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" IN A LONELY STREET" :  
1940's HOLLYWOOD, *FILM NOIR*,  
AND THE ' TOUGH ' THRILLER.

by

FRANK S. KRUTNIK

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Film Studies

The University of Kent at Canterbury, July 1989

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the debates and the problems bound within the concept of 'film noir', one of the most persistently 'mythologised' areas of Hollywood cinema. As I shall show, 'film noir' was a term generated within film criticism in order to identify and to account for a complex series of transformations within the Hollywood cinema of the 1940's, particularly around the area of the crime thriller. As I shall suggest, because it functioned as a blanket categorisation, the term has suffered from a mystification which has problematised many of the attempts to come to terms with the historical processes it initially described (a problem only exacerbated by its extension to films produced since the early 1950's). This thesis will seek here to re-locate the phenomenon described by the term 'film noir' within its cinematic and historical contexts. After a general introduction to the debates surrounding 'classical' Hollywood cinema, the genre system of production and the problems represented by the 'film noir', Section Two comprises an examination of the complex determination of the 'noir phenomenon', suggesting how this resulted from a confluence of intermeshing 'aesthetic', social-cultural, institutional and industrial transformations. Following this explication of the diversity of the determination of film noir, Section Three proposes that a large proportion of the crime thrillers so termed - i.e. the 'tough' thriller, a cinematic development of the recent 'hard-boiled' trend in American crime fiction - manifests a particularly obsessional representation of problems besetting masculine psychic and sexual identity, and masculine cultural/social authority.

Working through the narrative logic of both some of the more famous and some of the more obscure of the 1940's 'film noir' thrillers - such films as THE STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR, AMONG THE LIVING, THE MALTESE FALCON, THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW, WHEN STRANGERS MARRY, DOUBLE INDEMNITY, BLACK ANGEL, MILDRED PIERCE, DETOUR, THE KILLERS, THE BLUE DAHLIA, DEAD RECKONING, OUT OF THE PAST, LADY FROM SHANGHAI, and PITFALL - I will suggest that, despite the confusion which has accreted to the term in the past forty-five years, film noir can prove a valuable means of exploring both:

- (a) the relationships between films and the multiple contexts for which and in which they are produced;
- and (b) the problems which beset any project of 'masculine consolidation' (with the 'tough' thrillers representing an extreme and much-problematised form of hero-centred fiction).

By bringing together debates on film history, industry, 'ideology', genre, and gender, it is hoped that this study may offer some suggestions for a much-needed reorientation of this vital but perplexing 'genre'/period.

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NOTES ON THE TEXT

- (1) To avoid confusion, I have standardised the references to books, films, articles/short-stories, and periodicals as follows:
- (a) THE MALTESE FALCON . . . . . film
  - (b) The Maltese Falcon . . . . . book
  - (c) "The Finger Man" / "Fantasia" . . . . . short-story or article
  - (d) "Screen" . . . . . periodical
- (2) On its first appearance in the text, a film will be followed by the year of its release (in brackets); however, subsequent references to films may repeat this information if it illuminates the context of discussion. A film which has been included within the 'film noir canon' will also be followed by the name of its production company.
- (3) The following abbreviations have been used for film-production companies:
- AA . . . . . Allied Artists
  - Col. . . . . Columbia Pictures
  - EL . . . . . Eagle-Lion
  - MGM. . . . . Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer/Loew's Inc
  - Mono . . . . . Monogram Pictures
  - Para . . . . . Paramount Pictures
  - PRC . . . . . Producer's Releasing Corporation
  - Rep. . . . . Republic Pictures
  - RKO . . . . . Radio-Keith-Orpheum
  - Selz . . . . . Selznick-International Pictures
  - TCF . . . . . Twentieth Century-Fox
  - UA . . . . . United Artists
  - Univ (-Int). . . . . Universal(-International) Pictures
  - WB . . . . . Warner Brothers
- Prod(s). . . . . Production(s)

INTRODUCTION.

I shall be concerned in this thesis with the debates and the problems bound up in the concept of 'film noir', one of the most persistently 'mythologised' areas of Hollywood cinema. As I shall show, 'film noir' was a term generated within film criticism in order to identify and to account for a complex series of transformations within the Hollywood cinema of the 1940's, particularly around the area of the crime thriller. As I shall suggest, because it functioned as a blanket categorisation, the term has often suffered from a mystification which has problematised many of the attempts to come to terms with the historical processes it initially described (a problem only exacerbated by its extension to films produced since the early 1950's). I will be seeking here to re-locate the phenomenon described by the term 'film noir' within its cinematic and historical contexts. After a general introduction to the debates surrounding 'classical' Hollywood cinema, the genre system of production and the problems represented by the 'film noir', I will examine - in Section Two - the complex determination of the 'noir phenomenon', suggesting how this resulted from a confluence of intermeshing 'aesthetic', social-cultural, institutional and industrial transformations. Following this explication of the diversity of the determination of film noir, I shall propose in Section Three that a large proportion of the crime thrillers so termed - a group I shall refer to as the 'tough' thriller, and which I will examine as a cinematic development of a recent ('hard-boiled') trend in American crime fiction - can be seen to manifest a particularly obsessional representation of problems besetting the

'regimentation' of masculine psychic and sexual identity, and masculine cultural/social authority.

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SECTION ONE:

'CLASSICAL' HOLLYWOOD, GENRE  
AND FILM NOIR.

## SECTION ONE

'CLASSICAL' HOLLYWOOD, GENRE, AND FILM NOIR

My aim in this section is to provide a brief introduction to key concepts which recur through this study and to outline the problems which a consideration of film noir involves. Because film noir is a product of what has been termed the 'classical' era of mainstream American cinema (ie. 'Hollywood') - and is often defined in terms of various stylistic, narrative and thematic differences from the norms of that cinema - then it is necessary to provide a definitional model of 'classical Hollywood' which can take into account the complexity of its operations. David Bordwell has described the 'classical' Hollywood cinema - which he sees as extending from the late nineteen-teens to the late 1950's/early 1960's - as a "distinct mode of film practice with its own cinematic style and industrial conditions of existence" [1]. The term describes, then, not only the industrial conditions of that cinema, and its business practices, but also its stylistic principles and norms, and how these latter have a quite crucial function not only in the production of films but also in the ways in which they are read by spectators, ie. how they function in the production of meaning and pleasure. I shall take these factors into consideration in the following introductory survey, drawing, in particular,

upon recent work on Hollywood cinema as both an industry and a social institution by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, John Ellis and others [2]. I shall subsequently pay particular attention to questions of genre, discussing how the genre system functioned as a central framework for the regulation of both the production and 'consumption' of Hollywood films, before discussing the problematic place which film noir occupies in relation to conceptions of generic production.

THE 'CLASSICAL' HOLLYWOOD CINEMA

The term "classical Hollywood cinema" refers both to a mode of commercial entertainment film (-making) and to the industrial structure which generated and sustained it. I shall here consider these separately, with the proviso that this division is motivated by convenience and should not be taken to imply that 'conditions of production' and the 'conditions of the product' can ever be so simply distinguished.

(i) The Hollywood Film Industry

The 'classical' period of American cinema is marked by "the concentrated control of the industry by several major companies" [3]. This oligopolistic form of control was so successful that it enabled Hollywood's worldwide economic and aesthetic dominance of the cinema [4], and it was brought about through the nineteen-teens via a series of innovations and combinations in all three branches of the industry (production, distribution and exhibition). Vertical integration, which was a characteristic of the major American industries before 1900, accelerated in the film industry during the 'teens, with the production companies moving into distribution and then exhibition, and exhibition interests moving into distribution and then production. The oligopolistic dominance of the industry was facilitated during this period by such key factors as:

- (a) the standardisation of exhibition in purpose-built cinemas, differentiated as first-run,

second-run, or subsequent run-houses;

(b) the innovation and standardisation of the feature-film as the prime 'product' of the cinema industry;

and (c) the centralising of film-production within the fixed-site studio.

It is important to stress that following an initial phase of competition, the major film companies operated together as a business community, consolidating and protecting their mutual interests. For example, in their theatres each major company showed not only their own films but also those produced by the other majors. Their interdependence was more significant than their rivalry, and through their mutual co-operation they effectively dictated control over access to the screen: during the 1934-1937 period, for example, 95% of the films shown in the first-run cinemas owned by the majors were released by the eight major companies (five vertically-integrated majors, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer/Loew's Inc., R.K.O., Warner Brothers, Paramount, Twentieth Century-Fox, plus the production-distribution combines Universal, Columbia and United Artists). Such co-operation, and the control over first-run exhibition outlets, allowed not only the exclusion of any potential rivals but also permitted the majors to regulate the form that the films took.

As George Mitchell has noted, the crucial factor in the innovation of the feature-film was not the length of the film but its cost:

In 1909 major producers such as Biograph spent around \$400-500 on a one-reel film, smaller companies perhaps half that amount. Feature films produced after 1914

ran anywhere from 5 to 10 reels. Using 1908 production costs, a 10 reel film running about two hours could be made for around \$5000. And indeed, some of the early feature films made around 1912 were shot on budgets under \$8000. In 1914, however, the new Paramount Company was contracting with independent producers, paying them \$25,000 per film plus a generous cut of the rentals. Blockbuster films like Griffith's BIRTH OF A NATION and Ince's CIVILISATION were running up budgets of \$100,000 or more. By the 1920's the average feature costs hovered around \$200,000 and blockbusters like THE COVERED WAGON cost close to a million [5].

The institutionalising of such high-cost films as the norm effectively squeezed out not only less-capitalised domestic production companies but also foreign competitors (who could not afford to plough so much money into films because of their relatively smaller domestic markets).

High cost film-making required the efficient organisation of the production process within the fixed studio, where production decisions were in the hands of managerial staff (rather than cameramen or directors, as in earlier days), and production became subject to an increasing division of labour. In the studio, the work of production was divided amongst various departments - cinematography, scriptwriting, directing, set design, for example - each under the control of a manager, and these all responsible to a producer ('general manager'). Through such organised production, the major film companies were able to achieve the efficient, regular, mass-production of 'quality' (high-cost) feature-films. The innovations of the continuity script in the mid-teens allowed films and groups of films to be rigorously pre-costed, thus eliminating waste and also providing a stable base for production which would be attractive to investment interests [6].

Initially, bankers and investment houses were reluctant to involve themselves with the small-scale, decentralized film industry, but with the stabilising of production and the integration of the 1919-1926 period, the industry was a much more viable proposition. Increasingly, film companies were able to offer stocks and bonds publicly and to apply to commercial banks for loans [7]. Capitalization was required for the intensive cinema-construction which marked the early 1920's - the era of the so-called "Battle of the Theatres" [8] - but in particular it was the adoption of the synchronized sound-film as the institutional norm in the late 1920's which led to the large-scale entry of Wall Street interests into the industry. This increased capitalization bank-rolled the installation of sound equipment in studios and theatres and it served further to concentrate control of the industry, for the expense of conversion proved prohibitive to many of the smaller, independent exhibitors who were forced to sell-out to the majors [9]. According to Janet Staiger, financing by outside capital reinforced the industry's adherence to contemporary business practices, including in particular the intensified regulation of such 'product practices' as the domination of the story in films, and the standardisation of the star-system and the genre-system as frameworks for production [10].

(ii) The Classical Hollywood Style

David Bordwell stresses the importance of the widely-held stylistic norms which sustain and are

sustained by the classical Hollywood mode of film practice, norms which

constitute a determinate set of assumptions about how a movie should behave, about what stories it properly tells and how it should tell them, about the range and functions of film techniques, and about the activities of the spectator [11].

As Bordwell and Staiger argue, the principles of the classical Hollywood style have a productive function: determining, for example, how cameras, laboratory equipment, sound recording, deep-focus cinematography, and widescreen could be innovated and utilised. They argue that "while technological change had to be economically beneficial in the long run, the directions and functions of such change were strongly contained by stylistic premises" [12]. Bordwell conceives of the 'classical Hollywood style' as a paradigm comprising a cohesive body of principles, these principles motivating the various stylistic devices employed (for example, three-point lighting, continuity editing, the use of fades and dissolves), the sets of stylistic systems (of narrative logic, of cinematic time, and of cinematic space ), and the relation of these systems to each other (with, in general, the system of narrative logic subsuming the others) [13].

Following Bordwell - though not adhering to the somewhat mechanical model he offers - I will here outline these major principles. They represent, clearly, not some monolithic set of laws but rather a mesh of dominant tendencies or a framework which individual films are built upon and from which they create their own particular marks of difference. These classical norms, however,

describe not only the principles by which the industry operated in the production of films, but also the expectations which spectators brought to the film: the 'rules' which they internalised.

(1) As Bordwell stresses, classical Hollywood cinema is a cinema of rules [14]. Rules, as he points out, are necessary for mass-production - enabling, for example, the interchangeability of parts, and the standardisation of production, distribution, and exhibition procedures. But there are also certain 'aesthetic precepts' which function as 'rules' - concerning (for example) story construction, acting, directing, shooting, editing and publicity. The Hays Code is an example of an overt form of the standardisation of the norms of filmic representation;

(2) Narrative is central in 'classical' Hollywood cinema, with the story serving as the 'blueprint' for production [15]. Hollywood narratives can be seen to develop and extend the 'novelistic' mode of popular fiction in that they are centred around individual characters and their emotions and actions, most often upon a single protagonist seeking to achieve goals and overcome obstacles. The narrative drive of the Hollywood film is tied to the actions of its characters - and it also conforms to sets of general realist principles (see below). Narrative actions generally adhere to a linear, cause-and-effect logic, and each is painstakingly motivated. This is made explicit in a passage from a screenwriting manual quoted by Bordwell:

Care must be taken that every hole is plugged; that every loose string is tied together; that every entrance and exit is fully motivated, and that they are not made for some obviously contrived reason; that every coincidence is sufficiently motivated to make it credible; that there is no conflict between what has gone on before, what is going on currently, and what will happen in the future; that there is complete consistency between present dialogue and past action - that no baffling question marks are left over at the end of the picture to detract from the audience's appreciation of it [16].

Another significant feature of the Hollywood narrative mode is that, as both Bordwell and John Ellis have noted [17], the 'classical' feature film tends to contain at least two lines of action:

(a) what one could term the 'generic' story - for example, the commission or detection of a crime, the adventure, putting-on-a show;

and (b) the heterosexual 'love story', which tends to be causally related to (a). In the 'women's picture' melodrama this is often the dominant storyline, and, as we shall see, in certain film noir thrillers the two lines of action are often (con)fused, with the hero's investigation of the crime becoming bound up with his more personalised investigation of the woman. However, in such 'masculine' genres as the Western, the thriller and the adventure film, the role of the woman is often marginalised - as token 'love interest' - the real drama concerning the male hero's proving of himself through endurance and achievement. In Anthony Mann's WINCHESTER '73 (1950), for example, the 'love interest' - played by Shelley Winters - never adequately competes with the eponymous weapon in the narrative: the conventional function of the woman-as-prize is displaced by the possession of and desire for the gun in an Oedipal drama

of divided brothers;

(3) The 'classical' Hollywood cinema is a cinema of verisimilitude. Bordwell suggests that "Hollywood's concept of realism comprises several assumptions drawn from distinct aesthetic frameworks and applied to different aspects of the film" [18]. Realism is, of course, a question of convention, of representations geared to a specific historically-situated audience, and Hollywood's realism depends generally upon clearly placing the spectator in regard to its representations, and giving the best, least complicated 'view' of the actions.

Each separate shot of a film represents a 'view' for the spectator, and as Bordwell notes, the editing of the shots into sequences tends to be matched to the processes of consciousness in that significant narrative details are highlighted in close-ups, new locations are signalled via establishing long-shots, and dramatic events are underscored by musical punctuation [19]. However, as John Ellis has commented, the impetus toward intelligibility can result in the effect or reality being sacrificed [20]. There is always a potential conflict between the demands of narrativity and verisimilitude, especially when one takes into consideration the fact that different genres, as I shall consider below, inscribe distinct sets of verisimilitudinous norms. Furthermore, because the spectator's identification with the characters is firmly encouraged, then there is also a potential conflict between 'realism' and the 'emotional' basis of the drama: a tension which crystallised most clearly at

the end of certain films, in the necessity of providing a happy ending [21]. SEVENTH HEAVEN (1927) is a good example of such an instance where the spectator's 'emotional investment' in the desires of the central protagonists is allowed to triumph over realistic motivation: the lovers Chico (Charles Farrell) and Diane (Janet Gaynor) are reunited in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds - Chico's death in the war. His return - to keep a daily, 'spiritual' rendezvous with Diane - is justified on an emotional basis, even though it clearly transgresses the conventions of realist narrative representation. The film succeeds in this because of the audience's familiarity with and desire for the conventions of the 'happy ending' (and also because the relationship has throughout been marked with 'transcendental' qualities);

(4) Classical Hollywood is also a cinema of concealed artifice [22]. Narration tends to be unobtrusive, with the classical film seeming to narrate itself and to follow a seemingly 'natural' order in the unfolding of its narrative. The importance which Hollywood ascribes to continuity results in a disguising of the breaks and discontinuities of filmic construction - the gaps between the frames of a film, the non-chronological order of shooting, etc. - to constitute the film as a 'flow', an 'organic' entity in the experience of spectating.

GENRE AND NARRATIVE(i) The 'Classical' Film As Process

There is a danger in any such brief description, as I have just attempted, of implying too fixed a model of the 'classical' Hollywood cinema. As Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery insist, "if the concept of the Hollywood film is to be at all useful, it must be understood not as a static, rigid entity, but as a set of practices with a history" [23]. Furthermore, these practices refer not only to the cinema's industrial structures and strategies but also to its institutional activity - in the production of cultural representations, producing ideology as coherent - and, as a corollary of this, to the activity of spectators. The industry produces films which, in their interaction with historically-situated spectators, produce meaning. However, the process of this production of meaning is highly trammelled, for one of the key functions of the institutionalised parameters of the Hollywood style was to regulate the ways in which the films were experienced and read. But whereas the aim in most industries is that the products (eg. cars of one model [24]) are as identical as possible, an essential specification for the film - in order that it can draw audiences and provide pleasure - is that it differs from other films. As Leo C. Rosten has commented, "Hollywood is geared to a mass market, yet it cannot employ the methods of mass production. Each picture is a different picture and presents unique demands" [25].

With novelty as such a crucial expectation of any film, Hollywood had to develop production practices which enabled film to be both standardised and differentiated.

Thus, as both Mae D. Huettig and John Ellis have argued [26], the conception of the film as an orthodox product is in itself problematic. The 'consumer' does not actually buy anything material, but rather he or she pays for the privilege of participating in the process which the individual film represents (and also of participating once more in the experience of cinema itself, of which the particular film is an instance [27]). This process [28] - which has an ideological effect in that it aligns, directs and systematises the spectator's subjectivity - is predicated upon an intensification of watching and listening (and the psychological drives which these activities mobilise - voyeurism and fetishism as modalities of pleasure-in-looking, epistemophilia, etc.) and the spectator's willing engagement with the cinema's structured modality of fictional activity, with the particular mobilisation and structuring of fantasy scenarios upon which each instance of 'novelistic' narrative depends [29]. The film does not simply 'act upon' the spectator but rather the spectator interacts with the film through a complex and multiple process of identification - with the figures represented on the screen, with the narrative positions of desire and desired articulated via the characters, with the viewpoint of the camera, and with the institutionalised narrational procedures of 'classical' Hollywood cinema which guarantee the channels of readability (and which are, as I have noted, internalised by the spectator as

expectations) [30]. The spectator's 'metapsychological economy' meshes with the play of positions represented by and within the individual text and thence with the institutional and industrial economies - for the spectator's engagement by and within the film is not random, but is rather 'guided' and regulated.

Before engaging with questions of how genre operates both to order to diversify the 'products'/processes of the 'classical' cinema, it would be useful to look briefly at the relationships between the cinematic institution's production of narrative representations - with the film as a specific signifying system - and the 'metapsychological' process which the film represents for the spectator. As I shall consider, narrative itself represents a making-coherent of both ideology and subectivity - of the subject-in ideology - by ordering and containing both the signifying activity of the film and the positioning of the spectatorial subject in relation to meaning. This is a highly complex area which received much attention in the mid-late 1970's from such film-theorists as Stephen Heath and the work of the influential journal "Screen". Drawing upon this work, I will here offer a brief sketch of some of the pertinent points relating to the issue of how the cinema 'reprocesses' ideological representations for, by and within the spectating subject. Crucial to such considerations is the concept of narration, a term which refers to the systematised ways in which the film aligns and produces its narrativised meanings. Narration represents an

economic system of balancing which seeks to generate coherence, to pull everything into a dynamic and ordered process of meaning - as Stephen Heath has argued, narration "contains a film's multiple articulations as a single articulation, its images as a single image (the 'narrative' image, which is a film's presence, how it can be talked about, what it can be sold and bought on) [31]". Thus, narration refers to the performance of the film as narrative - which is not, to extend the metaphor, by any means an impromptu performance but relies upon systematised rules and conventions which are shared by both the individual spectators who constitute the audience and the 'performer'. The film is thus not hermetic in its meanings but depends for its intelligibility upon intertextual systems - thus, by 'performer' I am referring not to the individual film in itself but rather to the individual film as a particular instance of the general narrational system of 'classical' Hollywood cinema.

Although the actors, sets, etc. are absent at the moment the film is projected and viewed - with the profilmic 'performance' differing radically from the spectator's 'view' in that it is discontinuous and generally out-of-sequence - what is actually performed in the cinema is the regulated construct of the film itself, which is definitely present to the spectator [32]. And one must stress that the spectator is by no means a mere 'witness' to this performance, for without the spectator the performance of the film - its subjective — ideological process - cannot exist. The narrational process - ie. the

turning of the sounds and images into narrative - relies upon the dual presence of film and spectator, and upon the common ground they share (the institutionalised stylistic and narrative norms; the normalised mode of film spectating in the cinema; the broader realm of cultural knowledge). This bipolarity of film and spectator characterises the film as discourse/discours - an enunciative mode in which, according to Emile Benveniste, the source of the enunciation is present, in opposition to history/histoire where it is suppressed [33]. The status of the film as discourse is further highlighted by the dependance of the individual film upon intertextual systems for its legibility - as Mary Ann Doane has suggested, "a narrative is insupportable without recourse to the conventions and strategies of previous narratives, and thus sustains a 'dialogue' with other texts" [34]. However, the 'classical' film masks its discursiveness, masquerades as histoire, as story - as John Caughie has explained,

The strategies, techniques and rules of classical film-making are there to conceal construction and enunciation . . . The film seems to have an organic relation to the world, a story of what happened rather than a discourse on it. [35].

The mainstream entertainment film, then, generally effaces the signs of its discursiveness, tends to play down its role as 'performer' - with certain notable exceptions: such genres as the comedian-comedy and the musical in which notions of performance are heavily inscribed within the film; in certain epics and science-fiction films (which present extended cinematic spectacles) and in the films of

such self-consciously auterist directors as Orson Welles, Stanley Kubrick and Max Ophuls, where the spectacle of cinematic technique is paraded as individualistic flourish (as 'stylistic signature').

With the film promoting itself as - and 'consumed' as-'story', what is also being effaced in the 'classical' cinema-viewing situation is an acknowledgement of the activity of the spectator. On the side of the spectator, the work of film narration can be understood as a "channelling of psychical energies and investments" [36] in which the spectator's subjectivity engages with the narrational process represented by the film. John Ellis has elaborated upon this spectatorial activity:

It is a work because it involves the expenditure of emotional energy and the taking of emotional risks in order to produce a sense of pleasurable satisfaction at the conclusion of the process. The process itself is a constant testing: a position of partial unity is held throughout the film by the viewer, who sees something of the truth throughout. But the film refuses to reveal all its truths until its conclusion, where everything falls into place for the spectator. [37]

Ellis highlights the interaction between the spectator and the narrational activity of the film, suggesting how the process of a film operates by offering the spectatorial subject a series of shifting positions in relation to meaning, and how in the regulated and dynamic systematisation of Hollywood narration this meaning does not cohere until the film is 'ready' to end. The narrational process relies, then, upon maintaining a balance between process and closure, between disequilibrium and equilibrium.

Historically, Hollywood adopted the mode of 'novelistic' fiction and intensified it by means of both a highly economic and systematic mode of narration and

the representational power of film itself (with its signifying materials able to close the gap between sign and referent much more effectively than can the 'symbolic' language of written fiction). In its structuring 'mechanisms', the narrative process of the 'novelistic' film is inaugurated through the disruption of an initial stable situation, and following a dispersal and realignment of the elements of this disrupted stability, a final and 'inevitable' restabilisation is arrived at, the consolidation of a new equilibrium - ie. closure [38]. The narrational activity of the film channels, and holds-in-place, dispersal in relation to realignment, disequilibrium in relation to order. As I have already suggested, integral to this activity is the fact that the spectator does not simply identify with the particular story and the 'dialectical' dispersal and realignment of its elements, but is engaged quite fundamentally by the narrative/narrational process itself. The spectator returns to the cinema not simply to 'consume' yet another story, but in order willingly to participate once more in the process of cinematic narration and to experience anew the pleasures that this process mobilises.

It can be seen from the above that any instance of narrative is predicated upon a transgression of order - a transgression of both the stable situation represented in terms of the particular story, and the unified ordering of subjectivity itself. It is a localised transgression because the 'risk' which the particular film represents is strongly contained: the spectator knows, as Ellis

puts it, that everything will fall into place at the end, that the enigmas which keep the narrative process 'open' and propel it forwards will be resolved at the end of the film. The spectator's familiarity with the stylistic norms and structuring principles of the 'classical' narrative film serves as a guarantee of arriving at a final position of knowledge, unification, coherence, stability. The detective/mystery story is often taken as a model of the operating principles of 'classic' realist narrative in general [39] - of which the 'classical' Hollywood film represents a particular modality - for in such stories the narrative process is inaugurated by a transgression of law (a crime, generally a murder), and the detective functions as an overt in-textual agent of the narrative process - by examining and sifting clues, and arranging and judging the various accounts of the crime (which often takes place before the opening of the narrative proper) in order to identify and counteract the criminal and in so doing to restore order. However, I would suggest that a more pertinent model for the ideological-subjective narrational process of the Hollywood film is provided by comedy, in that - as Steve Neale and myself have argued [40] - comedy narratives are also dependant upon the transgression of norms, rules, codes of conduct, but that this transgression is clearly marked out as being for the sake of a final and inevitable realignment. Comedy provides the site for the allowable disruption of order, an acceptable space wherein transgression has a central but controlled function - as it does in the

Hollywood narrative system more generally. Transgression should, then, be regarded as an integral part of the system.

Stephen Heath has described the 'novelistic' as "the ideological category of the narrative elaborated in film, as it is of that in the novel" [41], and he sees it as being concerned precisely with the drama of meaning and identity:

the problem it addresses is that of the definition of forms of meaning and identity within the limits of existing social representations and their determining social relations, the provision and maintenance of fictions of the individual [42].

For the spectator or the reader, fictional activity is precisely dependant upon a splitting and dispersal of the ego - upon the ego-in-process, moving through a series of related positions - and *this* can only be pleasurable if the process is regulated. For Heath, what 'fictional activity' allows is a reworking of the very processes which are constitutive of subjectivity itself, ie of the construction and maintenance of a fixed, ordered identity out of process (of a 'fictive identity') [43]. Hence the prevalence of Oedipal scenarios in fiction: the 'novelistic' allows a safe, displaced, disguised replaying of the logic of the coming-into-being of the subject, while at the same time allowing the spectatorial-subject to experience one more time, in the 'imaginary' form of fantasy, the transgressive positionings of desire - and the very flux of positions - which are banished from the order of the sexed, socialised subject (and which constitute the unconscious).

The 'novelistic', then, is fixated upon the critical processes from which identity is structured, engaging of necessity with those positions which are barred from the conscious discourse of the subject but at the same time contextualising and reorganising these possibilities within the production of an 'inevitable' position of stability and 'meaningful' identity (with the unified subject as the 'destination' of the play of signification).

In this context it is worth coming back to Ellis' point about the 'emotional risks' involved in viewing a film (or, more broadly, in participating in any 'novelistic' fictional process). As I have suggested, the risk tends to be contained by one's awareness that fiction represents a space apart from real life, being on the side of the 'imaginary'. Fiction is structured around the same kinds of fantasies which are involved in daydreams (which are similarly narratively organised), but, because they are public, fictional fantasies are subjected to much greater control - otherwise they risk causing distress or unpleasure. Hollywood films, of course, were subject to an overt form of containment - in the institutionalised parameters of the Hays Code form of regulatory censorship (which was motivated in large measure by the economic necessity of maintaining a mass, across-the-board audience). As I have suggested, an element of risk, of transgression, is essential to the pleasurability of a film and to the generation of narrative process itself. Both the narrative film and the daydream have, of necessity, to regulate this risk and to trammel the fantasy-flux which is integral to

the process of each. Robert J. Stoller suggests how the daydream (specifically, but not exclusively, of the order activated in sexual 'perversions') represents a channelling of psychical energy which pulls between pleasure and anxiety:

If the daydream is to work it must not arouse too much anxiety without also ending excitement. This is done by introducing a sense of risk into the story. A sense of risk; in reality, the risk cannot be too great or anxiety will arise. One can only have the impression of risk. [44]

In the narrational system of the Hollywood film - as John Ellis notes - it is similarly a question of "a contained risk because the disruptions are provided for a short while and then brought back into line"[45]. It is at this juncture that one can stress the significance of genre: as I shall consider in more detail below, what genres represent in particular are modalities of the regulatory system of 'classical' Hollywood narrative which bind together the economic necessity for the regulation of standardisation and difference, together with the ideological and 'metapsychological' economies activated by the film as a textual system.

The general norms of the 'classical' Hollywood style function as an overt form of the standardisation of stylistic parameters - with the 'play' of images contained as narrative. However, it was also necessary to maintain a system of standardised variation at the level of narrative itself, and in the 'classical' Hollywood mode of production the genre system, like the star system, was one of the principal strategies for achieving this. Both the star system and the genre

system served not only as frameworks for the mass-production of films but also as frameworks for the ways in which these films were meaningful and pleasurable for/by the spectator, for they played an integral part in the codification of conventions and expectations across specific texts [46]. Each allowed both a stabilization of expectations - the films of one particular star or genre would conform to parameters established in pre-existing texts (and also extra-filmic discourses) - and the production of an essential degree of differentiation (for there were many different stars and genres).

In order to introduce a consideration of the problematic status of film noir as a unified category of films, I will first discuss how genre functioned for both the industry and the spectator as a means of regulating and diversifying mainstream Hollywood films, drawing in particular upon Steve Neale's 1980 monograph Genre [47], an influential attempt to recast the question of genre in terms of both industrial practice and an attention of how the cinema institution regulates meaning and pleasure for its spectatorial subjects.

(ii) The Genre System

Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery see the 'classical' Hollywood style as representing for its audience "an important part of their horizon of expectations, establishing what a fictional film is "'supposed' to look and sound like" [48]. Genres functioned as dynamic subsystems of the Hollywood style, for they represented different ways of ordering

and diversifying its potentialities [49]. As Neale has remarked:

Genres produce a regulated variety of cinema, a contained and controlled heterogeneity that explores and exploits the optimum potentiality of cinema's resources and, in particular, the narrative system it has adopted as its aesthetic and ideological basis. [50]

The genre system allowed the production of different types of stories but also the containment of this variety within frameworks of organising principles. The specific film conformed not only to the general parameters of the Hollywood style but also to the particular norms of the generic subsystem. Generic specification was also a strong selling-point to audiences, with terms such as 'western', 'horror-film', 'musical', 'thriller' and 'romantic comedy' being recognised and used by the industry, the trade press ("Variety", "Motion Picture Herald" etc), fan magazines, newspaper reviewers and audiences.

However, not only are the boundaries between genres by no means fixed and precise, but a genre cannot simply be defined in terms of the elements it contains. As Leo A. Handel has usefully suggested,

A picture is never a hundred per cent western, mystery or comedy, but it usually includes many other basic story types. A western picture might, and often does, include elements such as mystery, comedy, romance and so on. [51].

Furthermore, the ways in which generic categories are used - among the industry, reviewers, audiences, and many film critics - tend to be very loose, demarcating very broad and at times far from contradictory parameters. For example, there are many different

types of comedy - comedian comedy, romantic comedy, family comedy, the comedy of manners - and in many instances terms such as 'mystery', 'thriller', 'suspense film' and 'crime film' are used interchangeably.

Rather, then, than seeing the genre as a strictly rule-bound context, one should stress that generic definition or generic specification have a descriptive or analytic value largely in regard to dominant tendencies - locating, for example, broadly demarcated sets of discursive configurations, narrative procedures, and stylistic emphasis (in, for example, the differential balancing of narrative and spectacle). As Steve Neale has stressed, the difference between one genre and another is never

a question of particular and exclusive elements, however defined, but of particular combinations and articulations of elements, of the exclusive and particular weight given in any one genre to elements which in fact it shares with other genres [52]. (my italics)

So, for example, Neale notes that although heterosexual desire features in films of any genre - being, as I have noted, central to the general narrative basis of the Hollywood film - it tends to play a specific and dominant role in musicals and melodramas which it does not in, say, most westerns and war films [53]. Similarly, violence is not specific to the western or the gangster film but it does tend to be fundamentally related to the disruption of law and social order around which the narrative processes of these genres turn [54]. Similarly, one can note relations of 'kinship' between certain groups of genres - for example, the melodrama (eg. Douglas Sirk's ALL THAT HEAVEN ALLOWS, 1955), 'social'

comedy (eg. such family comedies as Vincente Minnelli's FATHER OF THE BRIDE, 1950) and the musical (eg. Minnelli's MEET ME IN ST LOUIS, 1944) can be seen as representing different ways of handling the same sets of issues and ideological tensions: for example, the conflict between individual desire and social constraints, especially between individual desire and the formal constraints of the middle-class family. And the fact that the thriller KISS OF DEATH (1947) could be remade as the western THE FRIEND WHO WALKED THE WEST (1958), and the gangster/caper film THE ASPHALT JUNGLE (1950) as both the western THE BADLANDERS (1958) and the adventure film CAIRO (1963), and the gangster film HIGH SIERRA (1941) as the Western COLORADO TERRITORY (1949) suggests that these genres also have strong points of 'kinship'.

As Steve Neale considers in some detail, genres work upon specific areas of ideological tension and contradiction. However, as he suggests [55], generic specificity is not a question solely of the different discursive ensembles which genres mobilise but also of the different ways in which these are worked through - produced and contained - as narrative. In order to regulate such discursive activity, genres maintain their own particular regimes of credence and registers of verisimilitude [56]. To take an obvious example, were a character in a traditional Western suddenly to burst into song, this would be transgressive of the norms of the genre (unless it is a 'singing cowboy' film or a generic hybrid like SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS, 1954, or ANNIE GET YOUR GUN, 1950), but in a musical this is perfectly acceptable. Generic conventions

and expectations, circulating between texts, thus have a productive function in establishing what is and what is now 'allowed' in the particular film. Genres thus function as intertextual systems, asserting a forceful pressure on the channels and limits of readability. Thus, it is important to conceive of genres as not simply bodies of texts, or bodies of textual conventions [57], but as fundamental components of what film-theorist Christian Metz has referred to as the "mental machinery" [58] of the cinematic institution. Neale elaborates upon the significance of genre in regard to the ideological activity of the cinematic institution (ie. to the production of cultural representations for a historically-situated audience):

Not only a set of economic practices or meaningful products, cinema is also a constantly fluctuating set of signifying processes, a 'machine' for the production of meanings and positions, or rather positionings for meaning; a machine for the regulation of the orders of subjectivity. Genres are components in this 'machine'. As systematised forms of the articulation, they are a fundamental part of the cinema's 'mental machinery'. Approached in this way, genres are not to be seen as forms of textual codifications, but as systems of orientations, expectations and conventions that circulate between industry, text and subject [59].  
(my italics)

Because each genre offers a systematised variant of Hollywood's modes of meaning and pleasures [60], then no genre can adequately be approached solely in terms of the films it is seen to comprise. Firstly, because generic specification or labelling works as a process of differentiation, then any one genre only really 'makes sense' in terms of its relationship to the other genres - in regard, that is, to its place as part of the genre system. Secondly, genres are by no means

exclusively cinematic but rather exist across forms of popular/commercial culture, albeit having their own particular codifications within cinema. Similarly, no one film can adequately function as a model of the genre because, as Neale suggests, genres exist across and between films rather than simply within them. The single film cannot in itself 'embody' the meaning of the genre, it can only activate the process of such meaning. Furthermore, it is worth bearing in mind that one of the crucial expectations which the spectator brings to the genre film is that it will differ from other films of that genre [61], so genre should not be conceived of in terms of any unproblematic 'repetition'. Genres are dynamic in that they accumulate 'meaning-potential' through time, they do not simply reiterate a stock set of themes, settings, character types and plot elements. Moreover, the process of the systematisation of meaning that they represent have a historical effectivity, for conceptions of genre "supervise" (to use Tom Ryall's term [62]) relationships between industry, text, context and audience, in specific conjunctures.

To take an obvious example: a western of the 1940's - say, John Ford's MY DARLING CLEMENTINE (1946) - is a different proposition from a western of the late 1960's, like Sam Peckinpah's THE WILD BUNCH (1969). THE WILD BUNCH is marked by an overt problematising of the ideological certainties of Ford's film. The conception of the western era as the founding moment of modern America - the 'frontier mythology' - is common to each, but whereas CLEMENTINE validates the necessity of the purposeful use of violence to bring about a settled and

civilised community (in the Earp family's confrontation with the vicious and anarchic Clanton's at the OK Corral) there is in THE WILD BUNCH a much more nihilistic representation of violence and a cynical representation of both the values of 'civilised' America (especially in its opening sequences) and the concept of heroic action (vide the failure of the idealistic Mexican guerilla 'Angel'). Produced just after the end of the Second World War, MY DARLING CLEMENTINE is an overtly militarist western - the fate of the town of Tombstone resting upon the conflict between two armed male gangs/families. THE WILD BUNCH, however, espouses a much more problematic representation of armed conflict which is in key with the more 'difficult' place which the Vietnam war occupied in American culture.

Peckinpah's film was one of a number of 'revisionist' genre films produced by the American post-'classical' cinema, and, like such other films of the late 1960's and early 1970's as the westerns MONTE WALSH (1970) and McCABE AND MRS MILLER (1971), the 'outlaw-couple' film BONNIE AND CLYDE (1967), the private-eye film THE LONG GOODBYE (1973), it maintains an ironic discourse with the Hollywood genres of the 'classical' period and the values which they were seen to body forth. It is by no means simply the case that the genres or their audiences have 'matured' to the point when they can 'interrogate themselves' but rather what is at issue here is a different perspective on and use of the generic codifications of 'classical' Hollywood. One cannot account for the differences between MY DARLING CLEMENTINE and THE

WILD BUNCH in terms of any dynamic inherent in the genre. Rather, this dynamic is determined by the intersection of generic conventions and expectations with - and their remodelling by - complex sets of interlocking determinants. This is to argue then that any considerations of genre requires a firm historical grounding, for to call MY DARLING CLEMENTINE and THE WILD BUNCH 'westerns' is not in itself sufficient. In the late 1960's the 'meaning' of the western as a genre is very different from the 1940's, and the determination of the 'meaning' of THE WILD BUNCH is a question in part of the interaction of the generic conventions and values of 'classical' Hollywood with the much transformed cultural and cinematic contexts. As a text, one does not read THE WILD BUNCH as one reads MY DARLING CLEMENTINE, although they are both westerns.

(iii) Genres And Cycles

There is a need, as I have just suggested, to view genres not as homogenous and continuous but in the light of periodic transformations. As regulatory systems of Hollywood narrative in general, genres - as precisely "systems of orientations, expectations and conventions that circulate between industry, text and subject" - act as frameworks for mediating between repetition and difference, and a crucial part of this function involves making the films meaningful to specific historically-situated audiences. In this section I will consider the question of the historical significance of genres, how they maintained their dynamic status vis-a-vis ideological, economic or political transformations. Such an approach will be developed in more detail later in this study, in a detailed consideration of the contextual factors

determining the emergence of film noir.

Firstly, an important point to note about genres is that they tend to be developed through cycles. The term 'cycle' refers to a series of films appearing over a relatively short time-span which are unified by more rigidly circumscribed narrative motifs, stylistic markings and ideological operations. As Janet Staiger has argued, the short-term production plans of Hollywood - "often less than a year in advance even in the 1930's and '40's for programme features" [63] - allowed the film industry to capitalise upon trends and to structure films in accordance with the current cultural climate (although, as I shall indicate in Chapter 8, this was still not flexible enough for the rapidly shifting ideological context of the early 1940's). In order to gauge the subject areas and concerns which would draw audiences, the industry invested in painstaking audience research and also sought to secure story sources (for example, popular novels and short stories), writers (eg. Dashiell Hammett, William Faulkner) and performers (eg. sports stars like Sonja Henie, Johnny Weissmuller and Esther Williams; Vaudeville and Broadway comedians like W.C. Fields and the Marx Brothers; radio stars like Jack Benny and Bob Hope) which would be familiar to the mass audience. Cycles represented short-term attempts to capitalise upon innovations which proved particularly successful and they allowed films to be produced and marketed on the basis of the differentiated repetition of proven success. Hortense Powdermaker gives as an example of the tendency of Hollywood to rework its successes

the film SMASH-UP, THE STORY OF A WOMAN (1946), and its relationship to THE LOST WEEKEND (Paramount, 1945). The latter was a top-selling film of its year and winner of the 'Best Picture' Oscar and the New York Critics award. Powdermaker sees the success of THE LOST WEEKEND as deriving in large part from the then unusual location of an alcoholic (played by Ray Milland) as a central rather than subsidiary character, and notes that

After the success of THE LOST WEEKEND, there were attempts to repeat the formula. SMASH-UP with a woman as its main character, was one of the repetitions, but had neither the power of THE LOST WEEKEND nor its profits at the box office [64].

The fact that the film was not a success is probably the reason why there were no further immediate attempts to cover the problems of alcoholism, but the significant feature of SMASH-UP is not merely that it follows THE LOST WEEKEND in treating the topic but the fact that its central character is a woman (played by Susan Hayward) and that this presents a crucial factor of differentiation in its attempt to capitalise upon the success of THE LOST WEEKEND.

It is clear from this example that a successful and innovative film will not necessarily give rise to a sustained attempt to rework and replay its elements of difference. Of course, the factors involved in the emergence and success of a cycle of films are quite complex, involving questions of why audiences are drawn repeatedly to the patterns of meaning and pleasure which circulate and are reiterated from film to film over a short period. Such considerations are further complicated by the fact that a particularly successful and innovative film may

not necessarily be immediately capitalized upon by the industry: for example, as I shall consider in Chapter 5, the 1941 version of THE MALTESE FALCON, although it represented a marked shift away from the detective/crime films of the 1930's, did not immediately give rise to a cycle of 'hard-boiled' detective films, one of the major reasons for this being the pressure on the film industry to direct its attention to the war effort. In order to make clear the significance of the cycle as a periodic, sub-generic grouping, I shall look briefly at the 1930's "screwball" cycle of romantic comedies.

As I have considered elsewhere [65], the romantic comedy can be seen to comprise distinct periodic cycles. In its ideological activity, the genre of romantic comedy seeks to specify and validate the acceptable normative parameters of heterosexual relations - in regard both to individual desire and to marriage as an institution. Thus in order to appeal to and draw audiences, the generic formulae have continually to be modified, to be updated in relation to the shifting cultural standards of marriage and heterosexual relations. The genre functions, as I have considered, as a means of accommodating transformations in this field in relation to familiar and conventional processes of narrative transformation. Cultural change in the realm of marriage and heterosexual relations is both articulated and held-in-place via the redeployment of the narrative conventions of the romantic comedy as a genre. These conventions have an affirmatory function in that they provide consolidatory frameworks and channels of comprehensibility: the new is bonded to -

and bodied forth via-the familiar, the rapidity of cultural change is thus made comprehensible. The "screwball" comedies of the 1934 to 1942 period - films like IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT (1934), MY MAN GODFREY (1936), HANDS ACROSS THE TABLE (1935) and TOM, DICK AND HARRY (1940) - derive their unity from a recurring set of problems which the films address and attempt to contextualise and disarm. They seek in particular to counter the upheavals in normative sexual relations and the challenges to the institution of marriage engendered by the economic crisis of the late 1920's and early 1930's (with a particular attention to the problem represented by the woman who desires a career or a life of luxury at the expense of conventional monogamy). In their stress upon the notions that money cannot buy happiness and that the heroine can only truly be satisfied when she marries for love, one can see the films as attempting to overturn the equation between female sexuality and wealth, which was encouraged in Cecil B. DeMille's marital comedy-dramas of the post World War One period (DON'T CHANGE YOUR HUSBAND, WHY CHANGE YOUR WIFE? etc) and the romantic comedies which followed them in the 1920's. In other words, although the films of the Twenties and those of the Thirties contain many of the same plots and narrative procedures, they differ in terms of their ideological trajectory, for they have different sets of priorities and points of pressure. The cycle of "screwball" comedies continued until 1942 when America's entry into the Second World War promoted a new social and ideological agenda which problematised both the "screwball" emphasis upon frivolity and individual

eccentricity and also the idea of romance as an all-important issue (Leo McCarey's 1942 film ONCE UPON A HONEYMOON being an interesting, somewhat uneasy combination of "screwball" comedy and wartime drama)[66]. The genre of romantic comedy came back into fashion in the 1950's (THE TENDER TRAP, 1954, PILLOW TALK, 1959, etc.) and the 1980's (MOONSTRUCK, 1988, BLIND DATE, 1987, etc.) and these cycles attempted similarly to address and hold-in-place contemporary transformations in sexual relations, with the very popularity of the genre in these periods - the very emergence of distinct cycles - suggesting their particular applicability to concerns of the moment.

The emergence of a cycle, then, is a complex, overdetermined phenomenon in which institutional, economic, ideological and even directly political (as in the cycle of anti-Communist thrillers of the early 1950's - THE WOMAN ON PIER 13, 1949, BIG JIM McLAIN, 1952, MY SON JOHN, 1952, etc.) determinants can come into play. Any adequate history of genres and their cyclic manifestations would have to take these intermeshing determinants into account when considering, for example, why certain genres are in favour at one time and out of favour in another - for example, why the western largely disappears during the 1980's, and why it in some ways is replaced by the science fiction film (as with OUTLAND, 1981, a space-station transposition of the plot of HIGH NOON, 1952). Furthermore there is, as I have already suggested, the important question of how a particular genre intersects with other genres. For example, in the case of the "screwball" cycle of romantic comedy, these films were

not produced in isolation but rather they constituted a significant differentiation from such other cycles of the 1930's as the gangster-film, the (monster) horror-film, the putting-on-a-show style musical, and the 'social-problem' drama. The question of generic shifts is most usefully approached not solely in regard to the individual genre but in regard to the 'hegemony' of the genre system as a whole.

## CHAPTER THREE

GENRE AND THE PROBLEM OF FILM NOIR

French cineaste and critic Nino Frank coined the term "film noir" [67] to describe what he perceived as a new trend in Hollywood's wartime film production. American films had been absent from French cinemas during the war, and Frank was reacting to the screening in Paris during July and August 1946 of five American thrillers which he and other critics [68] believed to signify a series of departures from pre-war Hollywood cinema. These films - THE MALTESE FALCON (WB., 1941), MURDER, MY SWEET (RKO., 1944), DOUBLE INDEMNITY (Para., 1944), LAURA (TCF., 1944) and THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW (Christie Corporation/International Pictures, 1945) - were seen as stylistically 'experimental' and as signalling a greater 'realism' in their representation of the shadier side of American society and of sexual and criminal 'pathology'. The first three were adaptations of 'hard-boiled' American crime novels (by Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and James M. Cain, respectively) and the term "film noir" itself served to establish a direct link between these films and the 'hard-boiled' crime tradition, for French translations of these novels were published by Marcel Duhamel under the series-title "série noir"

Although the conception of film noir as a new, and indeed 'progressive', strain in wartime and postwar Hollywood film-making was further elaborated in French film criticism - culminating in 1955 in the first book-

length study of the subject, Panorama du Film Noir Americain, written by Raymonde Borde and Etienne Chaumeton [69] - it did not figure in Anglo-American film criticism until the late 1960's and early 1970's. Since then, not only has film noir become institutionalised as a 'set topic' within studies of Hollywood cinema [70], but the term has also circulated beyond academic and critical contexts, entering increasingly into more broadly popular discourses on the cinema. For example, the term can often be found in the film reviews contained in such magazines as "Time Out", "City Limits", "New Musical Express", "The Face", "Radio Times" and "TV Times" and in reviews in national and even local newspapers. Furthermore, as a term and as a concept, film noir has within the last fifteen years been appropriated by the mainstream cinema industry, with such films as CHINATOWN (1974), FAREWELL, MY LOVELY (1975), TAXI DRIVER (1976), THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE (1981), BODY HEAT (1982), BLADE RUNNER (1982), DEAD MEN DON'T WEAR PLAID (1982), MONA LISA (GB/1986), ANGEL HEART 1987), BLACK WIDOW (1987), HOUSE OF GAMES (1987), NO WAY OUT (1987), SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME (1987) and D.O.A. (1988) utilising in markedly different ways the stylistic and narrative conventions seen to constitute the 1940's film noir.

However, despite the increasingly familiar use of the term, among film critics and historians film noir remains a hotly-debated area of contention. Particularly problematic is its very status as a unified grouping of films: Spencer Selby, for example, describes film noir as "perhaps the most slippery of all film categories" [71].

In the critical accounts which have accumulated since the early 1970's there are so many diverse conceptions of film noir that there is a real danger of it becoming virtually redundant as an analytic or descriptive category. At a more popular level, the problematic 'identity' of film noir serves to intensify its highly 'bankable' mystique: for example, when a new film is labelled as film noir, this tends to represent a promise of quality, that the film in question is more-than-'just'-a-thriller. When reading the various critical accounts of film noir, it becomes clear that what is required in order to come to terms with the subject is the clearing of a path, or rather several paths, through the confusion which has accumulated around the term. From the start, film noir represented a critical response to various transformations within 1940's Hollywood cinema, and by no means simply within the area of the crime film itself. The French critics of the post-war period developed the concept of film noir under rather 'unnatural' circumstances, without an adequate familiarity with the developing context of Hollywood's wartime production. As William Straw has noted, "film noir as a term was originally the product of unsystematic observation or intuition" [72]. It was not initially a definitional or 'categorical term but rather, as David Bordwell has suggested, film noir functioned not to define a coherent genre but to locate in several American films a challenge to dominant values" [73]. This 'challenge' was in itself multi-faceted, referring to multiple forms of differentiation: in terms, for example, of a 'non-classical' visual style,

an unflattering representation of law and society, a fatalistic/existential thematic, and an emphasis upon 'disturbed' and often criminally 'excessive' sexuality. It was only subsequently that film noir began to be consolidated as a 'unified' category, with the book by Borde and Chaumeton providing it with definitional characteristics, and 'fleshing-out' a history and an internal momentum for the 'noir corpus'.

As a post-constructed category - it was not, in the 1940's, a generic term in circulation between the film industry, the subsidiary media and audiences - film noir has given rise in critical/historical accounts to often severe taxonomic problems. There is little agreement not only upon what characteristics it takes to make a particular film noir, and thus which films do and do not constitute the 'canon', but also - as I have suggested - upon the precise status of the category itself. For example, Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg, and Paul Kerr refer to film noir as a genre [74]; Raymond Durnat and Paul Schrader see it as defined more by mood and tone [75]; Janey Place and Robert Porfirio regard it as a movement [76]; while, most confusing of all perhaps, Jon Tuska defines it as "both a screen style . . . and a perspective on human existence and society" [77]. In order to begin to disentangle this problem, I shall here briefly consider the implications of the most common of these conceptualisations of the 'unity' of film noir.

(ii) Categorisations of Film Noir

In the case of film noir it is difficult to argue for the same principles of unity which mark such recognised

genres as the Western and the gangster-film (not that these are in themselves unproblematic). Indeed, crucial to most conceptualisations of film noir are its trans-generic manifestations. Not only is it seen to comprise the 'tough' crime thrillers seen generally to constitute the bulk of the 'noir canon', but also 'problem-pictures' like THE LOST WEEKEND and CROSSFIRE (RKO., 1947), gangster-films like HIGH SIERRA (WB., 1941) and WHITE HEAT (WB., 1949), 'women's picture' melodrama/thriller hybrids like MILDRED PIERCE (WB., 1945), THE VELVET TOUCH (RKO., 1948) and THE RECKLESS MOMENT (Walter Wanger Prods., 1949), and even Westerns like RAMROD (1947) and PURSUED (1947) - films which have all, at one time or another, either been labelled as films noirs or have been regarded as having 'noirish' characteristics or sequences. Furthermore, the conception of film noir as a genre is problematised by its strong association with 1940's Hollywood - genres, as I have already noted, tend to exist across specific periods rather than being bound within them (although the contemporary 'revival' of film noir within the mainstream commercial cinema could be seen to validate it as a genre in this respect, depending upon whether the more recent films are regarded as 'hommmages' to film noir 'returns' to film noir, or a 'continuation' of film noir).

There is also, of course, the problem of the unfamiliarity of the term 'film noir' to the industry, audiences and subsidiary media of the 1940's. The absence of the name, however, need not necessarily serve as a disqualification, if it can be demonstrated

that rather than representing a series of features 'read off' from the film by critics, the 'defining characteristics' of film noir represented a more or less cohesive set of "orientations, conventions and expectations" circulating between industry and audiences. Thus, Foster Hirsch - who regards film noir as a genre "that is in fact as heavily coded as the Western" [78] - argues that it operates within a circumscribed set of narrative and visual conventions. He suggests, for example, how the titles of many of these films serve to 'cue in' sets of narrative and 'atmospheric' expectations or to point up "the thematic and tonal similarities within the films" [79]:

(a) with the recurrence of such 'key words' as "street" (eg. STREET OF CHANCE, SIDE STREET, SCARLET STREET), "city" (eg. THE SLEEPING CITY, CRY OF THE CITY, NIGHT AND THE CITY), and "dark" and "night" (eg. THE DARK CORNER, NIGHT HAS 1000 EYES, SO DARK THE NIGHT);

(b) with the use of expressions from the 'tough'/'hard-boiled' crime idiom (eg. FRAMED, DECOY, FALL GUY, RAW DEAL, THE SET-UP);

(c) with the suggestion of a 'fatalistic'/'existential' thematic or 'moods' of despair and paranoia (eg. THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME, CORNERED, CRISS-CROSS, DESPERATE, FEAR); and

(d) with the promise of a 'delirious' combination of violence, death and sexuality (eg. KISS OF DEATH, MURDER, MY SWEET, KISS THE BLOOD OFF MY HANDS, KISS ME DEADLY).

Titles are, of course, an extremely important factor

in 'generic identification': in the 'B'-films of the 1930's and 1940's generically-coded titles were frequently pre-tested with audiences before the films actually went into production, or in some cases had even been scripted [80]. However, it is important to stress that titles do not in themselves create the narrative-image of the film, but the latter is precisely constituted through a combination of diverse sets of informational 'cues'; for example, in the iconography of film posters, in promotional tag-lines, like DOUBLE INDEMNITY's "From the moment they met it was murder"; in the ways in which these films were labelled in the trade press - with such descriptions as 'psychological murder-mystery', 'psychological thriller', and 'crime melodrama' suggesting certain broad tendencies; in the features singled out by reviewers; and in the presence, in particular of certain stars (such as Humphrey Bogart, Robert Mitchum, Robert Ryan, Alan Ladd, Elizabeth Scott and - 'Forties-era - Barbara Stanwyck). It must also be stressed that in his consideration of film noir titles, Hirsch proceeds from a corpus of films (and a set of definitional characteristics) which he has already identified as noir.

Thus, although film noir is a critically-constructed category, this does not in itself immediately rule out the possibility of some 'generic' unity to these films. Any approach along these lines, however, needs to subject the process of the construction of the films' 'narrative images' to detailed scrutiny. A central problem with any definition of film noir as a genre,

however, is that it will never incorporate all of the films which have been termed 'noir' in the past five decades. Thus, a contrary tendency is represented by critics like Raymond Durnat and Paul Schrader who sees the specificity of film noir as residing not in the standard 'generic' field of narrative motifs, themes and settings, but rather they view film noir as a periodic-stylistic inflexion of the crime film. These writers emphasise questions of 'tone' and 'mood' which are in themselves quite complex and often loosely-defined. For example, they involve not merely a consideration of recurring visual motifs and stylistic strategies, but of how these interact with narrative motifs/scenarios and modes of narration. All too often, however, it is 'visual style' which is privileged. The critic/film-maker Edgardo Cozarinsky, for instance, claims that the 'noir style' represents "a kind of performance where the story is just as necessary, and important, as the libretto to an opera, a pre-text, whether for music or for a more concerted play of sounds and images" [81].

This over-emphasis upon 'stylistic performance' sidesteps the marshy ground of the narrative and thematic heterogeneity of the noir corpus, but even more problematic than this is the difficulty of convincingly demonstrating the homogeneity of the so-called 'noir style'. After ploughing through the highly generalised accounts of the 'noir style', which tend to feature in consideration of these films, one is forced to ponder: "Is film noir characterised

by a unified style at all, or is it more than the case that the stylistics identified together as 'noir' represent a more disparate series of 'stylistic markings'?" The elements of the 'noir style' identified by such critics as Schrader and Janey Place [82] - compositional imbalance, chiaroscuro lighting, night-for-night shooting, etc. - are hardly specific to the film noir, nor to the crime film, nor even to 1940's Hollywood. Moreover, they do not 'in themselves' create the 'atmospheric' connotations they are often credited with but rather they tend to have such significance because of their difference from the alternative stylistic possibilities, and because of their carefully 'negotiated' differentiation from the conventional 'classical' style of concealed artifice. Much of the critical work on film noir tends to overvalue such 'non-classical' stylistics as being in themselves 'subversive' or 'transgressive', without paying sufficient attention to the function and motivation of such 'stylistic extravagance'.

Foster Hirsch notes that many of the films termed noir feature "splashy visual set-pieces" or "passages of kinky vaudevillian cinema" [83] in which the non-normative 'noir stylistics' are exhibited quite flamboyantly. However, the 'disorientating' visual style does not actually pervade the films - with such notable exceptions as Orson Welles' studiedly 'auteurist' THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI (Col., 1948), and Stanley Kubrick's 'post-noir' eccentricity KILLER'S KISS (1955).

Rather, as Hirsch notes, such "italicized moments" of stylistic flourish tend to have a specific, narratively-motivated place within the films:

Often, in fact, noir functions in a neutral, even deadpan range, instead of the energy that characterises the set-piece, the films work for a flattened effect, an almost zombie-like verbal and visual mode. [84].

The disorientations of the Crazy House/mirror-maze finale of THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI, the paranoid, 'expressionist' dream-sequence in THE STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR (RKO., 1940), the drug-induced hallucination-scenes in MURDER, MY SWEET, and the delirious atmosphere of sex, drugs and low-life at the 'hot-jazz' jam-session in PHANTOM LADY (Univ., 1944) - these and other such 'italicized' sequences represent a discharging of narratively-accumulated energy, simultaneously bodying-forth and holding-in-place the 'excessive' (that which is 'taboo' in the representational context of the films' production - most often extreme violence, 'perverse' or corrupt secuality). There is a danger - a trap into which J.A. Place and L.S. Peterson fall in their stills-based analysis of the 'noir style' [85] - of playing down the specific place which such 'stylistic flamboyance' is allowed to occupy within the norms of 'classical' film-making in the 1940's, precisely as a standardised means of signifying and 'siphoning-off' excess. Rather than simply representing an 'alternative to' or 'transgression of' the 'classical' Hollywood style, the 'noir stylistics' were precisely part of the systematisation of Hollywood's narrational regulation

in the 1940's. In regard to questions of 'artistry and aesthetic differentiation, it must be remembered that these were all commercial, mainstream productions - rather than films of the avant garde - and thus one needs to pay attention not solely to the innovatory ingenuity of individual directors, cinematographers or set-designers etc., but more crucially to the spaces which were opened up for such practices within the industrial and institutional parameters of the period (an issue which shall receive further consideration in Chapter Eight).

A further problem to the conceptualisation of film noir exclusively as a 'period style' which represented a deviation, or series of deviations, from mainstream Hollywood practice is that a number of the key films in the 'noir canon' are resolutely 'classical' in terms of their visual style - most notably, THE BIG SLEEP (WB., 1946) and THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE (MGM., 1946). On reading the critical accounts of film noir it becomes clear that films can be labelled 'noir' on the basis of wide-ranging, far from contradictory criteria, and that the 'noir style' in itself - as in Paul Schrader's brief, admittedly exploratory listing [86] - tends to represent a collapsing-together of 'visual-style', the use of sound-effects, aspects of narrative structure, dialogue style, characterisational devices and narrational strategies (voice-over and flashback structures, in particular). Given this variegated quality of the so-called 'noir style',

and given the standardisation of the stylistic differentiation in represented, the claims made for the status of film noir as a 'movement' with a group of filmmakers sharing common objectives and cultural obsessions - along the lines of German Expressionism, Italian Neo-Realism, the French 'Nouvelle Vague' - similarly tends to ignore the importance of the industrial and institutional context of 1940's Hollywood cinema (for example, the managerial control over the process of production, and the departmentalised division of labour).

Finally, there is the view that film noir can be seen in terms of a cycle within the broader genre of the 'crime film'. However, the generic boundaries of the 'crime film' are themselves difficult to determine - as Spencer Selby notes, as a category the crime film encompasses "various and often overlapping generic headings of crime film, gangster film, mystery, suspense thriller and psychological melodrama" [87]. I shall consider the question of the narrative diversity of the 1940's crime film in Section Three and Appendix Two, but for the moment it is sufficient to note that the film noir - as it has been constituted through the criticism - is by no means simply a cycle which displaces these already - established generic sub-groupings in the 1940's, but rather it can be seen to incorporate all of them. Even if one were to posit film noir as a series of cycles - encompassing such comparatively 'new' cycles as the 'tough' private-eye thriller as well as periodic-cyclic transmutations of established 'forms'

like the 'social-problem' crime film and the gangster film - one is faced with the problem of the unwieldiness and confusion of the existing critical distinctions between cycles, genres, sub-genres etc.

(ii) The 'Noir Phenomenon'

Although the films labelled noir appear to belong together, the explanations offered for their unity as a group have often failed, I would argue, because of the inappropriateness of the criteria brought to bear upon this key area of Hollywood cinema. Much of the film noir criticism has not been sufficiently responsive to the sheer complexity of the determination of the 'meaning' of films nor to the particular circumstances affecting their context of production (both industrial and cultural). In this study I shall not be seeking to claim that film noir represents exclusively a genre, a generic subsystem or periodic transformation, a cycle or several cycles, a movement or a "specific period of film history" [88]. Rather, it seems to be more useful to acknowledge that none of these various descriptions of the status of film noir exhausts its potential - that they describe but certain facets of what one could term the 'noir phenomenon'. The phenomenon of film noir provokes fascinating questions concerning the inter-relationships between the industrial and institutional activities of 'classical' Hollywood during a period when the 'classical' mainstream cinema and the culture which produced it were subjected to intense ideological, cultural and social transformation and realignment.

It is by no means the case that the critics have tended simply to negate the complexity of the 'noir phenomenon', for this is often overtly addressed. It is more a question, I would suggest, of the ways in which this complexity has been theorised and contextualised. For example, a popular strategy has been the framing of film noir - and in some instances the notion of genre itself - in terms of some inherent, 'organic' development: noir is 'germinated', it 'matures' and 'flowers', it 'decays' and 'dies' [89]. Such organic metaphors pervade many of the more unrigorous of the popular accounts of film noir, but are also displayed in the more influential work of Borde and Chaumeton and Paul Schrader. These writers divide up the noir corpus/period into distinct phases of development, distinguishing, for example, between the early studio-produced films noirs and the postwar trend towards location-shooting, noting the narrative, thematic and stylistic distinctions between films of these periods. For Schrader, for example, the wartime phase is marked by private-eyes and 'lone wolf' investigators, the immediate postwar period by an emphasis upon crime-in-the-streets, political corruption and police routine, and the late 1940's and early 1950's is conceived to be a "period of psychotic action and suicidal impulse" [90]. Schrader acknowledges that such distinctions are rather broad, and it is indeed easy to cite individual films which contradict them: for example, many postwar crime films like THE

KILLERS (Mark Hellinger Prods., 1946), OUT OF THE PAST (RKO., 1947) and DEAD RECKONING (Columbia, 1947) combine studio- and location-shot material, and in such thrillers as HE WALKED BY NIGHT (Bryan Foy Prods., 1949) and RAW DEAL (Reliance Pictures, 1948) the location-shot sequences are marked by the same stylistic orientations as the wartime, studio-produced films. At times, the desire for a neat and vaguely workable segmentation leads to an unfortunate sacrifice of historical rigour.

A further tendency in the historiography of film noir - which has been prevalent since the work of Borde and Chaumeton - has been the citing of diverse sets of 'sources' and 'influences' as a means of accounting for the 'noir phenomenon': including German Expressionist cinema, 'hard-boiled' crime fiction, popularised psychoanalysis and the multiple social, sexual and economic upheavals resulting from World War II. However, although in this way the critics are precisely seeking to account for the variegated nature of film noir, it tends to be the case that these multiple determinants are stressed at the expense of what is arguably the prime context - or, more pertinently, meta-context - the 'classical' Hollywood cinema itself. The diverse sets of 'sources' and 'influences' credited for the phenomenon of film noir only really 'make sense' in the context of the particular commercial and institutional pressures affecting the 'classical' Hollywood cinema in the 1940's; the debate, in other

words, needs to concern itself much more intrinsically with 'why' and 'how' these various factors were influential when they were. As I shall suggest in Chapter Eight, the 1940's represented a critical period for the 'classical' cinema, for not only did the decade see the peak of that cinema's success but it also marked the beginning of the decline of the large-scale generic production of films for a mass, heterogeneous audience. These and other factors were responsible for at times extensive transformations in Hollywood's narrative and stylistic practices - it was not simply the case that external 'influences' somehow magically made their mark upon the Hollywood film.

In the next section of this study I shall pay detailed attention to the most prominent of the determinants cited for film noir, in order to gauge both the extent of their 'influence' and the reasons why the Hollywood cinema drew upon them at this particular juncture. My aim will be to recast film noir as an object of historical enquiry, and this project involves not so much a deconstruction of film noir as a reorientation, a clarification of the diverse sets of issues, processes and transformations which the concept of film noir has often tended to collapse together. Rather than providing yet another topological reshuffling of the 'set menu' of themes, determinants and stylistic practices which has been in existence since the publication of Panorama du Film Noir Americain in 1955, it seems to me to be necessary

to situate the multiple facets of the 'noir phenomenon' within a more viable conception of the 'classical' Hollywood cinema as an industry and a cultural institution. By stressing that the 'noir phenomenon' represents a series of stylistic transformations - not just in terms of visual style, but in regard to normative conventions of characterisation, narration, sexual representation, generic production and narrative development - I hope to be able to account for both the diversity of the films termed noir and the common sets of issues and processes which can be seen to unify them (as precisely 'films of their time'). In Section Three I will propose a differentiation within the 'noir corpus' between:

(a) various hybrid forms of the crime film;

and

(b) the 'tough' crime thriller, a cinematic adaptation of the modes of 'hard-boiled' crime fiction in existence in 'pulp' magazine stories and popular novels since the late 1920's.

As I shall suggest, this differentiation serves the useful purpose of disentangling from the highly cluttered 'map' of the film noir several groups of films which reveal an insistent and recurrent obsession with the representation of challenges to and problems within the ordering of masculine identity and authority. I hope that this will open up several previously neglected 'territories' and provide a viable contribution

to the debates on sexual representation in film noir/  
1940's Hollywood cinema which were inaugurated by  
the influential British Film Institute publication  
Women in Film Noir (1978).

SECTION TWO:

FILM NOIR: SOURCES,  
INFLUENCES, DETERMINANTS.

## SECTION TWO

FILM NOIR:SOURCES, INFLUENCES, DETERMINANTS

Faced with the complexity of film noir as a category, film criticism - as I suggested in the last chapter - has generated an expansive and intricate collection of 'influences' and 'sources' in order to account for different aspects of the 'noir phenomenon'. Thus German Expressionist cinema has been invoked in order to explain the emergence of the 'non-classical' 'noir style'; the American, 'hard-boiled' trend in crime/detective fiction has been offered as a 'source' for the plots, character-types, and dialogue-style of the 'tough' film noir thriller; and both the increasing popularisation of Freudian psychoanalysis and the extensive and intensive cultural and social transformations experienced by the United States through the 1940's have similarly been foregrounded in the historical accounts of the formation of film noir. It is often the case that these and other determinants are listed briefly, as a prelude to the more tangible issues that the particular critic wishes to address, and this has tended to result in the unfortunate consolidation of a 'mythologised' history of film noir. Chapters Four to Seven below will be concerned with a detailed examination of the most common of these determinants, in which I will be seeking to investigate the extent and the specific forms of 'influence'

bearing upon the noir thriller.

An account of the relationships between film noir and its cinematic and extra-cinematic determinants is advisable because it highlights how the 'classical' Hollywood film does not exist in a vacuum, but bears precise relations of kinship to and difference from other (popular-)cultural forms produced within the same ideological and social context. At the same time, I will stress that these various 'sources' and 'influences' cannot be seen to have a determinant role in themselves. What is most often markedly lacking from the 'potted histories' of film noir is any detailed attention to the Hollywood cinema of the 1940's, the context in which these other determinants come together and find their specific places. These determinants did not 'magically' make their mark upon the Hollywood cinema of the 1940's but were, rather, subject to a process of selective assimilation. They did not 'challenge' or in any way 'overturn' Hollywood's stylistic and narrative standardisation but were incorporated within it. Thus in Chapter Eight I will consider the pressures bearing upon the 'classical' Hollywood cinema in the 1940's which made it possible for these various 'external' determinants to be 'influential' in the first place.

## CHAPTER FOUR

GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM AND FILM NOIR

'German Expressionism' has been considered as perhaps the prime 'influence' on the film noir visual style. The principal evidence for such an influence has been the number of directors from the German and European cinema who later worked in Hollywood and directed films later termed noir: especially Fritz Lang, Robert Siodmak, Billy Wilder and Edgar G. Ulmer, and also the cinematographers John Alton and Rudolph Mate (also a director). In stressing the 'Expressionist-connection', the critics attempt to account for the stylistic differences identified with the noir visual style in terms of a direct input from a different cinema, German Expressionism being the paradigm of (European) art cinema.

The term 'German Expressionism' implies a connection between German cinema of the post-World War One period and the cultural/aesthetic phenomenon of Expressionism: the nature of this connection is not too closely specified in the writing on film noir. Barry Salt feels that German Expressionism functions as a blanket term to cover various types of film in the late 'teens and early 'twenties, and he finds that there are only 6 films released in Germany between 1919 and 1924 "in which most features are indebted to Expressionist painting or theatre" [1] - plus a straggler - METROPOLIS, directed by Lang - in 1926. Several other films use the acting and/or set-design

associated with Expressionist theatre, but in many historical accounts of this period in German cinema almost any film made at this time tends to be called 'Expressionist' if it has a degree of visual stylization. In both the Expressionist films proper, and the supernatural or romantic films often classed as such, one can see the attempt to differentiate German cinema from American films of the period, an attempt by the German film industry to offset the domination of their home market by Hollywood. As Steve Neale notes [2], one of the principal - and recurring - means of such differentiation in the face of domination by Hollywood has been the recourse to 'art' cinema, and this is the case in German cinema after the international success of the most famous 'Expressionist' film, Decla's 1919 production DAS KABINETT DES DR. CALIGARI. Thus, according to Salt, the adoption of avant garde theatrical practices accelerated:

In Germany it quickly came to be standard procedure in quality films that all, or many, of the shots should be pre-designed by the art director, in some cases with collaboration from the director [3].

The 'look' of CALIGARI, for example, relies greatly upon the set-design of theatrical designers Hermann Warm, Walter Röhrig, and Walter Reimann.

In film noir criticism, German Expressionism tends to be represented as a unified film movement with a coherent corpus of stylistic traits. But, as Barry Salt indicates, many of the devices and techniques

associated with 'Expressionism' are best seen as 'expressivist' features which are derived from other cinemas - particularly from Danish and American films - which had no connection with the theatrical and artistic Expressionist movement [4]. For example, pre-World War One Danish films used high-angle and low-angle shots and silhouette effects achieved with arc lights, and in the American cinema, films directed by Maurice Tourneur and Cecil B. DeMille used atmospheric montage sequences, superimpositions to represent subjective states, and shadowy effects [5]. Furthermore, as David Bordwell remarks, the difference represented by the German cinema of this period has perhaps been overstated, for "in many respects that cinema most resembled the classical American practice" [6].

In the 'set-menu' of film noir history, the German Expressionist influence privileges the individual directors and cinematographers but it also implies a sudden outburst of Expressionist stylistics in the 1940's, though usually acknowledging such precursors as Lang's *YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE* (Walter Wanger Productions, 1937) and the horror films produced by Universal in the early 1930's. According to David Bordwell, however, the so-called 'Expressionistic' techniques of lighting, camerawork and special effects were imitated by Hollywood soon after the success of *CALIGARI* in the U.S.A. in 1920, and Hollywood continued to draw upon innovations in European cinema. For example, later German films like *VARIETY*, (U.F.A., 1924, directed by E.A. Dupont) and *THE LAST LAUGH* (U.F.A., 1924, directed by F.W. Murnau) created in the American cinema from 1926 to 1928 "a vogue for unusual angles and the so-called

'free' camera" [7], and he continues to note that at Fox studios German films would be screened for directors and cinematographers and followed-up by in-depth discussions [8]. Bordwell argues that the assimilation of Germanic technique was selective - as with other cinemas, "the classical (Hollywood) style took only what could extend and elaborate its principles without challenging them" [9]. What is required, then, in any detailed study of the links between 1920's German cinema and the 1940's film noir is to pay closer attention to the processes of such selective assimilation, in the context of the norms and principles of classical Hollywood.

According to Bordwell, in 1920's Hollywood films, 'Germanic' stylization is most generally motivated by character psychology - especially to indicate extreme psychological states like madness, anxiety, intoxication and dreams: in fact, the motivational basis is similar to the use of such techniques in the film noir thrillers. Such devices were rarer in the 1930's, after the innovation of standardised, synchronised sound, with the notable exception of the horror film - for example, the distorted-perspective sets in FRANKENSTEIN and THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN - and also certain crime-films - particularly the chiaroscuro lighting in the scene in YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE, where Eddie Taylor (Henry Fonda) waits in the condemned cell [10]. The presence of such techniques in these genres indicates how they were already generically-coded prior to the 1940's. In the German cinema of the early 'Twenties it is generally 'uncanny' subjects which are

seen as 'Expressionist' - films like CALIGARI in which there is a preoccupation with disjunct and disturbed psychological states. This gives a rationale for the stylized, distorted sets and the non-naturalistic acting. CALIGARI is a tale told by a madman, and the mise-en-scene is motivated by the logic of dislocated perspective. In the Universal horror films, the setting is similarly stylized, an otherworldly realm of superstition and lore (either folk- or scientific-). In YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE Eddie Taylor's chiaroscuro cage is often interpreted as a fatalistic image:

The dark, heavy bars form a broad, fan-like pattern of shadows, symbolising disaster even more intensely than the black arrow lines of the prison in THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI. Fate's inescapable trap is made visible [11].

The 'Germanic stylization' is, then, adopted within the Hollywood cinema, even before the 1940's, to signify psychological disturbance, the uncanny, fatalism.

The 'revival' of 'Expressionist' stylization in the 1940's occurs largely in the context of the ambitious 'B' film, as a means of differentiation from conventional Hollywood mise-en-scene. Paul Kerr sees this style as representing a negotiated opposition to 'classical' Hollywood realism [12]. The reasons for this - as Kerr indicates - are quite complex and cannot be explained solely in terms of German directors and cinematographers working within the Hollywood system; rather, the stylistic differences represented by the 'B' film noir have to be considered in terms of intersecting determinants - economic, institutional, generic, ideological, which I shall consider in more detail in Chapter Eight. For the moment, however,

it is worth highlighting one of the connotations that the 'Germanic' visual stylization gave rise to. In September 1940 - over a year before the release of THE MALTESE FALCON, a film considered by many critics to be the first film noir thriller, and six months before the release of R.K.O.'s 'Expressionistic' 'art' movie CITIZEN KANE - R.K.O. released their first 'B' film noir, STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR, a film which in recent years has received much attention, especially for its extended dream sequence where the hero dreams that he is arrested and executed for a crime he did not commit. At least one review compared the stylization of this dream sequence to CALIGARI [13], and the review of the film in "Variety" picked up on the film's combination of the familiar generic material of the crime story and an aberrant, non-Hollywood style:

It's a film too arty for average audiences, and too humdrum for others [14]

Richard Combs has expanded upon this:

Precisely because it is such a perfect example of film noir, one feels that it exemplifies all the confusion of stories and materials that make noir virtually impossible to identify as a distinct form. To go even further, it ~~ex~~emplifies the tension between such realist givens as plot and character and the 'expressionist' tendency which is such a feature of the noir style [15].

The noir style, then, is perhaps best conceived not as a borrowing from 'German Expressionism' pure and simple, but as a combination of such stylization with the realist givens of the classical Hollywood style: it is a hybrid form (as Paul Schrader notes in his article).

The 'expressionist' stylistics of STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR include tilted camera angles, heavy chiaroscuro

(in the corridors of the hero's rooming house the shadows of the balcony hang thick and black on the walls; at one point in the dream sequence, the hero is seated, in long-shot, at a table in the jail, while a pattern of black bars of light is formed on the wall behind him - a shot having similar connotations to Eddie Taylor's cage) and distorted sets (again in the dream sequence, where the scale of newspapers, skyscrapers and the courtroom are highly exaggerated). These are all motivated in terms of atmosphere or character psychology: for example, when the hero is pacing in his room, believing his next-door neighbour to be dead, the camera is tilted almost at 45°, this and the black bar-like shadows seeming a 'reflection' of the hero's psychological destabilisation (which explodes in the paranoid grotesquery of the ensuing nightmare). The visual distortion matches and represents the hero's psychological imbalance, as an atmospheric corollary. This 'psychological dimension'-as shall be discussed below - is a key factor in the 'newness' of the 1940's film noir thrillers, as they are subject to shifts within general conventions of psychological verisimilitude.

One can relate the 'expressionist' stylistics of the 1940's thrillers to a shift towards psychological suspense - pioneered in the thrillers of Cornell Woolrich and continuing through the 1940's in such novels as John Franklin Bardin's The Deadly Percheron (1946) and Frederic Brown's Here Comes A Candle (1950) - and also to the desire of 'B' producers to differentiate their product (see Chapter Eight), The 'equation of the 'expressionist'

techniques with 'art cinema' can be found in many reviews of these thrillers, though their reception was not always favourable: James Agee, for example, wrote about the 'expressionist' jazz short JAMMING THE BLUES:

I thought the two effects which wholly compose it - chiaroscuro and virtual silhouette - too pretentious and borrowed and arty [16].

Any account of the 'Expressionist' influence on film noir which simply notes the German/European directors and cinematographers working in Hollywood in the 1940's is, then, incomplete. The influx of European film-makers into Hollywood began long before the emergence of film noir, especially after the 'Parufamet Agreement' of 1925 when Paramount and M.G.M. secured a high financial stake in the premier German studio U.F.A., with the capacity to secure German talent for their own industry [17]. The individual film-makers like Billy Wilder and Fritz Lang had to work within the Hollywood system, in accordance with its norms and principles and within its industrial procedures. Under such a system innovation is never a question simply of the creative individual: the norms of the classical style determine the parameters for stylistic innovation and incorporation. What is significant in the case of the relationship between film noir and 'German Expressionism' - both somewhat shady categories - is not so much the question of any 'influence' but the figuration of various kinds of stylistic differentiation in relation to the context of the dominating 'classical'

Hollywood style. Such stylistic differentiation is manifested particularly in the crime film, a 'genre' which depends upon violence and disruption, and - in the case of the so-called films noirs - in relation to a 'psychologised' mode of suspense.

## CHAPTER FIVE

HARD-BOILED FICTION AND FILM NOIR

The mass-produced, mass-entertainment fiction film is, in certain important respects, an extension of the popular novel. Both are characterised by genres, by a tendency towards melodrama and action (rather than 'high-cultural' literary or aesthetic values), by stock or typical characters rather than 'fully rounded' characterisations. The Hollywood film (the dominant form of mass-entertainment film) has throughout its history relied to a significant extent upon adaptations of published fiction, and in the classical period estimates between 17% and 50% have been given for the proportion of such adaptations. The bulk of these are reworkings of popular novels and short stories rather than 'literary' classics or modernist novels, the advantage of the former being that they have already proven themselves with the mass audience which Hollywood is seeking. Furthermore, the narrative basis of popular fiction has strong similarities with that of the Hollywood film - the 'literary' adaptation requires much more transformation, as the 'literary' problematic often includes processes of narration which are non-traditional and - in terms of the classical style - aberrant. The 'literary' text, then, has to be converted into the terms of the Hollywood style - for example, narrative is streamlined and 'tightened', character is de-emphasised

in favour of action, and a love-story is inserted (as in *THE LOST MOMENT*, Universal-International, 1947, an adaptation of Henry James' story "The Aspen Papers"). In the Hollywood 'literary' adaptation, the source text or the name of the author function as signs of 'quality' or prestige, but in general Hollywood is concerned more with 'production values' than 'literary values' - a 'quality' film being one which is expensively mounted, with well-known stars, special effects, and so on.

In the majority of critical texts on film noir the influence of the 'hard-boiled' form of American crime fiction is given a high priority - as in Paul Schrader's comment:

When the movies of the Forties turned to the American 'tough' moral understrata, the hard-boiled school was waiting with preset conventions of heroes, minor characters, plots, dialogue and themes. Like the German expatriates, the hard-boiled writers had a style made to order for film noir; and, in turn, they influenced noir screenwriting as much as the Germans influenced noir cinematography [18].

Because of this oft-cited centrality of 'hard-boiled' fiction in the histories constructed for noir, I will devote a significant proportion of this chapter to an examination of the relationship between this writing and the noir films. Usually, consideration of the 'hard-boiled' influence stops short at a handful of names who can be salvaged from the mass of 'tough' crime writers: Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, James M. Cain, and sometimes Cornell Woolrich and Horace McCoy have all been vaunted as 'transcending'

or 'personalising' the conventions of the crime or detective novel. This stress on individuals leads to a neglect of the contexts and the environment of conventions within which they worked.

