



Université  
Fédérale

Toulouse  
Midi-Pyrénées



UNIVERSITÉ TOULOUSE  
Jean Jaurès

Université Jean Jaurès (Toulouse II)  
UFR Langues et Civilisations Étrangères  
Département d'Études du Monde Anglophone



## NOSTALGIA AND REVISIONISM INTERTWINED:

Todd Haynes's Reworking of the Melodrama Genre in  
*Far From Heaven, Mildred Pierce, and Carol.*

*Mémoire de 2<sup>ème</sup> année pour le Master Recherche « Études Anglophones »*

**Présenté par** Sarah CAMPION

**Sous la direction de** M. David ROCHE et M. Zachary BAQUÉ

Année Universitaire 2017-2018



# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Characters and Relationships</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>I – Gender and the Legacy of the Melodrama Genre.</b>	<b>II</b>
<b><i>A) A Lasting Heritage</i></b>	<b><i>II</i></b>
1. <i>From Eighteenth-Century Literature to Cinema</i>	12
2. <i>The Heyday of Melodrama</i>	14
<b><i>B) Introduction to Haynes’s Nostalgic and Revisionist Art</i></b>	<b><i>17</i></b>
1. <i>Imitation of Art</i>	18
2. <i>Credits and Primary Appearance</i>	20
<i>At First Sight</i>	20
<i>Melodramatic Music</i>	21
3. <i>Haynes’s Indirect Lens on the Past</i>	25
<b>II – Fragmented Melodramatic Place and Space</b>	<b>27</b>
<b><i>A) Architectural Oppression: There Is No Crowded Space like Home</i></b>	<b><i>27</i></b>
1. <i>Stairway to the State of Mind</i>	28
<i>Climactic Ascension and Incidental Descent</i>	29
<i>Hierarchical Order</i>	32
2. <i>Overly Geometrical Suffocating Places</i>	34
<i>The Hearth As Center Of the Household</i>	34
<i>Oppression Unleashed</i>	43
<b><i>B) Cracking the Shell</i></b>	<b><i>51</i></b>
1. <i>Windows and Doors:</i>	51
<i>Windows of Contemplation</i>	52
<i>Behind Closed Doors</i>	57

1. <i>Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Tell Me Who's the 'Fakest' of Them All</i>	60
<b>III- Fragmented Nostalgic Genre for Contemporary Fragmented Genders</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>A) Discrepancy in Content: Shattering the Nuclear Family</b>	<b>66</b>
1. <i>The Seasonal Celebrations Paradox</i>	67
2. <i>Dysfunctional Motherhood, Fatherhood and Parenthood</i>	70
3. <i>Masculinity and Femininity Questioned</i>	74
<b>B) Queer Form: Disruptions in and Invasion of the Woman's Film</b>	<b>76</b>
1. <i>Stylization: Light, Contrast, Color</i>	76
3. <i>Gender Inversions: Queer Sounds and Queer Looks</i>	84
<i>Queer Sound</i>	84
<i>Queer Look</i>	91
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Annex</b>	<b>98</b>
<i>Scene 2.1: Carol – from 57'14" to 58'13"</i>	98
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>99</b>

## Acknowledgements

I owe the achievement of this dissertation not just to those who directly helped me but also to those who inspired me and encouraged me through this long journey that led me here.

