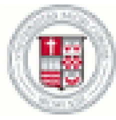

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SPRING 2002

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HELEN ADAMS

THE PORTRAYAL OF WAR IN THE MOVIE MUSICAL

In one sense, the subject of war would appear to be incongruous as an element of plot in the movie musical. The musical has been, for at least the first two or three decades of its existence, the ultimate escapist vehicle for its audience—"a kind of comfort, a false mirror like Snow White's stepmother's" (Bernardo Bertolucci, in Oumano 289). Even with the heightened realism that entered the genre beginning in the 1950s with the film *Oklahoma* and its psychopathic antagonist Jud Fry, the ultimate reality of war remains an almost impossible challenge to set to music and choreography.

However, war is also almost impossible to ignore, in the movie musical genre as in any other art form, because it has been such an important factor in twentieth-century history as well as in the history of every previous century. Verdi's opera *Il Trovatore* is reputed to have started a small revolution in 1853, perhaps the only example of musical theater impacting history instead of the reverse. If art usually does imitate life, instead of life imitating art as it did in the case of Verdi's opera, then art must reconcile with the reality of two world wars, which consumed the attention and energy of its audience over much of the first half of this century. In addition, there are wars in our more recent past which have perhaps been smaller but even more controversial than the world wars.

From its beginnings with the advent of sound in film, through World War II, and into the 1950s, the musical did not attempt to deal extensively with the real world at all, let alone with a subject as brutally real as that of war. In fact, during the 1940s the musical offered the fantasy and escape that the public wanted most. With the rationing of many

other luxury goods making the movies a popular and available outlet for spending money, audiences made the musical the most popular genre of the war years (Kobal 203). This period of musical film history has been referred to as "the golden years of the Hollywood musical" (Kobal 201).

Some dramatic movie plots of the period portrayed "sadistic Nazis and perverted Orientals" (Kobal 202) in the propaganda films that immediately followed America's entrance into the war; later, others dealt with the effects of war on society, in films like the 1946 classic *The Best Years of Our Lives*. Producer Samuel Goldwyn is quoted as having declared about this film, "I don't care if [the film] makes a nickel—I just want every man, woman and child in America to see it" (http://www.MovieDb/showmovie 1). In contrast, the musical portrayed the war through stories about soldiers painting the town while on leave in New York or Hollywood, USO canteens dedicated to entertaining servicemen with the music of one big band after another, and the glorified lives of real, patriotic Americans. Alternatively, the subject was avoided altogether in favor of pure fantasy.

For example, the film *Anchors Aweigh* (1945), directed by George Sidney and starring Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, and Kathryn Grayson, tells the story of two sailors on leave in Hollywood, where they meet a beautiful movie extra with ambitions of musical stardom. The two sailors are first seen in the film as heroes being awarded medals in a ceremony held "on board". a sterile white stage and backdrop that represents a battleship despite the lack of any equipment that would indicate this to be a war vessel. The film ends in the same location with both sailors, to the music of pianist and conductor José Iturbi, embracing the girls they have met and fallen in love with while on leave. This "battleship" is the sole reference to the war that is made in the film, except for the fact that the main characters are not just sailors but heroic sailors. In this minor capacity the movie becomes a vehicle for glorifying the war effort. There is also an ongoing Hollywood stereotype of the sailor as an adventurous and romantic lead, which in or out of wartime makes him a

popular movie character. The fact that the sailor is involved in fighting a war does not even remotely affect the plot in this and in many other films of the period.

In the "rousing propagandist musical" (http://www.filmsite.org/warfilms, 4) *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942), directed by Michael Curtiz, James Cagney portrays the patriotic vaudevillian George M. Cohan. During World War I, Cohan wrote flag-waving songs such as "Over There," which quickly became the soldier's theme song, "Grand Old Flag," and the film's title song, "Yankee Doodle Dandy." Cohan's songs, as revisited in this biographical movie, remain pertinent to World War II movie audiences, while the historical distance of the character is a comfortable one: George M. Cohan satisfies the need for both patriotism and nostalgia. In addition, Cohan was a performer and not a soldier, so his connection to World War I, for the World War II audience, is strictly a musical one.

Two Girls and a Sailor (1944), directed by Richard Thorpe and starring June Allyson, Gloria DeHaven, and Van Johnson, is an example of a review musical which serves primarily to showcase the talents of well-known musicians of the era: José Iturbi, Lena Horne, Jimmy Durante, Gracie Allen, the big bands of Harry James and Xavier Cugat, and a host of other popular musical performers of the era whose names are less widely recognized today. Again, the setting of the film in a USO canteen serves to glorify the American soldier, but the fact that the canteen's audience is made up of soldiers does not figure into the plot. There is one solitary reference to World War II in this film, however. When asked by José Iturbi why she has written a concerto for index finger, Gracie Allen replies, "There's a war on. I need the other nine to knit with!"

The list of musicals produced during World War II which serve as vehicles of escape from the reality of war is endless. *I Married an Angel* (1942), Jeanette Macdonald and Nelson Eddy's last film together, is, as the title suggests, a fantasy. *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944) is a nostalgic return to turn-of-the-century Americana, and *Little Nellie Kelly* (1940) is another

nostalgia piece, also starring Judy Garland, which is based on a George M. Cohan play written for Broadway in the early 1900s. A series of musicals referred to as "good neighbor films," with titles like *Down Argentine Way* (1940), *That Night in Rio* (1941), and *Weekend in Havana* (1941), were popular vehicles for the wartime pinup girl Betty Grable and other stars. Economically, they were important to Hollywood because they opened up a new market for American films in South America, after European distribution of American films was discontinued in 1940 due to the war already being waged there. (It is interesting to note that, as clean and wholesome as we may consider the American musical to be, the 1943 film *The Gang's All Here* was banned in Brazil due to some footage involving Carmen Miranda and bananas. While American audiences giggled at the sexual imagery, Brazilian censors considered it taboo.)

In other words, 1940s musicals, while they may not have tackled the subject of war, lent themselves well to wartime society by meeting the needs of their audiences for wholesomeness, exuberance, patriotism, and fantasy. As Ethan Mordden writes in *The Hollywood Musical,* "Escapism? Say rather moral re-armament"(Mordden 159).

Having discussed the musical films produced during wartime, it is necessary to move forward in the history of musical film, past the war years and the postwar years and into much more recent film, to find musicals which actually make the subject of war an element of plot construction. As mentioned above with a reference to the film *Oklahoma,* psychological realism began to enter the characters of musical film in the 1950s. This opened up a great deal of subject matter to songwriters and lyricists, material which had been out of their reach until this shift toward realism began. Musical film was once again redefining itself, as it had done in the late '30s and very early '40s, for example, when it moved from a dance to a song orientation (Mordden 161).

As noted earlier, war is a subject that is almost impossible to set to music and choreography. With the exception of the march, the rhythm of which lends itself

extremely well to musical interpretation, it is hard to imagine song-and-dance routines in the trenches. However, a fairly large number of musical films, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, did make war a central theme by approaching the subject from various perspectives other than that of actual combat. In the following examples, one war musical deals with war's impact on society, one is an expression of anti-war sentiment, one is a historical representation, and one asks the largest philosophical questions concerning war and the ideals of justice.

Cabaret (1972), directed by Bob Fosse and starring Liza Minnelli and Joel Grey, has been called the ''last of the great screen musicals'' (http://www.celebsite.com/index.html, 1). It is an extremely complex film which, in the simplest description of its plot line, tells the story of American cabaret singer Sally Bowles in pre-World War II Berlin and her doomed love affair with an English teacher who comes to live in the same boarding house as Sally. On a deeper level, the film portrays the conflict between elements of German society, which the audience knows will lead to Germany's initiation into war. It is not so much the impact of war on society but the reverse that is integral to the plot of *Cabaret*. The film depicts those weaknesses inherent in any social order, which act as breeding grounds for the rise of political figures and parties who ultimately lead it into war.

In the musicals actually produced during the war, as previously discussed, the existence of soldiers as characters in the film, even though they are never seen in action, provide the only indication that a war is going on. The fact that they are soldiers has little or no plot relevance. *Cabaret*, although it is classified by a number of sources including the Internet Movie Database as both a war film and a musical, also lacks any direct reference to World War II. However, *Cabaret*'s intended effect is the exact opposite from that of the '40s musical. In *Cabaret*, we see realistic scenes of violence which are glimpses of gang attacks by groups of a minor political party only vaguely identified as Nazis; they are not scenes of war. The film depends on the audience's supplying

the understanding of the outcome of these scenes of Nazi violence it portrays to actually intensify their horror and brutality. The film uses brilliantly the literary technique of drawing the audience in through knowledge of an outcome of which the characters are completely ignorant. When the German character Maximillian, for example, assures visiting Englishman Brian that the Nazis can be controlled and that they are useful in eliminating the Communists, the audience fully recognizes the fatal error in Maximillian's dismissal of the Nazis. With the 20/20 vision of hindsight that history has provided, the audience also recognizes Maximillian's blindness to be representative of the blindness of a large segment of the German population, and is all too aware of its outcome.