(i) The seedbed of the 'hard-boiled' crime story were the sensationalist genre-based 'pulp' magazines - descendants of Victorian "penny dreadfuls" and dime novels - which proliferated from the 1920's to the mid-1950's. The most famous of the crime/detective pulps, and the one seen as most important to the development of the 'hard-boiled' style(s) was "Black Mask". Starting out as a largely conventional magazine devoted to English-style 'classical' detective stories, by the end of the 'twenties it was associated with the tough, dynamic 'American' style referred to as 'hard-boiled'. Carroll John Daly is generally acknowledged as the first to write in this style with a story published in "Black Mask" in May 1923 featuring "Three Gun Terry" Mack, a fore-runner of his series-hero Race Williams. Daly has been largely over-shadowed by the success of Dashiell Hammett, whose series of Continental Op(erative) stories began appearing in that magazine from October 1923 (i.e. two years before the publication of Ernest Hemingway's first non-limited-edition book In Our Time, a fact which problematises the common assertion that the various types of 'hard-boiled' writing are 'tributaries' flowing from the 'stream'

founded by Hemingway [19]). Hammett was especially encouraged by Captain Joseph T. Shaw, who edited "Black Mask" from 1926 to 1936, who, according to Diane Johnson began a process of 'Hammettizing' the magazine, devoting it exclusively to the 'hard-boiled' form. And "Black Mask" was successful enough to be imitated by many new and existing 'pulp' [20].

Both Shaw and Hammett wanted, however, to extend beyond the short-story format of the 'pulp'. Hammett's book reviews [21] indicate that he had serious ambitions for the crime novel, and he himself wanted to experiment with such 'literary' techniques as 'stream of consciousness' [22]. Hammett's novel-length fiction was progressively successful, both in commercial and critical terms, and the first four - Red Harvest (1929), The Dain Curse (1929), The Maltese Falcon (1930) and The Glass Key (1931) - were initially serialised in "Black Mask". Hammett - like Chandler and Cain after him - was published by the prestigious house of A.A. Knopf, and the 'Knopf-connection' may be one of the reasons why Hammett received so much critical attention. The critics praised Hammett for his 'realism' - which was bolstered by his well-publicised experience as a Pinkerton detective - and for his lack of literary pretention, his sparse, stripped-down writing style; and also, of course, for the way in which his books do not 'hold back' from violence, sexuality and the seamy side of life. Hammett's prestige can be gauged

by the fact that in 1934 The Maltese Falcon was the first detective novel to be included in the Modern Library series.

Hammett's success was instrumental in the popularity of the 'hard-boiled' crime/detective novel in the 1930's. Other writers followed his path from the 'pulp' to books, including the prolific Erle Stanley Gardner (first novel 1933), Jonathan Latimer (in 1934) and George Harmon Coxe (in 1935). Furthermore, Hollywood became interested in Hammett, though as an individual writer and not as a member of some 'hard-boiled' school (which is a classification made by the critics and denied by non-pulp writer James M. Cain [23]). In June 1930, Warner Brothers bought the film rights to The Maltese Falcon, and in July David O. Selznick, then an executive assistant at Paramount, recommended that Hammett's services be obtained to write a story for the screen, commenting that the writer "might very well prove to be the creator of something new and startlingly original for us" [24]. However, the final film - CITY STREETS was not of the private-eye variety associated with Hammett, but was a gangster film, an attempt by Paramount to cash-in on the popularity of Warner Brothers' gangster cycle. Several Hammett adaptations appeared in subsequent years [25], and Hammett continued to work for Hollywood studios - intermittently - until 1939. However, it was the M.G.M. version of Hammett's fifth and final novel, THE THIN MAN (1934)

which had the most impact, spawning several sequels which lasted into the late 1940's. For somebody generally reported to be a major influence on the film noir, it is perhaps surprising that only two of Hammett's film-adaptations are generally termed such - the 1941 adaptation of The Maltese Falcon, produced by Warner Brothers and the 1942 remake of THE GLASS KEY by Paramount.

There is in 1930's Hollywood no recognisable 'hard-boiled' film cycle to match the ascendancy of the 'hard-boiled' crime novel. The adaptations are more occasional, usually 'B' films like the trio of Universal productions based on Jonathan Latimer's private-eye hero Bill Crane (THE WESTLAND CASE, 1937; THE LADY IN THE MORGUE, 1938; and THE LAST WARNING, 1938). Hollywood was late in capitalising on the 'hard-boiled' story primarily because of the enforcement of the Hays Code in 1933. In this context, adaptations of these crime novels, with their overt violence and sexual content, proved problematic. For example, M.G.M. bought the rights to James M. Cain's scandalous The Postman Always Rings Twice in 1934, but their film adaptation did not appear until some 12 years later; Paramount had similar problems with Double Indemnity (8 years from acquisition to film release). The adaptations that were attempted had to be significantly altered: Warner Brothers 1936 version of the Falcon, SATAN MET A LADY injects large doses of broad comedy, to the extent that a reviewer in "The New York Times" could summarise it as a "cynical

farce of elaborate and sustained cheapness". It seems that the film industry was particularly wary of the crime genres following the reaction accorded the gangster cycle of the early 1930's; the 1930's detective films are predominantly represented by the low-budget series featuring 'classical' detectives (Sherlock Holmes), debonair sleuths and adventurers (Philo Vance, The Saint, Bulldog Drummond), or various 'novelty' investigators (girl-detective Nancy Drew, the orientals Charlie Chan and Mr. Moto). These were all derived from published fiction, but not from the 'hard-boiled' crime story. These series, and others like them (for example THE FALCON and ELLERY QUEEN), continued into the 1940's, although there are signs of a gradual incorporation of 'hard-boiled' elements at the end of the 'thirties: in, for example, the Bill Crane films already cited, and a Michael Shayne (private-eye hero of Brett Halliday, a writer from the pulps) series commencing in 1940 with MICHAEL SHAYNE, PRIVATE DETECTIVE (Fox).

In the 1940's there is a marked increase in the number of adaptations of 'hard-boiled' crime fiction. One reason for this is the 'paperback revolution' from 1939, with cheap mass-produced books marking the beginning-of-the-end for the 'pulp', and publishers like Dell, Fawcett, Popular Library and Ace turning from 'pulp' magazines to the paperback. The mass-success of paperbacks led to demand for both new fiction and for reissues, and the 'hard-boiled' crime/detective story was but one of the 'pulp'-born

genres to find a new lease of life and an even wider market. Other reasons for the emergence of a 'hard-boiled' film cycle will be considered below (Chapter Eight), in the context of the industrial determinants in 1940's Hollywood. Warner Brothers 1941 remake of THE MALTESE FALCON, starring Humphrey Bogart in his first iconic 'tough' role of the 1940's, is generally credited as the first adaptation of a 'hard-boiled' detective story which keeps to the spirit of the original, but it is worth noting that it proved something of a false start in that there was no immediate series of 'hard-boiled' follow-ups, but rather a relative hiatus until 1944. In 1942, two Raymond Chandler adaptations were released, but these were incorporated within pre-existing 'B' detective series: the novel Farewell, My Lovely became the film THE FALCON TAKES OVER (R.K.O.), with Chandler's private eye transformed into George Sanders' gentlemanly sleuth, and the novel The High Window became TIME TO KILL (Twentieth-Century Fox), a Michael Shayne film in classical 1930's 'B' style.

However, between THE MALTESE FALCON in 1941 and the emergence of a 'hard-boiled' film cycle proper in 1944, a number of films appeared which used 'hard-boiled' characteristics in conjunctions with what could be termed 'noir' stylistics: for example, Twentieth-Century Fox's I WAKE UP SCREAMING (1942, based on a serialised novel by 'pulp' writer Steve Fisher, and actually in production before the

FALCON), and two films from Paramount, STREET OF CHANCE (based on Cornell Woolrich's The Black Curtain; Woolrich had a prolific 'pulp' career before his first suspense novel was published in 1940), and the remake of THE GLASS KEY, scripted by 'pulp' writer Jonathan Latimer, and starring Alan Ladd. These contain the occasionally flamboyant lighting and cinematographic 'effects' (unbalanced composition, low-key, high contrast lighting, etc.) seen later to be typical of the noir visual style, whereas the Bogart version of the FALCON is largely conventional in style (with the major exception of the low-angled camera emphasising Sidney Greenstreet's menacing bulk, a device to become characteristic in the 1940's, as in two Anthony Mann-directed thrillers featuring Raymond Burr, DESPERATE - R.K.O., 1947 - and RAW DEAL - Reliance Pictures, 1948).

The heyday of the 'hard-boiled' film cycle is from 1944 to 1948 - after this the number of such films decreases, substantially in the 1950's. The cycle had clearly run its course: most of the well-known books and authors had been filmed, and there were new trends developing within crime fiction, both written and filmed - for example, as a means of cutting costs, production companies turned in the late 1940's to such cheaper source materials as newspaper stories and magazine articles. From the 1950's on, the 'hard-boiled' forms of crime fiction no longer represented a new or dominant strain. (John) Ross Macdonald is one of the few writers to

continue to develop the Hammett/Chandler private-eye tradition since the early 1950's. However, there has been a significant 'revival' in recent years, with such contemporary crime writers as Elmore Leonard, Arthur Lyons, Michael Collins, James Elroy, Joseph Hansen, and Norman Z. Lewin, consciously working within the 'hard-boiled' crime/detective tradition - a revival of interest which has also seen the republication of many relatively obscure 'tough' novels from the 'Thirties and 'Forties (through - in Britain - such publishers as Zomba Books, No Exit Press and Simon and Schuster's "Blue Murder" series).

What is 'hard-boiled' writing? The 'tough' private-eye stories have often been taken to be the most representative type - as they have indeed of film noir [26] - but the category is in practice much more complex and confused. David Madden, for example, in his study of James M. Cain has related the 'hard-boiled' school to other 'genres': the convoluted suspense thrillers of Cornell Woolrich (aka. William Irish), the 'proletarian' adventures of B. Traven (for example, The Death Ship, 1926; The Treasure of The Sierra Madre), and what he terms the 'pure' tough-guy novels such as Horace McCoy's They Shoot Horses, Don't They? (1935) [27]. However, these divisions blur within specific books, and the usefulness of the concept of the 'hard-boiled' school sometimes seems in doubt. It is perhaps more useful to stress the institutional context of 'pulp' magazine writing, although the role and significance of the 'pulp's' were not fixed, changing consid-

erably after the widespread introduction of the paperback book. A number of 'hard-boiled' writers also worked in journalism, and several - including Woolrich, Steve Fisher, George Harmon Coxe and Erle Stanley Gardner - contributed stories and articles to the more up-market 'slick' magazines - like "The American Mercury", "The Smart Set" and "The Atlantic Monthly". The writing termed 'hard-boiled' furthermore ranges from 'pulp' efficiency to a curious hybrid between 'pulp' and more 'literary' aspirations, particularly in Chandler's later novels like The Long Goodbye (1953)[28].

Although the 'hard-boiled' category is not as unified as the writers on film noir imply, the various fictions it describes are nonetheless an important 'input' into film noir. Using the filmography of Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward [29], David Bordwell estimates that almost 20% of the film noir thrillers produced between 1941 and 1948 are adaptations of 'hard-boiled' novels and short stories [30]. And there are many more which imitate or rework successful films and novels - like THE DARK CORNER, Fox, 1946 (described by James Agee as "a shameless combination of formulae", a mixture of the high-society murder intrigue of LAURA and the Chandler-style detective thriller [31]). And - for reasons to be considered below - Hollywood imported a number of 'pulp' magazine writers into its screenwriting ranks in the 1940's,

and these worked on a significant proportion of film-thriller scripts (See Appendix One).

Finally, it is worth indicating that the 'hard-boiled' variants of crime fiction had a cultural dissemination which extended beyond both popular written fiction and the Hollywood film. Radio - one of the great unresearched areas of mass entertainment - was particularly significant here, for in the 1940's a number of crime/mystery series featured hard-boiled heroes and adapted some of the popular hard-boiled writers - as in the "I Love a Mystery" series from 1939 to 1952; a series based on George Harmon Coxe's hero Flashgun Casey (who made his debut in "Black Mask" in 1934) in 1946; several Cornell Woolrich stories were adapted - sometimes by Woolrich himself - for various radio drama series, like the highly popular "Suspense"; and Hammett proved particularly popular, with at least three series - "The Fat Man" (1946-1950), "The Adventures of Sam Spade" (1946-1951) and "The Adventures of The Thin Man" (1941-1950).

(ii) 'Hard-boiled' fiction as a category represents a series of differences from the 'Golden Age' or 'English-style' 'classical' detective novel [32], typified by the 'thinking machine' super-sleuth (Sherlock Holmes being the best-known, though not the only example) and the amateur gentleman-detective (like Agatha Christies's Hercule Poirot and Dorothy L. Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey). Ratiocination is replaced by action, and the mystery

element displaced by suspense. Gunplay, illicit or exotic sexuality, police corruption and personal danger to the hero play major parts in 'hard-boiled' fiction. Whereas the mystery-story takes place in a stable, generally conservative social environment - the small villages and country mansions of Christie, for example - the 'hard-boiled' thriller is a more dynamic form, its drama not tied so much to the mechanics of the puzzle:

The contemporary thriller has been constituted not around a method of presentation but around the milieu represented, around specific characters and behaviour; in other words its constitutive character is in its themes . . . violence, sordid crime, the amorality of characters [33].

The 'hard-boiled' hero is much more involved in and vulnerable to the dangers of the world into which he enters. With the puzzle-element displaced, the various forms of 'hard-boiled' fiction tend to precipitate the hero through a chain of episodes - as Chandler commented

The technical basis of the "Black Mask" type of story was that the scene outranked the plot in that a good plot was one which made good scenes. The ideal mystery was one you would read if the end was missing [34].

Lawrence Alloway has described the mystery element in this fiction as a "pseudo puzzle", a pretext, "the simulated precision of which can be resolved in various ways until the last moment", and - as he continues:

As the movies adapted the form, it meant that the audiences were freed from causal narrative to a greater extent than in the novels where you can check back [35].

There is then a close affinity between the thriller form and the Hollywood style film: crucial to each is a narrative drive which propels the reader/spectator/hero forwards through a "molecular" narrative, a series of connected episodes.

Edmund Wilson criticised the The Postman Always Rings Twice novel because it was constructed like a movie continuity, its 12 chapters like the scenes or sequences in a film [36]. In general, 'hard-boiled' fiction is strongly influenced by Hollywood's particularly effective and economic version of the 'novelistic'. For example, there is a preponderance of quick-to-read dialogue; exposition and characterisation are highly economical; and frequently the chapter ends on a 'hook' - a sudden revelation or an incompleting action - which propels the reader onwards, to read more. The result is that these books can be devoured in one sitting, like a film; the covers of the 1970's Vintage Books reissues of Cain's novels carry a quotation from the "Saturday Review of Literature": "No one has ever stopped in the middle of one of Jim Cain's books". Chandler praised Hammett's contribution to detective fiction for "a rather revolutionary debunking of both the language and material of fiction" [37]. Hammett, according to Chandler, "took murder out of the Venetian vase and dropped it in the alley" [38], and whereas the mystery writers deal with a highly artificial world, "the realist in murder writers of a world in which gangsters can rule nations and almost rule cities; . . . in which a screen star can be the finger man for a mob, and the

nice man down the hall is a boss of the numbers racket . . ." [39]. In other words, there is a marked shift to a specifically American subject-matter, furthermore a subject-matter redolent of Hollywood exoticism. But besides this marked shift in content, Chandler emphasises Hammett's stylistic difference. Hammett, like Joseph T. Shaw, believed in principles of simplicity, clarity and action, and "Black Mask" adopted these accordingly and moved away from the florid, cluttered Victoriana of its early prose style. These principles are fundamental also to Hollywood narration, and it is not surprising that Hammett's style has been compared with the functioning (or the apparent functioning) of the film camera:

(Hammett's style) is sparse and austere, thanks precisely to the perfect objectivity with which events are presented. It does not record anything but what we might have seen or heard ourselves if we had been present at the scene - as in the 'cameraman' who has been placed there for our benefit. [40].

Of course, not all of the 'hard-boiled' writers keep to this 'filmic objectivity' - the playful metaphors of Chandler and the intense atmospheric delirium of Woolrich are obvious examples here - but it is a significant feature of the 'hard-boiled' style and attitude.

The question of the 'hard-boiled' influence on Hollywood films should not, then, be conceived of solely in terms of the films adapting the books. Rather, it seems to be the case that the stories and novels were in themselves influenced by Hollywood's

mode of storytelling. One can point to more detailed evidence of this. Cornell Woolrich was one writer who set out to achieve atmospheric effects which were quite obviously inspired by cinema. For example, in the following extract there is an explicit reference to a Hollywood editing device:

They sat patiently watching the montage of the revue, scene blending into scene with the superimposed effect of motion-picture dissolves [41].

And in those passages where Woolrich seeks a heightened atmosphere of masochistic delirium one frequently finds a parallel with the chiaroscuro lighting effects of the cinema:

'The bars of light made cicatrices across us' [42]

and

The next two hours were a sort of Dante-esque Inferno . . . It was the phantasmagoria of their shadows, looming black, wavering high on the ceiling walls [43].

It is impossible to tell whether such filmic effects are influenced by film noir stylistics or whether they anticipate them. Whatever is the case, the important point to draw from such resemblances is the kinship shared by the popular novel and popular film. With the importation of 'pulp' writers into Hollywood in the 1940's this kinship intensifies, the mutual influence becomes even more pronounced; David Madden is perhaps correct, then, when he claims that "the tough-guy novel and its movie counterpart have cross-fertilised each other" [44].

Certain of the formal characteristics associated with film noir are also approximated in 'hard-boiled' fiction. One finds 'flashback' devices in many 'hard-boiled' novels: James M. Cain's Serenade (1937), Woolrich's The Black Path Of Fear (1944) are good examples, as are Woolrich's The Black Curtain (1941) and John Franklin Bardin's The Deadly Percheron (1946), in which the complex structure is motivated by the hero's amnesia [45]. Because the hero in such fiction is frequently also the narrator there is a frequent 'psychological' dimension to the narratives, a mood-drenched hesitation between 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity'. The emphasis upon - a very much sub-Freudian - psychology increasingly characterises both the written and filmed thrillers of the 1940's and serves as a rationale for formal and stylistic deviations/innovations.

(iii) The 'hard-boiled' forms of crime fiction represent not only an Americanisation of the genre, but an emphatic 'masculinisation' also. In general, this fiction is concerned with the aims, ambitions and activity of a male hero and with the parameters of male fantasy. Here, for example, is a contemporary review of The Maltese Falcon (novel) by Gilbert Seldes:

After the high-minded detective heroes, with their effeminate manners, their artistic leanings, and their elaborate deductions, he (Sam Spade, the hero)

is as startling as a real man in a shop-window full of dummies. His actions and his language will shock old ladies [46].

What is being championed here - tough, 'macho' masculinity - is one of the prime obsessions of 'hard-boiled' writing, and one which was adopted also by the 1940's film thrillers. This obsession can take various forms: for example, in the thrillers of Mickey Spillane (who appeared at the end of the 'hard-boiled' era) there is a celebration of brute, violent masculinity, and in Woolrich's suspense novels the controlling activity of the hero is frequently in jeopardy, with trauma replacing celebration. In the private-eye stories the masculinity of the hero is generally more secure, for the detective remains the central unifying figure in regard to knowledge, as well as being the prime narrative agent. In James M. Cain's 'thrillers of transgression', the hero is often seduced into the commission of a crime - and, moreover, a crime with a firm Oedipal basis - and the conflicting forces of his sexuality are set into play, torn as he is between the Law and the transgressive thrust of his desire (particularly in Serenade, where the hero is further torn within himself between heterosexuality and a 'corruptive' homosexuality).

One of the central features of the 'hard-boiled' style is the language, the 'hard-boiled' idiom, a tough, cynical, wisecracking, 'masculine' vernacular present both in the profuse dialogue and in the first-person narration. In many of the private-eye stories, language is used as a weapon, as a sign of the hero's

prowess - even more so perhaps than orthodox weapons. Through his verbal prowess the hero out-wisecracks and outsmarts his opponents, cracking the facades of deceit erected by those with something to hide. This verbal sparring becomes a key component also of the 1940's film thrillers, and is generally acknowledged as a central feature of film noir. Because this tough verbal prowess is very much the mark of the 'masculine' hero, one finds that women tend to be radically excluded. There may be occasional 'wisecracking dames' - particularly in the Chandler novels and adaptations - but predominantly the male is the language-user and the central female character is eroticised. The representation of women for their sexuality (for men) has been discussed at length in Women In Film Noir, but it is important to stress that the conventions of sexual representation in film noir are in some ways pre-empted by 'hard-boiled' fiction.

Where the male hero is characterised in part by his tough and controlled use of language, the woman - in both the 1940's film thrillers and in 'hard-boiled' novels - is represented as a Body, or Shape or an erotic Thing. The first-person narration by the hero sets up an opposition between hero-subject and woman-object, and the narrative drive of the 'hard-boiled' stories relies upon and succeeds in cementing an identification between reader and 'hero' (both as narrating voice and as central narrative agent/figure for the projection of active fantasies). Women are

generally excluded from occupying such a central place in the narrative; it is interesting that in Mildred Pierce (1941) Cain does not use first person narration but rather this story of an ambitious woman is continually contextualised by a very much male-oriented third-person authorial commentary, just as the male characters in both the book and the film attempt to situate Mildred as an erotic object [47].

Though 'hard-boiled' fiction is actually quite diverse in terms of its plots, the obsession with a 'tough' form of masculinity recurs. An extreme example of the aggressive objectification of the woman is Jonathan Latimer's Solomon's Vineyard [1941] which opens with this:

From the way her buttocks looked under the black silk dress, I knew she'd be good in bed. The silk was tight and under it the muscles worked slow and easy [48].

Hollywood could not, of course, be as explicit as this. Instead, the sense of the woman as a body of awesome excitation is represented in the 1940's thrillers by the measured pan up the body of the woman, the camera representing the viewpoint of the hero (as in DOUBLE INDEMNITY, THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE, DEAD RECKONING and THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI). The sweaty force of the description of the woman in Solomon's Vineyard or in Cain's novels becomes displaced into Hollywood's conventions of glamorous artificiality (as in the luminously composed Lana Turner, dressed

in a pure-white swimsuit in THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE). Of course, the 'sexual pathology' of 'hard-boiled' fiction is not simply a case - as Cain remarked of his own work - of 'one man's relation to one woman' [49]. One of the central problems facing 'hard-boiled' masculinity is finding a place for heterosexual relations in the context of brute, rampaging or narcissistic conceptions of male sexual identity, a subject which will be examined in relation to 1940's thrillers in Section Three.

CHAPTER SIXFILM NOIR AND THE POPULARISATION OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

Freudian psychoanalysis first made an impact in America after World War I. It was the attention accorded to the newly-diagnosed problem of war neuroses which led to public awareness of psychoanalytic terms and therapeutic practices [50] - and indeed, this same problem led to a further intensified popularisation of psychoanalysis in the 1940's. While the rise of Fascism quashed psychoanalytic movements in Europe through the 1930's and 1940's, they proliferated in the United States - owing in part to the influx of European academics and analysts. Popular psychoanalytic literature began in America in 1920, with a translation of Freud's General Introduction to Psychoanalysis by child-psychologist G. Stanley Hall [51], and with later translations by A.A. Brill. Inevitably, the dissemination of psychoanalytic concepts from medical and academic spheres into more broadly 'popular' discourses resulted in sometimes radical transmutations of the analytic work of Freud and his successors - a trend which culminated in the post-Kinsey Report 'sexology' of the 1950's and early 1960's (with its stress upon the statistically-measurable 'sexual-pathology' of 'everyday life'). As a cultural and commercial institution, Hollywood also became interested in the increasingly visible

phenomenon of psychoanalysis - and like the "cult of psuedo-psychoanalysis" more generally, Hollywood quite blithely confused 'psychology', 'psychoanalysis', 'psychiatry' and 'psychotherapy' [52].

Parker Tyler has suggested that the film industry initially resisted any wide-scale 'exploitation' of psychoanalysis because of its intellectual and European connotations, and because of its sheer complexity [53]. With the more general cultural dissemination of psychoanalytic concepts, Hollywood became more interested - to the extent that Sigmund Freud himself was offered a lucrative deal by Hollywood for a 'film-version' of his work (an offer he declined) [54]. References to psychiatrists, psychoanalysts and Freudian notions such as the 'unconscious' and the 'subconscious' - particularly joking ones - became more common in Hollywood productions through the 1930's - in such films as BOMBSHELL (1933), MIDNIGHT (1938), BLUEBEARD'S EIGHT WIFE (1938), BRINGING UP BABY (1938), THE MAD MISS MANTON (1938) and BLIND ALLEY (1939) - but the trend became markedly more prominent in the 1940's, particularly in crime thrillers but also in such other films as the horror film CAT PEOPLE (1942), the musical LADY IN THE DARK (1944), the thriller-spoof MY FAVOURITE BRUNETTE (1947), and the mental-illness 'problem-picture' THE SNAKE PIT (1948).

Even more significant than particular references or the presence of psychiatrists as characters was the way in which the cultural prominence of psycho-

analysis in the 1940's affected norms of characterisation, strategies of sexual representation, and aesthetic/narrational devices. At times, reference to the field of Freudian theory was spectacularly displayed - most notably in Alfred Hitchcock's romantic-thriller SPELLBOUND (Selznick-International, 1945). But more generally, popularised 'psychoanalytic' notions insinuated themselves into the narrational/motivational logic of the Hollywood film, setting new standards for psychological verisimilitude which continued to develop through the 1950's - in genres like the Western (eg., Anthony Mann's films; THE FASTEST GUN ALIVE, 1956; THE COBWEB, 1955 and TEA AND SYMPATHY, 1956), and the romantic/sex comedy (eg., THE SEVENYEAR ITCH, 1955; PILLOW TALK, 1959). By 1947, Parker Tyler could claim with breezy confidence that "psychoanalysis is now part of the social texture", and by the end of the decade film criticism had not only paid heed to the 'psychoanalytic' trend in Hollywood films [55] but was itself showing a marked 'Freudian' influence [56].

In this chapter I shall consider the impact of Hollywood's appropriation of 'vulgarised' Freudian psychoanalysis upon the 1940's film noir crime thrillers, concentrating especially upon shifts in strategies of characterisation and the investment in an overtly 'subjectivised' drama) and strategies of sexual representation, and also upon the figuration of psychoanalysis as a (scientific) discourse of patriarchal authority.

(i) 'Psychoanalysis' and Character

The most extensive effect of Hollywood's adoption of popularised psychoanalysis was upon character motivation. The thrillers of the 1940's represented a shift from earlier crime films in that attention was focused upon the 'psychology' of crime. Borde and Chaumeton note that the film noir thrillers tend to represent crime from the viewpoint of the criminal [57], but one can add to this that there is an emphasis in many films upon the motives and psychological repercussions of crime. Films like DOUBLE INDEMNITY (Paramount, 1944), THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE (M.G.M., 1946), SCARLET STREET (Diana Productions, 1945) and THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME (R.K.O., 1947) are concerned with the psychological drama of the central character(s) as they are embroiled in the commission of a crime and its consequences. These characters are not totally in control of what they are doing but are subject to darker inner impulses, signified frequently by an obsessive fatalism (DETOUR, P.R.C., 1945, is a particularly good illustration of this [58]). The characters are 'driven' into crime, not merely by circumstances, but through a flaw in their 'psychological make-up', or through an (often sexual) obsession.

The central character in BLACK ANGEL (Universal, 1946), Marty Blair (Dan Duryea) is a talented musician

turned alcoholic because his wife Mavis is unfaithful. Mavis is murdered, her lover Kirk Bennett (John Phillips) is arrested and convicted, and Bennett's wife Catherine (June Vincent) seeks to prove his innocence, gaining Blair's assistance. Blair falls in love with Catherine and wants to marry her - for they have found no evidence to clear Bennett. She rejects him and he embarks on a binge; during his alcoholic delirium the projected images of his killing of Mavis come back into his mind. This sequence of remembering is a typical example of the 'visual set-pieces' of film noir, its distortions and stylization motivated by the central character's trauma - the realisation that he was the actual killer. BLACK ANGEL is one of a number of thrillers of the period which feature amnesiac heroes (see Chapter Ten), and the solution of the crime is bound up with resolving the gap in Marty's memory and facing up to the trauma of the past, the narrative drive having a heightened 'psychological' pressuring.

Many other films accentuate the 'psychological' nature of the thriller through the use of the flashback and voice-over narrational structures, found often in conjunction. These structures were normalised in the 1940's, and often subject to extraordinary complications - vide the flashbacks-within-flashbacks in THE KILLERS (Mark Hellinger Production, 1946), THE LOCKET (R.K.O., 1947), SORRY, WRONG NUMBER (Hal Wallis Productions, 1948) and EXPERIMENT PERILOUS (R.K.O., 1944). David Bordwell claims that the flashbacks are almost always motivated in terms of character memory:

If we see flashbacks as motivated by subjectivity, then the extraordinary fashion for temporal manipulations in the 1940's can be explained by the changing conceptions of psychological causality in the period. Flashbacks, especially convoluted or contradictory ones, can be justified by the increasing interest in vulgarized Freudian psychology [59].

Though not used exclusively in the 'tough' crime thrillers, 'Forties-style flashback/voice over structures (with the 'present time' of the narrative framing the main story) occur in a large number of these films - including STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR (R.K.O., 1940) (an early and at times uncharacteristic use of these structures), DOUBLE INDEMNITY, MURDER MY SWEET, DEAD RECKONING (Columbia, 1947), OUT OF THE PAST (R.K.O., 1947), DETOUR, MILDRED PIERCE (Warner Brothers, 1945) and THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME. Bordwell finds that in these films the flashbacks do not function primarily to reveal character traits and do not respect the literary conventions of first-person narration, most obviously when the flashback contains material not actually witnessed by the narrating character. Rather, as he sees it,

Character memory is simply a convenient immediate motivation for a shift in chronology; once the shift is accomplished, there are no constant cues to remind us that we are supposedly in someone's mind. In flashbacks, then, the narrating character executes the same fading movements that the narrator of the entire film does: overt or self-conscious at first, then covert and intermittently apparent [60].

Nevertheless, it is worth stressing that the 'psychological atmosphere' generated by and signified through such flashbacks is extremely important in terms of the much-remarked 'mood' of the film noir thriller. In the films listed above, the flashbacks propel the narrative under pressure, the 'present time' of the telling being a time of

disjunction or trauma.

The flashback and voice-over structures establish a certain 'attitude' towards the narrative. In thrillers like *DEAD RECKONING*, *OUT OF THE PAST* and *DETOUR*, the voice-over narration seems traumatised, carrying the burden of past mistakes and transgressions, a conventional structure resembling the confession [61], where the narrator seems under a compulsion to get things said and to clear him/herself of guilt. In some films, there seems at times to be a confusion between the veracity of the voice and the truth represented by the image track. But whereas Christine Gledhill sees 'discursive confusion' as potentially progressive in identifying and analysing ideology [62], it is perhaps best to see the momentary confusion as adding to the 'psychological veracity' of the films. The important thing to remember here is that the flashbacks originate from a point of pressure, and the narrator is represented as not totally in control, under threat (*DEAD RECKONING*), awaiting execution (*THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE*), dying (*DOUBLE INDEMNITY*), or on trial for his life (*THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME*). The occasional disjunctions in the narration, the conflict between voice and image, give the sense of the narrator not being a detached storyteller, but rather having a personal stake in the drama - he is physically and psychically enmeshed.

Another important feature of the 'psychological' thriller is suspense itself, which the complex flashback structures intensify through the fracturing of chronology and the cause-and-effect chain of the narrative. This

serves precisely to delay and to frustrate the psychic stability which is sought by the protagonist, for the drive to resolve the plot and eradicate the enigma is often intrinsically connected with an attempt to achieve a stable and coherent identity (markedly so in BLACK ANGEL). Various forms of 'psychological' suspense thriller proliferated in the 1940's - for example, Alfred Hitchcock's films, the 'Gothic' thriller/paranoid woman's film, and the 'tough' thriller - and they can be seen to manifest a common concern with psychological destabilisation (whether male or female).

WHEN STRANGERS MARRY (King Bros/Monogram), a 'B' thriller of 1944, is another interesting example of the 1940's 'psychological' suspense film. It is centred upon Millie Baxter (Kim Hunter) whose new husband Paul (Dean Jagger) is suspected of murder. Millie fears that Paul may indeed be a killer and that she herself is under threat, for she hardly knew him when they married. In this element of paranoia, the film is similar to REBECCA (Selznick, 1940) and SUSPICION (R.K.O., 1941), and the 'Gothic' persecuted-wife melodramas of the 1940's. However, the film contains a number of the atmospheric sequences seen as characteristic of film noir and has a convoluted narrative reminiscent of Cornell Woolrich. For example, near the start of the film Millie is alone in her hotel room, ill at ease because Paul has not shown up, and the mise-en-scene conveys her sense of disjunction and desperation; Robert Porfirio describes the sequence

thus:

Millie Baxter is alone and frightened in a hotel room with jazz blaring next door, while the neon "dancing" sign alternately fills the room with light and then leaves it in darkness [63].

And later in the film as she is walking alone through the streets at night, distorted faces are superimposed over the dark shadows, chiding "He's a murderer". These 'atmospheric' sequences are motivated by the woman's psychological conflict, torn as she is between love for her husband and the thought of him as a killer. The setting of the film carries, according to Robert Porfirio, "undertones of fear and hysteria" [64]: the atmospheric use of dark shadows, and visual and sound effects [65] make the mise-en-scene a correlative of the character's state of mind. In this sense, mise-en-scene in these 'psychological' thrillers operates in a fashion similar to the mise-en-scene of such 1950's melodramas as Vincente Minelli's THE COBWEB, and Douglas Sirk's WRITTEN ON THE WIND; in the words of Thomas Elsaesser there is:

a sublimation of dramatic values into decor, colour, gesture and composition of frame, which in the best melodramas is perfectly thematised in terms of the characters' emotional and physical predicaments [66].

In a similar way, the unbalanced compositions, chiaroscuro lighting and other stylistic features associated with the film noir function not just as baroque spectacle but they are motivated by and signify the emotional and physical situations of the characters (threat, trauma, loss etc.).

In these thrillers of the 1940's, the incorporation of vulgarised psychoanalytic themes and concepts is firmly linked with a general narrative and aesthetic interest in subjectivity. In STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR, which I considered in the previous chapter, there is a strong psychological inflexion to the hero's predicament. Disturbed by the fact that his eye-witness testimony is sending Briggs (Elisha Cook Jr.) to his death for a murder conviction, Mike Ward (John McGuire) paces in his room and imagines that his next-door neighbour Meng (Charles Halton) is dead, and then - through a series of flashbacks and a voice-over commentary - he fearfully imagines that he may be arrested for the murder, the flashbacks revealing potentially incriminating evidence against him. The drama, the suspense, the predicament, seems internally generated - the escalation of the narrative has a kind of paranoid logic, and this paranoia comes to a climax in the grotesque distortion of the dream sequence which is, as Tom Flinn writes "alive with subconscious desires, seething with repressions, awash with pent-up hatred, and constructed from the night-marish circumstances of the character's real situation" [67]. Crime is not a case - as Ward initially feels - of uncomplicated surface appearances, but involves far-reaching psychological motivations and repercussions.

In STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR, the relative straightforwardness of the plot is complicated by the emphasis upon the hero's psychological predicament, and there is suggestion, furthermore, of a more complex logic of the mind. The flashbacks detail how Ward is

bothered by Meng: in the first, Meng and the landlady complain about the noise of his typing; in the second, the hero is disgusted by Meng leering at young girls ("He looks as though his mind could stand a little laundering", he comments); in the third, Meng and the landlady enter *the hero's* room to find him with his girlfriend Jane (Margaret Tallichet) after the two have been caught in the rain - Ward is outraged when Meng says with prurient excitement - "Look there she is - look at her legs!". Ward's attitude towards Meng seems a *projection* of his own sexual frustration - he cannot marry Jane because he does not earn enough money; the third flashback innocently nods towards the possibility of pre-marital sex, a possibility frustrated because of the conditions in the cheap boarding house where Ward is forced to live because of his low income.

One finds in this and other thrillers of the period a circuit of motivations operating far beyond the overt narrative incidents. This has been noted by many writers in their identification of the 'moral ambiguity' of characters in film noir. For example, the hero's relationship with Meng is bound up with his general economic situation, the sexual frustration this enforces, and the fact that Ward testified against Briggs and was, as a result, able to advance his career. The hero, rather than actively pursuing the plot is himself enmeshed in crime and its consequences, his 'guilty thoughts' partially indicting him. Like the heroes of many 1940's thrillers, he is both actant and 'subjective centre' (although it must be noted that

the last half of the film features Jane prominently as she investigates the murder of Meng, is threatened by the escaped lunatic - Peter Lorre - who is the actual murderer, and ultimately clears Ward and makes possible the marriage of the two principals).

The interest in character subjectivity extends far beyond the crime thriller in the 1940's - it can be related to a general aesthetic ideology in Hollywood films of this period, and to shifts in conceptions of psychological verisimilitude. Nevertheless, one finds in these crime thrillers recurrent interest in 'subjective' effects - for example, in the extended use of the 'subjective' camera (in LADY IN THE LAKE, M.G.M., 1946 and DARK PASSAGE, Warner Brothers, 1947); in dream or hallucination sequences (as in MURDER MY SWEET, BLACK ANGEL, LADY FROM SHANGHAI); in the voices heard by disturbed or obsessive characters. The conflict and disruption characteristic of crime narratives enables the representation of extreme states of mind, and also of the conflicting currents within the minds of individual characters.

(ii) 'Psychoanalysis' and Sexual Representation

The general association of 'psychoanalysis' with sexuality was also, of course, taken up by Hollywood, and proved very useful in creating a 'sexualised' atmosphere which would pass the censors. Parker Tyler links the 'pop-psychoanalysis' in films like GILDA (Columbia, 1946) with "the sinister sex of monster movies" [68]. What one finds in these thrillers is

that murky sexual intrigues are alluded to rather than directly represented. As the audience was familiar with this vulgarised 'Freudianism', the films are able to hyper-charge gestures, looks, aspects of mise-en-scene and dialogue so that they suggest much more than their overt meaning. In this context it is worth quoting Borde and Chaumeton at length:

In film noir there is an attempt to create an atmosphere of latent, vague and polymorphous sexuality which everyone could project their desires into and structure how they wanted, like a Rorschach ink blot . . . With such a way of playing with official censorship, this eroticism recalls Freud's notion of the dream-work: instead of showing forbidden realities, seemingly neutral elements are introduced which are nevertheless evocative by association or through symbolism. So dance is an age-old transposition of the sexual act itself, but the 'thriller' has from time to time made subtle use of this worn-out allegory . . . Some fetishistic themes would be explained similarly: the boots and gloves of Rita Hayworth in GILDA . . . Sado-masochistic passages which are in keeping with the central subject of film noir, are also prone to this allusive technique. In the association between pleasure and violence, the exhibition of the latter sometimes stands in for the former, which is still hinted at in some details (GILDA/WHITE HEAT/SCARLET STREET/etc.) . . . The masochistic inspiration obviously has its origin in the theme of the blonde criminal (Lana Turner, Peggy Cummins, Barbara Stanwyck) and the Woman-Vamp (Lauren Bacall). Occasionally, abnormal sexual relationships can be guessed at, or even perversions - as in GILDA, where a few clues indicate troubling relations between men [69].

The incorporation of and reference to popular conceptions of psychoanalysis allowed this potential for double-meaning, which certain films play upon. Examples include the badinage between Walter and Phyllis in DOUBLE INDEMNITY, where a seduction attempt takes the form of a 'routine' where Walter play-acts as a traffic cop and Phyllis as a woman caught for speeding; and the sequence in the restaurant in THE BIG SLEEP where there is a similar seduction-routine between

Marlowe (Humphrey Bogart) and Vivien (Lauren Bacall), where this time it is horse-racing which provides the metaphorical substitute for 'sexual bargaining'. In the psycho-sexual conflict between characters which is a prime feature of many of these thrillers, objects achieve a significance beyond their overt function: like the sword-stick in GILDA, which at first 'stands in' as the phallus in the relationship between Johnny (Glenn Ford) and Ballin Mundson (George MacReady), and which is later displaced by Gilda (Rita Hayworth) herself. Other examples include the cigarettes and cigars which serve as props and stand-ins for 'sexualised' relations between characters: for example, Keyes' (Edward G. Robinson's) cigar in DOUBLE INDEMNITY, always dutifully lit by Walter, and the cigarettes in the ashtray during the credits sequence to THE BIG SLEEP, suggesting that 'Bogart' and 'Bacall' are making love.

GILDA is a veritable festival of such displacements. Elspeth Grant in the British "Daily Sketch" (22nd April, 1946) expressed common critical opinion when she complained of "the obliquity of dialogue currently fashionable in Hollywood films . . . *nobody* ever says anything straight out to anybody or attacks a subject directly". Dialogue in this film carries a playful allusiveness. When Gilda first appears in the film - a dynamic entry upwards into an empty shot, with her hair flowing free and an ecstatic smile on her face - Ballin asks her "are you decent?" (meaning 'dressed'), to which she replies invitingly "Me?" - seemingly

mocking the idea of (moral) decency. But when faced with a stony look from Johnny, she self-consciously pulls up the shoulder-strap of her long flowing gown to give a more restrained answer to the question:

"Sure, I'm decent".

Such innuendo persists through the film: later, as Ballin helps her on with her dress, she remarks "I can never get a zipper to close. Maybe that stands for something, what do you think?", and taunting Johnny, she quips "If I'd been a ranch, they'd've named me the Bar Nothing". The film in general toys knowingly with the spectator's awareness of popularised psycho-analysis:

JOHNNY: "Get this straight: I don't care what you do. But I'm going to see to it it looks alright to him. From now on, you go anywhere you please, with anyone you please. But I'm gonna take you there and I'm gonna pick you up and bring you home. Get that? Exactly the way I'd pick up his laundry".

GILDA: "Shame on you, Johnny. Any psychiatrist would tell you that your thought-associations are very revealing . . . All to protect Ballin. Who do you think you are kidding, Johnny?".

It toys especially with the implications of 'abnormal' sexuality: the relationship between Ballin and Johnny - the latter feminized, with his slicked-back hair, narcissistically admiring himself in the mirror - with Gilda teasing Johnny with "Good evening, Mr. Farrell, you're looking very beautiful" and "How pretty you look in your night-gown", plus the many suggestions of Gilda's promiscuity. Through such techniques of allusion and indirect reference, the vicissitudes of the relations between the central characters caught in



a love-triangle can be deviously implied, leaving the spectator - as Borde and Chaumeton suggest - to make the connections and read in the significances.

With the Hollywood film constrained by Hays Code censorship, the framework of popularised psychoanalytic ideas was useful in closing the gap between the restricted field of representation and the 'realistic' expectations of the audience as to what the characters would do and how they would behave. The Hays Code censorship in itself forced upon film-makers this indirect representational mode, with, for example, a kiss having to stand-in for sexual intercourse, or one murder for many. Again, these techniques of representation are by no means restricted to the crime film, but they are particularly suited to its subject-matter - especially as many of the thrillers of the period have a dominant sexual problematic intermingled with the problem of law and social-order. Moreover, the sexual pathology of the 'hard-boiled' source novels was often far in excess of the strictures of the Hays Code.

(iii) 'Psychoanalysis' and Patriarchal Authority

Psychoanalysis had the reputation of a science, and though its popularisation gave rise to versions at several removes from its subtlety and complexity, the scientific association persisted. One can find this particularly in those films featuring psychoanalysts as characters, where the psychiatrist/psychoanalyst/psychologist is the character who is able to tie up

a number of loose ends in the plot by acting as a source of scientific authority. Generally, this sense of scientific authority is conservative in nature - explaining away deviance - and it is also patriarchal. The psychoanalysts are usually male or, if female, are themselves frustrated or neurotic (as in SPELLBOUND). Psychoanalysis is represented as very much a male science, and as such is utilised to explain and classify female behaviour and sexuality.

In THE DARK MIRROR (Universal-International, 1946), Lieutenant Stevenson (Thomas Mitchell) runs into trouble on a murder investigation when he cannot ascertain which of two identical twins, Terry and Ruth (both played by Olivia deHavilland) is the murderess. The police detective is blocked because the witnesses to the crime cannot differentiate between the sisters (as in STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR and many films using a 'wrong man' narrative, the legal machinery relies to a large extent upon appearances). Thus the police detective turns to a psychiatrist for help, and Dr. Scott Elliot (Lew Ayres), a specialist on twins, attempts to study their personalities. His study/investigation makes use of scientific machinery and psychological procedures - the ink-blot test, a word-association test, a polygraph ('lie-detector') in order to establish differences between the sisters, and there is much pseudo-scientific jargon about 'split-personalities'. 'Psychoanalysis' thus functions here as a means of making visible what is hidden to appearance - the 'unconscious mind' (ie. 'true nature') of the twins, based on the dubious

premise that one must be 'good' and one 'evil'. What is being explored in the film is female sexuality/identity: the 'good' is passive and domestic, the 'evil' is independent, strong-willed, aggressive. Thus, 'psychoanalysis' operates here, and in other films of the period, to justify anew patriarchal inequalities, based on the assumption of the male as norm, the female as different/strange/other.

The same holds true for *THE LOCKET*: Nancy Blair (Laraine Day) is about to be married to John Willis (Gene Raymond), but the latter is visited by former husband (Brian Aherne), a psychiatrist. Blair tells Willis that Nancy has ruined the lives of three men and though attractive and seemingly normal - an ex-lover describes her as "the perfect girl" - is a "hopelessly twisted personality". Thus, there is, as in *THE DARK MIRROR*, a distinction between a woman's appearance and her 'inner-self', and Blair the psychiatrist is like Dr. Elliot in being able to 'tell the truth' about the woman. The film explores the 'inner reality' of Nancy through several flashbacks. Her kleptomania is related to a childhood trauma when she was accused of stealing a necklace: her aberrance as a woman, her 'madness', links in a characteristic way female sexuality with the desire for money, a common theme in films with an erotic and ambitious femme fatale (*DEAD RECKONING*, *OUT OF THE PAST*, *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*, *LADY FROM SHANGHAI*, being notable examples). *THE LOCKET* proffers its narrative as the 'case-study' of a woman who is insane, different, threatening. This story/study is overtly

linked to 'psychoanalysis', a 'psychoanalysis' which acts as a 'scientific' rationale for the misogynist investigations of female sexuality found in other thrillers of the period.

'Psychoanalysis' is represented in these films, then, in terms of male authority: 'science' is on the side of (patriarchal) law. Rationality and knowledge are the province of the male, whereas women are objectified, differentiated sexually and psychically. The films posit an intimate connection between femininity and neuroses - a connection, of course, with a broader cultural dissemination - and this is paraded in the tortured heroines of REBECCA, SUSPICION, GASLIGHT and other woman-centred thrillers. But more characteristic of the male-centred film noir thrillers is the equation between female 'deviance' and psychosis. The thrillers of the 1940's contain numerous examples of women who desire power in a man's world, this desire leading them into open conflict with the men who rule over them. However, rather than giving vent to the women's frustrations, the films classify them as insane. Thus, in TOO LATE FOR TEARS (Hunt Stromberg Productions, 1949), SUNSET BOULEVARD, (Paramount, 1950), DEAD RECKONING, LADY FROM SHANGHAI, DOUBLE INDEMNITY and others, the transgressive, rebellious women are ultimately revealed to be pathological cases, their desire for money and sexual independence being indices of this.

Psychoanalysis - whether explicitly referred to or implicitly invoked - tends in such films to function as a normative 'science' and a conservative ideology:

it is used to explain away deviant or aberrant characters - under which category come women but also such figures as the Oedipally-fixated violent psychopath Cody Jarrett (James Cagney) in WHITE HEAT (Warner Brothers, 1949) (a clinical psychologist in the film describes as his central problem a "psychopathic devotion" to his mother). 'Psychoanalysis', then, operates in these films to define 'subjective reality', the 'true character' of individuals, and as such it functions - as THE DARK MIRROR shows in particular - as an instrument of Law. David Bordwell - following Marc Vernet [70] - has made some useful comments on the particular appropriateness of popularised psychoanalysis to the 1940's crime thriller:

. . . certain aspects of psychoanalysis fitted generic models. Hollywood films stressed the cathartic method of psychoanalysis (not important for Freud after 1890) because of its analogy to conventions of the mystery film. The doctor's questioning recalls police interrogations (the patient as witness or crook who won't talk). Like the detective, the doctor must reveal the secret (the trauma) and extract the confession [71].

In THE DARK MIRROR and THE LOCKET the skills of doctor and detective are allied in a male figure of (scientific) authority. The 'cure' is the solution of the problem, the finding of the final piece in the jigsaw of plot and character - in these and other 1940's crime films, the pinning-down of the woman's 'deviance' in terms of motivations which are readily comprehensible - greed, madness, 'unholy lust' (as in Gene Tierney's incestuous fixation in LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN).

At the risk of encroaching into the concerns of the next chapter, it is worth indicating here, as Betty

Friedan suggests [72], that in official discourses of the 1940's, it was often women who were held to blame for many psychoneurotic conditions. Male maladjustment in such accounts was rationalised in terms of women 'failing' to accept their 'correct', 'feminine' place: disloyal girl-friends or spouses, but particularly the figure of the overbearing, suffocating mother. The repressive, conservative use of psychoanalysis as a popularly recognised 'science' coincides with a period of accelerating female independence during the war, as shall be discussed below. Psychoanalysis can thus be seen in its 1940's popular disseminations as one of the many patriarchal discourses mobilised to combat the multifarious 'threats' posed by the 'emergent woman'.

\* \* \* \*

A further point to stress in this account of the impact of psychoanalysis in the 1940's is the strong emphasis upon the individual. Betty Friedan sees this as a displacement from social forces:

It was easier to look for Freudian sexual roots in man's (sic) behaviour, his ideas, and his wars than to look critically at his society and act constructively to right its wrongs-[73].

Parker Tyler similarly holds to such an account, seeing the general interest in 'psychological' disturbance and the 'psychology' of murder in 1940's Hollywood cinema

as a displacement from 'social' murder represented by the war [74]. In the thrillers, crime, especially murder, is represented as individually generated, with the individual tending to be not totally responsible for his or her deviant actions. The films are obsessed with the trauma and disturbance of individuals, and though more general causes may be referred to - such as the war as an explanation of Buzz's psychosis and Johnny's violence in *THE BLUE DAHLIA* - a vulgarised concept of childhood trauma is usually present as something of a catch-all explanation (as in *THIS GUN FOR HIRE*, *THE LOCKET* and *WHITE HEAT*), to such an extent that many eccentricities of plotting may be excused.

Finally, there is what Parker Tyler has referred to as the "emotional atmosphere of psychoanalysis" [75]. This phrase may be taken in a number of ways, but I would here stress especially the 'psychological' nature of the suspense in these films. Dealing as they are with psychologically disturbed characters, either psychopaths or characters enduring extreme stress, and representing crime in terms of the individual, many of these 1940's thrillers allow an identification for the spectator with their morbid fantasies of alienation and the fetishistic tough-masochism. Fate is often a question of the individual's frustration seeming to be displaced, allowing the satisfaction of 'alternative' fantasies to those which may ostensibly seem to be catered to. The fantasy of individual success - in the case of the hero of *THE DARK CORNER*, for example

- is frustrated, but the narrative path to the resolution of this lack, allows the spectator's involvement in the hero's masochistic self-immolations. The 'emotional atmosphere' is a useful term to describe the particular meshes of fantasy within these films, the nestling and interweaving of 'perverse' or 'illicit' fantasies within those which are more socially visible and accepted. Thus, for example, - and this will be considered further in Section Three - films like THE DARK CORNER, OUT OF THE PAST and THE KILLERS allow the male spectator to engage himself with masochistic positions for male sexuality, under the alibi of more 'masculine' fantasies. The heroes of such films are tough but vulnerable, victims often of a 'fatal flaw' within themselves which causes their displacement from an idealised - and impossible - tough male masculinity.

FILM NOIR AND AMERICA IN THE 1940'S

Many of the critical and historical accounts of film noir view it, either implicitly or explicitly, as a 'reflection' of the complex social and cultural transformations experienced by the United States in the 1940's. There are, however, serious drawbacks with the ways in which film noir has been conceptualised as representative of the cultural context in which it was produced. For example, Hollywood did not specialise exclusively in the 'tough' thrillers seen to constitute the bulk of film noir. Rather, these films were produced - and experienced by audiences - in conjunction with a variety of other genres. Thus, 1946 saw not only the release of THE BIG SLEEP (WB), THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE (MGM), GILDA (Col.) and THE BLUE DAHLIA (Para.) but also such musicals as EASY TO WED, STATE FAIR, and BLUE SKIES, the musical-biographies THE JOLSON STORY, NIGHT AND DAY and RHAPSODY IN BLUE, the Westerns CANYON PASSAGE and MY DARLING CLEMENTINE, the sentimental comedy-dramas THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S and IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE, and women's-picture melodramas like A STOLEN LIFE and HUMORESQUE. Richard Maltby reports that Leslie Asheim made precisely this point in 1947, in the context of a debate among liberal critics and academics which was sparked off by film-producer John Houseman's privileging of such 'tough' thrillers as THE BIG SLEEP and THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE as the emblematic films of the post-war period [76]. As Richard Maltby has argued, this 'Zeitgeist' view of the film noir thrillers came subsequently to mark a

wide range of film criticism from Borde and Chaumeton onwards [77].

It is important, then, to consider in what ways and under what pressures these films of the 1940's 'reflect' the social and cultural context. One cannot stop at the noting of elements which may seem particularly suggestive of one's notion of 'America in the 1940's' - for example, the presence in a number of postwar thrillers of ex-servicemen heroes - but one needs to consider the particular ways in which such elements are figured within the generically-specified parameters and procedures of the narrative, narrational and stylistic systems of the classical Hollywood cinema. A complex interaction between text, context and inter-text (both of genre and the Hollywood Style in general) mitigate against any unitary conception of 'determination', and complicating the picture still further - as I shall consider in the next chapter - are the ideological and economic pressures bearing upon Hollywood in the 1940's. What is especially significant about many film noir thrillers is, as I shall argue, the ways in which they address and regulate certain aspects of the social and cultural transformations of the period by means of generically-codified structures of narrative elaboration and containment. The crime thriller allowed, for example, only certain aspects of the social problem of 'post-war maladjustment' to be articulated, and this articulation was in itself subject to the processes of ordering and displacement characteristic of the textual activity of the Hollywood film. I shall consider

these problems further, in connection with THE BLUE DAHLIA - a film which seems particularly 'resonant' in regard to the social upheavals of the post-war period - but I shall firstly sketch-in certain of the social and cultural transformations which can be seen to be most relevant to the film noir thrillers.

(i) The War, Women, and 'Post-War Disillusionment'

Both in the wartime and post-war periods of the 1940's, the United States was subject to complex and far-reaching social, economic and political transformations which should be considered not only in terms of their presumed effect on film content but also, and quite crucially, in regard to the ways in which they affected the cultural context of contemporary audiences (and hence the cultural co-ordinates by which Hollywood mapped the changes in its output). The United States entered World War II with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, and this engendered a rapid cultural mobilisation, a shift from an - albeit rather nervous - ideology of isolationism to an ideology of commitment and community [78]. An ideology of national unity, purpose and struggle was heavily promoted - not only in the discourses issuing from such official agencies as the Office of War Information, but via cultural institutions more generally - an ideology which sought to displace the divisions of class, race, etc., which had characterised the pre-war period [79].

For example, one of the consequences of both the wartime expansion of the economy and the mass

drafting of men into the armed services was that women were overtly encouraged - as part of their patriotic 'duty' - to enter the workforce rather than to devote themselves exclusively to home and family. As Melva Joyce Baker has reported, "the female labour force increased by 6.5 million or 57% during the war years, boosting the number of women workers to nearly 20 million by 1945" [80]. By 1943 women comprised 36% of the total labour force [81]. The visibility of women in the economic realm was matched by a widespread redefinition of their cultural place. With the rapid and officially-sanctioned urging of women, both single and married, to 'step into men's shoes' - and with such further consequences of the war as the imbalance in the ratio of single women to single men [82] - traditional conceptions of sexual role and behaviour were put under stress [83]. However, it seems that the confusion and disorientation resulting from this were generally not allowed an adequate expression in the context of the war-directed ideological consolidation, and this may be one of the principal determinants of the outpouring of dissatisfaction, alienation and sexual hostility seen to be a characteristic of Hollywood's post-war thrillers [84].

As a social institution, Hollywood sought to address and to clarify the ideological confusion of the war years, but at the same time - as I shall consider in the next chapter - was itself subject to the threat of substantial pressure from government agencies. The 1942-3 period seems in particular to have been marked by interruptions to and redefinitions

of Hollywood's pre-war generic standardisation, owing to the necessity of being seen actively to contribute to the war effort. I have already considered - in Chapter One - one of the casualties of such generic transformations: the 1930's cycle of "screwball" comedies. In their recurring attention to women who seek social and economic advancement through the 'manipulation' of their sexuality, these films can be seen as problematic in the context of the post-1942 downplaying of sex and class inequality. Furthermore, the "screwball" emphasis upon frivolity and eccentric individuality were less easily justifiable in the war years, as perhaps was the validation of romance as all-important. The highly successful romantic melodrama CASABLANCA [1943] suggestively pinpoints this qualification of individual romantic satisfaction, when the 'isolationist' Rick (Humphrey Bogart), a bruised and cynical romantic, relegates the emotional turmoil of his affair with the married Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman), to commit himself to the global conflict, concluding that "it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world" [85]. The willing renunciation of individual satisfaction to 'the cause', and the concept of an over-reaching duty feature in many discourses of the early war years in America, and figure prominently in motifs of renunciation and self-sacrifice in a wide range of films. The redefinition of individuality can be seen especially in such combat films as AIR FORCE (1943)

and BATAAN (1943), where male heroism is established not through individual achievement, but in terms of group unity, with the combat unit (the bomber crew, the platoon, etc) functioning overtly, in its 'typed' mixture of classes and races, as a microcosm of American society (with women evoked, through reminiscence, photographs and letters, as symbolic of 'why we fight').

With the pressure on Hollywood of having both to address the changing social co-ordinates of its audiences and to regulate a significant proportion of its productions in accordance with the objectives of the war effort - which were by no means unambiguously defined - it is not surprising that, as noted in Section Three, the success of *THE MALTESE FALCON* in 1941 inspired no direct cycle of 'hard-boiled' crime thrillers. The stress upon the cynical, self-reliant hero who lives by his own code, the disdain for the established forces of law and order, and the overt misogyny found in the Hammett adaptation would have been less viable in the pressured context of the war years. Indeed, such agencies as the Office of War Information and the Bureau of Censorship were particularly worried about gangster films - a designation which seems to have included the 'tough' thrillers - for the way in which they might be perceived as discrediting the American political system in the eyes of foreigners [86]. Such films were not banned outright, but officials of both agencies were harshly critical of them [87]. As with previous attempts at external intervention, Hollywood attempted to forestall such criticism by regulating itself: just as the criticism of the 1930's gangster

films resulted in their remodelling as the 'G-man' cycle (see Appendix Two), so too such films of the early war years as ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT (1942), LUCKY JORDAN (1942) and MR LUCKY (1943) - laid emphasis upon the gangster-figure who is converted from illicit self-interest to "the cause" (sometimes through a conflict with a heinous gang of Fifth Columnists). Michael Renov suggests a further reason why Hollywood may have been reluctant to follow the FALCON with a series of 'tough' crime thrillers: there had been a dramatic increase in the female proportion of the domestic film audience, and Renov sees this - rather than changes in women's social role in themselves - as a principal motivation for a trend towards the production of 'female-oriented' films during the early war years (as in the glorification of the working-woman in such diverse films as SWING SHIFT MAISIE, 1943, GOVERNMENT GIRL, 1943, and TENDER COMRADE, 1943) [88].

As I noted in Chapter Five, the 'hard-boiled' thriller emerges with force in 1944, and although this is complexly determined, Renov has suggested that there was a lessening of wartime exigencies around this time, with victory for the Allied Forces being a more viable and imminent prospect [89]. Renov claims that from 1944 a more concerted emphasis on postwar issues becomes apparant in a variety of discourses, with a particular attention to the phenomenon of the working-woman:

by 1944, the internal memoranda of government agencies show that the female work force was being termed 'excess labour' and efforts were being made to induce voluntary withdrawal, an attitude even then being transmitted from the editorials of major newspapers, magazines and through

other public opinion forums [90].

The transition from wartime to post-war cultural priorities should not, then, be conceived of as a clean 'gear-shift' in 1945, but rather in terms of a more gradual re-orientation once the end of the war was in sight (hence the common inclusion of such 1944 films as MURDER, MY SWEET and DOUBLE INDEMNITY among those thrillers typifying currents in post-war American society is not as erroneous as it may at first seem).

The end of the war itself resulted in further discursive confusions, the effects of which are generally collapsed together under the blanket-term 'post-war disillusionment'. Critical accounts of film noir tend to foreground here the maladjustment experienced by returning servicemen - citing the cycle of thrillers featuring such figures - but the issue is far more complex than this. The cultural mobilisation of the war years had been rapid, intense and, above all, temporary, and the postwar era promised further uncertainties, by no means simply a return to pre-war conditions. It was not only the expectations of returning servicemen which were confronted with a disillusioning reality, but the very process of unification towards a common and localised goal - a victorious end to the war - led to a highlighting in the post-war years of those problems which had been repressed in the 'diversion' of the wartime consolidation of unity and purpose. As Sylvia Harvey comments, "it may be argued that the ideology of national unity which

was characteristic of the war period, and which tended to gloss over and conceal class divisions, began to falter and decay, to lose its credibility once the war was over [91]. The transition towards a post-war social and cultural order necessitated the consolidation and redefinition of a 'normality' outside the context of a more-or-less unitary goal like the war [92], and the shift to peacetime seems to have presented these divisions and problems anew, and in sharper focus. The bitter labour disputes of 1946 and 1947 [93], and the widespread cultural 'paranoia' of the Cold War can be seen as powerful manifestations of division and discontent.

In her article "Women's Place: the absent family of film noir", Sylvia Harvey sees the post-war noir thrillers as marked in particular by a problematising of heterosexual relations and of the family as a secure and stable institution [94]. In many wartime films, the family functions as a 'metaphor' for social stability - venerated (especially) in David O. Selznick's home-front paean SINCE YOU WENT AWAY (1944) as "an unconquerable fortress" - and Harvey suggests that the representation of the family in the film noir thrillers can be seen as a 'metaphor' for social discontent. A fundamental feature of the 'generic specificity' of the 1940's crime thrillers is the way in which they tend to pivot around variously articulated scenarios of revolt against the family as a site of integration into the cultural order. For example, in the figure of the lone, individualistic hero, the embodiment of self-contained and self-

defining masculinity (the hero-as-phallus in THE MALTESE FALCON); in those films where adulterous passion leads to murder (DOUBLE INDEMNITY, THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE, THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME); and also in such films as THEY LIVE BY NIGHT, GUN CRAZY, DESPERATE and SHOCK-PROOF, where the heterosexual couple exists apart from or pitted against mainstream society [95]. From 1944, many thrillers obsessively rework such scenarios of revolt - serving as an expression of dissatisfaction against marriage and the family - but at the same time the transgression sets in motion an emphatic machinery of repression (as in DOUBLE INDEMNITY, where the murder of the husband leads irrevocably to the destruction of Walter and Phyllis). It is important to stress the issue of genre here, because not all films of the 1940's manifest such tensions - or manifest them in such an acute and extreme manner - but rather the crime thrillers later termed films noirs seem to have functioned as the primary means of articulating and ordering such problems.

The question of why the 'tough' thriller, rather than any other genre or cycle should have emerged as the principal site for this project - addressing and working-through problems in regard to disruptions of masculinity, heterosexual love and the family - involves a consideration of the particular forms of narrative process which these films mobilise, and this area shall receive more attention in Section Three. For the moment, however, it is worth stressing that what is further at stake in these films is a problematising of normative conceptions of sexual identity and sexual role

- which marital and familial relations legitimise, and which one can see as having been significantly challenged through such factors as women's wartime experience in previously male-dominated work contexts and the wartime separation between the sexes occasioned by dispatching a large number of men overseas. At the end of the war, with the servicemen returning home, and with economic and social priorities (and proprieties) shifting once more, women were quite aggressively ejected from the workplace through large-scale lay-offs and overt discrimination [96]. This was accompanied by an intensive renegotiation of the wartime discourses which had promoted the idea that women could find a place in society outside the traditional home context. Such discursive manoeuvres are exemplified by a 1946 comment from Frederick C. Crawford, board chairman of the National Association of Manufacturers: "From a humanitarian point of view, too many women should not stay in the labour force. The home is the basic American unit" [97]. Hollywood co-operated in this work of ideological renegotiation - by, for example, most consistently addressing post-war discontent in terms of problems experienced by men, as in the returning-veteran thrillers and the prestigious problem-picture THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES [1946].

A large proportion of post-war thrillers are marked - as many critics have noted [98] - by the problems represented by women who seek satisfaction outside the acceptable framework of marriage and family. MILDRED PIERCE (WB. 1945) is of particular

interest here, not only because its narrative centres upon a woman - Mildred (Joan Crawford) - who rejects a conventional home life in order to realise her ambitious and erotic wishes, but because the way in which this story is handled indicates much about the specificity of the 1940's 'tough' thrillers. Mildred's story is the conventional material of the 'women's picture' melodrama, and is dominated by her dual wishes: for success as a businesswoman (eventual owner of a chain of restaurants which bear her name), and for an exclusive relationship with her daughter Veda (Ann Blyth), a relationship which excludes men. Both wishes are marked in terms of Mildred's revolt against convention: her rise to power inaugurated when she rejects both her weak husband Bert Pierce (Bruce Bennett) and suburban domesticity. However, the 'women's picture' narrative and the traditional mise-en-scene of such melodramas are both contextualised within the framework of a crime/detective story. The film opens and closes in an emphatically noir mode, with the highly-accented visual style associated with the film noir conjoined with a generically-codified disruption of the law. The film opens at a high-point of violence, with the killing of Mildred's second husband Monty Beragon (Zachary Scott) by an unseen assailant. Before he dies he utters Mildred's name, and this serves to implicate Mildred - in the eyes of the spectator - immediately. Mildred's flashback-telling of the story of her life is emphatically located as her 'confession' to the detective, Inspector Peterson, and the investigation of Monty's murder serves as a means of situating

Mildred's 'deviance' as a problem for both legal and patriarchal law. The story-of-the-woman is thus not presented 'direct' but is rather trammelled within the field of the male-oriented crime thriller and within a hermeneutic which stresses her guilt and accountability. Mildred is eventually restored to her first husband, and her transgressive wishes are countered: her restaurant business is ruined, and her daughter is revealed to be the true killer. The last few shots of the film restate her return to convention: as Mildred leaves Lt. Peterson's office to meet Bert, she walks through corridors in which women are kneeling and mopping the floor - an emphatic image of female servitude which is the inverse of Mildred's ambitious and defiant dream [99].

A further aspect of the contextualisation and 'disarming' of Mildred's trajectory usefully pinpoints a general tendency in the film noir crime thrillers. At several points in the film Mildred (Crawford) is overtly 'sexualised', her bare legs captured by the 'gaze' of both a male character and the camera. This objectification of female sexuality in the film noir thrillers occurs in a certain formalised and fetishistic way, and serves often to deny any 'subjective' place in the text for the central female character. The forceful representations of the female body, or parts of the body, can be seen as an extension of the wartime popularity of the 'pin-up' - in, for example, such periodicals as "Yanks", the magazine for the armed forces. Such thrillers as *THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME*, *THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE*, *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* and *THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI* contain sequences in which an

ambitious and 'independant' woman is represented explicitly as erotic spectacle, often introduced into the narrative via the camera's slow pan up her body (this was not a new device - BABY FACE, 1933, for instance, contains a notable example of such a shot - but it is one which reappears persistently in 1940's thrillers). Women like Elsa Bannister (Rita Hayworth) in THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI, Coral Chandler (Lizabeth Scott) in DEAD RECKONING, and Kathie Moffett (Jane Greer) in OUT OF THE PAST are explicitly represented in terms of their sexuality, but the pleasure in the erotic spectacle tends to be accompanied by a marked ambivalence, for such women deliberately seek to advance themselves through the manipulation of their sexuality. As such, they can be seen as the period's equivalent to the 'gold-diggers' who feature prominently in the pre-war "screwball" comedies, such figures as Eve Peabody (Claudette Colbert) in MIDNIGHT (1939), Regi Allen (Carole Lombard) in HANDS ACROSS THE TABLE (1935), and Jean Harrington (Barbara Stanwyck) in THE LADY EVE (1941). The shift from the romantic comedy to the 'tough' crime thriller as the principal setting for the articulation of the issues represented by such characters suggests a more acutely troubled framing of the problematic. Whereas in the romantic comedy the impetus is on convincing the women that love provides a greater satisfaction than money or ambition, in the film noir thrillers such women tend, as Christine Gledhill has noted [100], to be much more rigorously subject to male investigation and moral censure.

But the intensive 'sexualisation' of the woman

which marks many of the film noir thrillers suggests something more than just a devaluation of her subjectivity or an overvaluation of her sexuality. The representation of such women frequently signifies a paranoid insecurity concerning male authority and sexuality. The woman tends to represent conflicting currents within male desire and identity [101], with the incoherence which often marks her aims and motivation indicative of more than just a simple 'misogyny'. The fetishistically eroticised woman is not simply the object of a 'passive' spectacle - as is, say, Marlene Dietrich in the films she made with Josef von Sternberg in the 1930's - but occurs frequently in conjunction with central male characters who are at time markedly powerless - as with Jeff (Robert Mitchum) in *OUT OF THE PAST* and Al Roberts (Tom Neal) in *DETOUR* (PRC, 1945). As I shall consider in Chapter Six, many film noir thrillers contain italicized figurations of failure and 'castration', where the breakdown of male authority - especially as incarnated in the figure of the hero - exceeds the activity of the femme fatale (who often functions as something of a scapegoat for a more pervasive erosion of masculine security). Writing in 1946, John Houseman seized upon this breakdown of masculine confidence and purpose as a recurrent feature of these films - "what is significant and repugnant about our contemporary 'tough' films is their absolute lack of moral energy, their listless and fatalistic despair" [102]. In her article "Duplicity in *MILDRED PIERCE*", Pam Cook posits that the post-war era can be conceived

of as a period marked by a crisis of masculinity and the patriarchal order, with the signs of such a crisis - and its obsessively repetitive eradication - being crystallised in the obsessional and recurrent Oedipal conflicts which mark the thrillers so insistently [103]. Films like *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*, *THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI* and *THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME* represent the Oedipal structure - and the patriarchal order it signifies - under threat. In such films, claims Cook, "the system which gives men and women their place in society must be reconstructed by a more explicit work of repression, and the necessity for this repression must be established unequivocally, by resolving equivocation" [104].

As I shall consider in more detail in Chapter Eight, the generic specificity of the film noir thriller can usefully be approached in terms of the particular space it occupied within the Hollywood cinema of the mid-late 1940's as a means of addressing and making coherent disruptions of masculine identity and masculine role within the context of a narrative process which defines and organises transgressions of the law. It is clear, from the very popularity of these thrillers in this period, that there was a market for such 'dischordant' representations of the family, of heterosexual romance, of breakdowns in the authority of the masculine. However, these films do not simply present such problems, but they quite crucially seek to order and to contain their transgressive charge. I shall thus proceed with an examination of a film which usefully illustrates the complex and 'compromised' ways in which the film noir thrillers speak of and for

their cultural/social context.

(ii) THE BLUE DAHLIA: Genre and 'Post-War Maladjustment'

From 1945, Hollywood produced a cycle of crime thrillers centred upon war veterans who return home to find themselves enmeshed in tortuous criminal conspiracies - such films include CORNERED (RKO, 1945), THE BLUE DAHLIA, SOMEWHERE IN THE NIGHT (TCF, 1946), DEAD RECKONING (Columbia, 1947), RIDE THE PINK HORSE (Uni-Int, 1947), THE CROOKED WAY (La Brea Prods., 1949) and BACKFIRE! (WB., 1949). As Richard Maltby sees it, the 'tough' crime thriller was the principal means by which Hollywood could generically order the problems signified by such figures, often "representing the failure of readjustment where Hollywood's musicals, comedies and romances of the period represented its own return to normality and, indeed, its proselytizing for the re-establishment of the ideology of pure and harmless entertainment in a conformist society" [105]. Returning G.I.'s did feature in various other films - for example, in THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES, in the comedy BREWSTER'S MILLIONS (1945), and in the family-film COURAGE OF LASSIE (1946) - but most consistently and emphatically in the thrillers. And a number of postwar 'tough' thrillers, while not actually including such characters, manifest a similar orientation around paranoia and maladjustment - Maltby, for example, convincingly sees OUT OF THE PAST in such terms, for although Robert Mitchum plays a private-eye rather than an ex-soldier, the disorientation he experiences in the film is not only quite similar to that of the 'returning-vet', but such a reading is bolstered by

the fact that Mitchum was in this period associated predominantly with G.I. roles - in THE STORY OF G.I. JOE (1945), TILL THE END OF TIME (1946), and CROSSFIRE (1947) [106]. In a wide range of postwar thrillers there is an investment in scenarios of male 'maladjustment' and 'alienation', although - as is to be expected in Hollywood cinema - rather than dealing explicitly with social issues, these films emphasise instead psychological destabilisation, criminal plots, and the workings of that all-purpose narrative displacement known as 'Fate'.

The 'returning veteran' thrillers provide a useful test-case for examining the relations between the social context of America in the 1940's and the generic modalities of the Hollywood film. Sylvia Harvey has suggested that in the post-war period the disillusionment felt by the returning soldiers "finds its way into the film noir by a series of complex transmutations. The hard facts of economic life are transmuted, in these movies, into corresponding moods and feelings" [107]. Moreover, these 'moods and feelings' are ordered generically, according to codified sets of expectations regarding the narrative process. In other words, generic procedures hold these moods and feelings - and by implication, their determinants - in place: by subjecting them to a recognisable and more-or-less predictable logic of narrative elaboration and resolution. In the case of the 'returning vet' cycle, the problems of post-war maladjustment are displaced within and ordered by the generic process of the crime thriller. Just as, in the 1930's, problems of economic

and sexual disjunction engendered by the Depression were subject to generic codification within the "screwball" romantic comedy, or as, in the 1950's, the tensions of the 'atomic' Cold War were appropriated by the displaced scenarios of 'invasion' or 'mutation' found in such films as THEM (1954), I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE (1958) and INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (1958). The levels of transmutation referred to by Harvey suggest how the Hollywood film functions as a 'distorting mirror' for their cultural and social contexts, how conventions of Hollywood narrative representation do not simply act as a 'vehicle' for the transmission of contemporary issues but have a strong determinate role. As Michael Selig cautions, "genre films are as determined by the conventions of storytelling as much by cultural and social issues . . . the movies don't directly reflect their social context, but reflect society more in the manner of a funhouse mirror, with all its peculiar aberrations of size and perspective" [108].

Although films are produced within and for a particular culture, they are also produced by an industry which has its own particular interests to serve and to secure. A film's relationship to its cultural context is thus mediated by the economic imperatives of that industry, and also by the ideological and political pressures bearing upon the latter's activities (for example, in the threats of external intervention - from moral pressure groups, from the Office of War Information, from the House Un-American Committee). The need to maintain a mass,

heterogenous audience meant that Hollywood tended in general towards ideological conformity, towards the middle-ground of the bourgeoisie (which was the most affluent sector of the audience). Furthermore, as a large-scale American industry, Hollywood obviously had a firm stake in promoting a capitalistic orthodoxy (as well as being biased towards a white and male cultural hegemony). However, to conceive of the Hollywood film itself as unproblematically ideologically conformist is erroneous. As I stressed in Chapter One, the status of film as a process complicates its functioning as a commodity. The industry's economic success was, as I suggested, predicated upon regulating a metapsychological-ideological economy which oscillates between the lure of the transgressive/disruptive and the pull of conformity. The textual process of the Hollywood film represents an activity of cultural representation in which meaning is produced in the interaction between the specific text, the individual historically-situated spectator, and the codes, conventions and discourses which oscillate between them. Furthermore, in the 'real world' ideology is, quite crucially, not unified - it comprises competing and contradictory sets of discourses and practices, the hegemony of which is subject to continual modification as conflicting interests - institutions, political parties, pressure groups, sexual and racial 'marginals', the media etc. - vie for attention and position. The relations of power between these discourses are always shifting, albeit within power-structured parameters, but cultural texts function as ways in which the play

of discourses can be 'pinned down', ordered, made coherent (for specific, historically-constituted groups of subjects).

Because the 'real-world' ideological context is never rigidly fixed, then Hollywood had, of necessity, to be responsive to changes in the environment of cultural conventions by which its projected audiences experienced their lives. To succeed both financially and as fiction, the classical Hollywood had to capture and captivate audiences, had to draw spectators who could, repeatedly, 'recognise' themselves in some way - in terms of their desires, ambitions, fears, etc - in its representations. As I stressed in Section One, the stability of the mass-market Hollywood industry was dependant upon exploiting the difference of the particular film. At the same time, the film's representation is - as the audience knows full well - filtered through and bodied forth via the 'distortions' of the classical Hollywood stylistic system (and its generic subsystems). The audience knows and expects the play between text, context and intertext. Fiction in general depends upon disavowal: one knows that these are merely words on a page or images on a screen, but at the same time one suspends disbelief and submits oneself to the pleasures of narrative process.

Fiction also relies upon psychical investment, a willingness to participate in the play of positions and scenarios set in motion by the text. In the Hollywood film, such formal features as the compression of exposition - with, for example, the central characters being played by stars who are familiar across texts -

and the generic ordering of scenarios allow ready recognition of, and access to, the narrative. The transmutation of 'social reality' in the Hollywood film, then, should not be conceived of in terms of 'interference', for it is a crucial component of pleasure in the fiction film, in the play between repetition and difference. For example, a prime source of the pleasure of the 'returning vet' thrillers for contemporary audiences can be seen to consist in the very play between the topicality of the issue of 'post-war maladjustment' and the familiarity of the narrative mode of the thriller - the latter form of 're-cognition' in the textual process holding the former in place.

The system of generic production allowed Hollywood to cater to different - albeit very broadly demarcated - sections of the mass audience. One of the most significant features of a genre is its deployment of instantly recognisable, 'readymade' scenarios. A generic film permits a highly economic entry into or identification with the narrative process, by virtue of the spectator's familiarity with the intertextual system. The recognition of the particular rule-bound 'game' which the genre activates - a play of stock situations, scenes, characters, and modes of affect, within prescribed limits - allows spectators to 'project themselves' - their aspirations, their desires - within the transformational matrix of the fiction. The address to topical issues is a further means of decreasing the gap between the film's fictional

representation and its contemporary audience, facilitating the process whereby spectators can recognise their 'own world' in that represented on the screen. Thus *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY*, which is very self-consciously topical, structures multiple points of entry into its drama of home-front self-sacrifice, featuring a diverse, inter-generational range of characters and emotional problematics and a highly compacted and intermeshing series of 'resonant scenarios'. For example, the wife whose husband is missing in action, the mother who has to manage her family in the absence of the father, the G.I. bride whose husband is killed, and the grandfather who cannot express his love for his grandson until it is too late. The scenarios of loss, self-denial and sacrifice which permeate this film manage to cover a wide range of home-front problems either directly affecting or familiar to a large proportion of its audience - although, in typical Hollywood fashion, the film concludes hopefully, with the news that the missing husband/father will be returning to the Hilton family. The happy ending here is a useful reminder of how the Hollywood film is concerned not merely with presenting such 'resonant scenarios' but with representing them in such a way that certain of their implications can be forestalled, often offering forms of resolution which offer a 'magical' triumph of 'fantasy' over 'reality'.

One reason why the 'tough' crime thriller was

appropriate to Hollywood's attempt to incorporate the problems associated with the maladjusted war veteran [109] was that it offered a generically-coded place for (the containment of) violence: indeed, many film noir commentators see the soldiers' wartime exposure to violence as motivating the increased brutality of the postwar thrillers. Furthermore, as these films tend to be concerned with the promotion and consolidation of a 'masculine ethos', they were thus particularly applicable to the contemporary 'masculine crisis' discussed by Pam Cook, with the disruptions and reassertions of masculine identity and authority being figured in terms of violence (as I shall consider later with the example of DEAD RECKONING). The legally-defined matrix of transgression and consolidation which is fundamental to the crime thriller functions as a means of ordering challenges to patriarchy. Problems in regard to the family, to conventional heterosexual romance, and to traditional conceptions of sexual identity are situated and displaced as problems for the (legal) system of law. In the consideration of THE BLUE DAHLIA which follows I shall pay particular attention to the ways in which the film handles its 'resonant scenarios' - of sexual hostility, psychological disturbance, and social maladjustment - by recuperating them within the ordering process of the crime-thriller narrative. I shall lay stress upon how the potentially 'disruptive' energy attached to such scenarios is rechannelled within the narrative process, considering not just the issues which the film turns around but

also the evasions, displacements and blockages which characterise the 'secondarisation' of narrative.

In THE BLUE DAHLIA, Johnny Morrison (Alan Ladd) returns home from Navy service to find that his wife Helen (Dorris Dowling) has not only been having an affair with nightclub-owner/racketeer Eddie Harwood (Howard da Silva) but that while on a drunken binge she caused the death of their son in an automobile accident. A scene where Johnny confronts his wife in her luxury apartment at the swank Cavendish Court sets up Helen's deviant attitude to marriage and family, but in the motivation ascribed to her rejection of her wife/mother role there is also an explicit problematising of Johnny as an adequate lover/husband/father. Helen complains that "We lived in a five-roomed house, and I did the laundry. And I never went anywhere because I had a kid to look after. I don't have a kid to look after anymore. And the people I go around with now don't use a kiss as an excuse to sock each other". Helen's grounds for dissatisfaction are not allowed any sympathy - "I take all the drinks I like, anytime, any place", she announces defiantly, "I go where I want to, with anybody I want. I just happen to be that kind of girl" - but at the same time, Johnny himself, especially as incarnated by the laconic, emotionally-cold Alan Ladd, remains a problematic moral counterpoint. There are repeated observations from both his wife and the hotel-detective concerning Johnny's readiness

to violent action - and soon after he arrives at Cavendish Court he punches Eddie Harwood. These explicit textual markings suggest how the film is deliberately drawing upon the problematic of post-war maladjustment - the suspicion engendered by the wartime separation between the sexes (with Helen as the inverse of the dutiful Anne Hilton/Claudette Colbert in SINCE YOU SENT AWAY), and the effects of the wartime exposure to violence. However, the film makes this latter point more ambiguous by suggesting that Johnny's violent streak pre-exists his war experiences. What is important about such features, though, is not their mere presence, but the way they serve as a 'set-up' for the generically-ordered crime narrative which follows.