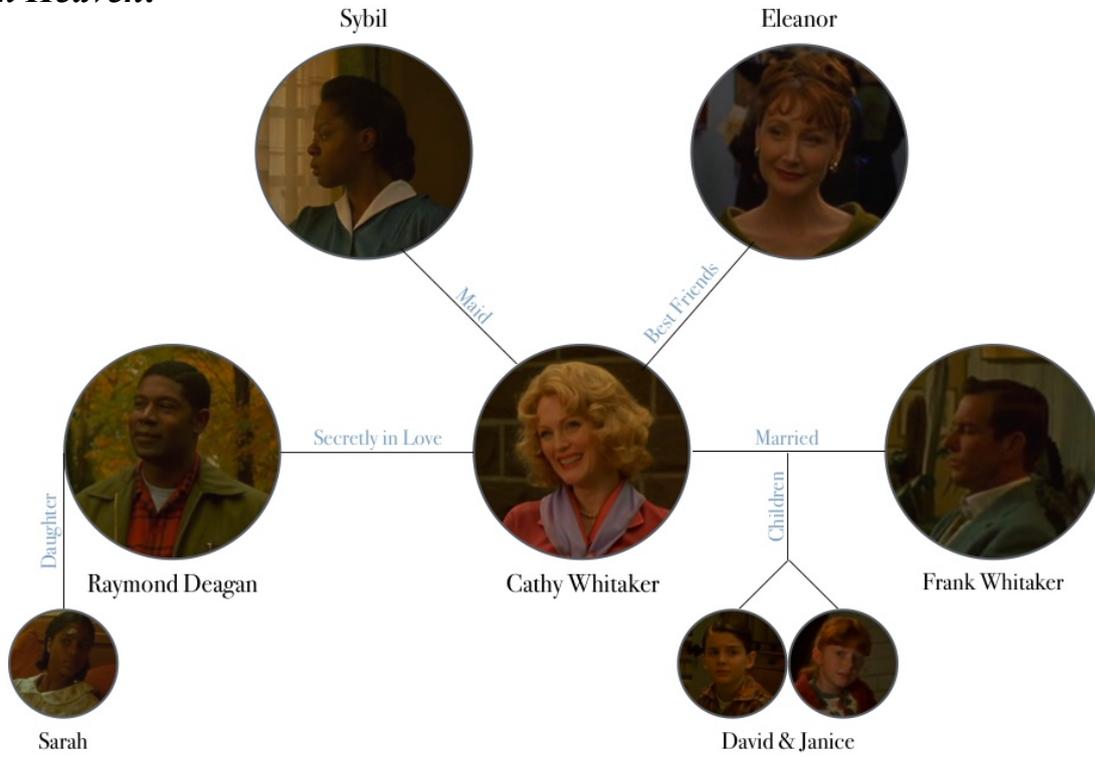
First and foremost, I'm overly grateful for the constant support of my supervisors **David ROCHE** and **Zachary BAQUE**, for their helpful advice and last but not least for their patience all along this project.

I'd like to thank all the teachers and professors whose classes on English-speaking cultures were enlightening. Among them, I must particularly thank **Nathalie VINCENT-ARNAUD**, for her support but also for giving me the opportunity to give a talk about music in *Far From Heaven*. This gave me the push that I needed to do more research on music in films.

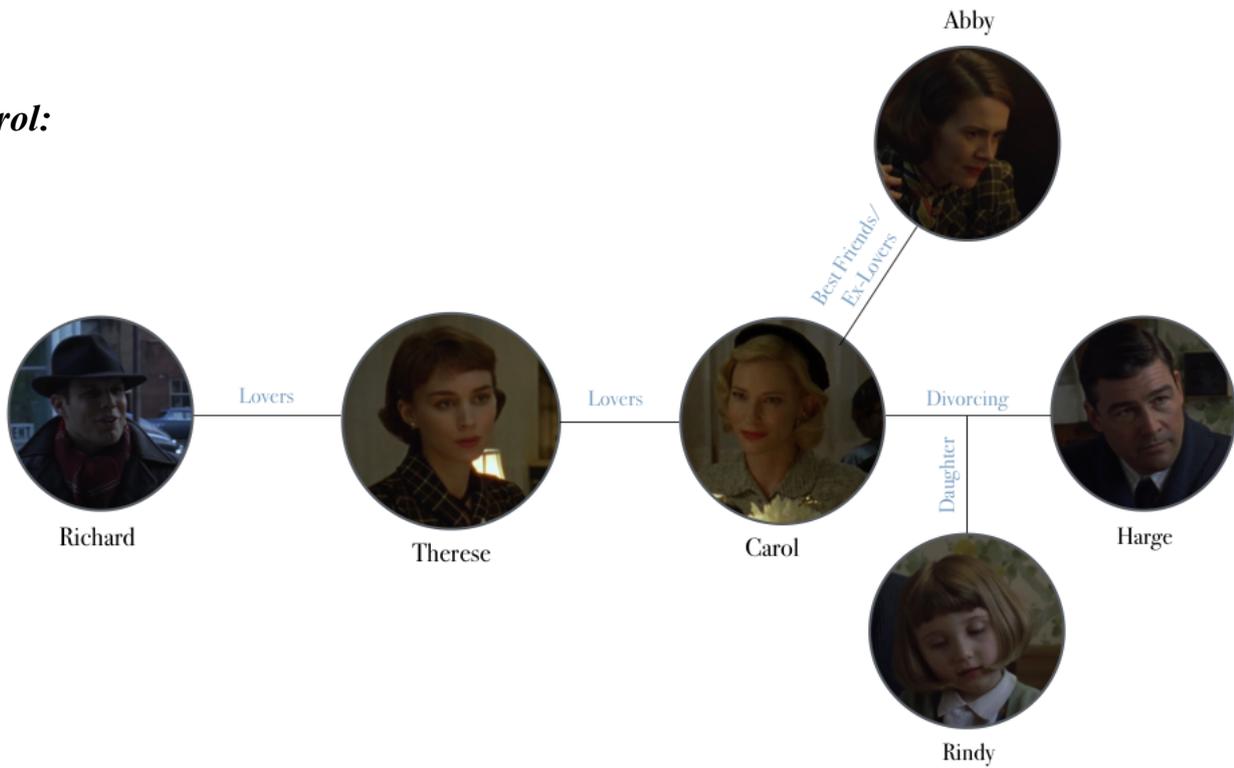
Last but not least, I'm thankful to **my family, my friends** and **my colleagues** for their encouragement, their undying warming support, and their protective concern.