Another important scene in this film for developing the plot element of war is the one which takes place in the rural beer garden. It is important on two levels. On the personal level, this scene first allows the audience to see the developing sexual relationship between Brian and Maximillian, both of whom have been portrayed until this point as Sally's lovers. What has already been viewed as a sordid love triangle emphasizing the weaknesses and insecurities of the three main characters becomes even more so as a third sexual alliance is formed. The sordidness of this love triangle contrasts sharply with the young Nazi boy who rises and begins to sing "Tomorrow Belongs to Me." The boy's sweet voice soon turns to an intense fervor, which is magnified by the voices of German peasants joining one by one in the song. Climactically, the boy's Nazi uniform is revealed by the camera, and suddenly additional Nazis are seen scattered among the crowd. The audience is aware, as this scene unfolds, of a dangerous choice being made in the minds of the Germans in the beer garden. They are choosing between social and political elements represented on one hand by the film's decadent and corrupt main characters (the Master of Ceremonies, Maximillian, Sally, even Brian and Fritz), and on the other hand by the clean-cut, "pure" Nazis we see in the beer garden. The audience has also already

seen the scenes of urban violence, attributing them to the Nazis, and the citizens in the beer garden presumably have not.

Finally, the scene in which the small dog of Natalia, the Jewish heiress, is found dead on the front steps of her home when she opens the door is crucial to the war/society dynamic of the film. The audience is aware that this is an action of the Nazis foreshadowing the genocide that is perhaps the most horrible legacy of World War II. Natalia is seen as the one main character in the film who remains innocent and honest with no hint of corruption, and the audience is reminded through this scene that she, and millions of other European Jews, are doomed.

While the emphasis in *Cabaret* is on the dynamics between war and society, the rock musical *Hair* (1979), directed by Milos Forman, is a vehicle for the voice of more controversial anti-war sentiment, expressed by the members of a hippie subculture. There is a distinct difference between the war themes of these two films. In *Cabaret*, the characters are oblivious to the threat of war and, although the main characters are part of an urban subculture, it is not a political one. The plot of *Hair*, on the other hand, centers on a late-1960s hippie subculture for which expression of anti-war sentiment to the point of civil disobedience is fundamental to its existence. *Hair*'s characters live according to an expressed ideology of universal peace and freedom, while *Cabaret*'s characters are driven only by their personal needs, ambitions, and desires; what goes on outside this self-absorbed existence doesn't concern them.

The entire plot of *Hair* revolves around the efforts of the hippie Berger and his friends to keep Claude, a young man just off the bus from Oklahoma and about to enter boot camp, out of the Army and out of Vietnam, by introducing him to their alternative lifestyle. It has been noted by reviewers that this film was released too late to retain the impact of the Vietnam war era that the 1967 Broadway version did—"too recent to be nostalgic and too distant to be contemporary" (http://www.tvguide.com/MovieDb 1). This

criticism may be more a product of the mood set by music, costumes, and dialogue of the film than of the political ideology of the characters. Many excellent dramatic films have been released about the Vietnam war since 1978—among them *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987)—which are not considered period pieces as *Hair* often is.

The fact that this film represents more the expressed political ideology of the characters than the impact of war upon them is also reinforced by the level of the audience's understanding. In this film, unlike *Cabaret*, the audience does not know more than the characters do—it is the other way around. In the final fast-paced scenes, Berger finds himself unexpectedly taking Claude's place in the plane leaving from the Army base for Vietnam, after having impersonated Claude so that Claude could leave the base to meet a girl. The audience, who has been won over to the side of Berger, is then immediately transported to a scene several months later at Berger's grave, revealing that he has subsequently been killed in action. The remaining characters, by the time they appear again in this scene following Berger's death, have had these months to grieve; the audience has not. The horror and poignancy of this conclusion remain with the audience long after the film has ended.

The most outstanding element of *Hair* as a war film, specifically an anti-war film, is its representation of the enemy. In history as well as in film, the Germans are generally accepted as the antagonists of World War II. However, the Vietnam war was far more controversial and far less clear-cut; *Hair* is part of a trend in American public opinion and hence in American film in which the American military is portrayed as the enemy. Berger and his friends are the heroes who initiate a daring plan of escape for their friend Claude—not from a prisoner-of-war camp, but from his own army.

One example of a war musical which attempts a historically accurate representation is *1776* (1972), directed by Peter H. Hunt and starring many members of its successful

Broadway cast, including William Daniels and Ken Howard. The play, which appeared on Broadway in 1969, and the subsequent film version, followed nine years of historical research by its creators Sherman Edwards and Peter Stone.

This film uses a number of techniques in both its music and dialogue to reference war without actually depicting battle, the main one being the use of epistolary style. Stories of the battlefront are told to the members of Congress and the audience by a series of dispatches from General George Washington, all delivered by the same weary, silent messenger and read by Secretary of Congress Charles Thomson. In apparent lapses from historical accuracy, John Adams and Samuel Chase of Maryland travel to New Jersey to see conditions at the front firsthand and report on their findings; and Lewis Morris of New York is won over to the side of independence by the report that his eight sons have joined Washington's army.

Musically, the film chooses its subject matter carefully, and there are fewer numbers in *1776* than are usually found in a musical. Several are humorous; only one is, according to historian Thomas Fleming, ludicrously out of context: "an inane song from [Blythe] Danner, 'He Plays the Violin' " (Carnes 90). Two of the film's musical numbers deal with the element of war. One is a poignant recollection by a young messenger of his friend's lingering death on the battlefield, in which the dying soldier longs for his mother to find him where he is laying. The other is "Molasses, Rum and Slaves," a highly dramatic song performed "with operatic intensity" (Carnes 93) by Edward Rutledge of South Carolina. In this song, Rutledge holds the North to an equal share of the responsibility for "this nation's most divisive issue," (Carnes 93) slavery, by claiming that Northern economic security is ensured by the sale of these three commodities to the southern colonies. Again, as in *Cabaret*, the audience knows as the characters do not that this issue will eventually lead to civil war.

There are varying opinions as to how far this film strays from historical accuracy, but even Fleming, a historian who

finds much fault with specifics of the film in his essay "1776," admits that it "gets a number of things right" (Carnes 90). Movie reviews were either more or less complimentary, with their perspectives being those of experts in film rather than of experts in history. Perhaps the most important and valuable aspect of this film is that it depicts, in its historical representation of the birth of this country, a true story that is the foundation of the American culture and value system. The future American heroes of fact and fiction are made by the outcome of this brief period in Philadelphia and the war for independence which followed it, and the makers of this film have been successful, in part through the addition of music, in portraying its intensity, uniqueness, and excitement with a limited amount of poetic license.

Finally, Lerner and Lowe's *Camelot* (1967), directed by Josh Logan, is a film that deals with the very ideals of justice and asks the largest possible questions about the nature of war. The Broadway play of 1960 and the film version are based on the story of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, as told in T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*. Perhaps Camelot works as a vehicle for such questions because Arthur is not a real but a mythical figure; however, like all mythical characters and stories he is a personification of unrealized ideals, not mere fantasy, and his questions though abstract are also very real.

This makes the film one which, like Robin Hood or any other myth, can be viewed on two levels—this link between fantasy and reality made the Broadway play of *Camelot* a symbol of the Kennedy presidency (http://www.tvguide.com/MovieDb 1). It is interesting to consider whether the release of the film in 1967 was in any way a result of the Vietnam war, and it may be giving the film's producers too much credit for insight to assume that they were thinking about Vietnam when they made the film. *Camelot* is often criticized as being clumsy and disappointing. However, I believe it is a wonderful film, both for the way it makes us ponder the questions that Arthur tries to resolve on behalf of all humanity and for the eloquent confusion, goodness, and

sincerity of the classically-trained Richard Harris in the role of Arthur.