For example, the ambivalent representation of Johnny serves to give him a motive for the murder of his wife, and suggests also that he is capable of such an action. The confrontation between Johnny and Helen concludes when he draws a gun upon her, spurred on by her mocking laughter concerning his status as a "hero". However, this moment marks both the climax and the cutting-off point for the film's elaboration of sexual hostility and the disjunction of the returning veteran. For Helen is subsequently murdered and this inaugurates a more familiar, generically-codified trajectory in which these contemporary social tensions are worked-through and dissipated (though not, as I shall suggest, without some sacrifice of narrative coherence); for the remainder of the film is a combination of falsely-accused-hero thriller and

mystery-story. The energy associated with the elaboration of contemporary social malaise in the early stages of the film is channelled away via the dominant hermeneutic of "Who killed Helen Morrison?" and the location of Johnny as a victim-hero, hounded by both criminals and police. Furthermore, after he leaves Helen, Johnny meets and becomes romantically involved with Joyce (Veronica Lake) - who turns out to be Eddie Harwood's dissatisfied ex-wife, and who serves as a conventional 'good girl' to balance against the 'castrating bitch' Helen [110]. Joyce functions as a redemptive force for Johnny: she is the one person who has not served in the armed forces whom he can trust, and it is through his relationship with her that Johnny can be redeemed from the initial suggestions of 'sexual inadequacy' and aggression. They meet when she offers him a lift in her car, and the first scene between them stresses their compatibility, not only in the contrast between Joyce's playful sexuality and Helen's vicious taunting, but also because the 'Forties star-team of Ladd-and-Lake are reunited (having previously featured in THIS GUN FOR HIRE, 1942, and THE GLASS KEY, 1942). Besides enabling a shift from the repercussions of Johnny's traumatic meeting with Helen, the scenes with Joyce serve also to exonerate Johnny in our eyes from blame in Helen's murder. The parallel editing between (a) Johnny and Joyce in the car, and, (b) the arrival of various other characters at Cavendish Court just prior to Helen's murder, makes it clear to us that Johnny could not be the killer. This is also a characteristic

example of the way the Hollywood film tend to displace wish-fulfillment: Johnny clearly desires Helen's death, but is not himself culpable. But the important point is that the fact of Johnny's innocence in regard to committing the actual murder serves as a means of dispelling the ambivalence attached to him in the confrontation with Helen.

The 'excess' initially associated with Johnny is not, however, simply elided but rather it is displaced onto another ex-serviceman, Buzz (William Bendix), who is given to bouts of amnesia and uncontrollable violence owing to a wartime head injury. In the first scene of the film the three returning Navy buddies, Johnny, Buzz and George (Hugh Beaumont) enter a bar, and Buzz suffers a violent breakdown inspired by the "monkey music" pounding from a jukebox. The fact that this scene precedes Johnny's encounter with Helen means that it acts as a further buffer against the sinister implications concerning Johnny - compared to Buzz, Johnny's aggression seems comparatively minor. Furthermore, after Johnny storms out of Cavendish Court it is Buzz, looking for Johnny, who unwittingly picks up a drunken Helen Morrison, and whom she takes back to her apartment. In the course of the story, Buzz emerges as the prime suspect in regard to the murder which Johnny had wanted but was not able to commit. Buzz seems, then, to be the agent of Johnny's wish for Helen's death. But here, however, there is a further evasion: Raymond Chandler, the scriptwriter,

had initially intended Buzz to be the real killer - committing the crime during one of his attacks - but, facing objections from the Navy, he was forced to rewrite the ending, making the hotel-detective 'Dad' Newell (Will Wright), who is very much a minor character in the bulk of the film, the actual murderer [111]. (It is ironic in this context, then, that the police captain says "I just happen to be dumb enough to want to get the right fall-guy"!).

There is a further aspect of Johnny's 'redemption' which should be noted here. When he draws his gun upon Helen it is a violent, although abandoned, attempt to assert his potency in the face of her scorn: her attempt to 'unman' him in her boasts of sexual liberty and in her ridiculing of the value of his war service. The pulling of the gun is almost a reflex action on his part, an attempt to confront danger by using his weapon. Although this is valid in wartime, the post-war context situates this action as illegal, and the film is in general concerned with taking Johnny from a state of 'readiness for war' to an integration into the peacetime order (signified through the closing heterosexual union). Not only is this confused and transgressive violence displaced onto Buzz, but Johnny also shifts quite markedly from a wielder of violent force to its victim: when he is attacked by low-life hoods in a shabby rooming house, and when he is abducted and brutally beaten by Eddie Harwood's cohort, Leo. Johnny's persecution is the reverse of Buzz's uncontrollable masculine aggression, although

the former is quite carefully distinguished from the latter in that it is represented as the result of a criminal 'conspiracy'.

Johnny's move towards social integration requires the shift from his 'service family' towards a more acceptable peacetime alternative signified by his relationship with Joyce. The war had resulted not only in a separation between American men and women but also in an intensification of male bonding, with men in close and constant proximity to each other and with a degree of mutual dependence unmatched in the peacetime context of work and social relations. THE BLUE DAHLIA opens at a point of transition between war and peacetime, with the three servicemen stepping off a bus to re-enter a civilian America which has been significantly transformed by the war (signified in particular by Helen Morrison's aberrance and the prominence of the opportunistic 'bad' capitalist Eddie Harwood). The three men have a final drink together before Johnny goes to see Helen. The scene in the bar stresses their intimacy and unity - for example, each puts a cigarette into his mouth at the same time, habitually. The closeness between the three men is represented in terms of displaced family relations, with Johnny, their wartime leader, as the father-figure and Buzz as a 'disturbed', barely socialised child. When Buzz explodes, Johnny and George know him well enough to talk him back to reason and calm. This is a 'family' grouping which

excludes women, and one which has to be dissolved now that the war is over. However, there is from the start a troubling uncertainty concerning the validity of the transition back to a 'normal' regime of heterosexuality and the family. Buzz asks him about his wife, and Johnny is tight-lipped and doubtful. Buzz asks the question without the 'adult' realisation of its lack of tact, whereas George's care for Johnny and protective tolerance of Buzz is signalled when he attempts to divert the question.

The all-male 'family unit' contrasts markedly - in its tight-knit bonding, mutual respect and unspoken caring - with the disrupted family Johnny subsequently encounters at Cavendish Court. Later in the film, when Johnny is at the height of his troubles, he once more seeks solace in the company of George and Buzz. Finding shelter in their apartment, he becomes once more the admired and adored hero rather than a ridiculed husband or suspected murderer. It is a restoration of his 'potency', and a broadly sexual edge is added by the fact that in Johnny's temporary restoration to the comforting male group he stretches out on the bed with George and Buzz kneeling expectantly beside him (and this also functions as something of an antidote to the Johnny-Helen confrontation, which had reached its climax in her bedroom). The mystery/thriller plot is ultimately resolved via a conventional gathering-together of the suspects where, as I have noted, both Johnny and Buzz are cleared. But the film itself concludes with an 'epilogue' where the male group

is dissolved in favour of the heterosexual couple, a scene which also involves a further recuperation of Buzz. Buzz and George are waiting for Johnny outside the precinct-house, and when Buzz advises George that they ought to leave Johnny and Joyce on their own it marks a 'miraculous' transformation from his 'excess' and from his childlike dependency to a position of maturity, a reversal of the previous George-Buzz relationship. Buzz tactfully drags George off for a drink, leaving Johnny and Joyce on their own.

THE BLUE DAHLIA is one of the 1940's thrillers which has not been subject to much critical attention. When referred to, it is generally dismissed. For example, Jon Tuska describes it as a 'romantic melodrama' with noir elements rather than a 'film noir proper':

Hatred, killing, infidelity are rampant in American society; these are noir ingredients, as is the fact that Ladd, as a veteran, trained to live in a violent world, proves a match for the violence he encounters after his discharge. What makes the film melodrama is that Ladd quickly discovers Veronica Lake and so finds a new love to replace the old one [112].

Tuska's perjorative use of the term 'melodrama' is here with connected a feeling that the noirness of the film is betrayed particularly by the prominence of the love story and by the happy ending which stresses integration at the expense of isolation and alienation. Carl Macek similarly feels that "the elements of the film are more exciting than the ultimate production"[113],

and what both critics seem to be objecting to is the way in which the implications of the film's 'resonant scenarios' are ultimately recuperated. Such critics have a rather idealistic conception of film noir in terms of its potential for social criticism, as a counter-cultural current within Hollywood cinema inspired by the post-war social traumas. However, such an approach precisely fails to take heed of the fact that these are films produced by the Hollywood cinematic institution, that film noir itself occupies a particular, specified place within the Hollywood cinema of the 1940's, as a site where certain contemporary social disruptions and problems can be addressed but also contained, subjected to the procedures of Hollywood narrative and generic standardisation. What is especially interesting about a film like THE BLUE DAHLIA is the pull between, on the one hand, its 'resonant scenarios', its suggestive elements of contemporary malaise, and, on the other hand, the organising principles of the Hollywood style - which can make such elements comprehensible and acceptable within the framework of a familiar narrative system. Of course, certain aspects of these scenarios can be seen to manifest resistance to recuperation, where the textual evasions, displacements and 'miraculous' transformations do not convincingly siphon off their disruptive energy. But to theorise about the effect and extent of such textual 'excess' one needs both a theoretical model of how Hollywood narrative and its generic variations actually work - which I have attempted to outline during Section One - and also an account of

the various forms of pressure bearing upon Hollywood at any particular time which may provoke transformations in its narrative standardisation.

Thus I would suggest that what is crucial to an understanding of the 'noir phenomenon', its emergence and its stylistic and narrative features, are not simply the determinants which I have been examining in this and the last chapter - either in isolation or taken together - but questions of why Hollywood was influenced by them, or drew upon them, when it did. How, in other words, they were allowed to be influential. The 1940's was undoubtedly a decade beset with 'traumatic' and confusing ideological, political and economic transformations, but these did not in themselves simply overturn Hollywood's standard production procedures, for their effects were filtered through a highly regulated, and self-perpetuating system of representation which was flexible enough to accomodate, within generic parameters, quite extensive upheavals in the cultural and social order.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

FILM NOIR AND HOLLYWOOD IN THE 1940's.

The 'sources' and 'influences' usually credited to the noir phenomenon - the German Expressionist cinema, 'hard-boiled' crime fiction, popularised psychoanalysis and the various sets of social and cultural upheavals of the 1940's - are not in themselves sufficient to account for the generation and development of the stylistic, narrative and narrational features of the film noir thrillers. As I have suggested, each can be seen to 'feed into' the noir phenomenon, in various ways, but in order to gauge the extent of their determinacy it is necessary to consider the ways in which these interact with - and are ultimately placed through - the primary contexts of the films' production. In this chapter I will thus examine how the series of 'stylistic' transformations represented by the noir phenomenon were motivated by complex economic and ideological shifts within the Hollywood cinema of the 1940's. This will make it clearer, for example, why films like THE STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR, AMONG THE LIVING and PHANTOM LADY were able to incorporate 'expressionistic' stylistic strategies - for during this period there were, within the institutionally-defined space of B-film production, strong economic incentives encouraging stylistic differentiation. Similarly, I shall suggest how the particular chronology of Hollywood's cycle of 'hard-boiled' thrillers becomes more readily understandable when one takes into account the ideological and economic pressures bearing upon the film industry during both the wartime and postwar periods.

As I shall stress throughout this chapter, the 1940's was a critical period for Hollywood, for it represented the beginning of a transitional phase between:

- (a) a 'classical' era characterised by vertically-integrated control and by the large-scale production of films for a mass, heterogeneous audience;

and (b) a 'post-classical' period marked by fewer, often more highly-capitalized productions and by a series of negotiated shifts away from the representational regime of the 'classical' Hollywood Style.

Of course, such considerations open onto a more general history of 1940's Hollywood which exceeds the conventionally-specified boundaries of the film noir proper. Nevertheless, it is crucial to introduce such an approach here because it is largely through the critical and historical work on film noir that such contextual issues and processes have most often been touched upon (and have also, unfortunately, been trammelled). I will thus be seeking here to go 'beyond noir' while simultaneously attempting to sketch-in the range of industrial, institutional and economic transformations within which the noir phenomenon can be placed historically. I shall concentrate upon the following: (i) the effects of the pressure brought to bear upon the film industry as a result of the 'cultural mobilisation' of the USA's 'war effort', drawing in particular upon recent work on the relationship between Hollywood and the Federal government's Office of War Information; (ii) the factors involved in the creation of an incentive towards 'quality' stylistic differentiation, with the 'noir style' specified in terms of a (more or less generically-)codified mode of product-differentiation; and (iii) a study of the context of 'B-film' production, in which such 'noirish' stylistic differentiation was particularly encouraged during this period.

(i) Hollywood, the War Effort, and the Film Noir Thriller.

In the early 1940's the film industry came under some pressure in regard to its political function and direction. Between 1939 and America's entry into World War II after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour (December 7th, 1941), there had already been approximately 50 films concerned with some aspect of the 'fascist menace' [114], and during the same period, discourses about the 'propagandist' influence of the cinema accelerated. Hollywood was subjected to unwelcome scrutiny from various sources, and was particularly anxious not to provoke a situation which would result in external controls. Firstly, in late 1940 the Special Committee of the House on Un-American activities (known as the "Dies committee" after its chairman, Martin Dies) launched an investigation into (largely 'left-wing') 'un-Americanism' in Hollywood - although it was not until the postwar period that the H.U.A.C. hearings caused a significant stir [115]. However, a more serious threat to the industry was posed by an isolationist faction which at a hearing before the Sub-Committee of the Committee on Interstate Commerce not only accused the major film companies of war propagandizing but also of operating a monopolistic control over production, distribution and exhibition [116]. Between September 9th - 26th 1940, representatives of the industry were summoned before the hearing - which was part of a general 'publicity war' between isolationist and interventionist factions [117]. As far as the industry was concerned, this particular wrangle was resolved with the USA's declaration of war against Japan after Pearl Harbour - following which the Committee on Interstate Commerce hearings were scrapped - but henceforward Hollywood's role in

relation to the American war effort was the subject of public debate and official scrutiny.

In his 1942 "State of the Union" address President Roosevelt declared that the film industry had a vital responsibility to inform the public concerning - as Russell Earl Shain has summarised - "the issues and the American way of life; the enemy; the united nations and neutral countries; the American production front; the American home or civilian front; and the American fighting forces" [118], and although Hollywood publicly welcomed this assignment of responsibility, there was an understandable reticence concerning any radical overturning of its commercial priorities. Both Will Hays, head of the industry's publicity organisation the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA), and the producer Walter Wanger, then head of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), spoke fervently of the positive function of entertainment as a means of alleviating the strain of war [119]. In a bid to preserve Hollywood's control over the production of feature-films, Hays claimed that features were best suited for recreation and positively 'escapist' entertainment, whereas short-subjects were the most viable means for conveying information [120], a distinction which would prove to have an added financial advantage - as Shain comments:

From an economic standpoint this division of labour proved of some benefit to the industry. Instead of underwriting and using its own raw film stock to produce short subjects, Hollywood through its War Activities Committee cooperated with the Office of War Information in making informational shorts. The government's share of the cooperation included financing and providing raw film. Thus, more commercial raw film, in short supply, could be devoted to the more profitable feature-length pictures [121].

From mid-1942, the film industry's contribution to the war effort was coordinated through the Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP), the Hollywood office of the Domestic Branch of the Office of War Information (OWI). The OWI was set up in June 1942 with the aim of coordinating the USA's intelligence and propaganda activities [122]. Lowell Mellett, previously head of the Office of Government Reports (OGR), had been appointed coordinator of Government films in December 1940, and after America's entry into the war he was also given responsibility for liaison between the film industry and the Government [123]. In April 1942, while still at the OGR, Mellett set up the BMP, with Nelson Poynter in charge (the BMP coming under the control of the OWI's Domestic Branch two months later) [124]. Wary of overt censorship, Mellett himself was initially conciliatory towards the industry, believing that the studios would more willingly cooperate if the government took care not to jeopardise profits [125]. He had a somewhat idealistic vision of the possibilities of cooperation between the OWI and Hollywood - for in reality relations between the two proved far more problematic. Mellett and Poynter found themselves constrained in particular by the BMP's lack of real power in enforcing its recommendations, and by the fact that the major film companies were primarily interested in their own financial welfare.

Although they were wary of external interference, Hollywood executives were at the same time anxious to convince the government of the value of their contribution to the war effort. The OWI, however, made it plain that it was not happy in this respect: Mellett and Poynter accused the film industry of incorporating the war as a background to

traditional generic formulae, rather than 'explaining' the issues involved in the conflict [126]. As Koppes and Black note:

The war - that versatile, all-purpose dramatic device, capable of initiating any action in a variety of infinitely exotic backgrounds - fulfilled Hollywood's fondest dreams. In the movie makers' ceaseless quest for variety and spectacle, the war was a godsend. The studios quickly grafted the war onto their traditional formula pictures: gangster stories, screwball comedies, frothy musicals. Even Tarzan, isolated in his jungle fastness, enlisted for the Allies [127].

TARZAN TRIUMPHS (1942) was indicative of Hollywood's principal approach to the subject of the war, as were such other 1942 productions as the broad farces THE DEVIL WITH HITLER, THE DARING YOUNG MEN, which featured Nazi-villains, war-related musicals like TRUE TO THE ARMY, STAR SPANGLED RHYTHM and THE YANKS ARE COMING [128], and a large number of espionage thrillers.

Besides these, there was a major cycle of combat/war-front films, which represented an overt means of dramatising war issues, but even in this respect there were problems. Mellett and Poynter objected to the 'hate-the-enemy' philosophy of these films (especially those concentrating upon the war against Japan), feeling that in their stress upon action they sensationalized the war [129]. The film industry itself was worried about too dramatic a shift to war-related films. As early as December 1942, an item in "Variety" suggested that Hollywood producers were doubtful about the continuing commercial viability of war films, stressing the difficulty of keeping up-to-date with major campaigns [130]. Thus, for example, HALFWAY TO SHANGHAI, an anti-Japanese film set in Burma failed at the box-office because by the time of its release Burma had fallen to the Japanese [131]. Nelson Poynter sought to convince the film industry to make more effort to incorporate the

government message into feature-films [132], and following negotiations with the industry, the OWI issued in the summer of 1942 the "Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry" [133]. In effect, this constituted a second representational code for Hollywood but, as Koppes and Black note, whereas the Hays Code was concerned largely with removing material from scripts and films, the OWI's manual represented an attempt to insert material - material, moreover, that was overtly 'political' [134]. At first, the film industry praised the OWI manual as a worthy guideline and promised its full cooperation. But although an increasing number of films incorporated suggestions from the manual, the OWI was still not satisfied, especially when their objections to such films as LITTLE TOKYO, U.S.A (1942) and AIR FORCE (1943) met with little effective response from the film industry. The agency thus sought further measures to bring Hollywood into line [135].

In late 1942, Ulric Bell, former executive director of the influential interventionist group Fight For Freedom, now working for the OWI's Overseas Branch, was drafted into the BMP as part of Mellett's strategy to consolidate relations with the Office of Censorship (OCC), the agency responsible for censoring mail, films and other outgoing or incoming material [136]. Mellett sought an arrangement with the OCC whereby the OWI could use the threat of an embargo upon the export of 'problematic' films as a bargaining tool with the major studios [137]. Hollywood's European markets had declined progressively during the late 1930's with the spread of fascism: Spain, Japan, and Italy all banned American films in the late 1930's, and in 1940 Germany banned them from its home and occupied territories [138]. During the war, Hollywood's domestic market more than sufficiently expanded to make up for the loss

of foreign revenues. The war-related boom in the national economy, coupled with the shortage of consumer durables and the restrictions of gasoline rationing, ushered in the film industry's most profitable period ever: admissions rose, top-budget films had substantially longer runs and the market for 'B' films increased as they played-out more quickly [139]. However, Koppes and Black argue that in many instances foreign exhibition could still make the difference between profit and loss [140]. Not only were there still lucrative markets in Latin America and the British Commonwealth, but later in the war foreign exhibition became particularly important as the Allied forces liberated European territories formerly occupied by the Nazis. For each film to be exported, the industry had to obtain a licence from the OOC, and Mellett sought influence over the granting of export licenses as a means of bringing pressure to bear upon the industry [141].

The Office of Censorship in Washington already operated a censorship code which barred films from export if they contained scenes or information of direct military value [142]. Mellett, Poynter and Bell wanted the OOC to go further, and eventually, the censorship bureau agreed to more stringent requirements for the granting of export licenses. In late summer 1942, the OOC's New York Board of Review advised the film industry to steer clear in newsreels of "unsavoury aspects of American life - gangsters, slums, hopeless poverty, Okies, etc., and in particular violations of American wartime restrictions, such as rationing, gasoline and rubber rules, etc." [143]. The OWI wanted these limitations extended to feature-films, and they were partially satisfied with a new OOC code issued in December 1943. Koppes and Black note that this new code overtly warned against the

gangster/crime films, which Ulric Bell was particularly strongly opposed to:

"Scenes of lawlessness or disorder in which order is restored and the offenders punished" might be allowed if lawlessness was not the main theme of a picture. Gangster pictures were the most troubling example of this type of film. The censors believed such productions discredited the American political system in the eyes of foreigners, but they were not banned per se. [144]

This objection to the gangster/crime film has particular implications for the history of film noir - although Koppes and Black nowhere discuss the phenomenon of film noir, and quite notably do not examine any individual noir films - in that it suggests a possible reason why there was little attempt to follow-up the success of THE MALTESE FALCON in 1941 with a cycle of similar thrillers. Dana Polan suggests that films like THE MALTESE FALCON and Alfred Hitchcock's SHADOW OF A DOUBT (Universal, 1943) - a thriller about a psychopathic widow-murderer Charlie Oakley (Joseph Cotten) infiltrating and threatening to contaminate a small-town family - can be seen as representing a countercurrent to the general wartime ideology of commitment and community [145]. A cynicism about the value of communal and familial bonding informs both films, and indeed is often a prominent characteristic of the films termed noir [146]. It is thus not difficult to see how they would have posed problems in the context of wartime 'cultural mobilisation'. With the uncertainties facing the film industry in the early years of the war - the ever-present threat of government intervention, and pressure from the OWI [147] - the relative absence of film noir thrillers in the 1942-1943 period does not seem so surprising. Ulric Bell was persistent in his attempt to dissuade the major producers

from making gangster/crime films. The BMP desired a positive representation of home-front unity in American films - emphasizing the necessity and 'nobility' of self-sacrifice - and Bell felt that the gangster/crime films suggested the opposite, even if, as in LUCKY JORDAN (1942) and MR LUCKY (1943), the gangster-figure was eventually converted. The comparatively more liberal Mellett and Poynter objected to Bell's wish for a further tightening of the OOC code as a means of regulating Hollywood's production, and the OOC itself refused to comply with Bell [148]. However, in 1943, Bell continued with his criticism of gangster films. Koppes and Black note that in his desire to counteract Hollywood's exploitation of the 'sordid side' of American life and society, Bell wanted the OOC's decisions ratified through the Overseas Branch of the OWI, and this intensified his feud with Poynter, who felt that too 'sanitized' a representation of life in the United States could actually harm the war effort [149].

Subject to such internal divisions, the OWI in both Washington and Hollywood found itself unable to withstand pressure from conservative forces within the coalition government [150]. In the Summer of 1943, the budget for the OWI's Domestic Branch was cut to just 27% of its 1942 level, and its work-force dropped from 1,300 to 495 [151]. As a consequence, Mellett and Poynter left the OWI, but Koppes and Black claim that even though the Domestic Branch was officially limited to the production of information shorts, the OWI's liaison activities were actually strengthened: the BMP's Film Reviewing and Analysis Section, now firmly under Bell's control, continued operations by moving to the Overseas Branch [152]. Without Poynter to countermand him, Bell was able to strengthen relations with the OOC and to secure further cooperation

from Hollywood by using as a bargaining-tool the newly-liberated markets in Europe [153].

Koppes and Black view the changing fortunes of the war in Europe as intensifying cooperation between Hollywood and the government. The major film companies were anxious to regain the foreign markets they had lost in the late 1930's, and in order to do so they required approval from the OWI's Overseas Branch - the latter being given the responsibility for distributing films in liberated areas; the government, on the other hand, was eager to use approved films as a cultural/ideological weapon in counteracting Axis propaganda [154]. However, it is difficult to get a sense of the actual power wielded by the Ulric Bell and the OWI between 1943 and 1945, for Koppes and Black unfortunately do not devote as much space to the later years of the war as they do to the 1940-1943 period. Other sources suggest an alternative picture of Hollywood's production policies in the later years of World War II - the period, in other words, of the first real 'flowering' of the film noir. Garth Jowett claims that until 1943 the film industry had to be rather careful about its position, in order to appease the OWI and to convince the Government that it could voluntarily make a worthwhile contribution to the war effort [155]. Hence the relative absence of cynical 'hard-boiled'/film noir thrillers at this time (although it is worth noting that three of the films noirs which did appear through 1942, THIS GUN FOR HIRE, THE GLASS KEY and STREET OF CHANCE, were produced by Paramount, a company which consistently refused to submit all its scripts to the OWI [156]).

There are indications, however, that Hollywood was prepared to cooperate to the extent that it did because it recognised that any shift in production

was only a short-term measure, and that the government's aims could be accommodated within the film industry's generic and narrative standardisation (rather than actually overturning it). There seems to have been a policy of strategic 'negotiation' on behalf of the film industry, whereby the government's imperatives were carefully filtered through Hollywood's economic and ideological/stylistic priorities. Dorothy Jones, director of the OWI's Film Reviewing and Analysis Section of the BMP between 1942 and 1944 found that only 376 of the 1,313 films produced by Hollywood during this period related to the war [157]. Russell Earl Shain provides the following breakdown of the proportion of war films produced between 1939 and 1947 [158]:

HOLLYWOOD PRODUCTION OF 'WAR FILMS', 1939-1947 [159]

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Films</u>	<u>Total War Films</u>	<u>% War Films</u>
1939	483	6	1.2
1940	477	12	2.5
1941	494	32	6.5
1942	488	121	24.8
1943	397	115	29.0
1944	401	76	19.0
1945	350	28	8.0
1946	378	13	3.4
1947	369	2	0.5

These figures suggest the expected acceleration of war-related films in 1942 but they also show a significant decrease after a peak of 29% in 1943.

In December 1942, "Variety" noted some concern among studio executives about the long-time commercial viability of combat films and concluded that "many top officials are considering a wide swing to detective and mystery

stories as well as additional escapist films and comedies" [160]. This suggests that when the wartime boom in attendances became apparant, the Hollywood film companies were reluctant to deviate too extensively from their proven commercial formulae. Much of the tension between the OWI and Hollywood in the early years of the war resulted from the latter's suspicions of the government agency because of its lack of experience in the field of commercial entertainment [161]. The films which did show evidence of substantial OWI influence - such as PITTSBURGH (1942), SO PROUDLY WE HAIL (1943), ACTION IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC (1943) and TENDER COMRADE (1943) - often elicited negative criticism from the industry, reviewers and audiences because of the overtness of their 'propagandising' (with the first two examples containing chunks of dialogue lifted directly from the OWI manual [162]). Although the proportion of war-related films reached a peak of 29% in 1943, this still meant that the bulk of Hollywood's production was unrelated to the war - and, as I have already noted, a large number of films featured the war mainly as a backdrop for conventional generic formulae (such as spy stories, comedies, musicals, 'B' series-thrillers).

The swing towards detective/mystery stories predicted by "Variety" received a further incentive the following year, when several writers of 'hard-boiled' fiction - including Steve Fisher, Frank Gruber, Clarence Mumford and Raymond Chandler - were signed up by major film companies to provide them with scripts and screen stories. As "Variety" reported in November 1943:

Shortage of story materials and writers now has film companies seriously ogling the pulp mag scripts and scripters. It marks the first time that Hollywood has initiated a concerted drive to replenish its dwindling library supplies and its scripiter ranks from the 20c-a-word authors of the weird-snappy-breezy-

argosy-spy-crime-detective mag school [163]

This move to secure new writers was motivated by several interlinked consequences of the war. Many of the film industry's male employees either enlisted or were drafted into the armed services: "Variety" reports that by late 1942, 4000 of Hollywood's artists and workers had entered the armed forces, including nearly 900 actors [164]. Such major male stars as Clark Gable, Tyrone Power, James Stewart, Henry Fonda, David Niven, Mickey Rooney and Robert Montgomery served in the armed forces, as well as some of the major directors and writers. This resulted not only in a shortage of male stars, but also of female stars - for the studios had not invested so strongly in promoting female performers [165] (and hence the industry was not immediately prepared to cater to the reputed increase in the female proportion of the domestic audience). This led to an intensified competition among the major studios for story sources as alternative 'production values'. For example, MGM began to invest in 'guaranteed' plays or books rather than in star names (particularly encouraged by their blockbuster success with David O. Selznick's production of GONE WITH THE WIND, 1939, an adaptation of a popular novel by Margaret Mitchell) [166]. However, owing in part to wartime paper rationing and to the partial displacement of the popularity of novels by non-fictional accounts of the war, there was a diminution in the amount of new fiction actually being published. Thus Hollywood's interest in writers from the 'pulp': they had proven commercial appeal together with the ability to write quickly and efficiently (not being as obsessive about the 'quality' of their work or their own status as were such noted Hollywood casualties as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Nathaniel West and even James M. Cain [167]).

It is most fruitful, perhaps, to regard the shift to war films in 1942 and 1943 as representing but a temporary - and, as I have suggested, highly trammelled - disruption of Hollywood's standard production policies, with the 1944 season representing a realignment, a return to more traditional generic forms and entertainment values. The (re)emergence of the 'tough' crime film can thus be seen as part of a more general shift away from the industry's investment in war-films during the early war years. In the Autumn of 1943 both PHANTOM LADY and DOUBLE INDEMNITY were in production, and the subsequent months saw the release of these films together with such other key 'film noir' thrillers as MURDER, MY SWEET, WHEN STRANGERS MARRY and LAURA.

(11) Stylistic Differentiation in 1940's Hollywood.

Apart from the factors I have already considered, the war served both to delay and to accelerate a more general process of change within Hollywood production. In her article "Individualism versus Collectivism", Janet Staiger traces through the 1940's and the early 1950's a movement away from "a regular output and mass production of films to fewer releases and higher-priced product" [168]. There were a number of economic incentives encouraging this trend. As a means of circumventing government anti-trust action, first launched in 1938, the major film companies agreed in 1940 to abide by a Consent Decree which both abolished the restrictive practice of 'blind-selling' and which restricted 'block-booking' to blocks of five (rather than the previous practice of 30 or more). 'Blind-selling' and 'block-booking' had been effective in helping to sustain regular mass-production by the majors, guaranteeing them an outlet for all their films and severely restricting the choice of exhibitors. Janet Staiger sees the Consent Decree (which was really only effective until 1942 (although it lasted officially until 1944), partially as a result of the refusal of Columbia, Universal and United Artists to abide by it) as helping to create a context of intensified product differentiation:

Stars, directors, and stories became even more important ingredients in the product while selling by brand name decreased in value since the entire output of a firm was no longer a marketing point [169].

However, Staiger stresses that after the termination of the Consent Decree, the major film companies - except for Columbia and Universal - did not return to their previous practices: Paramount, RKO and Twentieth Century-Fox kept to

blocks of 5 films, whereas MGM extended to blocks of 10, and Warner Brothers switched to a system of unit sales (pioneered by United Artists) [170].

The wartime economic boom resulted in the biggest commercial revival in cinema since the period of transition to sound [171], despite the fact that the number of films actually produced declined by 18.7% in 1943 and a further 12.5% in 1945 [172] - fewer films were thus playing for longer, and taking proportionately more at the box-office. The trend towards fewer releases was exacerbated by the restrictions imposed on the industry by the War Production Board (WPB) [173] which from January 1943 progressively limited the industry's allocation of raw film stock and also set a ceiling of \$5,000 on the set-construction budget for individual films [174] - pre-war costs for set-construction averaging \$50,000 for 'A' films and \$17,500 for 'B' pictures [175]. In December 1942, "Variety" pointed to the need for a "realignment of major production schedules with a view to turning out solid big-budgeteers, since celluloid is considered too valuable to direct to low-budget productions" [176]. However, this did not lead simply to an elimination of 'B'-features - although, as I shall consider below, such a course of action was mooted in some quarters. Rather, with the stringent restrictions on the amount which could actually be spent on materials for a film's production, the studios were forced to compensate with alternative production values in order to maintain standards of 'quality'. This is suggested in particular by the emergence of what later became known as the 'noir style', which - as I have suggested - precisely represented a form of 'quality' differentiation and which did not involve the use of costly materials. Such stylistic differentiation was achieved by means of fixed equipment (lights, camera lenses, sound and editing equipment, etc.) and

through the 'aesthetic' innovations of existing staff, who during this period were given far more incentive to innovate (as I shall consider in the final part of this chapter).

Janet Staiger suggests that the wartime boom in cinema also encouraged more independent companies to enter production. There are several factors which made independent production [177] - previously a minority strategy - more viable at this time: for example, owing to the rising fortunes of the cinema industry there was less financial risk attached to film-production and Wall Street investment banks once more became interested in such ventures after their cautiousness during the slump of the 1930's [178]. Furthermore, until 1946 there were substantial tax benefits to be derived from independent production. Such high-salaried staff as directors, stars and producers were subject to an extremely low taxation rate (25% capital-gains tax as opposed to 90% personal income tax) if they set up single-film corporations rather than accepting salaries from the studios [179]. Such one-off corporations, which often had the financial safety-net of distribution agreements with the major studios, permitted greater choice (within fixed parameters, of course) for directors, cinematographers and stars, allowing them to 'experiment' with story-types and stylistic techniques. Furthermore, the smaller, established independent companies, like Monogram and Republic - which had hitherto largely specialised in 'B' product - were given more incentive to move into the lucrative field of 'A' feature production. Even after this 'loophole' in the Revenue Act was 'shored up', there were further economic factors mitigating against the film industry's return to pre-war levels of the mass-production of films.

Besides being Hollywood's most profitable year ever, 1946 also presented the film industry with several far-reaching problems, including the threat of the divestiture of cinemas (forestalled since the 1940 Consent Decree and coming into effect after a 1948 Supreme Court ruling against the major film companies); escalating production costs, with substantial increases in the prices of raw film stock and of materials for set construction (with the film industry having to compete with the postwar boom in housing); labour disputes, which resulted in on-set production being cut by 50% during that year; and also the threat that several countries (including Britain, Hollywood's largest foreign market) would introduce import taxes and quota restrictions in order to protect their domestic film industries [180]. These and other factors caused the industry to embark upon a major cost-cutting campaign in the immediate postwar period, with a large proportion of staff being released from their contracts [181]. Furthermore, with cinema attendances declining drastically after their 1946 peak, a postwar return to traditional studio-bound production was not such an attractive proposition [182], and Janet Staiger has argued that in this context the benefits of one-off independent production became obvious to the major film companies, for they could "concentrate on making fewer, specialized projects and financing or buying the more desirable independent films" [183]

Hortense Powdermaker notes that in 1946 more than a third of the films in production were being shot by independent units, and she also cites an item in the issue of "Variety" dated January 8th 1948 reporting that in 1947 more than one hundred independent companies were formed carrying budgets of over \$4 million [184]. Thus, although the 1948 Supreme Court decision officially required the major film production-distribution combines to sell off their

theatre holdings - serving thus to dismantle the vertically-integrated structure of the industry - it seems that the major companies had already pre-empted this course of events and saw the advantages voluntarily of moving away from studio-bound mass-production [185]. Thus the dominant mode of Hollywood production in the 1950's - the 'package-unit' system, where the whole industry acts as a pool for labour, resources and talent for the individual film 'package' [186] - was not simply or solely caused by the 1948 anti-trust decision, for the incentive pre-existed this. As Janet Staiger has stressed, the 'package-unit' system "was intricately tied to the postwar industrial shift: instead of the mass production of many films by a few manufacturing firms, now there was the specialized production of a few films by many independents. The majors acted as financiers and distributors" [187].

With the move away from the 'producer-unit' system, which had dominated film production through the 1930's and most of the 1940's, there was a related move out of the self-contained studio. In the latter half of the 1940's, location-shooting became increasingly prominent as an alternative to in-studio production. This is particularly evident in the crime thrillers of the period - for they precisely exploited the spectacle of chase-scenes, etc., filmed in 'real life' locations. The so-called 'semi-documentary' police thrillers (see Appendix Two) - like *THE HOUSE ON 92nd STREET* (TCF, 1945), *THE NAKED CITY* (Mark Hellinger Prods., 1948) and *CALL NORTHSIDE 777* (TCF, 1948) - flamboyantly displayed their use of 'realistic' locations, but many more thrillers of the period incorporated location-shot sequences with studio-shot material (compare, for example, the studio-filmed *THE BIG SLEEP* with such later productions from the same studio - Warner Brothers - as *DARK PASSAGE* or *WHITE HEAT*). By no

means a new technique - earlier crime films like I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG (1932) and HIGH SIERRA (1941) feature extensive location-shot footage - the shift away from the studio set did represent a significant trend in the postwar period, and one which was particularly noticeable in the field of the crime thriller (such films being particularly suitable because of their contemporary settings). The chiaroscuro 'studio' look associated with the crime films of the early-mid 1940's did not totally disappear - for example, RAW DEAL (Reliance Pictures, 1948) and OUT OF THE PAST (RKO, 1947) contain several stylized chiaroscuro sequences - but on the whole it became displaced and increasingly marginalized within a new dominant 'realist aesthetic' which represented a shift from 'psychological' realism to an environmental 'naturalism'.

As I shall consider in more detail below, the emergence of what subsequently came to be known as the 'noir style' can be seen to be determined in large part by the economic incentive towards product differentiation which was created by the wartime context. Similarly, the decline of this chiaroscuro stylization was encouraged by the postwar economic and structural reorganisation of the Hollywood cinema and by related transformations in stylistic norms. A number of critics cite the impact of new technology - like the hand-held Arriflex camera, captured from the Germans (and used, for example, in the opening subjective-camera sequence of DARK PASSAGE) [188], the development of faster film stocks and portable lighting equipment - as a formative factor in the move away from 'noir stylization' and towards a plainer, more 'naturalistic' mise-en-scène within the thriller. However, technology is not in itself determinate, but is innovated in accordance with economic and/or

ideological aims. For example, William Lafferty notes that the Zoomar zoom lens, which appeared in 1947, proved attractive to the film industry not because of its 'aesthetic' potential but because it was "expected to cut dolly shot costs about 75%" [189]. In other cases, new techniques were generated and new technology was innovated in order to intensify the spectacular or illusionist effect of film (thus the flexible Arriflex camera was used in DARK PASSAGE because it could better approximate the mobility of human vision than the cameras already in use).

It was up to professional groups like the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) and the Director's Guild to set standards for the ways in which new technology could be incorporated and new techniques generated: they established a regulatory context for the aesthetic innovations of their members, mediating between the interests of the latter and the general stylistic principles of Hollywood. Groups like the ASC and the Director's Guild encouraged their members to think of themselves as 'artists' rather than 'craftsmen': for example, Paul Kerr notes that the latter, after it was formed in 1936, "professionalised the directors, reaffirming the rhetoric of individualism, creativity and differentiation" [190]. Nevertheless, as David Bordwell and Janet Staiger have noted, such organisations were subject to the operating tension between standardisation and differentiation which marked the industry as a whole [191]. Thus, the question of stylistic innovation cannot be reduced simply to a matter of the individual 'creative' director, producer or cinematographer [192]. As I stressed in Section One, the nature of film as a product/process and the need for regulated difference meant that aesthetic/stylistic innovation

occupied a crucial space within the system of production. As Douglas Gomery suggests,

Producers wanted to experiment and try new things to gain an edge on their competitors. If they continued with the same stories and stars, others would surge past them, but exhibitors wanted predictable box-office attractions, and tended to support forms and personae that had worked best in the recent past [193].

As I have noted, through the first half of the 1940's, the boom in cinema attendance, coupled with the restrictions on materials and film stock and the shortage of stars and story sources, served as an incentive towards intensified product differentiation. I would suggest that the emergence of the so-called 'noir style' can usefully be seen as a manifestation of the 'investment' in aesthetic/stylistic differentiation, particularly on behalf of independent companies, seeking to draw attention to their product, and the producers of 'B' movies who, as I shall consider below, were given the opportunity during the 1940's of 'upgrading' their position in the industry. Furthermore, individual producers, directors and cinematographers were, with the beginning of the shift away from studio mass-production, more overtly encouraged to experiment with new techniques - within the broad parameters of the Hollywood Style.

(iii) The 1940's 'B' Film and the 'Noir Style'.

In his article "Out of What Past? The 'B' Film Noir" [194], Paul Kerr regards the 'B' crime thriller as the predominant context for the generation of the 'noir style'. Double-feature programming was introduced in the early 1930's as exhibitors sought to draw back the audiences which had deserted the cinema during the slump which followed the early sound-film boom. By late 1935, when both the Loew's (MGM) and RKO theatre chains announced that all bar their top-run cinemas would convert to double-feature programming [195], the double-bill was established as the standard form of film exhibition, and it remained so until about 1950 [196]. Rather than coupling two full-length 'A' features, the general practice was to screen an 'A' film preceded by a shorter, less expensive 'B' film (plus newsreels, cartoons, trailers and shorts). As Kerr notes, in the 1930's such 'B' films tended largely to be inferior copies of 'A' product, inferior because of their restricted budgets and shooting schedules and because many were made by the smaller companies who could not afford to invest in star names [197]. There was, however, a major drawback with contemporary distribution and exhibition practices, for whereas 'A' features generally played for a percentage of the box-office take, 'B' films were sold on the basis of a fixed (flat) rental. A 'B' film rarely made a significant loss, but there were no significant profits to be made either, which meant that for the major companies there was little incentive to produce such films [198]. Thus, from the early 1930's on a situation existed where smaller, thinly-capitalized companies - like Mascot/Republic, Monogram and, in the 1940's, Producers Releasing Corporation (PRC) - survived by specialising

in cheaply-made 'B' product (and serials). The standardisation of double-feature exhibition - and thus the need to main a regular supply of supporting-films - resulted in the production of 'B' films by specialised units at the major companies, but such films were comparatively more lavish than the output of the smaller companies for they were able to make use of the fixed resources of the major studio (including sets, props, costumes and technological resources).

Budgetary restrictions, however, exerted a significant pressure on the films made in both contexts. Because of their sheer cheapness in comparison with 'A' features, 'B' films tended to deviate from the stylistic norms of Hollywood 'quality' product, eschewing, for example, the little 'bits of business' which contribute to the verisimilitudinous effect of characters and setting; Todd McCarthy and Charles Flynn provide the following illustration of this:

A script called for the actor to light a cigarette in mid-scene? A fumble would call for a retake; the actor entered with the cigarette lit. In fact, as often as not, the scene would begin with our cigarette-puffing hero already in the room! (Why waste time, and risk a retake, by having him open the door?). This elimination of stage business, of entrances and exits, gives most B's a strange, almost cryptic air of flatness and unreality. [199]

Furthermore, the shorter running-length of the 'B' picture (generally, just over an hour) often resulted in hurried exposition or overly rapid narrative wind-ups, so the films appeared less 'well-made' than 'A' features. One can add here such economically-determined characteristics as the use of minimal casts, a limited number of sets, and a tendency to rely on stock shots and borrowed footage (for example, Monogram's 1945 release DILLINGER incorporates the whole of the robbery sequence from

Fritz Lang's 1937 'A' feature YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE [200] - especially in the form of 'montage sequences' [201].

Steve Brody, president of Monogram/Allied Artists, also suggests that smaller companies such as his own found it difficult to bid for story sources: "We had to use ninety-five percent original material, unless it was something in the public domain" [202]. Thus many 'B' companies tended to rework stories. Don Miller gives as an example of this, several adventure films made by Republic: THE LEATHERNECKS HAVE LANDED (1936) was the story of three US marines tackling smugglers in China; in FORGED PASSPORT (1939) the basic elements of the story are repeated, with a shift in setting to the USA-Mexico border, and the transformation of the marines into immigration officials; ROUGH RIDERS' ROUNDUP (1939) accomodates the story as a Roy Rogers vehicle; GIRL FROM HAVANA (1940) switches the setting to the South American oilfields; and, finally, in REMEMBER THE NIGHT (1942) the villains are changed from smugglers to enemy agents [203]. A further means of overcoming story problems was the 'B' series' in which the same central character or group of characters, and highly similar stories, would be repeated across a string of films (a strategy favoured by both the small and major companies - especially Twentieth Century-Fox).

In the late 1930's and early 1940's there was substantial criticism from both within and outside the industry of the poor quality of many of the 'B' films. For example, Garth Jowett cites a "Newsweek" report which claims that during 1936 and 1937 two-thirds of the films seen by weekly cinema patrons were 'B' films, the definition of such being "a small-budget film thrown together as quickly as possible, with routine plot and treatment, and without important box-office names" [204]. In 1940

producer Samuel Goldwyn, purveyor of the 'quality' film, launched a savage attack on double-bill programming, and in the same year Leo A. Handel's American Institute of Public Opinion conducted a poll in which 57% of their sample of cinemagoers expressed a preference for single-feature programming:

The adverse vote on double-bills is more a reaction to 'poor' features often found as the 'lower half' of the double-bill. Persons interviewed who dislike double features were asked whether they would change their attitude if both pictures on a double-bill were good. When this qualification was added, opinions divided 64 to 36 in favour of double features [205].

Handel further notes that experiments to reintroduce single-feature programming at this time did not prove successful, and indeed there was substantial resistance to such a move among exhibitors, especially those not affiliated to the major companies [206].

In the early 1940's, 'B' films were the subject of further controversy. In November 1942, Lowell Mellett made a speech to the National Board of Review in New York (the local office of the OOC) in which he attacked the "plague" of double-features - as Koppes and Black report, "He scorned them for wasting chemicals needed for gunpowder production and for taking up screen time that was needed for informational shorts" [207]. The trade-paper "Motion Picture Herald" attacked Mellett's speech, noting that the industry knew much more about making films than the bureaucrats and claiming that 'B' films were necessary for developing new stars [208]. And in January 1943 the independent exhibitors' trade weekly "Harrison's Reports" launched an attack on plans to scrap 'B' features, claiming that such action would have a "possible ruinous effect on thousands of exhibitors who depend on

'B' product for their existence, and on whose existence the producers and distributors are equally dependant" [209]. The next issue carried an editorial by P.S. Harrison entitled "There Is No Justification For Bad 'B' Pictures" in which he suggested that the way to respond to the War Production Board's rationing of raw film stock was not to scrap the 'B' film, but to improve its quality, and he further laid the blame for low standards upon the shoulders of the major film companies:

The low quality of 'B' product released by the major studios is disgraceful, and it needs only a changed viewpoint on the part of studio executives to correct the situation. If these executives will discontinue the 'assembly-line' practice of producing 'B' pictures, and demand of their producers better scripts, the quality of their 'B' product would improve, and their use of precious film will not be termed wasteful [210].

There was thus a firm pressure on the industry to upgrade the quality of 'B' product during the early 1940's.

Paul Kerr suggests than one means of differentiation which found favour with 'B' producers from the late 1930's was the combination of generic formulae to create 'hybrid forms':

Double-bills were beginning to contrast the staple 'A' genres of that decade - gangster films, biopics, musicals, screwball comedies, mysteries and westerns - with a number of Poverty Row hybrids, mixtures of melodrama and mystery, gangster and private-eye, screwball comedy and thriller (and later, documentary and drama). [211].

For example, Jean-Pierre Coursoudon has described THE MAD DOCTOR OF MARKET STREET, a 1942 Universal 'B' directed by Joseph H. Lewis, "as a wretched hodgepodge of horror, exotic adventure and comedy" [212]. Other examples of the trend towards generic combination in this period include Republic's WHO KILLED AUNTIE MAGGIE (1940), a mixture of comedy and

mystery; RKO's STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR (1940), a mixture of horror and mystery (this film was actually promoted by RKO as a horror film [213]); Paramount's SWEATER GIRL (1942), described by Don Miller as "a strange but nicely blended mixture of college antics, musical and whodunit" [214]; Twentieth Century-Fox's CAREFUL, SOFT SHOULDERS (1942), a mixture of screwball comedy and spy drama; and Columbia's DOUGHBOYS IN IRELAND (1943), a mixture of musical and war film.

Kerr sees this trend towards generic combination [215] as being particularly important to the generation of the 'noir style'. Indeed, many critics have remarked on the hybrid character of film noir: Borde and Chaumeton, for example, comment that the film noir thriller seems to synthesize the horror-film, the gangster-film, the mystery-film and the social-problem dramas of the 1930's [216]. Furthermore, Paul Schrader considers that "it is the unique quality of film noir that it was able to weld seemingly contradictory elements into a uniform style", highlighting in particular its combination of 'realism' and 'expressionism' [217]. Such early 'noir' thrillers as STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR and AMONG THE LIVING (Paramount, 1941) represent not only a hybrid of different narrative formulae but also combine the different forms of mise-en-scène associated with such genres as the horror-film and the mystery film.

I have already considered STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR in detail, but AMONG THE LIVING is perhaps even more noteworthy in this respect. The beginning of the film is characterized, both narratively and stylistically, as 'Southern Gothic' [218], for it is set in a large, decaying mansion and focusses upon both the decline of the once-mighty Raden family and the dark secret lodged within the walls of Raden house.

John Raden (Albert Dekker) returns home thinking himself the last of his family line, but he discovers that his identical twin brother Paul (also played by Dekker), whom he thought long dead, is a violent psychopath who for 20 years has been hidden away and cared for by the family doctor and their black servant. When Paul escapes from his confinement and hides out in a low-life boarding-house, there is a marked narrative and stylistic shift towards the territory seen later to mark the film noir. A sexual naif, Paul is magnetically attracted to Millie Pickens (Susan Hayward), the flirtatious daughter of the owner of the boarding-house, who is unequivocally characterized as a manipulative and greedy femme fatale (at one point she says "For \$5,000 I'm not afraid of anything. Not even death"). Later, in the characteristic 'noir' setting of a low-life bar packed with ecstatically jiving couples - jazz music here, as in PHANTOM LADY and D.O.A (Harry M. Popkin Prods., 1950), signifying libidinal release - Paul gets drunk for the first time and his disorientation, sexual maladjustment and paranoia are represented in the form of one of the stylized 'set-pieces' found in many later 1940's thrillers (marked by fast-cutting, blaring jazz, and close-ups of raucously laughing faces). The 'noirish' mise-en-scène and the atmospheric combination of 'corruptive' sexuality, violence and psychological delirium finds its apotheosis in the next sequence: Paul menacingly pursues the blonde B-girl who rejected him in the bar, chasing her through dark, deserted alleyways and finally killing her (with the extreme high-angle camera positions to which the film cuts throughout the chase both distancing the spectator from Paul and insinuating the absence of a 'normal viewpoint'). At the end of the film there is a further marked narrative shift - John Raden is mistaken for

his murderous brother and locked in the town jail. The townspeople form into a mob - with the montage sequence detailing this being strongly reminiscent of Fritz Lang's film FURY (1936) - and the drama becomes centred upon John's plight as the potential victim of a lynching (thus adding suggestions of the social-problem drama).

AMONG THE LIVING is of particular interest because it quite clearly shows that, although unmistakably a 'B' film, it is emphatically striving for distinctive effects and atmosphere (as is STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR, with its 'expressionist' dream-sequence). It is a 'quality B' which is quite ostentatious in its ambitions: as is suggested by Theodore Sparkuhl's carefully-composed deep-focus cinematography, the film's long tracking-shots and the 'trick' photography when the two Raden brothers share a scene. Stuart Heisler, the film's director, had worked his way up from film-editor, to second-unit director (responsible, for example, for the storm scenes in the Samuel Goldwyn/John Ford epic THE HURRICANE, 1937), to a director of 'B' films for Paramount [219]. Following AMONG THE LIVING, and an earlier thriller-horror hybrid THE MONSTER AND THE GIRL (1941), Heisler was considered worthy enough to direct 'A' features - including the 'tough' thriller THE GLASS KEY (Paramount, 1942) [220]. AMONG THE LIVING was a low-budget film which received attention both from critics and within the film industry [221] because of the way in which its director, cinematography and writers were able to use it as a showcase for their talents. Indeed, one of the industry's main arguments for retaining the 'B' film during the 1940's was that it was a valuable testing-ground for new talent and techniques.

Janet Staiger claims that at the major studios like Paramount and RKO, 'B' product was hardly supervised at all in comparison with 'A' features [222]. And at the smaller companies too, directors and crew were encouraged to innovate as long as they kept within budget and delivered the film on schedule. Phil Karlson, a director who worked extensively for Monogram during the 1940's has remarked:

"No, there was actually more freedom - of course, so fast! - in the smaller studios. Really, it was the greatest teacher in the world for me, because I could experiment with so many things doing these pictures. No matter what I did in the smaller studios, they thought it was fantastic, because nobody could make pictures as fast as I could at that time, and get some quality into it by giving it a little screwier camera angle or something" [223].

The association Karlson makes between "quality" and the "screwier camera angle" is particularly suggestive of the way in which the 'noir' stylistics were received at the time (as now) in terms of their codification of 'aesthetic' differentiation.

The examples of STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR and AMONG THE LIVING suggest a process of 'quality' differentiation within the 'B' films of the early 1940's. There was both a context for such aesthetic/stylistic differentiation - with the industry attempting to upgrade the quality of the 'B' film in order to forestall attacks on the poor quality of low-budget productions - and also a strong incentive on behalf of directors, cinematographers, writers and performers to get themselves noticed and hence secure their position within the industry. Moreover, it was not unknown for a suitably well-received 'B' film to be upgraded for an 'A'-

feature release. In 1938, for example, RKO's A MAN TO REMEMBER - scripted by Dalton Trumbo and directed by Garson Kanin - received such good critical notices from provincial screenings that it was booked into a prestigious first-run theatre for its New York première [224]. Another RKO 'B' film, FIVE CAME BACK (1939) - directed by John Farrow, who made such later Paramount thrillers as THE BIG CLOCK (1948), NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES (1949) and ALIAS NICK BEAL (1949) - was similarly upgraded after receiving critical praise [225]. Other directors who gained attention in low-budget contexts included Jean Negulesco (later responsible such Warner Brothers' thrillers as THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS, 1944, NOBODY LIVES FOREVER, 1946, and ROAD HOUSE, 1948), who gained his feature-debut on the strength of his "bizarre camera-angles" in a series of swing/jazz musical shorts [226] and Robert Siodmak, whose 1943 Universal horror-film SON OF DRACULA is described by Don Miller as having "a 'B' budget but a lot of 'A' ambition" [227]. Siodmak was a German émigré who, from 1941 to 1944, worked exclusively within the 'B' film, in a variety of genres (romantic comedy, romantic melodrama, horror-film, espionage-thriller, 'jungle fantasy'). The film he made after SON OF DRACULA was the particularly well-received Cornell Woolrich adaptation PHANTOM LADY, a low-budget 'A' thriller produced by Joan Harrison - scenarist and assistant to Alfred Hitchcock on JAMAICA INN (1939), REBECCA (1940), FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT (1940), SUSPICION (1941) and SABOTEUR (1942). Both newspaper reviewers and the trade press commented upon the film's striking atmosphere and its visual and sound effects [228], and the film's critical and commercial success marked Siodmak's transition into more prestigious 'A' features for Universal, the majority of his 1940's films being film noir thrillers [229].

As I have already suggested, with the reduction in the number of films being produced during the wartime period - owing to both the curtailment of block-booking in 1940 and the restrictions on raw materials and film-stock - there was an incentive towards the selling and exploitation of films on a more individual basis. Paul Kerr suggests that this included 'B' films

which were, even, occasionally, now subject to press reviews and trade shows. Relatively rapidly 'B' films were encouraged to become increasingly competitive, compulsorily different, distinctive. What had previously, perhaps, been a rather static aesthetic and occupational hierarchy between 'B's and 'A's became suddenly more flexible [230].

As Kerr sees it, the shift from the 'block' to the individual film, as the principal means of attracting exhibitors, meant that for independent producers in particular there was an increased 'investment' in product differentiation, so that their films could compete with those produced by the majors. It is worth stressing here how the phenomenon of the "sleeper" - the modest 'B' film which becomes a 'surprise' success - may not have been simply the result of luck or 'accident', for there is evidence to suggest that in a number of instances such successes were deliberately planned.

Don Miller gives as an example of this the low-budget MGM film JOE SMITH, AMERICAN (1942), a homefront espionage thriller which although it ran only 62 minutes opened at a first-run Broadway house for its New York premiere - and played for an extended engagement - on the strength of outstanding critical notices [231]. The topicality of the film's subject - sabotage, Fifth Columnists, and the patriotic determination of the 'ordinary Joe' - was a major factor in the film's success [232], but Miller suggests the film's chances were particularly enhanced by the strategy

adopted by MGM publicists, for they "'allowed' several influential film columnists and commentators to 'discover' the film" [233]. This deliberate use of critics by the film industry may have been more widespread. Miller gives as a similar example VOICE IN THE WIND (referred to by Spencer Selby as a notable film noir [234]), an extremely low-budget 1944 production by Rudolph Monter and director Arthur Ripley which sought to engage the 'highbrow' critics by means of its use of the stylistic strategies of the European 'art' cinema. Miller notes that United Artists (a prime outlet for independent productions) took over distribution of the film from PRC and that their publicity department precisely heralded

how it was made cheaply and surprised everyone by becoming an artistic success; how the low budget didn't prevent a masterpiece from being born; how one could strive for Art whilst counting the pennies, and so on [235].

As a result of this promotional strategy - which is interesting in terms of the contemporary and subsequent reputation of the 'B' film noir in general - United Artists managed to secure a Broadway theatre for the film's opening and drew an 'art-house' audience (which, Miller notes [236] had been deprived of contemporary European art-movies during the 1940's). The association made between the cheapness of VOICE IN THE WIND and its 'artistic' quality suggests that during this period the lack of Hollywood 'A'-feature production values may in some instances have served as a further means of product differentiation which could have a particular usefulness in targeting critics and audiences who were hostile to the mainstream Hollywood film.

The increasing emphasis upon the individual film favoured not only the one-off independent production - as Staiger has considered [237] - but

it also meant that the already existant and hitherto 'low-status' 'independent' companies like Monogram and Republic had increased prospects for receiving more lucrative exhibition deals. At Monogram, for example, there was a deliberate attempt in the mid-1940's to upgrade the status of their films. For example, the suspense-thriller WHEN STRANGERS MARRY (considered in Chapter Six) - made by an independent production team, the King Brothers - was released by Monogram in 1944 and became the 'sleeper' of its year, garnering critical acclaim and drawing good business. All too aware of the limitations of the flat-rental deals for 'B' films, Monogram sought with this and subsequent films to obtain percentage-deals from exhibitors. A policy of 'quality' 'B' films - what Monogram president Steve Broidy describes as the "nervous 'A'" - seemed to them the best means of breaking through the major companies' stranglehold over prime exhibition outlets. Broidy comments on the "nervous 'A'":

"With us it was a premeditated attempt to upgrade our status in the industry. With the other companies (ie. the majors), it was an attempt to garner all the market and to have a place to absorb the accumulated overhead that was created by having a contract list of players, directors etc." [238].

As Broidy suggests, such "nervous 'A'" films were also produced by major studios (although, of course, these were not quite so 'nervous'), who were motivated by the desire both to restrict the market for smaller companies and also to cash-in on the relatively high returns for low-budget productions. RKO, a studio which faced continual economic uncertainty, was particularly drawn to the quality 'low-budget' feature - as such productions as MURDER, MY SWEET, OUT OF THE PAST and the Val Lewton 'horror' cycle testify. With many RKO films - particularly thrillers - the boundaries between the 'A' film and the 'B' film are blurred. Similarly,

Don Miller notes that the low-budget Paramount films produced by Sol C. Siegel are similarly hard to categorise in these terms, for many played in some locations as 'B's and others as 'A's [239].

WHEN STRANGERS MARRY, although it proved a critical and commercial success, did not gain Monogram a percentage-deal. However, Broidy persevered in its attempts to upgrade the status of his company, and in the next year Monogram achieved the breakthrough it was looking for. The gangster film DILLINGER was made for \$193,000 - a significant increase over the \$75,000-\$80,000 Monogram usually spent on its productions - and grossed over \$4,000,000 in home and international markets [240]. With this film, the company had succeeded in securing a percentage-deal - presumably on the basis of former quality 'B's/nervous 'A's like WHEN STRANGERS MARRY. Its success permitted Monogram to produce further lower-budget 'A' features - like SUSPENSE (1946), by Paramount director Frank Tuttle, and THE GANGSTER (1947). In 1946 Allied Artists was formed as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Monogram, the intention being to distinguish the company's new ambitions from Monogram's reputation for 'grade-B' product, and thus both to upgrade their status with exhibitors and to increase the saleability of their films [241]. In this period, Republic Pictures also saw an opportunity to move into comparatively higher-cost, higher-quality productions. Since 1937, Republic had already been producing one or two 'A' features per year - such "Republic Specials" as DARK COMMAND (1940), produced by Sol C. Siegel, directed by Raoul Walsh, and reuniting the stars of John Ford's successful Western STAGECOACH, Claire Trevor and John Wayne [242]. From the mid-1940's this policy expanded, and the company introduced a class of "Premiere" pictures into their schedule, utilising name directors and stars - including such films as THE SPECTRE OF THE ROSE (written and directed by

Ben Hecht, 1946), MOONRISE (directed by Frank Borzage, 1948), MACBETH (directed by and starring Orson Welles, 1948), RIO GRANDE (directed by John Ford, starring John Wayne, 1949), and HOUSE BY THE RIVER (directed by Fritz Lang, 1949) [243].

As for the major companies, Dore Schary has suggested certain of the transformations in their attitude towards 'B' product through the 1940's. In his autobiography, he claims that in 1940 or 1941 he himself remarked to Louis B. Mayer, head of MGM, "that low-cost pictures should dare - should challenge - that they should also be used as a testing ground for new talent - directors, writers, actors, producers" [244]. Schary was put in charge of MGM's 'B' production from 1941 to 1943 and during that time was given the freedom to choose his own stories, sets and directors, as long as he kept within budget (\$250,000, or at most \$300,000 per picture - ie. over three times the budget for the pre-DILLINGER Monogram 'B' films). Generally not an advocate of expensive film-making, Schary followed a three-year stint producing for David O. Selznick with an emphatic return to the "quality 'B'" at RKO (a company responsible for more so-called films noirs than any other). As vice-president in charge of production, he opted for a policy of low-budget features:

RKO's resources had not been flourishing, and therefore it seemed sensible to make lower-budget films, using some of our rising stars to help attract customers [245].

Charles Koerner, Schary's predecessor, had actually inaugurated RKO's policy of low-budget films during the war, but Schary helped to provide continuity in that company's production until the studio was bought out by Howard Hughes. Of the forty films produced by Schary between January 1947 and June 1948, over a quarter were low-budget thrillers, including such

critical successes as CROSSFIRE (1947), OUT OF THE PAST (1947), THE SET-UP (1949), THEY LIVE BY NIGHT (1949) and THE WINDOW (1949).

With the standardisation of single-feature programming in the 1950's, the double-bill and the 'B' film virtually disappeared (with the notable exception of 'drive-in' exhibition, which became a stable market for low-budget 'exploitation' features). As Paul Kerr has suggested, many of the 'B'-genres - like crime thrillers, domestic comedies, and Westerns - were appropriated by television and subjected to different narrative and stylistic parameters (the high-contrast chiaroscuro style of the film noir thriller being replaced in TV detective shows like DRAGNET by a much lower-contrast 'look' more suited to the poorer quality of the TV image) [246]. The context within which the 'noir' style of the low-budget crime film had been generated and sustained was increasingly eroded through the 1950's as the mainstream cinema, beset by falling attendances and the reorganisation of its vertically-integrated structure, redefined its place within the sphere of popular, commercial entertainment/leisure [247].

(iv) The Limits of the 'Noir Style': THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI.

In his article on the 'B' film noir, Paul Kerr claims that the 'noir style' represented a "resistance to the realist aesthetic" which characterised the mainstream 'classical' Hollywood cinema [247]. However, this 'resistance' should not be seen as representing simply a 'subversion' or 'critique' of the 'classical' style - as Kerr notes, it was inspired in large part by an accommodation to restricted budgets and running-lengths (with 'atmospheric' intensification compensating and substituting for the lack of production values and for the restricted space available for narrative development). In his later article on 'B' director Joseph H. Lewis, Kerr adds a further qualification to the 'ideological' significance of 'noir' stylistic differentiation:

one of the avenues . . . opened up among the 'ambitious' 'B's involved the contravention of current formulas and standard stylistic practices . . ., as indulgence in excess, individuality, idiosyncrasy, virtuosity, as if for its own sake. Within these differences, however, residues of Hollywood's standardisation remained [248].

There is, indeed, a blatant 'exhibitionism' about the stylistic flourishes grouped together within the (post-constructed) category of the film noir style. However, it is not so much the case that Hollywood standardisation remains within the 'noir style' as simply a "residue" - rather, it is the level of standardisation of 'noir' stylistic difference within the generically-ordered parameters of the 'Hollywood Style' that is more to the point. The 'noir' stylistics precisely represent permissible forms of difference, coded and conventionalised strategies of aesthetic/stylistic differentiation (the extent of their standardisation suggested in

particular by the fact that they did not remain 'ghettoised' within the 'B' thriller but became incorporated increasingly within such 'A' thrillers as MILDRED PIERCE, GILDA, and DEAD RECKONING). Furthermore, it is important to stress the extent to which the deployment of the 'noir' stylistics was carefully motivated. Rather than 'rupturing' the text they often serve to increase its efficiency, to intensify its drama. Repeatedly signifying psychological destabilisation, 'excessive' sexuality, violence, a fatalistic thematic, etc., the 'noir style' most often heightens the charge of the fiction (and serves the particularly useful purpose of enabling that which was barred from direct representation to receive a displaced but nonetheless forceful expression).

I will conclude this consideration of stylistic differentiation within the 1940's thriller by looking briefly at an exceptional case in which the 'noir' stylization quite markedly was felt to exceed the acceptable limits. In Orson Welles' THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI there is a fascinating tension between 'stylistic performance' and the conventions of 'Hollywood Style' storytelling. The film was initially scheduled by Columbia as a low-budget thriller to be shot in the streets of New York, as was the vogue in the postwar period, and Welles agreed to the project after completing another - much more straightforward - thriller, THE STRANGER (International Pictures, 1946), as a means of securing finance for his elaborate stage production of Jules Verne's "Around the World in 80 Days". However, Columbia's head, Harry Cohn, insisted that Welles use Rita Hayworth, the studio's major star (and Welles' soon-to-be-divorced wife), and as a result the budget escalated. Seizing the opportunity of once more taking charge of a major studio production, Welles took his unit to a series of exotic locations - as a result the film ran over budget and over

schedule. When the first cut was screened, Columbia executives were alarmed at both the incomprehensibility of the plot and by the film's uncharacteristic use of Hayworth. Harry Cohn ordered the film to be re-edited, re-scored and re-dubbed, some of the work being done by Welles, the rest by Columbia staff. Columbia was still not happy with the film, and it was withheld from distribution for over a year, being released first in Britain in March 1948, and in America three months later. The film was a financial disaster, and it apparently devastated the Hollywood careers of both Welles and Hayworth.

It is easy to see why Columbia was so nervous about the film. As James Naremore has succinctly put it, "the complex but conventional plot machinations are delivered through hallucinatory visuals, the whole movie becoming a satiric dream-work or magic-show based upon a standard thriller" [249]. Exploited by Welles as an exercise in show(off)manship, the film becomes an excuse for a series of flamboyant visual and aural tricks which culminate in an extended 'expressionistic' tour-de-force set in a Crazy House/Mirror Maze. Welles precisely hyper-inflates beyond its usual boundaries the stylization generally associated with the noir thriller. Behind THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI's stylistic extravagance rests a deliberate parody of Hollywood's conventions of glamour and storytelling. Throughout the film, Hayworth is dressed in parodically overstated versions of 1940's 'calendar-girl' fashions, Welles' intention seemingly being to satirize the star's "sex-goddess" image from GILDA. For example, when Elsa/Hayworth has finished her seductive "siren-song" - a conventional feature of thrillers of the period - the soundtrack 'cuts' briskly to an inane radio-jingle for "Glossio Lusto" shampoo (which serves as an ironic reference to Gilda-Hayworth's long, flowing hair, which Welles had had cropped short and

bleached blonde). Welles also refused to shoot any glamour close-ups of Hayworth - a fixed feature of star-vehicles - and these were filmed subsequently, and are often markedly mis-matched with the footage into which they are inserted. The extent to which this was perceived as a 'hatchet-job' on Hayworth's star-image can be gauged from the following extract from a review in the "Los Angeles Examiner":

There ought to be a law against the kind of murder and mayhem Orson Welles, genius at large, committed in making a picture called THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI. I rather imagine Harry Cohn, Mr Boss of Columbia, feels the same way, for in eighty-six minutes Willie Wonder Welles completely destroyed the beauty, glamor and feminine appeal of Rita Hayworth (to say nothing of the illusion of being an actress) which Mr Cohn has spent extensive and careful years in building [250].

The disastrous critical and commercial reception accorded the film suggests the limits within which the 'noir' stylistic differentiation usually operated. In THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI narrative coherence is systematically overwhelmed by intrusive stylistic extravagance - especially in the Mirror Maze finale, where the dialogue explaining the film's tortuous web of deception and betrayal is submerged beneath a series of intricate, distorted reflections. The film represents a conscious play with the conventions of the 1940's 'tough' thriller, subjecting its conventional scenarios and narrative stratagems to a studiedly dissonant representation: the trial scene is rendered as broad farce; the mannered, at times virtually incomprehensible, voice-over of Michael O'Hara/Welles repeatedly comments upon the ridiculousness of the plot and his own ludicrousness as a hero-figure; and at one especially notable moment, Grisby (Glenn Anders) is elaborating a complex plan to fake his own death, and caps the scene with the pointed remark, "Silly, isn't it?" [251].

THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI is both a deliberate parody of many of the conventions of the 'tough' crime thriller, and a 'quintessential' film noir, exaggerating - and at the same time seeking to 'dazzle' with - the forms of stylistic/aesthetic differentiation which had become normalised within crime films of the period. The reputations of its star and director may have enabled such an expensive and unusual film to be made in the first place, but it was these same reputations which suffered the most as a result (Welles could not direct a film for a major Hollywood studio until he narrowly managed to secure TOUCH OF EVIL in 1958). Few others in Hollywood would have dared - or even been in a position to - jeopardise their careers in such a manner, for in general their aim was to secure more work, not to lose it through such a mocking gesture of defiance.

SECTION THREE:

THE REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY  
IN THE 1940'S 'TOUGH' THRILLER.

## SECTION THREE

THE REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITYIN THE 1940's 'TOUGH' THRILLER

It is not violence and spasmodic savagery that are the outstanding features of the "tough" movie. Violence is a basic element in American life and has always been an important element in American entertainment. What is significant and repugnant about our contemporary "tough" films is their absolute lack of moral energy, their listless, fatalistic despair. [John Houseman, 1947] [1].

PREFACE

In this section I shall not be seeking to address all of the films which criticism has termed 'noir'. Rather, I will be concerned with a sizeable subset of the film noir - what one could even regard, from the critical generalisations of the past forty years, as the 'core' of the, film noir : namely, the 1940's 'tough' thriller. As I shall consider below, the various forms of 'tough' thriller can be unified on the basis of their preoccupation with narratively-articulated disruptions of male sexuality, identity and authority: they are precisely concerned with working-over and seeking to re-order multi-faceted challenges to the

regime of the masculine. The term '*tough*' thriller will refer to those films - produced largely during the 1940's, but continuing into the early 1950's - which are centred upon the exploits of a male hero who is engaged either in the investigation or commission of a crime. Many of these films were either directly adapted from 'hard-boiled' fictional sources, or were strongly in the 'hard-boiled' crime/detective tradition (which is itself, as I suggested earlier, very much a hybrid category) - and I will thus make frequent reference to these films' 'literary antecedents'.

I shall in particular be seeking to distinguish the '*tough*' thriller from other 1940's crime-film cycles which have at one time or another either been included within or related in some way to the 'film noir' canon. The gangster-film, for example, is excluded here not only because it is largely absent as a discernible cycle in the 1940's - re-emerging with some force in the 1950's - but also because, unlike the '*tough*' thriller, which tends to be strongly bound to the lone male hero, the gangster-film features a strongly-marked context of organised crime. Similarly, the 'police-procedural'/'semi-documentary' thrillers of the latter half of the 1940's are excluded because the activity of their heroes tends to be located in relation to systematised procedures of detection. Furthermore, such 'Gothic' suspense thrillers as REBECCA (1940), GASLIGHT (1944) and EXPERIMENT PERILOUS (1944) are excluded not only because they derive from a different literary tradition (the 'popular Gothic' novel or play) and often feature period settings, but also because they tend to be emphatically centred upon women and are generally concerned with the representation of female desire and subjectivity. Nevertheless, because these and other forms of 1940's

crime-film do share elements of 'mood', visual style and 'sexual pathology' with the 'tough' thriller - and also because their very differences illuminate the specific issues and processes around which the 'tough' thrillers turn - then they shall receive attention in Appendix Two.

Any activity of constructing distinctions within or between film cycles and genres inevitably faces problems, for the 'coherence' of a cycle or a genre is a question not of a simple repetition of elements and 'structures' but, as I stressed in Chapter Two, of a differential re-investment of elements and processes. In the case of 'film noir', this difficulty is exacerbated especially by the widespread trend towards generic combination which marks the Hollywood cinema of the 1940's. Within the general realm of the 1940's crime-film one can point to such examples as HE WALKED BY NIGHT (Bryan Foy Prods., 1949), a combination of the 'tough' thriller and the 'police-procedural'; to CROSSFIRE (RKO, 1947), a mixture of 'tough' thriller and 'social-problem' crime-film; to MILDRED PIERCE (WB, 1945), a combination of 'tough' thriller and 'women's picture' melodrama; to ALIAS NICK BEAL (Para., 1949), a 'cross-fertilization' between the 'tough' thriller and the 'supernatural fantasy' (very much in vogue in the 1940's); and to two films directed by Anthony Mann, REIGN OF TERROR (Univ.-Int., 1949) and THE TALL TARGET (MGM, 1951), which represent interesting hybrids between the 'paranoid' 'tough'-thriller and the costume-drama.

Furthermore, with the sheer volume of crime films issuing from Hollywood in the 1940's, the 'tough' thriller itself was subject to a remarkable degree of innovation, complication, and formal play within its boundaries. Thus, as I shall consider below, the hero of D.O.A. (1948)

represents a combination of two 'functional' positions - for he is both investigator and murder-victim. Similarly, the hero of OUT OF THE PAST is (private-eye) 'investigator', 'transgressive-adventurer hero' and 'victim-hero' in different sections of the film.

Such twists, permutations and combinations already marked the written forms of 'hard-boiled' fiction - which, through the 1930's and 1940's, had similarly been produced in bulk - and the Hollywood cycles further exaggerated this tendency, with the very accommodation of 'hard-boiled' fiction within the parameters of 'Hollywood Style' narrative representation necessitating further degrees of transmutation. In the 'tough' thrillers of the 1940's, motifs, scenarios, techniques of plotting, etc., were extensively copied, reworked and grafted across cycles - the conventions established within both the written fiction and the films being subject to an at times remarkable degree of (regulated) play. Cyclic or generic development itself represents a complex process of transmutation and accommodation - the context of the individual film submitting the elements it shares in common with other films to a differentiated process of elaboration and containment. Two examples will serve to highlight this. Firstly, Jerry Wald, a producer for Warner Brothers in the mid-1940's, was reputedly so impressed by Paramount's DOUBLE INDEMNITY that he deliberately borrowed from it for his own James M. Cain adaptation, MILDRED PIERCE, not only adding a murder to Cain's original story - thus making a relatively 'aberrant' James M. Cain novel conform more to the contemporary image of Cain as a specialist in murder stories [2] - but also adopting the earlier film's flashback and voice-over structures [3]. However, in MILDRED PIERCE, the flashback/voice-over narration works in a very differently controlled way from that of

DOUBLE INDEMNITY, particularly because it serves the function of articulating the story of a female protagonist. Secondly, the screenplay for the film OUT OF THE PAST was adapted from his 'hard-boiled' detective novel Build My Gallows High by Daniel Mainwaring (aka. Geoffrey Homes), who has admitted that he consciously "swiped" narrative stratagems from Dashiell Hammett's The Maltese Falcon [4]. However, OUT OF THE PAST relies upon a knowledge of the 'hard-boiled' private-detective thriller precisely as a conventionalised form of Hollywood film, for by 1947 such thrillers were far more readily familiar to audiences than they were in 1941, when John Huston's adaptation of the Hammett novel appeared. OUT OF THE PAST thus structures a very different place for the spectator in regard to its narrative process, because it overtly acknowledges, feeds off, and subjects to a remarkable degree of formal play, the narrative conventions of the private-eye thriller.

Given both the modification of a cycle across time - the 'generative nucleus' being extended by each film added to the 'canon' - and the 'interplay' between (related) cycles, then it becomes impossible to divide-up the 'noir corpus' into tidy, mutually exclusive categories. What I will be concerned with below, then, are dominant tendencies of the regulated modalities of the narrative process. Of the many possible ways of sub-dividing the 'tough' thriller, I shall concentrate upon the three rather broad categories, which are by no means totally discrete but which can usefully be distinguished on the basis of the markedly different ways in which the hero tends to be positioned in relation to the 'enigma', to the disruption which 'mobilises' the narrative process. As I shall show, what is especially at stake in each of these three modes of the 'tough' thriller is a 'testing' of the hero's prowess - not

merely a testing of his ability as a detective or a criminal but much more crucially of his 'masculine competence'. For the hero consolidates his masculine identity through the accomplishment of a crime-related 'quest', the means by which he can define himself in relation both to the legally-defined framework of law and to the Law of patriarchy which specifies the culturally-acceptable positions - and the delimitation of - masculine identity and desire. These three categories are:

- (a) the investigative thriller, where the hero, who is often a professional detective, seeks to restore order and to validate his own identity through the process of exposing and countermanding a criminal conspiracy;
  - (b) the male 'suspense-thriller', which is the inverse of the above, in that the hero is in a marked position of inferiority in regard both to the criminal conspirators and to the police, and seeks to restore himself to a position of security by eradicating the enigma;
- and (c) the 'criminal adventure' thriller, where the hero, usually with the aid of a woman, becomes engaged in either a wilful or an 'accidental' transgression of the law, and has to face the consequences of 'stepping out of line'.

As I shall show, what is particularly striking about the 1940's 'tough' thrillers is that they betray a persistent problematising of masculinity, a problematic which is differently stated and negotiated

within these broad groupings. The 'tough' thriller is a particularly heightened form of hero-centred fiction, in which, I shall suggest, the representation of the hero as a unified and consistent masculine presence who can serve as the active 'centre' of the narrative is persistently qualified. In his 1908 paper "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming", Sigmund Freud considered how in forms of popular narrative the hero functions as the 'hub' of the fantasy-matrix which is set in motion by and organised through the narrative [5]. Referring to a functional position and a figure of 'identification' in the narrative, the term 'hero' is not inherently sex-specific, but within a patriarchal context which equates masculinity with 'activity', it largely refers to a male protagonist (the term 'heroine' carrying connotations of 'passivity', as in the 'mythic' figure of the 'princess' as object of desire and reward for the hero's achievements). Indeed, Freud's own sliding between "hero" and "he" shows the linkage traditionally made between the hero as active protagonist (a narrative position) and maleness. Freud discusses in particular how in popular fiction the hero often functions as an 'ideal ego':

One feature above all cannot fail to strike us about the creations of these story-writers: each of them has a hero who is the centre of interest, for whom the writer tries to win our sympathy by every possible means and whom he seems to place under the protection of a special Providence . . . It seems to me, however, that through the revealing characteristic of invulnerability we can immediately recognise His Majesty the Ego, the hero alike of every day-dream and every story [6].

The hero serves both the writer (Freud's principal concern) and the reader as an 'ideal ego' who can achieve in the 'imaginary' form of (fictional) fantasy the fulfilment of ambitious and erotic wishes. In

male-oriented fiction, the hero often tends to function as an idealised, figure of narcissistic identification who precisely unites authority, achievement and masculine-male sexuality. Such 'fantastically' glamourised hero-figures promote a vision of masculine omnipotence and invulnerability, and one can regard the central project of such narratives as the consolidation of such an 'ideology' of the masculine. This process of consolidation requires the hero's successful completion of a series of 'directed' tests through which he proves his worthiness to 'take up his place as a man' - the culmination of his mission/'quest' frequently coinciding with his integration into the cultural order through marriage. This recurring representation of the process of coming-to-manhood has a widespread currency in patriarchal fictional forms (from 'classical' mythology to the 'dime novel'), and is indeed one of the most pervasive and familiar 'structures' of such 'male-oriented' Hollywood genres as the Western and the adventure film. However, this 'Oedipal structure' is never simply universally reiterated, but it is reworked for - and within the terms of - specific cultural contexts. Indeed, it is so perpetually and pervasively reworked that its specific figurations can usefully be regarded as a 'barometer' of the pressures bearing upon and the challenges besetting the masculine ordering of culture and the cultural ordering of masculinity.