## Characters and Relationships

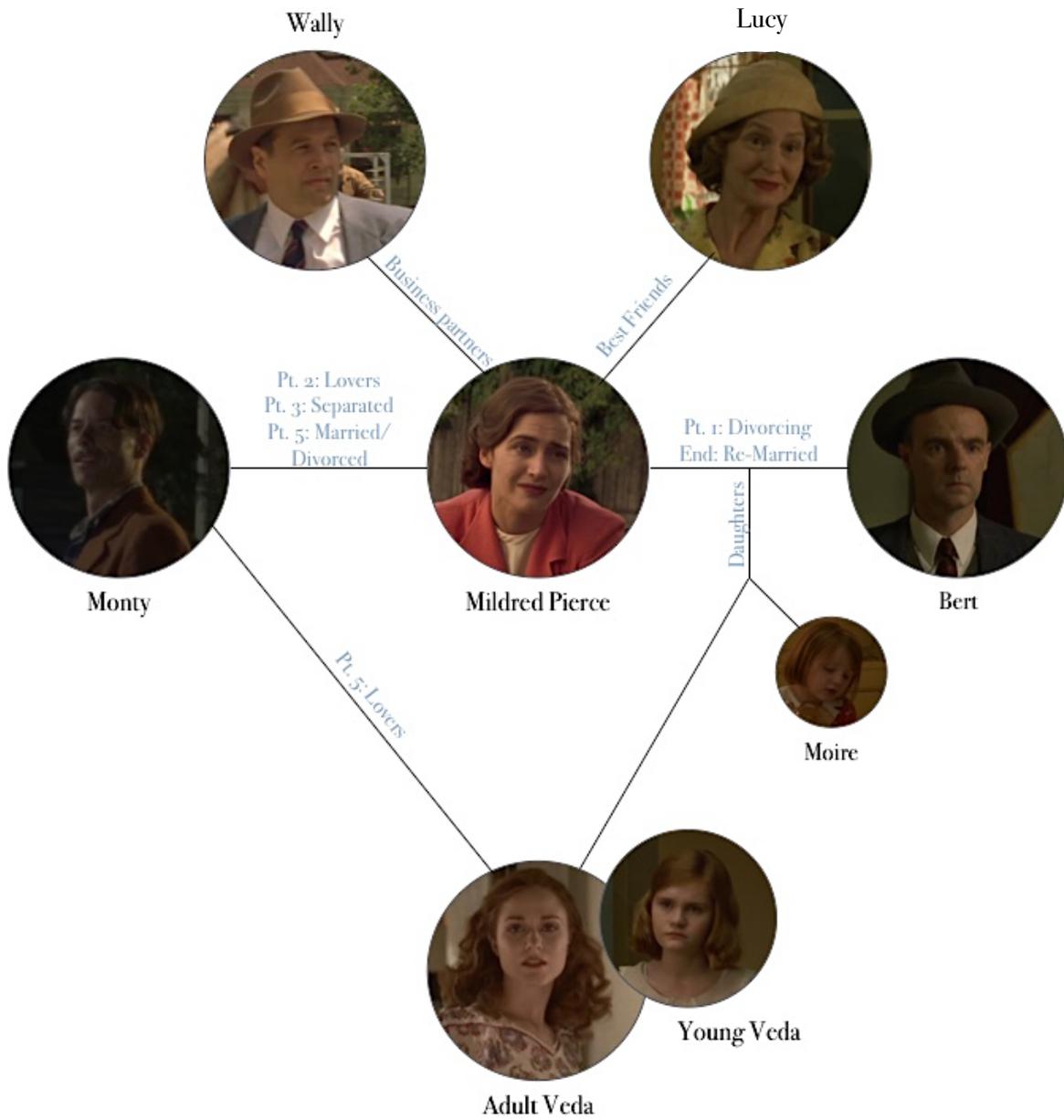
### *Far From Heaven:*



### *Carol:*



*Mildred Pierce:*



## Introduction

Haynes's body of work is hard to define, because of the multiplicity of stories, singular characters and fragmented style he creates and recreates. The filmmaker "quickly established himself as one of the most original filmmakers in his ability to expose the mechanisms of contemporary society," starting with his short-film *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story* (1987),<sup>1</sup> featuring Barbie dolls instead of real actors, to tell the story of Karen Carpenter.<sup>2</sup> This bold and original use of dolls in a movie discussing the delicate subject of anorexia, in relation to society's expectations concerning the female body, was acclaimed in film festivals following its public release. Unfortunately, his first movie got banned because of its unlicensed use of The Carpenters' music. He then tackled the issue of AIDS in *Poison* (1991), thanks to which he became a renowned filmmaker, especially amongst critics. With this feature film, Haynes affirms his genre-patchwork style which he had already displayed in *Superstar*. This particular style allows him to reveal different ways of looking at one character, one situation and/or one narrative, (or even different characters symbolizing different phases or perceptions of one person, as in his biopic of Bob Dylan *I'm Not There* (2007) where Bob Dylan is represented through six different characters, each 'belonging' to a different film genre. His experiment on the blending of genres, from *Superstar* on, highlights the importance of film genre in narration. Indeed, genres tackle particular topics and the blending thereof add a contemporary queer look. This particular play with genre is common in the New Queer Cinema genre with which Haynes is often associated. B. Ruby Rich says of this particular genre that it adopts several styles to discuss and highlight the queer subject.<sup>3</sup> Given this substantial experience, the focus he made on the melodrama genre in three of his latest oeuvres could seem, at first, very different from his earlier films, even more so given that the stories are set in the 1930s (*Mildred Pierce* (HBO, 2011)) and 1950s (*Far From Heaven* (2002) and *Carol* (2015)).

The characters in these three films (not only the female leads) face the limitations of conventional gender roles and find their lives impacted by them. Overall the women and minorities are shown as those who suffer the most from them. In *Mildred Pierce*, the eponymous character realizes how difficult it is to be a single mother during the Great Depression, after her husband leaves

---

<sup>1</sup> *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story*. Dir. Todd Haynes. Iced Tea Productions, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Ducharme, Olivier. *Todd Haynes : Cinéaste queer : Liberté, identité, résistance*. (Canada: Varia, 2016) p.12.