In *Camelot*, war is represented in its largest and most universal perspective as the product of the unceasing conflict between human nature and human ideals. For Arthur, as for every world leader in history, the decision to go to war against Lancelot is the dilemma caused by the antinomies that are inherent in war—the opposing yet equal outcomes of resolution versus devastation. The decision he must make is also the most bitter and ironic ending possible to his Round Table, which was conceived as a result of the first of many "propositions" he makes in the film. He puts forth this proposition to his Queen, Guinevere, stating that since every man wants to live, every man must hate war. From this conclusion, he develops the ideology of "might for right," and summons knights from across Europe to come to England and participate in a model society celebrating the highest human ideals. In other words, Arthur attempts to make human nature and human ideals compatible. However, the film illustrates the difficulty of resolving the conflict between them.

It is also the portrayal of Arthur as both king of Camelot and husband of Guinevere which makes this story a complex and philosophically interesting one. It is the meeting of these two aspects of Arthur himself that brings the film and its conflict between human nature and ideals to a climax. Following proof of Guinevere's adultery, Arthur is forced to try her for treason. (Adultery becomes treason when the wronged husband, Arthur, is the King.) Lancelot's subsequent rescue of Guinevere from the stake once again forces Arthur's hand, for although he welcomes Guinevere's rescue, he must now go to war against Lancelot and thereby seal the fate of his own Round Table.

Throughout the film, it becomes increasingly apparent that human nature will fail to live up to Arthur's ideal system of "might for right." Even before Lancelot's appearance in Camelot, there is bickering and petty jealousy among the knights, and they fail to understand Arthur's

noble goals. Even the gentle and harmless Pellinore is not able to grasp Arthur's vision. After failing in his attempts to explain to Pellinore his system of justice through trial by jury, Arthur tells Pellinore that it probably doesn't matter if he doesn't understand it, since Pellinore will never find himself in court. Pellinore replies under his breath, ''Not without my ruddy sword, I won't.''

This conflict pervades every scene of the film, with the love affair between Lancelot and Guinevere being perhaps the most outstanding example. In Tennyson's epic poem, ''Idylls of the King,'' there are strong moral judgments made concerning the human frailty of indulging in illicit love. Guinevere repents in the poem, ''We needs must love the highest when we find it / Not Lancelot, nor another'' (http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/idyl-gui5). Inboththe play and the film, however, products of the 1960s instead of the late 1800s, this moral judgment is far less strongly pronounced. The love of Guinevere and Lancelot is portrayed as a force greater than they are, a force apart from themselves, and they are seen as heroes of the film as much as Arthur is for their superhuman efforts to withstand the temptation of it.

This is a much more compassionate and a much more difficult interpretation than Tennyson's. In ''Idylls,'' Tennyson's Guinevere realizes that her name will be remembered with contempt throughout history, a punishment for her that is satisfying closure for the reader. However, in Camelot the peasants, the knights, and even Arthur all ask of Lancelot in the song ''Guinevere,'' ''The bells will soon ring clear / Won't he rescue Guinevere?'' Instead of Tennyson's satisfying closure, the Camelot movie audience is rewarded with unresolved issues to ponder long after the film has ended. However, it must be pointed out that Tennyson also recognizes in his poem some of the conflicts that abound in the story of Camelot. For example, he writes that the sword Excalibur has engraved on it both ''Take me,'' and ''Cast me away'' (http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/idyl.ca 1).

There is no situation in the film in which this conflict is not present, because there are simply no obvious villains. Even Mordred, Arthur's illegitimate son, has just cause for his hatred of Arthur and his wish, which is finally realized, to destroy the Round Table—because Arthur has refused to publicly recognize Mordred as his son. Arthur claims that he will not do so until Mordred gains an understanding of Arthur's ideals and shows a willingness to live by them; yet Arthur, for all his noble ideals, is the one who has fathered an illegitimate son!

In *Camelot,* therefore, the viewer will find a great deal of thought-provoking material concerning the nature of war, justice, love, and human nature. Arthur's ideal kingdom is destroyed, but his ideals live—even as he prepares for battle against Lancelot, he instructs a little boy who has stolen into his camp, "Don't let it be forgot that once there was a spot / For one brief, shining moment that was known as Camelot!"

Camelot is, for me, the truest and most profound representation of war in the movie musical. For other viewers, with a different set of experiences to affect their perspective of a film about war, one of the other films that have been discussed might be more meaningful. It may be that one of the 1940s films, which do not even mention World War II, are to some viewers the most vivid and meaningful for the very reality they avoid. The most profound meaning lies completely in the hands of the viewer, through memories and association, and not in the content of the film at all. "In the darkness of the movie theater . . . we want to see our own film" (Bertolucci, in Oumano 181).

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KATHERINE HASKELL

THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC IN *DANCES WITH WOLVES*

As Jacquelyn Kilpatrick states in her book, *Celluloid Indians*, film "music can generate lyrics within the consciousness of the viewer" (38). In *Dances With Wolves* the music plays a very important part in the communication of the story. Each note heard in the film was chosen with care to evoke a certain emotion or vision in the viewer's mind. Different instruments represent different characters and as the film progresses, those characterizations sometimes change. If one listens to the music closely enough he or she can hear the entire story conveyed in just the melodies and harmonies of the musical score.

Kevin Costner, as the director of this film, and John Coinman, as music supervisor, used the integration of visual effects and music to create this masterpiece. For instance, when John Dunbar is surrounded by an overwhelming landscape and begins to realize the greatness of nature, the music crescendos to become quite loud. The closer shots of Dunbar usually come into the film when he considers a new thought or contemplates a recent discovery. Soft, easy music plays while he writes in his journal and his narration tells the audience his deepest thoughts. When this narration reveals the most poignant ideas, the music suddenly stops, leaving his voice as the only sound so the audience focuses completely on the words. An example of this technique occurs after Dunbar and the Indians return from the buffalo hunt. Dunbar retreats to his fort alone and exclaims, "many times I felt alone, but until this afternoon I never felt completely lonely." Dunbar's relocation to the Indian camp to live shortly thereafter shows the importance of this statement. The audience obviously remembers it because the lack of music enhanced each word.

The movie starts off by featuring slow, dreary music that signifies something wrong with the main character, whom the audience has yet to meet. Once cavalry lieutenant John Dunbar appears on screen, we notice that indeed he is hurt and his leg may be amputated. He forces his boot onto his injured foot to the sound of loud, pulsing beats meant to convey the pain he feels at this point. The intense music playing behind the scene reinforces the image of his face twisted in torture. The viewer, trapped by all of his or her senses, joins Dunbar in his agony. He then decides to attempt to sacrifice himself because he would rather die than live without his leg. While the Confederate Army shoots at him, loud and quick runs of notes convey the adrenaline pouring through his body. Throughout these opening sequences, a plethora of trumpets play, representing the armed forces themselves.

Once Dunbar has healed, he leaves his present post and travels across the prairie with a "peasant" called Timmons. A gorgeous, soft melody that includes violins and French horns accompanies his journey. The music depicts a peaceful world far away from the fast-paced war he is distancing himself from. The camera goes in and out on a beautiful landscape, with a great crescendo of the music as the camera angle gets wider and the people get smaller compared to the vast prairie. The music suddenly stops as he finds an abandoned skeleton; this interrupts his enjoyment of the peace. The next shot shows the landscape and Dunbar riding on a galloping horse that will take him to freedom and the pretty music has returned. The melody reaches its loudest volume once he finds his post and Timmons, a nuisance of a man, leaves him alone. The increase in volume suggests that Dunbar will now start his new, happier life.

Certain instruments represent particular characters or groups in this film. The solo trumpet symbolizes John Dunbar. We first notice the appearance of this instrument immediately after he tries to get himself killed on the battlefield. At this point the film shows him starting to think on his own and become his own person instead of just

following the orders of the army. As Dunbar writes in his journal during the course of the movie, the audience can hear a solo trumpet softly in the background. When something reminds him of the outside world, such as Timmons and his vulgar language, the music stops abruptly. The trumpet also signifies that Dunbar has overcome some obstacle and will continue to persevere on his own. Some examples of this type of illustration are when he sees the deer carcass in the lake and then quickly regains his composure as well as after his first contact with the Indians when he is shown burying his supplies. The audience also hears the trumpet the morning after the Indian children attempt to steal his horse, and when he polishes his uniform, determined to speak to the Indians and establish ties with them.

As the movie continues, Dunbar begins to change and the trumpet follows suit. Instead of a complete solo, low instruments often play underneath the melody. The low instruments, as I will discuss later, represent the Indians. The mixture of these sounds suggests that Dunbar is starting to behave like his Indian friends. When he charges and kills the buffalo before it can reach the child, the trumpet is shrill and high-pitched. This signifies the Indian nature Dunbar displays in this action of killing a buffalo and saving one of the tribe. The same melody that the trumpet plays accompanies a shot of him as a new man dressed in Indian clothing and clean-shaven, only now a harmonica and a jew's harp perform it. This new instrumentation emphasizes the shocking transformation of Dunbar. Toward the end, Dunbar rides by himself to the music of a trumpet and a trombone, showing that Dunbar is not as simple as he once was; the simple trumpet solo no longer exists. His experiences with the Indians have transformed him from a one-dimensional army officer to a man with a much broader understanding of the world.