The very stress within such narratives upon a process of consolidation suggests the extent to which masculinity is not in essence either unified or unproblematic [7]. The hero's potency has to be proved and asserted, it is not simply taken for granted. On his 'quest' he encounters various forms of obstruction and delay which provide opportunities for a testing of his prowess - his ingenuity, physical

courage or 'honour' - and which permit a 'measuring' of the hero in relation to the specific culture's image of itself (filtered, of course, through the institutionalised conventions of genre, narration and representation). What is particularly fascinating about the 'tough' thrillers, as I suggested in Chapter Seven, is that they immediately provoke a suggestive reading of dramatic tensions besetting masculine identity and authority in the 1940's. The figuration of the hero is, as I shall show, subject to a particular instability. These films may be characterised by an overt 'masculinisation' of both language (the 'hard-boiled' idiom, which in itself is aggressive and competitive) and action (in the marked predominance of violence), but, as I shall emphasise below, both the representation of masculinity and the figuration of the hero in terms of a unified position of masculine identity are far more fraught and unstable. I shall be seeking to highlight how the process of consolidation conventionally represented by the dynamic masculine hero is either undercut or deflected, and that in its place one finds a range of 'alternative' or 'transgressive' positionings of male desire and identity (and a manifestly more sceptical representation of the worth and security of the network of male authority). For example, I will show that over and again in these films, the conventional figuration of the 'tough' and controlled masculine hero is invoked not so much as a model of worthwhile or 'realistic' achievement but as a worrying mark of what is precisely lacking. While ostensibly seeking to dramatize a 'positivist' trajectory - a confidence in masculine identity and the right of male law - the 'tough' thrillers tend to subject this to a series of inversions, delays and schisms, and in the process they open up onto 'transgressive' positionings of male desire - masochistic

romantic obsessiveness, homosexuality, paranoia or psychosis - which testify to a lack of unity within the mutually sustaining frameworks of the male ordering of culture and of masculine identity.

In his 1947 article "Today's Hero: A Review", John Houseman identifies the 'tough' crime thriller as a cycle whose "pattern and its characteristics coincide too closely with our national life . . . [because it] presents a fairly accurate reflection of the neurotic personality of the United States of America in the year 1947" [8]. I have already, in Chapter Seven, argued that caution is required in such generalised accounts of the relations between a film or a cycle and its social-cultural context. One of the key factors to be taken into account is that such representations do not spring directly or immediately from their culture but are subjected to and filtered through a wide range of mediating contexts (economic, institutional, and generic). As I suggested, the form of the 'tough' thriller became a specified means of addressing and seeking to contain a series of contemporary challenges to masculine identity and authority, challenges which were subject to a highly displaced representation by being codified within the organising framework and the narrative process of the thriller (a 'genre' which precisely feeds off dissonance and disruption). Nevertheless, Houseman provides several useful insights into the ostensibly 'perverse' pleasurability of these films. A feature he especially seizes upon is the representation of the 'tough' hero:

He is unattached, uncared-for, and irregularly shaved. His dress is slovenly. His home is a hall bedroom, and his place of business is a hole in the wall in a rundown office building. He makes a meager living doing perilous and unpleasant work which condemns him to a solitary life. The love of women and the companionship of men are denied him. He has no discernable ideal to sustain him - neither ambition, nor loyalty, nor even a lust

for wealth. His aim in life, the goal to which he moves, and the hope which sustains him, is the unravelling of obscure crimes, the final solution of which affords him little or no satisfaction . . . His missions carry him into situations of extreme danger. He is subject to terrible physical outrages, which he suffers with dreary fortitude. He holds human life cheap, including his own . . . In all history I doubt there has been a hero whose life was so unenviable and whose aspirations had so low a ceiling [9].

In Freud's account of the fantasy-basis of popular fictions, the hero (as "His Majesty the Ego") represents, as I have suggested, a valourisation of masculine achievement and the consolidation of a unified ideal of masculine identity. The successful accomplishment of the goal-directed quest serves to display his 'completeness-as-a-man', that he has overcome lack, that he can take up his 'rightful place' as a man in the lineage of patriarchal authority. The pervasiveness of such a trajectory of 'masculine affirmation' in popular fictional forms suggests how the 'ideology of the hero' serves to 'mythologise' male succession to cultural authority. The hero, crucially, treads a well-trodden path of 'masculine endeavour', his achievements representing not merely his own personal triumphs but also his 'pacting' or 'contracting' to a network and tradition of institutionalised patriarchal authority. In other words, the hero's functioning as "His Majesty the Ego" derives its legitimacy not from any qualities he may incarnate but from an institutionalised regime of 'masculine rule' to which, through his quest, he allies himself and by which he seeks to gain recognition. Houseman claims that the frequency of shabby, defeatist and isolated hero-figures in the 'tough' thrillers testifies to a rejection of - or at least a difficulty with - the accepted or idealised cultural possibilities of such an 'ideology' of masculine authority and identity. As I suggest below, such films as DETOUR and THE DARK CORNER are marked by a notable problematising of any purposeful or (self-)assertive 'heroic' action. In many other instances, the reassertion of the possibility of determinate masculine action and authority (ie. the triumph of the hero) succeeds - if at all -

only narrowly or, as in *THE KILLERS* and *DEAD RECKONING*, at great cost. Such displacements of the trajectory of masculine assertion - and the related obsession with the figure of the traumatised or 'castrated' hero - can be read as signs of an emphatic qualification of the idealised wholeness and unity of the masculine (in both its psychic and cultural spheres, and in their interrelations). By so displacing the hero as a figure of masculine valourisation, these 'tough' thrillers are able to generate a range of transgressive representations of masculine identity and desire.

The appeal (and relevance) of the 1940's 'tough' thrillers to their contemporary audiences may be seen, then, to derive from the ways in which - under the guise of a generic mode (the detective story, the thriller) which signposts as its ultimate aim the restoration of a masculine regime of law, authority and potency - they were able to offer an engagement with less easily sanctioned positions of masculine identity and desire [10]. Produced during an era in which both the psychic and social regimentation of masculinity was subject to intensive and extensive stress - both in the wartime and postwar periods - these thrillers can be seen, in their particularly codified and trammelled manner, to give 'voice' to a dissatisfaction with or uncertainty over the conventionalised representation of masculine role and masculine identity. In these films, the concern with a destabilised masculinity quite pointedly tends to exceed the framework of social law which is integral to the crime-thriller - for in their amplification of problems besetting the cultural and psychic consolidation of masculinity they open onto a chaotic disorder which resists any clear-cut process of narrative resolution (and hence the frequent recourse within these films to the supernatural realm of Fate as a means of asserting a final semblance of order, the necessity of appealing to this higher, less tangible regime of 'Law' suggesting - by implication - the failure of the social system of masculine law). For the remainder of the Section, I will be seeking to trace the ways in which the various forms of the 1940's

'tough' thriller both articulate and attempt to regulate the challenges to and disjunctions within and across the interlocking spheres of masculine psychic/sexual identity and the cultural regimentation of masculine authority.

## CHAPTER NINE

THE INVESTIGATIVE THRILLER

Being a detective . . . entails more than fulfilling a social function or performing a social role. Being a detective is the realization of an identity. . .

[Steven Marcus] [11]

Although, as I considered in Chapter Five, the 'hard-boiled' private-eye heroes of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler represent a more physically-active fantasy than such 'classical' sleuths as Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot, they nevertheless tend similarly to be valourised as unified egos. The private-eye hero more overtly infringes legal procedure, but as an individual, non-affiliated professional he nonetheless embodies a 'principle of law' which is superior to that signified by the police force and the legal-system. Furthermore, through his detective activity he is shown as having the power more efficiently and fairly to enforce and to consolidate the law. In the private-eye thriller, truth is not scientifically or systematically ascertained (as it is in the police-procedural) and neither is it pieced-together through ratiocination (as in the 'classical' detective story). Rather, it is emphatically constructed by the private-eye hero, and it derives its legitimacy precisely from his 'personal worth'. The private-eye occupies a mediating position between the worlds of crime and legitimate society, and he proves himself by his ability to withstand the challenges to his integrity - and to his very status as the 'active hero' (i.e. to his masculine professionalism, or his 'professionalised masculinity') - which derive from the enigma (that is, from the

disruption of order which inaugurates and propels the narrative process, that gap in knowledge which is represented by 'the past' which has to be reconstructed and redeemed through the detective's investigative mission) [12].

As I considered in Chapter Five, the 'hard-boiled' private-eye hero represents an 'Americanisation' and 'masculinisation' of the 'classical' detective, but he can also usefully be seen as a fusion of the detective-hero with the type of adventurer hero found in the Western story. The world he moves through and seeks to order is comparable to the mythologised Frontier of the Western, a world of violence and lawlessness lacking any intrinsically effective machinery of civilized order, and dominated by assertive masculine figures of self-appointed authority. The lawless context of the "mean streets" world legitimises the private-eye's own aggressivity in the pursuit of his mission to establish a regime of truth. But what is principally at stake in the private-eye story is not really the safeguarding of 'normal' society - which may, as in the Western tale, be a product of the clash between the hero and the criminal/outlaw forces - for this often tends to be overshadowed by what arguably constitutes the real thrust of the narrative: the affirmation of the hero as an idealised and undivided figure of masculine potency and invulnerability (as precisely "His Majesty the Ego"). The 1941 Warner Brothers' adaptation of Hammett's The Maltese Falcon - the first of the cycle of 1940's 'tough' private-eye films - is characterised by the relatively unproblematic validation of the detective precisely as such a masculine hero. As I shall show below, this film is not actually representative of predominant tendencies within the 'tough' thrillers of the 'noir period', for these

films tend to be vitally obsessed with lapses from and failures to achieve such a position of unified and potent masculinity. It is thus worth devoting some space to the ways in which *THE MALTESE FALCON* constitutes its detective-hero, Sam Spade (Humphrey Bogart), as an 'ideal ego', in order to suggest what is actually at stake in the 'tough' investigative films which followed.

Seeking both the murderer of his partner, Miles Archer (Jerome Cowan) and the much-pursued jewelled bird of the title, Spade is confronted with a parade of characters who seek to deceive and threaten him, but he persistently triumphs over them. There is one significant moment when his masculine control appears to the spectator to break down. During his first meeting with the corpulent criminal baron, Gutman (Sidney Greenstreet), Spade seems violently to lose his temper. However, as he leaves Gutman's hotel-room, the film shows us that Spade is, in fact, smiling to himself. His apparant 'breakdown' is thus recast as a narrative 'snare' [13] - a 'red-herring' - and in accepting that he/she has been 'caught out', the spectator reappraises Spade as the manipulator of the scenario rather than its victim. The reversal of knowledge here works along the lines of a 'gag' [14], for it is a stratagem which serves to reconfirm the mastery of Spade/Bogart by raising and then disavowing the possibility of his defeat, transforming him in a moment from apparant failure to definitive master, and forcing the spectator to admit that he/she has underestimated him. The film repeatedly replays such scenes of triumph, serving to validate Spade, not just as a 'character' - in terms, that is, of the narrative predicates which define him - but as a figure of superior knowledge in comparison with the knowledge imparted to the spectator.

The way in which Spade's authority as hero is inscribed as a narrational principle is highlighted in another of the film's typical scenes. Following Archer's killing, and just after his first meeting with the duplicitous femme fatale, 'Miss Wonderley'/Brigid O'Shaunnessy (Mary Astor), Spade returns to his office and begins to roll himself a cigarette (a motif associated with him throughout the film, his assured and leisurely manner suggesting an unflappable control). As he puts the cigarette into his mouth, the dapper Joel Cairo (Peter Lorre) - later revealed to be a criminal associate of Gutman and Brigid - is shown into the office by Spade's secretary. The detective sits back and coolly smokes his cigarette while, across the desk, Cairo fidgets intently with his umbrella, not engaging with Spade's look and drawing only laconic replies to his questions concerning the 'black bird'. But then, with Spade's attention distracted by the dictaphone, Cairo rises from his chair and draws a gun upon the detective. Spade is now subject to Cairo's demands, his inferior position underscored by the fact that he sits while Cairo stands. As Cairo orders Spade over to the middle of the room - to search him - the camera is at an extreme low-angle, italicizing the danger faced by the hero. But then, with a smile on his face and the cigarette still dangling from his lips, Spade turns, knocks the gun from Cairo's hand, and punches him. As Cairo lies unconscious on the sofa, the detective searches through his pockets - directly reversing Cairo's intent. The moment of triumph is emphatically figured in terms of Spade's mastery through vision, for the film then cuts to a series of point-of-view close-ups as he examines Cairo's papers. The looks of Spade and the camera/spectator are unified (we 'share' his superior view) [15]. This identification with the authority of Spade's

look relocates the hero in a position of control, so much so that the film can indulge in a little joke which serves to reinforce Spade's 'superior' masculinity: Spade sniffs Cairo's handkerchief, and it is evident from the amused look he casts in the latter's direction that it is perfumed. Spade's mastery is thus explicitly linked with the triumph of 'tough' masculinity over a 'deviant'/effeminate adversary (and Gutman is also associated with 'deviant' male sexuality, in his ambiguous attachment to the young 'gungel' Wilmer/Elisha Cook Jr.) [16].

THE MALTESE FALCON is explicitly concerned with the idealisation of Spade as an embodiment of self-sufficient phallic potency: he is beholden to no-one, incarnating and enforcing the law in himself. This is perhaps most vividly demonstrated at the end of the film, when the detective determines where the burden of guilt shall fall - setting up the woman, the embodiment of sexual difference, as the 'fall guy' to the law. In this exclusion of the feminine from the final restoration of order, it is made clear that validation of Spade as the potent detective/hero represents an emphatic escape from the responsibilities of family and of 'normal' social life - and, indeed, of any extra-individual commitment. San Francisco, the setting for the film, becomes a violent playground in which the hero's masculine prowess is submitted to a series of adventurous tests, and it is sharply separated from any home space, from the family, from the routine of the everyday. Both the film and Spade himself inscribe an explicit distance from 'settled life'- revealed particularly through the hero's cynical attitude towards marriage and bonds of 'obligation' (in his casual adultery with Archer's wife).

The validation of the invulnerable masculine hero requires, then, a careful 'negotiation' of the fact of sexual difference (which, of course, poses a threat to the self-sufficiency of the 'hero-as-phallus'). It is thus worth considering here the two types of threat which women pose for the elaboration of the fantasy of the 'tough' private-eye:

(a) on the one hand, women can represent the 'dangers' involved in acculturation, in settling-down. Just as Western films like MY DARLING CLEMENTINE, SHANE (1953), and RIDE LONESOME (1959) conclude with the hero rejecting romantic/social integration to ride off alone into the wilderness [17] - thus avoiding the threat of the termination of phallic self-containment - so too the private-eye story will often end up with the hero alone, ready to embark on a new adventure and unencumbered by social and (hetero)sexual obligations. Women have an integral place in such narratives, but as 'conquests' - as testimony, that is, to the hero's 'sexual prowess'; this serves to prevent them from competing with or disrupting his detective activity, the means by which he can assert and define himself without restriction (over and again, in the case of a series-hero like Philip Marlowe or the Continental Op). Raymond Chandler's fiction is particularly interesting in this respect, for sexual entanglement tends to feature as a principal articulation of the 'corruption of integrity' which is the force against which Marlowe continually struggles. By exposing the 'essential' untrustworthiness and criminality of such women as Velma/Mrs Grayle in Farewell, My Lovely and the Sternwood sisters,

Carmen and Vivien, in The Big Sleep, Chandler's detective is able to provide a strong rationale for the 'necessity' of remaining unattached [18]. Women may be allowed only the most fleeting of appearances without 'compromising' Marlowe's status and trajectory as a private-eye - and this is particularly highlighted by the problems the writer faced with his last - unfinished - Marlowe novel, The Poodle Springs Story (1959). As Chandler wrote in a letter to Maurice Guinness:

(The) idea that he should be married, even to a very nice girl, is quite out of character. I see him always in a lonely street, in lonely rooms, puzzled but never quite defeated. . .  
P.S. I am writing him married to a rich woman and swamped by money, but I don't think it will last. [19]

(b) more explicitly dangerous, however, are those women who have themselves rejected their conventional place as wives/mothers - the alluring but ambitious femmes fatales who figure repeatedly in the 'tough' thrillers. In THE MALTESE FALCON this danger is rigidly controlled: in 1941 Mary Astor was a distinctly 'mature' star and in the Hammett adaptation she is never the object of the kind of eroticised representation found in such later thrillers as THE KILLERS, THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE and DEAD RECKONING. As a result, Spade's overcoming of the 'lure' of sexual pleasure is made very easy, for, unlike the heroes of these other films, he is never in any real danger of being overwhelmed by his desire for the 'erotic' woman; Brigid never poses any real threat to his rationality, his control, his phallic self-containment.

Brigid represents but one of a number of tests to which Spade is submitted in the course of his investigation, whereas - as Christine Gledhill has suggested [20] - in many of the later 'tough' thrillers the woman often becomes the predominant object of the hero's quest. When, from 1944, the Hollywood studios began to produce 'hard-boiled' thrillers in a concerted manner, they tended either to introduce or to increase the prominence of a heterosexual love-story - a factor which in many cases shifted the emphasis from the story of a crime or investigation to a story of erotic obsession. The love-story complicates the linear trajectory of the hero's quest and, in the case of the investigative thrillers, the dominance of the woman problematises the phallic narcissism involved in both the figure of the 'tough' lone investigator and the trajectory of his self-defining, male-oriented mission; the more prominent the woman, the more difficult it becomes to validate the exclusively masculine ethos which is often at the very core of the private-eye story and other forms of 'tough' investigative thriller (a question which will receive further consideration below, particularly in connection with DEAD RECKONING). As I have already suggested, in order to maintain the private-eye as an unchallenged figure of law he has to be 'protected' from sexual entanglement. Indeed, Raymond Chandler went so far as to 'write-off' all Hollywood detective films because he saw them as essentially compromised in their inclusion of the love-story:

the really good mystery picture has not been made . . . The reason is that the detective always has to fall for some girl, whereas the real distinction of the detective's personality is that, as a detective, he falls for nobody. He is the avenging justice, the bringer of order out of chaos, and to make his doing this part of some trite boy-meets-girl story is to make

it silly. But in Hollywood you cannot make a picture which is not essentially a love story, that is to say, a story in which sex is paramount [21].

This grafting of the love-story onto the 'hard-boiled' detective story meant that the films had to confront what the written fiction could much more easily repress or elide: precisely the question of how heterosexuality could possibly accommodated within the parameters of such an obsessively phallogentric fantasy without causing it to collapse [22].

One film which is especially significant in this respect - although not at all typical of the majority of 'tough' thrillers - is THE BIG SLEEP, the 1946 Warner Brothers' version of Raymond Chandler's first Philip Marlowe novel, directed by Howard Hawks and once more featuring Humphrey Bogart as a 'tough' private-eye. However, whereas in the 1944 Chandler adaptation MURDER, MY SWEET the private-eye narrative is subjected to a destabilisation - the film persistently playing-against the relatively controlled Marlowe of the novel - in THE BIG SLEEP it is more the case that the investigative story is overtly decentred. Hawks was a director noted for both action dramas (like TIGER SHARK, 1932; ONLY ANGELS HAVE WINGS, 1939; and AIR FORCE, 1943) and 'crazy comedies' (like TWENTIETH CENTURY, 1934; BRINGING UP BABY, 1938; and HIS GIRL FRIDAY, 1940), but in many of his dramas he was drawn towards narrative reversals which tended to shift the emphasis away from the 'serious' treatment of dramatic issues towards a more playful, comic elaboration: notable examples include the way in which in TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT (1944) the kind of interventionist/isolationist debate which marks CASABLANCA is persistently displaced by the 'fun' relationship

between Harry Morgan (Humphrey Bogart) and Slim (Lauren Bacall); and in RED RIVER (1948), where the expected violent confrontation between the 'excessive' figure of the Law, Tom Dunson (John Wayne), and the 'surrogate-son', Matthew (Montgomery Clift), who has rebelled against his authority is, at the 'last minute', transformed into a comic reconciliation (largely through the intervention of a woman, Tess/Joanne Dru) [23]. THE BIG SLEEP is similarly remarkable for the ways in which the conventions of the 'hard-boiled' detective story are set in play. There is a 'playing down' of the usual atmospheric correlatives - of the threat of violence, of the 'tough' 'muscle-flexing' of dialogue and attitude - and in their place an emphasis upon the 'playful scene'. Bogart and Bacall replay their star-teaming in TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT, and indeed the goal of the narrative is much more the consolidation of the pair as the 'Hawksian' heterosexual couple [24] than the resolution of the enigma (hence the much-remarked complexity of the film's plot - by being de-emphasised, less attention is paid to causal motivation). Bacall is increasingly played against the femme fatale connotations of her character, Vivien Sternwood, and the films also tends to set Bogart against the image of Marlowe: in a joke about his being too short for a private-eye; in his impersonation of an effete 'bookworm'; and in the playful love-scenes with both Bacall and Dorothy Malone (as a bookshop attendant with whom he wiles away an afternoon). In a characteristic generic reversal, Hawks works against the 'hard-boiled' story's conventional constraint of women by foregrounding them insistently - even the taxi-driver with whom the detective strikes up an immediate bond (as in DARK PASSAGE - W.B. 1947, and OUT OF THE PAST) turns out to be a woman.

In the majority of post-1944 'tough' thrillers, however, there is a significantly different interfusion of the investigative narrative and the love-story. *THE MALTESE FALCON* is characterised by a rigid constraint of the feminine - not just of women themselves, but of any acceptable non-'tough' definition of male sexuality - and *THE BIG SLEEP* precisely subjects the validation of the 'tough', lone detective hero to a series of reversals. Many of the 1940's 'tough' thrillers, however, are marked by a more traumatic struggle to find a place, in regard to the masculine 'myth-making' which characterises the 'hard-boiled' investigative narrative, for both women and for 'alternative' definitions of male sexuality and identity. 'Struggle' being the operative word because of the extent to which, as I have already suggested, the process of accomodating the love story transforms the story of masculine assertion into a very different kind of story. As Christine Gledhill has argued:

The processes of detection - following clues and deductive intelligence - are submerged by the hero's relations with the woman he meets and it is the vagaries of this relationship that determine the twists and turns of the plot . . . Film noir probes the secrets of female sexuality and male desire within patterns of submission and dominance [25].

However, this destabilising of masculine affirmation should not solely, or even predominantly, be ascribed to the presence of the erotic-but-'predatory' woman. What is at issue in these films is, as I shall consider below, a more pervasive problematising of masculine identity and of the legitimising framework of male authority which the woman serves to activate rather than actually to cause.

The Sam Spade type of invulnerable, self-assured hero proves to be quite rare in the majority of 1940's 'tough' thrillers. Indeed, one can see Spade as occupying something of a precarious position between, on the one hand, a psychopathic masculine assertion - as with such psychotic heroes as Robert Manette (Gene Kelly) in CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY (Universal, 1944), Chris Cross (Edward G. Robinson) in SCARLET STREET (Diana Prods., 1945), Sam Wild (Lawrence Tierney) in BORN TO KILL (RKO, 1947), Dixon Steele (Humphrey Bogart) in IN A LONELY PLACE (Santana Prods., 1950), and the James Cagney gangster figures in WHITE HEAT (WB, 1949) and KISS TOMORROW GOODBYE (A William Cagney Prod., 1950) [26] - and, on the other hand, a masochistic 'impairment' of the masculine. The representation of masculinity in the 1940's 'tough' thriller oscillates between these two extremes, between the excessive presence and excessive absence of the qualities which define Sam Spade [27]. Indeed, taking the 1940's 'tough' thrillers as a whole, it can be seen that Sam Spade represents a marked deproblematization of the conflicting currents within masculine identity and sexuality which many of the later films give voice to, and seek to order. Although the psychotically-disturbed male is a notable source of fascination in many of the films, he tends most often in the investigative thrillers to be located as the villain rather than the investigator, as the source of the disorder which has to be countered rather than as the agent of law (although the investigative ex-vet films CORNERED, THE BLUE DAHLIA, and DEAD RECKONING quite markedly problematise the investigative hero as a figure of law through his readiness to 'excessive' violence. The investigator-as-psychopath is perhaps most readily identifiable in the figure of Mickey Spillane's series-hero, Mike Hammer).

For the remainder of this chapter I shall, with the aid of selected 'tough' thrillers, examine the relations between the investigative narrative, the representation of women and the figuration of lapsed and impaired masculinity. I will concentrate upon two further examples of the 1940's private-eye film, *THE DARK CORNER* and *OUT OF THE PAST*, which represent notable departures from the Spade-type hero - precisely representing the position of potency and knowledge signified by the 'tough' detective as a failed, lost or unattainable ideal - plus *THE KILLERS*, one of the most complexly hybrid of 1940's thrillers, which not only (like *OUT OF THE PAST*) contains one of the period's most striking representations of masculine fallibility, but which also features a splitting of the 'hero-space' between two radically opposed figurations of masculinity - and as such proves to be extremely useful in allowing one to isolate the issues and processes more generally in play in the 'tough' investigative narratives.

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At the start of *THE DARK CORNER* (TCF, 1946) - a film directed by Henry Hathaway, maker of several of the 1940's 'semi-documentary' thrillers [28] - private-detective Bradford Galt (Mark Stevens) is markedly disjunct compared to Sam Spade. Sent to prison as the result of a 'frame-up' engineered by his partner Tony Jardine (Kurt Kreuger), a broken, traumatised Galt finds himself, on his release, the victim of a further criminal conspiracy. A corrupt art-dealer, Hardy Cathcart (Clifton Webb), employs the hired-killer 'White Suit' (William Bendix) to coerce Galt into killing Jardine and then, after the latter is

eliminated by 'White-Suit', to frame him for murder. Whereas Galt is unaware of the identity of the conspirators, the spectator is shown them in action from very early on. Where Sam Spade is at times in possession of more knowledge than the spectator - which serves to stress his superiority as hero - Galt remains markedly inferior, attempting throughout the film to discover the information already held by the spectator. Compared to THE MALTESE FALCON, then, the spectator has a markedly different relationship both to the investigative narrative and to the hero. Even at the end of the film, Galt does not extricate himself from the conspiracy - and hence does not redeem himself as active hero. Discovering Cathcart's central role in the persecutory machinations which frustrate him, Galt tries to make the art-dealer confess. But Cathcart manages to turn the tables on him and is on the verge of killing the detective when he is himself shot dead by his wife, Mari (Cathy Downs), who is incensed to discover that Cathcart was responsible for the murder of Jardine, her lover. Although the enigma is resolved, and the criminals eventually 'brought to justice', Galt is still, at the end of the film, emphatically not the prime agent of narrative order.

This suggests that it is precisely the hero's failure to secure a position of 'tough', active masculinity which is the orientation of the fantasy matrix mobilised by THE DARK CORNER. Galt's ostensible aim may be to assert and define himself by achieving mastery over the enigma, but this serves - I would suggest - as the 'cover story' for a less easily-sanctioned fantasy of male masochism. Rather than seeking to expose and to triumph over the conspiracy, and hence to situate himself as a figure of Law, Galt persistently finds excuses for being unable to

do so. At one point he bemoans: "I may be stupid, but I know when I'm licked"; and later he wallows in extreme defeatism: "I feel all dead inside. I'm backed up in a dark corner and I don't know who's hitting me". The criminal persecution engineered by Cathcart makes permissible the articulation of such a transgressive masculine fantasy in which the desire to fail to become a potent hero substitutes for the desire to achieve a unified identity under the Law. It is worth dwelling here on the significance of such a masochistic fantasy.

In her article "Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of Cinema" [29], Gaylyn Studlar (following Gilles Deleuze's analysis of the novels of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch [30]) suggests that the male masochistic fantasy does not, as Freud considered, have its basis in Oedipal conflict itself but rather is rooted in the desire for pre-Oedipal symbiosis with the mother [31]. Whereas Freud saw male masochism in terms of the male subject's assumption of a passive, 'feminized' position in order to placate the Father, and to avert castration anxiety by masquerading as 'castrated', Studlar emphasises instead the centrality in such scenarios of the 'authority' of the mother [32]. The male masochist seeks precisely to disavow his masculine identity and to submit himself to the mother as a figure idealised as powerful and complete (rather than 'lacking' or 'castrated'). The passivity of the masochist - incarnated especially in the repetition of loss and in "the eternal masochistic attitude of waiting and suspended suffering" [33] - is thus the mark of the attempt to expel the phallus as the signifier of paternal authority and sexual difference; Studlar examines the logic of this:

Deleuze maintains that the father's punishing superego and genital sexuality are symbolically punished in the son, who must expiate his likeness to the father. Pain symbolically expels the father and "fools" the superego. It is not the son who is guilty, but the father who attempts to come between mother and child. [34]

The masochistic orientation of the scenarios of failure and passivity represented through Galt's trajectory is highlighted particularly by the unusual prominence in this film of a 'positive' female-figure, Galt's secretary/girlfriend Kathleen (Lucille Ball). Galt is shown to be continually dependant upon Kathleen as a 'nurturing' figure, as a woman who can buck up his spirits and provide shelter from the turmoil of the masculine arena of crime and detection, from the regime of masculine testing which Cathcart's machinations force him into. Not only this, but she persistently criticises Galt's profession as a private-eye, overtly encouraging him to abandon the 'tough' masculine regime and chastising him when he insists upon adopting a 'tough' masculine attitude ("You're afraid of emotion. You keep your heart in a steel safe").

One can see, then, that Galt is torn between:

- (a) the trajectory of the investigation, where completion of the quest signifies his affirmation as a detective and 'as a man';
- and (b) the abandonment of the quest, and the ostensible 'failure' to achieve such a position.

As I have suggested, the narrative resolves this problem by simultaneously presenting the overcoming of the enigma and denying Galt an active role in the resolution. Cathcart, the persecutory 'Father-

-figure', is eradicated not by Galt but by Mari, another woman. Mari usurps the authority of Cathcart-as-Father in order to destroy him, firing her gun before he can use his and, in the process, exonerating Galt from any 'Oedipal' guilt which would result from his confrontation with the 'Father'. By maintaining a splitting of the space of the woman in the text - between Kathleen as nurturing, 'oral mother' and Mari as powerful 'phallic mother' - the film is able to resolve the narrative without establishing a regime of masculine law or any unproblematic masculine identification for Galt.

OUT OF THE PAST, one of the most 'traumatised' of all the 'tough' thrillers, features a private-detective hero who is even more chaotically divided than Bradford Galt. Jeff Markham (Robert Mitchum) is a 'hard-boiled' big-city private-eye who is hired by big-time gambler Whit Sterling (Kirk Douglas) to retrieve his mistress, Kathie Moffett (Jane Greer). Kathie has shot and wounded Whit, and absconded with \$40,000. Jeff traces her to Acapulco, but he falls in love with her and as a result does not alert Whit. The lovers flee to San Francisco - leading a low-life existence like the 'outlaw couple' in such films as SHOCKPROOF (Columbia, 1948) [35] - but they find only temporary security, continually fearing that Whit may catch up with them. The 'inevitable' happens: they are spotted by Jeff's ex-partner Fisher (Steve Brodie) who, on attempting to blackmail them, is callously shot dead by Kathie. Jeff is stunned and disillusioned by Kathie's ready violence, and by the revelation that Kathie lied to him when she told him she did not have Whit's money. As a result, Kathie runs off, leaving

him to bury Fisher's body. Jeff then seeks to escape from his past life by adopting a new name - Jeff Bailey - and starting anew as the proprietor in the small, out-of-the-way town of Bridgeport. However, he is rediscovered by Whit's henchman Joe Stephanos (Paul Valentine) and summoned to Whit's house at Lake Tahoe, where he finds Whit and Kathie back together again. Whit tells Jeff that he will forget about Jeff's past transgressions if he does another job for him, retrieving Whit's tax-papers from a lawyer - Leonard Eels (Ken Niles) - in San Francisco. Jeff agrees, reluctantly, hoping to square himself with Whit and then settle down with his small-town girlfriend, Ann (Virginia Huston). However, the second mission turns out to be an elaborate 'frame-up', where Jeff is to be set-up as the 'fall-guy' for Eels' murder. Jeff seeks but fails to sabotage Whit's trap, and he flees back to Bridgeport, pursued both by the police and by Whit, and hoping to redeem himself by using the tax-papers - which he secured in San Francisco - as a bargaining-tool against Whit. This plan, however, is frustrated when Kathie shoots and kills Whit, to prevent him from turning her over to the police for Fisher's murder. Once more in Kathie's power, Jeff is forced to drive off with her, but instead of escaping back to Mexico he makes deliberately for a police ambush. Realising that he has betrayed her, Kathie shoots him before she is herself killed by the police [36].

This synopsis suggests the complexity of the story in the film, which ranges over a large stretch of time and an unusually diverse series of locations (New York, Acapulco, San Francisco, Bridgeport). This contrasts sharply with the more 'coherent' (and largely enclosed) setting of THE MALTESE FALCON. The chronological and geographical range suggests the extent to which Jeff finds it impossible to maintain any|

control over the story, as Spade does so easily, and serves indeed as a correlative of his difficulty in establishing a position of controlled and unified identity. The narrative complexity, and the concomitant fragmentation of the hero's sense of control, is exacerbated by its sequencing in the film's narration. The film opens in Bridgeport, with Joe Stephanos entering the town to seek out 'Jeff Bailey', and the past events emerge through Jeff's flashback-narration of his earlier life, told to Ann as they drive out to Lake Tahoe. This structure serves to locate Jeff's affair with Kathie as the traumatic past which he has to repress in order to live a 'normal' life, the repressed material forcefully re-emerging into and overturning his cosy small-town existence. At stake in this 'subjectivised' story-within-a-story is the lapse of the 'tough' hero from the position of potency signified by his status as a 'hard-boiled' private-eye, to a situation where his masculinity and identity are quashed, negated. It is worth examining this story of the lapsed hero in some detail, to suggest how the 'traumatic core' of OUT OF THE PAST represents an extreme problematising of the fantasy of self-contained, omnipotent masculinity which characterises THE MALTESE FALCON.

The first scene of the flashback, set in Whit's New York office, establishes Jeff as the archetypal 'tough' private-eye. During the meeting, he lounges diffidently in his chair, unconcerned as to whether or not he accepts Whit's mission (ie. his 'proposal' to prove himself as a man, to a man who signifies a regime of masculine authority). The scene serves as a test of 'hard-boiled' competence, with Whit and Jeff established, particularly through their control over language, as superior masculine figures: in opposition to Joe (who paces the room in hot-tempered agitation) and to Fisher (whose attempt to prove his 'toughness' takes the form of a

lamentably bad wisecrack, "A dame with a rod is like a guy with a knitting-needle"). In accepting Whit's mission, to retrieve Kathie, Jeff accepts a 'masculine contract', setting out to prove his worth as a 'tough' private-eye and as an agent of Whit. A later scene, set in Jeff's hotel in Acapulco, particularly highlights the nature of Jeff's quest as a masculine pact, and serves as a marked inversion of the initial meeting between the two men. Whit and Joe pay Jeff a surprise visit just as he is packing to leave with Kathie. In contrast to his earlier composure, Jeff is now extremely edgy, and he attempts to conceal his nervousness beneath an overly-assertive 'hard-boiled' bluff. In New York, Jeff's 'tough' attitude and language had been natural and controlled, but here it is very much a performance. He is fearful that at any moment Kathie may walk into the hotel-room and give the game away to Whit. The hero is now markedly disjunct in relation to Whit's masculine authority, against whom he has transgressed in wanting to take the woman for himself. Jeff's lack of control over the situation continues as they proceed to the bar for a drink. He stops in his tracks as he sees from behind a woman who is dressed just like Kathie and then, while the three men sit at a table, he sees Kathie herself enter the hotel, his inner trepidation displayed when he knocks over a drink. Although Whit and Joe finally depart without noticing Kathie, Jeff's loss of control is evident to them - Whit comments that he seems to have "picked up some nerves". Furthermore, he is unable to escape from his contract with Whit - which would clear him of some of the guilt of transgression - for as Whit leaves the hotel, he says to Jeff, with a controlled and menacing smile, "I fire people, but nobody quits me".

This sequence occurs the day after Jeff has consummated his relationship with Kathie. Their affair is transgressive not only because she is Whit's mistress - and hence can be seen to spark off Jeff's 'Oedipal revolt' - but also because Jeff deliberately sets himself in a position of submission to her, and in so doing he is not simply seeking to set himself in Whit's (masculine) place with Kathie but rather is attempting to establish a relation to her that bears the marks of pre-Oedipal fantasy. In his love for her he transgresses, then, against the whole regime of masculine authority. Where Whit desires to re-possess Kathie, to reassert his control over her, Jeff sets himself in her control, in the process denying both her status as 'bad object' (signalled by her use of the gun against Whit, and by stealing his money) and also his 'post-Oedipal' obligation as the agent of Whit-as-Father. The representation of the story of Jeff's 'fall' in terms of his 'confessional' narration to Ann very pointedly stresses that it is Jeff himself, rather than Kathie, who is to blame for his lapse. This is highlighted towards the end of the film, when, after Kathie has killed Whit, Jeff accuses her of having betrayed him, and she replies: "I never told you I was anything but what I am. You just wanted to imagine I was. That's why I left you". In other words, this is not so much the story of a transgressive femme fatale as it is that of a 'tough' hero who causes his own destruction through a willing abnegation of his 'responsibilities-as-a-man' (and thus OUT OF THE PAST can usefully be compared with the 'criminal adventure' thrillers, to be considered below). What is important here, then, is not so much Kathie, and her status as a 'machinating woman', but rather the problems engendered by the conflict between Jeff's desire to escape his responsibilities and

the power of patriarchal Law which decrees the acceptable positionings of the identity and desire of the masculine subject.

In disavowing Kathie's status as a 'phallic woman' who seeks to usurp male authority, Jeff constitutes her as 'oral mother', complete-in-herself, a source of maternal plenitude. As in *THE DARK CORNER*, the private-eye hero seeks to escape from the professionalised masculinity of his job. This is particularly marked in Jeff's voice-over narration, which has a complex function in the way it serves both to recreate the story of Jeff's 'fall' but also to inscribe a distance from it by establishing a distinction between Jeff-as-voice and Jeff-as-actant, between "Bailey" and "Markham". At the start of the flashback, Jeff's narration shifts into the obsessively 'hard-boiled' discourse which marks the New York sequence and the scenes between the three men in the hotel in Acapulco. However, in the flashback Jeff's voice-over descriptions of Kathie become obsessively romantic. For example, while he waits for her on the beach at Acapulco, pacing against the glittering background of sea and moonlight, the voice-over comments: "And then she'd come along like school was out. And everything else was just a stone you sailed at the sea". His language seems stripped of its 'toughness' by the force of Kathie as a desired image of plenitude. And it is not just the 'tough' language - from which, of course, women are excluded - that is negated here, but also the controlling power of the detective-hero's look. Kathie 'fills his eyes': he no longer desires to investigate her, to constitute her as the object of his professionalised masculine gaze (relaying the look of Whit), but seeks instead to look, and to keep on looking, in 'innocented' fascination. His is no longer a controlling vision - the voyeuristic vision of the detective - but is

rather a fetishistic vision through which Kathie is constituted as the shimmering, white-clad image of radiant perfection [37]. This is highlighted by Kathie's 'luminescence' throughout the Acapulco sequences - especially emphatic in the beach scene - and in the way Jeff's voice-over continually represents her as a glowing image:

"And then I saw her, coming out of the sun . . .";

" . . . and then she walked in out of the moonlight, smiling";

"And then I saw her, walking up the road in the headlights".

Besides his passive fetishistic look at Kathie, the masochistic position Jeff establishes in relation to her is emphasised by his ceding of motive power. Throughout their affair, Jeff leaves it to Kathie to determine when they shall meet, and is never able to arrange the course of events himself. This powerlessness is italicized in the following voice-over comment: "And every night I went to meet her. How did I know she'd ever show up? I didn't. What stopped her from taking a boat to Chile or Guatemala? Nothing. How big a chump can you get to be? I was finding out" [38]. Constituted by Jeff in opposition to the trajectory through which he can consolidate his identity as post-Oedipal masculine subject, Kathie becomes the repository of his desire precisely to escape from the responsibilities of masculine identity. For example, when she tries to convince him that she did not take Whit's money, Jeff cuts her off and moves in to kiss her, saying "Baby, I don't care", an overt repression of his masculine status as an investigator (and it is significant that Jeff's later horror in discovering the \$40,000 in her bankbook can be seen to derive not merely from Kathie's deception but quite crucially from Jeff's ceding of his responsibilities as detective, the desire not to know supplanting his male-directed mission to find out

the truth). It is also significant in this regard that it is Kathie who initiates the consummation of their relationship, rather than Jeff himself. It is worth quoting the dialogue exchange here, to highlight the way in which Kathie is emphatically located during the 'sexual contract' as 'usurping' his vision [39]:

KATHIE: "Did you miss me?"

JEFF: "No more than I would my eyes. Where shall we go tonight?"

KATHIE: "Let's go to my place".

This is followed by a scene of implied sexual intercourse in Kathie's cabin [40] - the very location being a further indication of Kathie's power over Jeff (Jeff, of course, agreeing to her proposal, by no means simply a victim to her). Between the scene of consummation, and just prior to the meeting with Whit and Joe which demonstrates the extent of his 'fall' from masculine confidence, Jeff tells her that he is not really afraid of what Whit may do to them, he fears only that Kathie may not want to run away with him. The extent to which Kathie now overrides all else for him is made emphatic during their subsequent life-in-hiding in San Francisco, when Jeff proclaims "It was the bottom of the barrel. But I didn't care. I had her". This repetition of the fact that Jeff no longer cares about anything but Kathie signifies the extent to which he has no independent identity now that he has rejected the authority of Whit for Kathie. Being with Kathie is now his sole preoccupation, with his own self-debasement only accentuating her idealised completeness. In this scenario of obsessive romantic love, the woman is ascribed a power and perfection - referred to explicitly by

Jeff as "a kind of magic, or whatever it was" - which is achieved through the ceding of his own (masculine) identity and his rejection of his contract with Whit in favour of the masochistic/erotic contract with Kathie. The hero's self-abasement, his rejection of the authority of the masculine, his insistence upon waiting for Kathie rather than attempting to determine the course of the affair, and his overvaluation of her - these factors all strongly mark the motivating basis of Jeff's love for Kathie as masochistic fantasy.

As a powerful 'pre-Oedipal' maternal figure, Kathie is aligned against the masculine power represented by Whit as the figure who determines Jeff's 'identity' (more precisely the negation of identity). However, the idealization of Kathie is terminated when she reveals herself - through the killing of Fisher and her desire for money (a characteristic motivation for the femme fatale's 'evil' [41]) - as a 'phallic mother' (what Fisher refers to as "A dame with a rod . ."). Jeff sees that Kathie is not a self-consistent source of plenitude, that she desires and seeks to usurp the authority of the Father (Whit), that she is precisely both 'castrated' (in needing Whit's money) and 'castrator' (in the wielding of the gun). In other words, Jeff's desire for non-differentiation, for symbiosis with Kathie (as 'oral mother') is revealed to be falsely grounded, to rest on a misrecognition of Kathie. His idealization of her had rested upon the disavowal of her 'phallic desire' - suggested by her initial use of the gun against Whit - which is emphatically replayed when Fisher catches up with them (with her victim, Fisher, being significantly associated with Jeff's previous life as a 'tough' private-eye). Jeff has been duped: Kathie has allowed him to constitute her as the object of his self-abnegating, masochistic

desire, to use him for forwarding her own plans. It is made clear that Kathie herself recognises Jeff's self-willed weakness when she says that she shot Fisher because he would never have done so, and would thus not have been able to prevent Fisher from alerting Whit. While Jeff is powerless to take such aggressive action, Kathie reveals herself to be all too willing to wield such excessively 'masculine' force'.

Jeff's masochistic/erotic contract with Kathie is terminated when she deserts him. Having abandoned Whit, and having been abandoned by Kathie, Jeff has lost his identity. As his voice-over narration comments, "I wasn't sorry for him [Fisher]. I wasn't sore at her. I wasn't anything" [my italics]. Thus he has to start all over again - as "Bailey" rather than "Markham", as garage-owner rather than private-eye - in the restricted setting of the small-town rather than the adventurous playground of the big-city. The story of the past which Jeff relates to Ann is, then, a compressed narrative of the traumatic loss of male identity and security under the Law. Kathie is not so much important 'in herself' as she is significant in terms of the drama of identity and position that is the story of Jeff Markham/Bailey, serving, as I have noted, to represent his fundamental transgression not only against his 'contract' with Whit but also against his 'place as a man'.

In the remainder of the film, Jeff seeks to redeem himself by 'rewriting' his history. His second 'contract' with Whit represents a test through which Jeff seeks to correct the mistakes he made in the first. He has to deal with a second femme fatale, Meta Carson (Rhonda Fleming) against whom he proves far more resilient than he had been with Kathie, acting 'tough' and non-committal towards her overt advances. However, he fails to establish any secure position through this second

test because Whit is secretly machinating against him, and Kathie herself is helping to set up the 'frame' rather than being simply 'replaced' by Meta [42]. From the moment he discovers that Kathie is back with Whit - at Lake Tahoe - Jeff treats her blatantly as a 'bad object', echoing Fisher's description of her as a "cheap piece of baggage" when he tells her "You're like a leaf that the wind blows from one gutter to another". The debasement of Kathie mirrors her previous over-valuation in that it represents Jeff's attempt to disavow his earlier romantic idealisation of her. And it is important to this project for Jeff to convince Whit of Kathie's transgressive manipulations - which he does, when he returns to Lake Tahoe after his second, thwarted adventure in San Francisco. For Jeff to be re-established as the active and potent hero, Kathie has to be set up, in a final 'contract' between Jeff and Whit, as the scapegoat for the earlier 'trouble with the man'. Whit rejects Kathie when Jeff reveals to him that Kathie has been secretly working with Joe behind Whit's back.

In this moment, Jeff is virtually restored to his previous ("Markham") potency. However, the setting-up of Kathie as the 'fall-guy' - a narrative stratagem which strongly recalls THE MALTESE FALCON, an acknowledged source for many of the film's scenes - fails because Jeff once more underestimates her. In order to keep a rendezvous with Ann, Jeff leaves her alone with Whit in the latter's house at Lake Tahoe, and he returns to find Whit dead on the floor. This moment represents Kathie's ultimate usurpation of the power of the 'Father' and she signals to Jeff that she has now taken his place: "I'm running the show now, don't forget". Jeff is now in danger of being forcefully returned to his former submission to Kathie - emphasised when Kathie

refers back to their days in Acapulco: "I want to walk out of the sun again and find you waiting. I want to sit in the same moonlight and tell you all the things I never told you - till you don't hate me". Kathie is now unambiguously cast - precisely, casting herself - as the manipulator of the man's romantic fantasy. There is, of course, a significant difference from earlier in that Kathie has, through wielding the gun against Whit, revealed herself once more to be a 'phallic' woman rather than the 'nurturing' woman Jeff believed herself to be in Acapulco - the latter function transferring to Ann (embodiment of small-town domesticity).

However, what is particularly remarkable about Jeff's final eradication of the 'evil' woman is that it is devoid of any connotations of 'triumph'. As Michael Walsh has stressed, the killing of Kathie is a desperately defeatist act, for

Jeff Bailey's experience is a vacillation between radically incompatible positions, and the narrative can engineer its closure only by annihilating him along with every figure from his problematic past. [43]

Following the annihilation of Whit, Jeff and Kathie, the film actually ends with a 'studio-imposed' coda in which 'normality' is asserted: Jeff's deaf-mute assistant, the Kid (Dickie Moore), signifies to Ann that Jeff was running away with Kathie, which leaves Ann free to marry her small-town childhood sweetheart, Jim (Richard Webb). The Kid then gestures affirmatively towards the "Jeff Bailey" sign above the garage - the same sign which had first brought Joe to re-find Jeff - signalling that he has done Jeff's bidding in releasing Ann from her obligation to him. This ending is itself laden with contradictions - for even in death

Jeff does not establish a unified, secure identity. He is reduced to the 'garage sign' - to "Jeff Bailey" - but the 'sign' given to Ann by the Kid casts him as the lapsed Jeff Markham. Both signs are thus duplicitous, for Jeff's identity is not fixed as either "Bailey" or "Markham". The only sign that is upheld is the Kid's signal to the "Jeff Bailey" sign, but then, as a deaf-mute, the Kid is himself outside language (both the 'hard-boiled' discourse of the 'tough' thriller and the small-scale talk of Bridgeport [44]) and does not himself even have a name. The film does not conclude, then, with the re-establishment of the Law or (masculine) language, but rather - despite the strongly conventionalised pairing-off of Ann and Jim (both peripheral characters to the main drama) - with a much more ambivalent 'confusion of signs'. The one who knows the truth, the Kid, is akin to the spectator in that this knowledge cannot be communicated. The failed recuperation of the hero exists alongside a failure to secure a unified position of knowledge.

Not only, then, do THE DARK CORNER and OUT OF THE PAST manifest a remarkable problematising of the Spade-type private-eye hero, but they are also significant for the ways in which they displace the investigative narrative in favour of a narrative process structured more around the disjunctions of suspense - precisely forestalling and frustrating the hero's attempt to consolidate himself in a position of mastery over the enigma, and in the process allowing the articulation of a masochistic fantasy which represents an inversion of the overt 'tough' masculinisation which so strongly marks THE MALTESE FALCON. It can be

seen from both films how women tend to represent a disturbance of the consolidation of masculinity which is integral to the trajectory of the 'tough' detective-hero in the FALCON. The woman is problematic because of the conflicting and contradictory currents which she activates within the hero, emerging herself as an embodiment of contradictory predicates and motivations [45] as she serves as one of the principal means by which the hero seeks to define himself. In other words, the contradictions frequently noted in the characterisation of the femme fatale in the 'tough' film noir thriller arise precisely because of the way in which she serves as an articulation of ambivalent tendencies within masculine identity and desire. As the example of Kathie Moffett shows in particular, the 'incoherence' of the motivations ascribed to the woman is a direct product of the contradictory ways in which she is perceived by the hero rather than in terms of what she 'actually' is, 'in herself'. The problematic representation of women in these 'tough' thrillers, then, is integrally bound up with - indeed, is precisely dependant upon - the representation of problems within and between men. The contradictory 'images' of Kathie - as 'phallic mother', as 'oral mother' - derive from oppositional tendencies within male desire, within which she is 'framed' [46].

Because of her exclusion from the regime of the masculine - which is so emphatic in the 'tough' thriller - the woman has to be situated in terms of opposition to, co-operation with, or object of the hero's self-defining trajectory (either the investigation or the 'criminal adventure', as the means by which he can assert himself as knowing, potent, masculine). However, although in films like OUT OF THE PAST the woman may represent a disturbance of the hero's attempt to achieve a

position of mastery and knowledge - and a concomitant disruption of the linear, investigative narrative - the cause of this disturbance and disruption lies, as I have suggested, in the 'nature' of masculinity itself. Masculine identity and sexuality are never stable and unified but are rather in flux between conflicting positions of desire; masculinity is hegemonic rather than homogeneous. The 'tough' investigative thriller, then, should be considered not in terms of any simple reiteration of a coherent 'masculinity' but as having to negotiate conflicting and contradictory positionings of male desire, identity and sexuality and to consolidate masculinity as unified. THE DARK CORNER is a particularly useful reminder that the disturbance of the hero's place in the 'tough' investigative thriller is not due solely to the machinations of the femme fatale, for Bradford Galt's troubles quite ostensibly derive from the problems he faces in establishing his position in relation to both the legal system of law and to the regime of patriarchal law, the figurehead of which is Cathcart (and it is important to note that while Mari Cathcart is established as a 'dangerous', gun-wielding woman at the end of the film, she has no interaction with the hero throughout THE DARK CORNER and, indeed, her violence does not have Galt as its object).

As the invulnerable, controlled hero, Sam Spade represents an attempt to deny that masculinity is divided or problematic. Although he faces a complex web of dissimulation, the trajectory of his 'quest' - a term the film invites, with its opening-title evocation of the Knight Templars - is emphatically linear, with the detective located as the dynamic agent of the narrative process. By contrast, Galt knows considerably less than the spectator and the disjunction of Jeff

Bailey/Markham is particularly inscribed in the complexity of the film's narration, the fragmented narrative mirroring his own fragmentation. The narrational/structural complexity integral to OUT OF THE PAST also characterises such other post-1944 'tough' thrillers as THE KILLERS, DEAD RECKONING and CRISS CROSS where, similarly, the dynamism of both the hero and the narrative seem to be impaired by convolutions in the telling of the story (involving, in some instances, multiple flashbacks). Christine Gledhill has referred to this narrational complication in terms of a 'discursive confusion', "a struggle between different voices for control over the telling of the story" [47].

Gledhill claims that the narrational incoherence can allow the emergence of a "woman's discourse" when the dominating "male discourse" loses its control or breaks down [48], but it is more to the point, perhaps, to stress that this confusion emerges precisely as a sign of the disruption of the authority of the masculine and not by any means simply as evidence of a "woman's discourse" breaking through its containment. For example, one might point to the 'splitting' of the function of the woman in OUT OF THE PAST as indicative of how the representation of female sexual identity in this film exceeds any simple placement: for not only are Ann and Kathie set in opposition as 'nurturing woman'/'phallic woman', but Kathie herself is split at different stages between these two poles, with there being a further doubling of Kathie and Meta as the femme fatale. However, these contradictory placements or definitions of the women in the film find their place within - and, as I have suggested already, precisely signify - a much more crucial 'splitting' of the hero, with Jeff's identity lacking the unitary force of the self-sufficient Sam Spade.

I shall conclude this examination of the 'tough' investigative thriller by considering how the investigative narrative functions in THE KILLERS (Mark Hellinger Prods. 1946) [49], a film in which the 'splitting' of the hero is not embodied within a single character - as it is in OUT OF THE PAST - but is rather manifested through a structural bifurcation of the 'hero-space'. The film comprises a series of asynchronous flashback 'testimonials' from diverse characters, these being contextualised within the framework of the investigative quest of insurance agent Riordan (Edmond O'Brien). As with OUT OF THE PAST, the narrational complexity of THE KILLERS can be seen to be determined by the attempt to contain and to order the traumatic effects of the 'unmanning' of a once-'tough' masculine figure, the ex-boxer Swede (Burt Lancaster), whose murder inspires Riordan's investigation. The only time that Swede himself figures in the 'present-tense' of the film's narrative is in the opening sequence. Two hired gunmen invade the tranquility of the small-town of Brentwood and terrorise the customers of a diner, looking for 'Pete Lunn'. As with the appearance of the dark-clad Joe Stephanos in Bridgeport at the start of OUT OF THE PAST, the two hoods represent the intrusion of big-city violence, the extent of this intrusion signalled by the emphatically 'noir' stylization which pervades the sequence (chiaroscuro lighting in conjunction with deep-focus cinematography, extreme high- and low- angled camera set-ups, and 'high-tension' musical scoring). It is a characteristic moment of male-defined violence which establishes the film immediately as a 'tough' thriller, but the climax of the sequence represents a 'troubling' of the assertive 'toughness' of the opening (signified particularly by the hoods' 'hard-boiled' urban talk and their threatening gestures). For

when he is informed of their presence, 'Pete Lunn'/Swede chooses neither to confront them nor to escape but instead he waits passively to be killed. There is a disturbing contradiction here between Swede's physically evident 'masculinity' - highlighted through the stress upon his muscled body, displayed through his vest - and his inertia when faced with danger. Instead of taking positive action, he lounges on the bed, his face hidden in shadow, and comments desperately, "I'm through with all that running around". He just lies there as the hoods burst through the door and shoot him.

The central enigma established by this opening is: 'Why did Swede refuse to save himself? What has robbed him of his 'masculine' motive power?'. This is, as Don Siegel has remarked of his 1964 'remake' of the film, the "catalyst" for the story [50] - and the point at which the original short-story by Ernest Hemingway ends [51]. It is this enigma which propels Riordan's quest. As with the 'mission' of Rip Murdock (Humphrey Bogart) in DEAD RECKONING, Riordan's task is to find out what brought about the downfall of the man, and to redeem him by eradicating the enigma. His investigation becomes a personal obsession which exceeds the requirements of his job - he is warned off the case several times by his boss, Kenyon (Donald MacBride). Riordan precisely sets himself up as Swede's avenger, and through so doing can be seen to be seeking to affirm his own masculine identity. His determination to find out all about Swede represents an attempt to achieve mastery over this enigma, in the process substituting his own success as a 'tough' investigator for Swede's masculine 'impairment'.

Riordan interviews the people who knew Swede and seeks to establish from their testimony the reasons for his downfall. His effectivity as a

masculine investigator is signified by his success in constructing a coherent picture of the 'truth' from the 'disordered' network of clues. By asserting himself as the 'knowing subject', Riordan can define himself as the antithesis of Swede: where, for example, Swede's fragmented identity is signified by the profusion of names by which he is known throughout the film - Ole Anderson, 'Swede', 'Nelson', 'Pete Lunn' - the investigator bears only the name 'Riordan', a testimony to his unitary force and single-minded masculine drive. In the first three of the film's eleven flashback sequences, Riordan establishes information about Swede's past. After a brutal beating in the ring - a public as well as personal humiliation - he had to quit boxing; but he was still at this stage determined and aggressive, vowing that he "ain't quitting". However, his desire for "big money" makes him cynical about a regular, honest job - his detective friend Lubinsky suggests that Swede joins the police - and he becomes drawn towards the criminal fraternity. Another flashback, set some five years later presents a totally opposed picture: a shabby, broken Swede stumbles around his disordered room, despairingly calls out "She's gone", and attempts to throw himself out of the window. When prevented from doing so, he throws himself down onto the bed - a 'rhyme' with the opening sequence - and weeps. The two extremes of Swede are thus restated, but separated: the 'tough', masculine boxer (a lost, gladiatorial potency), and the man brought low, 'feminized' through tears.

It is not until the fourth flashback that we see the woman who, as it has been suggested, is to blame for the 'unmanning' of Swede. Kitty (Ava Gardner) thus occupies a highly constrained place within the text: like *Mildred Pierce*, she is firmly bracketed within the context of a

male-directed investigation. But, furthermore, she appears within the flashback which represents the story of Lilly (Virginia Christine), the 'good girl' whom Swede rejects in favour of the more glamorous Kitty. She is thus doubly marked as 'bad object'. It is worth considering in some detail the sequence in which Swede first meets Kitty, for it crystallizes the 'trouble with Swede' and it also, like the Apapulco sequence in OUT OF THE PAST, presents a highly compressed scenario of male romantic obsession. Swede takes Lilly to a party in a lavish apartment owned by the gangster Big Jim Colfax (Albert Dekker). When Swede sees Kitty he is immediately captivated by her glamorous appearance. She is a lustrous incarnation of 1940's Hollywood 'eroticism', with long, flowing black hair, and wearing a tight, black split-leg dress and black elbow-length gloves (her costume very similar to that of Rita Hayworth in the 'striptease' scene in GILDA, and to that worn by Lizabeth Scott on her first appearance in DEAD RECKONING). Lilly is markedly displaced, looking on while Swede gazes in fascination at Kitty's shimmering 'perfection'. The way in which he is frozen into immobility while looking at Kitty serves as a reinforcement of the danger she represents as an 'erotic' object. But the 'look' of the camera is at no time equated with Swede's own look (as it is, for example, when the hero first meets the 'erotic' woman in such films as DOUBLE INDEMNITY, THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE, DEAD RECKONING and THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME). Rather the spectator witnesses Swede's 'entrapment' through the look [52], is markedly detached from that look: emphatically so when Kitty sings her 'torch-song', the culmination of the seduction/contamination of Swede.

Because it is such a common feature in the codification of (female) 'eroticism' in the 1940's 'tough' thriller, it is worth devoting some space to how the 'torch song' operates as a 'performance' of the woman's desirability. In *THE KILLERS*, Kitty sings "The More I Know Of Love"; in *CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY*, Jackie sings "Always"; in *DEAD RECKONING*, Coral (Lizabeth Scott) sings "Either It's Love, Or It Isn't"; in *THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI*, Elsa (Rita Hayworth) sings "Please Don't Take Your Arms Away"; in *THE BRIBE* (MGM, 1949), Elizabeth (Gardner, again) sings "Situation Wanted"; in *GILDA*, the eponymous heroine (Hayworth) sings "Amado Mio" (Love Me) [53]. In each case, the woman presents herself as 'made for love', desiring love, needing love. Such songs often mark the pivotal moment in the scenarios of 'fatal attraction', situating the woman as a Siren-figure (quite explicitly in *THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI*, where the yacht which provides the venue for the song named after Circe, the mythical siren of *The Odyssey*). But because the song is precisely a performance - that is, it is rehearsed, not really spontaneously 'from the heart', as the song-numbers in many musicals tend to be marked (as with "The Trolley Song" and "The Boy Next Door" in *MEET ME IN ST LOUIS*, 1944) - then it also activates the question 'If this is a 'fake', then how much else is?'. In *DEAD RECKONING*, for example, Rip is simultaneously attracted to the woman via the song but is also deeply suspicious of her, desiring to find out just how sincere or otherwise is the projected image of love and vulnerability. The fascination rests, of course, in the spectacle of sexual difference promoted through the performance, with the 'decorous' and plaintive voice of the woman, for example, being radically removed from the 'tough', aggressive use of language which characterises the men. And, of course, it is not just

the woman's voice which is important in such sequences, but also her body: and it is notable how passive the woman tends to be during the performance (with, again, GILDA being an emphatic exception) - something taken to a sadistic extreme in THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI. In THE KILLERS, Kitty's glamorously bedecked and posed body represents an emphatic contrast to the masculine world of the boxing-ring with which Swede is most familiar, the arena of male combat and brutality in which the male body is the source of spectacle. Indeed, Kitty's first words to Swede highlight this bodily difference which makes her so fascinating to him: "I hate brutality, Mr Anderson. The idea of two men beating each other to a pulp makes me sick".

Swede is attracted to Kitty because of her difference from the lower-class masculine world he knows, because of the image of luxury and glamour she represents (especially in contrast to the more homely Lilly, whose 'domestic' qualities are emphasised by her later marriage to Swede's friend, police-lieutenant Lubinsky/Sam Levene - a man who can provide her with the security and routinised existence which Swede scorns). As I have already suggested, the film inscribes a distance both from Swede's fascination with Kitty and from her performance of the song. The film cuts from Kitty's mysterious, preoccupied look offscreen as she commences singing to a shot of Lilly being approached by Blinky Franklin (Jeff Corey), one of the shady characters at the party. He offers her a drink and then talks about Big Jim Colfax, who is out of town. Lilly has been persistently admiring the lavishness of the apartment, and envying Kitty's glamour, and it becomes clear to her and to the spectator, but not to Swede, that Kitty is a 'kept woman'. Swede remains in innocent, ignorant fascination. Indeed, the film highlights

the fetishistic character of his love for Kitty, not only in his idealisation of her as self-consistent (her glamour springing magically from her), but also in the way in which - later in the film - he continually paws over the green silk handkerchief she has given to him (this handkerchief, which is covered in golden harps, is all that Swede possesses when he dies - and that he can ever really hold onto). The revelation of Kitty's attachment to Big Jim enables the film to present a critique of Swede's fetishised attachment to her, particularly as this information is imparted to Kitty's rival for his affections.

Although Kitty's voice continues on the soundtrack, she is markedly displaced from the image. Not only is Kitty herself doubly distanced within the film's narration (contained within Riordan's investigative quest and through Lilly's flashback), but so too is Swede's obsession with her. There is also a pointed association between Swede's passivity in looking at Kitty and his passivity when faced with the killers: the 'erotic' woman is associated with death and contamination. As such, one can see why Kitty's introduction into the film is heavily bracketed: his meeting with her inaugurates the process whereby Swede moves from being able to express that he will not quit to being a quitter par excellence. A 'rhyming-shot' within the sequence implies this economically: during the song, Swede walks away from Lilly to stand beside the piano, where Kitty is sitting, the camera reframing to exclude Lilly from the shot. Following a medium close-up of Kitty, the film cuts to a side-on view where Swede dominates the right half of the image, Kitty's head is just perceptible along the left frame foreground, and in between them, on the piano, stands a large lamp. The lamp visually intervenes between Swede and the object of his desire -

and the same lamp is also emphatically present in the very first shot of the party sequence, where it dominates in the right foreground in the shot where Swede and Lilly are let into the apartment. Following two shots which detail the conversation between Lilly and Blinky, the film cuts back to the space of the piano and the lamp, but from a slightly different angle. Now, Kitty is much more prominently in the left foreground and Swede is less dominant in the right background, the lamp still burning brightly between them. Swede is looking towards Kitty, but she stares forward, offscreen. This 'rhymed shot' concludes the song-sequence, and it emphasises how Kitty has achieved a position of dominance vis-a-vis Swede. The spectator has a totalising view: being able to perceive both the intensity of Swede's entrapment-through-the-look and the lack of reciprocation on the part of Kitty (emphasised both by her self-absorbed look outside the frame of the image, away from Swede, and by the visual dominance of the 'inert' object, the lamp, which 'stands in' as the object of Swede's look, blocking his vision). The mise-en-scène of the two rhymed shot suggests, then, a 'before' and 'after' effect - suggests, that is, that Kitty has 'usurped' the man's gaze.

The traumatic Swede-Kitty relationship which is the key to his 'downfall' as a man actually occupies only a minimal proportion of the film. They have only a few more scenes together. We see them for the second time in the flashback ascribed to Lubinsky: Kitty is dining in a restaurant with a group of small-time mobsters when Lubinsky arrives on the trail of some stolen jewellery. Swede arrives just as Lubinsky is about to arrest her for possessing a stolen brooch. When she begs him to do something about it, Swede himself claims responsibility for the

robbery in order to protect her. Not only does his love for Kitty cause Swede to lose his security under the law, but he is also led to attack Lubinsky, his best-friend since childhood (the close relationship between the two men who have chosen different paths in escaping an impoverished background being comparable to the friendship between the gangster-hero/James Cagney and the priest/Pat O'Brien in *ANGELS WITH DIRTY FACES*, 1938). This sequence, then, suggests both Swede's self-abnegation and his willingness to defy the law for the sake of the woman (both of which characterise Jeff's relationship with Kathie in *OUT OF THE PAST*). Later, Swede returns from prison to find Kitty firmly attached to Big Jim Colfax, and she is here the archetype of the 'lazy' kept woman (as with another Kitty, a.k.a. "Lazy Legs"/Joan Bennett in *SCARLET STREET*), lounging on a bed while Big Jim and his gang plan a heist. Swede involves himself in the caper because he wants to be near her.

Between these two sequences is a scene set in Swede's prison-cell, where he is shown treasuring the green handkerchief despite the cynicism of his older, wiser cell-mate Charleston (Vince Barnett). Charleston - who is, along with Riordan, Lubinsky and Swede's ex-manager Packy (Charles D. Brown), one of the few people to attend Swede's funeral - tells Lubinsky that "I guess me and the Swede were as close as two guys can get", and the old man clearly acts as a 'stand-in' for Swede's lost relationship with Lubinsky [54]. The homo-erotic father-son relationship between the two (Charleston says, "I guess me and Swede were as close as two guys can get") is disrupted when Swede meets up with Kitty, and the old man warns him to "stop listening to those golden harps". Swede, of course, does not heed the 'paternal' advice and, as a consequence, he

commits himself both to involvement in the robbery and to an ultimate - and failed - confrontation with Big Jim, who is, like Whit Sterling in *OUT OF THE PAST*, a powerful figure of male authority who lays claims to the desired woman. Kitty is thus represented as multiply divisive, causing the men to fall out among themselves and to renege against the bonds of friendship and obligation that unite them. It is significant that in the scenes where Kitty appears, the mise-en-scène is dominated by 'triangular' compositions - involving either three characters in the frame, or two characters and a prominent object - which represent a visual correlative of the conflicts which the woman provokes. On the night before the robbery of the Prentice Hat Company, Kitty deliberately provokes a fight between the frustrated Swede and Big Jim, while she coolly steps out of the way to brush her hair in front of the mirror, a further indication of her narcissistic self-absorption [55].

Towards the end of the film, Riordan deliberately sets himself in Swede's former place with Kitty, as a means of both avenging Swede's destruction and asserting his own immunity to Swede's 'weakness'. Through a ploy, he manages to arrange a meeting with Kitty at the "Green Cat" club. She attempts to convince Riordan that she has reformed, telling him:

"I have a home now, and a husband. I've got a life worth fighting for and there's nothing in the world I wouldn't do to keep it just the way it is....I hated my life. Okay, I wasn't strong enough to get away from it. All I could do was dream of some big pay-off that would let me quit the racket".

This ploy for sympathy is, however, invalidated by the film on two counts. Firstly, her account of what happened after the robbery

conflicts with the facts Riordan has already unearthed: both Riordan and the spectator know that she is lying. Secondly, when she attempts to distinguish herself from "the old Kitty Collins", the mise-en-scène is forcefully reminiscent of the 'rhyming' shots in the party/song sequence: Kitty and Riordan sit across from each other at a table, on top of which - and between them - is a burning candle (which is, significantly, only prominent in the close-shots of Kitty - Riordan being distanced from her 'contamination'). The composition of the shot thus suggests that Kitty is attempting to deceive and entrap Riordan as she had earlier used Swede, but Riordan is markedly not 'duped' by the woman and refuses to believe her account of what happened.

Kitty criticises Swede's obsessive attachment to her and blames his failure to retain his strength and identity upon his own weakness. She criticises him in particular because he was "always looking at me" and toying with the green handkerchief. And then she 'delivers' the film's final flashback, which differs from those preceding in that it is duplicitous. This flashback serves as the equivalent of the song which Kitty sings at the party, in that she presents a false image of herself as dedicated to love, in order to deceive a man. Through the flashback she presents herself as an innocent victim, as a woman frustrated by her circumstances but deeply in love (the same image projected by Elsa in *THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI* and Coral in *DEAD RECKONING*). That this is a manipulative facade is confirmed by what happens next: Kitty leaves Riordan at the table, to 'powder her nose', and then the two gunmen who had murdered Swede come into the club and start blasting away - while Kitty makes her escape through the washroom window. But Riordan has outsmarted her - Lubinsky and his men appear and shoot the killers dead.

Riordan thus manages to turn the tables on Kitty, demonstrating his invulnerability as the masculine detective and reversing her earlier deception of Swede.

Having exposed Kitty's duplicity, Riordan and Lubinsky drive to Colfax's mansion to complete the reassertion of the law. A shoot-out leaves Colfax fatally wounded, and the mobster - who is now married to Kitty - confesses that they planned together to double-cross the gang after the heist, and that he had sent the killers after Swede purely as a safety-measure. The latter's death, in other words, was not strictly necessary, but the implication is that Big Jim had him removed because of his involvement with Kitty. Kitty is brought to the top of the stairs, where Colfax lies dying, and her 'corruption' is stressed further, when she desperately beseeches Colfax to clear her name. She is condemned by the two male figures of law: Riordan is tough and unsympathetic, and Lubinsky comments moralistically: "Don't ask a dying man to send his soul into hell". When Riordan tells her "It's no use, Kitty, your would-be fall-guy is dead", it is clear that his mission is over, that she has been prevented from using another man to forward her self-seeking desires. Kitty continues pleading, and keeps repeating "Kitty is innocent", trying in vain to get the dead Colfax to mouth the words - her self-alienating discourse betraying a retreat into psychosis which is the mark of the punishment of the law (in the emphatic fragmentation of her subjectivity) .

Following this exposure, condemnation and punishment of Kitty, the film concludes with the reconfirmation of Riordan as a 'tough' and tireless embodiment of the law, as the polar opposite of the lapsed Swede. Back in the insurance office, Kenyon congratulates him and

rewards him with some time off - but only for the weekend. This is similar to the ending of Fritz Lang's *THE BIG HEAT* (Columbia, 1953), but whereas in this latter film the police detective Dave Bannion (Glenn Ford) is transformed into an obsessive, almost mechanised figure of law (after the murder of his wife), Riordan is from the start a figure of ruthless phallic potency. Riordan's extremism in the pursuit of his mission is motivated by the extremity of Swede's 'fall', his obsession with masculine reassertion driven by the latter's ceding of will and identity. This very polarisation of Swede and Riordan problematises the possibility of a 'normal' heterosexual relationship. Although Lilly and Lubinsky are represented as a happily-married couple they are - like Ann and Jim in *OUT OF THE PAST* - strongly marginalised, featuring together only in one very brief scene. As with most 'tough' thrillers, the main interest lies neither in 'normal' social life nor in any 'pure and simple' masculine celebration - it rests, rather, in the representation of the problems which beset any attempt to consolidate masculine identity as secure and unified.

At the end of *THE KILLERS*, Riordan is emphatically alone. But whereas in *THE MALTESE FALCON* the phallic potency of the hero can be playfully celebrated, the conclusion of *THE KILLERS* represents a more acutely troubled situation. Spade is emphatically controlled in his relations with women, is the master of his feelings and thereby can resist any danger of 'contamination' and 'debasement' through love. However, the splitting of the hero-space between Riordan and Swede as two radically opposed male figures - the 'castrated' and the 'castrator' - represents the possibility of 'tough', controlled masculinity as a far less viable proposition. As in *OUT OF THE PAST*, the 'splitting' of the

woman - between 'good object' (Swede's idealisation) and 'bad object' (Riordan's denigration) - suggests conflicting tendencies within, and by implication a 'difficulty' with, the hegemony of masculine identity. This savagely polarised representation of masculinity can only be ordered by an emphatic activity of repression. Riordan, like the insurance investigator, Keyes, in DOUBLE INDEMNITY, is denied a 'personal life', has no identity outside of his job. He proves his 'supremacy' through the successful completion of his quest, but it is manifestly clear that his final trajectory is obsessive and defensive - that his job 'protects' him from from the kind of emotional fallibility which brought about the destruction of Swede . Whereas Spade can master his emotions, Riordan has to expel them - otherwise he risks succumbing to the same 'contamination' which destroyed Swede, a self-willed abnegation of his identity 'as a man'.

## CHAPTER TEN

THE 'SUSPENSE' THRILLER

I suggested in the previous chapter that in the 'tough' thriller the investigative narrative is integrally concerned with the assertion and consolidation of masculine law. Although in THE MALTESE FALCON this process of assertion and consolidation is managed relatively unproblematically, such films as THE DARK CORNER, OUT OF THE PAST and THE KILLERS can be seen through their displacement of the investigative narrative to represent masculine authority and masculine identity as much less controlled and stable. There is in each case an obsession with failed and impaired masculinity: in THE DARK CORNER and OUT OF THE PAST it is the investigative hero who is himself 'contaminated', whereas in THE KILLERS the investigation is an emphatically aggressive attempt to restore a masculine order through repression (with Riordan's reassertion of order markedly failing to 'shore up' the divisions revealed through the 'body' of the film's narration). THE MALTESE FALCON is characterised by an overt and successful process of 'masculinisation' through which the detective-hero is affirmed as potent, invulnerable, undivided, and also uncontaminated by both the machinating femme fatale and the 'corrupted' male figures (Gutman, Joel Cairo, Wilmer). In the later films, however, this process of 'masculinisation' is under far greater stress - the investigative narrative is subject to extensive displacement and fragmentation and there is a much more emphatic sense of strain in the narrative resolution (though differently manifested in each instance). This 'breakdown' of the process of consolidation and

unification - which is the work of the 'tough' investigative narrative - results in a representation of masculine identity, and of the legitimising framework of masculine authority, as much more radically divided and contradictory.

This can be seen particularly in a film like *DETOUR* (PRC, 1945), where the figuration of a lapsed, impaired hero occurs without the contextualising framework of an investigative narrative. Al Roberts (Tom Neal), the protagonist of this film, represents the polar opposite to the 'tough', controlled masculinity of Sam Spade, for he finds himself not just unable to, but obsessively unwilling to, take any effective action against the 'conspiracy of Fate' which he fervently claims (in his voice-over 'address' to the audience) is oppressing him. Roberts' downfall is brought about by a series of ludicrous/grotesque coincidences which serve to 'entrap' him in a course of action which prevents him from joining up with and marrying his girl-friend Sue (Claudia Drake) - so that by the end of the film, with two 'murder' charges hanging over his head, Roberts is drifting aimlessly, perpetually fearful that he will be picked up by the police, and strenuously denying any responsibility for his actions. His declamatory denial of responsibility which closes the film is worth quoting here for its resemblance to Bradford Galt's defeatist protestations:

"I keep trying to forget what happened and wonder what my life would have been like if that car of Haskell's hadn't stopped. But one thing I don't have to wonder about - I know. Someday a car will stop to pick me up that I never thumbed. *[A highway patrol vehicle stops behind him, and an officer takes him inside]* Yes, Fate - or some mysterious force - can put the finger on you or me, for no good reason at all".

Roberts' voice-over is 'whingeing' and accusatory throughout the film [55]: whereas Spade seeks to define himself by achieving mastery over the external world - mastery through knowledge and action - Roberts perpetually disavows the possibility of taking any determinate action, blaming everything that happens to him, that prevents him from achieving security, upon some unfathomable "mysterious force".

As Tania Modleski suggests, the 'accidents' which befall Roberts - for example, two of the people he comes across 'just happen' to be suffering from fatal diseases and die shortly after meeting him - "are so overdetermined that, logically, they seem to cancel each other out" [56]. The highly emphatic coincidences around which the narrative turns, together with the 'enclosed' world of the film (exacerbated by its very low budget: the minimal cast and settings, the use of stock footage), serve to de-emphasise realist denotation and to suggest that everything within the film is a 'projection' of the hero's psychic disturbance. The film is dominated by 'subjective' narrational devices like the flashback, voice-over, and dream/memory sequences, and these consistently problematise any 'objective' reading of Roberts' story. As Blake Lucas has commented:

His struggle against fate is self-defeating, for in spite of his protestations to the contrary, the "detour" is really the road he wants to travel. . . Roberts must always encounter the same projection of his own sense of pessimism and doom in rebellion against his soft and accomodating nature [57]

In other words, the strongly-marked persecutory fantasy of DETOUR, and the 'hysterical' determination of its narrative, suggest that behind Roberts' ostensible wish to regain Sue - and thus to accede to his 'rightful place' as husband/father is another, more 'perverse' wish to

fail in his trajectory, to remain outside masculine identification. Roberts, as bearer of the voice-over, as subjective centre of the film, provides an overtly paranoid rationalisation for what befalls him. His 'psychosis' can be seen to be determined by the conflict between, on the one hand, the masochistic orientation of his desires [58] - whereby he sets himself outside the (paternal/legal) law - and, on the other hand, his fear of retribution, of the punishing force of the 'law of masculinity' against which he transgresses. He remains caught in limbo between the attraction of realising his 'illicit' desires and the fear of a full commitment to them; hence he oscillates, finding transitory satisfaction 'on the road' - the film's principal setting - until the final reckoning, when he is picked up by the police. Unlike THE DARK CORNER, THE KILLERS, OUT OF THE PAST there is in DETOUR no 'actual' criminal conspiracy marked as motivating the hero's lapse - only the 'conspiracy' of fate - and hence the paranoid mechanisms of projection, displaced in these other films, is here much more overt.

As I have suggested, the majority of the 1940's 'tough' thrillers are concerned not with any simple validation of 'tough' masculinity but with the articulation of the problems which beset any such project. Few other of the post-1944 'tough' thrillers [59], however, are as extreme as DETOUR in terms of its representation of masculine defeatism and inertia but, as I have shown above, films like THE DARK CORNER, THE KILLERS and OUT OF THE PAST do reveal a persistent fascination with (the 'horror' of) the passive or 'emasculated' man. In the last chapter, I suggested that the displacement or fragmentation of the investigative narrative is integrally bound up with a 'splitting' of the hero space - so that the hero is no longer the unified 'hub' of the narrative process

- and with a blockage of 'tough', controlled, and unified masculinity. In place of this blocked or thwarted 'masculine project' one can see something else emerging: the obsessive figuration of masculine failure and impairment, not as simply the inverse of the 'tough' investigative hero (a marking of that which has to be eradicated or overcome) but as in itself a source of fascination. As I have suggested, the 'tough' thriller pivots around challenges to and problems within the regimes of the masculine (both in the ordering of masculine subjectivity and the masculine regimentation of the social/cultural order). Problems of law - with which the crime film in general is, of course, concerned - become quite precisely figured in terms of problems besetting masculinity: the crimes are integrally bound up with a destabilisation of masculine identity and authority. Indeed, this tends to be particularly striking in the opening sequences of the 'tough' thrillers, where the hero is often explicitly located in a marked situation of impairment, powerlessness or predicament - notable examples including *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*, *MURDER, MY SWEET*, *DETOUR*, *THE KILLERS*, *DEAD RECKONING* and *THE BRIBE* (MGM, 1949).

The stories of Bradford Galt, Jeff Markham/Bailey and Swede all pivot around the fascination with - and the horror of - the man who has lapsed from, or even more pointedly has wilfully negated, a previously-held position of 'tough' masculinity. In each instance the investigative narrative functions both as a means by which to 'measure' the extent of the male's fall from unified, controlled masculinity, and as an attempt to reverse this loss. But in each film the redemptive and consolidatory function of the investigative narrative is subject to qualification: in *THE DARK CORNER*, Galt's investigation is almost incidental to his

'recovery'; in *OUT OF THE PAST*, Jeff's second foray as 'tough' hero blatantly fails; and in *THE KILLERS*, although Riordan punishes the 'castrating' transgressors, the division between himself and Swede is staunchly affirmed in the process (Riordan can never 'know' Swede - although he actually professes this as his desire - because he can never risk the 'contaminating' danger of emotional entanglement). In each case, as in *DETOUR*, the 'tough' male's 'downfall' is caused by his very readiness to submit himself to debasement (masquerading as an 'incapacity' to extricate himself from either a criminal conspiracy or a 'fatal obsession' with a destructive woman, or both). The insistent recurrence of this desire to fail suggests that what is at issue in these films - what precisely lies behind the charge of their obsessional scenarios - is an erosion of confidence in the legitimising framework of masculine authority (marked by the cultural systems of law, business and family).

As I have shown, the aggressive masculine assertion which marks *THE MALTESE FALCON* tends in the later thrillers to be directly opposed by the hero's relinquishment of his 'responsibility-as-a-man'. Split and sometimes radically decentred as a position of narrative authority, the hero of many of these films frequently oscillates between conflicting potentialities. This is marked in particular, as I have suggested, by his 'masochistic' alignment of the woman as an alternative source of 'authority': in her fantasised 'wholeness' she can be seen to 'legitimise' the male's desired escape from his Oedipal trajectory. As I suggested in the consideration of *THE KILLERS* and *OUT OF THE PAST* in the last chapter, the divisions within the hero (or, in *THE KILLERS*, within the functional 'hero-space') tend often to 'make their mark' upon

the process of narration itself - the 'telling' of the story is subject to extensive convolution at times (deriving from the complex chronological ordering of the plots and from the presence of unreliable or multiple narrators), making it much more difficult to establish a unified position of 'truth', knowledge and identity. The linearity and coherence which characterise Sam Spade's trajectory in THE MALTESE FALCON tend to be markedly frustrated. This problematising of the hero as a viable position of narrative authority mirrors the series of schisms in the relations between men and women, between men themselves, between men and their social world, and within the male psyche, which are insistently and persistently articulated within these films.

