiences; and they share the context of a culture of distrust. One of the reasons these similarities have been obscured - and why the gothic film in particular has been relegated to the margins of the *noir* canon - is that a great deal of writing on *film noir* has stressed its affiliation with the hardboiled novel rather than with the stage thriller or the gothic romance.[27]

Thus Neale's work allows the shifting of critical genre frames to occur, so that both *film noir* and the gothic woman's film can be reviewed from a different perspective. In her reading of the uncanny Elisabeth Bronfen describes it as a process whereby "fixed frames and margins are set in motion".[28] This description is apposite for the shifting of frames that I have undertaken in my examination of portrait films. Setting fixed frames in motion has not only been something I have identified as an intratextual mode characterising many of the aural, visual and narrative elements of the portrait films, I have also tried to make the moving of frames a feature of my argumentative strategy. So that frames are set in motion across texts, across genre categories and across the framing theories which inform the understanding of the cinema audio-viewer. To illustrate what I mean I want to turn to an image which, as it were, portrays this strategy, Figure 5.0. I began this thesis with the image of Barbara Hale, surrounded by a network of contesting frames, throughout my argument I have identified ways in which frames defining framed subjects, or critical categories are partial, and that their ostensibly definitive functions can be interrogated. This final image stages a moment when the function of a frame as a limit, or definition, is challenged. The woman steps out of its confines, joining a wider world of possibilities outside her frame. In this thesis I have not argued for a removal of frames, nor have I suggested that the shifting of frames is an activity which homogenises the framed object. What I have advocated is an identification of frames as an implicit part of the critical process, showing the possibilities that exist when issues of film sound, spectacle, gender and genre are re-framed to allow a wider view.