The flute describes a challenge for Dunbar. We hear the flute when he attempts to communicate with the wolf, Two Socks. The wolf represents a challenge for him as he works

hard to get the wolf to trust him and eat out of his hand. The flute plays as the Sioux leave for war against the Pawnee, showing the difficulty Dunbar has staying behind and watching his friends go off to battle. The flute functions as the main instrument in the love theme for the movie. Dunbar and Stands with a Fist face this obstacle together, since they are obviously in love, but she still mourns for her late husband. They also face the difficult barrier of language since she remembers little English at first. Once they overcome these challenges and are together, the love theme continues but strings hold the melody instead of the flute.

Possibly the most interesting musical statement is the one made with the percussion and low brass. The sounds of many different instruments playing quick, jumpy rhythms one after another with a steady beat of maracas underneath enhance the first appearance of Indians. A high-pitched violin and timpani find their way into the music as well. These high-pitched sounds, percussion, and a defiant low brass make up the sounds of the Indians at the start of the movie. The high squeals represent the savagery the stereotypical movie Indian displays, the percussion evokes danger, and the low brass depicts his stoic personality. This representation of Indians is employed even as Stands with a Fist remembers her white childhood and the Indians attacking her family.

Once Dunbar and the Sioux start to make a connection, the music begins to change. He starts to see them as people instead of savages and strings with no percussion often accompany them. However, the old "Indian" medley reoccurs when the Indians show their "savage" sides. For example, when they are preparing to hunt the buffalo and paint themselves, their appearance immediately causes us to think of stereotypical Indians and the music reflects this sentiment. The old Indian music also comes to represent the Pawnee because the movie shows them as a tribe that does incorporate the savage into their daily life. All throughout the battle between the Sioux and the Pawnee, we hear percussion and low brass.

After the battle, this music shifts completely and comes to signify the white race and shows that the tables have turned and the whites are now seen as the ''bad guys.'' Examples of whites being represented by the ''Indian'' music are when they realize that whites savagely killed the buffalo, when Ten Bears talks about white invasions, and when the white soldiers shoot Two Socks. When the white soldiers are running through the forest attempting to find Dunbar and the tribe, the audience sees the most obvious example of this switch. There is a strong presence of percussion and low brass, instruments solely reserved for Indians at the start of the film.

The last point I would like to make concerning the musical score of this film deals with the mixing of different instruments in order to create an intricate harmony. These musical phrases occur toward the end of the film, when Dunbar has learned to communicate and live with the Indians. As Kicking Bird talks about the harmony between the two different races, his words are joined by a combination of high and low instruments. As Dunbar hears his Indian name and claims that he knows who he is for the first time, we also hear this complex integration of instruments. At the very end, the film is again enhanced by the complex melody lines, performed by an entire symphony, as Dances with Wolves and Stands with a Fist ride away from the tribe together. In this scene and the entire film, visual effects are blended with music in order to produce a beautiful depiction of the central theme that different races can combine harmoniously as the different instruments that produce the music in each scene do.

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PAOLA BALDINO

NATIONALISM

This past week has been one filled with anguish, sorrow, deceit, confusion, and loss. On Tuesday, September 11, 2001, four passenger jetliners were hijacked, resulting in the deaths of thousands upon thousands of people. The airborne attack led to the destruction or severe damaging of two major landmarks in our country: one was the World Trade Center, the other, the Pentagon. At a time like this, it is hard to rationalize our attacker's actions. How do you justify the unjustifiable? How do you attempt to comprehend the lack of respect for human life that is rooted in the sick minds of people worldwide? It is almost one week later and I am still in shock. Every time I turn on the radio or television, or read the newspaper, I see yet another recounting of the events. I hear horror stories about what people witnessed. I see pictures of people leaping to their death from the ninetieth floor of one of the Twin Towers and try to reason *why* some family somewhere just lost a father, a mother, a sister, a brother, a cousin, a life. A knot immediately forms in my throat and I push back tears in a lame attempt to be *the strong one*. We, our country, the United States of America, are at war.

This "Day of Terror," as the media has labeled it, is not the first time in our history when our country and our people have been persecuted. Many actually compare this most recent attack to that of Pearl Harbor's approximately sixty years ago. What made last Tuesday's attack more violent and hurtful however was the fact that it took place inside, where we work and live. We weren't bombed off the East or West Coast somewhere. The terrorists' targets were not military. They were decisively targeting civilians, with its purpose being to weaken a country by murdering its citizens. If news reports are accurate, this was an act of terrorism aiming to kill and harm Israelis living in the United States as well as all

Americans in their homeland. Perhaps it was a vicious act to punish the United States for not supporting the terrorist group's political agenda. Yet even though we are shaken, we are not broken. If anything else, we stand together even stronger and prouder than before.

The reason why I bring this incident up is because after reading countless assigned articles and essays on Native Americans and the media for my college course studying the injustices plaguing Native Americans in the United States of America, I wonder why Native Peoples haven't attempted to gain retribution by murdering all their wrongdoers. Maybe I'm jumping the gun. Perhaps. Nevertheless, as I travel back in time in my own mind, the more I think of all the injustices inflicted upon African Americans and Native Americans, I can't help but ask myself certain things. Honestly, if outsiders feel they can justly viciously attack our country because they disagree with our political agenda, how can we not expect and be astonished at an uprising among our own citizens for being mistreated by their own government?

Our country has seen its bad days. We have come a long way from a time when skin color would decide whether or not a person could live and be free. Nonetheless, overcoming racial biases doesn't mean forgetting or denying the past. Two words: Manifest Destiny. As part of the ever so gracious *Indian Removal Act of 1830,* European settlers decided to expand their territory and in doing so "remove" all Native Peoples from their land and reestablish them elsewhere—wherever they wouldn't *get in the way.* This process led to many territorial conflicts, as they would relocate one Indian tribe near one of its enemy tribes. Manifest Destiny went on until all the land was taken, further expansion westward was no longer possible, and all Native Americans were kicked out of their homes. Racism toward Native Peoples has existed in our country for many years. Even today some remains, as is true for racism toward African Americans. Sadly so, racism is something that our nation has had a difficult time eliminating—old habits die hard.

Manifest Destiny isn't the only thing plaguing our past.

Citizens of our country have mocked, murdered, raped, tortured, and belittled Native Americans simply for disagreeing with their cultural background and religious upbringing. We call them stupid, dirty, primitive, and bloodthirsty savages. We depict them as uneducated, vicious people in our movies and utilize that image to pump up the white man's ego and dehumanize the Indian. People need to feel superior. They feed off of it. Even when the government, many years ago, admitted that most of the time it was the white man who would instigate wars against Natives, citizens refused to believe it. Admitting those statements to be true would be admitting that Native People were actually human beings and that the white man was at times a vicious, racist murderer—and that wasn't acceptable.

As time went by people started realizing that Native Americans weren't "all that bad." So, let's not kill them anymore or drive them out of their homes! Instead, since we've grown and matured to a point where we believe in equality (sarcasm intended), let's accept the fact that we co-exist with people of different faith and ethnicity and help them, well, be just like us! This, my friends, is what we call *assimilation*! White America decided to disassociate American Indians from any part of their cultural heritage and instead introduce them to Western society and traditions. It was believed that by providing new clothing, hairstyles, language, and daily activities that Native Americans would *assimilate* themselves into white America and become more presentable and less "savage-like."

> Nothing so surely and perfectly stamps upon an individual a national characteristic as language. . . . This language, which is good enough for a white man and a black man, ought to be good enough for a red man. . . . If we expect to infuse into the rising generation the leaven of American citizenship, we must remove the stumbling blocks of hereditary customs and manners, and of these language is one of the most important elements. (Kilpatrick 17)

It is hard for me to accept the fact that at one point we were so hypocritical and ethnocentric that we felt it necessary to make everyone sound like us. Why? Because we're the superior race? Please. The sad thing is that some people alive today still believe white man is superior and are influencing new generations to feel the same, forgetting the dangerous consequences. Have we forgotten the sadness the Oklahoma City bombing brought our nation? Have we set aside the Columbine shootings, where children were shooting each other because they were convinced nobody's life had any worth? Have we let go of Matthew Shepard's memory, a young boy who was murdered by his classmates just for being gay? Have we forgotten Hitler? To some these horrific, vicious, degrading acts may be explained as nationalism—a product of people's love for their country. So stripping the *bad* from the Native identity to infuse the white man's American "perfection" into it was supposed to be for the best. This is not nationalism. There is no love in these acts. There is no justification for this hatred in my eyes. There is no justification for four jetliners being used as bombs against our country to "make a point." As citizens of this world we are at war every day. And I weep for those who don't know any better.