In those cases where the hero is a detective (professional, semi-professional, or amateur) one finds his position in regard to the enigma characterised by instability, there tending to be quite extensive shifts from his status as investigative 'subject' to that of 'object' of suspense. In the 'classical' detective story, and in THE MALTESE FALCON, the detective-hero is frequently validated and admired as the 'superior' position of knowledge and authority. In many of the 'tough' thrillers, however, the hero is often markedly inferior to the spectator in regard to what he knows of the enigma, and through the major part of the film he is frustrated in his attempts to establish any mastery over the disruptions it engenders. The Spade-like position of authority and confidence functions as very much a 'structuring absence' which haunts such lapsed 'tough' heroes, as a possibility quite emphatically 'held in suspension'. As Elizabeth Cowie has posited, the modes of the 'detective/mystery story' and the 'suspense thriller' can be regarded as

'structural' inverses in regard to the ways in which they position the spectator through knowledge:

Where the detective or mystery thriller is an unfolding, unravelling of the enigma through clues and deduction in which the reader/viewer is underprivileged in regard to narrative actants, in the suspense thriller there is a continual holding back, interruptions in the pursuit of the resolution by the characters, and a privileged position of the reader/view [sic] in relation to the elements of danger and often the enigma as well [60].

In the suspense mode, then, the play of knowledge and positioning involves the spectator in a very different relationship to both the hero and the enigma. Whereas the detective represents a position of in-textual authority, this position is, in the suspense thriller, voided from the text. In THE MALTESE FALCON we are 'flattered' when we are allowed to share the detective's viewpoint - the matching of the looks of hero and spectator which I considered in the last chapter serves to elevate the latter through a (temporary) bonding with the 'superior' detective (momentarily we 'are' Spade, we see what he sees, know what he knows). However, in the 'tough' suspense thrillers, it is the spectator who is 'in the know', who can foresee the course of events, and the hero is continually striving to discover what the spectator knows already. The hero is disadvantaged, he precisely cannot see what we can, but the spectator's superiority of knowledge and viewpoint is accompanied by powerlessness, for he or she is unable to intervene, to 'warn' the hero, to change the course of events. Suspense is not, of course, specific to the 1940's 'tough' thriller - it is, indeed, integral to the narrational process of the Hollywood film, and of 'novelistic' fiction more generally [61] - but in these films it tends to occupy a specific place,

serving to mark the absence of a protagonist-in-control. Mechanisms of deferment and obstruction frustrate the hero's pursuit of the resolution, and hence the stabilising of his identity.

This can be seen particularly in *THE DARK CORNER* and *OUT OF THE PAST* which are not simply a hybrid of 'investigative thriller' and 'suspense thriller', but much more crucially they represent displacements of the investigative narrative through suspense. Bradford Galt and Jeff Markham are repeatedly blocked in their attempts to situate themselves as controlling detective figures - a clear example of the hero's powerlessness being the scene of Jeff's nervous meeting with Whit in Acapulco. Whereas the private-eye traditionally has a professional detachment in regard to the crime - stressed in *THE MALTESE FALCON* by Spade's cynical haste in removing his dead partner's name from their office door - Galt and Jeff are both strongly implicated in and at the mercy of the enigma, unable to establish a secure position in relation to it. In the 1940's, those thrillers featuring a personally-implicated investigator far exceed in number the private-eye films, and they represent a further shift than the latter away from the 'whodunnit'/'classical' detective story and its narrative 'machinery' of stabilisation. They can be considered as 'paranoid man' films [62], as melodramas specifically and overwhelmingly concerned with the problems besetting masculine identity and meaning. 'Tough', controlled masculinity becomes an ideal which is lost or unattainable, or which can only precariously be achieved: it is represented not as something which can be taken for granted - as in any way 'integral' - but as something which has precisely to be achieved and consolidated through an awesome struggle.

The Oxford English Dictionary contains various entries for the word 'suspense', among which the following is particularly applicable to the case of the 'tough' thriller:

A state of mental uncertainty, with expectation or desire for decision, and usually some apprehension or anxiety; the condition of waiting, esp. of being kept waiting, for an expected decision, assurance or issue; less commonly, a state of uncertainty what to do, indecision [63].

What is precisely involved here is not simply the postponement or forestalling of the eventual triumph of the hero - as both 'hero' and 'as a man' - but a more traumatic uncertainty as to whether such a resolution is actually possible. Rather than the drive towards the solution of the enigma which marks the detective-story, many of the 1940's 'tough' thrillers are characterised by a pressurised delaying of the moment of stability and integration. Indeed, it can even be claimed that these films manifest a principal fascination with the process of resisting - and thereby raising the possibility of sidestepping - the conventional Oedipal closure of narrative, of suspending Oedipal law. The transgressive desires which lie behind such a process are partially masked by the scenarios of victimisation, conspiracy and fatally-determined coincidence which allow access to them. It is significant, for example, that the "splashy visual set-pieces" which punctuate these thrillers tend to occur at - and explicitly serve to accentuate - such moments of impairment, danger and confusion where the hero's Oedipal trajectory is most 'threatened'. The mechanisms of delay precisely allow the 'licit' expression of those possibilities which are barred from the Oedipal ordering of masculine identity.

In this consideration of suspense in the 'tough' thriller, I have thus far been addressing processes which characterise the 'tough' thriller in general. Nevertheless, there are discernible forms of suspense-thriller (more pointedly, perhaps, 'suspense melodrama') which can usefully be seen as comprising a coherent subset of the 'tough' thriller. These are all films in which the enigma represents an emphatically personal challenge to the hero, functioning as a direct threat to his stability of identity under the law (and it is thus suggestive that many of these films feature returning veteran heroes, for they are persistently obsessed with the figuration of maladjusted or disrupted masculinity). The following can be seen to represent some of the most 'symptomatic' of the forms of 1940's 'tough' 'suspense melodrama':

(1) Those films in which the hero is falsely-accused of murder and embarks upon the investigation in order to clear his name. In DARK PASSAGE (WB, 1947) and THE BLUE DAHLIA - as well as THE DARK CORNER and OUT OF THE PAST - the hero is both 'suspect' and 'investigator', and the narrative maintains a separation and a tension between these functional positions until the resolution. Such films may resolve with the failure of the hero's quest to redeem himself (as in OUT OF THE PAST) or this may be achieved in a cursory or excessively 'contrived' manner: as with the pronounced narrative manipulations involved in the process of finding a narrative 'fall-guy' in THE BLUE DAHLIA; or with the case of DARK PASSAGE, where the persecution of Vincent Parry (Humphrey Bogart) seems to lead logically to a desperate conclusion,

which is instead 'magicked away' by an epilogue in which Parry is reunited with his lover, Irene (Lauren Bacall), in a beachside paradise in Peru. Such examples suggest how the final consolidation of knowledge and position which marks the end of the investigative narrative may not actually be the goal of these stories, that the hero's quest for self-definition may be serving as a 'cover story' for the articulation of fantasies which are less easily sanctioned and consolidated within conventional codifications of the masculine;

(ii) Those films in which the hero is not himself certain of his part in a murder by virtue of amnesia. In these 'amnesiac-hero' thrillers, the enigma is quite crucially intertwined with a 'splitting' or a breakdown of unified male identity. In the 'returning-vet' thriller *SOMEWHERE IN THE NIGHT* (TCF, 1946), for example, George Taylor (John Hodiak) seeks not only to identify a murderer but to find out his own true identity. Others films centred upon amnesiac investigators include three further 'returning-vet' thrillers - *CRACK-UP* (RKO, 1946), *THE HIGH WALL* (MGM, 1947), and *THE CROOKED WAY* (La Brea Prods., 1949) - plus a significantly large number of Cornell Woolrich adaptations [64] - *STREET OF CHANCE* (Para., 1942), *BLACK ANGEL* (Univ., 1947), *FALL GUY* (Mono., 1947), and *FEAR IN THE NIGHT* (Pine-Thomas Prods., 1947);

(iii) Those films in which the hero is wrongly imprisoned for murder while the investigation is carried out on his behalf by others. Suspense is accentuated in such cases by a race-against-time narrative, where the

hero's friends seek to prove him innocent before he is due to be executed. In both STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR and PHANTOM LADY, the hero languishes in jail while his girlfriend sets out to clear him. What is especially interesting about the films featuring a wrongly-accused hero is that although he is generally exonerated in terms of the actual killing, he tends to have a strongly marked desire to commit the crime. Incriminated on the basis of a web of circumstantial evidence, the hero's wrongful incarceration is prominently figured as a punishment for his 'guilty thoughts', with the legal system tending to operate as an 'externalised' apparatus of persecution. In both THE STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR and PHANTOM LADY there is a displacement of the hero's illicit wish upon a psychopathic male figure of 'excess' who serves as the hero's 'double' - the escaped lunatic in the former, and the artist-strangler Jack Marlow (Franchot Tone) in the latter - this displacement enabling a purging of the hero's repressed homicidal rage so that he can be integrated within a 'sanctioned' heterosexual relationship;

(iv) Those films in which the hero's investigation serves as an attempt to avenge a wronged or murdered loved-one. In such cases, the hero is forced to confront the enigma by taking the law into his own hands because of the insufficiency of the legal system, his self-appointed quest 'legitimised' by the strength of the bonds between hero and loved-one [65]. In the 'returning-vet' thriller CORNERED (RKO, 1945), Laurence Gérard (Dick Powell) is a Canadian ex-pilot whose wife is murdered by French fascist sympathisers, and this rationale propels the hero's brutally-pursued quest to find the killers and to dispense 'justice'.

The film climaxes with Gérard's killing of the arch-fascist Marcel Jarnac (Luther Adler) while under the influence of one of the amnesiac-psychopathic attacks he has experienced since his war service. In DEAD RECKONING, Rip Murdock (Humphrey Bogart) takes the law into his own hands in order to avenge and exonerate his murdered war-buddy Johnny (William Drake) - as in CORNERED, the hero's assertive masculine quest becomes an obsessive postwar continuation of the extreme wartime conditions which had required a relatively stark and unproblematically combative testing of masculinity. Gérard and Murdock are both 'men out of time' who precisely need to replay the war in order to function as men, who are ill-prepared for the demands of 'peacetime'. CORNERED, DEAD RECKONING and BACKFIRE! (WB, 1950) - with a similar plot to DEAD RECKONING, except that the vet-hero's falsely-accused buddy is not actually killed - betray a marked hostility towards (and, by implication, fear of) postwar integration, especially of the delimitation of aggressive masculine assertion which it required. In the three films, postwar society - displaced to South America in CORNERED - is somewhat fantastically represented as a 'violent playground' where the aggression of the hero is justified in terms of the hostility directed towards both himself and the loved-one.

Further mention should be made here of D.O.A., in which the place of the 'loved-one' is occupied by the hero himself. Frank Bigelow (Edmond O'Brien) is slipped a fatal radioactive poison that will kill him within 24 hours. Bigelow sets out to 'avenge himself' and to resolve the mystery of his killing before the poison takes full effect. The completion of this mission provides little satisfaction in itself, as Bigelow discovers that the motive for the killing was both arbitrary and

impersonal (he 'just happened' to notarise a bill-of-sale for a consignment of stolen iridium), and the moment of knowledge is simultaneously the moment of death: his 'triumph' as detective-hero coinciding with his eradication. Besides this offered motive, the film suggests as a rationale for Bigelow's death the fact that in coming to the big-city he sought escape from both the restrictions of small-town life (the town's name - Banning - suggesting the 'self-repression' involved in such an existence) and the prospect of conventional married-life with his fiancée Paula (Pamela Britton) by throwing himself into the hedonistic pleasures of urban high-life (signified by 'hot' jazz and 'available' women). The 'punishment' seems far in excess of the 'transgression', and what is especially remarkable about D.O.A. - as with DETOUR - is the figuration of the narrative itself as an instrument of grotesquely exaggerated persecution.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE CRIMINAL-ADVENTURE THRILLER

Either because he is fated to so by chance, or because he has been hired for a job specifically associated with her, a man whose experience of life has left him sanguine and often bitter meets a not-innocent woman of similar outlook to whom he is sexually and fatally attracted. Through this attraction, either because the woman induces him to it or because it is the natural result of their relationship, the man comes to cheat, attempt to murder, or actually murder a second man to whom the woman is unhappily or unwillingly attached (generally he is her husband or lover), an act which often leads to the woman's betrayal of the protagonist, but which in any event brings about the sometimes metaphoric, but usually literal destruction of the woman, the man to whom she is attached, and frequently the protagonist himself [66].

The above is offered by critic James Damico as a 'narrative model' for the film noir thriller. From the films I have already considered, it can be seen that this model has a far from general applicability, although many of the thrillers do contain several of the elements Damico highlights. However, it does serve quite usefully to describe the 'structuring mechanisms' of a distinct cycle of 1940's 'tough' thrillers - what one could term the 'criminal adventure'. Whereas the private-eye films derive many of their characteristics from the novels of Hammett, Chandler, and others - and similarly the Hollywood suspense thriller owes some debt to the suspense novels produced by such writers as Cornell Woolrich and John Franklin Bardin - the 'criminal adventure' thrillers derive in particular from the highly successful crime novels of James M. Cain, which obsessively rework such scenarios of Oedipal transgression and punishment [67]. The commercial and critical success of Paramount's 1944 Cain-adaptation DOUBLE INDEMNITY [68] - which in

itself represented a significantly workable compromise between the scandalousness of Cain's fiction and the representational restrictions of the Production Code - was particularly influential in creating a vogue for these 'criminal adventure' thrillers through the mid-late 1940s. Succeeding films which reworked the components of the mode of transgressive fantasy represented by Cain's fiction included THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE (MGM, 1946), STRANGE TRIANGLE (TCF, 1946), SUSPENSE (King Bros., 1946), PITFALL (Regal Films, 1948), THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI (Columbia, 1948), THE FILE ON THELMA JORDAN (Hal B. Wallis Prods., 1950), THE PROWLER (Horizon Pictures, 1951), WHERE DANGER LIVES (Cummings-Allen-RKO, 1953), ANGEL FACE (RKO, 1953) and HUMAN DESIRE (Columbia, 1954). And compressed versions of this 'narrative structure' also figure prominently in a range of other 'tough' thrillers, including MURDER, MY SWEET (where it is displaced through Marlowe's activity as private-detective, which enables him to resist the offer of an illicit relationship with Mrs Grayle/Claire Trevor), THE KILLERS (in the triangular configuration of Swede, Kitty and Big Jim Colfax), OUT OF THE PAST (with Jeff as transgressive adventurer in Acapulco) and THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME (RKO, 1947), plus two Fritz Lang films which markedly ironicize the structural components of this fantasy, THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW (International Pictures, 1944) and SCARLET STREET (Diana Productions, 1945).

Cain saw his fiction as deriving its force from the lure of the wish to transgress:

I, so far as I can sense the pattern of my mind, write of the wish that comes true, for some reason a terrifying concept, at least to my imagination. Of course, the wish must have terror in it; just wanting a drink wouldn't quite be enough. I think my stories have some quality of the opening of a forbidden box,

and that it is this, rather than violence, sex, or any of the other things usually cited by way of explanation, that gives them the drive so often noted [69].

In both Cain's fiction and Hollywood's 'criminal adventure' thrillers, the 'transgressiveness' of the wish is marked on a manifest level by the fact the woman desired by the hero 'belongs' to another man. But the fact of adultery does not in itself account for the 'terror' of the wish. Rather, this derives from the way in which, through his adulterous and often murderous trajectory, the hero establishes himself in revolt against Oedipal Law. Through the 'criminal adventure' the hero seeks to assert his potency and invulnerability, in defiance of the 'castrating' power of the Law. In each case the transgressive adventure tends to be pitted directly against either the family or some other systematised figuration of the patriarchal order, or both. For example, in both *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* and *THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME*, the hero specifically transgresses against a closed regime of masculine economic power. The insurance company each works for has at its head a powerful figure of male authority (the deceased 'Symbolic Father' Old Man Norton in the former, and Trenton/Tom Powers - who is also the hero's father-in-law - in the latter). In *THE FILE ON THELMA JORDAN*, the hero is an assistant district-attorney, Cleve Marshall (Wendell Corey), who abuses his position in order to cover up the part of his mistress, Thelma (Barbara Stanwyck) in a murder. And in *OUT OF THE PAST*, as I have already considered, the hero rebels against the 'masculine code' of the private-eye, and his contract with Whit Sterling. In each instance, the hero's 'responsibilities-as-a-man' are forcefully demarcated, and established as the 'target' of the transgression.

The Oedipus complex refers not simply to any 'real-life' familial conflict but rather functions as a model for the transmission of the patriarchal cultural order. As Juliet Mitchell has emphasised:

The Oedipus complex is the repressed ideas that appertain to the family drama of any primary constellation of figures within which the child must find its place. It is not the actual family situation or the conscious desire it evokes . . . The Oedipus complex is not a set of attitudes to other people, but a pattern of relationships between a set of places - actually occupied or otherwise [70].

What is precisely at stake in the Freudian model of the Oedipus complex is the male's 'succession' to a position of unified identity, identifying with the Law-of-the-Father but at the same time accepting his own subjugated place in relation to it (that is, that the 'castrating' power of the Law may be used against him, that he may be denied his 'right of [male] inheritance' to the phallus as the signifier of desire and authority). In the 'criminal adventure' thriller, the hero revolts against his 'place' and seeks to usurp the authority of the Father, the sexual drama - the hero's desire for the 'forbidden' woman/ the 'Mother' - serving as a microcosm of a drama of transgression which has broader ramifications. The hero of such films is a male overachiever who seeks through his defiance of the Law to set himself above it, and to set himself in its place, as 'omnipotent'.

His daring gamble against the delimitations of his place within culture, under the Law, represents a transgressive fantasy which is marked - in multiple ways - by the 'inevitability' of its failure. Indeed, the expectation that the hero will finally be 'brought to justice' is no mere concession to the Production Code - it is, rather, a crucial precondition for the capacity to derive pleasure from the

fantasy. The process of defiance can only be tolerated within strict limits, and thus the fantasy of Oedipal revolt has precisely to be articulated within the context of defensive processes. Thus one finds in these 'criminal adventures' that the fact that the hero's adventure will fail is italicized very early on. DOUBLE INDEMITY provides a particularly clear example of this: the film opens with the hero, Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray) fatally wounded - a mark of his 'castration' [71]; he stumbles into his office in order to make his dictaphone 'confessional', addressing the character who insistently embodies the 'castrating' power of the Law-of-the-Father - and of the insurance company - the claims-investigator Barton Keyes (Edward G. Robinson). Keyes functions quite clearly as Walter's 'superego' [72], as a powerful and punitive agent who unites both the patriarchal and economic systems of Law. His phallic attributes are marked particularly by the "little man" inside him - who is able, he says, to tip him off to a phony claim - and by the cigar he repeatedly offers to Walter for lighting [73] (this repeated motif stressing the bonding between the two, and Walter's 'obligation' to Keyes/the insurance company/the Law).

Walter's transgressive adventure comprises an attempt both to 'crook' the insurance company and to secure the married woman who is the object of his fetishistic sexual desire, Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck). The murder of Phyllis' husband by the two lovers thus represents an assault upon Neff's responsibilities as an agent of the insurance company, and also upon the nuclear family. However, it further represents a transgression of his personal relationship with Keyes: as Parker Tyler has noted, there is a double symmetry in the relations between the two men, a uniting of business and the personal [74]. The

love between the two is overtly acknowledged by each at the end of the film and, as Tyler has suggested, Neff's confessional statement to Keyes is a sign of Neff's response to Keyes' feelings for him (as well as testifying to the power of Keyes as the 'super-ego') [75]. While the ostensible objects of Neff's adventurous fantasy are money and a woman, the principal motivation for his transgression is the very desire to transgress. Both the money and the woman are heavily marked as 'taboo': Neff's job requires him to act as an agent for the company, and his sale of policies is supervised by Keyes - he is not in any controlling position in regard to the money exchanged through him. He uses his professional knowledge of the insurance business for his own purposes, against the company - calculating the most lucrative means of collecting insurance from Dietrichson (a fall from a train guarantees a 'double indemnity' payment). And Keyes himself outlines the 'prohibition' against women: when Phyllis phones Neff at his office before the murder, Neff is extremely edgy because Keyes is in the room, and he attempts to evade the latter's suspicions by addressing her as "Margie" (and his acknowledgement that 'Margie' "drinks from the bottle" serves as a further means of debasing her). Keyes is emphatically 'married' to his job, to his 'little man' (which had warned him off the only woman he had ever been involved with, "a tramp from a long line of tramps"). After the killing of Dietrichson - engineered to look like an accident - Keyes' "little man" causes him to diagnose murder, and also immediately makes him suspect the dead man's wife.

Generally in the 1940's 'tough' thriller, women are excluded from any position of power within economic, social and legal institutions, and those who do either seek to, or momentarily obtain, such power tend

to be threatening, 'castrating' figures - like Kathie Moffett in OUT OF THE PAST and Kitty Collins in THE KILLERS. Although such 'women's picture'/ thriller hybrids as MILDRED PIERCE and TOO LATE FOR TEARS [76] are actually centred around the transgressive desires of a female protagonist, the 'tough' thrillers tend to be much more rigidly concerned with what is at stake for the male hero, and women tend to be represented as inherently dangerous and contaminating - unless they are domestic, trusting and trustworthy like Ann in OUT OF THE PAST, Lilly in THE KILLERS and Lola Dietrichson (Jean Heather) in DOUBLE INDEMNITY. Such criminal figures as Whit Sterling in OUT OF THE PAST, Eddie Harwood in THE BLUE DAHLIA and Martinelli in DEAD RECKONING pose a far less drastic threat in comparison with the 'erotic' femme fatale, who seeks money, luxury and power over men and who has far less stake in maintaining the parameters of the patriarchal order. Barred from achieving their ambitions in the same way as men, such women tend to realise their wishes by attaching themselves to men who are rich and powerful. These heterosexual attachments thus run counter to the 'acceptable' motivations for marriage. Rather than subjugating their desires and their identity to their men, these women marry in order to achieve financial or social advancement, in the process manipulating the desire men hold for them. This inversion or perversion of conventional/ 'legitimate' sexual relations is highlighted especially by the fact that the husbands tend often to be old or physically infirm. Bannister (Everett Sloane) in THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI, Nick (Cecil Kellaway) in THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE, Mr Grayle (Miles Mander) in MURDER, MY SWEET and Dietrichson (Tom Powers) in DOUBLE INDEMNITY are all attractive to the women solely on the basis of the financial security they can offer,

and the aberrance of the woman's choice is made explicit when the younger, poorer, more 'virile' hero sets himself up as a rival.

The hero is evidently more 'suitable' for the woman, and the problem emerges not from the fact that she refuses to recognise this fact as much as from her refusal to accept it - and to accept the delimitation of her desires which a relationship with the hero would involve. The trouble which follows is thus most often represented as a logical consequence of the woman's greed, from the fact that she seeks both the hero and luxury/financial security. Although there is a certain degree of play with the motivations of the femme fatale in the 'tough' thriller - for example, Cora (Lana Turner) in THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE is by no means unequivocally an 'evil' figure, and Adrienne Fromsett (Audrey Totter) in LADY IN THE LAKE (MGM, 1947) is transformed from ruthless, self-seeking businesswoman to housewife/mother [77] - she tends most often to be explicitly held to blame for the hero's lapse. It is through her insistent seductions that the hero is lured from the 'straight-and-narrow', and significantly enough the films do not seek to explore in any detail what motivates her in her attempt to defy the law - it is quite common for the woman to be ultimately revealed to be a 'pathological' case, her deviance and dissatisfaction recuperated as 'madness' (as with the femme fatale figures in DOUBLE INDEMNITY, THE KILLERS, DEAD RECKONING, THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI and TOO LATE FOR TEARS).

As inherently 'deviant' in regard to - and hence excluded from - the male-defined cultural norms, the woman [78] is in a position whereby, compared to the hero, she does not have so much to lose by transgressing against her acceptable place. But, as I have already noted, it is not her story that tends to be to the fore - although the

articulation of the 'woman's story' can be a factor which problematises the centrality of the male drama, and which consequently has on occasions to be quite carefully negotiated and contained [79]. Her very 'otherness' - heightened through her self-fetishisation as erotic object - simultaneously attracts and disturbs the hero because of its difference from the male regime with which he tends to be familiar (explicitly so, as I considered above, in both OUT OF THE PAST and THE KILLERS). Through her sexual difference, the woman embodies the possibility of transgression, but is not until the hero makes a 'pact' with her that the transgressive trajectory of the 'criminal adventure' is inaugurated. The hero of the 'criminal adventure' is precisely attracted by the woman who sets herself against convention - something which is particularly suggested by the very presence of the more conventional and loyal 'good girl' who has either to be rejected by or 'lost' to the hero. In other words, it is the very danger attached to the femme fatale which makes her desirable to the hero. The first appearance of the woman in these films tends to pinpoint this combination of fascination and fear - her 'otherness' serving as a powerful lure in itself, but one which is emphatically linked with a transgression of the law.

This dialectic of fascination and fear makes it manifest that the hero is aware of what is at stake if he responds to the woman's sexual invitation [80]. This is particularly explicit in a scene in THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME [81], where the hero, Larry Ballantine (Robert Young) first catches sight of Verna (Susan Hayward), the woman who will provide him with an opportunity to rebel against both his wealthy and 'emasculating' wife Gretta (Rita Johnson) and her father/his boss Trenton. In his

office one day, Larry is 'frozen' in his tracks as he catches sight of Verna, the new secretary, as she bends provocatively over a filing cabinet; his voice-over commentary conveys the intensity and immediacy of his desire for her and also marks this out as explosive-transgressive (for Larry has already been warned-off philandering):

"She looked like a very special kind of dynamite, neatly wrapped in nylon and silk. Only I wasn't having any. I'd been too close to an explosion already. I was powder-shy."

The woman, then, presents the hero with the opportunity to transgress rather than simply causing his transgression. This is evident in DOUBLE INDEMNITY, where after he agrees to Phyllis' murder plan, Neff comments in his voice-over narration:

"It was all tied up with something I'd been thinking about for years. Since long before I met Phyllis Dietrichson. Because - you know how it is, Keyes - in this business you can't sleep for trying to figure out all the tricks they pull on you. You're like the guy behind the roulette wheel, watching the customers to make sure they don't crook the house. And then one night you get to thinking how you could crook the house yourself, and do it smart. Because you've got that wheel right under your hands. . . . Look, Keyes, I'm not trying to whitewash myself. I fought it, only I guess I didn't fight it hard enough".

Neff is by no means simply 'duped' by the woman, for his own principal desire is to 'buck the system'. The murder of Dietrichson, the affair with Phyllis, and the 'crooking' of the insurance company represent Neff's calculated gamble [82] against the delimitations of his place under the Law-of-the-Father. His 'criminal adventure' seems an act of Symbolic defiance, an attempt to deny that he is subject to the 'castrating' power of the Law.

However, although Neff is precisely trying to assert his 'invulnerability', his 'phallic omnipotence', the criminal adventure is marked from the start - as I have already stressed - by the inevitability of the failure of such a gamble. Neff starts out in the film bearing the visible mark of his 'castration' - the wound [83] (and the murder itself requires that Neff masquerades as 'castrated', by impersonating the crippled Dietrichson). In other words, DOUBLE INDEMNITY does not simply represent the story of a transgressive adventurer but it is also pervaded by the knowledge that the attempt will fail, that the hero will never be able to set himself above the Law. Neff explicitly embarks on his daring gamble in order to impress Keyes with his 'potency' - Keyes functions both as the one who must ultimately 'judge' the transgression and as the one at whom the transgressive adventure is principally directed (Neff betraying his bonds of obligation to Keyes-as-Father). As Claire Johnston has suggested [84], there is a crucial 'splitting' in Neff's relations with Keyes. On the one hand, Keyes is a figure of Symbolic Law, embodying the Law-of-the-Father, but on the other hand Neff constitutes Keyes as a pre-Oedipal 'idealised father', as 'ego ideal'. Johnston suggests that Neff's repressed homosexual desire for Keyes-as-idealised-father is marked emphatically in the film - Neff wants to "think with your brains, Keyes", to possess his knowledge [85]. Hence the obsessive, mechanised detailing of the preparations for the murder, whereby Neff seeks to impress Keyes with the meticulousness of his planning, the 'potency' of his intellect.

In this and the other 'criminal adventure' films, the moments of transgression tend to be emphatically marked by suspense - which

precisely signifies that the hero is not in control, that he is vulnerable to the punitive power of the Law. In OUT OF THE PAST, the scene in Jeff's hotel in Acapulco has precisely this function; in THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE Frank (John Garfield) attempts to kill Nick in his bath but is prevented from doing so, firstly by the arrival of a policeman and secondly by a freak accident (there is a power failure at the critical moment); and in DOUBLE INDEMNITY, not only is the crime in itself a tortuous, drawn-out plot involving impersonation and meticulous timing, but as Walter and Phyllis seek to escape from the spot where they have dumped Dietrichson's body their car stalls. As in the investigative thrillers, then, suspense tends to signify the blockage of the ostensible trajectory of masculine assertion, and furthermore this blockage is 'subjectively' overdetermined - the 'external' circumstances of the frustration serving to 'give voice' to the internal contradictions involved in the very fantasy of transgression.

The hero's desire to 'triumph' in his defiance of the Law is inextricably bound up with his fear of detection and punishment: when he sets himself against or above the Law, not only is he vulnerable to retribution but he also alienates himself from the structuring framework of masculine identification, and thus from the possibility of finding any secure identity which is actually 'liveable'. There can be no identity 'beyond the Law'. DOUBLE INDEMNITY particularly highlights the contradictions involved here: Neff seeks to transgress against Keyes' authority, but for the sake of demonstrating to Keyes his own 'potency'. In other words, the authority of the Father is indispensible - it gives meaning to the very act of transgression just as it also is transgressed against. Neff, as transgressive adventurer, is caught in a 'double-bind'

which can be resolved only through his own annihilation and the concomitant reassertion of the Law-of-the-Father. The 'lesson' is that the hero's 'Oedipal revolt' cannot succeed, but it is the very impossibility of success which intensifies the desire for transgression. The particular 'mesh' of fantasy mobilised through the 'criminal adventure' story is, then, by no means concerned simply with a revolt against the Oedipal order - for it has as its aim an integral reassertion of that order. It represents a 'testing' of the limits, of the limitations - not just a testing of the self, but a testing of the self in relation to the Law.

DOUBLE INDEMNITY concludes with an emphatic reassertion of the bonds of obligation between Neff and Keyes, and of Neff's identity under the Law. Phyllis has been exposed as using Neff in order to realise her own transgressive wishes. Rather than acting simply as a 'vehicle' for the articulation of Neff's fantasy of 'Oedipal revolt', then, Phyllis is - after Dietrichson's murder - located quite unambiguous as a 'phallic' woman who seeks to usurp the authority of the Father (in her desire for money, for the destruction of the family, and for participating in/'controlling' Neff's transgression). In itself, this location of Phyllis as 'phallic woman' can be seen in terms of a displacement onto Phyllis of Neff's own initially expressed wish to 'buck the system', and also as an attempted repression of Phyllis' 'otherness': she is posited in a relation of 'desiring the phallus', and hence of validating the phallus (to which Neff himself aspires [86]). With Phyllis cast as 'phallic woman', Neff/the film can repress the danger of a problematic erosion of masculinity through romantic idealisation (of the kind which is forcefully articulated in THE KILLERS and OUT OF THE PAST), thus

sidestepping the possibility of the male's 'masochistic' desire for the 'oral mother' [87] - that is, of his desire for an identity which excludes the phallus.

This is highlighted in the scene where Neff kills Phyllis, and is himself fatally wounded. On his final visit to the Dietrichson house, he intends to shoot Phyllis and to arrange it so that Lola's fiancé, Nino Zachetti (Byron Barr), is framed for the murders of both Dietrichson and his wife. However, Phyllis shoots Walter before he can put this plan into motion (with her destructiveness further emphasised by her threat to poison Zachetti against Lola by making him jealous of Neff's flirtation with her daughter-in-law). Although Neff is wounded, he manages to stumble over to her, and the dialogue passes between them:

WALTER: "Why don't you shoot again, baby? Don't tell me it's because you've been in love with me all this time".  
 PHYLLIS: "No, I never loved you, Walter, not you or anybody else. I'm rotten to the heart. I used you just as you said. That's all you ever meant to me. Until a minute ago - when I couldn't fire that second shot. I didn't know that could happen to me".  
 WALTER: "Sorry baby, I'm not buying".  
 PHYLLIS: "I'm not asking you to buy, just hold me close"  
*[She puts her head on his shoulder]*  
 WALTER: "Goodbye, baby".  
*[He shoots her]*

Her inability to fire the fatal shot signifies a 'weakness' within her, suggests that she cannot fully live up to her own 'phallic' desire. The woman's reluctant acknowledgement of feelings of love - a strategy found also in the ending of DEAD RECKONING - serves to 'subjugate' her independent, transgressive desires and thus to repress any possibility of the woman being totally outside the Law. It also operates as a means of forestalling the implication that Neff does not 'satisfy' her

sexually. As with the aspiring 'gold-diggers' who figure in the 1930's "screwball" romantic comedies, Phyllis is made vulnerable through Love (that is, through her 'nature'-as-a-woman'). Neff's comparative 'potency' is callously demonstrated through the ease with which he can pull the trigger on her.

The restitution of order, the closure of the narrative of transgression, proceeds swiftly. Neff himself engineers the reunion of Dietrichson's 'good-girl' daughter Lola and Zachetti. Neff saves the latter from 'contamination' by Phyllis - saving Zachetti as he cannot save himself. In restoring the heterosexual couple (and hence the family - thus reversing his earlier transgression) and in destroying Phyllis, Neff is seeking to contain the damage and restore order through repression (a process which is directly articulated through the structure of the 'confession'). In other words, he changes his trajectory from an attempt to 'buck the system' to an attempt to reaffirm it, resolving the ambiguity of his relationship with Keyes by setting himself up as an agent of the Law. Once Keyes has 'received' Walter's 'confession' - unbeknown to Neff, Keyes is standing in the doorway of the office while he dictates - he turns responsibility for Neff's punishment over to the police. By so doing he is, as Claire Johnston argues, left free to acknowledge and return Neff's love:

The challenge to the patriarchal order eliminated and the internal contradictions of that order contained, a sublimated homosexuality between the two men can now be signified [88].

Keyes reverses/'returns' the 'lighting ritual' by striking a match for Neff's cigarette as the latter lays dying. Keyes can relinquish his status as 'Symbolic father' - but only at the point of Neff's death -

and his emphatic shift from 'superego'/Symbolic Father to narcissistic 'ideal ego'/Imaginary Father, signified by the film's closing scene, resolves the 'splitting' of identity involved in Neff's pursuit of the 'criminal adventure' [89].

Jonathan Buchsbaum sees a "core generative anxiety about passive homosexuality" as a general characteristic of the 'tough'/film noir thriller, and he claims that "this anxiety creates the need for the femme fatale, as the protagonist requires her in order to rehearse an aggressive masculinity, which in turn, helps him to deny any anxieties over weakness" [90]. Buchsbaum argues that Neff's 'criminal adventure' represents a drive to "prove the absence of passive homosexuality" [91]. The complexity of the 'criminal adventure' narrative in DOUBLE INDEMNITY derives precisely from the way in which Keyes is 'split' between 'superego' and 'ideal ego' - between Symbolic Father and Imaginary Father - a division which in turn signifies a 'splitting' of Neff's identity. His transgressive adventure represents an attempt to prove his masculine identity not just to himself but to another man, Keyes, and it is the contradictions within Neff's relationship with Keyes that produce the 'double-bind' within which his identity becomes trapped. As I have suggested, his revolt against the Law precisely casts the Law as the validating framework for the adventure. The particular imbrication of fantasy and prohibition which marks Neff's 'criminal adventure' suggests an impossibility of escaping from or challenging the parameters of masculine identity, and in particular the determinacy of 'castration'. The film's narrative provides a series of tests by means of which Neff seeks to deny the 'castrating' power of the Law, but at the same time he seeks recognition by the Law and in order to gain it

has to accept his own 'castration'. The fantasy of transgression fails, inevitably. And what is left for Neff is a recognition of - almost an escape into - a narcissistic identification with Keyes which he has been resisting all along but which the whole of his transgressive fantasy can be seen to turn around.

As Buchsbaum suggests, the narcissistic homoeroticism with which the film closes is a pervasive feature of the 'tough' thriller - although it is rarely as manifest as it is in DOUBLE INDEMNITY and DEAD RECKONING (as I shall consider below). With the hero of the 'tough' thriller seeking so assiduously to convince himself and others of his own masculine identity then he is irrevocably drawn towards an idealisation of the 'phallus incarnate', against which he can be measured and through which he is defined and can 'recognise' himself. In the 'criminal adventure', the rebellion against the phallic power of the Law leads "straight down the line" (to borrow a central metaphor from DOUBLE INDEMNITY) to a subjection to the Law. In a very real way, then, it is not a fantasy of defiance at all, but rather it serves as a means to an end, as a means, that is, of bringing about an unequivocal demonstration of the reassuring power of the Law. The desire for transgression - and 'transgressive desire' - exists in order to be countered, in order to justify the delimitations through which masculine identity is conventionally ordered through the Oedipus complex. Rather than simply giving voice to a frustration with the 'cultural' parameters of masculine identity, then, the 'criminal adventure' can be seen to represent a desire for reassurance, a desire to have demonstrated in an unequivocal manner the inescapability and inviolability of identification through - and subjection to - the Law-of-the-Father.

In DOUBLE INDEMNITY, THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE, THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI and (the flashback-narrative of) OUT OF THE PAST the 'transgressive adventurer' hero is defined outside the context of the family: he is a bachelor who wilfully sets himself in opposition to 'settled' social life. A significantly different version of the 'criminal adventure' narrative is found in such films as THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW, PITFALL and THE FILE ON THELMA JORDAN where the hero occupies a much more constrained position, within the family. In these films the fantasy of the 'tough' masculine over-achiever - an 'unbounded Prometheus' - is figured as a desired counterpoint to the mundane restrictions of social life, but at the same time it is represented overtly as a fantasy which has far less chance of ever being realised (for the hero's 'castration' is far too evident). These films are of particular interest for the ways in which they articulate the contradictions between, on the one hand, the conventional social place of the male - as husband/father - and, on the other hand, the regime of 'tough' masculinity. Such contradictions are heightened especially by the emphatic representation of 'tough' masculinity in terms of fantasy. I shall conclude this examination of the 'structuring mechanisms' of the 'criminal adventure' thriller by looking, firstly, at PITFALL, a film where the hero seeks to escape from the restrictions of an oppressive suburban bourgeois lifestyle, and secondly, at THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW, a thriller with a patently more ironical representation of the 'criminal adventure' narrative.

The opening scenes of PITFALL establish the life of John Forbes (Dick Powell) in terms of home, family and work. In the first sequence, while his wife, Sue (Jane Wyatt), cooks breakfast, the domestic routine is represented as a source of profound dissatisfaction for the husband/father. Forbes' discontent derives from a feared loss of potency through the related factors of the financial sacrifice involved in providing for a family, and his awareness that he has failed to live up to the promise he showed at college (where he was nominated as the boy most likely to succeed, and Sue had been voted the most beautiful girl in the class). As with George Bailey (James Stewart) in Frank Capra's sentimental/fantasy comedy-drama IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE (1946), John Forbes intensely desires the life of adventure which he sees as having been denied to him through the sacrifices involved in settling down. His wife's comment that he is "John Forbes, average American, backbone of the country" serves only to intensify his desire to escape from his 'trapped life of regularity and order. His job is similarly cast in terms of a frustrating imprisonment-within-routine. As an agent of the Olympic Mutual Insurance Company, Forbes - like both Walter Neff and the bank-teller protagonist (Joseph Cotten) of THE STEEL TRAP (TCF, 1952) - has simultaneously to handle large sums of money and to deny himself access to them. In the spheres of both family and work, then, Forbes' life is characterised by self-delimitation and self-sacrifice.

The 'criminal adventure' narrative is inaugurated by Forbes' break from the routinised regularity of both spheres. He visits fashion-model Mona Stevens (Lizabeth Scott) in connection with an embezzlement case he is dealing with. Bill Smiley (Byron Barr), her boyfriend, is obsessed with Mona, and has embezzled in order to provide her with the luxury he

thinks she desires and deserves. It is Forbes' 'duty' to retrieve Smiley's gifts from her. While he waits for her in her apartment, Forbes is fascinated by her portfolio of glamour photographs - the woman's attraction being precisely represented in terms of her status as image. Throughout the course of the film, it is evident that Mona represents a source of attraction for him because her glamorous appearance allows him to use her as a 'suitable' vehicle through which to enact his fantasy to transgress against the bourgeois respectability in which he has allowed himself to become imprisoned. In conventional fashion, the hero's meeting with the woman represents the pivotal moment in the hero's transgression, but what is precisely unconventional is the way in which Mona is deliberately detached from any connotations of 'manipulative', 'destructive' female sexuality, and represents instead a potential for Forbes' 'salvation' from a life of self-denial and limitation (a possibility which is, of course, highly bracketed - resulting as it does in a conflict between his desires and the obligations of work and family). The film incorporates a shift from the 'male orientation' of DOUBLE INDEMNITY by privileging 'Mona's story' in opposition to how Forbes views her. The film furthermore distances the spectator from Forbes' viewpoint by refusing him any POV shots in the 'framing' of Mona within the film.

Forbes introduces himself to Mona as an agent of the insurance company - rather than using his own name. The determined efficiency of his initial approach serves further implies the danger of Forbes' loss of 'identity'. When he voices regret about having to take back Smiley's gifts, Mona gives voice to his own dissatisfaction - by describing him as "a little man with a briefcase" who is "strictly business" and does

what he is told. The woman's taunt sets in motion the hero's desire to 'prove himself', and Mona expresses surprise at his offer to buy her a drink - for she recognises and acknowledges this as counter to routine. In return, Forbes says he would shoot himself if he thought he were turning into the 'dehumanised', duty-bound man she had described. He continues this 'adventurous' break from routine by allowing her to take him out to the boat Smiley had given her. However, although the boat-ride clearly excites Mona, Forbes himself is distinctly uneasy, verging on seasick. Forbes' wish for excitement - signified both by the boat-ride and by his growing relationship with Mona as 'illicit' woman - is thus set in the context of his inappropriateness as an adventurer. Indeed, his actual transgression is remarkably minor compared to the other 'criminal adventure' thrillers of the period: it consists of several rendezvous' with Mona, and an attempt to cover-up the gift of the boat. In comparison with the heroes of DOUBLE INDEMNITY and THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE, Forbes is shown to relish the idea of being a transgressive adventurer without having the courage to commit himself to a full-blown, defiant transgression.

As I have suggested, the prominence of the 'story' of Mona most insistently qualifies Forbes' fantasy of transgression. The film resists displaying her as a fetishised erotic 'icon'. Her 'glamour-girl' sexuality is distinguished from her 'real self' - her job requires her to be 'on display', although 'at heart' - the film suggests - she is a 'natural' woman, and is interested in Forbes for what he is rather than for what he aspires to. The film thus reverses the connotations of Elizabeth Scott's star-image as 'fatal woman' (as in THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS, Hal B. Wallis Prods., 1945; and DEAD RECKONING). Later, in

the bar, she tells Forbes her story. She claims that Smiley was too much in love with her, and that she protested firmly at his attempts to provide her with expensive gifts far beyond his means. Although the content of her account bears similarities to Kitty Collin's disclaimer of responsibility for Swede's fetishistic love, there is in PITFALL a marked 'decontamination' of the 'erotic' woman.

Smiley's self-corrupting, obsessional love is markedly paralleled by Forbes' own interest in Mona, in that each seeks to constitute her as the ultra-glamorous icon of their desires [92]. During their first meeting, Forbes is captivated not by Mona 'in the flesh' but through his fascination with her frozen, posed and glamourised image (thus identifying with another's look at her, rather than seeing her 'for himself'). As an 'image', Mona is a much safer vehicle for Forbes' rather 'passive' attempt to find excitement outside the confines of work and family. This 'passivity' is highlighted during their first kiss, later in the film - a kiss which she inaugurates - and can, indeed, be viewed in terms of his (highly 'controlled') attempt to 'try out' an abnegation of his 'responsibilities-as-a-man' (husband/ father) [93].

Significantly, there is another male figure within the film whose intense, obsessive desire for Mona is comparable to that of Smiley. 'Mac' MacDonald (Raymond Burr) is a shady private-detective employed by the insurance company to investigate the Smiley case. It is Macdonald who sets Forbes onto Mona Stevens, and who first casts her as ultra-glamorous - confessing that he has fallen in love with her. The fact that she is desired by others (Smiley and Macdonald), together with this initial view of her through the glamour-photos, are sufficient to motivate Forbes' own desire to situate her as the supra-alluring vehicle

for his fantasy. Macdonald functions in the films as Forbes' 'double', in that he is able to express his desire for Mona without restriction - he is an 'id figure' of unbounded masculine brutality, whose desire for the woman is characterised as a full-blooded obsession which Forbes dare not commit himself to. Unlike Forbes, Macdonald is a man without 'responsibility', who does not (have to) repress his desire and his dissatisfaction, and who quite pointedly does not 'live by the rules'. This 'doubling' is accentuated by the fact that Macdonald is a private-eye, a role associated with Dick Powell in his first 'tough' thriller of the 1940's, MURDER, MY SWEET. Forbes is precisely introduced to Mona - and to the idea of loving Mona - through Macdonald. And it is Macdonald who serves as the agent of punishment for his transgression, when he beats up Forbes outside his home for seeing her.

Mona is prevented from seeing Forbes when, on attempting to visit him after Macdonald's attack, she discovers that he is married. Rather than serving as a 'corruptive' mother-figure - like Kathie in OUT OF THE PAST, or Kitty in THE KILLERS - Mona is prepared to sacrifice her own desires and to instruct Forbes on what is best/most right for him. When they meet in a bar after his recovery, she returns the briefcase he had left behind in her apartment, saying "I'm sure you'd be lost without it", and sends him home. For Forbes, Mona shifts from the incarnation of a glamorous and 'illicit' alternative to the limitations and responsibilities of his 'normal' life, to someone who can function as his 'superego'. At the same time, the film stresses the cost that this shift represents for Mona. She realises the 'impossibility' of any relationship with Forbes, and is caught between her love for him - as an alternative to the obsessional possessiveness of both Smiley and

Macdonald - and her reluctance to disrupt his family. In its emphasis upon the woman's self-sacrifice, PITFALL can be seen to incorporate within the form of the thriller the emotional problematic of the 'women's picture' melodrama (and it is by no means the only film to do so - other notable examples being THE VELVET TOUCH, RKO, 1948; and Max Ophuls' THE RECKLESS MOMENT, Walter Wanger Prods., 1949).

Following both the beating and his 'confrontation' with Mona, Forbes tries to reconstruct his home-life and to accept the limitations as his role as husband-father. Whereas earlier he had criticised the routine of his life, he now espouses its security and determinedly tries to be content. In so doing, he is explicitly acting in accordance with Mona's desires - she precisely wants him to find domestic contentment, for it is something which she herself has been denied. However, Macdonald's extreme but frustrated lust becomes a destructive force which threatens Mona, Forbes and Forbes' family. When his advances are spurned by Mona, Macdonald begins to blackmail her with his knowledge of her 'affaire' with Forbes. She informs Forbes of this, and he responds by taking the law into his own hands and 'paying-back' Macdonald's beating, vowing to kill him if he threatens his wife and child. Macdonald then visits Bill Smiley in jail and begins a process of working him into a jealous rage over Mona and Forbes. Smiley becomes the agent both of his own and of Macdonald's thwarted desire.

Smiley is released from jail, and is given a gun and fuelled with alcohol by Macdonald (who has secured Smiley's release by posing as an agent of the insurance company - an impersonation which further stresses the 'doubling' of Forbes and Macdonald). Mona fails to appease Smiley, and warns Forbes that he is in danger. On a lone and grim vigil,

Forbes turns off the lights in the house (transforming the home-space into an environment of disturbing shadows), and waits downstairs with a gun in his hand. Not heeding Forbes' initial attempt to scare him off, Smiley is shot when he attempt to break into the house. Forbes seeks to cover his tracks - and to limit the damage to his family - by telling the police he shot Smiley as a prowler. When the police leave, however, he breaks down and confesses the truth to Sue. She rejects his ploy for sympathy, however, and commands him to stick by the account he gave to the police, in order to protect their son. However, Forbes is haunted by his conscience, and he roams the streets, wracked by guilt - like another 'transgressive adventurer', Chris Cross (Edward G. Robinson) in SCARLET STREET - until he eventually confesses all to the District Attorney.

However, it is not solely Forbes' dilemma which contributes to the negativity of the film's conclusion. While Forbes had been coping with the danger of Smiley, Mona had herself received a threatening visit from Macdonald. After telling her of the plot he has set in motion, Macdonald says he is determined that she will eventually end up with him. In order to circumvent this, Mona takes a gun from a drawer and shoots him. Forbes and Mona are both present at the Hall of Justice, but the District Attorney forbids them to speak together. This officially-sanctioned figure of the Law decrees that Smiley's death counts as justifiable homicide, but he severely chastises Forbes for not calling the police in sooner. Forbes is told that he will have to live with the consequences for the rest of his life. Mona herself is due to face trial for the shooting of Macdonald - which, we are told, has not proved fatal- and the film thus proves a marked reversal of such 'tough'

thrillers as *OUT OF THE PAST* and *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*, for it casts Forbes, as precisely an 'homme fatale' who brings catastrophe to the woman.

The film ends with Forbes' wife 'laying down the law': she takes him back, because he has been a good husband and father except for one 24-hour lapse. The 'happy ending' is, however, markedly provisional - Sue says that they can try to redeem what has been put in jeopardy. More problematic than this itself is the pervading sense of negativity with which the film concludes. Forbes has to accept the restrictions of his life - there can be no escape for him - and the routine of family and work has imprisoned him for good. In *PITFALL*'s variation of the 'criminal adventure' narrative, then, it is not the hero's own desire which in itself represents a threat to the family. Rather, his break from routine and his 'repressed' toying with the possibilities of transgression serve to unleash extreme and destructive forces of desire against which the family had previously been protected. Once he 'steps out of line' and starts to fantasise about the excitement which lies beyond - and is repressed by - the routine of his day-to-day bourgeois existence, he sets in motion a plot directed against both himself and his family. The 'lesson' which Forbes learns - not so much to his own as to Mona's cost - is that the sacrifice of self which is involved in the 'normal' routine of work, home and family is inevitable, and has steadfastly to be maintained - 'or else'. There is a stark and bitter contrast between the relative innocence of Forbes' attraction to the possibility of embarking on an affair with a glamorous woman and the violence of the threat this gives rise to. The 'punishment' seems far in excess of the 'crime'. Forbes and Mona are subjected to a degree of emotional turmoil and physical danger which they seem not to have

'merited' by their actions. The institution of the family, which in the latter stages of the film they both - ironically - seek steadfastly to consolidate, emerges as a staunchly-defended 'fortress', protected not with military might, and not just through the sanctioning 'armoury' of legal and cultural institutions, but with a far less tangible and more powerful 'internally-generated' force of guilt and prohibition. If one is not secured within the 'fortress-family', one is in opposition to it has to suffer the consequences. As Spencer Selby notes, PITFALL emerges as a "disquieting noir thriller which doesn't seem entirely able to reaffirm the middle-class values its protagonist disregards" [94] - disquieting because, as I have suggested, the film articulates the cost of transgression rather the security of conformity.

Fritz Lang's independant production THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW, released over three years earlier than PITFALL, is more explicitly concerned with the 'psychical machinery' which regulates the (male) individual's conformity with the cultural regimes of law, home and family. As in PITFALL, the hero transgresses against his restricted options as a bourgeois family man. Although THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW was in production before the release of DOUBLE INDEMNITY, it holds an ironical discourse with the type of 'criminal adventure' fantasy found in the latter (and which, as I have suggested, was popularised in James M. Cain's fiction from the mid-1930's). Compared with PITFALL, Lang's film more evidently - and more 'knowingly' - stresses the inappropriateness of its protagonist as such a 'transgressive adventurer' hero. Professor Richard Wanley (Edward G. Robinson) is a

solid, sober family man and academic (a psychology lecturer). As is characteristic of Lang's films, *THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW* emphatically and economically foregrounds the structural mechanisms of its narrative in the opening scenes. We first see Wanley delivering a lecture entitled "Some Psychological Aspects of Homicide". He stands in front of a blackboard on which is sketched a Freudian model of the psyche. In the next scene, at the railway station, he sees off his wife and children, who are departing for their annual vacation, and leaving Wanley - emphatically a 'happily married man' - to his "summer bachelorhood".

That evening, he pays a customary visit to his (all-male) club. But, just outside the entrance to the club, he stops to gaze at a portrait displayed in the window of an art-gallery. His two, similarly 'respectable' and middle-aged, friends - the District Attorney Frank Lalor (Raymond Massey) and Dr. Michael Barkstone (Edmond Breon) - catch his fascinated stare at the portrait of an attractive woman, and they make humorous but wistful comments about "our sweetheart", "our dream-girl". In his own admiration for the portrait, Lalor plants the seeds of Wanley's later 'transgression' for he suggests the excitement of meeting the woman in 'real life', beyond the framing and fixity of the portrait ("extraordinary woman, too, I bet"). The portrait inspires the three men to discuss the restrictions brought about by their advancing years - "the solidity and stodginess of age", as Wanley puts it - and to consider what they would do if they met the 'woman in the window' in real life. Wanley says he would "run like the devil" if such a possibility arose (although he also comments wryly that should a burlesque-dancer happen to come into the club, he would gladly watch). However, Wanley is speaking here with a 'voice of responsibility' which

runs counter to his earlier highly-charged look at the portrait, suggesting a duality within the Professor which one is precisely led to consider in terms of the <sup>Film's</sup> previously introduced Freudian distinction between 'superego' and 'id'.

This introductory section serves as preparation for a 'dream' experienced by Wanley after his two friends leave him at the club, a 'dream' - in essence, more fundamentally a 'daydream' - in which he seeks to prove that he is not subject to the delimitations of middle-age. Before falling asleep in his chair - after his two friends have departed - Wanley breaks his normal routine of "one cigar, another drink, and early to bed" by helping himself to an extra two drinks, a minor transgression which serves to 'inaugurate' the 'dream'. Wanley further indicates his 'desire to transgress' by selecting for his late-night reading a 'daring' text - "Solomon's Song of Songs". The 'dream-narrative' is thus carefully, deliberately 'cued-in'/motivated - although the status of the narrative as a 'dream' is not actually revealed until the end of the film. The 'dream-narrative' represents the trajectory of Wanley's 'subconscious wish-fulfillment', his attempt to prove to himself that he is not 'castrated' by middle-age, that his "spirit of adventure" still persists. The 'dream' leads him into a series of adventures whereby he becomes the protagonist of a drama of 'criminal transgression' akin to that of James M. Cain's fiction. As Wanley leaves the club, he meets the woman whose portrait stands in the window. Alice Reed (Joan Bennett) seems to emerge from the portrait as if 'summoned-up' by Wanley (her reflection in the window overlaying her painted image). However, Wanley does not run away, as he had earlier prophesied. Instead, he allows Alice to take him back to her apartment,

in order to see the sketches for her portrait. In so doing, he is deliberately refusing to heed Lalor's warning against heeding "the siren call of adventure" ("Men of our years have no business playing around with any adventure that they can avoid. We're like athletes who are out of condition. We can't handle that sort of thing anymore").

Although the relations between Alice and Wanley are perfectly 'innocent' - and remain so throughout the film, for the contact between them never goes so far as a kiss - they are 'compromised' when Alice's lover surprises them. The man - later revealed to be financier/industrialist Charles Mazard (Arthur Loft) - does not believe Wanley's protestations of innocence, and his jealousy erupts violently: he slaps Alice and attacks Wanley. In the ensuing scuffle, Wanley stabs Mazard in the back with a pair of scissors, handed to him by Alice. Realising that the man is dead, Wanley is horrified at the possible consequences. He checks his first impulse to call the police and decides to cover up the crime by taking the body elsewhere. Although the killing is itself a 'justifiable' and 'unintentional' homicide, in that Wanley acts in self-defence, the plan to conceal the crime sets him up as a 'knowing' criminal. It is worth tracing the implications of this first section of the 'dream' in terms of the concept of subconscious 'wish-fulfillment'. The 'dream' is not comparable to, say, the nightmare in STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR, in that it has greater narrative coherence and is not differentiated from the 'real time' of the preceding narrative through a marked stylistic differentiation. It relies upon the spectator's belief that it is not 'dream', but 'reality' - as a continuation of the opening scenes. What it represents is an 'imaginary'//fictional extension of the debate between Wanley, Mazard and Barkstone in which Wanley is

given the opportunity to test himself as 'potent' hero. In going back to Alice's luxury apartment, Wanley is acting as - in the terms of the 'dream', fantasising himself as - the transgressive adventurer who sets himself against the norms of social living in order to realise his desires - for adventure, for sex, or for money - and hence to prove his 'potency'. However, as is quite common in a Lang film, the spectator does not share the viewpoint of the hero, and the markedly structures an 'ironic' distance between what Wanley would like to be and how we perceive him.

The transgressive killing of Mazard - the powerful 'Father' who claims possession of the desired woman - functions, like the husband-murders in *THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE* and *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*, in terms of a (disguised) 'Oedipal revolt'. Mazard is revealed to be rich and powerful, and in terms of the signification of 'paternal' authority, he is 'doubled' with Lalor (this being marked not only through the straw-hats worn by each character, but also by the fact that the alias Mazard uses when he meets Alice - "Frank Howard" - shares a first-name with Lalor). What is particularly notable in this instance, however, is the very emphasis upon displacement, not just a sexual displacement (in the coyness of Wanley's relations with Alice), nor a displacement of intentionality (the killing being accidentally), but a more marked displacement of Wanley away from what he desires to be. For the spectator, the 'fantasy' of Wanley as 'transgressor-hero' is intermingled with his own fear of the consequences of such a revolt. As with *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* and - even - *PITFALL*, then, the 'criminal adventure' reveals an emphatic intermingling of both transgressive desire and a fear of retribution. *THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW* makes

particularly emphatic how the very defiance of the Law, leads to an unequivocal demonstration of the power and inescapability of the law.

Lang's film represents a particularly interesting variation of the 'criminal adventure' narrative - because its hero is a middle-aged family man (rather than a youthful 'rebel'), and because its narrative of transgression is itself cast in terms of the overdeterminedly 'subjective' structure of the 'dream' (even if it is only perceived in these terms 'retrospectively'). The conflict between Wanley's desire to transgress and his fear of the Law is marked in terms of the conflict between 'id' and 'superego'. However, Wanley's 'dream'-construction of himself - as transgressive adventurer - is pointedly under the sway of the 'superego'. Wanley shows none of the assertive, self-confident lust of Walter Neff. For example, when he first arrives at Alice's apartment, Wanley insists that he will not drink too much, and there are also no signs of actively sexual intent on his part (this being displaced into the desire to look - passively - at the woman's portrait). Furthermore, the representation of Mazard's killing as an accident contrasts sharply both with the meticulous planning of Walter Neff and with John Forbes' decision to risk take the law into his own hands. For Wanley, the 'id' is, from the start, already highly constrained. Indeed, compared to DOUBLE INDEMNITY and PITFALL, Wanley's 'transgressive' actions are remarkably brief: his involvement with Alice and his killing of Mazard do not in themselves constitute the main thrust of the narrative. Rather, I would suggest that they serve principally as the means by which they can set in motion and motivate a differently-oriented narrative of 'masculine testing'.

The critical moment for Wanley is not the decision to go back to Alice's apartment, and neither is it the actual killing of Mazard. It is, rather, his subsequent decision not to notify the police but to cover up the crime. In DOUBLE INDEMNITY and PITFALL, the story has a clear two-part structure: firstly, the 'story' of the 'temptation' of the hero - which leads to the act of transgression - and secondly, the 'story' of the consequent conflict between the hero and the ('internal' and 'external') forces of law. THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW marginalises this first 'story' and shifts the testing of the hero almost exclusively onto the second 'story'. Wanley's decision not to alert the police inaugurates this second 'story', and precisely casts the first 'story' as a transgression. Until that point where Wanley picks up and then puts down the telephone, the consequences of his lapse from routine are not irreversibly 'illicit'. In his lecture at the start of the film, Wanley quite clearly distinguishes between killing in self-defence and killing for gain, stating that they cannot be judged or penalised in the same way. The refusal to call the police - a decision which is not explicitly motivated [95] - precisely transforms what is quite clearly a killing in self-defence (Mazard being much bigger than Wanley, and attempting to strangle him) into a more overtly criminal act. Although, then, Wanley does not consciously plan to transgress - unlike Walter Neff - his decision not to call the police transforms the killing of Mazard into an apparent act of criminal transgression. Wanley casts himself as a lawbreaker, retrospectively - and this serves to situate the narrative of transgression specifically within the terms of fantasy. Killing in self-defence is thus transformed into killing-for-gain; the gain is not financial, but it can, as Reynold Humphries puts it, be defined instead

as "taking advantage of a situation to put one's plans (that is, desires) into operation" [96].

Wanley's concealment of the body shifts his relationship to crime from realm of 'academic theory' to the practical. It represents, in other words, a 'rewriting' of his identity in relation to the law. As such, Wanley directly pits himself against his Lalor, the District Attorney. In the discussion in the man's club, Lalor establishes himself as the one who can 'lay-down-the-Law', by insisting that as middle-aged men they should accept the limitation of their 'potency' and forego the "spirit of adventure". Through the concealment of the corpse and the subsequent covering-up (and 'flaunting') of incriminating clues, Wanley aspires to test the Law - and to test Lalor, as 'figurehead' of the Law. Wanley, indeed, does not simply conceal the evidence of the crime, for the emphatic botching of the concealment of his part in the killing serves as a means by which he can offer himself to Lalor as a potential suspect. Wanley wants Lalor to accept/recognise him as a 'transgressive adventurer' - as 'potent. A recognition which would precisely expose Lalor as erroneous in his declaration of Wanley's 'castration'. When Wanley is invited to accompany Lalor on his investigation into Mazard's killing, he suggests to the D.A. that the assemblage of clues the criminal had been 'careless' enough to leave behind suggest that he himself could be the culprit. However, Lalor just laughs at this theory, refusing to take him seriously as a 'daring criminal' (a restatement, in other words, of his 'authoritative' view of Wanley as 'castrated'). As with Keyes in DOUBLE INDEMNITY, Lalor is not simply the protagonist's adversary, for he is established by the hero as the one must must recognise and 'judge' the transgression. But in THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW,

Lalor's persistent refusal to acknowledge the possibility of Wanley's part in the crime highlights the gap between Wanley's fantasy of being a 'potent' adventurer-hero and the 'reality' of his situation as a middle-aged family-man who must learn to accept his 'castration')

The 'dream' structure itself ultimately serves to specify Wanley's transgression in terms of 'hallucinated' wish-fulfilment rather than 'reality'. And throughout, *THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW* employs 'ironizing' devices [97] which italicize Wanley's ineffectualness as a lawbreaker in relation to his transgressive aspirations (although these never serve simply to 'distantiate' the spectator from Wanley as a 'character' - his predicament is represented in such a way as to preserve 'sympathy'). This 'splitting' of Wanley - the schism between his desired 'potency' and his 'castration', and between the opposing forces of 'id and 'superego' - is highlighted, for example, when, in Alice's apartment, he is on several occasions shown prominently 'doubled' in a mirror-reflection. Furthermore, the film sets up several suspense sequences which precisely demonstrate to the spectator's Wanley's distinct lack of control. The removal of the body becomes a particularly extended example of this. As he draws his car up to Alice's apartment-house, Wanley is stopped by a policeman for driving without lights. When he first seeks to carry the corpse to the car, one of the Alice's fellow tenants arrives at the front door, and Wanley narrowly avoids detection. Then, with the body in the boot he is stopped at a toll-gate: Wanley drops his coin as he seeks to drive past, to be called back by the attendant. Shortly after this, he almost drives through a red light, and as he pulls up sharply he realises he is being watched over by a motorcycle patrolman. Finally, when he actually succeeds in offloading the body, he

leaves footprints and tyre-tracks in the rain-soaked mud, and he also manages to tear his jacket and cut his arm on a fence (thus leaving several important clues).

Such suspense sequences precisely highlight that Wanley is not the master of the chain of circumstances he has set in motion. The uniformed officers he encounters on his 'criminal' voyage of concealment serve as a reminder of the omnipresence of the Law - and Wanley is noticeably shaken by each encounter. He is comparatively more at ease with Lalor - not only because he knows him, but also because he has the advantage of knowing more about the crime from first-hand experience. His discussions with Lalor about the Mazard case become precisely a game played with knowledge, a game in which he has a distinct advantage. It is an artificial situation, precisely 'constructed' by Wanley - after all, it is 'his dream' - in order to bring about a controlled context in which he can demonstrate his powers - teasing Lalor with the possibility that he may be both a bold adventurer and criminal genius, but at the same time able to hide behind his respectability (even earlier, when stopped by the traffic-cop for driving without lights, Wanley manages to escape punishment when he reveals his profession). The police theory about the case corresponds with the scenario Wanley had sought to suggest: Lalor tells him that they suspect a crime-of-passion scenario (which of course, allows Lalor to discount Wanley immediately). Furthermore, his discussions with Lalor once more turn crime into a matter of intellectual debate and ratiocination - the arena in which Wanley is most comfortable. With Lalor, Wanley can play against the Law while at the same time protecting himself from danger.

However, Wanley is jerked from his 'academic' security when a complicating element is thrown into the machinery of the plot he has engineered. Alice and Wanley are threatened by the arrival on the scene of Heidt (Dan Duryea), Mazard's shady ex-bodyguard - an unknown element which is beyond Wanley's control, and which furthermore represents a physical danger. Heidt is quite markedly 'doubled' with both Lalor and Mazard through the motif of the straw-hats which are worn by all three. Heidt, as a corrupt ex-policeman, represents an inversion of the Law, its twisted mirror-image. He uses investigative procedure - as when he searches Alice's apartment for incriminating clues - but he is not bound by any 'principle of law' or self-restraint, being out for what he can get (firstly money, then money and Alice). He incarnates the type of youthful and 'potent' rebel Wanley had sought to pretend to be - Heidt's scenes with Alice, for example, contrast markedly in their 'sexual by-play' with the stiffly polite encounters between herself and Wanley. Faced with the far less controllable threat posed by Heidt, Wanley rationalizes that the only way to solve the problem is to kill him. However, this plan to murder 'for real' patently demonstrates Wanley's ineffectualness as a 'potent' criminal. He devolves responsibility for accomplishing the act to Alice (using the conventional 'woman's weapon', poison - and moreover, a poison Dr. Barkstone told him was undetectable). Wanley is so out of his depth when faced with the machinations of a real criminal that he has to hide behind the woman (with Alice, in her encounters with Heidt, managing to retain control far more easily than Wanley had when dumping Mazard's corpse).

Furthermore, while Alice attempts to slip poison to Heidt, and to cope with his sexual advances, Wanley sits at home, waiting for a phone-

call from her (his passivity here serving as the inverse of the 'tough' hero's desired mastery). The murder-plan - far from a 'crime of passion', but still an 'illicit' contract between Wanley and a desirable woman - comes unstuck. Heidt proves himself superior to the would-be criminals when he thwarts Alice's attempt to poison him. The blackmailer turns violent, and demands more money before leaving. When Wanley is told of the failure of their plan, he mixes some of the poison for himself and sits down to die. The film then cuts back to Alice, who has heard a scuffle in the street and discovers that Heidt has been shot by the police. Finding upon him the \$5,000 and the watch with Mazard's initials - which he took from Alice - he is immediately located as the killer, and the case is closed. But Alice's attempt to contact Wanley comes too late: as the telephone rings, he is sitting dying in his chair, while on the table beside him are framed photographs of his wife and children (a reminder of the security he has lost through his attempt to transgress).

However, this downbeat conclusion is immediately reversed. Wanley wakes up in his chair at the club, and the whole of his 'criminal adventure' is revealed to be a dream. Paul Jensen feels that

This ending is a cheat used to rescue the director, who had painted himself into a corner. Killing off the hero was a far from common practice in the Forties, though today's audiences more readily accept downbeat or vague endings. Besides, had the professor been destroyed in this way by a web of circumstances, chance, or his own errors, he would not have been a moral winner, since he had progressed from an innocent (because unplanned) killing to the coldly calculated (but unsuccessful) murder of the bodyguard [98].

On the contrary, not only is the 'dream' well-motivated - as I have already noted - but it gives the film a dense texture of psychological

overdetermination. That Wanley's 'criminal adventure' is a 'dream' does not lessen its 'meaning', as Jensen claims [99], but it serves rather to highlight that the drama of the film consists not in 'external' occurrences but much more fundamentally in the 'psychology' of crime. The 'dream-drama' serves to articulate the conflicting currents within Wanley's psyche, to 'dramatise' his desires, repression, guilt, fear. The story operates on twin-motors: fantasy and fear. Wanley seeks to 'make-believe' that he is a transgressive hero, but at the same time he is aware of the dangers of 'stepping out of line'. As in the other 'criminal adventure' thrillers I have discussed here, the lure of transgression is inextricably linked with a desire for affirmation of the Law. Through the dream, then, Wanley seems to be attempting to justify to himself his current delimitation. The conclusion of the 'dream-narrative' serves as a crushing demonstration of the power of the Law - for even if the threat of Heidt is averted, the internalised agency of the Law, the 'superego', delivers its own punishment.

The 'dream-Wanley' is not simply, as Jensen claims, the victim of "a web of circumstances, chance, or his own errors". Rather, the 'machinery' of the film's narrative process is precisely geared to the conflicting 'internal' forces which structure Wanley's own identity. The film represents this identity in terms of process and conflict. The 'licit' Wanley - family man, bourgeois professional, academic - has to accept the repression upon which his life is based. The 'illicit' Wanley, the 'daredevil' adventurer hero, has to be sacrificed. The 'lesson' the professor learns is the security provided for those who make the 'sacrifice', who subject themselves to the Law. As he leaves the club - 'for real' - Wanley stops to gaze at the portrait of the

woman in the window. The 'dream' seems to be coming true as a woman's reflected face is superimposed over the portrait. Wanley turns to face the woman - who does not really look like 'Alice' - and she asks him for a light. Rather than obliging her, he runs off - thus abiding by his earlier, pre-'dream', caution. The joke which concludes the film is strongly counterposed to the desperation which ends the 'dream', and testifies to Wanley's acceptance of his own 'castration'.

The 'criminal adventure' thrillers I have considered above, then, can be seen to be crucially concerned with a testing of masculinity in relation to the Law (hence a testing of the 'licit' positionings of masculine desire and identity). In *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*, the 'structuring' of masculinity is affirmed through the trajectory of Neff's lapse - which precisely demonstrates both the nature and the power of the Law. In *PITFALL*, the 'structuring' of masculinity is validated in terms of the family, through the demonstration of the responsibilities of, and the sacrifices involved in, the male's social role as husband/father. *THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW* essays a comparatively more complex project, in that it addresses the 'regimentation' of masculinity within the realms of 'social law' (in Wanley's an act of criminal transgression), the family, and the male psyche itself (through the carefully-established oppositions between 'ego', 'id' and 'superego'). The 'psychological drama' of *THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW* stresses that the Law is not just an external force against which the hero 'pits himself', for not only is it embodied within cultural institutions and the social order - but it is an integral component of the 'properly-coded' masculine self.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

A PROBLEM IN 'ALGEBRA':DEAD RECKONING AND THE REGIMENTATION OF THE MASCULINE.

Throughout this section, I have attempted to suggest ways in which the 1940's 'tough' thrillers are marked by - and seek to re-order - disruptions to and schisms within masculine identity. At times this problematic is addressed overtly - as in *THE WOMAN AND THE WINDOW* with its manifest figuration of masculinity as conflictual and in process, or the contrary example of *LADY FROM SHANGHAI*, where the figure of the 'tough', controlled masculine hero is subjected to an extended parodic play [100]. However, the 'tough' thrillers treat the drama of their 'dislocated' heroes seriously (indeed this very seriousness is a specific target of Welles' mockery). In the main, the 'tough' thriller invests its pleasures in the serious representation of a problematised masculinity. Just as the 'dramatic' representation of the 'realm of women' - of the family, home, romance, motherhood, female identity and desire - has been approached (by both the film industry and by film critics) in terms of the categorisation of the 'women's picture' melodrama, one could consider the 'tough' thriller as representing one form of 'masculine melodrama'. Through its deployment of scenarios of male alienation, victimisation, fatalistic despair and romantic obsession, etc., the 'tough' thriller represents a cinematically-regulated engagement with - and acknowledgement of - a contemporary destabilisation of masculinity in both its psychic and cultural spheres of

determination. These films trace the disjunctions within and between masculine identity and social authority - often uniting the two in the form of a sexual transgression.

The problems faced by the 'tough' heroes are not, however, solely or even predominantly bound up with the 'difficulty' of their relations with women - for, as I have suggested, the latter tend to signify disturbances within or threats to the 'regimentation' of masculine identity and social/cultural authority. Although the 'heterosexual competence' of the hero is one of the crucial arenas for the 'tough' thriller's project of 'masculine-testing', what is perhaps most striking about many of these films is their insistence upon 'testing' the hero in relation to other men - as partners, adversaries, or representatives of legal or patriarchal law (vide such powerful 'paternal' figures as Keyes, Lator and Trenton). The hero's attempt to define himself through the 'quest' or 'adventure' involves a series of 'contracts' whereby the hero 'pacts' himself to the positions of desire signified through the individual characters. As I have suggested, in films like THE KILLERS and OUT OF THE PAST the hero's investment of desire in an exclusive 'pact' with a woman causes him to lose his place in relation to the masculine 'contracts' which have hitherto structured his identity. Jeff Markham and the Swede become dislodged from a defining network of male authority, by transgressing against their 'masculine' responsibilities. Involvement with a woman, then, poses the danger of disrupting the circuitry of desire which sustains 'tough', controlled masculinity, and sends desire 'hurtling' into the 'chaos' beyond the Law - causing disjunctions between the hero and the authority of the masculine, and also within the male psyche itself (most evidently so in THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW). I will conclude this discussion of the representation of

masculinity in the 'tough' thriller by examining a film which particularly highlights the contradictions within the consolidation of a unified, 'tough' masculine identity, and which, furthermore, casts this process of consolidation in terms of the problems involved in the adjustment of a violently 'war-honed' masculinity to the demands and delimitations of postwar social life.

DEAD RECKONING - a 1947 production by Columbia, directed by John Cromwell and co-scripted by 'hard-boiled' novelist Steve Fisher - uses the postwar 'masculine crisis' as an overt reference-point for its drama of masculine aggression, loss and instability. It is a film which seems to 'speak' directly of and for its context, using the fictional 'machinery' of the 'tough' thriller as a 'symptomatic' vehicle for a simultaneously disrupted and assertive process of 'masculinisation'. The Army as a regime of masculine authority and discipline stamps its presence much more markedly in DEAD RECKONING than it does in THE BLUE DAHLIA. The pivotal relationship in this film is between two recently-discharged paratroopers, Captain Rip Murdock (Humphrey Bogart) war-comrade Sergeant Johnny Drake (William Prince). The trouble starts for the two men on their final assignment together before returning to civilian life - under 'high-priority' orders, they are flown from France to New York, and then rushed by train from New York to Washington. On the train, Rip rifles through the papers of the Colonel who accompanies them, to discover that they are en route to Washington because they have both been decorated: Johnny is to receive the Congressional Medal of Honour, and Rip himself is to be awarded the Distinguished Service Order. However, Johnny is displeased with this 'surprise' - which not only represents an official consolidation and recognition of their relationship, their status as a team (for they had

taken part in the specific action together), but which also represents a 'gift of love' from Rip to Johnny (for Rip had recommended Johnny for the medal).

While conversing playfully in their shared train-compartment, Johnny takes off his shirt, and Rip kids him about the college-pin he wears in his undershirt. Mysteriously secretive about the pin, Johnny secures it in his mouth as he takes off his undershirt and washes himself. Rip carries on talking as Johnny flannels his chest, and the film curiously italicizes the fact that Rip does not gaze at the bare-chested Johnny. Indeed, while the scene carries overt 'homoerotic' connotations, there is also a strongly marked defensiveness concerning the extent of their 'intimacy' [101]. Rip repeatedly brings the conversation round to the subject of "dames" - a blatant attempt both to 'desexualise' his own relationship with Johnny and to invite Johnny's agreement with his view that women take second-place to the intense bonding they share (and which has been forged in the extreme conditions of wartime 'testing', which women do not know and cannot share). Johnny and Rip are firmly marked opposites in terms of their experience of life. Before the war, Rip had been a 'proletarian' taxi-driver, while Johnny was an English-teacher at a college, but the war has been responsible for their consolidation as a 'team' and has giving them the chance to 'speak the same language'. The fact that the war is now over clearly puts this relationship in jeopardy, subjecting it to the divisions which constitute their 'peacetime' identities. Women represent a further form of threat, unless they can be rigidly objectified - as "dames".

Both the 'class' differences between the two men, and the 'secondary status' of women are the subject of a short, joking exchange between Rip

and Johnny as they share one of their final moments in each other's company:

RIP: "Say, when you get on again as a professor at some college and I'm back running my cab at St Louis; send me up a problem in algebra once in a while".  
 JOHNNY: "Blonde or brunette?"  
 RIP: "A redhead in a sloppy-joe sweater"  
*[Both laugh].*

The 'class' difference between the two men is clearly located as subsidiary to the 'question' of women, for Rip can breezily acknowledge the former in terms of a controlled, manageable difference (negotiated and negated through their wartime bonding). However, with the topic of women, Rip seeks an acknowledgement from Johnny in regard to the 'common ground' they share. Johnny immediately understands what Rip means by "a problem in algebra": women are coded specifically as a 'problem' which has to be 'worked out' by the men (i.e. 'resolved'). This analogy is cast in terms of a 'shared joke', the joke serving to institute an opposition between "we" who share it, and women as its 'object'. As is often the case, the 'joking context' represents a bonding, communalising activity [102], and is a means of signalling that the two men are on the same 'wavelength' - whereas women are excluded from the circuitry of male-male communication, categorised physically (in terms of their hair-colour) rather than as 'fellow subjects', and cast as 'other'. During the train-compartment sequence, Rip refers to several (unnamed) women in a similar fashion, and he does so seemingly in order to degrade one specific woman, whom Johnny is in love with.

This woman - who is also unnamed (referred to by Rip as "that blonde") - is from the start the key signifier of the disruptions which lie

in wait for the male friendship in the 'civilian' world (and in terms the film invites, women are irretrievably 'civilian'). It is Johnny's love for the 'mystery woman' which has prevented him from fully joining-in Rip's 'rip-roaring' social-life (as Rip's voice-over informs the spectator, he always had a girl on his arm whereas Johnny 'did without' [103] ). Johnny is thus similar to the Swede in THE KILLERS and Jeff in OUT OF THE PAST, a man so 'hung up' on a woman that he is in danger of 'losing his manhood'. Rip seeks to deny that Johnny's is at all "special":

"Johnny, why don't you get rid of the grief you've got for that blonde, whoever she is? Every mile you go you sweat worse with the same pain. Didn't I tell you all females are the same with their faces washed?"

He seeks to degrade her by both stressing the exclusion of women from the 'intimacy' of male bonding (as in the "algebra problem" joke), but by simultaneously emphasising that women are 'all the same' (again, unlike men - who are all 'different', unique). This 'otherness' is rendered in terms of 'inferiority' - but also of 'contamination', for Johnny has clearly been 'contaminated' by his involvement with the woman, for he will not confide to Rip why he is so nervous about the the medal. This withholding of 'confidence' becomes a major obstacle between the two men, and, as Rip is to learn later, the secret itself concerns a 'transgressive' heterosexual relationship - akin to that found in the 'criminal adventure' thrillers - which had culminated in the murder of the woman's husband and Johnny's subsequent branding - by the police and the press - as a 'crime of passion' killer.

Johnny's 'illicit', civilian past offers a different Johnny from the man Rip knows. It makes Johnny an 'enigma', rather than the 'buddy' and

'war hero' he had known. Directly counterposed to the medal, as the signifier of their wartime relationship is the college pin Johnny seeks to conceal from Rip. The pin signifies both Johnny's educational/class status (as an ex-student of Yale) and his mysterious, 'contaminated' civilian past. In the train compartment, Rip insistently needles Johnny about the hidden pin/'hidden past', and while Johnny balks at the prospect of having his photograph taken when the train stops in Philadelphia, Rip gets his chance to look at the 'mystery object'. He sees that it contains the vital clue that Johnny's real surname is Preston. However, before Rip can confront Johnny with this piece of information, his buddy makes his escape.

Rip takes it upon himself to find Johnny and to dispel the mystery which surrounds him. His trail takes him to Johnny's home-town, Gulf City: Rip enters the world of Johnny Preston in order to re-find, to reassert the identity of, Johnny Drake. In his researches in the local newspaper office, he discovers the 'dark secret' of Johnny's past - that he is wanted for the murder of the wealthy Stuart Chandler. It is a sign of Rip's 'masculine competence' that he is able to assemble sufficient clues to establish an active trajectory through the mystery. But whereas Riordan's self-appointed investigative quest is conducted with aggressive confidence, Rip's effectivity is compromised by his personal involvement. The sequence where he waits alone in his hotel-room, vainly hoping for a call from Johnny, is pervaded by a sense of desperate - and desperately 'tough' - loneliness. At this point in the film, the soundtrack is densely saturated with Rip's 'hard-boiled' voice-over. He paces restlessly in his room, frustrated by the inertia, the lack of knowledge, forced upon him - while his voice-over narration, the 'voice of his thoughts', edgily and obsessively seeks to dispel the silence. Rip no longer has Johnny to talk to, only himself.