<sup>3</sup> Rich, B. Ruby. "New Queer Cinema". *Sight & Sound*. BFI, 25 June 2017. Web. 29 Dec. 2017.

<<https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/features/new-queer-cinema-b-ruby-rich>>

her when she accuses him of having an extra-marital affair. Her only experience valuable experience is, according to others, raising her daughters and selling home-made pies. This prevents her from finding a job she deems good enough for her. She ends up working as a waitress once she understands this is the best she can get. From the event develops the complicated mother-daughter relationship since her daughter, Veda, refuses to accept the thought of her mother working as a waitress, “taking tips, wearing a uniform and mopping up crumbs.”<sup>4</sup> Contrary to the two other melodramas, *Mildred Pierce* came out as an HBO five-part miniseries in 2011. For this type of medium, Haynes adopted a more “naturalist” aesthetic which drastically changes from *Far From Heaven*, a very pastiche tribute to Douglas Sirk’s 1950s melodramas which only came to light in the 1970s.<sup>5</sup> Pam Cook highlights “their capacity to examine social issues of gender, sexuality and race” and claims that the “extravagant” aesthetics of *Far from Heaven* enables a visual critique of the American society.<sup>6</sup> This critique is conveyed through “Hayne’s imitation of art” inspired by “Sirk’s imitation of life.”<sup>7</sup> In this quotation, Pam Cook refers to Sirk’s remake of the 1934 *Imitation of Life*, directed by John Stahl. The 1950s revised story shows a certain irony as to how society changed (or did not)<sup>8</sup> – comparing the status of two women, a black woman and a white one – and how it was back then with regard to gender and race issues through an “imitation of life.” Sirk transposed the original story of *Imitation of Life* to fit his present while Haynes’ *Far From Heaven* remains in the past.<sup>9</sup> Thus, when Cook refers to “Haynes’ imitation of art,” she foregrounds Haynes’s desire to make a more vivid social critique – which was previously done by Sirk in his remake of *Imitation of Life* – by imitating the art of the melodrama genre used by Sirk.<sup>10</sup> In Haynes’s homage to his melodramas, Cathy, the main character, mother of two and suburban housewife, walks in on her husband kissing another man during one of his so-called late nights at the office. While she desperately tries to find a way to save her marriage she falls for Raymond, her African-American gardener. Their relationship is soon enough spied on until the rumor has it and forces them to say goodbye. The theme of impossible love (but mostly immoral according to social conventions of the time) comes back in his latest film, *Carol*, adapted from Patricia

---

<sup>4</sup>*Mildred Pierce*, Episode 1.