Richard A. Hribko, Jr.

The Shackles of Society in the Musical Utopia of *West Side Story*

In the 1961 movie musical, *West Side Story*, directed by Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, with music by Leonard Bernstein and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, the viewer is immediately greeted by the familiarity of the intertext of Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*. In a world that will not allow two people to realize their dream of undying passion, the audience is taken on a journey in which lovers meet, pursue their romance against all odds, and vow to change the world, only to find themselves ultimately trapped in a web of tragedy. The tragedy, however, does not end as *Romeo and Juliet* did in the untimely demise of both protagonists. On the contrary, *West Side Story* ends with a message of hope in unity: a message that not only transcends the bloodbath of victims left in the wake of gang warfare, but also colors the film in its entirety when it is viewed a second time.

The only way to understand this vision of hope for the future is to examine the issues that were plaguing the nation in the time period in which the tragedy is set. While the 1950s were cursed with the House Un-American Activities Committee trials, in which the rulers of "The Great Melting Pot" were using their political powers to unjustly prosecute Americans believed to be Communists, urban neighborhoods were facing their own struggle and prosecution. The paranoia voiced by the speakers of the nation found its way into the streets of everyday life and racism increased with the escalating numbers of migration. At the end of World War II, an effort to contract cheap labor sent United States companies to the island of Puerto Rico to recruit workers. As a result of recruitment agents and island government encouragement, migration increased "from 1,800 in the

period between 1930 and 1940, to 31,000 from 1946 to 1950, to 45,000 from 1951 to 1960'' (*Latin@* 1). In 1953 the mayor of New York City, Richard Wagner, publicly stated that ''he and all New Yorkers would welcome any Puerto Rican willing to work'' (1). *West Side Story* effectively dispels this empty promise by depicting the struggle of love's embrace against the shackles of societal racism in the city streets of Manhattan. Racism, however, was not the only issue plaguing the nation: the battle for equality continued for women in the ''land of the free.'' *West Side Story* captures both the inequity of race and gender, and displays them at the forefront of the narrative while the musical numbers reinforce and further the plot by setting the stage, introducing and building characters, heightening tension, and providing an escape from the urban realism of the city streets into the grandiose utopian world of fantasy.

Rick Altman prefaces Martin Sutton's article entitled ''Patterns of Meaning in the Movie Musical'' by explaining Sutton's theory of ''the two fundamental views of human value''—the ''superego'' and the ''id'': ''The plot material . . . represents the text's 'superego,' its allegiance to an ethic of socially defined reason, while the [musical] numbers—the film's 'id'—provides the characters as well as the spectator an opportunity to exercise imagination and personal freedom'' (190). *West Side Story* presents this confrontation as the two forbidden lovers escape into the id of their romantic imaginations within the musical numbers, while fighting the injustice of the superego's restraining realism of the social order within the narrative. In order for the battle of the id and the superego to begin, however, the film must first set the stage.

Setting the stage is not merely dressing the set with props and realistic building facades. It is more than that; it is the placement of characters within the plot while bringing to light the issues that express the cultural values and social mores of the times. In *West Side Story,* the cultural values of the fabled ''nifty fifties'' are lost within the forgotten face of the poverty-stricken occupants and the misunderstood

teenager syndrome that still affects the nation today. On the other hand, the social mores take precedence within the depiction of racial segregation and male dominance that lies beneath the power relations of the U.S. in the 1950s.

From the start of the movie, the narrative and the musical numbers work together to tell the story. This begins in the opening number, which starts in silence accompanied by the muted buzz of urban noise and the faraway whistle of the antagonistic gangs. As the camera's wide-angled shots of the city ultimately focus in on the snapping Jets, the rhythm takes precedence as the whistles and street noise of the narrative eventually give way to the heightened crescendo of stringed instruments. As the Jets move through their turf, we are introduced to their gang by, quite literally, the writing on the wall as the word "Jets" is painted on buildings around the basketball court. It is important to point out the subliminal, but yet symbolic, portrait of a young girl sitting in the center of a chalk-drawn web looking down at her creation as the Jets stroll by her. The symbolism of this pictorial moment encapsulates the dominance of males in the 1950s as the Jets tower over the young girl, who glances at them tentatively, while the web depicts the entrapment of females in an unequal patriarchal society. Through dance movements the Jets take shape as they seem to glide through the city, dancing in sporadic *relevés* and out-stretched arms, thus giving further association with their gang's name. Riff, the gang leader, is coolly introduced as the Jets walk by a building in which his name, again painted on the wall, is given attention as he quickly does a half-turn and the graffiti is momentarily noted in the background of the *mise-en-scène*.

The Sharks are introduced in a similar manner, however their gang name is not as predominantly displayed and they are introduced in a more antagonistic way. Bernardo, the leader of the pack, is spotted in a close-up with his hand against a red wall evoking the culture of violence and juvenile delinquency attached to Puerto Ricans in the 1950s. The Sharks dance through the city streets over painted introductions of "Sharks" with an intensified rhythm as the

tempo of the "Prologue" increases, dramatically introducing the rivalry that will plague the rest of this movie musical. Jerome Robbins manages to diffuse this intensity briefly with a choreographed movement of leap frog between the two gangs that leads into a series of playful oppositions in which the gangs enlist paint, food, and parodied hoots as their main weapons of warfare. Eventually, the percussive drive of the music, coupled with the action of the chase, heightens to chaos as the "stabbing" of Baby John results in a basketball court rumble. Although there is no weapon displayed in this scene, the intensity of the choreography and the driving, sinister quality of the instrumentation makes it seem that violence has occurred. Throughout the number, narrative is minimal, thus introducing the audience to the goal of the movie: to express this passionate tragedy in the form of music and dance. Narrative is simply a catalyst to the action expressed within the musical numbers and the audience will see more of this movie musical technique throughout the film.

With the war of racism and segregation established, the story can move to the more intricate weavings of the plot. However, before moving on to the musical build of other characters, one should examine another issue that points to the social mores of the times: the female struggle for equality in the male-dominated world of the fifties.

White females are portrayed as gradations of obedient subjects in the hierarchy of the patriarchal society. In protest to the male-projected images of stupidity expressed by Jet gang members in front of Doc's Soda Shoppe, Graciella retorts, "I and Velma ain't dumb!" In contrast to this portrayal of weakness, Anybodys, a young tomboy, becomes the quintessential character symbolizing the rising strength of women. Reluctantly, at the request of her male superiors, Anybodys obediently leaves the War Council, however, she displays her strength as she pushes through the Sharks. One further blow is dealt to the female image as Riff slaps Graciella on the buttocks to prompt her departure. This subjugation of Anybodys, Graciella, and Velma, displays

women as obedient and/or unintelligent sexual objects of their white male counterparts.

Perhaps the better expression of hope in the struggle for gender equality can be found within the context of the Puerto Rican world of women. The short dialogue between Anita and Maria before the dance shows the existence of arranged marriages within the culture of America. Anita explains that Bernardo, Maria's brother, has selected Chino for her husband. However, the subsequent song, "America," brings to light the female optimism of equality through the strong charismatic performance of Rita Moreno, as Anita, and the playful banter between the male and female oppositional views embedded in the lyrics. In "America," the Sharks focus on the oppression of race in America, while their female counterparts express hope about the opportunities available to them that were not attainable on their island of Puerto Rico. The narrative is limited to a playful exchange of teasing dialogue between the representatives of gender embodied in the characters of Anita and Bernardo. "America," therefore, propels the narrative into a deeper symbolic meaning of the promise of female equality even while expressing the issue of racism. The strength of the female character of Anita surpasses the playfully parodied responses of Bernardo while the choreography establishes a girls-against-the-boys routine. The men dance with syncopated sharp movements, sporadically raising their hands above their heads to resemble the puppets they are claiming themselves to be in America. Anita leads her troop of women to center stage with high kicks, driving the male dancers out of the limelight. The women in their dance movements are free and wild, flaring their dresses and stomping their feet symbolizing their desire to stamp out inequality and rise to the occasion to better themselves. This issue of equality, while a sub-issue of the movie, is choreographed brilliantly and leaves the audience with a glimmer of hope for women to surmount male oppression as the dance ends in coupled poses that place the women towering over the men, with Anita's outstretched arm reaching into the infinity of night.