Such 'masculine loneliness' [104] is another recurring feature of both the Hollywood 'tough' thriller and the 'hard-boiled' detective story. The 'tough' first-person narration establishes in each a restricted regime of communication, whether the 'voice' is marked in terms of 'interior monologue' (as with Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe), 'confessional' (as in Cain's The Postman Always Rings Twice), or whether its 'discursive context' is unspecific. Although, Rip's voice-over/flashback is situated as the 'story' he tells to a priest, one of its effects is to italicize the 'alienation' of Rip - his 'voice' is distanced from, but strenuously seeks to control, the world the he moves through as a 'character' [105]. Rip is more at ease when he can find others who share his 'hard-boiled' discourse - as when he competitively banter with the police-detective, Lieutenant Kincaid (Charles Cane) in the city morgue. It is at the morgue that Rip finds out that Johnny is dead - the sign which allows him to identify the charred corpse being Johnny's college-pin, now melted into a shapeless lump. (Only Rip can recognise Johnny now, because of his knowledge of the pin. For everyone else, Johnny's body bears no identifiable marks - his identity has been 'burned out'). With this new development, Rip is even more determined to redeem the Johnny he knew, and his voice-over expresses this determination in terms both emotional and vengeful:

"I was thinking: 'Now I won't have to say goodbye to Johnny'. I remembered him in Berlin, crazy song he always sang. I used to say 'You drive me nuts with it'. Yeah. I used to say to him . . . Well, let's just say I remember Johnny - laughing, tough and lonesome. Let's just say that. But I knew all at once I had a job. They don't give out the Congressional Medal to dead guys wanted for murder, but he was gonna get it even if he got it on his grave. And I was going after whoever tried to jip him out of it".

On the soundtrack, this speech is backed by the musical theme which has already been associated with Johnny's 'corruptive' past. It is the music to a song later to be performed by Johnny's "blonde", Coral Chandler (Lizabeth Scott) - "Either It's Love, Or It Isn't". When Rip finally meets Johnny's 'mystery-woman' in the Sanctuary nightclub, he is immediately aggressive, not just towards her but also towards the whole of the moneyed crowd who idle away their leisure time in the luxurious and crooked 'civilian' setting ("It looked like feeding-time at the zoo," his voice-over comments scornfully, as soon as he enters, "All you needed was money to start with and bicarbonate to finish with" [106]). This 'corruptive' world of the nightclub is set in direct opposition to the dangerous and violent context of male testing in which Rip has spent his war years (as in *GILDA* and *THE BLUE DAHLIA*, the nightclub is strongly associated with 'parasitic' civilians who have taken personal advantage of the war). Coral Chandler seems perfectly 'at home' in this world, and suffers the unbarred force of Rip's aggression towards all things 'civilian'. However, his attempt to 'contain' her through his 'hard-boiled' insults is problematised from the start. Rip finds himself unable simply to 'repress' her, for in order to understand Johnny, he has to try to come to terms with the Johnny's overwhelming attraction to her.

Rather than being simply one more link in Rip's investigation, Coral becomes - in typical 'tough'-thriller fashion - its central and most problematic term. She holds all the answers to Johnny's past - possessing not only the 'truth' about Chandler's killing, but in herself holding the secret of how Rip's beloved war comrade could possibly have 'fallen so low'. Rip actually asks her later in the film, "What did it for Johnny?" - he desires intensely to have the 'mystery' of such self-abnegating love

explained to him. As part of the testing of his own bonding with Johnny - which constitutes the investigation - Rip has repeatedly to 'test' Coral. But the crucial ambivalence in his motives is highlighted by the first test he submits her to - for he decides to gauge her reaction to the news of Johnny's death by dancing with her. This aggressive manipulation of heterosexual intimacy pinpoints the sadistic impulses behind this testing, but at the same time the choice of the dance for its vehicle hints that other motivations may be in play. Rip seeks continually to catch Coral off guard, to debase her, to demonstrate the 'inferior' status of her sexual difference (thereby to demonstrate to himself the inherent 'superiority' of the masculine, and of male bonding). However, although he tells himself (in the voice-over) that he has to know Coral 'as Johnny knew her' - in order to prove the 'invalidity' of such heterosexual attractions - his relationship with Coral becomes subject to a complex mesh of conflicting desires.

It is significant - in a film obsessed with masculine language and identity - that the confused impulses generated within the hero become especially marked in terms of the profusion of names by which he seeks to 'fix' the woman. From being the unnamed, contaminating "blonde" of Johnny's past, Coral subsequently oscillates between a series of conflicting 'identities' which Rip 'structures' for her. In the club, he refers to Coral as "the Chandler doll"; later, he takes over Johnny's love-name for her, "Dusty"; and then, when he trusts her enough to let her help out on his mission, he names her "Mike". This profusion of names suggests not only how the woman circulates through the text as a locus of 'confused' identity', but it also points to a confusion within his own identity - for it is Rip who sets himself up as 'namegiver', the (would-be) master of her

identity. The confusion he finds in Coral derives from the inadequacy and confusion of the identities he constructs for her - and from his own 'chaotic desires'. The spectator is given a privileged indication of this confusion within the hero soon after he meets Coral. Rip hears her (off-screen) voice as she order a drink, sitting down near him at the bar. The film cuts from a close-view of Rip to a mobile POV shot representing his look, with the camera panning slowly up along her bare leg, her body, her face (as I have noted, such shots are a common signifier of 'sexual attraction' in the 'tough' thriller). However, in his voice-over, Rip seeks to deny this explicitly represented sexual fascination. As he sits down with Coral at a table, the voice comments aggressively, spitefully:

"I hated every part of her. I couldn't figure her out yet. I wanted to see her the way Johnny had. I wanted to hear that song of hers with Johnny's ears. Maybe she was alright - and maybe Christmas comes in July. But I didn't believe it"

Rip is obsessed with measuring Coral in terms of (his feelings for) Johnny - an obsession which results eventually, as I shall consider, in the 'perverse' location of Coral 'as Johnny'. Not only can Rip not come to terms with his simultaneous attraction to and hatred of Coral, but this contradiction itself suggests a fundamental disunity within Rip (a disunity which is also maintained 'structurally' through the first part of the film, in the split between Rip-as-voice and Rip-as-actant). Rip insistently seeks to deny that his identity and his aims are at all 'divided', proclaiming himself to be a powerful, determined and controlled masculine force ("I didn't believe it").

As "Mike", Rip institutes Coral as a replacement for Johnny, his lost-buddy. In his attempt to solve the problem of sexual difference, he

feels most secure when he can transform the woman into a man! In the masculine world in which Rip Murdock moves, the "algebra problem" represented by women is irresolvable - women have an impossible place. And after he meets Coral, this mission to redeem Johnny loses its direction as Rip becomes enmeshed in a more general quest to 'pin down' the meaning of sexual difference. Furthermore, his own fascination with Coral overwhelms his interest in her terms of 'Johnny's story'. An extended dialogue exchange is worth quoting here for the way in which it highlights the incompatibility between Rip's idealisation of 'tough' masculinity and heterosexual relations. This conversation takes place while Rip is driving Coral out to the beach for a lunch-date:

- RIP: "You know, the trouble with women is they ask too many questions. They should spend all their time just being beautiful".
- CORAL: "And let men do the worrying?"
- RIP: "Yeah. You know, I've been thinking. Women ought to come capsule-size, about four inches high. When a man goes out of an evening, he just puts her in his pocket and takes her along with him, and that way he knows exactly where she is. He gets to his favourite restaurant, he puts her on the table and lets her run around among the coffee-cups while he swaps a few lies with his pals -".
- CORAL: "Why -".
- RIP: "- Without danger of interruption. And when it comes to that time of the evening when he wants her full-sized and beautiful, he just waves his hand and there she is - full size".
- CORAL: "Why, that's the most conceited statement I've ever heard".
- RIP: "And if she starts to interrupt, he just shrinks her back to pocket-size and puts her away".
- CORAL: "I understand. What you're saying is, women are made to be loved".
- RIP: "Is that what I'm saying?"
- CORAL: "Yes, it's . . . it's a confession that . . . that a woman may drive you out of your mind. That . . . you wouldn't trust her. And because you couldn't put her in your pocket, you get all mixed up".

Rather than seeking to 'come to terms' with the woman, Rip feels she must be rigidly contained - available to the man when he wants her and how he wants her. There is no attempt to integrate her, as a woman, within his circle of "pals", for in the realm of 'male discourse' and 'male comradeship', the only possibility he allows her, as a woman, is 'reduction'. This fantasy of the shrinkable 'instant woman' is patently impossible, and the question of how the woman actually can be accommodated becomes one of the principal issues in the film. Although Rip may claim to know Johnny, a man, "like my own birthmark", the woman cannot be so easily known: and hence the film's insistent attention to the process of naming/fixing. After Rip has 'tested', he allows Coral to assist him in his attempt to retrieve the last letter Johnny wrote to Rip, which has been stolen by the 'up-market' gangster/nightclub-owner Martinelli (Morris Carnovsky). Coral has already asked what Rip would like to call her - putting her 'identity' in his hands - and, after some deliberation, he 'christens' her with a male name. Rip even allows "Mike" access to his and Johnny's personalized 'signifier', "Geronimo" - the paratroopers' jump-call. But this 'fantasized' attempt to 'de-sexualize' Coral is as unworkable as his desire for a 'shrinkable model'. Although Rip involves her in his mission, he cannot delegate to her the same kind of tasks Johnny had performed during the war. As a 'male helper', Coral is very much a 'second-rate Johnny'. Before he break into Martinelli's office at the Sanctuary Club, he tells Coral "This is Operation Solo. I don't want you hurt" - thus, preserving her as the 'feminine good-girl' "Dusty" (i.e. how Johnny had perceived her), rather than "Mike".

In Martinelli's office, Rip is knocked unconscious, to be savagely beaten on awakening by Martinelli's psychopathic henchman, Krause (Marvin

Miller). Martinelli, effete and pretentious, and Krause, a brutal thug, represent a 'union of opposites' which is a direct inversion of the bonding of the, similarly very different, Rip and Johnny. The negativity of the Martinelli-Krause 'male couple' is emphasised by their 'foreign' names (respectively, of Italian and German origins, thus having 'enemy' status during the war), and by the corrupt network of authority inscribed in their bonding as 'master' and 'servant' (for, although Rip was officially Johnny's superior officer, their relationship and their effectivity as a 'two-man team' was based more on mutual respect). In opposition to Rip and Johnny, then, Martinelli and Krause represent a corrupt 'homosexual' bonding - the sadistic sexual circuitry which operates between them [107] being highlighted during Krause's beating of Rip, which he performs "to dancetime", with the radio blaring. Considering that Rip had also used a dance in order to 'test' Coral, it can be seen that the 'normal' heterosexual bonding usually signified through the dance is absent here, and is markedly displaced by an 'eroticised' masculine violence (in each instance).

Rip manages to escape from Martinelli and Krause, and to take refuge in a church - which is how the film begins. He has now finished his story to the priest, and the latter sections of the film are 'narrated' outside the 'framing structure' of male 'reminiscence'. Before commencing his 'confessional', Rip had been at such a low point as to lack confidence in himself, his bruised and shabby appearance matching an internal 'breakdown' (the cost of both his constant, paranoid vigilance 'on the case', and the loss of Johnny, his 'loved one'). However, the delivery of his story to the priest - and not just to any priest, but to the uniformed Father Logan, who happens to be nicknamed "the jumping padre", because he is both priest and

paratrooper - rallies him out of defeatism. Rip's 'confession' - the story of how he came to lose both Johnny and his own 'potency' - is delivered to a figure who militarises religion ('God the Father' is structured in terms of the authority of the Army). And it is the very fact of delivering this 'confession', rather than any advice it draws from Logan (for Rip escapes into the night before he hears what the priest has to say) which makes Rip's 'recovery' permissible. In other words, it is the act of being able to order chaos - both through the structuring process of narrative, and through the inscription of the authority of the subject's voice (in accordance, that is, with the authority 'institutionalised' in the recipient) - which allows Rip to 'regain himself' [108]. His tale told, Rip immediately relocates Coral as the locus of disturbance, reasoning that the misfortunes which have befallen both himself and Johnny derive from her duplicitousness.

With renewed determination, Rip rushes to confront Coral, and cynically, viciously accuses her. However, at one point his diatribe seems to be motivated in part by a paranoid insecurity concerning his own 'masculine competence'. For in his denigration of Coral as 'bad object', as Chandler's murderer, Rip also compares himself with Johnny, 'framing' the latter as the signifier of 'impaired masculinity' (thus working against the trajectory of his mission, to redeem his buddy's name):

"Go ahead, put Christmas in your eyes and keep your voice low. Tell me about Paradise and all the things I'm missing. I haven't had a good laugh since before Johnny was murdered. . . I'm not the type that tears do anything to . . . Maybe the trouble is my name isn't Johnny and I never taught college anywhere and I don't appreciate the finer things of life. Like looking at a doll cry, and taking the rap for a murder she committed. . . Do you think I fell for that fancy tripe you gave me? It's not a new story, baby . . . You killed him, why lie?"

Rip seeks to deny the uncertainty and confusion of his desires by locating Coral as the unequivocally guilty object. Coral insists she told him the truth about the death of her husband, except that in the struggle which developed after Chandler found her with Johnny, the gun that 'accidentally' went off was in her own, not Johnny's, hand. She also tells Rip that Johnny himself had claimed responsibility in order to protect her.

Coral tearfully pleads with him to believe her, and succeeds in deflecting Rip from his desire for 'justice'. Firstly, she counters his accusation that it was she who knocked him unconscious. Just before 'going under', Rip had scented night-blooming jasmine, the perfume worn by Coral. However, Coral informs him that the scent of real jasmine is especially prominent in Martinelli's office at night. She thus turns his 'masculine rationality' - his ability to 'investigate' - upon him, discounting the validity of his 'evidence'. Secondly, she breaks down in tears - an explicit recourse to a conventional, vulnerable 'femininity' - and tells him about both Chandler and her own hard and deprived life. Thirdly, she calls his bluff about turning her over to the police, by phoning them herself. However, rather than allowing her to continue with the call, Rip snatches the phone, checks that the police are on the end of the line, and puts the receiver back down. It is thus made clear that the confusion in his motives has not been resolved: he is thwarting his own desire to situate Coral as the 'scapegoat' for Johnny's ruin and murder (a motivation based on his jealousy of Johnny's intense desire for her), seemingly because he wants her for himself. He holds Coral to him and tells her: "I had to make you prove it the hard way. To ever really know. A few minutes ago I didn't dare to do this. Now I can, Mike. I'm doing it so you know I

can". Rip thus 'pacts' himself with Coral - she, in return, agreeing that she will be whatever he wants her to.

The 'renewal' of the 'pact' between the two exposes a chaotic circuitry of conflicting desires and allegiances: with Coral as:

- (i) Johnny's girl;
  - (ii) Rip's rival in love for Johnny;
- and (iii) Rip's replacement for Johnny).

The confused set of places 'offered' to Coral by Rip, suggests both the conflicting potentialities between which Rip's own identity oscillates and also his inadequacy in establishing external 'object-relations' in a more general sense. Rip finds it difficult to make sense of the 'civilian' world around him, and to establish himself in a secure position in relation to that world. The world he does know, and in which he knew Johnny, is the regimented masculine institution of the Army - but the authority of the Army is markedly lacking in the postwar civilian world. Rip has difficulty in his 'mission' because of this lack of a stable and regimented framework of masculine authority in normal social life - and outside the context of the Army he finds it impossible to maintain stability within either the trajectory of his mission or his identity. Indeed, he is most at ease when actively pursuing his mission - where he can act as if it he were still engaged in a war, and thus clarify his goals and reduce desire to a question of masculine force. In retreat from the chaos of civilian life, Rip yearns nostalgically for the wartime regime of 'masculine testing'.

Rip seeks to order the chaos of the 'civilian' world by bringing 'military' force to bear on the 'enemy'. From his safecracker friend McGee (Wallace Ford) - whose suburban home represents an inversion of domesticity, for it is stacked with lethal mementos his son has brought

back from the war - Rip arms himself with ex-Army weapons, for use against Martinelli (who, Coral has told him, is holding the gun used to kill Chandler, which bears her fingerprints). Now that he has 'pacted' himself with Coral, Rip sets himself a different trajectory. He agrees to go away with her - to abandon the quest to avenge Johnny - but he also seeks gratification through a demonstration of his 'potency', by 'paying back' both Martinelli and Krause for inflicting violence upon him. After Coral - as "Mike" - shows him the secret entrance to Martinelli's office, Rip is able to surprise his two male adversaries. He 'pays back' Krause's earlier assault on him by turning on the radio and 'slugging' him with the gun. However, Martinelli disrupts such a relatively unproblematic masculine assertion. He tells Rip that Coral is his wife, that she was a greedily ambitious girl he took from the slums of Detroit. Threatened by Rip, Martinelli talks further - saying that Coral had desired Chandler's death in order to get his money, and that he himself had committed the deed, with Coral's gun. This new information complicates the picture even further for Rip, and his confusion manifests itself through violence - as he lets loose two fire-grenades (which serve as a reminder of Johnny's fate). Finally obtaining the gun which killed Chandler, Rip leaves the burning office with Martinelli (Krause having already jumped through the window to avoid a fiery death).

However, as he opens the exit-door of the club, Martinelli is shot dead by Coral - a bullet meant for Rip. Rip drives her away in the car, and promises: "You're going to fry, Dusty" (a further evocation of Johnny's destruction). Realising Coral's betrayal both of himself and Johnny, Rip is once more firmly set on his trajectory as 'avenger', and can reaffirm his relationship with Johnny. This unequivocal proof of the 'evil' of the woman

- conveyed, as in *OUT OF THE PAST* and *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*, by the wielding of the gun - enables Rip to master his earlier confusion. The man responsible for Johnny's murder has himself been killed, and Rip also has in his power the woman who brought about his buddy's ruin. As he drives her to police headquarters, Coral tries a desperate last bid to escape punishment. Rip demonstrates to her his reformed conviction and purpose, by resisting her plea for him to let her go. The following exchange of dialogue, in the car, signals Rip's reconfirmation of his bonding with Johnny:

CORAL: "Rip, can't we put the past behind us? Can't you forget?"

RIP: "The trouble is, I can't forget that I might die tomorrow . . .  
A guy's pal was killed, he ought to do something about it".

CORAL: "Don't you love me?"

RIP: "That's the tough part of it. But it'll pass. Those things do  
in time. But there's one other thing: I loved him more"

The love between men, then, is validated at the expense of the more 'difficult' arena of heterosexual relations. The latter is located as inherently transitory, and as a realm within which Rip cannot so easily maintain his place. Faced with the threat of such violent 'repression', Coral rejects her 'feminine' ploy for sympathy, and expresses her 'masculine' ruthlessness - in a scene similar in effect to the climactic car-confrontations of *OUT OF THE PAST* and *THE FILE ON THELMA JORDAN*. Saying she is tired with being 'pushed around', Coral draws her gun on Rip, and he counters by pressing his foot hard on the accelerator and warning her: "If you shoot, baby, you'll smear us all over the road". By resorting to violence, Coral is clearly facing Rip on the territory he favours - the clear, uncomplicated ground of combat. Coral now represents a direct, violently-articulated 'masculine' threat - no longer posing the danger of emotional complication. Rip can face up to her, 'as a man'. When she does

actually shoot him - and as a result sends the car hurtling 'suicidally' into a tree - it further confirms her 'masculinity'.

The film's final sequence is set in the Gulf City hospital. The sequence opens with a blurred-focus POV shot, the camera 'looks' directly upwards at a handful of people standing over a hospital-bed. Although subsequently revealed to represent Coral's point-of-view, this shot is a direct 'rhyme' with a POV shot ascribed to Rip earlier in the film, which marked his return to consciousness after being 'blackjacked' in Martinelli's office. Coral is dying, but Rip is only wounded. A phone-call from General Steele, the figurehead of Army authority (whom Rip had telephoned at the start of his 'mission') interrupts him on his final visit to Coral. This call - for Captain Murdock - reinstates Rip as 'Army'. Rip tells the General that Johnny's medal of honour will have to be awarded posthumously - a sign of the accomplishment of his quest. Rip refers to Johnny as "Sergeant Drake" - for he has now expelled the contamination of his identity as "Preston". The film's resolution is emphatically coded in terms of the reassertion of 'Army Law' (as opposed to the 'civilian' law represented by Lieutenant Kincaid). Receiving recognition from, and having his actions sanctioned by, General Steele, Rip is reinstated as the-hero-in-control. All that remains for the film is a final 'send-off' for Coral.

And in death, Coral receives a curiously perverse 'redemption'. Swathed in 'sterile' white bandages - which serve to 'purify' her of her 'sexuality' (her body, and her long, flowing hair totally 'masked'), Coral tells Rip she is afraid of dying. Rip suggests that she face up to death 'as a man', by imagining that she is going 'out the jump-door'. Coral is redeemed, in death, as "Mike", as a 'paratrooper' - and Rip tells her she will join the honoured ranks of dead war-heroes ("You'll have plenty of

company, Mike. High-class company"). As she 'goes under', Rip says "Geronimo, Mike", and the film cuts to its final image, the shot of a parachute opening. The shot is also a 'rhyme' - for when Rip had been knocked unconscious, his 'blackout' was represented as "a brief parachute-jump montage. The final sequence of the film, then, opens and concludes with Coral situated within the framework of Rip's own experience. This overt process of 'masculinisation' is notably both 'perverse' and 'fragile'. Coral is 'desexualised' - or, more accurately, 'resexualised'. She dies as "Mike", as Rip's buddy, his 'replacement Johnny'. Whereas Rip's earlier 'contract' with Coral represented his accomodation to her desires (and the partial abandonment of his quest 'for' Johnny), he now establishes a 'contract' on his terms. He allows her entry into the 'hallowed' legion of the dead: all she has to do in return, is to face death 'as a man', to maintain the elision of her own sexual difference. Coral dies, as "Mike", validating the supremacy of the 'phallus' and 'sacrificing' herself in order to maintain Rip's fetishistic denial of 'castration'.

The ending of DEAD RECKONING represents a rigid, repressive assertion of 'masculine law'. In the absence of 'male bonding' all that is left for Rip is isolation and loneliness. There is no possibility of incorporating women into a life which clings so obsessively to the 'phallus'; Rip proves his own 'potency' in restoring 'potency' to Johnny, by repressing the 'contamination' of sexual difference. The fact that women are "unknowable", they they resist accomodation within the terms of desire structured around the 'phallus', emerges with some force in DEAD RECKONING - a force which has to be explicit repressed or negated in order for the 'masculine' regime to be reaffirmed. The forceful thrust of Rip's desire to shore up the crumbling walls of the masculine regime - he seeks resolutely to assert the

supremacy of masculinity - betrays a fear of that which lies outside and cannot be subsumed to the masculine. This fear is particularly attached to Coral because of the threatening mobility of her identity, the way she oscillates between the 'feminine' and the 'masculine'. She is 'containable' when she betrays her 'phallic' desire [109]: she no longer represents such a threat (to masculinity and to the masculine ordering of culture) because 'her desire' is revealed similarly to circulate around the 'phallus' (as the logic follows, she 'is a man, after all'). Rather, then, than representing a difference from the 'phallic economy' of desire, Coral reveals herself to be under its sway. In death, this 'phallic' desire can be 'dissolved', when Coral acknowledges the superiority of Rip as the embodiment of 'phallic potency'. On her death-bed, Coral obeys Rip's orders and validates his 'code' - saying that she would like him to put her 'in his pocket'. Her desire is subjected and subsumed to his - he is the metteur-en-scène of her 'final jump'. No longer able to pose a threat, Coral is 'ennobled' through a process of proselytizing-by-death.

DEAD RECKONING can be seen to represent the 'tough' thriller's obsession with the regimentation of the masculine taken to a bizarre, perverse extreme. John Cromwell said he felt the script was "a noxious sort of thing, but I felt perhaps we could make something of it" [110]. In the finished film, Rip is represented as clinging desperately to an idealised and impossible 'fantasy' of 'tough' masculinity (so desperate, indeed, that a woman has to be made into a 'man' in order to gain acceptance). What is particularly striking about the film is the way in which it situates Rip's identity - and also the identities of Johnny and Coral - precisely in terms

of process. Both the hero's own masculine identity, and the 'masculine' authority of social law have to be rigorously maintained and consolidated, rather than simply assumed as 'given' and 'fixed'. However, at the same time as Rip 'propagandizes' for the supremacy of the law, language and experience of the masculine, he finds himself subject to conflicting potentialities and desires, the confusion of his mission testifying to contradictions within this project. In the paranoid 'machinery' of the plot, nothing is as it first appears to be, and Rip can only assert order by resorting to brute force - by all other means he is defeated. Rip cannot, and ultimately will not have to, accept that the 'war' is over, nor that anything can or does lie 'beyond the phallus'.

The ending of the film can be seen to represent the 'hallucinated' fulfilment of Rip's 'wish' for a demonstration of the inviolability of the masculine. With this concerted, sadistically-managed repression of the 'feminine', however, Rip is faced with isolation, with a withdrawal from the arena of heterosexual relations. As with many of the films discussed earlier, DEAD RECKONING dramatises the conflict between two propositions: "men need women" and "women are too unknowable". Rip Murdock seeks to resolve the problem by banishing the first term - Coral can only be accepted (and fetishitically known) as "Mike". With femininity very much figuring as an oppositional term which, by its very existence, threatens the exclusiveness and completeness of the 'phallus', one means of safeguarding the supremacy of the 'phallus' is to render the 'feminine' in terms of 'castration' (for the woman, in 'lacking the phallus', quite firmly validates the 'phallus' as the signifier of desire). At the end of DEAD RECKONING, Coral, although revealed to be 'conspiring' against masculine law, ultimately acknowledges and validates the 'superiority' of

the masculine (of Rip/the Army). All is finally 'held-in-place' in terms of the 'phallus'. The dangerous flux and mobility of Coral's identity is resolved when she is situated, in fantasy (the final parachute-jump being coded in terms of Rip's subjectivity), as a 'man'. This can only succeed with her death - because alive, Coral represents the threatening fact of difference. And in terms of this logic, the only means by which Rip can safely hold onto his 'identity-as-a-man' is - at least in terms of any involvement with women - to remain forever "in a lonely street" [111].

### CONCLUSION.

In its various articulations within the practices of film history and film criticism, film noir has figured as a particularly unwieldy category riven with methodological problems. Most often, it tends to be conceptualised as the multi-faceted product of diverse sets of 'aesthetic' and cultural influences which 'meshed together' during the 1940's, a period in which the conventional co-ordinates of American social life were subjected to extensive upheavals provoked firstly by wartime exigencies and secondly by the need to adjust to a postwar cultural reordering (which required also a reordering of the cultural place of the cinema).

One of the most commonly-cited of these aesthetic/stylistic influences upon the film noir is the 'German Expressionist' cinema. As I suggested in Chapter Four, however, it is difficult to substantiate that these post-1918 German films had any direct influence upon the noir films of the 1940's. The chiaroscuro techniques and distorted perspective characterising such films as *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI* had already become incorporated within Hollywood productions prior to the 1940's, particularly within the horror-films of the 1930's, where they were codified in terms of uncanny subjects and madness. Their redeployment within the 1940's thrillers emerges firstly with such ambitious B-productions as *THE STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR* and *AMONG THE LIVING* which deliberately combined elements drawn from the horror-film with the narrative strategies of the crime-thriller. Besides this tendency towards generic combination, the forms of stylistic differentiation later referred to as noir were also encouraged by the desire of B-film producers to upgrade the status of their films, in the hope of securing more favourable rental deals. The phenomenon of the 'sleeper' - the critically-lauded low-budget production - was well-established during the early 1940's, and in this context the use of 'expressionistic' stylistic devices was only to be expected considering that the stylized German films had since the early 1920's been institution-

ally accepted as the paradigm of 'art cinema' (ie. of a cinema 'worthy' of critical attention).

Another of the widely-heralded 'inputs' into the film noir are the popularised forms of Freudian psychoanalysis, the cultural dissemination of which intensified during the early 1940's as a result of war-related psychoneuroses. Incorporated within a wide range of genres, the concepts derived from popularised psychoanalysis found a particularly apposite niche within the crime-thriller - for such films were marked by an increasing 'personalization' of crime, rather than framing criminal activity in terms of either a 'social problem' or the product of organised gangs. As such, the crime-films of the war years represented a shift away from predominant tendencies which characterised the crime-genre in the previous decade. The incorporation of a 'psychoanalytic' frame of reference served both to explicate and to contextualise a growing interest in the excesses provoked through psychical disturbance. It furthermore proved a useful means of circumventing some of the institutionalized restrictions of the Hays Code form of censorship, enabling a more elliptical and displaced mode of representation which could be 'decoded' by audiences who were familiar with popularised psychoanalysis both within and outside the cinematic context. This popularised 'Freudianism' did not, then, in itself cause the various shifts within the crime films of the 1940's, but it was rather co-opted into a more general transmutation of stylistic and generic parameters which was active during the war years.

So what, then, were the factors which served to the multifarious shifts within the crime-thrillers of the 1940's? As I have stressed throughout this study, it is difficult to produce a cogently unitary definition of the film noir, or to trace a simple, linear history of its determination. Its history, like the body of films it conventionally comprises, is fractured and amorphous. It is crucial to grasp the extent to which noir was an overdetermined phenomenon, a product of various forms of pressure which were by no means constant throughout the decade (hence, for example, the significant differences between wartime, postwar and late 1940's films noirs). Faced with the

problem of isolating the most pertinent contexts for studying the history of noir, many critics have not devoted sufficient attention to the institutional and industrial practices of Hollywood cinema in the 1940's. Thus, as I argued in Chapter Seven, the general privileging of the social and cultural upheavals experienced by the United States during this period often fails to provide a convincing account for the determination and the character of film noir because it neglects the complex - indeed, compromised - ways in which films, or any other texts, speak of and for their culture. Many critics have seized upon the noir thrillers because they seem most ostensibly appropriate to a 'zeitgeist'/reflectionist view of the 1940's as a troubled period in American history. However, as I suggested with the case of THE BLUE DAHLIA, the relationship of a film to its cultural context of production takes the form of an intricate play of evasion, dissimulation and transmutation. The cultural 'raw material' is modified and regulated as it is subjected to both the general narrational principles of the Hollywood Style and the specifications of its generic subsystems. Thus, there is much more to 1940's Hollywood production than the noir thrillers themselves - the same cultural context also 'generated' musicals, comedies, westerns, melodramas and adventure-films.

What is required, then, is a reformulation both of the 'history' of the noir phenomenon (of both its determination and its momentum) and of the principles of unity which may be seen to give the films noirs their coherence as a group. Thus, in Chapter Eight, I have sought to relocate various of the 'stylistic transformations' identified with the film noir within the context of the ideological and economic pressures to which Hollywood was subject through the 1940's. As I noted, this decade saw both the peak of the commercial success of the 'classical' Hollywood cinema but also the beginning of the dismantling of the controlled system of film-making which sustained it. The period was marked, for example, by a series of economic incentives which encouraged a shift towards the production of fewer, more highly capitalized <sup>Films</sup> - a trend which became especially pronounced in the 1950's. Such factors included the demonstrated success of independent productions; the escalating

costs of studio production in the postwar years; the marked decline in admissions (especially pronounced in the final years of the decade); the Supreme Court ruling against vertical integration in the film industry in 1948; and the general displacement of the cinema as the major entertainments industry, with broadcast television become progressively dominant through the early 1950's. As I suggested, the forms of stylistic and narrative differentiation later associated with the 'noir phenomenon' were motivated in part by this generalised context of reorientation within the Hollywood cinema of the period - hence the much-noted pervasiveness of many of the 'noirish' stylistic markings across a broad spectrum of films and established generic 'boundaries'. This in itself implies that the norms of the 'classical' style were being subjected to an at times remarkably extensive degree of formal play.

But besides this general contextual reorientation, one can point to more specific factors which help to explain certain characteristics of the 'noir phenomenon'. For example, during the early 1940's Hollywood came under a degree of ideological pressure which necessitated that it cooperate with the cultural mobilisation of the war effort, and this - together with the commercial need to address the war (which, after all, was affecting in one way or another the majority of the audience for Hollywood films) - resulted in a temporary interruption to and reshuffling of Hollywood's established policies of generic standardisation. As I noted, one effect of this was the relative hiatus in the cycle of 'hard-boiled' crime thrillers following the success of THE MALTESE FALCON in 1941. The need to address the global conflict also resulted in a further hybridization of generic formulae during the war years, a process already very much in evidence in the B-films of the period and which resulted not merely in a degree of narrative complication but also in the combination (and even confusion) of stylistic and narrational parameters. As I suggested, in the early 1940's the B-producers faced adverse criticism over the poor quality of their films, and this - together with the prospect of securing percentage-deals rather than flat-rental exhibition agreements - created an incentive towards the differentiation of B-product from A-films

(in comparison to which they seemed inferior). Used as a training-ground and a showcase for new stars, directors and cinematographers, the B-films of the 1940's provided a context for (regulated) stylistic innovation. The flashy, flamboyant 'excesses' later seen as integral to the 'noir style' were in many cases directly encouraged in B-movies, especially in the context of the crime-thriller, where stylistic exhibitionism could be readily motivated because the genre precisely relied upon disruption in order to generate the narrative process. These stylistic strategies later found their way into A-productions, and they were particularly highlighted in many of the films which represented a categorical confusion between the A-feature and the B-film - for example, in many of RKO's low-budget crime-thrillers which were produced throughout the 1940's.

As I suggested, this relocation of the 'noir phenomenon' within the context of the institutional and industrial practices of 1940's <sup>Hollywood</sup> opens up a historical perspective on film noir which avoids some of the more simplistic assertions about its cultural determination. However, this still leaves the problem of the generic imprecision of the noir category. As I suggested in Chapter Three, the impressionistic nature of many of the initial formulations of film noir resulted in such a wide range of films being included within the category that generic arguments were often untenable (a problem compounded by the extension of film noir long past the end of the 1940's). What is required, then - and what I have sought to lay the groundwork for in the third section of this study - is a de-homogenizing of the noir corpus. Thus the distinction between, on the one hand, the modes of the 'tough thriller' and, on the other hand, the various 'ancillary' forms of Hollywood crime-thriller which proliferated in the 1940's. These latter tend to share certain narrative, stylistic or narrational features with the 'tough' thrillers - being a further sign of the generic 'hybridization' or 'confusion' widespread through the decade (and which can be seen as a sign that the genre system was placed under variously manifested forms of stress during this time). Nevertheless, this emphasis upon the centrality of the 'tough' thriller usefully highlights the

importance to the film noir of what is generally seen as another of its primary determinants, the 'hard-boiled' crime-fiction which had been introduced through the pulp-magazines of the mid-1920's. It was only in the mid-1940's that Hollywood attempted in any significantly extended manner to capitalize upon this successful and influential trend within popular fiction. Whereas Hollywood would ordinarily have sought to replicate the 'hard-boiled' trend soon after it had attained cultural visibility - in the early 1930's - it was prevented from doing so because of both the domination of the crime-genre by other forms, such as the gangster-film and the 'social-problem' crime-film, and also because the strengthening of the Hays Code form of self-regulatory censorship problematised the transferral to the screen of the manifestly vicarious representation of sexuality and violence which was characteristic of many of the 'hard-boiled' stories. However, by the early 1940's the context had changed significantly. The popularity of 'hard-boiled' crime stories had not declined - indeed it was actually intensified owing to the introduction of the cheap paperback-book from 1939 and to the profusion of radio adaptations through the 1940's. Furthermore, the censorship context had also become relatively liberalised in comparison to the post-1934 period, as film-makers had become used to 'stretching' the limits of representation without ostensibly breaking the rules (and, as I have already suggested, the invocation of a 'psychoanalytic' frame of reference served this purpose well). However, the very profusion of both direct 'hard-boiled' adaptations and films in the 'hard-boiled' manner is sufficient in itself to suggest their sustained popularity with audiences into the late 1940's.

In Section Three I sought to provide an accounting for why these 'hard-boiled' 'tough' thrillers dominated the crime genre in the 1940's. As I suggested the historical and cultural relevance of these films can be seen to derive from the ways in which they represented a generically-regulated response to the various challenges which the wartime and postwar contexts had posed to the mutually-reinforcing regimes of masculine cultural authority and masculine psych

stability. Whereas the initial impetus of much 'hard-boiled' crime fiction can be seen to consist in a celebration of the potent and authoritative masculine hero, the adaptation of such stories to the Hollywood cinema of the 1940's was very differently inflected. For these films reveal a generically-modulated erosion of confidence in the 'legitimacy' and authority of the patriarchal cultural order, subjecting the traditionally affirmatory trajectory of the masculine hero to an at times remarkable degree of inversion or disruption. Not only are the heroes of these films frequently lacking in or disjunct from the power of cultural authorisation - setting themselves against the law in the criminal adventures, losing the security of their relationship to the law in such films as THE DARK CORNER and OUT OF THE PAST - but within themselves they are often subject to irreconcilable and conflicting impulses. Both internally fractured and lacking a secure place in regard to the (male-structured) network of cultural authority, the 1940's 'tough-guy' heroes consequently find it difficult to maintain or achieve a secure position in regard to the ordering process of narrative (ie. a position of control vis-à-vis the enigma). Even such vengefully determined and dogmatically masculine detective-figures as Riordan in THE KILLERS and Rip Murdock in DEAD RECKONING are unable totally to order or to repress the chaos which is unleashed when another male allows his identity to be quashed; they emerge, rather, as irretrievably isolated figures, seeking defensively to bolster a decaying regime of masculine authority. In other instances, the hero's quest to achieve mastery over a world which throws at him innumerable and recondite challenges tends often to be patently reversed, transforming him from would-be master to a victim of a tortuous criminal conspiracy. And even if, in the last instance, the hero does escape from his paranoid trajectory, this is not so much the point - for the final assemblage of order can seem almost absurdly 'make-believe' in comparison to the extent of the disorder which has been revealed through the main body of the film. Indeed, this points to one of the most striking features of the 1940's 'tough' thrillers - their very fracturing of narrative coherence, which one could even go so far

as to describe as indicative of an investment in the elaboration of chaos. At times, the pull between, on the one hand, the process of reordering which is integral to the various forms of the crime story and, on the other hand, the forceful disruption of order which is its functional prerequisite, is the source of a fascinating tension in these films. What gives the 1940's 'tough' thriller its strong sense of unity as a group of films is the way in which this tension tends to manifest itself in terms of a qualification both of the supposed masculinity of the hero and of the masculine regimentation of culture which he tends, in one way or another (even when, as in the criminal adventures, set in opposition to it) to be an agent of.

As I stressed, the 'tough' thrillers do not constitute the totality of films which have been included within the category of film noir - although they do represent perhaps the most sizeable proportion, and certainly one of the definitively innovative and apposite cycles within 1940's Hollywood. By the end of the decade, the emergence of new trends within the crime-film genre - the 'semi-documentary' policier and a revival of the 'social-problem' crime drama (both considered in Appendix Two) - although they by no means totally displaced the 'tough' thrillers (indeed, they often incorporated and reworked elements from them), did serve further to italicize the extent to which the latter were very much a product of the wartime and postwar periods. For example the 'semi-documentaries' and the 'social-problem' dramas each represented a marked shift away from the 'tough' thriller's obsession with psychological and sexual malaise, or at least they recast these <sup>within</sup> a perspective which stressed the normative processes of law and social order (a notable example being the treatment of the problem of the returning-veteran in both CROSSFIRE and BOOMERANG!) This shift towards a 'sociological', rather than 'psychological', mode can be seen in terms of a process of postwar 'reconstruction' in which there is an attempt to recuperate the elaboration of the psychic disintegration of the hero which marks so many of the 'tough' thrillers. Into the 1950's, there were

further notable shifts within the crime-film - for example, a revival of the gangster-film which replaced Prohibition-era gangsterism with the modern-day 'syndication' of organised crime. However, this pushes beyond the boundaries of this present study. Many crime-films produced from the 1950's to the present day have become incorporated within the 'genre' of film noir. In this regard I would advise a certain degree of caution, for such films need to be considered not only in regard to the films noirs of the 1940's but also in regard to the cinematic and cultural-ideological contexts in which and for which they were produced. For the conditions which 'germinated' the films noirs of the 1940's were, as I hope I have shown, specific to the 1940's. To generalise beyond this risks destroying the credibility of both the films noirs and the crime-films après noir.

APPENDIX ONE:

'HARD-BOILED' HOLLYWOOD.

## APPENDIX ONE

HARD-BOILED HOLLYWOOD1940-1950

The following, far from exhaustive, filmography is designed to give some indication of the impact of 'hard-boiled' crime writers upon Hollywood during the 1940s. I have included both adaptations of 'hard-boiled' crime novels/stories and the contributions of 'hard-boiled' scriptwriters to crime films of the period. I have excluded 'hard-boiled' adaptations and screenwriting prior to 1940 and after 1950, and have also omitted the scripts written by 'hard-boiled' writers which fall outside the category of the crime film (for example, Jonathan Latimer's work on the 1941 supernatural comedy TOPPER RETURNS, Raymond Chandler's contribution to the 1944 romantic melodrama AND NOW TOMORROW, and the 1940 film version of W.R. Burnett's Civil War adventure Dark Command).

The sources I have used in compiling this filmography include the books by Silver and Ward, Ottoson, Selby and Don Miller [see bibliography]

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1940

MICHAEL SHAYNE, PRIVATE DETECTIVE# [TCF] *based on Brett Halliday's novel Dividend On Death*

1941

DRESSED TO KILL# [TCF] *based on Richard Burke's novel The Dead Take No Bows*

HIGH SIERRA [WB] *based on novel by W.R. Burnett  
scripted by Burnett*

I WAKE UP SCREAMING [TCF] *based on novel by Steve Fisher*

THE MALTESE FALCON [WB] *based on novel by Dashiell Hammett*

NO HANDS ON THE CLOCK [Pine Thomas Prods.] *based on novel by Geoffrey Homes\**

SLEEPER'S WEST# [TCF] *based on Frederick Nebel's novel Sleeper's East*

1942

THE FALCON TAKES OVER [RKD] *based on Raymond Chandler's novel Farewell, My Lovely*

THE GLASS KEY [Para.] *based on novel by Dashiell Hammett  
script by Jonathan Latimer*

THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T DIE# [TCF] *based on Clayton Rawson's novel No Coffin For the Corpse*

NIGHT IN NEW ORLEANS [Para.] *script by Jonathan Latimer*

STREET OF CHANCE [Para.] *based on Cornell Woolrich's novel The Black Curtain*

THIS GUN FOR HIRE [Para.] *co-scripted by W.R. Burnett*

TIME TO KILL# [TCF] *based on Raymond Chandler's novel The High Window*

1943

THE FALLEN SPARROW [RKD] *based on Dorothy B. Hughes' novel@*

THE LEOPARD MAN [RKD] *based on Cornell Woolrich's novel Black Alibi*

1944

CRIME BY NIGHT [WB] *based on story by Geoffrey Homes\**  
 DOUBLE INDEMNITY [Para.] *based on novelette by James M. Cain*  
*co-scripted by Raymond Chandler*  
 THE MARK OF THE WHISTLER [Col.] *based on story by Cornell Woolrich*  
 THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS [WB] *co-scripted by Frank Gruber*  
 MURDER, MY SWEET [RKD] *based on Raymond Chandler's novel Farewell, My Lovely*  
 PHANTOM LADY [Univ.] *based on novel by Cornell Woolrich*

1945

JOHNNY ANGEL [RKD] *script by Steve Fisher and Frank Gruber*  
 MILDRED PIERCE [WB] *based on novel by James M. Cain*

1946

THE BIG SLEEP [WB] *based on novel by Raymond Chandler*  
 BLACK ANGEL [Univ.] *based on novel by Cornell Woolrich*  
 THE BLUE DAHLIA [Para.] *script by Raymond Chandler*  
 THE CHASE [Nero Prods.] *based on Woolrich's novel The Black Path of Fear*  
 CRACK-UP [RKD] *based on story by Frederic Brown*  
 THE DARK CORNER [TCF] *co-scripted by Jay Dratler*  
 DEADLINE AT DAWN [RKD] *based on novel by Cornell Woolrich*  
 THE FRENCH KEY [Rep.] *based on novel by Frank Gruber*  
 NOBODY LIVES FOREVER [WB] *script by W.R. Burnett*  
 NOCTURNE [RKD] *script by Jonathan Latimer*  
 THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE [MGM] *based on novel by James M. Cain*

1947

BORN TO KILL [RKD] *based on James Gunn's novel Deadlier Than The Male*  
 THE BRASHER DOUBLOON [TCF] *based on Raymond Chandler's novel The High Window*  
 DARK PASSAGE [WB] *based on novel by David Goodis*  
 DEAD RECKONING [Col.] *co-scripted by Steve Fisher*  
 FALL GUY [Mono.] *based on Cornell Woolrich's story "Cocaine"*  
 FEAR IN THE NIGHT [Pine Thomas Prods.] *based on Cornell Woolrich story "Nightmare"*  
 THE GUILTY [Mono.] *based on Woolrich's story "Two Men in a Furnished Room"*  
 THE LADY IN THE LAKE [MGM] *based on novel by Raymond Chandler*  
 OUT OF THE PAST [RKD] *based on Geoffrey Homes\* novel Build My Gallows High*  
*scripted by Geoffrey Homes\**  
 RIDE THE PINK HORSE [Univ-Int.] *based on novel by Dorothy B. Hughes@*  
 THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME [RKD] *scripted by Jonathan Latimer*  
 THE UNFAITHFUL [WB] *script by David Goodis and James Gunn*

1948

THE BIG CLOCK [Para.] *scripted by Jonathan Latimer*  
 THE HUNTED [AA] *scripted by Steve Fisher*  
 I WOULDN'T BE IN YOUR SHOES [Mono.] *based on novel by Cornell Woolrich*  
*scripted by Steve Fisher*  
 KISS THE BLOOD OFF MY HANDS [Harold-Hecht-Norma] *based on novel by Gerald Butler's*  
 LADY FROM SHANGHAI [Col.] *based on Sherwood King's novel If I Die Before I Wake*  
 NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES [Para.] *based on novel by Cornell Woolrich*  
*co-scripted by Jonathan Latimer*  
 PITFALL [Regal Films] *based on Jay Dratler's novel*

1949

THE ACCUSED [Para.] *Jonathan Latimer contributed to script*  
 ALIAS NICK BEALE [Para.] *scripted by Jonathan Latimer*  
 THE BRIBE [MGM] *based on a story by Frederick Nebel*  
 IMPACT [Harry M. Popkin Prods.] *co-scripted by Jay Dratler*  
 THE WINDOW [RKD] *based on Cornell Woolrich's story "The Boy Who Cried Wolf"*

1950

THE ASPHALT JUNGLE [MGM] *based on novel by W.R. Burnett*  
*script by W.R. Burnett*  
 GUILTY BYSTANDER [Laurel Films & Edmund L. Dorfman] *based on novel by Wade Miller*  
 IN A LONELY PLACE [Santana Prods.] *based on novel by Dorothy B. Hughes<sup>©</sup>*  
 KISS TOMORROW GOODBYE [William Cagney Prod.] *based on Horace McCoy's novel*  
 THE LAWLESS [Para.] *based on Geoffrey Homes\* novel The Voice of Stephen Wilder*  
*scripted by Geoffrey Homes\**  
 NO MAN OF HER OWN [Para.] *based on Cornell Woolrich's novel I Married A Dead Man*  
 UNION STATION [Para.] *based on a story by Thomas Walsh*

NOTES

- \* . . . Geoffrey Homes was the pen-name of Daniel Mainwaring.
- # . . . Films marked thus were entries in the low-budget Mike Shayne detective series.
- § . . . An unusual example of an English 'hard-boiled' thriller.
- © . . . A rare example of a female novelist writing in the 'hard-boiled' style.

APPENDIX TWO:

1940'S CRIME FILM CYCLES.

## APPENDIX TWO

1940's CRIME-FILM CYCLES

As I stressed in the "Preface" to Section Three, the 'film noir canon' which has been constituted by film critics since the mid-1940's comprises a bewildering heterogeneity of crime-film cycles and generic hybrids. I hope that the distinction I have made between, on the one hand, the various forms of the 'tough' thriller and, on the other hand, the variety of 'ancillary' crime-film cycles will prove useful as one means of 'interrupting' the eclectic 'flow' of the term 'film noir' within the discourses of film history and film criticism. In this Appendix, I will be attempting to highlight the specificity of the 'tough' thriller further, by noting some of the major 'alternatives' to and transmutations of the 'hard-boiled' forms. What follows represents by no means an 'exhaustive' exploration of the complex generic field of the crime-film, and neither would I seek to claim that the specific categories are in any way either mutually exclusive or unproblematically unified.

Rather than attempting any 'authoritative' or 'immutable' classification, then, I shall be seeking below to highlight, in the case of such cycles as the 'outlaw couple' thriller and the 'semi-documentary' police-film, both the points of intersection with, and the carefully maintained differences from, the 'tough' thriller. Certain of the films considered below - like many of the 'tough' thrillers themselves - can 'fit' into several of the categories, rather than being easily 'contained' within any one. SHOCKPROOF, for example, mobilises the conventions of the 'social-problem' crime film, the 'criminal adventure', and the 'rogue cop' thriller - as well as utilising the 'structuring framework' of the 'outlaw couple' thriller. And indeed, as I have stressed throughout this study, many of the 1940's crime-films are patently, deliberately cross-generic. Motifs, scenarios, stylistic strategies, narrative conventions, etc., are extensively set-in-play, not simply within any individual, discernible category but across a complex range of Hollywood productions of the period.

Before embarking upon an examination of certain 'ancillary' cycles of the 1940's crime thrillers, I will note briefly some of the cycles which I have excluded from the selection for various reasons:

(a) the espionage thriller was one of the principal cycles of the war years, for it represented a convenient compromise between the necessity Hollywood faced of both addressing war-issues and 'investing' in familiar generic modes. Films like Alfred Hitchcock's FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT (Walter Wanger Prod.; 1940), JOURNEY INTO FEAR (RKO, 1943), THE FALLEN SPARROW (RKO, 1943), THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS (WB, 1944), and Fritz Lang's MANHUNT (TCF, 1941), THE MINISTRY OF FEAR (Para., 1944) and CLOAK AND DAGGER (United States Pics., 1946) - to name some of the most 'known' of a significantly large group - contain similar 'paranoid' narratives and stylistic 'flourishes' to the 'tough' suspense thrillers. However, such espionage stories can most markedly be distinguished from the 'tough' thrillers on the basis of their 'national'/'international' dimension. The 'dark forces' and the complex plotting against which the hero struggles often tend to be 'rationalised' in terms of tangible 'political' conspiracies (although in Lang's films the hero's psychological destabilisation is often enmeshed within the 'external' conspiracy);

(b) the 'period' crime-thriller/melodrama includes, on occasions, the same kinds of 'claustrophobic' compositions and 'psychological' or 'sexual' disjunctions which mark the 'tough' thrillers. THE LODGER and HANGOVER SQUARE, two 1944 films directed by John Brahm for Twentieth Century-Fox, feature a psychopathic protagonist (played in each instance by the bulky Laird Cregar) who could fit comfortably within either the 'tough' thriller or the 'horror-film' (Brahm's films suggesting in particular the degree of overlap between the two, in terms of their - differently articulated - use of the 'uncanny'). Such Val Lewton RKO productions as THE BODY SNATCHER (1945) and BEDLAM (1946) similarly represent a marked shift from the horror-film's conventional 'externalisation' of the 'uncanny' and towards

the 'internal' generation of guilt, fear and 'persecution-by-the-unknown'. Films like Robert Siodmak's THE SUSPECT, and Anthony Mann's REIGN OF TERROR and THE TALL TARGET - which I have already noted - can be viewed more emphatically in terms of a transposition into the terms of a stylized 'past' (which 'reflects' the tensions of the 'present') of the scenarios and processes which characterise the 'tough' thriller ;

(c) the boxing-thriller enjoyed a revival in the late 1940's, having been one of the prominent cycles of 'low-life' thrillers produced by Warner Brothers before the war (with such films as THE PERSONALITY KID, 1934; KID GALAHAD, 1937; KID NIGHTINGALE, 1939; and KNOCKOUT, 1941). BODY AND SOUL (Enterprise Pictures, 1947), CHAMPION (Stanley Kramer Prods., 1949) and THE SET-UP (RKO, 1949) focus, like many 'tough' thrillers, upon masculine ambition and impairment, and upon 'low-life' criminal activity. The sport itself represents a 'primitive' form of masculine testing, with the boxing-scenes themselves often serving to present a stark spectacle of masculine triumph and defeat. The 'ring' becomes an enclosed arena of masculine 'performance', a site of contest between two skimpily-clad 'contenders' who enact a ritualistic and idealised 'fantasy' of masculine potency. As in the characteristically more 'feminine' genre of the musical, this public display feeds off behind-the-scenes tensions, struggles and disillusionments. In the 1940's boxing-thrillers, the sport tends to be represented as explicitly 'corruptive', in different ways. In CHAMPION, the boxer-protagonist Kelly (Kirk Douglas) becomes a ruthless 'ego-maniac' who, like the gangster-hero, seeks to rise-to-the-top at the expense of all else (family, loved-ones, etc.); at the end of the film, he succeeds in becoming "Champion of the World", but not only is he 'beaten to a pulp' in the process (an inversion of his preening narcissism), but he also dies after throwing the winning punch. In THE SET-UP, on the other hand, Stoker (Robert Ryan), a veteran of the ring, has become transformed into a 'loser' whose desperate determination to prove his 'masculine' integrity by winning - rather than 'taking a fall' -

leads to a humiliating beating at the hands of gangsters. THE SET-UP suggests that there is no honour, security or real achievement to be derived from the sport, and it further lays stress upon the 'perverse' gratifications of the ringside spectators;

(d) the prison-picture was another of the cycles associated with Warner Brothers before World War II - vide such films as NUMBERED MEN (1930), 20,000 YEARS IN SING-SING (1932), I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN-GANG (1932), MAYOR OF HELL (1933), SAN QUENTIN (1937), EACH DAWN I DIE (1939), CASTLE ON THE HUDSON (1940), and I WAS FRAMED (1942). The late 1940's saw the beginning of a revival in the prison-picture, which continued into the 1950's - a cycle which included BRUTE FORCE (Mark Hellinger Prods., 1947), RIOT IN CELL BLOCK 11 (1954), BLACK TUESDAY (1954), CELL 2455 DEATH ROW (1955), BEHIND THE HIGH WALL (1956) and THE LAST MILE (1959). John Cromwell's CAGED (WB, 1950) is unusual in its women's prison setting, for in general the prison-picture is concerned with the relations between men in a situation of pressured confinement - and as such has often to confront similar sets of problems (of 'masculine definition') to those which mark the 'tough' thrillers. The prison provides a rigid context for 'masculine regulation' - it is an authoritarian social institution which demands both strict conformity with a regimented body of punitive 'rules' and an acceptance of self-delimitation. In BRUTE FORCE - generally regarded as a film noir - the prison is represented as a 'microcosm' of a social order based upon repression and tyranny (and is ruled over by the sadistic, 'neo-Nazi' Captain Munsey/Hume Cronyn). This corrupt regime is destroyed through the violent, 'self-sacrificial' rebellion of the inmates. As with many other prison-pictures, BRUTE FORCE displays a particular fascination with the violent consequences of 'penned-in' masculinity;

(e) the anti-communist thriller of the late 1940's and early 1950's - such films as THE WOMAN ON PIER 13/I MARRIED A COMMUNIST (1949), I WAS A COMMUNIST FOR THE FBI (1951) and BIG JIM McLAIN (1952) - tends

generally to be discounted as a 'noir cycle' because its overt 'political' orientation displaces what is felt to be the 'noir' specialisation in sexually and psychologically motivated crime. The production of such thrillers in this period - like the 'blacklist' itself - was motivated in part by the film industry's desire to forestall the threat of external intervention after the unwelcome scrutiny of the House Committee on Un-American Activities generated adverse publicity for Hollywood.

The cycles to be discussed in more detail below are the following:

- (i) The 'Rogue-Cop' Thriller;
- (ii) The 'Women's Picture' Crime-Thriller;
- (iii) The Gangster Film;
- (iv) The 'Semi-Documentary'/'Police-Procedural' Thriller;
- (v) The 'Social-Problem' Crime Film;
- (vi) The 'Outlaw-Couple' Film.

(1) THE 'ROGUE-COP' THRILLER

The 'rogue-cop' films produced during the late 1940's and early 1950's represent both a reworking of the 'criminal adventure' thriller and an inversion of the police-centred 'semi-documentary'. Films such as *THE BRIBE* (MGM, 1949), *WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS* (TCF, 1950), *THE MAN WHO CHEATED HIMSELF* (Jack Warner Prods., 1950), *DETECTIVE STORY* (Para., 1951), *THE PROWLER* (Horizon Pics., 1951), *THE BIG HEAT* (Col., 1953), *ON DANGEROUS GROUND* (RKO, 1952), *ROGUE COP* (MGM, 1954), *SHIELD FOR MURDER* (Camden Productions, 1954) [1], *PUSHOVER* (Col., 1954) and *TOUCH OF EVIL* (Univ-Int., 1958) feature 'law-officers' who set themselves above the law in the attempt to realise their own, 'illicit' desires. In *THE BRIBE*, Rigby (Robert Taylor) is a Federal agent sent to the Caribbean to investigate an illicit trade in Army surplus equipment. However, his romantic involvement with Elizabeth (Ava Gardner) - wife of one of the smugglers, Tug Hintten (John Hodiak) - complicates his quest, so that he comes to face a difficult choice between the woman or the morality of his job. The film opens with Rigby agonisingly trying to decide whether to take a bribe which would enable him to run away with the woman he loves, or to fulfil his duty (which could possibly result in Elizabeth's imprisonment). Rigby's very indecision represents a lapse from responsibility, for it leads directly to the killing of Tug by the chief arms-trader, Carwood (Vincent Price) - an action which Rigby profits from (in that it allows him greater access to the wife). Eventually, however, after painstakingly and obsessively seeking to ascertain the extent of Elizabeth's involvement with the gang, Rigby completes his quest, and kills Carwood 'in the line of duty'. The film makes things easier for Rigby when Elizabeth is finally proved not to be part of the criminal gang: but, because of the very real temptation he experienced, he finds that he is unable to marry Elizabeth without quitting his job.

Many of the later 'rogue cop' thrillers are markedly more extreme than *THE BRIBE*, in that their heroes consciously set themselves against or above the law, unable to resist the temptation to use for their own ends the power their job permits them. In Otto Preminger's *WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS*, Mark Dixon (Dana Andrews) is an unstable police-detective who finds

himself compulsively drawn towards violence; he accidentally kills a suspect under interrogation, and tries to pass off the killing as a gangland murder. In *THE PROWLER*, patrolman Webb Garwood (Van Heflin) seduces a married woman, and to get her all to himself - and thus gain access to her husband's money - he murders the husband while pretending to shoot a prowler. In *THE MAN WHO CHEATED HIMSELF*, Ed Cullen (Lee J. Cobb) is a police-detective whose involvement with a married woman leads him to cover-up her killing of her husband. In *SHIELD FOR MURDER*, Barney Nolan (Edmond O'Brien) is a corrupt patrolman who murders a gangster because he refuses to pay him his 'due'. In *PUSHOVER*, Paul Sheridan (Fred MacMurray) is a police-detective whose obsession with a 'gangster's moll' leads him ultimately to kill her lover. *ROGUE COP* features a crooked patrolman - Kelvaney (Robert Taylor) - who seeks to redeem himself when his policeman-brother is murdered by the gangsters who pay him.

In the above films, the heroes are overtly corrupt because they abuse their positions of responsibility in order to gain either money (*SHIELD FOR MURDER*, *ROGUE COP*, *THE PROWLER*) or a woman (*PUSHOVER*, *THE MAN WHO CHEATED HIMSELF*, *THE PROWLER*). However, in other films of the "rogue cop" cycle the hero can be ascribed more ambivalent motives for taking the law into his own hands. In *THE BIG HEAT*, police-detective Dave Bannion (Glenn Ford) turns vigilante when his wife is killed in a brutal car-bomb explosion (intended for Bannion himself). In *DETECTIVE STORY*, the ability of Jim McLeod (Kirk Douglas) to fulfil his duty as a police detective is severely compromised by marital difficulties, which spark off an 'innate' instability. Like McLeod, Joe Wilson (Robert Ryan), the hero of Nicholas Ray's *ON DANGEROUS GROUND*, is a big-city detective with a streak of 'psychopathic' violence. However, Wilson is redeemed (whereas McLeod dies), by moving out to the snowy wastes of the countryside and finding a new sense of purpose with the blind woman (played by Ida Lupino) he falls in love with.

In general, the 'rogue cop' thrillers betray a significant interest in the figure of the 'contaminated' law-officer. At the heart of their hero-centred conflicts is the difficulty of maintaining a clear-cut separation between the 'professional' and the 'personal' - between law and desire - and as such, these films can be seen as a significant extension of the 1940's 'tough' thriller.

(11) THE 'WOMEN'S PICTURE' CRIME THRILLER.

As I have shown through Section Three, women occupy a problematic place in regard to the 'masculine testing' which characterises the 'tough' thriller. If they do not represent a direct transgression of masculine authority, then they are made markedly subservient to it. In the 'semi-documentary' thrillers, too, women tend to be subservient to the dramatic conflicts structured around men and around such male-dominated social institutions as the police, the FBI, the 'free Press'. Whereas the 'tough' thrillers enact - often in overtly problematised terms - the repression of the feminine, the 'semi-documentaries' most often 'exclude' it.

It is rare to find female detectives in the 1940's thrillers [2]. Two apparent exceptions, which I have already referred to, bear this out. In both THE STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR and PHANTOM LADY a woman embarks upon an investigation in order to clear her lover of a murder charge. However, in each film the woman tends ultimately to be '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' masquerade sets her in a marked 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). In THE STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR, the detective activity of Jane (Margaret Tallichet) is also 'compromised' by her femininity - for although she can actually find the escaped lunatic (Peter Lorre) responsible for the murder for which her boyfriend Mike (John McGuire) is due to be executed, she cannot personally extricate herself from the danger her discovery leads to. Indeed, as a means of resolving the plot, the film relies upon a climactic 'monster-pursues-girl' scenario (which is itself not resolved by Jane - for the killer is run over by a truck). 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.

There were, however, a large number of suspense thrillers produced by Hollywood in the 1940's in which women were pivotal to the drama. Such 'Gothic melodramas' - or what Mary Ann Doane [3] refers to as 'paranoid woman' films - included REBECCA (1940), SUSPICION (1941), GASLIGHT (1944), EXPERIMENT PERILOUS (1944), JANE EYRE (1944), THE TWO MRS CARROLLS (1947), THE SECRET BEYOND THE DOOR (1947), SLEEP MY LOVE (1948) and CAUGHT (1948). These films situate their female protagonists as victims to a real or imagined conspiracy, in which her husband (usually) is seeking either to murder her or to drive her mad. It is important to stress that the woman, although located as 'investigator' is explicitly not a 'detective' in the same way as a male hero can be. For example, the female voice-overs frequently found in these thrillers are, in comparison to their male counterparts in such 'tough' thrillers as DOUBLE INDEMNITY, DEAD RECKONING and LADY FROM SHANGHAI, markedly deficient in terms of the authority they can maintain in relation to the plot and to the image itself. Similarly, the recurring figuration of the woman's blocked or impaired vision situates her relationship to 'truth' as of a different and inferior order to that which can be established by the male (as is considered by Reynold Humphries in his detailed study of SECRET BEYOND THE DOOR [4], and also by Mary Ann Doane [5]). The 'crimes' investigated by the film also, in many cases, tend not actually to have occurred, but are about to be committed. This serves to intensify the paranoia, locating the 'crime' in the (woman's) Imaginary. Female experience, female vision, and female knowledge tend to be negated or invalidated - represented in terms of 'false consciousness', or 'hallucination' [6]. As in the popular Gothic novel or play, the house itself - the 'woman's space' (distinguished from the public spaces of the 'tough' thriller) - is transformed into a site of terror and aggression, this process of 'making strange' suggesting the extent to which such fiction derives its charge from a displaced representation of the frustrations of and the hostility towards the conventional domestic/marital/familial delimitation of female desire and identity [7].

In another group of 1940's woman-centred thrillers, the 'heroines' represent an inversion of the passive, or threatened women of the 'Gothic' suspense melodramas. Rather than suffering the 'psychic violence' of marriage and the home, the protagonists of such films as THE LETTER (1940), LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN (1945), TEMPTATION (1946), IVY (1947), THE VELVET TOUCH (1948), TOO LATE FOR TEARS (1949) and BEYOND THE FOREST (1949) strike out violently against any such delimitation of their desires. These films are 'case-studies' of

the 'female lawbreaker', the woman whose 'uncontainable' desires are bodied forth in extreme and illicit acts - the murders of husbands, lovers, rivals, and even - in *LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* and *BEYOND THE FOREST* - of their unborn children. Whereas the 'criminal' women of the 'tough' thrillers must be exposed and condemned, these 'women's picture' thriller-melodramas can be seen much more emphatically to invite the spectator's engagement with the 'fantasy' of female-in-revolt (despite the ultimate narrative-containment of the woman). *MILDRED PIERCE*, which I considered earlier, represents a variation of such films in that the woman is not actually guilty of murder, but is from the start presumed to be so (by other characters in the film, by the spectator); hence, unlike the protagonists of *IVY* and *BEYOND THE FOREST*, Mildred can ultimately be redeemed and returned to her 'place' - at the cost of the repression of her 'deviant', ambitious desires.

Besides this, there are a large number of other woman-centred thrillers which - like *MILDRED PIERCE* - represent a more manifest hybrid between the 'women's picture' melodrama and the 'tough' thriller. In Max Ophuls' *THE RECKLESS MOMENT*, for example, the stability of a bourgeois household is disrupted by the intrusion of outside, criminal elements when the adolescent Bea Harper (Geraldine Brooks) has an affair with, and then accidentally causes the death of, the 'small-time hood' Ted Darby (Shepperd Strudwick). As in *PITFALL*, this threat from the 'outside' is marked by the transformation of the home into a 'prison' of dark and menacing *noir* shadows. In *THE RECKLESS MOMENT*, the lapse from 'order' sets in motion a chaotic circuitry of desire which, in the absence of the father (Mr Harper is away in Germany, and is never seen in the film), has to be 'recontained' by Bea's mother, Lucia (Joan Bennett) - who ironically comes to fight against not only Bea's disruptive desire, but also her own (for she becomes the object of desire for Martin Donnelly/James Mason, who initially sets out to blackmail her). *THE RECKLESS MOMENT*, then, establishes a direct opposition between the bourgeois family and the world of crime - but at the same time it uses the latter both to signify and to unleash desires repressed in the former sphere. Other woman-centred crime thrillers of the period - such as *THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS* (1946), *POSSESSED* (1947) and *THE DAMNED DON'T CRY* (1950) - similarly explore and codify female identity and desire in terms of the 'criminal' (for the restrictions upon women within the patriarchal regimentation of culture necessitate that any forceful expression of female desire be codified in terms of the 'illicit'). Other films can be considered more

specifically to represent 'women's picture'/'tough' thriller hybrids when the 'story of the hero' is problematised by the disruptive prominence of the 'woman's story' (which in the 'tough' thrillers - as I have suggested - tends to be contained by a rigidly conventionalised codification). GILDA is perhaps the most striking example of such a displacement of the 'masculine drama' by a drama of 'female identity', but such a process also marks (albeit in different fashion) THE FILE ON THELMA JORDAN (in which the hero's 'criminal adventure' is ultimately subservient to that of the woman), and also SHOCKPROOF and GUN CRAZY, two 'outlaw couple' films which shall be considered below.

(iii) THE GANGSTER FILM.

Like the Western-film, the gangster-film has often been regarded as a 'paradigmatic', easily-recognisable Hollywood genre, which is characterised both by pronounced cycles (in the early 1930's, the mid-1950's, the mid-1970's) and a seeming endurance (vide such comparatively recent films as SCARFACE, 1983, and THE UNTOUCHABLES, 1987). Generic definitions frequently both the importance of the gangster-figure as protagonist. The gangster-hero is a masculine 'over-achiever' who triumphs in a (criminal) context where success is dependent upon 'nerve', quick-wittedness and brute force. At the core of such stories - which trace the gangster's rise-to-power, and then (briefly) his downfall and death - one can identify a violently ambitious masculine fantasy. Indeed, Thomas Elsaesser highlights how "the verve and stamina of narrative pace" [8] derives its 'energy' from the gangster-hero's driving, unbounded ambition. With such protagonists as Tom Powers (James Cagney) in THE PUBLIC ENEMY (1930), Rico (Edward G. Robinson) in LITTLE CAESAR (1930) and Tony Camonte (Paul Muni) in SCARFACE (1932),

the single-minded pursuit of money and power is followed by the equally single-minded and peremptory pursuit of physical survival, ending in the hero's apotheosis through violent death [9]

This 'anti-social' basis of the gangster 'fantasy' gave rise to notable censorship difficulties in the early 1930's, as a result of which the violence and dynamism associated with the gangster-hero is seen by many writers [10] to transfer to heroes on the other side of the law: for example, the Federal agent played by James Cagney in G-MEN (1935), and the 'gangbusting' undercover detective-hero (Edward G. Robinson) of BULLETS OR BALLOTS (1936). In the late 1930's, there were further reorientations of the gangster-hero. For example, in ANGELS WITH DIRTY FACES (1939), the prototypical James Cagney gangster, Rocky Sullivan, feigns cowardice on the electric-chair in order to deter a teenage gang from his brand of illicit heroism (although it is significant that Rocky's last-minute 'conversion' occurs off-screen, and

is potentially 'disavowed' through its displaced representation as a shadow and disembodied voice). Another significant, but very deliberately 'different', film of the period is Samuel Goldwyn's prestigious theatrical-adaptation, DEAD END (1937), which uses the gangster-figure, 'Baby Face' Martin (Humphrey Bogart), as a 'sociological case-study' rather than a hero/protagonist proper - with Martin located as a product of, and ultimately a victim to, a hostile slum environment.

The gangster-film has been traced as far back as D.W. Griffith's 1912 Biograph production THE MUSKETEERS OF PIG ALLEY, but it is Prohibition-era gangsterism which is most readily associated with the Hollywood gangster-film. By the 1940's this context was no longer applicable - and, as I have suggested, the gangster-hero fantasy met with substantial resistance during the war. One of the final gangster-films of the 1930's, THE ROARING TWENTIES (1939) represented a 'summing-up' of the conventions of the early 1930's cycle, firmly locating the 'bootlegging' gangster as a 'thing of the past'. With such notable exceptions as HIGH SIERRA (WB, 1941), WHITE HEAT (WB, 1949) and KISS TOMORROW GOODBYE (William Cagney Prods., 1950) and such 'watered-down' gangster-films as LUCKY JORDAN and MR. LUCKY, the gangster-film was relatively rare in this period. As a prominent cycle within the crime-film, one can see the gangster-film as having been displaced by the 'tough' thriller. However, HIGH SIERRA, WHITE HEAT and KISS TOMORROW GOODBYE are notable for their 'recasting' of the earlier films' celebratory assertion of 'masculine' dynamism in terms of the problems and divisions which beset the heroes of the 'tough' thrillers.

HIGH SIERRA explicitly reverses many of the conventions of the 'classic' gangster-films. The hero, 'Mad Dog' Roy Earle (Humphrey Bogart) is a professional criminal whose context is rapidly vanishing. A disjunct and lonely 'man out of time', Earle lacks the brash self-confidence which had propelled the earlier gangster-heroes. Rather than a dynamic, outward-directed energy and sense of purpose, Earle is characterised in terms of self-doubt, fallibility and loneliness. The film focusses upon its hero's frustrations and renunciations, to the extent that the gangster/caper plot (the robbery of a hotel) becomes markedly subsumed to the protagonist's 'emotional drama'. Earle's

commitment to the 'caper' is displaced in particular by the story of his romantic involvement with Velma (Joan Leslie), an impoverished young girl with a club-foot (whom Earle seems to be attracted to because her low social-status and her 'deformity' make her similarly a 'misfit'). After he pays for Velma's foot to be cured, he finds himself rejected by her - and once more on his own. Like the later thrillers DARK PASSAGE and IN A LONELY PLACE (both of them also starring Bogart), HIGH SIERRA is emphatically a 'drama of masculine loneliness' - a 'male melodrama' - rather than a straightforward and dynamic 'old-style' gangster-film

After the heist, Earle is besieged in the Sierra mountains. The scene becomes, for the expectant public and for the energised ranks of newspaper and radio journalists, a spectacle of individualistic gangster-hero assertion. However, the spectator has a far more ironical perspective. The shoot-out, and Earle's eventual death, are represented by the films not in terms of some 'heroic', assertive 'rebellion', but rather as the culmination of a 'personal drama' of frustration, loneliness and loss. This 'personal drama' conflicts with the gangster as a figure of 'public mythology' (promoted as such within by press). The conventional ending - the death of the gangster - thus has a far from conventional 'emotional resonance'. Watched on by Marie (Ida Lupino), the woman who has loved him all along, but whose love he did not recognise until it was too late - Earle is shot dead as he tries to protect Pard, the dog whose devoted affection he has similarly neglected. Rather than connoting the logical, explosive consequences of a 'masculine energy' which exceeds containment, the death of the gangster in HIGH SIERRA has a more complex emotional circuitry.

The 'blaze of glory' ending - *ie.* the spectacle being manifestly constructed by the 'media circus' - hides for the 'outside world' (but not for the 'privileged' spectator) the 'true significance' of Earle's death. Earle manifestly escapes from a world in which he cannot find a place. The film's conclusion succeeds as a powerful representation of masculine 'self-pity', for the spectator - like the adoring Marie - recognises Earle's 'true worth' but is unable to intervene to prevent his 'unjust' killing. Such a fantasy of 'alienation' validates the individual at the expense of society. However, whereas the 'classic' gangster-heroes turned their 'masculine' energy outwards, in direct

defiance of the law, in HIGH SIERRA this energy is turned narcissistically inwards, clinging defensively, protectively to the ego-in-retreat, and culminating in a patent rejection of engagement with a potentially frustrating reality.

HIGH SIERRA is often included within the 'film noir canon' because it features both an 'alienated' hero and a series of reversals and displacements of the early 1930's gangster-film conventions (other significant transformations being the shift from an urban to a rural milieu, and the reversal of the conventional significance of the 'good-girl' and the 'bad girl' - for the former betrays the hero, while the latter remains loyal). WHITE HEAT and KISS TOMORROW GOODBYE are often similarly regarded as 'films noirs' for the ways in which they play against the generic conventions of the gangster-film. In each film, James Cagney plays an 'old-style' gangster-figure whose energy and ambition have transmuted into psychosis. In the former, Cagney's Cody Jarrett has an obsessional attachment to his mother, and his psychological instability manifests itself in explosive outbursts of violence. The technological armoury of the postwar police force - a clear reference here to the 'semi-documentaries' of the period (see below) - is pitted against Jarrett's raw, psychotically assertive masculine dynamism, seeking to contain him as a figure of the past (of America, of the movies).

Jarrett escapes from the trap engineered by the undercover policeman, Hank Fallon (Edmond O'Brien) - who infiltrates his gang - to serve as the 'metteur-en-scène' for a devastating explosion which concludes the film. Jarrett fires into a gasometer upon which he has taken refuge, and in a destructive, psychotic apotheosis he proclaims the sheer power of his 'deviance', as he shouts triumphantly: "Top of the world, ma!" (this self-willed destruction of the world - identified by Freud as a common paranoid delusion [4] - serves as an ironic allusion to the "The World Is Yours" sign which in SCARFACE (1932), crystallizes Tony Camonte's drive for success). In KISS TOMORROW GOODBYE - based on Horace McCoy's 1948 novel - the gangster-figure becomes an incarnation of brute, rampaging masculinity. Through his unbridled verve and aggression, Ralph Cotter (Cagney) achieves immense sexual and political power, his sadistic defiance of conventional morality becoming

the object of fascination for the other characters in the film, and for the spectator. In each film, James Cagney represents the individualistic energy of a past 'amorality' which has become more markedly 'twisted' in its accomodation to a technologically and bureaucratically efficient postwar world.

In general, the gangster-as-protagonist is found only on rare occasions in 1940's Hollywood cinema , as indeed is the context of organised crime. Both tend to be displaced by the emphasis both upon the lone, 'non-affiliated' hero and upon criminal acts which are more psychologically or sexually motivated. However, the gangster-figure does figure in a somewhat transmuted manner in many of the 'tough' thrillers - in the guise of nightclub/casino owners like Ballin Mundson (George Macready) in GILDA, Martinelli (Morris Carnovsky) in DEAD RECKONING, Eddie Mars (John Ridgely) in THE BIG SLEEP, and Whit Sterling (Kirk Douglas) in OUT OF THE PAST - as principal antagonists of the hero (and as often sexual as well as 'criminal' rivals). In the 1950's, however, the gangster-film made an explicit 'comeback'. Films such as THE ENFORCER (1951), THE PHENIX CITY STORY (1955), THE BIG COMBO (1955), NEW YORK CONFIDENTIAL (1955), THE BROTHERS RICO (1957) and MURDER INCORPORATED (1960) drew upon the contemporary and highly newsworthy context of modern-day, syndicated crime - 'corporate gangsterism' (often a 'mirror-image' reversal of 'legitimate' capitalist enterprise). There was also, in this period, a return to representations of Prohibition-era gangsterism, in such films as Don Siegel's BABY FACE NELSON (1957), Nicholas Ray's PARTY GIRL (1958), AL CAPONE (1959) and Budd Boetticher's THE RISE AND FALL OF LEGS DIAMOND (1960), as well as in the gangster-comedy SOME LIKE IT HOT (1959).

A 'derivative' of the gangster-film is the caper-film, in which a group of professional criminals is assembled for the purpose of committing a specific robbery. Marginalised or displaced caper-plots feature in HIGH SIERRA, and THE KILLERS and CRISS-CROSS, but in later films like ARMORED CAR ROBBERY (RKO, 1950), THE ASPHALT JUNGLE (MGM, 1950) and THE KILLING (Harris-Kubrick, 1956) there tends to be more

emphasis upon the group and group dynamics than upon the individual protagonist. In these films, the group sets itself against the law and mainstream society, but its unity tends to be jeopardised by individual failings - often through a sexual lapse (as with Emmerick/Louis Calhern and the voyeuristic Doc/Sam Jaffe in THE ASPHALT JUNGLE, and the weak and besotted George/Elisha Cook Jr. in THE KILLERS). After the international success of Jules Dassin's French production RIFIFI (1954), the caper-film tended to deviate more substantially from the structuring mechanisms of the 'classic' gangster-film, especially in the case of such glossy romantic thrillers of the 1960's as Dassin's TOPKAPI (1964), GAMBIT (1966), KALEIDOSCOPE (1967) and THE THOMAS CROWN AFFAIR (1968).

(111) THE 'SEMI-DOCUMENTARY' / POLICE-PROCEDURAL THRILLER.

The histories of film noir document the emergence in the postwar period of what has become known as the 'semi-documentary' crime thriller. These films, which represent a series of significant narrative and stylistic departures from the 'tough' thriller, constituted a marked trend between 1945 and 1948 - and many of their distinguishing characteristics simultaneously became absorbed within other types of crime film - such as the 'espionage thriller' BERLIN EXPRESS (RKO, 1948), and WHITE HEAT - and later within such TV detective shows as "Dragnet". Rather than an adaptation of fictional sources, the 'semi-documentaries' were often fictionalised accounts of 'true stories' drawn from FBI files, newspaper articles, and other 'factual' sources. Furthermore, they manifest a 'realist aesthetic' which represents a significant departure from the 'expressionist' stylization often found in the 'tough' thriller, foregrounding location-shooting and 'realist' sound (rather than 'studio artifice') and utilising narrational strategies drawn from wartime documentaries and newsreels (such as Louis de Rochemont's influential MARCH OF TIME series of the 1930's and 1940's). A hybrid of fiction-film and documentary conventions, these thrillers nonetheless conform to 'classical' norms in that their stories tend to centre upon one or very few characters, and narrative principles of clarity, causality and linearity are observed.

The cycle of 'semi-documentary' thrillers is generally seen to commence with THE HOUSE ON 92nd STREET (TCF, 1945), a film concerned with FBI agents infiltrating and destroying a cell of 'Fifth Columnist' agents. This film opens with typed credits - to signify the 'official' status of the 'case' (drawn, we are informed, from FBI files) - and with the claim that "The scenes in this picture were photographed in the localities of the incidents reported". Following this, a stentorian voice-over narration accompanies newsreel-style footage of FBI agents at work, highlighting such "modern techniques of detection" as photographic surveillance, 'bugging', and two-way mirrors (all to be used in the course of the film). The stress both upon 'actuality' and upon

systematised-technological investigative procedure represents a marked shift away from the individual drama of the 'tough' thrillers (with the love-story - and its potential complications - tending to be especially absent). In the 'semi-documentaries', detection is not a matter of intuitive action but of organisational machinery, and a manifest 'objectivity' displaces the pervasive, potentially corruptive 'subjectivity'.

The use of sound particularly highlights the 'realistic' impression which *THE HOUSE ON 92nd STREET* and its successors attempt to construct. In many of the principal scenes in this film not only is there an emphatic 'room tone' but there is also on the soundtrack a prominent 'filtering-through' of 'street noises' (which tend to be elided in the comparatively more 'controlled' use of sound in 'classical' studio productions). Non-diegetic background scoring is also markedly absent through most of the film - the significant exceptions being the film's highly structured narrative climaxes. A chase over the George Washington Bridge contains the kind of high-tension musical scoring which was conventional in the 'tough' thrillers of the period. Furthermore, in its later stages the film quite carefully builds up a clearly-defined suspense-thriller plot centred around an individual hero, FBI agent Bill Dietrich (William Eythe). Dietrich poses as a Nazi sympathiser in order to infiltrate the spy-ring, but his true identity and motives are discovered by the enemy agents while he is in their midst. This drama, and the FBI's mission, are resolved when the 'G-men' storm the spies' stronghold to free Dietrich (and, in effect, the tear-gas attack becomes not dissimilar to that in *ANGELS WITH DIRTY FACES*). At the end, with its climactic mini-drama resolved, the film returns to a newsreel découpage, showing the wide-scale rounding-up of enemy agents, while the voice-over returns to celebrate the efficiency and courage of the FBI.

Many of the characteristics I have just outlined became standard in the 'semi-documentary' cycle. Another Louis de Rochemont production, *13 RUE MADELEINE* (TCF, 1946) - which, like *THE HOUSE ON 92nd STREET* was directed by Henry Hathaway - proclaims itself to be based on the files of the wartime intelligence-agency, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The film is similarly concerned with American agents fighting the

Nazi threat (with the Nazis once more represented as a highly-organised criminal gang). In a similar way to its predecessor, 13 RUE MADELEINE emphasises 'procedure' for its first half - detailing the recruitment and training of American undercover agents - before switching to an 'action drama' centred upon an individual OSS agent (James Cagney) caught behind-the-lines in Nazi-occupied France. Once more, then, there is something of a compromise between 'documentary' and 'drama', and a final reliance upon a dynamic hero-centred narrative as a means of providing a suitable Hollywood-style ending. Despite the emphatic 'realist' differentiation, then, conventional plotting strategies such as the chase, suspense and action are still integral to the functioning of these films as generically-recognisable thrillers.