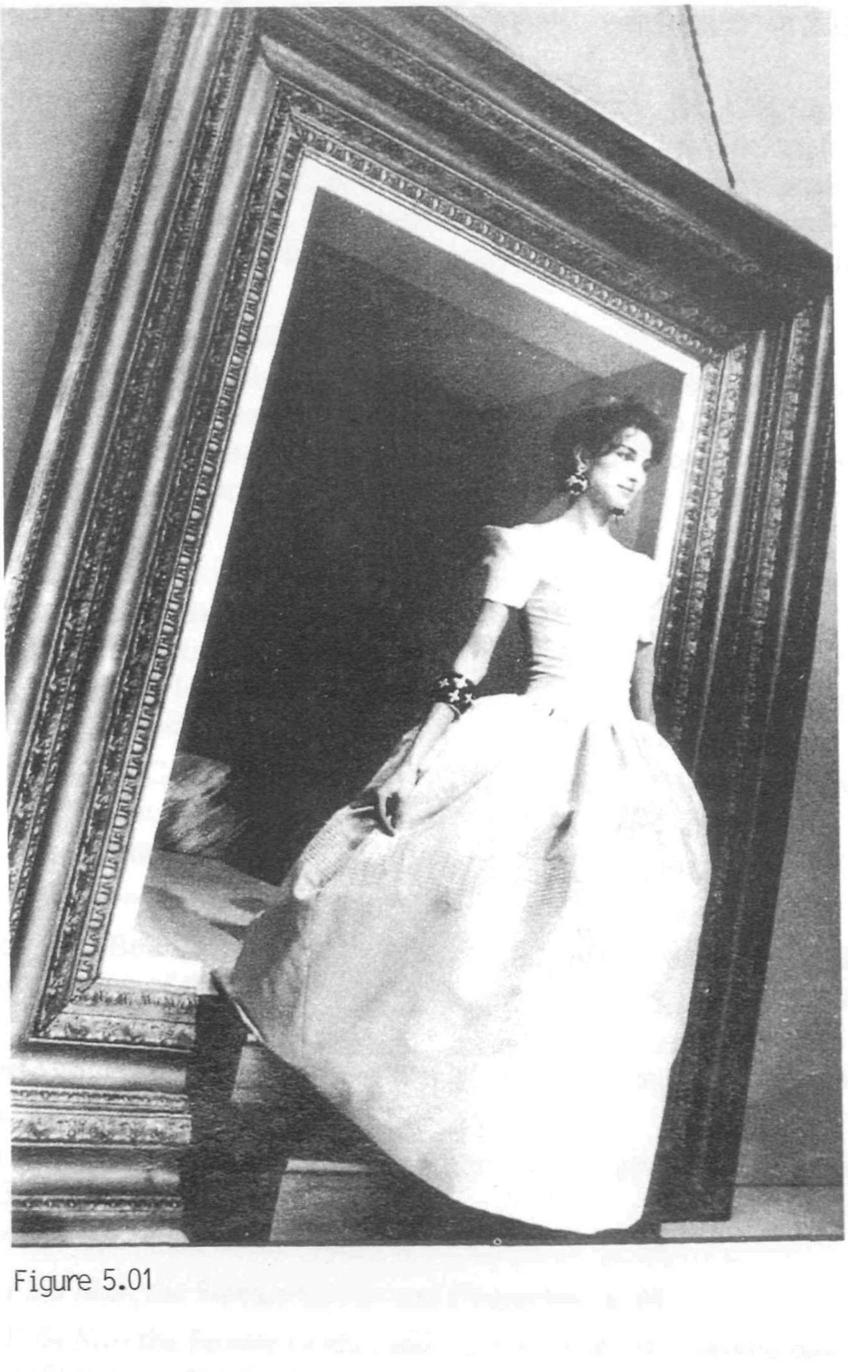


Figure 5.01

NOTES

[1] Kaplan, 'Introduction', in Women in Film Noir, pp. 2-3.

[2] Chion, Audio-Vision, p. xxvi.

[3] Chion, Audio-Vision, p. xxvi.

[4] Vernet, '*Film Noir* on the Edge of Doom', p. 26.

[5] James Naremore, More Than Night, p. 255; Kaplan, 'Introduction', in Women and Film Noir: New Edition, p. 1.

[6] Martin draws on Film Noir: An Encyclopedic Reference to the American Style: 3rd Edition, ed. by Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward (New York: The Overlook Press, 1992); Jon Tuska, Dark Cinema: American Film Noir in Cultural Perspective (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), Hirsch, The Dark side of the Screen: Film Noir; Krutnik, In a Lonely Street; and she has also drawn on filmographies of women scriptwriters in Lizzie Francke, Script Girls.

[7] My focus here is on the possibilities of thinking about 1940s films cross-generically, ie. with problematising the way that the category of *film noir* has been constructed in relation films from the classical Hollywood cinema, rather than on 'post-classical' films, often categorised as 'neo-noir'. Clearly the categories of classical/post-classical and neo-noir are not easy to define either, but there is not space here for a more lengthy discussion of this issue.

[8] Patricia White's chapter is reprinted from inside/out Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories, ed. by Diana Fuss (London: Routledge, 1991). Its inclusion in the new edition is part of what Kaplan sees as the potential impact that "three new main concerns in film studies... postmodern theory, gay/lesbian issues, and postcolonial/racial foci" have had on the study of *film noir*. Kaplan, 'Introduction', Women in Film Noir: New Edition, p. 3.

[9] Kaplan, 'The 'Dark Continent' of Film Noir: Race, Displacement and Metaphor in Tourneur's *Cat People*, (1942) and Welles' *The Lady from Shanghai* (1948)', in Women in Film Noir: New Edition.

[10] Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', p. 121.

[11] Bordwell, 'The Bounds of Difference', in The Classical Hollywood Cinema, p. 75. Neale also discusses the use of the term in a contemporary context in Genre and Hollywood, pp. 174-5.

[12] Maureen Turim, 'Flashbacks and the Psyche in Melodrama and *Film Noir*', in her Flashbacks in Film (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 182.

[13] Murray Smith, '*Film Noir*, the Female Gothic and *Deception*', *Wide Angle*, 10 (1) (1988), 62-75, p. 63.

[14] Smith, '*Film Noir*, the Female Gothic and *Deception*', p. 64.

[15] Smith, '*Film Noir*, the Female Gothic and *Deception*', p. 64.

[16] Smith, '*Film Noir*,the Female Gothic and *Deception*', p. 64. I would take issue with the assertion that *films noirs* do not present male perception as in question. Richard Maltby, referred to in Chapter Two, directly challenges this in his description of the male investigator as "less than perfect, frequently neurotic and sometimes paranoid", 'The Politics of the Maladjusted Text', p. 39. Frank Krutnik's work also refutes this, centring on *film noir* as 'masculinity in crisis'.

FILMOGRAPHY

KEY

* Films where portraits feature in the narrative.
(*) Films where other art issues, such as modern art, sculpture, or artists as characters figure, in the narrative.

The Big Clock. dir. John Farrow, Paramount, USA, 1948.(*)

The Big Sleep. dir. Howard Hawks, Warner Bros, USA, 1946.

Cat People. dir. Jacques Tourneur, RKO Radio Pictures, USA, 1942.

Caught. dir. Max Ophuls, Enterprise Productions, USA, 1949.

Citizen Kane. dir. Orson Welles, RKO Radio Pictures, USA, 1941.

Crack-Up. dir. Irving Reis, RKO Radio Pictures, USA, 1946.(*)

The Dark Corner. dir. Henry Hathaway, Twentieth Century Fox, USA, 1946.*

The Dark Mirror. dir. Robert Siodmak, Universal, USA, 1944.

Dark Waters. dir. Andre de Toth, Benedict Bogeaus, USA, 1944.