The strength of Anita and her hope for gender equality is one of the tragedies in *West Side Story,* as she is stripped of her hope in the attempted rape at the soda shop that occurs later in the film. Thus, "America" highlights the social issue of the female struggle for equality while providing the viewer with the foundation of Anita's character.

The building of character through song and dance is best expressed in the character of Tony. While the narrative introduces the childhood-rooted friendship of Riff and Tony, the viewer sees only a glimpse of Tony's inner character as he talks to Riff about his dream of good fortune. The musical number, "Something's Coming," furthers the spectator's understanding of Tony's optimism embedded in his undying passion to find a better way of life. Although this is established within the preceding scene, which shows Tony as a working man in contrast to the irresponsible lifestyle of Riff, the musical number lays Tony's heart on his sleeve. From the lyrical and exciting flow of the instrumentation the audience is whisked away into Tony's world, in which Richard Beymer's tenor voice heightens the melodic truth behind his dreaminess. If the audience doesn't fall in love with Tony during the first verses of the song, they are certain to fall in love with him by the end of the solo, in which his falsetto intensifies the beauty of his sincerity. This is just one of the many glimpses into Tony's character.

As Martin Sutton states, "The film musical has many openings that create a sense of personal isolation" (194). This sort of isolation further develops Tony's character in "Maria." He finds himself in opposition to his environment, in love with the socially professed enemy, as he walks alone in the basketball court previously determined in the opening scene to be Jets' turf. The powerful falsetto of Tony's prayer, "Maria," gives breadth to the power of song to color a mood in the movie musical, transporting both its characters and its audience into a world of euphoric ecstasy where the contrast of the oppressive environment is lost within the ideology of the musical escape.

The music can transport the audience to a realm of

ideological fantasy, it can also be used to heighten the tension apparent in the plot of the musical. This is especially true in *West Side Story*. The music in "The Dance at the Gym" lends itself to the wild abandon of the teenagers as couples dance in contracted positions while wildly throwing out their limbs in time to the music. This suggests the pent-up, raw energy of the oppressed characters, who are simply waiting for an opportunity to unleash their anger. Meanwhile, the narrative suggests a solution to the rivalry within the dialogue of the emcee, who announces a game called a "get together dance." The men walk around the women, which can also be interpreted as an animalistic portrayal of women as objects, until a whistle blows and they are supposed to dance with whomever is standing in front of them. While the air of tension is apparent in the choreographed walks into position for all gang members, the music maximizes the suspense of the scene as it creates a carnival-like dissonance between the light-hearted, merry-go-round sound of the orchestration in contrast to the arrogance proudly displayed by the participants of the dance. When the whistle shrilly brings the game to an end, drums create a tribal-like beat which sends the gang members reeling back to their own race to face-off in a mambo that becomes the rumble before the rumble. Although they don't physically fight, this altercation between the two opposing cultures is evident in their dance movements as they battle for control of the gymnasium floor.

The best evidence of music heightening the tension of a scene is in the song entitled "Quintet." While the song blows the audience away with the sheer volume of the crescendo of voices into climax, it is also a self-contained number in the battle between the superego and the id of the plot. The number starts off with a fierce introduction of bass and percussion, while the Jets and Sharks sing their respective verses about winning the rumble. Here are the oppositional forces of the superego that Maria and Tony have been battling throughout the movie. Anita sexily chimes in to sing about the romance—all right, sex—anticipated after

the fight. This interlude is strategically placed to alter the hardness of the preceding verse in order to meld into Tony's lyrical vision of destiny fulfilled. Maria joins him, shining innocence through the red haze as Natalie Wood's operatic soprano voice rings with purity, in the duet of the id: the ideological romance the two lovers hope to secure by stopping the impending rumble. The combination of voices overlapping each other, as each soloist or group becomes part of the finely tuned choral orchestration, intensifies the suspense of the audience as they are enrapt in the irreconcilable lyrics of each group singing about their hopes for victory. But the music and lyrics cannot receive full credit, as the movie musical has camera work and editing too. By the end of the number the camera, which was politely showing each group or soloist singing in the beginning, becomes an editing machine of quick cuts that hastens the pace by flashing each character or group climaxing abruptly into a red wash that immediately fades into the silence of the rumble scene.

As in the beginning of the film, the silence is slowly replaced by muted street noise and the characteristic whistle of the Jets. As the rumble proceeds, the lack of narration again accentuates the ability of the movie musical to express this story through music and dance. While the dissonance of the music backing the rumble enhances the tragedy and chaos of the scene, it becomes apparent that Tony's id cannot survive the web of the superego environment which he is trying so desperately to transcend. This prefaces the destruction of the id which ironically takes place only partially in musical form.

The dialogue in which Chino tells Maria that Tony killed her brother, Bernardo, is reinforced by Anita's song, "A Boy Like That." The superego of the outside world tries to impose itself on the id when Anita sings, "He'll murder your love, he murdered mine." But the strength of Maria's id is undeflatable as she passionately sings "I Have a Love" and reverses Anita's intention by superimposing her id onto the mournful Anita, thus convincing Anita to facilitate Maria's escape with Tony. Hope floats for a moment more until

Anita's good intention makes her vulnerable to the culture of power embodied in the white male-dominated world of society.

The music of the rape scene in Doc's Soda Shoppe is one that suggests playful taunting at first, but the viewer's knowledge of Anita's mission makes this scene difficult to watch. As the Jets start pulling at her clothes and her person, the instrumentation heightens to chaotic volumes and "America," in which Anita's strength and her hope for equality were so strongly portrayed earlier, is reprised briefly to accentuate the juxtaposition of the victimized woman she has now become. The hate that drives the superego of racism and segregation has not only destroyed her love but also her feminist strength. Symbolically, Anita's will and hope is stripped from her soul as her clothes are violently ripped from her body. The superego, however, has one final hope to destroy: the romantic optimism of Tony and Maria.

The romance of Tony and Maria is chronicled only briefly in dialogue preceding several musical numbers in which camera angles and special effects carefully establish the microcosm of their fantasy. Across a crowded gymnasium, Tony and Maria gaze at each other as the *mise-en-scène* of the gym blurs into oblivion. The outside world of the dancers is suspended momentarily as they draw toward each other and the narrative establishes that they are clearly aware of the breach in cultural values they are about to incur. The light and airy music of the scene propels them into a quiet dance of mirror-like images which is also reflected by other dancers in the gym. The audience is propelled into the utopian fantasy until the ill-fated kiss sends the couple reeling out of the fantasy world of the id and back into the reality of the superego as Bernardo tears his sister away from Tony. This utopian moment, however, is not unsullied: the ominous reprise of the carnival dance begins in bass notes during the blurred reality, thus foreshadowing the threat of the outside world just before the kiss.

The fantasy world of the id does not die at the gym. The non-diegetic echoing of "Maria" propels Tony into a

serenade of his first love. The *mise-en-scène* of the same city streets that looked so dirty and ill-fated in the "Prologue" has changed to warm purplish glows suggesting that the hues of fantasy are coloring the environment of reality. Tony crosses by rows of windows with iron grates illuminated from the inside. In the light of love, these windows look like the doorways to a thousand churches, thus making the romance transcend the filth of the streets to shine in a realm of ethereal innocence. As the song ends, the reflection of light on the dark cobblestone alleyway adds to the romantic ambiance, but as the camera pulls back to expand the scene, the final picture of Tony surrounded by the darkness of the alleyway hints at the isolation Tony will face in choosing to love someone against societal norms.

The environment of loving each other in a dark alley, further procures the isolation of the couple while winking at the Shakespearean intertext of *Romeo and Juliet*. The camera reiterates the microcosm of Tony and Maria's world by focusing even closer in on the couple throughout their duets. This cinematic isolation suggests that their love can only exist within the close proximity of their embrace, but the couple hangs on to hope against all odds. Their fantasy of societal acceptance materializes only for a brief moment in the bridal shop scene in "One Hand, One Heart." The addition of the mannequins—as inanimate family and friends—into their microcosm, and a centrally located window in the *mise-en-scène*, symbolically transform the shop into a church as a yellowish glow from within their fantasy world rests on the crosspanes of the window. The id tries to impose itself on the superego of reality. However, since the attendees are headless dummies, they cannot see that this love can transcend all boundaries. Hence, the tragedy: love is expressed, but its full potential can never be realized.