With the stress in these films upon the institutional forces of law - upon criminal investigation and law enforcement as an official activity - the individual serves as a necessary, but necessarily regulated, part of the system. The films thus eschew the psychic/sexual destabilisation and emotional angst which are integral to many of the 'tough' thrillers. This also holds true for a cycle of late 1940's thrillers which share many of the narrative and stylistic strategies of the 'semi-documentary', the police-procedural. In such films as THE NAKED CITY (Mark Hellinger Prods., 1948), T-MEN (Reliance Pictures, 1948), BORDER INCIDENT (MGM, 1949), PANIC IN THE STREETS (TCF, 1950), and UNION STATION (Para., 1950), crime is similarly viewed from the perspective of an officially-sanctioned force - respectively, police-detectives, treasury officials, immigration officers, public-health officials, and railway detectives. What is particularly interesting about these films is that although there is a similar detailed foregrounding of the machinery of investigative procedure, there also tends to be a recurring attention to the dynamics of the 'male couple' who are bonded together and tested in a context of ever-present danger.

The drama of allegiance and respect between the two-man detective-team takes the place of the conventional heterosexual-love story (most emphatically, perhaps, in Anthony Mann's T-MEN, where one of the team is murdered and his partner unites personal and professional motives in his quest to eradicate the killer). When the spheres of heterosexual

attachment, home, and family are incorporated, they often tend to be highly 'tokenistic' and conventionalised - a deflection from the drama's principal interest in the 'male couple'. The extent to which the hero and his partner are defined by their job does emerge, in some instances, as a problem - for they have no identity outside the job/away from each other. For example, in both T-MEN and UNION STATION (in which railway-detective Lieutenant Calhoun/William Holden seeks to prove his competence as a 'bona fide' lawman to the police-detective Inspector Donnelly/Barry Fitzgerald by singlehandedly capturing a psychotic kidnapper), the heroes become obsessively zealous and brutal in their determination to fulfil their professional duties. As with Jim Wilson (Robert Ryan) in Nicholas Ray's hybrid 'police-film'/melodrama ON DANGEROUS GROUND (RKO, 1952), the 'cop' takes over and represses the 'man'. This sense of the 'corruptive' influence of police-work - the way in which it enables the individual officer to set himself above the law - stands in sharp contrast to the glorified validation of the police which marks THE NAKED CITY, and both T-MEN and UNION STATION can be seen to prefigure the concerns of the early 1950's cycle of 'rogue cop' thrillers (see below).

This problematising of the institutional legal forces also marks, albeit in a different form, Henry Hathaway's 'semi-documentary' thriller CALL NORTHSIDE 777 (TCF, 1948; not produced by Louis de Rochemont). The hero of this film is McNeal (James Stewart), a newspaper reporter who is assigned by his paper to re-investigate an old murder-case, and whose initial 'professionalised' cynicism gives way to a developing 'human interest' in the predicament of the wrongly-convicted Frank Wiecek (Richard Conte). Although CALL NORTHSIDE 777 incorporates many of the techniques of the 'semi-documentary', there is a significant shift away from the 'authoritarianism' of its forebears. McNeal's status as a journalist grants him only 'semi-official' status, and the film itself is concerned with the conflict between the hero's reawakened ideals of social justice and the bureaucratic intransigence of the legal authorities. The police are 'mechanical' and rule-bound, and they are represented with an 'objective' distance - for the film refuses them any close-ups or intimacy. In common with many of the 'social-problem' crime films of the period (see below), CALL NORTHSIDE 777 manages to offset

its criticism of the legal institutions with a belief in the more 'unofficial' institutions of 'liberal democracy' - the power of the press as guardians of morality, the force of 'human values' (when McNeal submits his first, rather shallow and uncommitted, report on Wiecek, his editor berates him: "This is writing without heart, without truth").

The film's ending provides a characteristic suspense-based 'wrap-up' for its drama. McNeal is ordered by the appeal court to produce evidence that will firmly clear Wiecek. With the deadline for the hearing fast approaching, McNeal is stumped. However, he suddenly discovers a photograph that provides a vital clue which will absolve Wiecek: in the form, significantly, of a newspaper visible in the background, the date on which establishes the duplicitousness of the testimony of the principal witness against Wiecek. McNeal waits impatiently for an enlargement of the photograph to be wired through to the appeal hearing, and the evidence arrives just before the hearing is due to close. The ending represents the triumph of McNeal's stand against an intransigent bureaucracy through his 'humanizing' of technology.

HE WALKED BY NIGHT (Bryan Foy Prods.; 1949), co-directed by Alfred Werker and Anthony Mann, is of particular interest, both for its use of technology and its highly-structured combination of the 'realist' conventions of the 'semi-documentary'/'police-procedural' with the more 'expressionist' tendencies of the 'tough'/'psychological' crime thriller. This film uses the 'case-study' approach, together with such other 'semi-documentary' realist-strategies as the detailing of systematised police work and the authoritarian voice-over. The story concerns the hunt for a psychotic cop-killer. Morgan (Richard Basehart) is a disturbed, powerful individual who sets himself in opposition to the forces of social law by manipulating for his own ends the same technological skills which the police rely upon. The scenes featuring Morgan stand in marked contrast to the plain, unobtrusive compositions and full 'realist' lighting which characterise the sequences devoted to police activity, for they are emphatically 'noir' in their chiaroscuro lighting, compositional imbalance and low-angled camera set-ups. These 'noir' sequences convey Morgan's psychotic disturbance - particularly in set-piece scenes of violence: when he kills a patrolman and when he

shoots his way out of a police-trap. The mise-en-scène of the police scenes, however, signifies balance, order, the rigid control of individualistic impulses. As with the preceding 'semi-documentary'/'police-procedural' crime thrillers, HE WALKED BY NIGHT concludes with a location-shot action sequence: a spectacular chase through the Los Angeles storm drains, where Morgan is contained and destroyed as an archetypal 'underground-man'.

HE WALKED BY NIGHT provides a useful illustration of the differences between the representational modes of the so-called 'film noir' and the 'semi-documentary'. The two modes represent different facets of Hollywood's 'realist aesthetic' during the latter half of the 1940's. It is thus not surprising that film noir criticism has often excluded the 'semi-documentary' as a 'noir' cycle proper. For example, Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton have remarked:

The American police-procedural documentary is in reality a documentary glorifying the police . . . There is nothing of this kind in noir films. If there are policemen, they are rotten - as the inspector in THE ASPHALT JUNGLE, or that prime example of a corrupted brute incarnate by Lloyd Nolan in THE LADY IN THE LAKE - sometimes even murderers (FALLEN ANGEL and WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS directed by Otto Preminger) [12].

Jon Tuska goes even further, claiming that "most of these pseudo-documentaries, in terms of their narrative structures, are the very antithesis of film noir" [13]. The machinery of official detection - where the individual and the 'libido' tend to be enwrapped within, and penned-in by, the 'rules' - can be directly counterposed, for example, to the individualism and intuitive action of the private-eye. Thus, the vigilantism of Mickey Spillane's detective Mike Hammer (Ralph Meeker) in the 'film noir straggler', KISS ME DEADLY (Parklane Prods., 1955) can be seen as a reaction not only against the earlier 'morality' of the private-eye but also against the 'faceless efficiency' of the law officers in the 'semi-documentary' films.

In their emphasis upon the mechanics of FBI/police work, the 1940's 'semi-documentaries' also differ significantly from such earlier police-centred films as G-MEN and SPECIAL AGENT (1935), which are dependent upon the two-fisted 'individualism' of their heroes. G-MEN anticipates

the later films in its use of 'newsreel' footage and an 'official' voice-over - as do such other 1930's Warner Brothers' productions as BULLETS OR BALLOTS, CONFESSIONS OF A NAZI SPY and THE ROARING TWENTIES (the latter produced, like THE NAKED CITY, by Mark Hellinger). Another notable antecedent of the 'semi-documentary' was the CRIME DOES NOT PAY two-reelers produced by MGM between 1935 and 1948, a series of 'semi-documentary' style shorts which had a similar law-and-order perspective. This series provided a training-ground for such directors as Jules Dassin, Fred Zinnemann, Joseph Losey and Jacques Tourneur - all of whom subsequently made feature-length crime thrillers. In 1939, Tourneur directed THEY ALL CAME OUT for CRIME DOES NOT PAY producer Jack Chertok. A similar early 'semi-documentary' produced by Chertok and directed by Zinnemann is KID GLOVE KILLER (1942), which significantly predated the postwar films in its stress upon 'scientific' police work (with the hero, played by Van Heflin, a forensic scientist).

(v) THE 'SOCIAL-PROBLEM' CRIME FILM.

The postwar period saw a resurgence of Hollywood 'social-problem' drama. Films like THE LOST WEEKEND, THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES, GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT (1947), THE SNAKE PIT (1948), PINKY (1949), LOST BOUNDARIES (1949), HOME OF THE BRAVE (1949) and INTRUDER IN THE DUST (1951) - concerned with such issues as alcoholism, returning war veterans, the treatment of mental disorders, and racial prejudice - represented a return to the kind of 'social-problem' films produced by Warner Brothers' in the 1930's (such as I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG, 1932, and BLACK LEGION, 1937). In their representation of topical, newsworthy issues, the 1930's and 1940's 'social problem' films are characterised by a manifest 'seriousness' which is frequently italicised by the incorporation of the narrational conventions of the documentary. The 1940's films seem to have been inspired in particular by the liberal trend - both in Hollywood and more generally - which was one of the products of America's wartime engagement in the global arena (and which later came to grief in the 'liberal purge' of the House Committee on Un-American Activities). During the war years, Hollywood was urged by such organisations as the Office of War Information and the Office of Censorship to produce films which would not merely represent the conflict between the Allied Forces and the Axis powers, but which would also examine the ideological context of the war and promote a better understanding of the enemy, of America's allies and of American society itself. Thus, in such films as TENDER COMRADE (1943), Jean Renoir's THIS LAND IS MINE (1943) and NONE SHALL ESCAPE (1944), the Hollywood studios sought to accommodate within the fictional parameters of the 'classical' film an emphatic seriousness of purpose and 'treatment' (with issues tending to be discussed overtly by the characters, rather than being embodied in their interaction).

This hybrid of 'issues drama' and the fiction film, encouraged by the wartime context, can be seen to transmute, in the postwar period, into this revival of the 'social problem' drama. In many of these films, the crime narrative provides a generically recognisable 'structure' for the 'handling' of the issues - allowing both an elaboration of the

'problem' and its containment within familiar narrative and narrational parameters. Because they incorporate elements of crime, violence, and psychological and sexual disturbance - which tend on occasions to be marked in terms of the 'noir style' (as in the delirium sequences in THE LOST WEEKEND and THE SNAKE PIT) - it is not uncommon for certain of these films to be included within the 'film noir canon'. I will thus briefly consider some of the major 'social-problem' crime films below, emphasising in particular how the foregrounding of the 'issues drama' necessitates a careful negotiation of the kinds of disturbance which mark the 'tough thriller'.

A useful film to start with is CROSSFIRE (RKO, 1947), for it overtly combines characteristics of the 1940's 'tough' thriller - chiaroscuro sequences, flashbacks and an investigative narrative - with a 'social problem' drama (like GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT, it strives for an indictment of anti-semitism). One of the 'quality' low-budget (\$500,000) features produced by Dore Schary at RKO, CROSSFIRE was felt by contemporary reviewers to be more 'distinguished' than the standard 'tough' thriller because of the extent to which it foregrounds its 'social problem'. The locus of disturbance in this film is Montgomery (Robert Ryan), a psychopathic anti-semitic soldier who murders a Jew and then attempts to frame his war-buddy Mitchell (George Cooper) as the killer. Although Montgomery is very clearly a disturbed individual, the problem he represents is de-individualised by being located both within the context of the postwar social agenda and within the abstract field of 'hate'. The earnest police detective Finlay (Robert Young) functions not solely as an investigator - along with another soldier, Keeley (Robert Mitchum) - but he also serves as a principal spokesman for the film's 'message', as in the following speech he delivers:

"Hating is always the same, always senseless. One day it kills Irish Catholics, the next day Jews, the next day Protestants, the next day Quakers. It's hard to stop. It can end up killing men who wear striped neckties".

There is a substantially longer speech delivered by the murdered Jew, Joseph Samuels, which is worth quoting here for the way in which it highlights the 'liberal' generalisations which tend to constitute the

'message-element' of the 'social-problem' crime films (the didacticism of which contrasts sharply with the condensations and displacements which characterise contemporary 'tough' thrillers like *THE BLUE DAHLIA* and *DEAD RECKONING*). Samuels' account of the difficulty of post-war adjustment, delivered to the 'psychoneurotically'-disturbed Mitchell, runs as follows:

"I think maybe it's suddenly not having a lot of enemies to hate anymore. Maybe it's because for four years now we've been focussing our minds on . . . on one little peanut. [*Samuels holds up a peanut*]. The 'win-the-war' peanut, that was all Get it over, eat that peanut. [*Samuels eats peanut*]. All at once, no peanut. Now we start looking at each other again. We don't know what we're supposed to do. We don't know what's supposed to happen. We're too used to fightin'. But we just don't know what to fight. You can feel the tension in the air. A whole lot of fight and hate that doesn't know where to go. A guy like you maybe starts hatin' himself. One of these days maybe we'll all learn to shift gears. Maybe we'll stop hatin' and start likin' things again".

*CROSSFIRE* manifests a significant tension between, on the one hand, the generalised liberal pronouncements of Finlay and Samuels, and, on the other hand, the much less easily confronted problems suggested by the film's two cases of war-induced psychological disturbance, Montgomery and Mitchell. The didacticism in its handling of the "race-hate" issue serves to disengage the film from too detailed an examination of the problems attached to these figures, but it can be argued that they nonetheless make their mark, particularly through the highly complex flashback narration (which even includes a duplicitous flashback, ascribed to Montgomery).

*CROSSFIRE* uses certain of the 'realist' stylistic devices associated with the 'semi-documentaries' of the period (a minimal use of non-diegetic music, heightened 'environmental' sound, a non-sensationalised representation of such low-life characters as the prostitute Ginny/Gloria Grahame). Elia Kazan's *BOOMERANG!*, a Twentieth Century-Fox production released in the same year, represents a more pronounced shift away from the 'tough' thrillers of the period, being much more emphatically in the 'semi-documentary' style (and, indeed, promoting itself as based on a 'true story' - a late 1920's murder-

case). The story concerned the ways in which the press, the politicians and the legal system of a small town 'conspire together' in order to convict an innocent war-veteran John Waldron (Arthur Kennedy) for the murder of a popular and respected Catholic priest. Waldron is one of the disillusioned and 'alienated' vet-figures who recur in the postwar 'tough' thrillers. He complains that he finds it impossible to settle down to a job or a normal life, that his war service has left him "five years behind the parade". However, the film is not principally concerned with Waldron's problems, or with the more general question of postwar (mal)adjustment. It does not seek to examine or to provide any resolution of Waldron's bitterness and disjunction. Indeed, this is made subordinate to a 'drama of integrity' in which the central protagonist is State's Attorney Henry Harvey (Dana Andrews).

Harvey is similar to McNeal in *CALL NORTHSIDE 777* in that he starts out as a detached, rather cynical professional but finds himself dedicating himself wholeheartedly to the attempt to prove the innocence of the wrongly-convicted man. Widely recognised as a "completely honest man", Harvey takes a stand against the town's self-serving prejudice, refusing to back down when a smear campaign is launched against his wife, and himself rejecting the seductions of political power (he is told he can run for governor if he drops the case). Through its validation of Harvey as a man of unbending integrity, a beneficent incarnation of the law, *BOOMERANG!* is able to offset both the potential drama of the returning-vet and the implications of political chicanery. In the end, he is able to reassert the boundaries between the spheres of the home, the law, politics, and the 'free press'; which had been temporarily contravened in the town's attempt to make Waldron a scapegoat. In its conclusion, *BOOMERANG!* especially highlights its difference from the 'tough' thriller in that the priest's killer is never actually found: the mystery plot is thus strongly displaced, subsumed to the final triumph of Harvey as a whole, undivided embodiment of 'democratic law'.

*KNOCK ON ANY DOOR* (Santana Prods., 1949) represents a more problematic combination of 'social problem' drama and crime-film. As in *BOOMERANG!* there is a similar emphatic shift away from the disturbed, socially-maladjusted individual - juvenile offender Nick Romano (John

Derek), who is accused of shooting a police patrolman during an armed robbery - towards the framing of crime within a 'social' (or, more accurately in this instance, a 'sociological') perspective. The central protagonist of this film is not the youth himself - and thus it differs significantly from the other films directed by Nicholas Ray which similarly focus upon blighted juveniles, *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT* (1948) and *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE* (1955) - but is rather, as in *BOOMERANG!*, an attorney who functions as a model of integrity and commitment. Like the police lieutenant in *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*, Andrew Morton (Humphrey Bogart) establishes himself as a benevolent 'father-figure' to the disturbed youth. Like Romano, Morton had himself been a juvenile criminal, but he has been able to redeem himself as a respectable bourgeois professional.

The bulk of the film comprises Morton's impassioned defence of Romano as he delivers his introductory remarks to the jury at Romano's trial, his own previous encounters with the youth represented through flashbacks. The film emphatically shifts the emphasis from the crime itself to an examination of Morton's questions, "Who is Nick Romano? What is Nick Romano? Why is Nick Romano?". He seeks to answer these questions by highlighting the adverse social conditions which have corrupted and degraded him. Morton recounts how Nick, the product of a poor immigrant family, has been let down by the social services, by the slum environment in which he has been forced to grow up (a breeding-ground of poverty, crime and violence), by the harsh, disciplinarian regime of reform school, which sought to "degrade" rather than to "exalt", and even by Morton himself - for the lawyer had once found himself too busy to be able to defend Nick's father on a charge of criminal violence. Moreover, Romano has also suffered more than his fair share of personal disaster: his young wife Emma (Allene Roberts) - a redemptive child-woman (like both Keechie/Cathy O'Donnell in *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT* and Judy/Natalie Wood in *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*) - kills herself while pregnant after Nick returns to a life of crime. A further argument put forward by Morton is that, as with John Waldron in *BOOMERANG!*, there is a conspiracy to convict Romano for the crime: the District Attorney (George Macready) seeks a conviction in order to boost his political

chances (using the threat of deportation to coerce one of Nick's friends into testifying for the prosecution).

The strident earnestness of the film is more than a little compromised by a lack of clarity in its objectives: it tries to lay the blame upon too many shoulders for any of its indictments to lodge there securely. There is a further problem in that, under cross-examination, Romano breaks down and confesses that he actually did commit the murder. Morton then delivers a lengthy speech in which he admits that Romano is guilty, but claims that the youth himself is not to blame. He argues that the cards had been heavily stacked against him throughout his life and a sense of failure drilled into him from very early on: "Nick Romano is guilty, and so are we, and so is that precious thing called society . . . Knock on any door, and you may find Nick Romano". However, Morton's plea for mercy has no effect, as Romano is sentenced to death. And, indeed, for the spectator the film's hand-on-heart liberalism serves to provide a rather ambivalent explanation for Romano's culpability, its 'sociological' generalisations lacking force in the face of Morton's personal investment in the youth's fate (precisely as image of himself).

In the late 1940's, 'social problem' elements were 'injected' into a far wider range of thrillers: BORDER INCIDENT, for example, takes for its background the topical issue of the smuggling of Mexican immigrants into the United States; another Anthony Mann film, DESPERATE (1947) contains an explicit critique of postwar materialism; and GUN CRAZY (1950) sets up, and then displaces, a 'sociological' explanation for its hero's criminality. However, in the 1950's - inspired in part by the success of topical 'plays of significance' on American television - the 'social problem' thriller became one of the dominant forms of crime film: as is evident from such productions as Kazan's ON THE WATERFRONT (1954), THE BLACKBOARD JUNGLE (1955), THE HARDER THEY FALL (1956), TWELVE ANGRY MEN (1957), EDGE OF THE CITY (1957) and THE YOUNG SAVAGES (1961). In part, the foregrounding of the social issue became a means of overtly differentiating these films from the 'classical' studio productions of the 'old-style', supposedly 'escapist' Hollywood of the 1930's and 1940's.

(vi) THE 'OUTLAW COUPLE' FILM.

The 'outlaw couple' films considered below tend to be included within the 'film noir canon' without actually receiving much detailed attention. Instead of centring upon a lone, individualistic 'tough' hero, these films are concerned with a heterosexual couple who find themselves branded as criminals, and who are consequently forced into an 'outsider' lifestyle on the road. The precursor of these 'heterosexuality-on-the-run' thrillers was Fritz Lang's second American feature YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE, produced by Walter Wanger in 1937. Eddie Taylor (Henry Fonda), a 'three-time-loser', is wrongfully convicted for taking part in an armed-robbery. Taylor is a victim both to an intransigent society - which will not 'give him a break' - and to a legal system which, as in many of Lang's films, is revealed to establish culpability on the basis of highly equivocal circumstantial evidence (a process in which the spectator is also implicated, for - as David Bordwell has indicated - the spectator is led to assume, until quite late in the film, that Taylor actually is involved in the robbery [14]). Taylor escapes from prison and goes on-the-run with his pregnant wife, Jo (Sylvia Sydney). Ostracized and persecuted by society, the couple are forced to survive on its fringes, committing small-scale crimes in order to provide for themselves and their new-born child. The film concludes with the 'inevitable' destruction of the 'family in exile'. After leaving their baby with Jo's sister, the couple flee for the Canadian frontier. However, they are spotted by a garage owner - ironically, when Jo seeks to buy, rather than to steal, a packet of cigarettes - who alerts the police. Jo and Eddie are both killed in a police ambush, as they are on the point of crossing the border.

Nicholas Ray's THEY LIVE BY NIGHT (RKO, 1948) reworks certain aspects of the sympathetic portrayal of the 'outlaw-couple' in YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE. At the centre of the film is the relationship between two adolescents, Bowie (Farley Granger) and Keechie (Cathy O'Donnell) who - as the film's introductory title puts it - "were never properly introduced to the world we live in". The misguided, naive Bowie becomes involved in a prison-break with two brutal criminals, Chickamaw (Howard

Da Silva) and T-Dub (Jay C. Flippen), and after their escape he is forced to take up their life of violent robbery. However, Bowie meets, falls in love with, and marries Keechie, whose love for him - like that of Emma for Nick in Ray's *KNOCK ON ANY DOOR* - holds the promise of Bowie's ultimate redemption. Their romance, however, is doomed by their alienation from society - and because Bowie finds himself unable to resist the influence of Chickamaw and T-Dub. Like Jo in *YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE*, Keechie becomes pregnant - but Bowie is killed in a police ambush before the child is born. As with the Emma-Nick story in *KNOCK ON ANY DOOR*, there is some ambivalence concerning the extent to which Bowie's love for Keechie can override the lure of his violent lifestyle.

However, the film concludes with a validation of their relationship as Keechie discovers a letter Bowie wrote shortly before his death, in which he unequivocally expresses his love for her. As in such romantic melodramas as *CAMILLE* (1936) and *LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN* (1948), death serves as a means of elevating or 'transcendentalising' the romance: the 'love-that-could-have-been' - that frustrated by reality - can maintain a far greater charge because of its impossibility (which guarantees that its tantalising promise of a dyadic 'fusion of souls' remains unbesmirched by mundanity and disillusion). *YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE* has a similar 'transcendental' ending - the film implies that Eddie Taylor has finally found freedom in death, when the non-diegetic voice of Father Dolan (William Gargan) - who Eddie accidentally killed during his prison-break - proclaims "You're free, Eddie, the gates are open . . .".

Two subsequent thrillers - Douglas Sirk's *SHOCKPROOF* (Col., 1948), and Joseph H. Lewis' *GUN CRAZY* (King Bros., 1950) - are notable for the very different uses to which they put the 'outlaw couple' narrative. *SHOCKPROOF* is a particularly striking example of the multiply-hybrid 1940's thriller, and as such - and also because it has received relatively little attention (being absent, for example, from the book by Silver and Ward) - it is worth examining this film in some detail. Griff Marat (Cornell Wilde) starts out as a figure of authority and integrity - like the heroes of *BOOMERANG!* and *KNOCK ON ANY DOOR* - but he becomes a 'criminal adventurer' when he risks all on the gamble of a transgressive love affair. There is, however, a further complication, for the

centrality of Griff, as hero/protagonist, competes with the major role played by the woman, Jenny Marsh (Patricia Knight), which shifts the film on occasions into the realm of the 'women's picture' melodrama - a genre in which Sirk worked extensively in the 1950's.

Whereas in the earlier 'outlaw couple' films, the woman is markedly subordinate to the hero - being characterised largely by her devotion to him - Jenny has a much more prominent and ambivalent place in the narrative of *SHOCKPROOF*, being both 'in herself' and 'for Griff' the site of dangerously conflicting desires. She is a woman criminal - but emphatically not the 'criminal woman' of the 'tough' thrillers - who is released after five years in prison and entrusted to the care of Griff, an honest but officious parole officer. Griff initially establishes himself in an 'authoritarian' position in regard to Jenny - he gives her a 'hardline' statement of the rules of her parole. However, his personal interest in her gradually comes to displace his professionalism, and like the lapsed heroes of the 'rogue cop' thrillers, Griff comes to abuse his position of authority. For example, as a parole officer he is able to bar Jenny from seeing her shady ex-lover - and hence his own rival - Harry Wesson (John Baragrey).

Jenny becomes the site of conflict between the oppositional forces of Griff and Wesson, the 'lawman' and the 'lawbreaker'. Each seeks to lay claim to her identity (and even to her appearance, for she dyes her hair differently in order to 'construct herself' for the approval of men). Jenny herself is posited as having little control over what happens to her, nor over who she 'really' is. She is torn between, on the one hand, Griff's attempt to 'reconstruct' her character (to constitute her as 'good wife'), and, on the other hand, Wesson's attempt to 'debase' her, by using her as a means to thwart and *camouflage* Griff. Jenny oscillates between the two potentialities, her own 'subjectivity' constrained and in perpetual confusion. Her own 'identity' is marked in terms of lack: she lacks 'class' and education, lacks self-determination, and comes to lack control over her very appearance [15].

*SHOCKPROOF* is, then, a complexly 'narrated' film, in which a 'female' melodrama (the story of a 'transgressive' woman) competes with a 'masculine' melodrama (the story of a 'transgressive' man). The conflict between the two modes becomes especially pronounced when Griff

takes Jenny home to meet his (blind) mother. Griff's motives for this action are ambivalent. He uses a professional rationale - his stated aim being to show her the kind of stable home-life she has never experienced (her own mother was an alcoholic, her father a criminal, her family excessively large and poor). But this serves to operate as a cover for more 'personal' sexual/romantic motives for getting Jenny into his home: to get her to agree to go there in the first place, he allows her to believe he is already married (and as thus posing no 'sexual threat'). For Griff, bringing Jenny into the home represents a dangerous confusion between the spheres of home and work (and, moreover, the latter incorporates 'criminality'). This confusion of the 'personal' and the 'professional' is intensified when he then obtains work for Jenny within the home (as his mother's helper). This attempt to situate Jenny (the 'woman criminal') within the home serves to destabilise the home. It leads directly to Wesson's visit to the house - which in turn forces Griff to use personal violence in order to eject him from it, to preserve the 'sanctity' of the home. Jenny's presence within the home, then, serves to mobilise the intrusion of threatening 'outside' elements.

However, the drama is not simply oriented around Griff's dilemma. The dense, cluttered mise-en-scène of the home is akin to that developed by Sirk in such later Universal melodramas as ALL I DESIRE (1953), ALL THAT HEAVEN ALLOWS (1955), and IMITATION OF LIFE (1958), and it suggests that, for Jenny, the home represents another prison. She becomes trapped within it, and within the imprisoning demands of Griff's desire for her as 'good wife'. Whereas the spectator is fully aware that Jenny serves as a 'disruptive' influence within the home, Griff blinds himself to this, persistently refusing to see that she is not as he desires her to be. When he clasps her hand on a family outing to the cinema, he is like a teenage boy on a first date ('respectful', 'restrained'), and - as at other such moments when he signals his romantic interest - the film privileges Jenny in close-up, rather than Griff. Although the trajectory of the plot centres Griff as the principal, determinate 'actant' - and is structured around the consequences of his lapse - the film deliberately inscribes a distance from Griff at such pivotal moments, stressing Jenny's anxiety, helplessness and confusion at the expense of

his 'fantasy' (thus, serving to highlight his desires as naively idealistic and foolishly romantic).

The home - Griff's home - presents no solution to Jenny's problems, and Griff's desire for Jenny to be in the home leads to an explicit breakdown of the boundaries between the personal and the professional, home and work, the domestic and the criminal. Griff asks her to marry him - such a marriage between a parole officer and a parolee representing a direct violation of the 'rules of procedure' for both. Griff's sincerely-stated, highly romantic idealisation of the stability of "friends, home, children" has no chance of coming to fruition in this 'illicit' relationship. And, indeed, his 'transgressive' desire for the 'woman criminal' leads to his own explicit involvement in the 'criminal', for Wesson goads Jenny into agreeing to the marriage (hoping subsequently to use this against Griff), and he is later shot by Jenny when he seeks to blackmail Griff through her. Griff 'casts his lot' with Jenny, abandoning the responsibilities and security of both work and home and taking to the road: they become an 'outlaw couple'.

It is significant that the shooting of Wesson is not represented 'directly' by the film, but is instead presented through Jenny's flashback-narrative, told to Griff as they embark on their 'adventurous' escape. Griff believes her implicitly and immediately, but the very fact that her account of the 'accidental' shooting is presented in the form of a 'subjectivised' flashback problematises the veracity of her story. Griff perceives no such ambivalence, because what Jenny tells him is exactly what he wants to believe actually took place. Similarly, Griff's immediate decision to run off with her, rather than facing up his responsibilities as a 'man of law', suggests the extent to which he wilfully seizes the opportunity to consolidate his romantic idealisation of Jenny at the expense of his place under the law.

Douglas Sirk has remarked that one of the factors which attracted him to Samuel Fuller's original script - entitled "The Lovers" - was its theme of "Love that cannot be fulfilled. Love in extreme circumstances, love socially conditioned . . . and impossible" [16]. Such amour fou - which breaks through the boundaries of law and responsibility - represents love in terms of transgression, and is based on a powerful

fantasy of intense, and intensely exclusionary love woman which leads 'inevitably' towards degradation and death (the ultimate negation of 'difference'). For the 'outlaw couples' of YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE and THEY LIVE BY NIGHT, 'being together' comes to transcend all else, and the establishment of the couple outside the law - especially marked in YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE by the fact that Eddie and Jo call their child "Baby", refusing the social regime of named identity - represents an attempt to 'deny' the divisions and responsibilities of the Symbolic order (with the fusion of the man and the woman representing a 'regression' to the Imaginary). In SHOCKPROOF, however, the 'outlaw couple' narrative is highly compacted, and the 'transgressive' love-affair is markedly voided of the intensity integral to the amour fou. The film 'distantiates' the love-story, so that it does not become 'emotionally' engaging [17] - it becomes, then, the inverse of the highly 'committed' representation of love-as-transcendence found in such Frank Borzage films as SEVENTH HEAVEN (1927), A FARWELL TO ARMS (1932) and THE MORTAL STORM (1940). In Sirk's film, the spectator is continually reminded of the disjunction between Griff's idealised view of Jenny and the 'reality' (a 'reality' of conflicting, multiply divisive relations between and within the two individuals). Griff's sacrifice-for-love emerges as a problematic obsession rather than a validated transgression.

The very compression of the 'love-on-the-run' narrative makes its ironies more explicit. In the latter stages of the film, there is a dramatic shift in visual style and setting, away from the work and home spaces which had dominated earlier, to location-shot scenes set in transitional spaces - cars, a bus, a railway carriage. As a result, the film highlights the ramifications of Griff's "fall" at the expense of any benefits he gains from being with Jenny (a marked contrast, then, to the representation of love in Lang's and Ray's 'outlaw couple' films). Whereas SHOCKPROOF starts with Jenny's attempt to change her appearance and her identity - from 'bad girl' to 'good girl' - Griff's change moves in the opposite direction. Their desires can thus be seen to be opposed, the trajectories of their fantasies pulling away from each other: they make a highly unstable couple. Griff's desire for degradation is made particularly explicit when he seeks to pawn his watch, scratching out an inscription on the back, which reads "To Griff Marat. Always Straight. Always Right". By

erasing his name, he is trying to negate his past identity under the Law. The elision of 'licit' identity is further highlighted in the newspaper coverage of their adventure, for Griff and Jenny are not referred to in terms of their names, but as "The Lovers". Furthermore, while in hiding, Griff has constantly to change his name in order to avoid detection, never able to rest in any one assumed identity for long. Thus, the romantic/criminal adventure Griff embarks on with Jenny has similarities to the self-abnegating 'masochistic' desire which characterises Jeff in *OUT OF THE PAST* and Swede in *THE KILLERS* - although there is a significant reversal of the fantasy in *SHOCKPROOF*, in that the representation of Jenny italicizes from the start her unsuitability as a vehicle for Griff's intensive idealisation.

The runaway lovers end up in the decidedly lower-class milieu of an oil-field, where Griff gets a manual job. Rather than bringing Jenny up to his social level, as he first intended, he has now been reduced to her 'class' - to a life of poverty, squalor, misery. However, this low-life existence exerts a strain upon the relationship, and when they see that a newspaper bought by the couple in the neighbouring shack bears a re-run of their story, Griff and Jenny, fearing imminent detection, decide to turn themselves in to the police. Ironically, the spectator sees - but the lovers do not - that the neighbours do not even recognise Griff and Jenny from their newspaper pictures. Fuller's original script had initially concluded with a shoot-out between Griff and the police, the ex-lawman meeting death at the hands of other officers of the law. Sirk felt this ending to be a fitting conclusion to the story of the Griff's lapse, and he also liked the suggestion in the script that this was not solely a pessimistic finale, for "something had started blooming in that goddam cop's soul" [18]. However, the film's producer, Helen Deutsch insisted upon a more upbeat, blatantly more 'make-believe' ending. The lovers are freed from blame and punishment - Harry Wesson turns out not to have died, and he furthermore clears Jenny by confirming that the shooting was an accident. It is a deus-ex-machina ending whereby the problems are not so much resolved as escaped-from. However, the very conflict between the intensity of the drama and the cosiness and quickness of the concluding scene makes the ending problematic, for it seems explicitly 'tacked-on' [19].

GUN CRAZY, originally released as DEADLY IS THE FEMALE, is much more extreme than its predecessors, in that the violent sexual passion of the lovers is inherently transgressive. Under the influence of Annie Laurie Starr (Peggy Cummins), the gun-obsessed young misfit Bart Tare (John Dall) embarks a flamboyant criminal career. The film begins with a quasi-sociological account of Bart's deviance, of the type common in such late-1940's 'social-problem' films as KNOCK ON ANY DOOR. Bart throws a brick through a window to steal a pistol, and is caught in the act by a police patrolman. In the courtroom, witnesses testify to the intensity of Bart's obsession with guns, a series of flashbacks providing the means by which Bart's deviance can be contextualised as a problem for social law. However, even at the beginning of the film there is an explicit tension between the ordering process represented by the 'social-problem' case-study and the extremity of Bart's obsession, which resists easy contextualisation within the 'sociological' framing of his disrupted home-life (which, compared to KNOCK ON ANY DOOR is remarkably displaced anyway - with the elision of any information concerning Bart's lost parents). For example, several witnesses highlight that it is not the killing-power of guns which attracts Bart but "something else": his teacher Miss Wynn (Virginia Farmer) feels "It was as if the gun was something the boy just had to have", like toys or a baseball bat. The court finds no satisfactory 'explanation' for Bart's 'disturbance' - which the judge refers to as an "obsessional mania" for guns - but there is an implicit 'psychoanalytic' explanation. His sister Ruby (Anabel Shaw), who 'stands in' for Bart's lost parents, remarks that "Bart's needed a man about the house". The desire for the gun becomes a means, then, of trying to find a replacement for this lost paternal authority, as an attempt to master the 'paternal signifier' and thence to give shape to his identity as a man (the teenage Bart says, that he 'feels like somebody' when he has a gun in his hands). The judge sends Bart to reform school - because, he says, he has to protect the community as well as Bart himself.

When he returns home, as a young adult, Bart is emphatically isolated from the 'normal' life of the community: Ruby is now married and has two children of her own, and his childhood friends Dave (Nedrick Young) and Clyde (Harry Lewis) now have respectable jobs as,

respectively, a newspaper reporter and sheriff. Having no clear ideas about his future, Bart can only think of establishing his life in relation to guns (this being precisely what he has in the place of the 'normal' desire for a home or job). Visiting a carnival with Dave and Clyde, Bart is immediately fascinated by the shooting skills of Annie Laurie, the sharpshooter. The meeting with the 'phallic' woman serves to shape the course of Bart's future. The 'woman-with-the-gun' [20] represents a disturbance of the conventional/'normal' location of the weapon/power in the hands of the male: she is precisely a woman who has usurped the 'male right'. Bart's attraction to Laurie seems motivated by his desire to find someone who can incarnate the paternal position of power and authority and thus allow him to find his 'place'. During their first meeting, the film highlights the hyper-charged looks exchanged between Bart and Laurie as they size each other up. Bart accepts Laurie's challenge for a public shooting-match - a contest which becomes a competitive testing of each other's 'potency'. Laurie represents a disturbance of this familiar ritual of male testing [21], asserting herself 'as a man'. At the climax of the contest, Laurie and Bart take turns in 'shooting at' each other, and he narrowly defeats her (thus asserting himself as a worthy object of her admiration). The combination of desire and violence lends a perverse charge to the shooting contest - and to the relationship between the couple throughout the film.

Whereas *YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE* and *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT* romanticizes the heterosexual relationship, and *SHOCKPROOF* ironicises the possibility of romance, in *GUN CRAZY*, the overwhelming attraction between the lovers is forcefully carnal. Packy (Berry Kroeger), owner of the sideshow, says that she and Bart keep looking at each "like a couple of wild animals". However, Bart is markedly naive, having no experience of women and immediately subjecting Laurie to an intense over-valuation. Laurie, in contrast to Jenny Marsh, knowingly encourages the man to transgress against the law. Bart idealistically proposes to her when he wins her from Packy (with the camera lingering on her ambivalent, 'knowing' expression). The spectator knows, but Bart does not, that Laurie has already killed a man in St. Louis, that she is a 'criminal woman'. The scene where Bart ousts Packy - the older man who lays claim to Laurie and who knows of her 'transgressive' history - represents a compressed

scenario of 'Oedipal revolt'. Packy makes a pass at Annie Laurie, but she thwarts and scorns him, implying that he is not 'potent' enough to satisfy her any longer. Bart interrupts them, and he stops Packy in his tracks by shooting at and shattering his mirror-reflection (the fact that he only destroys the reflection, rather than Packy himself, pointing up Bart's inability to kill). Encouraged by Laurie to overthrow the 'paternal' figure through violence, Bart 'pacts' himself to the desires of the 'transgressive' woman, the woman who is outside the law.

Following a whirlwind honeymoon, the couple find themselves out of both money and luck. Laurie directly encourages Bart to take to crime, using the his naive devotion to her to get what she wants. She scorns Bart's weakness and innocence, just as she had earlier mocked Packy, and then threatens to leave him if he does submit to her plans. Faced with this threat, Bart rushes over and kisses her passionately - the kiss sealing the 'contract' between them, for it signifies his submission to her 'illicit' desire, and to her 'perverse' authority (although it must be stressed that Bart is clearly presented with the power of 'choice' here - he is not simply 'overwhelmed' by her). It is this moment that marks the beginning of Bart's criminal career. Their violent and exhilarating series of armed bank-robberies extends the adventurous 'transgressiveness' of their relationship, and gives expression to the intensity of their 'excessive' passion. Unlike the other "outlaw couple" movies, GUN CRAZY sets the woman as the dominant partner - and this serves as the 'rationale' for the comparative extremity of the love-on-the-run adventure. And whereas Griff Marat and Jenny Marsh are 'forced' to change their identity while on the run, Bart and Laurie wilfully and vicariously embrace multiple identities - which allows them to escape past police dragnets, but which also highlights their defiance of the regime of identity-under-the-Law. of fixity.

Laurie clearly derives an 'erotic' charge from danger, but Bart is motivated in large part by fear: fear that Laurie may leave him, and fear that he may have to use his gun to kill. During the second robbery, he has to restrain Laurie from shooting a bank guard. She bribes Bart with the promise of the exclusiveness of their love - "I love you more than anything in this world", she promises him - but it is clear that the attraction of violence holds as much if not more force for her.

Totally under the sway of Laurie's desire, Bart actually expresses the fear that he is losing his own identity. As they escape from one of their hold-ups, Laurie urges Bart to shoot at the police car which pursues them - but instead of killing, as she wanted, he disables their car by shooting-out a tyre. Following a montage sequence of newspaper headlines proclaiming the fame/notoriety of the outlaw-couple - and which for the first time makes public their names - there is a particularly significant scene which highlights Bart's awareness of the problems he is facing.

Bart is dressed in a stolen naval-officer's uniform, driving with Laurie beside him. He says he feels uncomfortable in uniform, although he had once served in the army. His life with Laurie has 'corrupted' him in terms of his 'worthiness' to wear the uniform of male service. He tells Laurie, in his characteristic stuttering manner, "Everything's going so fast. It's . . . it's all in such high gear. It sometimes . . . it . . . doesn't . . . feel like me. Does that make sense? . . . It's as if none of it really happened. As if nothing were real anymore". To Bart's expression of confusion, his denial of self-responsibility, Laurie replies: "Next time you wake up, Bart, look over at me lying there beside you. I'm yours. And I'm real". To which Bart replies: "Yes, but you're the only thing that is, Laurie. The rest is a nightmare". This dialogue-exchange indicates the extent to which Bart had ceded the determination of his identity to Laurie - she is now his sole 'touchstone'. As his difficulty with the uniform suggests, Bart has lost his place under the Law (for his life is now defined by the road, and by the gun he wields under Laurie's instructions). Bart may be able to articulate his dissatisfaction (albeit uneasily), but he finds himself unable to take matters any further than this. He sees the problems involved in his 'pact' with Laurie - which alienates him from any possibility of 'normal' social life - but he dares not extricate himself from it, for fear of losing her.

In SHOCKPROOF, Griff Marat overtly chooses to transgress against the Law in order to realise his desire for an exclusive relationship with the 'illicit' woman. Bart, however, is posited as never having control over his destiny once he makes the 'pact' with Laurie. Indeed, from the start Bart manifests an 'unconscious' resistance to 'taking

control' - as is signified by the 'unfathomable' character of his 'bonding' to the gun. Laurie's power derives from her ability to represent, for Bart, a solution to the problems of identity and sexual difference, for she embodies not merely a 'masculine' power (through the gun) but she can also manipulate her 'femininity', by playing upon Bart's emotions. However, Bart comes to realise that this 'hermaphroditism' is not only unstable but is, indeed, 'monstrous', representing no possibility of 'salvation', only destruction. Bart agrees reluctantly to one more robbery, in order to secure enough money to 'retire' (Laurie bribes Bart with the promise that "We'll get rich. Then we'll get out of the country. We'll be together, always together"). After thus 'extending his contract', Laurie takes even firmer control, and makes their final heist - the robbery of a meatpacking plant - a 'masterly', painstakingly-planned send-off to their criminal career. It is also during this robbery that Laurie finally shoots and kills, to Bart's horror. Despite this, he still finds himself unable to separate from the woman who holds such a strange and powerful attraction for him. And Laurie also, cannot see her scheme through to its planned conclusion - their temporary separation.

Their inability to part from each other leads directly to their downfall. Both realise that their public notoriety as a couple poses a major threat to their continuing together, but they decide to remain with each other regardless of this danger. And in GUN CRAZY's overtly delirious conclusion, even death cannot separate them - for it marks the apotheosis of their amour fou. In hiding in California, Laurie tries to explain why she had to kill during the robbery, but gets flustered because she can find no 'logic' in her destructive desire. She then considers why she killed the man in St Louis, when she was with Packy, but all she can find to say is "I get so scared I can't think. I just kill". Bart, rather than condemning or deserting her, strengthens their pact, claiming "We go together like guns and ammunition". On the night before their planned escape to Mexico, they go to a fair. In contrast to the carnival at which they first met, the fair gives Bart and Laurie the chance to act like a 'normal' young couple. Partaking of this 'lost' possibility of 'normality', Bart and Laurie dance together - but the song they dance to, "I'm Mad About You", only serves to underline and to

restate the 'perversity' of their attraction. Both their 'normal' night-out together and the prospect of settling-down are shattered when they realise that the police are on their trail (after the stolen money is discovered in their hotel-room).

After an escape which leaves them shabby, desperate and impoverished, Bart takes her back to his home-town - because they have nowhere else to go. They hide out in Ruby's house, but their presence disrupts the stability of the home. There is a pronounced antagonism between Ruby and Laurie, the two women in Bart's life - for the latter serves as the antithesis of the 'domestic' woman - housewife/mother - that Ruby is (and indeed, this sequence markedly qualifies the couple's earlier fantasy of settling-down). When Bart's friends, Dave and Clyde, discover that he and Laurie are hiding there, they seek to convince him to surrender, but Bart decides once more to escape with Laurie. Rejecting her ruthless suggestion about taking Ruby's baby along as a hostage - a scheme which restates Laurie's perversity as a 'mother' - the couple make for the mountains. Hounded by the police and their dogs, the couple are directly placed as the "wild animals" Packy had termed them. Their excessive, 'animalistic' desire cannot be incorporated within society - it can only be driven out and destroyed.

Facing the consequences of their failed attempt to set themselves apart from and in opposition to 'normal' society, Bart indulges in a brief, nostalgic reminiscence of his 'innocent' boyhood adventures with guns (of the time before 'manhood', before Laurie). Bart and Laurie's escape has no direction - for their trek into the mountains represents both a journey back into Bart's lost past, and a journey into a 'pre-civilised' wilderness (into which the forces of social law drive them). Trapped in a mist-shrouded swamp - which, like the swamps in King Vidor's films HALLELUJAH! (1929) and RUBY GENTRY (1952) and Vincente Minelli's HOME FROM THE HILL (1959), serves as a setting in which repressed, 'primal' desires are contained - Bart and Laurie find themselves unable to see their pursuers. When the Sheriff walks towards them, asking Bart to give himself up, Laurie's 'animalistic' desire to kill is reawakened by her fear - and she levels her gun at Bart's friend. Bart shoots her to save the Sheriff's life, and is subsequently gunned down himself by the police. Dave and Clyde gather round the dead

lovers, but say nothing, and the camera tracks back, upwards. Bart and Annie are 'pacted' unto death, and when Bart shoots Laurie - the only time he can ever bring himself to kill - it serves to maintain the barriers separating the world he and Laurie had created - a world of 'illicit', anti-social desire - and the world of 'normal' social life. For Dave and Clyde this dramatic spectacle of amour fou is incomprehensible - all they can do is stand and look and then, like the camera, withdraw.

One can distinguish between the 'outlaw couple' thrillers, then, on the basis of the different ways in which the 'impossible love' is articulated in relation to the social order. In *YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE, THEY LIVE BY NIGHT* (as in Anthony Mann's 'outlaw couple' thriller *DESPERATE*, 1947), the love is impossible because 'society' is 'unjust', and the couple seeks to establish a 'family-in-exile'. In *SHOCKPROOF* and *GUN CRAZY*, however, the love is in itself 'beyond the law', and beyond contextualising within the terms of any familial ordering (the very 'falseness' of *SHOCKPROOF*'s ending highlighting this). The couples of *SHOCKPROOF* and *GUN CRAZY* do not have, or seek to have children. Whereas *YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE* and *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT* represent an investment in a 'tragically' blighted heterosexual relationship, in *SHOCKPROOF* and *GUN CRAZY*, love leads inherently to 'degradation' and to a violent transgression of the 'licit' boundaries of desire. Whereas in *SHOCKPROOF*, this 'all-consuming', destructive passion is represented ironically, *GUN CRAZY* gives violent and vicarious expression to desires which are manifestly and inherently 'criminal'.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

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8. Benjamin Hampton: A History of the American Film Industry, Dover Publications, New York (1970) [*orig. 1931*]; pp. 252-280
9. Huettig, op. cit.; p. 53
10. Janet Staiger; Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, op. cit.; p. 315
11. Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, op. cit.; p. xiv ("Preface")
12. *ibid.* p. 367
13. *ibid.* p. 4 ff.
14. *ibid.* p. 4
15. *ibid.* p. 12 ff.
16. *ibid.* p. 18

17. (i) *ibid.* pp. 16-17; and  
(ii) Ellis, *op. cit.*; p. 48
18. Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, *op. cit.*; p. 19
19. As John Ellis (*op. cit.*; p. 83) has noted,  
*the regime of classical narration developed in Hollywood tended towards an extremely explicit regime of construction of information for the cinematic spectator, where everything was directed towards intelligibility.*
20. *ibid.*
21. David Bordwell: "Happily Ever After, Part Two",  
*"The Velvet Light Trap"* no. 19 (1982); pp. 2-5;
22. David Bordwell; Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, *op. cit.*; p. 24 ff.

CHAPTER TWO: GENRE AND NARRATIVE

23. Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery: Film History: Theory and Practice,  
Random House, New York (1985); p. 83
24. Steve Neale: Genre, BFI, London (1980); pp. 52-53
25. Leo C. Rosten: Hollywood: The Movie Colony, The Movie Makers,  
Arno Press, New York (1976) [originally published 1950]; p. 28
26. (i) Huettig, op. cit.; p. 114  
(ii) Ellis, op. cit.; p. 37
27. Ellis, op. cit; p. 26
28. A process through which the spectator is offered a series of shifting positions in relation to meaning, but which is also crucially 'held-in-place' through complex sets of intermeshing 'rules' which regulate the play of signification. The boundaries - and knowledge of the boundaries - are a crucial pre-requisite for the 'play' of fiction.
29. Stephen Heath describes the term 'novelistic' to describe the ideological work of literary/film narrative and he sees it as concerned specifically with *"the definition of forms of individual meaning within the limits of existing social representations and their determining social relations, the provision and maintenance of fictions of the individual"*. [Heath: Questions of Cinema, Macmillan, London (1981); p. 125]  
As Christian Metz has considered, the cinema represents an efficient vehicle for such a project because it is particularly suited to the activity of 'wish-fulfilment' - *"with its authentic images and sounds, the novelistic film helps nourish the subject's phantasy flux and irrigates the figurations of the wish; it is not to be doubted that the classical cinema is among other things a practical means of affective fulfilment"*. [Metz: "The Fiction Film and Its Spectator: A Metapsychological Study", New Literary History vol. 8 no. 1 (Autumn, 1976); p. 80]
30. For a discussion of the complex and multiple forms of cinematic identification, see John Ellis, op. cit.; pp. 41-45
31. Stephen Heath, op. cit.; p. 121
32. For a consideration of the 'perceptual status' of the narrative film, see Metz's paper "The Fiction Film and Its Spectator", op. cit.; p. 87 ff.
33. For further consideration of 'histoire' and 'discours' see:  
(i) Christian Metz: "History/Discourse: A Note On Two Voyeurisms", in Psychoanalysis and Cinema, Macmillan, London (1982); p. 91; and

- (ii) Geoffrey Nowell-Smith: "A Note on Histoire/Discourse",  
in John Caughie (ed.) Theories of Authorship,  
RKP/BFI, London (1981); p. 234
34. Mary Ann Doane: The Dialogical Text: Filmic Irony and the Spectator,  
PhD thesis, University of Iowa (1979) [Ann Arbor Microfilms]; p. 83
35. John Caughie: Theories of Authorship, op. cit.; pp. 202-203
36. Doane, op. cit.; p. 1
37. Ellis, op. cit.; p. 87
38. For a consideration of the play between equilibrium and disequilibrium in the  
narrative process, see Stephen Heath: "Film and System, Terms of Analysis, Part 1",  
"Screen", vol. 16 no. 1 (Spring 1975); pp. 48-49
39. See, for example, Gill Davies: "Teaching Through Narrative",  
"Screen Education" no. 29 (Winter 1978-1979); p. 62
40. Steve Neale and Frank Krutnik: Popular Film and Television Comedy,  
Routledge, London (forthcoming 1990).  
The consideration of comedy in relation to transgression and realignment is a  
prominent issue through this book.
41. Heath: Questions of Cinema, op. cit.; p. 125
42. *ibid.*
43. *ibid.*; pp. 127-128 and p. 157
44. Robert J. Stoller: Perversions: the Erotic Form of Hatred,  
Harvester Press, Hassocks (1976); p. 7
45. Ellis, op. cit.; p. 68
46. Neale: Genre, op. cit.; pp. 54-55
47. Neale: Genre, op. cit.
48. Gomery and Allen, op. cit.; p. 84
49. Neale, op. cit.; p. 56
50. *ibid.*; p. 63
51. Handel, op. cit.; p. 45
52. Neale, op. cit.; pp. 22-23
53. *ibid.*; pp. 20-22
54. *ibid.*; pp. 21-22
55. *ibid.*; p. 31
56. *ibid.*; pp. 36-37
57. *ibid.*; p. 51
58. Christian Metz: "The Imaginary Signifier,

"Screen" vol. 16 no 2 (Summer, 1975); p. 18

59. Neale, op. cit.; p. 19
  60. ibid.; p.56
  61. ibid.; pp. 49-50
  62. *Genres may be defined as patterns/forms/styles/structures which transcend individual films, and which supervise both their construction by the film maker, and their reading by an audience.*
- Tom Ryall; "Teaching Through Genre", "Screen Education" no 17 (Winter 1975-6 ); p. 28  
[quoted in Steve Neale; Genre, op. cit.; p. 71]
63. Janet Staiger, in Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, op. cit.; p. 111
  64. Hortense Powdermaker; Hollywood the Dream Factory,  
Little, Brown and Co., New York (1950); p. 40
  65. Frank Krutnik; "The Comedy of the Sexes",  
in Neale and Krutnik, op. cit.; Chapter Seven
  66. The case of Preston Sturges' madcap romantic farce THE PALM BEACH STORY (1942) suggests particular ways in which the 'frivolity' of the "screwball" films was rendered problematic during the early war years. The reviewers of the Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP) - the Hollywood branch of the Government's Office of War Information - singled this film out for especially criticism. Dorothy B. Jones, head of the BMP's reviewing section, described it as *"a fine example of what should not be made in the way of escape pictures"*. And reviewer Marjorie Thorson elaborated upon the reasons why the film was considered so 'objectionable'; *"We are shown only unbridled extravagance, fantastic luxury, childish irresponsibility and silly antics on the part of those who should, by virtue of wealth and position, be economic leaders of a nation at war . . . Do we want Europeans and Latin Americans to believe this is typical of American domestic ideals?"*. There were particular objections to the wanton *destruction of a railway carriage by the riotous "Ale and Quail Club"*, the selfishly hedonistic use to which the millionaire, John D. Hackensacker III (Rudy Vallee) puts his yacht, and the number of marriages Hackensacker's spoiled sister has to her credit (initially eight, cut to four by the PCA).
- [Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black; Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies, I.B. Taurus, London (1990); pp. 91-92

CHAPTER THREE: GENRE AND THE PROBLEM OF FILM NOIR

67. Nino Frank: "Un Nouveau Genre 'Policier': L'aventure Criminelle",  
"L'Ecran Français" no 61 (1946)
68. These other critics include:
- (i) Jean Pierre Chartier: "Les Americains Aussi Font des Films noirs",  
"Revue du Cinema" no. 2 (Nov, 1946)
- (ii) Henri Francois Rey: "Demonstration par L'absurde: les films noirs",  
"L'Ecran Français" no. 157 (June 1948)
- (iii) Pierre Kast: "Remarques sue le problème du sujet",  
"La Nouvelle critique" no 5 (April 1949)
69. Raymonde Borde and Etienne Chaumeton; Panorama du Film Noir Américain (1941-1953)  
 Editions du Minuit, Paris (1955)
70. It is notable, however, that although Anglo-American film-criticism 'discovered' film noir in the late 1960's, it was not until comparatively recently that the subject received a full book-length study in English (and there have been several in the 1980's). Borde and Chaumeton's book has remained untranslated into English.
71. Spencer Selby; Dark City: The Film Noir, McFarland, Jefferson NC (1984); p. 3
72. William Straw; Problems in the Historiography of Cinema: the Case Film Noir, unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, Canada (1980); p. 87
73. David Bordwell, in Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, op. cit.; p. 75
74. (i) Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg; Hollywood in the Forties,  
 Tantivy Press, London (1968); p. 19
- (ii) Paul Kerr: "Out of What Past? The 'B' Film Noir",  
"Screen Education" nos. 32-33 (Autumn/Winter 1979-80); p. 45
75. (i) Raymond Durnat: "Paint It Black", "Cinema" (UK) no. 6-7 (1970); p. 10-11
- (ii) Paul Schrader: "Notes on Film Noir",  
"Film Comment" vol. 8 no. 1 (Spring 1972); p. 8
76. (i) Janey Place: "Women in Film Noir", in  
Women in Film Noir (ed. E. Ann Kaplan), BFI, London (1978); p. 37
- (ii) Robert Porfirio: "No Way Out: Existential Motifs in the Film Noir",  
"Sight and Sound" vol. 45 no. 4, (Autumn, 1976); pp. 212-213
77. Jon Tuska; Dark Cinema Greenwood Press, Westport (1984); p. xv
78. Foster Hirsch; The Dark Side of the Screen: Film Noir,  
 Tantivy Press, London (1981); p. 72

79. *ibid.*; p. 10
80. Kerr, *op. cit.*; p. 8
81. Edgardo Cozarinsky: "American Film noir", in  
Cinema: A Critical Dictionary: Volume One (ed. Richard Roud),  
Secker and Warburg, London (1980); p. 58
82. (i) Paul Schrader, *op. cit.*;  
(ii) Janey Place, *op. cit.*
83. Hirsch, *op. cit.*; p. 86
84. *ibid.*
85. J.A. Place and L.S. Peterson: "Some Visual Motifs of Film noir",  
"Film Comment" vol. 10 no. 1 (January-February 1974)  
[also in Bill Nichols (ed.): Movies and Methods, University of California Press,  
Berkeley (1976); pp. 325-338]
86. Schrader, *op. cit.*; pp. 10-11
87. Selby, *op. cit.*; p. 1
88. Schrader, *op. cit.*; p. 8
89. *cf.* Higham and Greenberg, *op. cit.*; p. 19
90. Schrader, *op. cit.*; p. 11

## SECTION TWO

CHAPTER FOUR: GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM AND FILM NOIR

1. Barry Salt: "From Caligari to Who?",  
    "Sight and Sound" vol. 48 no. 2 (Spring 1979); p. 119
2. Steve Neale: "Art Cinema As Institution", "Screen" vol. 22 no. 1 (1981); pp. 33-39;
3. Salt, op. cit.; p. 121
4. *ibid.*; p. 120
5. (i) David Bordwell, in Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, op. cit.; p. 73  
    (ii) Barry Salt, op. cit.; p. 120
6. Bordwell, in Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, op. cit.; p.72
7. *ibid.*; p. 73
8. *ibid.*
9. *ibid.*
10. *cf.* the still on p. 184 of Lotte Eisner's Fritz Lang, Secker and Warburg, London (1976)
11. *ibid.*; p. 185
12. Paul Kerr: "Out Of What Past?", op. cit.; p. 54
13. "STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR", "Monthly Film Bulletin", no. 83 (1940); p. 174  
    The review describes the film as containing "*a few successful moments in the CALIGARI manner*".
14. "Variety" vol. 139 no. 13 (September 4, 1940); p. 7
15. Richard Combs: "STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR",  
    "Monthly Film Bulletin", vol. 48 no. S7 (August 1981); p. 166
16. James Agee, Agee On Film, Peter Owen, London (1967); p. 132
17. Steve Neale, "Art Cinema As Institution", op. cit.; p. 22

CHAPTER FIVE: HARD-BOILED FICTION AND FILM NOIR

18. Paul Schrader, op. cit.; p. 10
19. A typical view comes from Stanley Kauffman's review of Hemingway's A Moveable Feast in "The New Republic" no. 190 (9th May, 1964):
- Hemingway was the obvious stylistic father of Dashiell Hammett, as Hammett was of Chandler and of many lesser writers in the genre,*
20. The first pulp-magazine devoted exclusively to crime/detective stories was probably "Detective Story", produced by leading pulp publishers Street and Smith. The 1920's and 1930's saw a proliferation of such magazines, many of which emulated "Black Mask". The following titles give some idea of the market: "Dime Detective", "Detective Fiction Weekly", "Clues", "Mystery Magazine", "Prize Detective Magazine", "Thrilling Detective", "Dime Detective", "Spicy Detective Monthly", "Crimebusters", "Thrilling Mysteries", "All Star Detective Stories", "Rapid-Fire Detective Stories", "Detective Action", "Double Detective", "Amazing Detective Stories", "All Detective", "Startling Detective", "All Detective Magazine", "Flynn's Detective Fiction" and "Racketeer Stories".
21. Diane Johnson; The Life Of Dashiell Hammett,  
Chatto and Windus, London (1984); pp. 57-58.
22. ibid.; p. 67
23. James M. Cain; "Introduction" to Double Indemnity, Corgi Books, London (1965); p. iv
24. Richard Layman; Shadow Man: the Life of Dashiell Hammett,  
Junction Books, London (1981); p. 125.
25. Dashiell Hammett film-adaptations in the 1930's:
- |                                       |                               |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ROADHOUSE NIGHTS (Para.; 1930)        | b/o <u>Red Harvest</u>        |
| THE MALTESE FALCON (WB; 1931)         | b/o Hammett's novel           |
| CITY STREETS (Para.; 1931)            | b/o Hammett screen-story      |
| PRIVATE DETECTIVE 62 (WB; 1933)       | b/o Hammett screen story      |
| THE THIN MAN (MGM; 1934)              | b/o Hammett's novel           |
| WOMAN IN THE DARK (RKO, 1934)         | b/o Hammett screen-story      |
| MISTER DYNAMITE (Univ.; 1935)         | b/o Hammett screen-story      |
| THE GLASS KEY (Para.; 1935)           | b/o Hammett's novel           |
| SECRET AGENT X-9 (Univ. serial; 1936) | b/o Hammett's comic-strip     |
| SATAN MET A LADY (WB; 1936)           | b/o <u>The Maltese Falcon</u> |
| AFTER THE THIN MAN (MGM; 1936)        | b/o Hammett screen-story      |
| ANOTHER THIN MAN (MGM; 1939)          | b/o Hammett screen-story      |
26. Amir M. Karimi; Towards A Definition of the American Film Noir (1941-1949),

Arno Press, New York (1976)

[PhD thesis, University of Southern California; 1970]; p. 155

27. David Madden: James M. Cain, Twayne, New York (1970); pp. 17-22
28. Chandler, for example, wrote in a letter of 1952;
 

*But alas, one grows up, one becomes more complicated and unsure, one becomes interested in moral dilemmas, rather than in who cracked who on the head.*

[in Raymond Chandler Speaking, ed. Dorothy Gardiner and Katherine Sorley Walker, Four Square, London (1966); p. 2161
29. Silver and Ward, op. cit.; pp. 333-336
30. Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, op. cit.; p. 76
31. James Agee, op. cit.; pp. 217-218
32. cf. Julian Symons: Bloody Murder, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth (1974); pp. 105-149
33. Tzvetan Todorov: The Poetics Of Prose,  
Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y. (1977); p. 47
34. Raymond Chandler: Pearls Are A Nuisance, ("Introduction")  
Penguin Books, Harmondsworth (1964); p. 8
35. Lawrence Alloway: Violent America: the Movies 1946-1964,  
Museum of Modern Art, New York (1977); p. 44
36. quoted by David Madden in James M. Cain, op. cit.; p. 117
37. Raymond Chandler: "The Simple Art Of Murder", Pearls Are A Nuisance op. cit.; p. 194
38. *ibid.*
39. *ibid.*; p. 197
40. Claude-Edmonde Magny: The Age of the American Novel, Ungar, New York (1972); p. 48
41. Cornell Woolrich: Phantom Lady [1942], in  
Four Thrillers by Cornell Woolrich, Zomba Books, London (1982); p. 113
42. Cornell Woolrich: The Black Path Of Fear, Ballantine Books, New York; p. 113
43. Woolrich: Phantom Lady, op. cit.; p. 234
44. David Madden, op. cit.; p. 42
45. John Franklin Bardin: The Deadly Percheron [1946], in  
The John Franklin Bardin Omnibus, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth (1976)
46. Diane Johnson, op. cit.; p. 77
47. Frank Krutnik, "Desire, Transgression and James M. Cain",  
"Screen" vol. 23 no. 1 (May-June, 1982); pp. 40-41
48. Jonathan Latimer: Solomon's Vineyard, Pan Books, London (1961); p. 7
49. James M. Cain: Preface to Double Indemnity, op. cit.; p. 15

CHAPTER SIX: FILM NOIR AND THE POPULARISATION OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

50. J.A.C. Brown: Freud and the Post-Freudians,  
Pelican Books, Harmondsworth (1961); p. 56
51. *ibid.*
52. Juliet Mitchell: Psychoanalysis and Feminism,  
Pelican Books, Harmondsworth (1975); p. 296
53. Parker Tyler: Magic and Myth of the Movies, Secker and Warburg, London (1971)  
[originally published 1947]; p. 112
54. Juliet Mitchell, *op. cit.*; p. 297
55. Parker Tyler, *op. cit.*; p. 112
56. Especially in two books by Parker Tyler, The Hollywood Hallucination (1944) and the  
aforementioned Magic and Myth of the Movies (1947), and a 1950 book by Martha  
Wolfenstein and Nathan Leites which blends 'psychoanalysis' with 'cultural  
anthropology', Movies: a Psychological Study, Atheneum, New York (1970).
57. Borde and Chaumeton, *op. cit.*; p. 5 ff.
58. The wilfully 'unlucky' hero concludes bleakly that "*Fate, or some mysterious force  
can put the finger on you or me for no good reason at all*". *cf.* further discussion of  
this film appears in Chapter Ten.
59. Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, *op. cit.*; p. 43
60. *ibid.*
61. *cf.* Michel Foucault: The History of Sexuality, Volume One,  
Pelican Books, Harmondsworth (1981); p. 61 ff.
62. Christine Gledhill: "KLUTE, Part 1: A Contemporary Film noir and Feminist Criticism",  
in Women in Film Noir, *op. cit.*; p. 17
63. in Silver and Ward, *op. cit.*; p. 307
64. *ibid.*
65. 'Subjective', non-diegetic voices of the type chiding Millie in WHEN STRANGERS MARRY  
appear in a large number of thrillers of the period, including EXPERIMENT PERILOUS  
(RKO, 1944), SCARLET STREET (Diana Prods., 1946), THE SCAR/HOLLOW TRIUMPH (Hollow  
Triumph Inc., 1948) and THE VELVET TOUCH (RKO, 1948).
66. Thomas Elsaesser: "Tales of Sound and Fury", "Monogram" no. 4 (1972); p. 14
67. Tom Flinn: "Three Faces of Film Noir",  
in Kings of the B's, edited by Todd McCarthy and Charles Flynn,  
Dutton, New York (1975); p. 157

68. Parker Tyler, *op. cit.*; p. 120
69. Borde and Chaumeton, *op. cit.*; p. 120 [translated by John Ellis]
70. Marc Vernet; "Freud: effets spéciaux; mise en scène: USA",  
    "Communications" no. 23 (1975); pp. 223-234
71. Bordwell, Thompson and Staiger, *op. cit.*; p. 20
72. Betty Friedan; The Feminine Mystique,  
    Penguin Books, Harmondsworth (1965); pp. 160-180
73. *ibid.*; p. 164
74. Parker Tyler, *op. cit.*; p. 166
75. *ibid.*; p. 120

CHAPTER SEVEN: FILM NOIR AND AMERICA IN THE 1940's

76. (i) Richard Maltby: "Film noir: the Politics of the Maladjusted Text",  
       "Journal of American Studies" no. 18 (1984); pp. 56-57  
 (ii) Leslie Asheim: "The Film and The Zeitgeist",  
       "Hollywood Quarterly", vol. 2 (1946-1947); p. 415
77. Maltby, op. cit.; p. 57
78. Dana B. Polan: "Blind Insights and Dark Passages: the Problem of Placement in Forties Film", The Velvet Light Trap no. 20 (Summer, 1983); pp. 28-30
79. Michael Renov: "From Fetish to Subject: the Containment of Sexual Difference in Hollywood's Wartime Cinema",  
       "Wide Angle" vol. 5 no. 1 (Winter, 1982); p. 17 ff.
80. Melva Joyce Baker: Images of Women in Film: the War Years, 1941-1945,  
       UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor (1980); p. 3
81. Marjorie Rosen: Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies and the American Dream,  
       Avon Books, New York (1974); p. 223
82. Michael Renov reports that in 1940 single men outnumbered single women by 3 to 2, but that by 1944 there were two-and-a-half times more single women than men in America.  
 Renov: Hollywood's Wartime Woman: Representation and Ideology,  
       UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor (1988); p. 47
83. Renov: "From Fetish to Subject", op. cit.; p. 18
84. See, for example,  
 (i) Marjorie Rosen, op. cit., pp. 233-242; and  
 (ii) Molly Haskell; From Reverence to Rape: the Treatment of Women in the Movies,  
       New English Library, London (1975); pp. 198-199
85. In a footnote reference, Koppes and Black (op. cit.; p. 355) suggest that the ending of CASABLANCA was determined in part by Warner Brothers' attempt to avoid censorship difficulties; Rick and Ilsa could not have departed Casablanca together while her husband still lived. The ending thus represents a 'strategic' ploy to satisfy both the PCA and the Office of War Information. Also, of course, by 'blocking' fulfilment of the relationship, the film intensifies the sense of a 'grand romance', of the 'love that could have been'.
86. Koppes and Black, op. cit.; p. 126
87. *ibid.*; pp. 106-7
88. Renov: "From Fetish to Subject", op. cit.; p. 10

89. Renov: Hollywood's Wartime Women, op. cit.; p. 47
90. *ibid.*; p. 33
91. Sylvia Harvey: "Women's Place: the Absent Family of Film Noir",  
in Women in Film Noir, op. cit.; p. 25
92. Although the war years had been by no means totally unified; urban blacks were particularly badly served by the wartime economic boom, and racial problems represented an acute 'blind-spot' for agencies like the Office of War Information (Koppes and Black; op. cit.; pp. 84-90). Violent race riots in major cities in Detroit in 1943 represented an especially disturbing manifestation of discontent with entrenched racism, neglect and exploitation which wartime discourses of unity and communal purpose could not sufficiently address.
93. Renov: Hollywood's Wartime Women, op. cit.; p. 77
94. Harvey, op. cit.; pp. 23-25
95. *ibid.*; p. 31
96. Marjorie Rosen, op. cit.; p. 217
97. *ibid.*; p. 216
98. For example, Molly Haskell, op. cit.; pp. 198-199
99. MILDRED PIERCE is a film which has received substantial attention from feminist film critics - including the following:
- (i) Joyce Nelson: "Mildred Pierce Reconsidered", "Film Reader" no. 2 (1980);
  - (ii) Pam Cook: "Duplicity in MILDRED PIERCE", in Women in Film Noir, op. cit.;
  - (iii) Annette Kuhn: Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema,  
RKP, London (1982); pp. 29-35
100. Christine Gledhill, op. cit.; p. 15
101. *ibid.*; pp. 15-17
102. Maltby, op. cit.; p. 56
103. Pam Cook: "Duplicity in MILDRED PIERCE", in Women in Film Noir, op. cit.; p. 69
104. *ibid.*
105. Maltby, op. cit.; p. 68
106. *ibid.*; p. 67
107. Harvey, op. cit.; p. 26
108. Michael Selig: "The Mirror Metaphor: Reflections on the History of Hollywood Film Genres"; "Film Reader" no. 6 (1985); pp. 133-134
109. Maltby (op. cit.; p. 66) notes briefly that the 'maladjusted veteran' was a much-sensationalized contemporary problem, giving rise to such newspaper headlines as "Crazed Vet Runs Amok".

110. Eddie Harwood's henchman Leo (Don Costello) says of women in general; "*They're all poison sooner or later, Almost all*" - the exception being Joyce.
111. Silver and Ward, op. cit.; p. 37
112. Tuska, op. cit.; p. 178
113. Silver and Ward, op. cit.; p.37

CHAPTER EIGHT: FILM NOIR AND HOLLYWOOD IN THE 1940's

114. Garth Jowett; Film: the Democratic Art, Little, Brown & Co., Boston (1976); p. 299
115. Russell Earl Shain; An Analysis of Motion Pictures About War Released by the American Film Industry, 1930-1970, Arno Press, New York (1976); p. 44  
*[PhD thesis submitted to University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1971].*
116. Koppes and Black, *op. cit.*; p. 17
117. *ibid.*; p. 42
118. Shain, *op. cit.*; p. 47
119. *ibid.*; pp. 48-9
120. *ibid.*; p. 49
121. *ibid.*; pp. 49-50
122. Koppes and Black, *op. cit.*; p. 55
123. *ibid.*; pp. 51-56
124. *ibid.*; p. 58
125. *ibid.*; p. 57
126. *ibid.*; p. 63
127. *ibid.*; p. 61
128. *ibid.*; p. 62
129. *ibid.*; p. 59
130. "Variety", vol. 149, no. 1 (December 16, 1942); p. 1
131. Koppes and Black, *op. cit.*; p. 61
132. *ibid.*; p. 63
133. *ibid.*; p. 64
134. *ibid.*; p. 69.

It is worth noting that during the war the Production Code was subject to a process of partial liberalisation, for - as Koppes and Black comment (*op. cit.*; pp. 69-70) - the Production Code Administration "*recognised that the war created 'extenuating circumstances' which would bring more violence and social and political subjects to the screen*".

135. Koppes and Black; *op. cit.*; pp. 72-84
136. *ibid.*; p. 80
137. *ibid.*; p. 105
138. It was the decline in markets, rather than any purely 'political' motive, which can be seen as having created a viable context for the production of such pre-war 'anti-

fascist' productions as Walter Wanger's BLOCKADE (1938), a story of the Spanish Civil War, and Warner Brothers' CONFESSIONS OF A NAZI SPY (1939). Koppes and Black (ibid.; pp. 34-37) note the following trends in Hollywood's productions of 1940 and 1941 which can be related to this shrinking of European markets (and the concomitantly increased importance of the British Commonwealth market):

(a) an increase in overtly anti-Nazi films: such 1940 productions as Frank Borzage's THE MORTAL STORM, FOUR SONS, ESCAPE, I MARRIED A NAZI, and Chaplin's THE GREAT DICTATOR, and also the 1941 film MANHUNT, the first of Fritz Lang's anti-Nazi films;

(b) a series of films which glamorised the US armed services: such as FLIGHT COMMAND (1940) and such 1941 films as I WANTED WINGS, DIVE BOMBER, NAVY BLUES, Abbott and Costello's BUCK PRIVATES, and Bob Hope's CAUGHT IN THE DRAFT;

and (c) a series of films which were "interventionist-by-analogy", such as Howard Hawks' Oscar-winning Warner Brothers' production SERGEANT YORK (1941) - a biopic of a World War I hero - and two 1941 films in which Americans enlist in the Royal Air Force, INTERNATIONAL SQUADRON and A YANK IN THE RAF,

139. Janet Staiger: "Individualism Versus Collectivism",

"Screen", vol. 24 nos. 4-5 (Winter 1980); pp. 70-71

140. Koppes and Black, op. cit.; p. 105

141. ibid.; pp. 138-9

142. ibid.; p. 106

143. ibid.; p. 125

144. ibid.; pp. 125-6

145. Dana B. Polan, op. cit.; p. 23

146. As with the equation of small-town life with delimitation and repression in OUT OF THE PAST, THE KILLERS and D.O.A.

147. And not just from the OWI, for the liberalism of Mellett and Poynter served to protect the film industry from substantially more extreme factions. For example, M.E. Gilfond, director of public relations for the Department of Justice, consistently called for drastic measures to control Hollywood. Early in the war he advocated a takeover of part of Hollywood's production (Koppes and Black, op. cit.; p. 57), and in late 1942 he urged Mellett to draw up rigorous guidelines for Hollywood's cooperation, whether it hurt business or not, proclaiming that "*The question of free speech . . . in the entertainment world is not particularly valid*" (ibid.; p. 105). Although the film companies may have on occasions expressed dissatisfaction with the approach of Mellett, Poynter and Ball, their evident desire to show cooperation with the OWI was necessary in the face of the potentially more drastic alternatives. The study by Koppes and Black highlights how the film industry sought both to advertise its desire

to cooperate while at the same time seeking to forestall the OWI's influence through such strategies as playing the OWI off against military approvals (for the Hollywood studios had cultivated positive relationships with the War Department and the Navy department), and in many cases allowing BMP reviewers access to films when it was too late for any significant changes to be made (by, for example, obtaining censorship clearance from the ODC before submitting films to the BMP). This proved a source of perpetual frustration for the organisers of the OWI - for example, in late 1942 Poynter complained that most producers were *"merely throwing a sop to the Mellett office - a sort of 'play a game with their government', as they do with the Hays Office censorship - [to see] how far they can go without getting into trouble"* (ibid.; p. 107)

148. Koppes and Black; pp. 126-7
149. ibid.; p. 132
150. ibid.; p. 134
151. ibid.; p. 138
152. ibid.; p. 139
153. ibid.; p. 139
154. ibid.; p. 140
155. Jowett, op. cit.; pp. 301-305
156. Koppes and Black, op. cit.; p. 100 and p. 112
157. Shain, op. cit.; p. 9
158. Exactly what constitutes a 'war film' is difficult to determine, but Shain provides the following useful definition: *"A war film is one dealing with the roles of civilians, espionage agents and soldiers in any of the aspects of war (ie. preparation, cause, prevention, conduct, daily life, and consequences of aftermath). Under this definition films did not have to be situated in combat zones"* (ibid.; p. 20)
159. ibid.; p. 31
160. *"Variety"*, vol. 149 no. 1 (December 16, 1942); p. 1
161. Koppes and Black, op. cit.; p. 63
162. ibid.; p. 98-100
163. *"Variety"*, vol. 152 no. 9 (November 10, 1943); p. 2
164. *"Variety"*, vol. 149 no. 1 (December 16, 1942); p. 4
165. *"Variety"*, vol. 153 no. 13 (March 8, 1944); p. 1
166. *"Variety"*, vol. 149 no. 1 (December 16, 1942); p. 3
167. It is worth stressing that in the 'classical' Hollywood era writers generally had little control over their work. It was common practice for one writer to provide the screen-story, another to write the script, others to provide additional material and

dialogue, 'doctoring', and additional writers might even be brought in during shooting.

168. Staiger: "Individualism Versus Collectivism", op. cit.; p. 66
169. *ibid.*; p. 70
170. *ibid.*; p. 71
171. "Variety", vol 149 no 4 (January 6, 1943); p. 1 and p. 9
172. Shain, op. cit.; pp. 55-56
173. The WPB was set up in January 1942 under the directorship of Donald M. Nelson, its function being to control the USA's industrial and economic resources - *"to set priorities on raw materials in order to maintain high production and keep the armed forces supplied"* (Shain, op. cit.; p. 51). Shain claims that Lowell Mellett of the OWI had the power to evoke sanctions against Hollywood producers by asking the WPB to restrict supplies to the industry (*ibid.*; p. 51). In the WPB's priority-list for raw film, the normal commercial feature-films came last, displaced in importance by
- (a) newsreels;
  - (b) films produced by the Army and the Navy;
  - and (c) war pictures. (*ibid.*; p. 55).
174. "Variety", vol. 149 no. 11 (February 24, 1943); p. 7
175. Shain, op. cit.; p. 52
176. "Variety", vol. 149 no. 1 (December 16, 1942); p. 3
177. Janet Staiger, in Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, op. cit.; p. 330.  
Staiger here defines an independent film company as *"a firm which was not owned by nor owned a distribution organisation"*
178. Staiger: "Individualism Versus Collectivism", op. cit.; p. 72
179. *ibid.*; p. 73
180. William Lafferty: "A Reappraisal of the Semi-Documentary in Hollywood",  
*"The Velvet Light Trap"* no. 20 (Summer 1983); p. 24
181. As Janet Staiger has noted in her article "Individualism Versus Collectivism" (op. cit.; p. 74):
- Between June 1945 and August 1948 the number of writers on term contracts fell from 189 to 87; contracts for members of the Screen Actors Guild declined from 742 in February 1946 to 463 in February 1948; the number of employed, skilled and unskilled workers also moved from a peak of 22,100 in 1946 to 13,400 in 1949.*
182. William Lafferty, op. cit.; p. 24
183. Janet Staiger, in Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, op. cit.; p. 331
184. Hortense Powdermaker, op. cit.; p. 50
185. Another sign of this is the popularity from the late 1940's of the 'international

- production' - such films as Jacques Tourneur's *BERLIN EXPRESS* (1948), Billy Wilder's *A FOREIGN AFFAIR* (1948) and Howard Hawks' *I WAS A MALE WAR BRIDE* (1949) inaugurated a trend towards film-production abroad, as a means of unlocking revenues 'frozen' overseas. International production accelerated through the 1950's, encouraged in particular by the relative cheapness of foreign labour.
186. Janet Staiger; Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, *op. cit.*; p. 330
187. *ibid.*; p. 331
188. *cf.* (i) Paul Kerr; "Out of What Past?", *op. cit.*; p. 64  
 (ii) Barry Salt; Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis  
 Starword, London (1983); p. 290
189. Lafferty, *op. cit.*; p. 24 (*cf.* also, Barry Salt, *op. cit.*; p. 293)
190. Kerr; "My Name Is Joseph H. Lewis",  
 "Screen", vol. 24 nos. 4-5 (July-October 1983); p. 52
191. Janet Staiger; Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, *op. cit.*; pp. 254-255
192. William Lafferty highlights this in his discussion of the 'semi-documentary' thriller, for its appearance in the postwar period tends often to be ascribed in large measure to the motive power of innovative producer Louis de Rochemont, formerly in charge of the influential *MARCH OF TIME* newsreel/documentary series. Lafferty qualifies this account by suggesting that Twentieth Century-Fox had specifically hired de Rochemont in 1943 in order to use his expertise in the field of fiction-film production, and that *"the seeds of the so-called semi-documentary had been sown at the corporate level almost two years before the end of World War II"* (*op. cit.*; p. 25). Lafferty thus suggests that the dominance of Fox in the field of the postwar 'semi-documentary' was the result of a deliberate studio strategy.
193. Douglas Gomery; The Hollywood Studio System, BFI/Macmillan, London (1986); p. 14
194. Kerr; "Out Of What Past?", *op. cit.*
195. Don Miller; 'B' Movies, Ballantine Books, New York (1987) [*orig.* 1973]; p. 30
196. Kerr; "Out Of What Past", *op. cit.*; p. 50
197. *ibid.*; pp. 55-60
198. Todd McCarthy and Charles Flynn, in McCarthy and Flynn (*ed.*), *op. cit.*; p. 17
199. *ibid.*; p. 22
200. Lotte Eisner, *op. cit.*; p.182
201. For example, Jack Shadoian notes that identical inserts of a police dragnet appear in

HE WALKED BY NIGHT (Bryan Foy Prods., 1949), and two Joseph H. Lewis films, GUN CRAZY (King Bros., 1950) and THE BIG COMBO (Security-Theodora, 1955).