<sup>5</sup>Cook, Pam. “Beyond Adaptation: mirrors, memory and melodrama in Todd Haynes’ *Mildred Pierce*.” *Screen*. 54.3 (Autumn 2013) : p.379.

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

<sup>7</sup>Cook, Pam. *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema*. (Oxon: Routledge, 2005) p.14.

<sup>8</sup>“In remaking *Imitation of Life* in 1959, Sirk allows us to gauge the distance travelled since 1934 in relation to the white mother, and to note the appalling lack of change in the situation of the black mother” - Kaplan, E. Ann. *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama*. (London: Routledge, 1992) p.175

<sup>9</sup>Roger, Philippe. “Généalogie de l’intime : la pensée optique des mélodrames de Todd Haynes.” *De l’intime dans le cinéma anglophone*, edited by Isabelle Schmitt-Pitiot and David Roche, CinémaAction-Éditions Corlet, 2015, pp. 146.

<sup>10</sup>*Screening the Past*, 14.

Highsmith's novel of the same title (previously entitled *The Price of Salt*). It tells the story of Therese, a young woman who, after she meets another (older) woman at work, finds herself in a process of exploring who she is as a maturing woman. This storyline is about finding out about one's identity in its purest, most forward form. The woman, with whom she slowly falls in love as they go on a road trip to escape their lives in New York, is going through a divorce and risks losing her daughter in the process because of moral beliefs. Once again, the question of sexual orientation in the 1950s is dealt with, but this time, the original story itself comes from the 1950s, which is a rather interesting element in the analysis of the relationship between past and present. The issue of same-sex relationships was dealt within the original story and was not added by Haynes to make the story fit in our present. Moreover, the core of Highsmith's story remains untouched in the adaption and only details are changed or kept silent, – seemingly to focus on the two main characters, – which makes the link between past and present stronger and all the more authentic.

While he uses a diverse range of genres, Haynes seems to have a particular liking for the melodrama. *Far From Heaven* is the most obvious in this regard compared to the other two with its flamboyant Technicolor and faithful mannerism. The filmmaker himself admits that *Far From Heaven* “completely ignores contemporary styles of naturalism, and [...] resurrects the most discredited of dramatic forms.”<sup>11</sup> Haynes shows a certain nostalgia for past aesthetics as he uses and re-uses later on, in *Mildred Pierce* and *Carol*, the aesthetics of the 1930s and 1950s melodramas. In doing so, he calls for the viewer's memory on many different levels, the first being that of the image itself and its aesthetic. But other elements have to be taken into account since they participate and increase the nostalgic feeling for those who are ready to perceive them. The inclusion of these nostalgic elements in these films creates a link between past and present which is important to the notions of both nostalgia and revisionism.

Many scholars have focused on Haynes' films: Pam Cook analyzed *Far From Heaven* as a work of nostalgia in *Screening the Past*.<sup>12</sup> She also published an article on *Mildred Pierce* in *Screen* about its blending of genres, which was also evoked by Sylvain Lavallée.<sup>13</sup> <sup>14</sup> Mary Ann Doane, known for her work on feminist film studies and research on film genre, also wrote an article dedicated to the

---

<sup>11</sup>Haynes, Todd. *Far From Heaven, Safe and Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story: Three Screenplays*. (New York: Grove Press, 2007) p.xi

<sup>12</sup>Cook, Pam. *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema*. (Oxon: Routledge, 2015)

<sup>13</sup>—. "Beyond Adaptation: mirrors, memory and melodrama in Todd Haynes's *Mildred*." *Screen*. 54.3 (Autumn 2013) : pp.378-387.

<sup>14</sup>Lavallée, Sylvain. "Mirage de la vie." *Séquences : la revue de cinéma*. 277 (2012) : pp.24-25.

work of Haynes, entitled “*Pathos and Pathology*,” in which she analyzes the theme of suffering; a theme which is essential in the study of the melodrama.<sup>15</sup> More recently, Olivier Ducharme focused on the queer dimension of his filmography in *Todd Haynes : Cinéaste Queer*, building his analysis on Foucault's notion of subjectivation – i.e. the subjection of one’s identity caused by a power balance – and highlighting the impact of this facet of the filmmaker's work.<sup>16</sup> Looking at all these analyses, Haynes seems to be a true user of classical Hollywood convention as a means to induce a sense of nostalgia but also a sense of revisionism in his movies.