The destruction of this ideological love is agonizing as Tony calls out to Chino in request for death. Hope surges in his soul once again as he runs across the basketball court to greet Maria, who he thought was dead, only to meet his life's end in her solemn embrace in an *a cappella* reprise of

"Somewhere." The music is gone. The fantasy is destroyed. The story is over. The rest of the plot is carried out in narrative dialogue devoid of instrumentation. The music only begins again as the last light of hope touches the onlookers; the Sharks help the Jets with the removal of Tony's body and Baby John places Maria's black shawl over her head to give her the privacy of mourning.

Although a tragic end, it is the dawn of a new hope: hope established in the unity of race and respect for women that the musical numbers present as a utopian resolution. In presenting this tragedy of an ideal love destroyed by the shackles of society, *West Side Story* proffers a key to unlocking the fetters of racism and inequality. Love is that key: the only emotion that can transcend the boundaries of race and gender to allow us to find a place in which we can find a new way of living—a place that, unfortunately, still escapes the world of today.

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KATHLEEN HAUGHEY

BILLY WILDER'S *THE LOST WEEKEND*: A STORY OF *THE BOTTLE*

In 1945, with his film *The Lost Weekend*, director and screenwriter Billy Wilder tackled a topic long taboo in cinema: alcoholism. A grim but compelling study, *The Lost Weekend* shocked on its release and still packs a knowing and disturbing punch. The film is the story of a man named Don Bernam, a "flop writer" who is so distraught with the realization of his failure that he turns to alcohol in order to avoid actually taking charge of his life. In the capable hands of Wilder, both the vicious spirals that ensnare Don and the reason for his addiction are clearly portrayed. In candid detail, Wilder shows how Don sees himself, how others see him, and what he's really like; it's not a pretty sight. His main caretaker is his brother, Wick, who supports him and tries over and over again to get Don "back on the wagon." Wick is aided in this task by Don's loving and determined girlfriend, Helen St. James.

In this motion picture, Wilder uses many of the same techniques he used in his other films to portray the struggle of a man fighting a desire which he can no longer repress. Wilder is a master of cinematic techniques which create a dark, dreary mood appropriate for a film about such a somber subject. The drab, gritty black and white cinematography of the film emphasized the menacing power of alcohol. Some of the booze-soaked scenes are filmed through or in the presence of numerous whiskey bottles and shot glasses.

The film opens with a pan across the New York City skyline. This shot is significant as it allows the audience to become aware of the large, fast-paced city in which these characters live—a city in which one tiny, insignificant person could easily get lost in the shuffle, or in their own struggle.

This shot is very similar to the opening shot in Wilder's later film, *Sunset Boulevard*. That film opened with a shot of the pavement followed by a quick pan through the streets. Just as that opening set the pace for that film, this opening sets the mood of this film by showing the crowded, busy world in which Don, the protagonist of *The Lost Weekend*, gets lost. As the camera focuses on one window to an apartment, we see our first glimpse into just what this film is about: hanging outside the window of this apartment, tied to a string, is a single bottle of rye whiskey—Don's liquor of choice. As the shot focuses in, we see Don, packing a suitcase for his proposed five-day, extended "long wonderful weekend" trip by train to a country farm where there will be "trees and grass and sweet cider and buttermilk, and water from that well that's colder. . ." Wick is telling Don of all the wonderful things there will be to drink on this vacation, and Don snaps at him, "Wick, please, why this emphasis on liquids? Very dull liquids." Here the audience gets a taste of Don's struggle. His brother keeps telling him that this weekend will be good for him after "what he's been through." It is hard to imagine a life in which everyone around you is totally aware of what you're fighting against and what you're struggling to avoid. Wick's constant reminder of "what he's been through" and all the list of "dull liquids" can't be making Don's fight any easier. While packing, Don asks Wick to get him his typewriter, telling him that he finally plans to write the novel he has planned for quite some time. He sends Wick to another room, and while Wick is gone, Don desperately grabs for the bottle of rye to untie it and pack it into his suitcase. But Wick returns too quickly and Don hurriedly puts the bottle back where it had been.

Helen enters with presents for Don to enjoy while on his weekend. She tells Don that she has plans to go to the symphony at Carnegie Hall. Taking the news of these plans as an opportunity to stall for time in order to get more alcohol, Don talks Wick into taking Helen to the concert, saying that they can take a later train. Wick is suspicious of

Don's motives, and Don's bottle hanging out the window is discovered. It is clear that Don's addiction is out of control, and Wick becomes angry. Don denies that he knew it was there: "I didn't know it was there. Even if I had, I wouldn't have touched it." Don has been lying to both Helen and Wick for some time now. He had told them that he has been sober for ten days, and the audience is fully aware that not only has he been drinking, but he has plans and supplies to drink some more. Helen, blinded by her love for Don, convinces Wick to go to the concert with her to prove that they trust him alone. Caring for his brother and knowing the lengths to which he must go, Wick has taken the extreme, vigilant precaution of stripping the apartment of all liquor bottles. He believes Don will be left dry—unable to satisfy his cravings while they're gone. However, Wick isn't fully aware of the lengths Don will go to. He truly thinks that without the alcohol everyone will see him for the failure he believes he truly is.

After they depart, Don's mounting desire for booze compels him to frantically search in all his favorite, obscure hiding places: behind a heater grating in the bathroom, in the vacuum cleaner bag, and behind his bed. It is clear that Wick was one step ahead of him: all these places have already been cleared out. The movies begins to speed up, mimicking the manic state of mind that Don is in. With each hiding place uncovered, the eerie electronically generated music becomes more and more symbolic of the craving he is trying to feed. The cleaning woman stops by and Don refuses to let her into the apartment. He steals her $10 wages left by his brother when she inadvertently mentions that the money is cleverly concealed in the lid of the sugar bowl in the kitchen. Debasing himself in order to misappropriate her earnings, he tells her that she will be paid the following Monday. Sadly, this is far from the lowest thing Don will do in order to obtain the liquor he so desperately craves.

Don takes her money and rushes off to the nearest liquor store, where he buys two bottles of rye: "The cheapest. None of that twelve year old aged in wood—not for me," he

tells the store clerk. Don tries to conceal the fact that he has the two bottles by buying apples to cover the top of the bag. He does this without even a second thought. This is second nature to him—drink and hide. It's what he has become accustomed to. However, his cover isn't very good. Most people are quite aware of his addiction. "That's the nice young man who drinks," is what they whisper as he walks by. The action of Don covering the bag with apples is symbolic of how Don tries to cover his problem in many ways. When he first met Helen, he tried to prevent her from knowing his problem. Similarly, he hides alcohol around the apartment, so Wick won't know how much he's drinking. In a way, he is hiding the problem from himself as well. By not acknowledging the fact that his problem is out of his control and he needs help in order to get back into a normal life, Don is hiding the fact that he is an alcoholic in his own mind.

As if the two bottles of rye he had now were not enough, Don enter Nat's Bar, an obvious regular. When he enters, Nat tells Don that he can have no more on credit and that his brother had already been in warning him not to give him anymore. Don is like a child who can't care for himself. Wick has to go around like a parent childproofing their house, taking away Don's hidden supplies, and going from bar to bar warning them not to sell him anymore. But this time Don has money. He takes his first drink, and when Nat goes to wipe away the ring from the counter, Don says, "Don't wipe it away, Nat. Let me have my little vicious circle. You know, the circle is the perfect geometric figure. No end, no beginning." (This circle motif is a reoccurring theme in this film, mentioned again when he compares his problem with a merry-go-round.) Wilder uses the rings to show the passage of time. The next shot begins with a close-up on the counter where the number of rings has increased, as Don gets steadily more and more drunk. Telling Nat of the "twins" which he plans to sneak past his brother, "the royal guard," while on vacation, he tries to justify his actions: "Well, I may never touch it while I'm there. Not a drop.

What you don't understand, all you, is that I've got to know it's around. That I can have it if I need it, I can't be cut off completely. That's the devil. That's what drives you crazy." It is exactly that: being cut off from the liquor which will propel Don into hallucinations later in the film. This line foreshadows Don's fate. Nat tells Don that he thinks he should slow down a bit, but it is clear that Don has done this same thing on a regular basis and he is prepared for Don's usual drunken state. The camera zooms in on Don's face, giving the audience the feeling that they are getting inside his brain:

> Come on, Nat. Join me—one little jigger of dreams, huh? . . . It shrinks my liver, doesn't it? It pickles my kidneys, yes. But what does it do to my mind? It tosses the sandbags overboard so the balloon can soar. Suddenly, I'm above the ordinary. I'm competent, supremely competent. I'm walking a tightrope over Niagara Falls. I'm one of the great ones. I'm Michelangelo, molding the beard of Moses. I'm Van Gogh, painting pure sunlight. I'm Horowitz, playing the Emperor Concerto. I'm John Barrymore before the movies got him by the throat. I'm Jesse James and his two brothers all three of 'em. I'm W. Shakespeare. And out there its not Third Avenue any longer—it's the Nile, Nat—the Nile—and down it moves the barge of Cleopatra. Come here . . .