[Jack Shadoian; *Dreams and Dead Ends: the American Gangster/Crime Film*,

MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.) (1977); p. 101

202. Interview by Linda May Strawn, in McCarthy/Flynn, op. cit.; p. 274
203. Miller, op. cit.; p. 106
204. Jowett, op. cit.; p. 279
205. Leo A. Handel; *Hollywood Looks At Its Audience*,  
University of Illinois Press, Urbana (1950); p. 133
206. "Harrison's Reports", vol. XXV, no. 2 (January 9, 1943); p.1
207. Koppes and Black, op. cit.; p. 107
208. ibid.; p. 108
209. "Harrison's Reports", vol. XXV no. 2 (January 9, 1943); p.1
210. "Harrison's Reports", vol. XXV no. 3 (January 16, 1943); p.1
211. Kerr; "Out of What Past?", op. cit.; p. 58
212. Jean-Pierre Coursoudon and Pierre Sauvage; *American Directors: Volume Two*,  
McGraw-Hill, New York (1983); p. 220
213. Miller, op. cit.; p. 132
214. Miller, op. cit.; p. 223
215. It is also worth stressing the extent to which generic combination may have been accelerated by the war. The need to incorporate the war within existing generic formulae resulted in a degree of transformation of these formulae. This is evident, for example, in the gangster-films of the period - such as ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT (1942), LUCKY JORDAN (1942) and MR LUCKY (1943) - where the gangster is converted from selfish criminality to a selfless engagement in the 'war effort'. Plus, as I have already suggested, such romantic comedies of the period as THE TALK OF THE TOWN and ONCE UPON A HONEYMOON were also transformed through their incorporation of 'issues drama' elements. A further notable example of a hybrid-genre film is THE OX-BOW INCIDENT (1943), which combines the Western and (anti-lynching) 'social-problem' drama. Furthermore, a large number of series films - like TARZAN TRIUMPHS and SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE VOICE OF TERROR (1942) (the first of a low-budget Universal series in which Arthur Conan Doyle's sleuth is shifted from the late-Victorian period to the World War II era) there is an accomodation of the series-formulae to the wartime context.

216. Borde and Chaumeton, op. cit.; p. 30
217. Schrader, op. cit.; p. 10
218. Robert Porfirio, in Silver and Ward, op. cit.; p. 11
219. Miller, op. cit.; p. 157
220. *ibid.*
221. *ibid.*
222. Janet Staiger; in Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson; p. 325
223. Phil Karlson, interviewed in McCarthy & Flynn, op. cit.; p. 335
224. Miller, op. cit.; pp. 124-125
225. *ibid.*; p. 128
226. *ibid.*; p. 149
227. *ibid.*; p. 240
228. The issue of "Variety" dated January 26th, 1944 (vol. 153 no. 7; p. 12) noted that in PHANTOM LADY "Sound effects and silent track without dialogue are used to maximum effect to heighten the suspense of the picture", and in his review of the film for the "New York Times" (February 18th, 1944), Bosley Crowther wrote:
- We wish we could recommend [PHANTOM LADY] as a perfect combination of the styles of the eminent Mr Hitchcock and the old German psychological films, for that is plainly and precisely what it tries very hard to be. It is full of the play of light and shadow, of macabre atmosphere, of sharply realistic faces and dramatic injections of sound. People sit around in gloomy places looking blankly and silently into space, music blares forth from empty darkness, and odd characters turn up and disappear. It is all very studiously constructed for weird and disturbing effects.*
229. Cinematographers who similarly moved from the 'B' films to 'A' features included John Alton - responsible for the distinctive 'look' of such 'film noir' thrillers as THE SCAR/HOLLOW TRIUMPH (1948), T-MEN (1948), HE WALKED BY NIGHT (1949), THE TALL TARGET (1951) - who made his name with striking lighting effects in such Republic films as THE DEVIL PAYS OFF (1941), MR DISTRICT ATTORNEY IN THE CARTER CASE (1942) and THE AFFAIRS OF JIMMY VALENTINE (1942) (Miller, op. cit.; p. 263), and Stanley Cortez, whose work on a number of Universal 'B' films (particularly BOMBAY CLIPPER, 1942) led to his being chosen by Orson Welles for THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS (1942) as a replacement for Gregg Toland (*ibid.*; p. 245).
230. Paul Kerr; "My Name is Joseph H. Lewis", op. cit.; p. 50
231. Miller, op. cit.; p. 211

232. Topicality was another of the principal means of upgrading the commercial chances of a 'B' film. Because they had shorter production schedules than 'A' features, 'B' films had a distinct advantage in terms of their incorporation of topical issues. This proved a particular strength during the World War II period, when - as I have already noted - the fast-moving context of the war often outstripped Hollywood's attempts to keep up with it. One of the first films to deal with the USA's entry into the war was the MGM 'B' *A YANK ON THE BURMA ROAD* (1942); the film was already in production when war was declared, but a scene mentioning Pearl Harbour was added at the last minute and served to elevate the film's status, especially as it was released a mere seven weeks after the Japanese attack (Miller, *op. cit.*; p. 196). Topical issues often provided 'B' producers with a 'selling-angle' which could more than compensate for their difficulty in securing prestigious story-sources
233. Miller, *op. cit.*; p. 211
234. Spencer Selby, *op. cit.*; p. 193
235. Miller, *op. cit.*; pp. 256-257
236. *ibid.*; p. 257
237. Staiger: "Individualism versus Collectivism", *op. cit.*; p. 72
238. Interview with Steve Broidy in McCarthy & Flynn, *op. cit.*; p. 271
239. Miller, *op. cit.*; p. 221
240. Interview with Steve Broidy in McCarthy/Flynn, *op. cit.*; p. 271
241. *ibid.*; pp. 272-273
242. Miller, *op. cit.*; p. 102
243. McCarthy & Flynn, *op. cit.*; p. 30
244. Dore Schary: *Heyday. An Autobiography*, Little, Brown and Co., Boston (1970); p. 114
245. *ibid.*; p. 157
246. Kerr: "Out of What Past", *op. cit.*; p. 60 ff.
247. Such transformations are highly complex and are beyond the aims of this particular study, but it is worth briefly the following effects:
- (a) the cinema's investment in the 'super-production' - with epics like *THE ROBE* (1953), *THE TEN COMMANDMENTS* (1956), *BEN HUR* (1959), and such lavish 'entertainment-packages' as *AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS* (1956);
- (b) the investment in and promotion of new technological 'gimmicks' like 3-D, Cinerama, Cinemascope/widescreen - and the standardisation of the colour-film - which capitalized upon the spectacular power of the cinema vis-à-vis television;

(c) the way in which the cinema sought to capitalize upon television's popularity by adapting TV 'plays of significance' like Paddy Chayevsky's MARTY (1955), Reginald Rose's TWELVE ANGRY MEN (1957) and Rod Serling's REQUIEM FOR A HEAVYWEIGHT (1962), and TV series like DRAGNET (1954);

and (d) a more general shift in popular genres of the period - for example, a displacement of 'monster-horror' by the science-fiction film; the development of the family-melodrama and the 'new-style' spectacular musical; several shifts within the Western - from 'social problem'/'message' Westerns like BROKEN ARROW (1950), HIGH NOON (1952) and APACHE (1954), to 'psychological' Westerns, to 'epic' Westerns like THE BIG COUNTRY (1958), THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN (1960) and ONE-EYED JACKS (1961) to small-scale 'stylized' Westerns like Budd Boetticher's RIDE LONESOME (1959) and Joseph H. Lewis' A LAWLESS STREET (1955).

248. Paul Kerr; "Out of What Past?", op. cit.; p. 54

249. Paul Kerr; "My Name is Joseph H. Lewis", op. cit.; p. 50

250. James Naremore; The Magic World of Orson Welles,  
Oxford University Press, New York (1978); p. 52

251. John Kobal; Rita Hayworth, W.W. Norton, New York (1978); p. 78

252. Despite the general level of play and parody, it is worth stressing that THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI manages to pull off a conclusion which works in rather conventional terms for a 1940's 'tough' thriller. A sense of resolution is firmly inscribed in the final sequence, where the male hero leaves the duplicitous femme fatale to die, and walks off into the dawn. Although Welles may substantially satirize the thriller-plot throughout the film, there is a fundamental assertion of masculine moral superiority in this ending: the woman bears the brunt of the blame for the complex layers of duplicity and criminality - as she does, indeed, for the major part of the film's attack on Hollywood - and the last word is left to the male voice of the director-star (which may parody the hero-role, but at the same time firmly asserts the predominance of "Willie Wonder Welles").

## SECTION THREE

PREFACE: THE REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY  
IN THE 1940's 'TOUGH' THRILLER

1. John Houseman: "Today's Hero: A Review",  
"Hollywood Quarterly", Vol. 2 (1946-7); p. 163
2. The novel Mildred Pierce deviates deliberately from such earlier Cain stories as The Postman Always Rings Twice and Double Indemnity; it is much longer, its narrative is relatively more complex, it abandons Cain's first-person narrational strategy, and - in particular - the narrative is centred upon a female protagonist and her 'transgressive' desires. For a further consideration of the 'Cain-text' see my article "Desire, Transgression and James M. Cain", op. cit.; especially pp. 40-41
3. Albert LaValley (ed.): Mildred Pierce, [film-script and commentary]  
 University of Wisconsin Press, Madison (1980); p. 29
4. "Screenwriter Daniel Mainwaring Discusses OUT OF THE PAST" (Interview)",  
"The Velvet Light Trap" no. 10 (Fall, 1973); p. 45
5. Sigmund Freud: "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" (1908), in  
Art and Literature: Pelican Freud Library, Volume 14,  
 Pelican Books, Harmondsworth (1985); pp. 137-140
6. *ibid.*; p. 137
7. Freud's model of the Oedipus complex stresses that (masculine) sexual identity is structured through a series of processes and identifications - and is finally 'held-in-place' by means of positioning in relation to the 'phallus' as signifier of authority and desire. For the male child, the 'correct' path through the Oedipus complex involves an identification with the authority of the 'Father' under the threat of 'castration'. This positioning, however, is never firmly, irrevocably fixed - for there is always the danger that the transgressive desires which have to be repressed within the cultural ordering of subjectivity may 'erupt' into consciousness. Particularly problematic for the cultural regimentation of masculine identity and desire - as I shall suggest - is the child's early,

'pre-Oedipal' relation with the mother, which threatens the 'exclusivity' of the 'phallic order',

8. Houseman, *op. cit.*; p. 161

9. *ibid.*; p. 162

10. It is not simply the case that this 'inversion' of the dynamic masculine hero is figured negatively in the films (as it is from the position of Houseman's humanistic liberalism) - in the sense of being an unsuitable vehicle for narcissistic identification. On viewing these films in bulk, it becomes apparent that these shabby, self-pitying hero-figures do frequently mobilise a marked - albeit manifestly 'inverted' - narcissistic attraction, for such instances permit an identification with a retreatist 'self-love' at the expense of an outward-directed 'object-relation'. In retreat from the outside world, the shabby-loner heroes reject external value-systems and, rather than challenging them, draw comfort from their own secluded and untested sense of 'perfection'.

CHAPTER NINE: THE INVESTIGATIVE THRILLER

11. Steven Marcus: "Introduction" to Dashiell Hammett's The Continental Op., Pan Books, London (1975); p. 21
12. cf. Tzvetan Todorov; The Poetics of Prose, op. cit.; pp. 47-48
13. cf. Roland Barthes; S/Z, Hill and Wang, New York (1974); p. 75-76
14. For a discussion of 'gags' and reversals, cf. Naale and Krutnik, op. cit.; Chapters Three and Seven
15. It is significant that in MURDER, MY SWEET, RKO's 1944 adaptation of Raymond Chandler's private-eye novel Farewell, My Lovely, the disjunction of private-eye Philip Marlowe (Dick Powell) from a Spade-like position of narrative control is underscored through the impairment of his vision, for at the start of the film he has been temporarily blinded by the powder-flash from a gun. In contrast to Spade, Marlowe is markedly vulnerable throughout the film; he is subject to beatings, is knocked unconscious, is drugged - and compared to the dynamic unity of Sam Spade, his authority is split between his positioning as (flashback-) narrator and actant. Marlowe's relative lack of mastery is highlighted in another sequence which is worth noting in comparison with THE MALTESE FALCON. At one point in the latter, Spade is drugged by Gutman, and the detective's momentary loss of control is represented via a very brief blurred-focus POV shot as he looks at his adversary; at one climactic point in MURDER, MY SWEET, Marlowe is drugged while imprisoned in Dr. Sonderborg's clinic, and Marlowe's hallucinatory distortions become the motivation for an extended set-piece of 'noir' stylistic 'excess'. Indeed, in the way in which it italicizes this and similar moments of the hero's breakdown of control, MURDER, MY SWEET - like many other 'tough' thrillers of the period - reveals itself to be an overtly paranoid narrative compared with the Hammett adaptation.  
*cf. Jonathan Buchsbaum: "Tame Wolves and Phony Claims: Paranoia and Film Noir", "Persistence of Vision" nos. 3-4 (Summer 1986); pp. 42-457*
16. Similarly, in MURDER, MY SWEET Marlowe's masculinity is affirmed by contrast with the effete 'ladies man' Marriot (Douglas Walton), whose 'femininity' is likewise conveyed via perfume. Another film which establishes such contrasts between its male figures is LAURA (TCF, 1944), in which the 'hard-boiled' New York detective MacPherson (Dana Andrews) is set in opposition to both the 'well-oiled' gigolo Shelby Singleton (Vincent Price) and the 'effete' intellectual Waldo Lydecker (Clifton Webb) as 'alternative' figurations of masculinity. Intersecting with the difference in the

'direction' of their masculine identity is an opposition between 'high-class' and 'low-class', with the comparative 'more masculine' detective seeking to assert himself at the expense of the rich, luxury world which, as in many other 'tough' thrillers, is represented as 'contaminating' - and is dominated by women; especially Shelby's 'keeper' Mrs Treadwell (Judith Anderson), and the enigmatic Laura (Gene Tierney) herself, who circulates between the men as a sign through which they seek to consolidate their own identities and express their own desires. What is particularly interesting about LAURA in this respect is that it exposes the 'corruption' within the rectitude of the detective, for through his 'necrophilic' obsession with Laura (he falls in love with her when he believes her to be dead) his desires are revealed to be as problematic as both Lydecker's narcissistic fetishising of her and Shelby's self-prostitution.

17. cf. Laura Mulvey: "Afterthoughts . . . Inspired by DUEL IN THE SUN"  
       "Framework" nos. 15/16/17 (Summer 1981); p. 14
18. This detachment being particularly inscribed in Marlowe's first-person narration - through the 'coolness' of his wisecracks and the leisurely hyperbole of his descriptions.
19. Raymond Chandler, in (ed.) Gardiner and Walker, op. cit.; p. 230
20. Gledhill, op. cit.; p. 15
21. Quoted by William Luhr: "Raymond Chandler and THE LADY IN THE LAKE"  
       "Wide Angle" vol. 6 no. 1 (1984); p.
22. The 1941 adaptation of THE MALTESE FALCON had a measure of protection in this respect - both in the stated aim to 'remain true' to the novel, and in the status of the novel itself as not only a popular best-seller but as an acclaimed 'classic' of modern (crime/detective) fiction - as I have considered in Chapter Five.
23. It is interesting to note that Hawks himself remarked that *"Whenever I hear a story my first thought is to make it into a comedy, and I think of how to make it into a drama only as a last resort"* - quoted by John Belton in "Howard Hawks";  
The Hollywood Professionals, Volume Three: Hawks, Borzage, Ulmer, Tantivy Press, London 1974; p.9
24. Across his films, Hawks was drawn persistently to a certain 'patterning' of heterosexual relations, characterised by both a 'playful' eroticism and a comparative 'equalization' of the man and the woman. Hawk's unconventional women and his unconventional love-relationships tend in the main to be sustainable only in contexts divorced from mainstream American society, and in which they have to co-exist with the demands of the hero's work and his male friendships.

25. Gledhill, op. cit.; p. 15
26. These Cagney thrillers are considered in the section on the gangster-film in Appendix Two.
27. Not that the two potentialities are mutually exclusive: Chris Cross, for example is quite markedly 'masochistic' and 'psychotic' at different junctures in SCARLET STREET. More generally, however, the 'psychotic'/'masochistic' potentialities tend to be split in specific films between 'complementary' male and female characters: as with Robert Manette and his suffering wife Jackie/ Abigail (Deanna Durbin) in CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY, and with Dixon Steele and Laurel Gray (Gloria Grahame) in IN A LONELY PLACE.
28. For a consideration of the 'semi-documentary' thriller, see Appendix Two.
29. Gaylyn Studlar: "Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of the Cinema", in (ed.) Bill Nichols: Movies and Methods: Volume Two, University of California Press, Berkeley (1976).
30. Gilles Deleuze: "Preface" to Masoch's Venus in Furs, in Masochism: An Interpretation of Coldness and Cruelty, George Braziller, New York (1971).
31. Studlar, op. cit.; p. 606.
32. *ibid.*
33. *ibid.*; p. 609
34. *ibid.*; p. 606
35. For further consideration of the 'outlaw couple' films, see Appendix Two.
36. It is worth noting some of the significant differences between OUT OF THE PAST and its source novel, Build My Gallows High (1946). The film markedly increases the prominence of the femme fatale (Mumsie McGonigle in the book) at the expense of the novel's comparative stress upon relations between men. In the film, the book's two powerful criminals, Whit Sterling and Guy Parker, are condensed into the figure of Sterling; several minor hoodlum figures are replaced by Joe Stephanos. The film also downplays the book's overt parallelism between the various men who are made helpless/vulnerable through heterosexual love - Red Bailey, the hero; Jim Caldwell; (Lloyd) Eels; Guy Parker - to focus more emphatically upon the plight of the hero. [Geoffrey Homes: Build My Gallows High, Blue Murder/Simon & Schuster, London (1988)].
37. In her influential paper "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" ("Screen" vol. 16, no. 3, Autumn 1975), Laura Mulvey proposes a distinction between voyeurism and fetishism as two (potentially conflictual) modalities of 'eroticised' looking in mainstream Hollywood cinema. Characterising both voyeurism and fetishism as strategies which are motivated by the male spectator's need to counter the troubling 'phallic' lack which is evoked by the representation of the female body, Mulvey associates the former with the controlling impetus of narrative (with the emphasis upon 'making things happen') and the latter with the propensity towards spectacle (where the image itself or the image of the woman's body is glamourised as complete-in-itself - a strategy of disavowal).
38. This speech shows precisely the play between the knowing voice and the naive actan

which persists through the flashback and testifies to a radical 'splitting' of the hero-as-subject.

39. It is worth noting here how this is but one of a heavily foregrounded series of 'contracts' which pervades *OUT OF THE PAST*. Indeed the wide-ranging plot of the film is 'tied together' through the recurring motifs of exchange and 'contractual bonding'. I have already mentioned the masculine work/contract between Whit and Jeff, but one can also note the similar 'bonding' between Jeff and Fisher, and also the contrasting 'pact' between Jeff and Ann. Kathie markedly disrupts the circuitry of exchange when she steals Whit's money and reneges on her 'sexual contract' with him. It is significant that at their first meeting, Jeff engages Kathie's attention by dropping a coin near her table. They are then interrupted by Jose Rodriguez, who offers both his services as a guide and to sell Jeff a pair of earrings. Jeff buys them as a gift for Kathie, but she rejects them, saying that she never wears earrings - and in the process short-circuiting this conventional 'romantic' offer by the male (significantly, when we see Kathie in San Francisco later in the film, she is prominently wearing a pair of earrings), Kathie's rejection of the gift only intensifies Jeff's interest in her, for he is fascinated by what he sees as her self-willed exclusion from the male-controlled circuitry of exchange - he tells her admiringly, " *I haven't talked to somebody who hasn't tried to sell me something for ten days*". And then, when he says that he wants her, rather than Jose Rodriguez, to show him round the sights of Acapulco, he reveals an idealistic desire for a relationship beyond the regime of 'selling' ( "*Nothing in the world is any good unless you can share it*", he tells her). This functions as a further suggestion of Jeff's 'misrecognition' of Kathie: his idealisation of her as 'beyond' exchange denies the reality both of her own 'contract' with Whit and the fact that she has ruthlessly destroyed it. In reality, Kathie is not 'beyond' exchange but she has rather sought to gain and maintain control over the system of exchange by controlling the 'value' of her own sexuality. She takes and holds onto the money because it precisely gives her the power to free herself from any obligation to the male-controlled system of monetary/sexual exchange (while at the same time, of course, the money derives its value only from this system).
40. The film simultaneously implies and denies that intercourse takes place. The couple run through the rain to the beach-house, laughing like carefree young lovers. When they arrive there, Kathie dries his hair, and Jeff does the same for her. He kisses her on the back of the neck and then tosses away the towel, which knocks the lamp over. When the light goes out, there is a swirl of music, and the camera then tracks

- towards the door, which blows open in the wind. There is then a cut to the outside, with the camera continuing its forward-tracking. This leading-away from the scene, together with the reprisal of the film's love-theme and the dousing of the light, suggests that Jeff and Kathie are making love. However, the film cuts back to the inside of the beach house; Jeff closes the door, and Kathie takes a record off the gramophone. There is a marked, seemingly post-coital change in their attitudes. However, although the slow forward-tracking of the camera implies that intercourse takes place, the cut back to the inside, and the 'continuity' of Jeff shutting the door after it has blown open, suggest that there has been no time-lapse. Sex is thus both firmly suggested and disavowed. Such a means of 'beating-the-censor' through the simultaneous process of affirmation and denial operates in a very similar fashion to the 'sexualised' jokes of the romantic/sexual comedy (for a consideration of which see my analysis of a gag from the 1959 Hollywood sex-comedy *IT STARTED WITH A KISS* in "The Clown-Prints of Comedy", *Screen* vol. 25, nos. 4-5 (July-Oct. 1984); pp. 58-59), and can be seen to be a characteristic means by which 'sex-scenes' were handled in both the 'tough' thrillers and many other films produced during the 'classical' era.
41. In many of the 'tough' thrillers money figures very much as the 'coin' of patriarchal authority: the economic system is controlled by men, as is the value of money as a token of exchange. Such femmes fatales as Phyllis in *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*, Kitty in *THE KILLERS*, Elsa in *LADY FROM SHANGHAI*, and Jane Palmer (Elizabeth Scott) in *TOO LATE FOR TEARS* (Hunt Stronberg Prods., 1949) are characterised by their 'pathological' greed, their desire to set themselves above masculine authority signified precisely by their desire for money.
  42. Indeed, at one point Kathie and Meta are significantly confused: Jeff goes to search the latter's apartment, only to find Kathie there in her place, and she even answers the telephone pretending to be Meta.
  43. Michael Walsh: "OUT OF THE PAST: the History of the Subject", *Enclitic* vol.6, no. 1 (Fall/Spring 1982); p.16
  44. The film maintains a rigid separation between the 'hard-boiled' discourse of the big-city and the mundane talk associated with the small-town. The separation between these two worlds is particularly acute in the film's opening scenes, when Joe Stephanos enters Marny's Café in Bridgeport, the clearing-house for town gossip. Whereas the 'tough' talk of the big-city is associated with masculine assertiveness, the shrunken regime of small-town discourse is associated with masculine delimitation (something which is particularly emphatic in the brief appearances of Ann's father, who verbally chastises her for seeing Jeff but cannot back up his words with forceful action).

45. Christine Gledhill, *op. cit.*; p. 18.

46. It is worth stressing here the pervasiveness in the 1940's 'tough' thrillers of the 'framing' or 'imaging' of the 'erotic' woman in terms of male desire and the male look. This takes such forms as:

(i) the representation of the woman as portrait/painted image; as in LAURA, Fritz Lang's THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW and SCARLET STREET; and NOCTURNE;

and (ii) the framing of the woman within the hero's 'sexualised' look in such films as DOUBLE INDEMNITY, THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE, and THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME - most often to mark her first appearance in the film.

The 'troubling' of the woman is inaugurated when she breaks out of the 'frame' and thus destabilises the network of male authority.

*[cf. also the consideration of women and the mirror-image in Footnote 54 below].*

47. Gledhill, *op. cit.*; p. 16.

48. *ibid.*

49. THE KILLERS was an independent production from Mark Hellinger, with financial backing and distribution by Universal-International. It was directed by Robert Siodmak, a German expatriate who, like Fritz Lang, was responsible for a large number of distinctively-styled thrillers of the 'noir' period. Siodmak's films are narratively quite diverse, ranging from 'paranoid woman' thriller (THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE, 1945), to *period crime* thriller (THE SUSPECT, 1945), to gangster-thriller (CRY OF THE CITY, 1948), to 'tough' thriller (THE KILLERS; CRISS CROSS, 1949), to such interesting hybrids of thriller and 'psychological' melodrama as PHANTOM LADY (1944), CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY (1944), UNCLE HARRY (1945), THE DARK MIRROR (1946) and THE FILE ON THELMA JORDAN (1949).

50. Stuart M. Kaminsky: "Don Siegel", "Take One" (June, 1972); p. 17

51. "The Killers", originally published in Men Without Women (1928) can be found in The Essential Hemingway, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth (1964); pp. 378-385.

52. Such 'entrapment' through the look is a common characteristic of the representation of male desire in the 'tough' thrillers, notable examples featuring in DOUBLE INDEMNITY, THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE and THE WON'T BELIEVE.

53. GILDA represents several significant departures from these other films in regard to the representation of the woman as 'erotic object'. The main song in this film is not actually "Amado Mio" but rather "Put The Blame On Mame", which is sung twice - intimately at first, where the song seems a sad reflection on the way that women seem to get blamed for all

manner of disasters befalling men; and the second time it becomes a song of defiance as Gilda performs a parodic striptease in order to provoke her husband Johnny (Glenn Ford) who has been both neglecting and persecuting her. Because the film is emphatically a Rita Hayworth 'star-vehicle' then Gilda herself is by no means as contained within a male-oriented drama as are the 'erotic' women in the other films. The three song-performances testify to the centrality of Hayworth-Gilda and to the importance of the star-image to this film. In contrast to the song in THE KILLERS, the 'torch-song' in GILDA is represented as a 'pure', unmediated performance, for not only is there a stress upon Hayworth-Gilda's dancing (an expected feature of Hayworth's 1940's star-image) but the sequence also contains no inter-cutting, being presented as a single-shot

54. Such mirror-shots are quite common in the 1940's 'tough' thrillers. They represent a problematising of the forms of representation of the woman-as-image which I considered in Footnote 46 - for in such instances it is the woman who is shown to be captivated by and desiring control over her own image - notable examples of this occur in DOUBLE INDEMNITY (where, during their first meeting, Phyllis is intent on applying her lipstick while Walter gazes on at her) and at the beginning of THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE (where the moment of 'fatal attraction' is similarly signalled, with Cora gazing into her compact-mirror and applying lipstick while Frank frames her within his lustful, fascinated look). In each case, the woman's absorption in her own image disrupts the circuitry of desire inaugurated by the man's look - she sets herself outside of this look by looking at herself rather than back at the man. THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI enacts a sadistic destruction of this narcissistic motif, when, during the mirror-maze sequence, Elsa's reflected image is multiply fragmented and shattered during the climactic shoot-out. [*In GILDA there is an interesting reversal of the way in which women tend to be represented as narcissistically obsessed with their appearance, for in this case it is Johnny who is criticised - by Uncle Pio (Stephen Geray) - for gazing into the mirror, Johnny is markedly 'feminized' in the early stages of the film as he forms a homo-erotic bonding with Ballin - the 'perverse' 'Father-figure' - a relationship which the woman disrupts.*]

CHAPTER TEN: THE 'SUSPENSE' THRILLER

55. At one point Roberts even accuses the spectator of persecuting him: *"But I know what you're going to going to hand me, even before you open your mouth. You're gonna tell me you don't believe my story . . . You'll give me that 'don't-make-me-laugh' expression on your smug faces"*. This testifies not just to a denial of - but a self-willed resistance to - responsibility.
56. Tania Modleski: "Film Theory's Detour", *"Screen"* vol. 23 no. 5 (Nov-Dec 1982); p. 78
57. Blake Lucas, in Silver and Ward, *op. cit.*; p. 90
58. Modleski, *op. cit.*; p. 76
59. This is not to suggest, however, that such a representation of masculine identity as divided and unstable is solely a characteristic of the post-1944 thrillers; for example, as I considered earlier, the 'infiltration' of 'psychoanalysis' into the thriller resulted in the at times spectacular display of divided male subjectivity in such early 'films noirs' as *THE STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR*, *AMONG THE LIVING* and *THIS GUN FOR HIRE*.
60. Elizabeth Cowie: "The Popular Film as Progressive Text - A Discussion of *COMA*, Part Two", *"M/E"* no. 4 (1979); p.62.
61. See for example, Steve Neale's consideration of suspense in his book *Genre*, (*op. cit.*; pp. 26-29), and also his remarks on suspense in the melodrama 'genre' in "Melodrama and Tears", *"Screen"*, vol. 27 no. 6 (1986); pp. 8-12.
62. For a consideration of the relations between paranoia, suspense and masochism in relation to another group of 1940's thrillers - what Mary Ann Doane has termed the 'paranoid woman films'- see:  
Mary Ann Doane: *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940's*,  
Macmillan, London (1988); pp. 123-154
63. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Second Edition), vol. XVII, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1987); p. 320
64. As I considered in Chapter Five, Woolrich was a specialist in the field of the psychological 'suspense melodrama', his highly-successful 'traumatised' novels and short-stories being extensively adapted by both cinema and radio through the 1940's.
65. An element of personalised vigilantism can also mark the private-eye thriller - for example, Spade's quest for the 'black bird' is sparked-off by the murder of his partner, and in Raymond Chandler's novel *The Long Goodbye* (1953), Marlowe's quest is motivated by the (apparent) murder of his best friend, Terry Lennox. Generally,

however, the private-eye's professional status 'legitimizes' the investigative adventure - although in Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer novels this professionalism tends to be merely a cover for the hero's narcissistic and sadistic masculine assertion.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE CRIMINAL-ADVENTURE THRILLER

66. James Dawico, op. cit.; p. 54
67. The general prevalence, in the 1940's 'tough' thrillers, of such sexual-criminal 'Oedipal' triangles is highlighted in a 'knowing' gag in the Bob Hope vehicle MY FAVORITE BRUNETTE (1947), a spoof of 'hard-boiled' detective stories in which Hope plays a baby-photographer who is able to act-out his fantasy of being a 'tough' private-eye. At one point the beautiful, beleaguered heroine confides to Hope, *"I know men. Somehow they always seem to be more interested in the problems of young wives with older husbands"*. The joke works specifically as a reference to the 'criminal adventure' thrillers, which were then at the height of their popularity.
68. For further consideration of Cain's fiction and the Hollywood thriller see my article "Desire, Transgression and James M. Cain", op. cit.; pp. 38-39.
69. Preface to The Butterfly, Pan Books, London (1981); p. 10;
70. Juliet Mitchell, op. cit.; pp. 63-64
71. Claire Johnston; "Double Indemnity",  
Women in Film Noir, *ibid.*; p. 101
72. A casual remark made by Walter early on in the film suggests the extent to which he has internalised Keyes as 'superego': when warned off trying the Dietrichson's locked liquor cabinet, he quips *"It's alright, I always carry my own keys"*. Later, Keyes gives a description of his job which explicitly outlines his status as a figure of authority: *"A claims man, Walter, is a doctor and a bloodhound and a cop and a judge and a jury and a father-confessor - all in one"*.
73. Claire Johnston, *ibid.*; pp. 102-3.
74. Parker Tyler, op. cit.; p. 172.
75. *ibid.* It is significant in this regard that Keyes seeks to prevent Neff continuing as a salesman - where to sell policies he has to 'sell' himself - by offering him a less well-paid but more prestigious and settled position as his assistant. Neff turns the job down, refusing this position of security in regard to the law - for Neff would be functioning as an investigator- to cast his lot with Phyllis.
76. For further consideration of such films, see Appendix Two.
77. Like Mildred Pierce, Adrienne Fromsett is located as a woman who occupies a 'man's position' - as editor-in-chief of a series of crime magazines. In her office, her 'masculine' attributes are highlighted - represented in terms of her unglamorous, 'severe' dress, her hair 'bound up' and packed tight upon her head, her 'hard'

manner. However, when Marlowe (Robert Montgomery) meets her at her home, she is markedly more 'feminine' (wearing a tight white robe, with her hair loose and 'free', displaying a hint of cleavage), Marlowe tells her emphatically: *"Why don't you look beautiful and stop worrying about guns . . . Start hearing your heart beat and wake up, Maybe you'll find it's a different world"*. Marlowe's criminal-investigation becomes concerned in large part with the attempt to 'convert' Adrienne to a more 'natural'/'feminine' sexuality - and by the end of the film she has been successfully 'tamed' (revealed to be both Marlowe's wife and mother of his children).

78. It is significant that in his Preface to The Butterfly (ibid.) James M. Cain saw as the prototype of the women in his 'criminal adventure' stories the mythical-figure of Pandora, the first woman whom Zeus had created as a punishment for the transgression of Prometheus (who stole the gift of fire from the gods on Mount Olympus and delivered it to the mortal world). By opening the jar (or box) in which the gods had imprisoned all the evils in the world, Pandora serves as a 'mythologised' rationalisation for the association between women and disruption/transgression. Whereas Prometheus' transgression was (at least in Aeschylus' version in the play Prometheus Bound) a deliberate and rational act motivated by his conviction that the gods were unjust in withholding the gift of fire.
79. Thus the 'story of the woman' tends to be figured as highly 'conventionalised'. Generally, it takes the form of a plea for sympathy whereby she seeks to convince the hero that she is the victim of poverty and sexual exploitation. In DEAD RECKONING, for example, Coral complains that it is a "blue, sick world", in an attempt to explain to Rip why she married for money. In THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE, Cora, like Coral, complains her early poverty, about how she has to work in a "hash-house" and put up with mauling from the customers. In TOO LATE FOR TEARS, Jane Palmer complains about a less extreme but equally as claustrophobic poverty, saying her family was "hungry poor . . . white-collar poor. The kind of people who can't keep up with the Jones' and die a little day because they can't". In each instance, the woman seeks to justify her desire for security or luxury, and also to validate her deliberate use of her sexuality in order to gain this. Such a way of securing money runs counter to the 'masculine' economic system and threatens the security and predominance of male desire (for the woman 'manipulates' the desire of a old/wealthy man in order to realise her own desires). With such women as Phyllis in DOUBLE INDEMNITY and Helen Morrison in THE BLUE DAHLIA, there is a more explicit casting of the woman's desire to 'better herself' in terms of the 'criminal' (leading in each case to violence against the family). With Phyllis, there is - compared to DEAD

RECKONING and THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE- a marked detachment of 'sympathy' from her story, for it represents not so much a lament about an unfair world as a complaint against any man who seeks to control her (for she says of her husband, "*he keeps me on a leash so tight I can't breathe*"). The 'conventionalising of the 'woman's story' within the 'tough' thriller serves generally to bracket the dissatisfactions women find with their cultural/social 'options' within a dominating context of male desire and male authority. The 'erotic' woman is strongly desired by the hero because of her 'difference' from other, more conventional women, but at the same time this very 'difference' suggests that her desires may not be as easy to 'satisfy', that she may pose a challenge to the hero's own 'masculine competence'. Thus, in DOUBLE INDEMNITY and DEAD RECKONING, the woman's 'story' turns out to be a deceitful ploy to 'ensnare' the hero, ultimately revealed to be a 'cover story' for her ruthless 'masculine' ambition.

80. Johnston (op. cit.; pp. 103-104) suggests that Neff is precisely excited by Phyllis' incongruity as a suburban housewife, and by the possibility of 'social excess' she represents. The extended, playful badinage scene which culminates their first meeting particularly indicates this. Phyllis tells Neff that his is 'going too fast' in regard to his pursuit of her, and she also sets herself up as a figure of law, a traffic-cop. Through his response to the 'game-like' contest of words, Neff signals acceptance of the scenario she constructs and attempts to push it further by submitting himself to her authority (thus offering to establish a 'masochistic contract' with her). Phyllis sidesteps this for the time being through a sharp reference to her husband - which serves not just as a warning about an authority beyond her own (which she ultimately seeks to usurp), but which also furthers her own authority, for she casts herself as the one who sets the schedule for their affair:

PHYLLIS: *"There's a speed-limit in this state, Mr Neff,  
45 miles an hour"*

WALTER: *"How fast was I going, officer?"*

PHYLLIS: *"I'd say around 90"*

WALTER: *"Suppose you get down off your motorcycle and give  
me a ticket?"*

PHYLLIS: *"Suppose I let you off with a warning this time?"*

WALTER: *"Suppose it doesn't take?"*

PHYLLIS: *"Suppose I have to whack you over the knuckles?"*

WALTER: *"Suppose I bust out crying and put my head on your  
shoulder?"*

PHYLLIS: *"Suppose you try putting it on my husband's shoulder?"*

WALTER: *"That tears it"*

81. THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME notably reverses many features of the 'criminal adventure'

narrative. As with the heroes of two Robert Siodmak films, UNCLE HARRY and CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY, Larry Ballantine is represented as totally 'in thrall' to women. Larry is markedly 'pre-adult', denying any responsibility for his own actions and deliberately delegating the determination of his life to a series of women with whom he becomes involved (one of them telling him: *"You're about as dependable as a four-year-old child"*). The principal irony in the film is that Larry never does actually murder his wife - she died accidentally, Larry never having the courage to set his murder-plan in motion - but that before the jury is due to deliver a verdict of "Not Guilty", Larry seeks to throw himself to his death, but is shot dead before he can reach the courtroom window. Larry's patent refusal to 'face up to' his 'responsibilities as a man' leads directly to his death.

82. In the 'tough' thrillers, gambling recurs as a key feature of the 'criminal' world, often as an distortion of 'legitimate' capitalism. In both GILDA and DEAD RECKONING it is associated with the wartime abuse of enterprise, and in many other instances it is explicitly connected to the woman's 'abuse' of money. The gambling-scene in DEAD RECKONING is particularly instructive in this respect. As a means of paying-off 'blackmail' money to Martinelli, Coral loses heavily at roulette, obsessively betting on the numbers 7 and 11. Rip tells her she is betting on the wrong numbers, and he attempts to reassert 'masculine' control, rejecting the 'passive' mode of roulette for the more active, competitive dice-game ('shooting crap') - reasserting control by using Coral's numbers in the right context.
83. Claire Johnston, op. cit.; p. 101
84. *ibid.*; p. 102
85. *ibid.*
86. When Neff initially becomes aware of Phyllis' desire to murder her husband - and of his own interest in the proposition - his voice-over commentary provides a suggestively 'phallic' metaphor for the danger and excitement of the adventure: *"I know I had hold of a red-hot poker, and the time to drop it was before it burned my hand off"*.
87. When Keyes gives Neff his warning about the dangers of involvement with women, he says that "Margie" (ie. Phyllis) *"probably drinks from the bottle"*. The connotation here is of the dangers of/fascination with 'orality', of what Claire Johnston refers to as *"social excess"* (p.102) - that is, of the woman as representative of a possibility of satisfaction (and of identification) outside the regime of the phallus (which exceeds or expels the Law). In both THE KILLERS and OUT OF THE PAST there is a vivid 'demonstration' of the dangers involved in the attraction with/by the 'oral

- mother'. It is significant that in *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* the masochistic male desire which marks the heroes of these other films is replaced by a paranoia which is generated by the contradictions within Neff's relationship with Keyes (rather than by a 'masochistic delirium' inspired by the conflict the hero's masculine trajectory and his romantic idealisation of the woman).
88. Claire Johnston, *op. cit.*; pp. 110-111
89. *ibid.*; p. 110
90. Jonathan Buchsbaum; "Tame Wolves and Phony Claims: Paranoia and Film Noir", "Persistence of Vision", nos. 3-4 (Summer 1986); p. 41
91. *ibid.*
92. There is a further parallelism/difference between Smiley and Forbes; whereas Forbes feels himself to be caught in a 'trapped' existence within his family and work, Smiley languishes in jail, a more literal trap in which he is confined because he allowed his desire for the woman to 'exceed the law'.
93. In the home-space, Forbes is very much paralleled with his young son Tommy - Sue tending to treat each, with 'maternalistic' humour, as 'little boys'. One can thus regard Forbes' 'adventure' as an attempt to prove his 'potency' to the wife/mother - to prove to her that he is a 'man' rather than a 'boy'. However, Forbes' very hesitancy in, and fear of, committing himself to an affair with Mona shows an unwillingness to take any potentially drastic steps in proving himself. Forbes can thus be seen actively to forestall the 'challenge' to the wife/mother - he is dissatisfied with the restrictions of his life within the family, but he is fearful of taking any steps that will radically jeopardise this life. The 'nightmare' of his involvement with Smiley and Macdonald is also comparable with the comic-book-inspired nightmares suffered by his son. Each 'nightmare' represents an invasion of 'outside' elements into the home-space, rendering the latter "unheimlich" (literally 'unhomelike', the term used by Freud to describe the 'uncanny').  
*[cf. Sigmund Freud: "The 'Uncanny'" (1919),*  
*Art and Literature: Pelican Freud Library Vol. 14, Harmondsworth (1985); pp. 339-376]*
94. Spencer Selby, *op. cit.*; p. 170.
95. Lotte Eisner, in her book Eritz Lang (*op. cit.*; p. 250), notes that the script contained a 'subjective' montage of Wanley's family at the point where he decides to put down the phone. The elision of this montage in the finished film makes Wanley's decision to tackle the problem himself seem more wilful than 'protective'.
96. Reynold Humphries; Eritz Lang: Genre and Representation in His American Films  
John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore (1989); p. 103

97. Such 'ironizing devices' include the comic use of the radio and a newsreel to 'puncture' Wanley's 'big-time' fantasy, and the continual use of suspense (verging at times on 'black comedy') as a means of offering the spectator a reading of Wanley's actions counterposed to his own.
98. Paul M. Jensen; The Cinema of Fritz Lang, A.S. Barnes & Co., New York (1969); p. 156
99. Jensen's objections to the 'dream-ending' of the film have a wider currency. One major reason for dissatisfaction with the 'dream-device' is that it requires a significant reversal of affect. The spectator's investment in the fiction has suddenly to cope with a rapid transformation of dramatic logic - from 'drama' to 'comedy'. The spectator is, in effect, made the butt of a 'structural joke', and has radically to rework his/her expectations. At the end of the film, the spectator is forced to acknowledge that the position of knowledge which the film constructs for the spectator in relation to Wanley's adventures is actually markedly deficient, whereas it had seemed a position of omniscience. Through most of the film, the spectator is consistently privy to information not possessed by Wanley. For example, as he drives away after hiding Mazard's body, the film cuts to a close-shot of Mazard's straw hat, inadvertently left by Wanley on the back-seat. Then, as the car departs, a combination swish-pan/track/tilt shot reveals to the spectator the tyre-marks Wanley has left behind him. However, in the last instance, this apparent superiority of the spectatorial view rebounds upon the spectator, for he/she is revealed to have radically 'mis-read' the 'evidence' (which is a typical 'Langian' strategy/theme, particularly emphatic in such crime-films as YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE, 1937, and BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT, 1956, where the spectator's knowledge/vision is similarly turned-back upon itself).

## CHAPTER TWELVE: A PROBLEM IN 'ALGEBRA':

DEAD RECKONING AND THE REGIMENTATION OF THE MASCULINE.

100. From the start of Welles' film, the voice-over signals an ironic treatment of Michael O'Hara's status as a hero - for he characterises himself as a foolishly innocent romantic rather than a self-controlled 'tough-guy'. There are several pointed put-downs of Michael's acts of 'heroism' - for example, at the start of the film he saves Elsa from muggers in Central Park, but his voice-over disclaims that this is at all 'heroic' - *"these young fellas were not professionals. And that's probably why I start out in this story a little bit like a hero. Which I most certainly am not"*. Through the course of the film, Michael is repeatedly duped by such characters as Grisby, Bannister and Elsa herself, and he becomes the vehicle for Welles' parody of Hollywood's contemporary representation of 'tough' masculinity.
101. In an item on Channel Four's "The Media Show" on January 28th, 1989, Andrew Britton made the following comment about the male relationships in such contemporary 'vet-films' as FIRST BLOOD (1982), BIRDY (1984), FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY (1988) and RESURRECTED (1988):
- It is absolutely crucial that the male relationship should not be presented as sexual . . . That it should be repeatedly signalled by having the men have liasons with various women along the way, even though the women are treated contemptuously. They have to be established as heterosexual. So I think the appeal is to a male audience which is experiencing at some level various kinds of intensities about men but cannot think of these intensities as gay.*
- This remark similarly describes one of the significant features of DEAD RECKONING.
102. Further consideration of the joke as a strategy of 'bonding' can be found in: Neale and Krutnik, op. cit.; Chapter Ten.
103. Rip, through his discourse, sets himself up as a superior - wiser/older - 'man of the world, who knows life, who knows women. He thus casts himself in a similar 'paternal' role to that Charleston fulfils for Swede in THE KILLERS
104. Interviewed for an LWT "South Bank Show" special on Raymond Chandler (transmitted on November 27th 1988), the contemporary 'hard-boiled' novelist James Elroy (author of The Black Dahlia) remarked: *"To me it's two things, 'hard-boiled' writing. It's the classic language of American violence, and America is a dark, brooding and violent place . . . And it's a language of masculine loneliness"*.
105. Rip concludes every confrontation with an aggressively and obsessively 'hard-boiled' 'wrap-up', whereby he seeks to demonstrate his mastery through language. Perhaps more acutely than any other 'tough' thriller, DEAD RECKONING illustrates how the masculine

'tough-talk' can function as a weapon (and, indeed, the idiomatic character of his language draws profusely, almost exclusively, from the Army-context - it is emphatic, combative 'war-talk').

106. This dialogue, and a similar situation, features also in *I WAKE UP SCREAMING* (TCF, 1942), which was based on a serialized novel by the co-screenwriter of *DEAD RECKONING*, Steve Fisher. Indeed, like *OUT OF THE PAST*, Cronwell's film abounds in references to other 'tough' thrillers of the period.
107. Whereas Rip seeks to deny the differences between himself and Johnny, Martinelli continually asserts his superiority to Krause. Martinelli's is clearly a 'corrupt' regime of authority, for he institutes a rigid distinction between 'master' and 'servant'. Martinelli, although he may profess a revulsion to Krause's psychopathic brutality is the one who gives the orders for its deployment. He is thus all the more powerful by not having to use his own hands. Whereas the Rip-Johnny relationship has been tested in the extreme conditions of war, the Martinelli-Krause pairing suggests the 'corrupt values' of a civilian world in which 'honest' masculine activity and integrity have been replaced by exploitation, subterfuge and criminality. Martinelli describes violence as the "*weapon of the witless*" - a remark which can provocatively be applied to Rip's final assertion of power - but his own 'ingenuity' represents a 'corruption' of masculine reason and initiative.
108. This consideration of the 'confession ritual' is influenced by Michel Foucault's consideration of its functioning, in *The History of Sexuality*, op. cit.; pp. 57-67
109. Coral's 'phallic' desire is marked not just in terms of violence, but also in the disclosure of her ambitious desire for money. When Rip has agreed to run away with Coral, she almost gives herself away in this respect when she insists that in whatever town they end up in, Rip run a taxi-business so that she will not have to touch her own money. As with Kathie in *OUT OF THE PAST* and Jane Palmer in *TOO LATE FOR TEARS*, Coral not only has a strong desire for money but she is also reluctant to use it (another 'perversion' of the male economic system).
110. quoted by Kingsley Canham in *The Hollywood Professionals, Volume 5: Vidor, Cronwell, Leroy*, Tantivy Press, London (1976); p. 104
111. It is worth noting how the 'sexual-discursive' conflicts of *DEAD RECKONING* are particularly inscribed in the film's use of its two stars. By 1947, Bogart's 'tough loner' image was already well-established - and the film uses what one could consider to be Bogart's contemporary 'catch-phrase', when he tells Coral "*You know, you do awful good*" (similarly-worded acknowledgements of the woman's deceitful 'performance' featuring in *THE MALTESE FALCON*; *ACROSS THE PACIFIC*, 1942; *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT*, 1944;

and *THE BIG SLEEP*, 1946). However, apart playing the loner, Bogart had also figured prominently as a 'romantic lead', particularly in *CASABLANCA* and the films he appeared in with Lauren Bacall (with Bogart-and-Bacall one of the most popular of the mid-1940's 'star-teams'). With *DEAD RECKONING*, Columbia sought to capitalise upon Bogart's success with his major Warner Brothers films, by reworking their dialogue, scenes and conflicts - playing off Bogart's loner-image against his Bogart-Bacall image (another film which sets up a similar conflict between the isolated hero/'partnered' star is *DARK PASSAGE*). Bogart is clearly the major star of the film, and in comparison Lizabeth Scott suffers, particularly because her role in the film can be seen in terms of a composite of various female star-images of the period. As John Kobal has noted in his biography of Rita Hayworth (op. cit.; pp. 211-212) this film was originally scheduled as Rita Hayworth's follow-up to *GILDA*, but Scott replaced her when Hayworth was signed up for *LADY FROM SHANGHAI*. Scott was no means as major a star as Hayworth, and if one compares this film with *GILDA*, one can see that *DEAD RECKONING* would have been a significantly different proposition with Hayworth as Coral. Lizabeth Scott is markedly more 'constrained' than Hayworth, Columbia seems to have capitalised upon certain similarities between Scott and Lauren Bacall; in terms of their hair (which also recalls Veronica Lake), their angular features, and husky voice. Indeed in his book *The Paramount Primitives* (Hanlyn, New York (1972); p. 517), James Robert Parrish notes that Scott was regarded by producer Hal B. Wallis, to whom she was under contract, as a direct substitute/replacement for Bacall (her publicity-tag, "The Threat", echoing that of Bacall, "The Voice"). In several scenes Coral/Scott is cast with Rip/Bogart in such a way as emphatically to suggest the Bogart-Bacall pairing in *THE BIG SLEEP*; instead, in the scene where Rip and Coral make plans to leave Gulf City, Coral/Scott wears a beret, jacket and skirt almost identical to that worn by Vivien/Bacall in Howard Hawks' Chandler adaptation. One can see, then, the 'splitting' of Coral-as-character as mirrored in the functioning within the film of Scott-as-star. The instability of the Scott-star image results in the forceful dominance of the 'Bogart-image' (although, as I have suggested, the film uses Bogart in such a way as to suggest the 'instability' within his own star-persona which was to be developed more extensively in later 'psychotic' roles in *IN A LONELY PLACE* and *THE CAINE MUTINY* (1954).

APPENDIX TWO

1. It is worth noting that three of these 'rogue cop' films - THE BIG HEAT, ROGUE COP, and SHIELD FOR MURDER - were based on novels by William P. McGivern.
2. The woman-detective tends to be more common in comedy-films, as in THE MAD MISS MANTON (1937) - where the heroine is still not 'allowed' to function as detective on her own, but is accompanied by a group of female investigators who pursue their quest in terms of a diverting 'socialite' adventure. Significantly, despite their apparant 'liberalism' in the centring upon a female investigator, more recent thrillers like COMA (1978) and THE CHINA SYNDROME (1979) offer a similarly constrained place for the 'active' woman-detective (as Elizabeth Cowie has considered in her article "The Popular Film as Progressive Text - A discussion of COMA, Part 1", op. cit.; especially pp. 71-79)
3. Mary Ann Doane: The Desire to Desire, op. cit.; pp. 123-154; and also her article "CAUGHT and REBECCA: the Inscription of Femininity as Absence", Enclitic vol 5 no 2/ vol 6 no 1(Fall/Spring 1982)
4. Reynold Humphries, op. cit.; pp. 136-152
5. Mary Ann Doane: The Desire To Desire, op. cit.; pp. 123-154
6. Diane Waldman: "'At Last I Can Tell It To Someone', Feminine Point of View and Subjectivity in the Gothic Romance Film of the 1940's" Cinema Journal vol 23 no 2 (Winter 1984); pp. 44-47
7. *ibid.*
8. Thomas Elsaesser: "Tales Of Sound and Fury", op. cit.; p. 17
9. *ibid.*
10. See, for example, John Gabree: Gangsters. From Little Caesar to The Godfather, Galahad Books, New York (1973); 48-54  
Eugene Roscow in his book Born To Lose: The Gangster Film in America (Oxford University Press, New York 1978; p. 227) describes G-MEN as exploiting "every characteristic that has made gangster films popular except the gangster protagonist".
11. Sigmund Freud: "Psychoanalytical Notes of an Autobiographical Account of A Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)" [SCHREBER], in Case Histories II: the Pelican Freud Library Volume 9, Pelican, Harmondsworth (1979); pp. 207-213
12. Borde and Chaumeton, op. cit.; p. 8  
Quoted/translated in Jon Tuska, op. cit.; p. 246
13. Jon Tuska, op. cit.; p. 192
14. David Bordwell: Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, op. cit.; pp. 81-82

15. When Jenny first dyes her hair, at the start of the film, it represents a self-motivated choice to 'reform', to 'reconstitute' herself. But once such a possibility has been established, she is no longer in control - she has to follow either the 'rules' laid down by Griff or the 'inverted' regimentation required by Harry Wesson. Griff's control over her is stressed economically by the film when, as they begin their 'love on the run' adventure, he commands her to dye her hair black so that she will not be recognised. Earlier in the film, Griff stresses his power over her appearance when he shows her 'photographic evidence' of the ageing experienced by a woman serving a long-term jail sentence - a stern warning to 'keep out of trouble'.
16. Quoted in Jon Halliday: Sirk on Sirk, Secker and Warburg/BFI, London (1971); p. 78
17. For an influential account of Sirk's strategies of 'distantiation', see:  
Paul Willemsen; (i) "Distantiation and Douglas Sirk",  
    "Screen", vol 12 no 2 (Summer 1971)  
    (ii) "Towards an Analysis of the Sirkian System",  
    "Screen", vol 13 no 4 (Winter 1972/3)
18. Douglas Sirk, in Halliday, op. cit.; p. 78
19. As Laura Mulvey has noted, such overtly enforced 'happy endings' often do not seal off the repercussions of the drama so much as amplify the tensions:
- as Sirk and other critics have pointed out, the strength of the melodramatic form lies in the amount of dust the story raises along the road, a cloud of over-determined irreconcilables which put up a resistance to being neatly settled in the last five minutes.*
- [Mulvey; "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama" in "Movie" no 25 (Winter 1977/78), reprinted in: Christine Gledhill ed.: Home is Where the Heart Is, BFI, London (1987); p. 76].
20. The 'awesome spectacle' of the 'woman-with-the-gun' also figures prominently in such 'sexualised' Westerns as the King Vidor/David O. Selznick spectacular DUEL IN THE SUN (1946), RAMROD (1947), Nicholas Ray's JOHNNY GUITAR (1953), and Samuel Fuller's FORTY GUNS (1957) - as well as two particularly 'excessive' King Vidor melodramas BEYOND THE FOREST (1949) and RUBY GENTRY (1952).
21. Such 'masculine testing' is a common feature of the Western or the male adventure film - as in the shooting matches between Matthew Garth (Montgomery Clift) and Cherry Valance (John Ireland) in Howard Hawks' RED RIVER (1948) and between Kurt (Hardy Kruger) and 'Chips' (Gérard Blain) in Hawks' HATARI! (1962).

## FILMOGRAPHY

## SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

Hollywood Crime Thrillers, 1940-1950

Included here are the majority of the 1940's thrillers referred to above, plus others which have been included in other considerations of film noir or have been seen as having 'noirish' inflexions. I have concentrated in this filmography upon those thrillers which are hero-centred and set in contemporary settings, but I have also included certain period thrillers (for example, THE SUSPECT, REIGN OF TERROR and SO EVIL, MY LOVE), woman-centred thrillers (for example, REBECCA and THE RECKLESS MOMENT), and others (such as THE LOST WEEKEND, a 'problem-picture' which has 'noirish' hallucination sequences). In no way would I claim that this is a complete filmography of film noir: because that whole subject is so contentious, such a thing is impossible.

The following has been compiled from various sources, but particularly Silver and Ward's Film Noir and Robert J. Ottoson's A Reference Guide to the American Film Noir (see bibliography). My policy in regard to the frequent discrepancies in chronology has been to date the films in relation to the date of their first public showings. Thus, for example, MURDER MY SWEET, which was originally released on December 18th 1944 - with the title FAREWELL, MY LOVELY - and then rereleased in March 1945 is included as a film of 1944. Similarly, THEY LIVE BY NIGHT was first released - as TWISTED ROAD - in June 1948, and rereleased more successfully in November 1949 - and is included here as

a film of 1948. There can, of course, be a significant lag between the completion of production and the film's release: thus, for example, the filming of THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI was finished in February 1947, but it was not released until June 1948 (owing to retakes, extensive re-editing and Columbia's apparant lack of confidence in the film).

FILMOGRAPHY

FILMS (In order of release)	DIST.	PRODUCTION CO. (Where different)	DIRECTOR	STARS
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## 1940

REBECCA	UA.	Seiz.	Alfred Hitchcock	Laurence Olivier; Joan Fontaine; George Sanders
STRANGER ON THE THIRD FLOOR	RKO.	-	Boris Ingster	Peter Lorre; John McGuire; Margaret Tallichet

## 1941

HIGH SIERRA	WB.	-	Raoul Walsh	Ida Lupino; Humphrey Bogart; Alan Curtis
AMONG THE LIVING	PARA.	-	Stuart Heisler	Albert Dekker; Susan Hayward; Harry Carey
THE MALTESE FALCON	WB.	-	John Huston	Humphrey Bogart; Mary Astor; Peter Lorre

## 1942

I WAKE UP SCREAMING	TCF.	-	H. Bruce Humberstone	Betty Grable; Victor Mature; Laird Cregar
JOHNNY EAGER	MGM.	-	Mervyn LeRoy	Robert Taylor; Lana Turner; Van Heflin
THIS GUN FOR HIRE	PARA.	Richard M. Blumenthal Prods.	Frank Tuttle	Alan Ladd; Veronica Lake; Robert Preston
MOONTIDE	TCF.	-	Archie Mayo	Jean Gabin; Ida Lupino; Thomas Mitchell
THE GLASS KEY	PARA.	-	Stuart Heisler	Brian Donlevy; Veronica Lake; Alan Ladd
STREET OF CHANCE	PARA.	-	Jack Hively	Burgess Meredith; Claire Trevor; Louise Platt

## 1943

SHADOW OF A DOUBT	UNIV.	-	Alfred Hitchcock	Teresa Wright; Joseph Cotten; Macdonald Carey
THE FALLEN SPARROW	RKO.	-	Richard Wallace	John Garfield; Maureen O'Hara Walter Slezak
WHISPERING FOOTSTEPS	REP.	-	Howard Bretherton	John Hubbard; Rita Quigley; Joan Blair

## 1944

PHANTOM LADY	UNIV.	-	Robert Siodmak	Franchot Tone; Ella Raines; Alan Curtis
DOUBLE INDEMNITY	PARA.	-	Billy Wilder	Fred MacMurray; Barbara Stanwyck; Edward G. Robinson
GASLIGHT	MGM.	-	George Cukor	Charles Boyer; Ingrid Bergman Joseph Cotten
THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW	RKO.	International Pictures	Fritz Lang	Edward G. Robinson; Joan Bennett; Raymond Massey
LAURA	TCF.	-	Otto Preminger	Gene Tierney; Dana Andrews; Clifton Webb
WHEN STRANGERS MARRY	MONO	King Bros.	William Castle	Dean Jagger; Kim Hunter; Robert Mitchum
MURDER, MY SWEET	RKO.	-	Edward Dmytryk	Dick Powell; Claire Trevor; Ann Shirley
EXPERIMENT PERILOUS	RKO.	-	Jacques Tourneur	Hedy Lamarr, Paul Lukas; George Brent

1945

THE SUSPECT	UNIV.	-	Robert Siodmak	Charles Laughton, Henry Daniell; Rosalind Ivan
STRANGE ILLUSION	PRC.	-	Edward G. Ulmer	James Lydon; Warren William; Sally Eilers
TWO O'CLOCK COURAGE	RKO.	-	Anthony Mann	Tom Conway; Ann Rutherford; Richard Lane
BEWITCHED	MGM.	-	Arch Oboler	Phyllis Thaxter; Stephen McNally; Edmond Gwenn
UNCLE HARRY	UNIV.	Charles K. Feldman Productions	Robert Siodmak	George Sanders; Geraldine Fitzgerald; Ella Raines
JOHNNY ANGEL	RKO.	-	Edward L. Marin	George Raft; Claire Trevor; Signe Hasso
THE HOUSE ON 92nd STREET	TCF	-	Henry Hathaway	William Eythe; Lloyd Nolan; Signe Hasso
MILDRED PIERCE	WB.	-	Michael Curtiz	Joan Crawford; Jack Carson; Zachary Scott
ANGER SIGNAL	WB.	-	Robert Florey	Faye Emerson; Zachary Scott; Dick Erdimann
MY NAME IS JULIA ROSS	COL.	-	Joseph H. Lewis	Nina Foch; Dame May Whitty; George Macready
RETOUR	PRC.	-	Edgar G. Ulmer	Tom Neal; Ann Savage; Claudia Drake
THE SPIDER	TCF.	-	Robert D. Webb	Richard Conte; Faye Marlowe; Kurt Kreiger
WILLEN ANGEL	TCF.	-	Otto Preminger	Dana Andrews; Alice Faye; Linda Darnell
WORNERS	RKO.	-	Edward Dmytryk	Dick Powell; Walter Slezak; Micheline Cheirel
WAVE HER TO HEAVEN	TCF.	-	John M. Stahl	Gene Tierney; Cornel Wilde; Jean Crain
THE LOST WEEKEND	PARA.	-	Billy Wilder	Ray Milland; Jane Wyman; Philip Terry
WILSON STREET	UNIV.	Diana Productions	Fritz Lang	Edward G. Robinson; Joan Bennett; Don Duryea
WILLOW	UA.	Selz.	Alfred Hitchcock	Ingrid Bergman; Gregory Peck; Leo G. Carroll

THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE	UNIV.	Selz.	Robert Siodmak	Dorothy McGuire; George Brent; Kent Smith
SHOCK	TCF.	-	Alfred Werker	Vincent Price; Lynn Bari; Frank Latimore
FEAR	MONO.	-	Alfred Zeisler	Warren William; Ann Gwynne; Peter Cookson
DEADLINE AT DAWN	RKO.	-	Harold Clurman	Susan Hayward; Paul Lukas; Bill Williams
STRANGE IMPERSONATION	REP.	-	Anthony Mann	Brenda Marshall; William Gargan; Hillary Brooke
THE DARK CORNER	TCF.	-	Henry Hathaway	Mark Stevens; Lucille Ball; Clifton Webb
NIGHT EDITOR	COL.	-	Henry Levin	William Gargan; Janis Carter; Jeff Donnell
THE BLUE DAHLIA	PARA.	-	George Marshall	Alan Ladd; Veronica Lake; William Bendix
GILDA	COL.	-	Charles Vidor	Rita Hayworth; Glenn Ford; George Macready
THE GLASS ALIBI	REP.	-	W. Lee Wilder	Paul Kelly; Douglas Fowley; Anne Gwynne
THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE	MGM.	-	Tay Garnett	Lana Turner; John Garfield; Cecil Kellaway
THE STRANGER	RKO.	International Pictures	Orson Welles	Edward G. Robinson; Loretta Young; Orson Welles
SOMEWHERE IN THE NIGHT	TCF.	-	Joseph L. Mankiewicz	John Hodiak; Nancy Guild; Lloyd Nolan
SUSPENSE	MONO.	King Bros.	Frank Tuttle	Belita; Barry Sullivan; Albert Dekker
STRANGE TRIANGLE	TCF.	-	Ray McCarey	Signe Hasso; Preson Foster; Anabel Shaw
INSIDE JOB	UNIV.	-	Jean Yarbrough	Preston Foster; Alan Curtis; Ann Rutherford
BLACK ANGEL	UNIV.	-	Roy William Neil	Don Duryea; June Vincent; Peter Lorre
THE KILLERS	UNIV.	Mark Hellinger Prods.	Robert Siodmak	Edmond O'Brien; Ava Gardner; Burt Lancaster
THE BIG SLEEP	WB.	-	Howard Hawks	Humphrey Bogart; Lauren Bacall; John Ridgely
CRACK-UP	RKO.	-	Irving Reis	Pat O'Brien; Claire Trevor; Herbert Marshall

THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS	PARA.	Hal B. Wallis Prods.	Lewis Milestone	Barbara Stanwyck; Van Heflin Lizabeth Scott
SO DARK THE NIGHT	COL.	-	Joseph H. Lewis	Steven Geray; Micheline Cheivel; Eugene Borden
NOBODY LIVES FOREVER	WB.	-	Jean Negulesco	John Garfield; Geraldine Fitzgerald; Walter Brennan
THE DARK MIRROR	UNIV.	Inter-John Inc.	Robert Siodmak	Olivia deHavilland; Lew Ayres; Thomas Mitchell
NOCTURNE	RKO.	-	Edward L. Maria	George Raft; Lynn Bari; Virginia Huston
THE CHASE	UA.	Nero Producers	Arthur Ripley	Michelle Morgan; Robert Cummings; Steve Cochran
UNDERCURRENT	MGM.	-	Vincente Minnelli	Katherine Hepburn; Robert Taylor; Robert Mitchum
THE MAN I LOVE	WB.	-	Raoul Walsh	Ida Lupino; Robert Alda; Andrea King

## 1947

DEAD RECKONING	COL.	-	John Cromwell	Humphrey Bogart; Lizabeth Scott; Morris Carnovsky
LADY IN THE LAKE	MGM.	-	Robert Montgomery	Robert Montgomery; Lloyd Nolan; Audrey Totter
BLIND SPOT	COL.	-	Robert Gordon	Chester Morris; Constance Dowling; Steven Gregory
THE BRASHER DOUBLOON	TCF.	-	John Brahm	George Montgomery; Nancy Guild; Conrad Janis
BOOMERANG	TCF.	-	Elia Kazan	Dane Andrews; Jane Wyatt; Lee J. Cobb
NORA PRENTISS	WB.	-	Vincent Sherman	Ann Sheridan; Kent Smith Bruce Bennett
FALL GUY	MONO	-	Reginald LeBorg	Clifford Penn; Teala Loring; Robert Armstrong

RISS OF DEATH	TCF.	-	Henry Hathaway	Victor Mature; Brian Donlevy Richard Widmark
RAILROADED	PRC.	-	Anthony Mann	John Ireland; Sheila Ryan; Hugh Beaumont
DARK PASSAGE	WB.	-	Delmer Davis	Humphrey Bogart; Lauren Bacall; Agnes Moorehead
THE UNSUSPECTED	WB.	Michael Curtiz Prods.	Michael Curtiz	Joan Caulfield; Claude Rains; Audrey Totter
RIDE THE PINK HORSE	UNIV.	-	Robert Montgomery	Robert Montgomery; Thomas Gomez; Rita Conde
OUT OF THE PAST	RKO.	-	Jacques Tourneur	Robert Mitchum; Jane Greer; Hilda Douglas
WHISPERING CITY	EL.	-	Fedor Ozep	Helmut Dantine; Mary Anderson; Paul Lukas
THE GANGSTER	AA.	King Bros.	Gordon Wiles	Barry Sullivan; Belita; John Lorring
THE HIGH WALL	MGM.	-	Curtis Bernhardt	Robert Taylor; Audrey Totter Herbert Marshall

## 1948

T-MEN	EL.	Reliance Pictures	Anthony Mann	Dennis O'Keefe; Alfred Ryder Mary Meade
SLEEP, MY LOVE	UA.	Triangle Prods.	Douglas Sirk	Claudette Colbert; Robert Cummings; Don Ameche
I WALK ALONE	PARA.	Hal B. Wallis Prods.	Byron Haskin	Burt Lancaster; Lizabeth Scott; Kirk Douglas
THE SECRET BEYOND THE DOOR	UNIV.	-	Fritz Lang	Joan Bennett; Michael Redgrave; Anne Revere
CALL NORTHSIDE 777	TCF.	-	Henry Hathaway	James Stewart; Richard Conte Lee J. Cobb
TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH	COL.	-	Robert Stevenson	Dick Powell; Signe Hasso; Ludwig Donath
THE NAKED CITY	UNIV.	Mark Hellinger Prods.	Jules Dassin	Barry Fitzgerald; Howard Duff; Dorothy Hart
THE HUNTED	AA.	-	Jack Bernhard	Preston Foster; Belita; Pierre Watkin
THE BIG CLOCK	PARA.	-	John Farrow	Ray Milland; Charles Laughton; Maureen O'Sullivan
BERLIN EXPRESS	RKO.	-	Jacques Tourneur	Merle Oberon; Robert Ryan; Charles Corrin
THEY LIVE BY NIGHT	RKO.	-	Nicholas Ray	Cathy O'Donnell; Farley Granger; Howard Da Silva

THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI	COL.	-	Orson Welles	Rita Hayworth; Orson Welles; Everett Sloane
I WOULDN'T BE IN YOUR SHOES	MONO.	-	William Nigh	Don Castle; Elyse Knox; Regis Toomey
RAW DEAL	EL.	Reliance Pictures	Anthony Mann	Dennis O'Keefe; Claire Trevor; Marsha Hunt
THE STREET WITH NO NAME	TCF.	-	William Keighley	Mark Stevens; Richard Widmark; Lloyd Nolan
RACE STREET	RKO.	-	Edward L. Marin	George Raft; William Bendix; Marilyn Maxwell
CANON CITY	EL.	Brian Foy Prods.	Crane Wilbur	Scott Brady; Jeff Corey; Whit Bissell
SHED NO TEARS	EL.	-	Jean Yarbrough	Wallace Ford; June Vincent; Robert Scott
KEY LARGO	WB.	-	John Huston	Humphrey Bogart; Edward G. Robinson; Lauren Bacall
LARCENY	UNIV.	-	George Sherman	John Payne; Joan Caulfield; Dan Duryea
THE PITFALL	UA.	Regal Films	Andre de Toth	Dick Powell, Elizabeth Scott; Jane Wyatt
HOLLOW TRIUMPH (aka THE SCAR)	EL.	Hollow Triumph Inc.	Steve Sekely	Paul Henreid; Joan Bennett; Eduard Franz
BODYGUARD	RKO.	-	Richard Fleischer	Lawrence Tierney; Priscilla Lane; Philip Reed
SORRY, WRONG NUMBER	PARA.	Hal B. Wallis Prods.	Anatole Litvak	Barbara Stanwyck; Burt Lancaster; Ann Richards
MOONRISE	REP.	Charles K. Feldman Prods.	Frank Borzage	Dane Clark; Gail Russell; Ethel Barrymore
CRY OF THE CITY	TCF.	-	Robert Siodmark	Victor Mature; Richard Conte; Fred Clark
BEHIND LOCKED DOORS	EL.	ARC. Prods.	Budd Boetticher	Lucille Bremer; Richard Carlson; Douglas Fowley
THE NIGHT HAS 1000 EYES	PARA.	-	John Farrow	Edward G. Robinson; Gail Russell; John Lund
KISS THE BLOOD OFF MY HANDS	UNIV.	Harold-Hecht-Norma	Norman Foster	Joan Fontaine; Burt Lancaster; Robert Newton
ROAD HOUSE	TCF.	-	Jean Negulesco	Ida Lupino; Cornel Wilde; Richard Widmark
THE DARK PAST	COL.	-	Rudolph Mate	William Holden; Nina Foch; Lee J. Cobb
FORCE OF EVIL	MGM	Roberts Prods.	Abraham Polonsky	John Garfield; Beatrice Pearson; Thomas Gomez
INCIDENT	MONO.	-	William Beaudine	Warren Douglas; Jane Frazer; Joyce Compton

1949

CRISS CROSS	UNIV.	-	Robert Siodmak	Burt Lancaster; Yvonne de Carlo; Dan Duryea
THE ACCUSED	PARA.	-	William Dieterle	Loretta Young; Robert Cummings; Wendell Corey
SHOCKPROOF	COL.	-	Douglas Sirk	Cornel Wilde; Patricia Knight; John Baragrey
ACT OF VIOLENCE	MGM.	-	Fred Zimmerman	Van Heflin; Robert Ryan; Janet Leigh
A WOMAN'S SECRET	RKO.	-	Nicholas Ray	Maureen O'Hara; Melvyn Douglas; Gloria Grahame
FLAXY MARTIN	WB.	-	Richard Bare	Zachary Scott; Virginia Mayo; Dorothy Malone
CAUGHT	MGM.	Enterprise Prods.	Max Ophuls	James Mason; Barbara Bel Geddes; Robert Ryan
KNOCK ON ANY DOOR	COL.	Santana Prods.	Nicholas Ray	Humphrey Bogart; John Derek; George Macready
HE WALKED BY NIGHT	PARA.	Bryan Foy Prods.	Alfred Werker	Richard Basehart; Scott Brady; Roy Roberts
THE BRIBE	MGM.	-	Robert Z. Leonard	Robert Taylor; Ava Gardner; Charles Laughton
THE CLAY PIGEON	RKO.	-	Richard Fleischer	Bill Williams; Barbara Hale Richard Quine
THE SET-UP	RKO.	-	Robert Wise	Robert Ryan; Audrey Totter; George Tobias
CITY ACROSS THE RIVER	UNIV.	-	Maxwell Shane	Stephen McNally; Barbara Whiting; Peter Fernandez
THE UNDERCOVER MAN	COL.	Robert Rossen Prods.	Joseph H. Lewis	Glenn Ford; Nina Foch; James Whitmore
THE CROOKED WAY	UA.	La Brea Prods.	Robert Florey	John Payne; Sonny Tufts; Ellen Drew
MANHANDLED	PARA.	Pine-Thomas Prods.	Lewis R. Foster	Dorothy Lamour; Dan Duryea; Sterling Hayden
ILLEGAL ENTRY	UNIV.	-	Frederick deCordova	Howard Duff; Marta Toren; George Brent
FOLLOW ME QUIETLY	RKO.	-	Richard Fleischer	William Lundigan; Dorothy Patrick; Jeff Corey

TOO LATE FOR TEARS	UA.	Hunt Stromberg Prods.	Byron Haskin	Lizab <del>eth</del> Scott; Dan Duryea; Arthur Kennedy
JOHNNY STOOL PIGEON	UNIV.	-	William Castle	Howard Duff; Dan Duryea; Shelly Winters
SO EVIL, MY LOVE	PARA.	Hal B. Wallis Prods.	Lewis Allen	Ray Milland; Ann Todd; Geraldine Fitzgerald
THE WINDOW	RKO.	-	Ted Tetzlaff	Barbara Hale; Bobby Driscoll Arthur Kennedy
SCENE OF THE CRIME	MGM.	-	Roy Rowland	Van Johnson; Gloria deHaven; Tom Drake
WHITE HEAT	WB.	-	Raoul Walsh	James Cagney; Virginia Mayo; Edmond O'Brien
THIEVES HIGHWAY	TCF.	-	Jules Dassin	Richard Conte; Valentina Cortesa; Lee J. Cobb
TRAPPED	EL.	-	Richard Fleischer	Lloyd Bridges; John Hoyt; Barbara Payton
BEYOND THE FOREST	WB.	-	King Vidor	Bette Davis; Joseph Cotten; David Brian
ABANDONED	UNIV.	-	Joseph M. Newman	Dennis O'Keefe; Gale Storm; Jeff Chandler
BORDER INCIDENT	MGM.	-	Anthony Mann	Ricardo Montalban; George Murphy; Howard daSilva
CHICAGO DEADLINE	PARA.	-	Lewis Allen	Alan Ladd; Donna Reed; June Havoc
THE RECKLESS MOMENT	COL.	Walter Wanger Prods.	Max Ophuls	James Mason; Joan Bennett; Geraldine Brooks
PORT OF NEW YORK	EL.	-	Laslo Benedek	Scott Brady; Richard Rober ; Yul Brynner
UNDERTOW	UNIV.	-	William Castle	Scott Brady; John Russell; Dorothy Hart
WHIRLPOOL	TCF.	-	Otto Preminger	Gene Tierney; Jose Ferrer; Richard Conte
WOMAN IN HIDING	UNIV	-	Michael Gordon	Ida Lupino; Howard Duff; Stephen McNally
REIGN OF TERROR	UNIV	-	Anthony Mann	Robert Cummings; Arlene Dahl; Richard Basehart

THE FILE ON THELMA JORDAN	PARA.	Hal B. Wallis Prods.	Robert Siodmak	Barbara Stanwyck; Wendell Corey; Paul Kelly
TENSION	MGM.	-	John Berry	Richard Basehart; Audrey Totter; Cyd Charisse
GUN CRAZY	UA.	King Bros.	Joseph H. Lewis	Peggy Cummins; John Dall; Berry Kroeger
RED LIGHT	UA.	Roy del Ruth Prods.	Roy del Ruth	George Raft; Virginia Mayo; Gene Lockhart
GUILTY BYSTANDER	Film Classics	Laurel Films & Edmond L. Dorfman	Joseph Lerner	Zachary Scott; Faye Emerson; Mary Boland
BACKFIRE	WB.	-	Vincent Sherman	Gordon Macrae; Virginia Mayo; Edmond O'Brien
THE TATTOED STRANGER	RKO.	-	Edward J. Montague	John Miles; Patricia White; Walter Kinsella
THE BLACK HAND	MGM.	-	Richard Thorpe	Gene Kelly; J. Carrol Naish; Teresa Celli
THE CAPTURE	RKO.	-	John Sturges	Lew Ayres; Teresa Wright; Victor Jory
SIDE STREET	MGM.	-	Anthony Mann	Farley Granger; Cathy O'Donnell; James Craig
ONE-WAY STREET	UNIV.	Leonard Goldstein Prods.	Hugo Fregonese	James Mason; Marta Toren; Dan Duryea
D.O.A.	UA.	Harry M. Popkin Prods.	Rudolph Mate	Edmond O'Brien; Pamela Britton; Luther Adler
IN A LONELY PLACE	COL.	Santana Prods.	Nicholas Ray	Humphrey Bogart; Gloria Grahame; Frank Lovejoy
THE ASPHALT JUNGLE	MGM.	-	John Huston	Sterling Hayden; Louis Calhern; Jean Hagen
DESTINATION MURDER	RKO.	Prominent Pictures	Edward L. Cahn	Joyce Mackenzie; Stanley Clements; Hard Hatfield
ARMORED CAR ROBBERY	RKO.	-	Richard Fleischer	Charles McGraw; Adele Jurgens; William Talman
NIGHT AND THE CITY	TCF.	-	Jules Dassin	Richard Widmark; Gene Tierney; Googie Withers
CAGED	WB.	-	John Cromwell	Eleanor Parker; Agnes Moorehead; Ellen Corby
THIS SIDE OF THE LAW	WB.	-	Richard Bare	Viveca Lindfors; Kent Smith; Janis Paige
WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS	TCF.	-	Otto Preminger	Dana Andrews; Gene Tierney; Gary Merrill
711 OCEAN DRIVE	COL.	Essaness Pictures	Joseph M. Newman	Edmond O'Brien; Joanne Drew; Donald Porter

THE LAWLESS	PARA.	Pine-Thomas Prods.	Joseph Losey	Macdonald Carey; Gail Russell John Sands
MYSTERY STREET	MGM.	-	John Sturges	Ricardo Montalban; Sally Forest; Bruce Bennett
PANIC IN THE STREETS	TCF.	-	Elia Kazan	Richard Widmark; Paul Douglas; Barbara Bel Geddes
CONVICTED	COL.	-	Harry Levin	Glenn Ford; Broderick Crawford; Millard Mitchell
KISS TOMMORROW GOODBYE	WB.	A William Cagney Production	Gordon Douglas	James Cagney; Barbara Payton Helena Carter
THE SLEEPING CITY	UNIV.	-	George Sherman	Richard Conte; Colleen Gray; Peggy Dow
SHAKEDOWN	UNIV.	-	Joe Pevney	Howard Duff; Brian Donlevy; Peggy Dow
UNION STATION	PARA.	-	Rudolph Mate	William Holden; Nancy Olson; Barry Fitzgerald
EDGE OF DOOM	RKO.	Samuel Goldwyn Prods.	Mark Robson	Dana Andrews; Farley Granger Joan Evans
THE BREAKING POINT	WB.	-	Michael Curtiz	John Garfield; Patricia Neal Phyllis Thaxter
BETWEEN MIDNIGHT AND DAWN	COL.	-	Gordon Douglas	Mark Stevens; Edmond O'Brien; Gale Storm
NO WAY OUT	TCF	-	Joseph L. Mankiewicz	Richard Widmark; Sidney Poitier; Linda Darnell
DARK CITY	PARA.	Hal B. Wallis Prods.	William Dieterle	Charlton Heston; Lizabeth Scott; Viveca Lindfors
WOMAN ON THE RUN	UNIV.	-	Norman Foster	Ann Sheridan; Dennis O'Keefe; Robert Keith
THE SUN SETS AT DAWN	EL.	-	Paul H. Sloane	Philip Shawn; Sally Parr; Howard St. John
DIAL 1119	MGM.	-	Gerald Mayer	Marshall Thompson; Virginia Field; Andrea King
WALK SOFTLY STRANGER	RKO.	-	Robert Stevenson	Joseph Cotten; Valli; Spring Byington
SOUTHSIDE 1-1000	AA.	King Bros.	Boris Ingster	Don deFore; Andrea King; George Tobias
HIGHWAY 301	WB.	-	Andrew L. Stone	Steve Cochran; Virginia Grey; Wally Cassell
TRY AND GET ME	UA.	Robert Stillman Prods	Cyril Enfield	Frank Lovejoy; Kathleen Ryan Richard Carlson
HUNT THE MAN DOWN	RKO.	-	George Archainbaud	Gig Young; Lynn Roberts; Mary Anderson
UNDER THE GUN	UNIV.	-	Ted Tetzlaff	Richard Conte; Audrey Totter John McIntire

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