Dead Reckoning. dir. John Cromwell, Columbia Pictures, USA, 1947.

Deception. dir. Irving Rapper, Warner Bros, USA, 1946.

Double Indemnity. dir. Billy Wilder, Paramount, USA, 1944.

Dragonwyck. dir. Joseph L Mankiewicz, Twentieth Century Fox, USA, 1947.*

Experiment Perilous. dir. Jacques Tourneur, RKO Radio Pictures, USA, 1944.*

Gaslight. dir. Thorold Dickinson, British National, GB, 1940.

Gaslight. dir. George Cukor, MGM, USA, 1944.*

The Ghost and Mrs Muir. dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz, Twentieth Century Fox, USA, 1947.*

Gilda. dir. Charles Vidor, Columbia, USA, 1946.*

House of Strangers. dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz, Twentieth Century Fox, USA, 1949.*

I Wake Up Screaming. dir. Bruce Humberstone, Twentieth Century Fox, USA, 1942.*

Jane Eyre. dir. Robert Stevenson, Twentieth Century Fox, USA, 1943.

The Killers. dir. Robert Siodmak, Mark Hellinger Productions/Universal, USA, 1946.

Kitty. dir. Mitchell Leisen, Paramount, USA, 1946.*

The Lady from Shanghai. dir. Orson Welles, Columbia, USA, 1948.

Laura. dir. Otto Preminger, Twentieth Century Fox, USA, 1944.*

The Locket. dir. John Brahm, RKO Radio Pictures, USA, 1947.*

The Lost Moment. dir. Martin Gabel, Walter Wanger Pictures, USA, 1947.*

The Maltese Falcon. dir. John Huston, Warner Bros, USA, 1941.

Mildred Pierce. dir. Michael Curtiz, Warner Bros, USA, 1945.

The Moon and Sixpence. dir. Albert Lewin, David L Loew - Albert Lewin Inc., 1943.(*)

Mr Skeffington. dir. Vincent Sherman, Warner Bros, 1944.*

Murder, My Sweet. dir. Edward Dmytryk, RKO Radio Pictures, 1944.

Nocturne. dir. Edwin L. Marin, RKO Radio Pictures, USA 1946.*

Notorious. dir. Alfred Hitchcock, RKO Radio Pictures, USA, 1946.

Now Voyager. dir. Irving Rapper, Warner Bros, USA, 1942.

Out of the Past. dir. Jacques Tourneur, RKO Radio Pictures, USA, 1947.

The Paradine Case. dir. Alfred Hitchcock, Selznick International Pictures, USA, 1948.*

Peeping Tom. dir. Michael Powell, Anglo Amalgamated, GB, 1959.

Phantom Lady. dir. Robert Siodmak, Universal, USA, 1944.*

The Picture of Dorian Gray. dir. Albert Lewin, MGM, USA, 1945.*

Pin-Up Girl. dir. Bruce Humberstone, Twentieth Century Fox, USA, 1944.*

Portrait of Jennie. dir. William Dieterle, Selznick International Pictures, USA, 1948.*

Psycho. dir. Alfred Hitchcock, Shamley/Paramount Pictures, USA, 1960.

Rebecca. dir. Alfred Hitchcock, Selznick International Pictures, USA, 1940.*

The Reckless Moment. dir. Max Ophuls, Walter Wanger Productions, USA, 1949.

Scarlet Street. dir. Fritz Lang, Universal/Diana Productions, USA, 1945.*

Secret Beyond the Door. dir. Fritz Lang, Universal/Diana Productions, USA, 1947.

Shadow of a Doubt. dir. Alfred Hitchcock, Universal, USA, 1943.

Shockproof. dir. Douglas Sirk, Colombia, USA, 1949.*

Sleep, My Love. dir. Douglas Sirk, United Artists, USA, 1948.

Sorry, Wrong Number. dir. Anatole Litvak, Paramount, USA, 1948.

Spellbound. dir. Alfred Hitchcock, Selznick International Pictures, USA, 1945.(*)

The Spiral Staircase. dir. Robert Siodmak, RKO Radio Pictures, USA, 1945.(*)

A Stolen Life. dir. Curtis Bernhardt, USA, 1946.(*)

The Strange Love of Martha Ivers. dir. Lewis Milestone, Paramout/Hal B Wallis Productions, USA, 1946.

The Stranger. dir. Orson Welles, International Pictures, USA, 1946.

Suspicion. dir. Alfred Hitchcock, RKO Radio Pictures, USA, 1941.*

That Lady in Ermine. dir. Ernst Lubitsch, Otto Preminger, Twentieth Century Fox, USA, 1948.*

The Two Mrs Carrolls. dir. Peter Godfrey, Warner Bros, USA, 1947.*

Under Capricorn. dir. Alfred Hitchcock, Transatlantic, GB, 1949.

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