With this thesis, I wish to make sense of the impact of nostalgia and revisionism in Haynes works. More particularly, I wish to show how these two apparently paradoxical concepts, actually work together in Haynes’s imitation and reworking of classical melodramas.

Revisionism and nostalgia might sound like diametrically opposed concepts, but nostalgia, which by definition draws an inevitable link between past and present, has the potential to create a space for revisionism. Revisionism can only work if we make elements of the past interact with our present, since it aims at showing what was not shown and is seldom discussed but nevertheless existed. Revisionism naturally questions our perception of the past, attempts to uncover the hidden social truths through stories, which undoubtedly existed but were to remain invisible. In her analysis of Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull* (1980), Pam Cook, who wrote many books on the representation of the past in cinema, asserts the coexistence of nostalgia and revisionism:

“[New Hollywood] sells itself on the basis of its reflexivity, calling up classic Hollywood in order to differentiate itself from it. The “modernity” of New Hollywood lies in the way it plays on the known conventions of a past Hollywood to displace it, while retaining the pleasures of homage to the past.”<sup>17</sup>

The superimposition of revisionism and nostalgia sends mixed signals: the viewers witness the imprisonment of characters in an environment aesthetically longing for something that is known to be irretrievable and which is hostile to their seemingly contemporary identities. For the mechanisms of this rather paradoxical combination to be understood, the legacy of melodramas throughout history must be a starting point in this thesis, so that the references to the melodrama genre can be better understood in light of Haynes’ reinterpretation of its conventions. Haynes’s indirect lens on the past will also be commented on, in order to grasp a more complete picture of his experience as a filmmaker,

---

15 Doane, Mary Ann. “Pathos and Pathology: The Cinema of Todd Haynes.” *Camera Obscura*. 19.3 (2004) : pp.1-21.

16 Ducharme, Olivier. *Todd Haynes : Cinéaste queer : Liberté, identité, résistance*. (Canada: Varia, 2016).

17 *Screening the Past*, 174.

but also as a spectator. We will then move on to the analysis of a very melodramatic setting, namely the home – or rather, as we will see, the oppressive house which is, along with the public sphere, imbued with the traces of a patriarchal society. We will focus on several motifs of the melodrama genre: The staircase and other architectural motifs, windows, doors, and mirrors. While these codes may appear as nostalgic at first, we will see that their distortion and their excessive *mise-en-scène* will, in fact, provide us with an aesthetic itself discussing with the revisionist content. Finally, since the melodramatic aesthetic is often invaded with other genres, we will focus on the question of the fragmentation of genre with regard to the question of gender. Indeed, Haynes's ties with the New Queer Cinema makes his blending of genres provides a fertile ground to discuss the very contemporary issue surrounding the construction – and depiction – of queer genders which go beyond the traditional and dated dichotomy between male and female, men and women.

## I – Gender and the Legacy of the Melodrama Genre.

What is a melodrama? More particularly here: What does the term melodrama refer to? What are the characteristics of the genre? As its etymology reminds us, it was closely linked to the use of music, with its prefix “melo-” deriving from *μελος* (‘melos’) in ancient Greek meaning “musical phrase”. It denotes an important characteristic of the melodrama film genre, which is expressing feelings by any means possible through narration – i.e. color, lighting, costume design...<sup>18</sup> We will see several times in this thesis that music amplifies what Bordwell refers to as “soul-bearing histrionics.” The cinema industry started using the term to designate movies whose narrative is “a hodgepodge of extravagant adventures, full of blood and thunder, clashing swords and hair’s-breadth escapes”, as described by a critic in 1906 quoted by Richard Maltby.<sup>19</sup> He affirms that this understanding of the term lived on until “at least 1960,” referring to movies such as *Psycho* (1960) or *White Heat* (1950).<sup>20</sup> The movies we refer to as melodramas today were then classified under the term of romantic dramas, a sub-genre of the woman’s film. The industry’s understanding of the word “melodrama” evolved throughout time, but the aesthetics of the romantic dramas from the Classical Era seem immortal. Decades after Fassbinder’s own reinterpretation of 1950s melodramas, shades of the aesthetics used by masters such as Sirk, Ophuls, Vidor – and many others – still show in Haynes’s oeuvres. It seems the classical era has merely faded.