In this monologue we get a glimpse into why Don drinks. While sober, Don has to face a life of disappointment—a life which once showed so much promise. He was a writer, and it looked like he was going to do something big, but after one failure after another, Don turned to alcohol in order to loosen up. However, as Nat so eloquently states later on in the film, "One is too many and one hundred is not enough."

The next scene opens with yet another close-up on the counter; now the number of glass circles has increased to at least ten. A boisterous Don is standing at the edge of the bar,

drunker than ever. Nat reminds him once again that it is time for him to go. Don gets angry at Nat for not telling him sooner, to which Nat responds that he has been reminding him for the last twenty minutes. Don runs out of the bar hoping to make it in time to meet Helen and Wick, however he is too late. Helen and Wick have returned to the apartment and what they feared has happened: Don has disappeared in search of liquor. Wick is finally fed up. He can't take care of Don anymore: ''We've reasoned with him; we've babied him. We've watched him like a hawk. We've tried trusting him. How often have you cried? How often have I beaten him up? We scrape him out of the gutter and pump some kind of self-respect into him, and back he falls, back in, every time.'' At this point Wick is trying to convince Helen to give up as well. They are both far too familiar with the ''vicious circle'' Don falls back into again and again; even Don is aware of this circle, as he instructs Nat not to wipe the symbols of it away.

However, Helen does not give up; she refuses to. She sees Don as being sick; she knows that he has a disease and he cannot control what he does. In her determination, the character of Helen is very similar to that of Betty Schaefer in Wilder's later film, *Sunset Boulevard*. Betty was an optimistic young girl who saw promise in the character of Joe, and was determined to make him reach his full potential. Similarly, Helen sees the potential Don has to be a great writer. She believes that if she just guides Don in the right direction, finds him the right doctor, she will cure him and he will be what she knows he can be. Don said this himself about Helen determination to help him: ''She knows she's clutching a razorblade, but she won't let go.'' Blinded by their love for the men in their lives, both Betty and Helen, are unable to see that these men have given up on themselves.

Don's downward spiral steadily gets worse. He avoids both his brother and Helen, and goes on a terrible drinking binge. He enters his dark apartment with his precious ''twins.'' Don hides one right away, obviously out of habit.

The other bottle he drinks right away. The apartment is filled with shadows that fall across Don's face. Wilder uses shadows to his advantage. In many of his films he shoots a scene in an only slightly lit room in order to give a feeling of desperation or despair. In *The Lost Weekend,* dark atmosphere is symbolic of the dark torture Don is subjecting himself to. The scene ends with a close-up into the shot of whiskey Don has poured himself. This a very significant shot. The camera is almost falling into the glass, much like Don is falling down into his pit of despair, a pit from which he cannot pull himself out of—not alone, anyway.

After stealing a purse in a restaurant to pay the bill and trying to pawn his typewriter, Don has hit rock bottom. It's Sunday of this lost weekend, and it looks like Don has lost what little self-respect he had left. Fearing the horrors that come with sobriety, there's no degradation that Don will not endure in order to imbibe. The key to this slow build-up, which reaps an unbearable reward, is Wilder's quiet inclusion of the markers of consumption. Wet glass rings multiply on a bar surface, bottles frame Don's face like prison bars, the distorted shadow of a forgotten resource brings light to his eyes. All around lie the traces of his obsession, artfully ignored in public and endlessly gossiped over in private; in sum, the signs of a roller coaster ride which only one man can halt. The catch is that unless Don wants to be helped, no one can force it upon him.

After a fall down the stairs, Don ends up in the alcoholic unit of the hospital. In these next few scenes, Wilder uses skillful camera angles to highlight the shadow of the glass windows which are covered with wire. These shadows fall back and forth across Don's face showing the terrible cage in which he is trapped. He knows he needs help, yet he doesn't think he can make it without the liquor he has become so attached to. After he escapes from the hospital during the frenzy caused by the detox induced hallucination of another patient, Don returns to his old habits. He waits outside a liquor store until the shopkeeper finally comes and opens it. He then demands to get the liquor for free. The

crazed look in Don's eye and calm, cool manner in which he hides his desperation is all part of the master acting ability of Ray Milland, who won an Oscar for this role.

Don returns home and steps over the milk bottles and newspapers which show the passage of days during this "lost weekend." He begins to go through detox himself. "Tiny creatures" is what the male nurse, Bim, told him he would see, and indeed he does. A mouse crawling in a hole in the wall, bats scurrying around—an attack. The scene once again is shot mostly in shadows, to further portray the dark and gloomy world Don has created for himself. The shadows falling across his face symbolize his own falling further and further into a situation he cannot handle alone. Don begins to scream, and his landlady calls Helen for help. Helen rushes over and finds Don on the floor. She cleans him up and calms him down. As she tries to get him to sleep, he begins mentioning Nat's warning about the "ending" to the novel he always planned on writing, *The Bottle*—he rhythmically clicks his fingers twice to signify his death: "Like this—or like that." He continues to repeat the gesture while the scene fades to black. This is the point at which the pessimistic, down-beat film was originally to end. (http://www.filmsite.org/lostw3.html).

However, being a Hollywood film during this era, such an open-ended and depressing ending couldn't be made. Instead, the next scene is the following morning. Don wakes up, steals Helen's coat and goes off to the pawn shop, with Helen following fast behind. As he comes out of the pawnshop Helen demands the ticket so she can get her coat back. She is heartbroken that Don would trade that of all things. This is because a mistake at the coat check with that very coat is what had brought them together in the first place. He refuses and walks back to the apartment.

Helen goes into the store and learns that Don did not in fact pawn the coat for money to buy booze. He traded it for "something he hocked here a while back"—a gun. He bought this gun once before to kill himself, but it seems that this time he plans to follow through. Don writes a suicide

note, and walks over to the mirror to finish off what he believes has already begun. Helen comes back to the apartment and begs him not to do it. He tries to justify his actions, "'cause it's best all around for everybody. For you, for Wick, and for me. . . . Look at it this way, Helen: this business is just a formality. Don Bernam is dead already. He died over this weekend . . . of a lot of things—of alcohol, of moral anemia, of fear, shame, DT's." Helen continues to beg him; she is praying for a sign, something to let Don know that he has a reason to go on. Then there is a knock at the door. It is Nat with the typewriter Don left at the bar after he couldn't hock it at any pawn shops.

Helen takes this to be the sign she was praying for: "Someone somewhere sent it back—why? Because he means you to stay alive. Because he wants you to write. I didn't ask for a big miracle." Improbably, he is redeemed by the love of his forgiving, "good" woman. With a determined commitment, he resolves to begin writing again, beginning with the events of the previous Thursday afternoon. Although he appears quickly rehabilitated, the outcome of his resoluteness is still vague—he has yet to put down any lines for his first novel on paper. Don becomes inspired. He decides to write down everything that happened to him the past few days, starting with him packing for the long weekend away:

> My mind was hanging outside the window. It was suspended just about eighteen inches below. And out there in that great big concrete jungle, I wonder how many others that are like me. Poor bedeviled guys on fire with thirst. Such comical figures to the rest of the world as they stagger blindly toward another binge, another bender, another spree.

The scene ends with another pan to the city, this time symbolizing the many of other people out in the city just like him, experiencing a crazy binge—a "lost weekend."

With *The Lost Weekend,* Wilder quite possible made his greatest serious film. Stunning in its intensity and

unrelenting focus, *The Lost Weekend* is far from an enjoyable experience, even if you're not drinking. This is shown through the dramatic cinematic undertones Wilder uses in order to further the presence of darkness and gloom in Don's depressive state. Present in almost every scene, Milland is the motor that drives *The Lost Weekend*. It is up to him to be convincing and, with every fiber of his body, he achieves this with a frightening effectiveness. In a film like *The Lost Weekend*, creating the right atmosphere is of paramount importance. This is where Miklos Rozsa's score comes in. The score is a key factor in conveying the emotions Don is going through in his desperation. Many of Don's scenes are utterly wordless, hence the music must work with Milland's physical expression to transmit the emotional tone. The music, the acting, and the expressionistic camerawork combine to portray alcoholism as the real problem it is. All this helped to make *The Lost Weekend* a revolutionary, groundbreaking motion picture. It was the first time that Hollywood had tackled this taboo subject. By doing so, and with such power, it created social awareness of alcoholism as a modern illness.

Works Cited

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