### A) A Lasting Heritage

The term *mélodrame* dates back to the end of the eighteenth century. It is Rousseau who first used the word for his play *Pygmalion*.<sup>21</sup> But how did it end up standing as a film genre? For a better understanding of what a melodrama is, I will first and foremost try to expose the ties between the staged melodrama and the film genre. Then, a brief overview of the heydays of the genre in the cinema industry will be provided with contextual elements of the era to understand the issues at stake, followed by a general comment on Haynes’s peculiar approach to the genre.

---

<sup>18</sup> Bordwell, David. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. (Oxon: Routledge, 1986) 70.

<sup>19</sup> Maltby, Richard. *Hollywood Cinema*. 2nd ed. (Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 1995) 103.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 103

<sup>21</sup> Allen, Emily. “Melodrama.” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of English Literature*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006). *Oxford Reference*. Web. 13 Feb. 2018.

## 1. From Eighteenth-Century Literature to Cinema

Many of the scholars who wrote on melodrama as a film genre have, with more or fewer details, reminded their readers of the roots of the genre which can be traced back to nineteenth-century literature and drama.<sup>22</sup> For instance, E. Ann Kaplan partly explains this phenomenon with the amount of stage and screen adaptations of novels, using her study of the representation of motherhood in *Stella Dallas* – published as a novel in 1923, later adapted into a play and then into movies – based on both the novel and the adaptation.<sup>23</sup> Given the number of book adaptations on screen, the presence of the melodrama genre in cinema can partly be explained by this habit of making and remaking. However, one must go back to the eighteenth century to find the first pieces of the “melodramatic imagination,” as referred to by Peter Brooks, in a post-French Revolution old continent.<sup>24</sup> The French Revolution had the consequence of allowing previously regulated populist theaters – whose plays had to be wordless – to freely manage their stage and the drama they showed. Born out of the deregulation, the *mélodrame* “and its strongly theatrical, physical, and sensational aesthetic drew strongly on the tradition of wordless spectacle,” Emily Allen notes.<sup>25</sup> This new type of spoken drama then reached the London stage at the beginning of the nineteenth century, spreading and developing further on the melodramatic aesthetic.<sup>26</sup> America, seeking to follow the lead of the old continent, soon welcomed the revolutionary drama whose extravagant *mise-en-scène* influenced the aesthetics of many Hollywood movies then broadly called melodramas.<sup>27</sup> As I explained earlier on – with Maltby quoting a 1906 critic’s definition of the melodrama – these movies didn’t have much in common with the movies under study here.

The roots of the genre – made out of intersections from a wide range of artworks spread out throughout two centuries – do not make it easy to explain how the woman’s film became today’s melodrama. According to Elsaesser, it also has ties with both eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature and drama:

---

<sup>22</sup> Namely, amongst others, Elsaesser, Gledhill and E. Ann Kaplan.

<sup>23</sup> Kaplan, E. Ann. *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama*. (London: Routledge, 1992)

<sup>24</sup> Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination : Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess*. (New Haven, London : Yale UP, 1976). vii

<sup>25</sup> Allen, Emily. “Melodrama.” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006). *Oxford Reference*. Web. 13 Feb. 2018

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

<sup>27</sup> Gledhill, Christine. “The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation”. *Home Is Where the Heart Is*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. (London: BFI, 1994)

“Perhaps the current that leads more directly to the sophisticated family melodrama of the 40s and the 50s, though, is derived from the romantic drama which had its heyday after the French Revolution and subsequently furnished many of the plots for operas, but which is itself unthinkable without the eighteenth-century sentimental novel and the emphasis put on private feelings and interiorized (puritan, pietist) codes of morality and conscience.”<sup>28</sup>

Overall, corroborating the writings of Elsaesser and Gledhill, what seems to really make the cement of the melodramatic imagination and its eclectic ensemble of products are: on one hand, their pervasive take on social issues and, on the other hand, the particular aesthetics that it imposed. Gledhill points out the fact that the critics’ focus on the melodrama only came forward because of the expansion of the studies on theatricality, thus, suggesting that the *mise-en-scène* plays a major role in the connection between stage and screen. As for Elsaesser, he confides that the fragments of the melodrama seem to have always come forward at times of social crises.<sup>29</sup> About the melodrama film genre, Pam Cook affirms that it “both recognizes the importance of women and marginalizes them”.<sup>30</sup> And in *Women’s Film and Female Experience, 1940-1950*, Andrea Walsh introduces the relationship between women and the women’s film as such:

“The American female consciousness of the 1940s, as mediated through the women’s film, embodied elements of resistance to male domination as well as acquiescence and submission. [...] The films popular among female audiences in this period portray a view of womanhood as: strong, maternal, and sisterly; desiring yet distrusting and angry toward men; excited about as well as ambivalent toward and frightened of independence and autonomy.”<sup>31</sup> P.4

These movies, therefore, cannot be dealt with unless we also consider the condition of women at the time they were made, and how they reflect on it despite the internalized sexism, amongst other prejudices. Indeed, with the traumatic hit of the two world wars which were, in the case of the United States, topped off with the Great Depression, the status of women kept changing. It provided numerous filmmakers with a wide range of implausible stories to be told on the condition of women. Stories as “implausible”, as Cathy puts it in *Far From Heaven*, as her relationship with her black gardener, as Carol and Therese’s love affair, or as Mildred’s (temporary) independence.

---

<sup>28</sup> Elsaesser, Thomas. “Tales of Sound and Fury.” *Home Is Where the Heart Is*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. (London: BFI, 1994) 45.

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

<sup>30</sup> Cook, Pam. “Melodrama and Women’s Picture.” *BFI Dossier 18: Gainsborough Melodrama*. Eds. Sue Aspinall and Robert Murphy. (London: British Film Institute, 1983) 17.

<sup>31</sup> Walsh, Andrea. *Women’s Film and Female Experience, 1940-1950*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984) 4.

## 2. *The Heyday of Melodrama*

Throughout the centuries, the term melodrama has been allocated to oeuvres that are supposedly not good enough to be taken seriously and/or attract mass audiences. According to Sue Harper in *Screen Online*, focusing on the British (family/domestic) melodrama:

“Melodrama’s lack of critical status can be attributed to this popular/feminine bias. Its concentration on taboo, ritual, rage and desire - all expressed without restraint - meant that most male critics, who preferred emotions to be spoken sotto voce, found melodrama to be tasteless. It is no accident that all the critics who have dealt seriously with the genre have been women.”<sup>32</sup>

Sentimentality and “private feelings” induced the aesthetics of the melodrama which does not rely much on words, contrary to the action films, but on gestures.<sup>33</sup> As its roots in theater show, it is a genre tainted with a particular leaning towards the popular as it mostly attracts mass audiences which is rarely seen as a “positive” feature according to the critics’ criteria. We must not forget that, thanks to its popularity, however, the (family/ domestic) melodrama – as we refer to it now – had a certain prestige in Classical Hollywood, back when it was referred to as the woman’s film, according to Maltby:

Within the trade’s usage, “melodrama” was certainly not an elevated term. The “woman’s film,” on the other hand, had a relatively prestigious status in Classical Hollywood. Most woman’s films, which would be identified as “melodramas” by the conventions of recent criticism, were placed by the industry in its other general category, of “drama.” As an industry term, “woman’s film” embraced a range of sub-groupings that included romantic dramas, “fallen women” films, Cinderella romances, and working-girl movies. Given that Classical Hollywood assumed that the majority of its audience female, it is hardly surprising that these “dramas” were generally of higher budget and status than the “melodramas” designed with a more masculine appeal. Far from being a despised or denigrated production category, the “woman’s film” was one of Hollywood’s quality products.<sup>34</sup>

This is what sets the melodrama, as a sub-genre of the woman’s film, apart from the earlier Hollywood melodramas. Harper’s observation on the rather negative connotation of the signifier “melodrama” points out the bias indirectly provoked by the ‘feminine’ perspective of the woman’s

---

<sup>32</sup> Harper, Sue. “Melodrama : Torrid Passion and doomed Desires.” *BFI Screen Online*. Screenonline.org Web. 23 Mar. 2017 <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/446129/>>

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Maltby, 103.

film which was then popular because, as Maltby highlights, women were considered as Hollywood's strongest audience. Consequently, a number of films with themes which, supposedly, appealed to women more than they did to men became Hollywood's golden goose.

Several traumatic events had a major impact on the American way of life, on the families, on the women and consequently on their Hollywood tales. The World Wars and the Great Depression managed to, paradoxically, both dent and reinforce the patriarchal system and the gender norms keeping it together, providing more and more subjects to be tackled regarding women's condition. More particularly, on the subject of motherhood, which is central in the family melodrama, E. Ann Kaplan talks about a "first, disturbing challenge to the nuclear-family institution, by 1914 in its fullest, most complete stage." She expands on the causes and consequences of this challenge as such:

"Women's entry into the work-force in large numbers during the First World War, the women's suffrage movement, and the first waves of female liberation in the 1920s, all severely threatened the nuclear family, whose cornerstone was the modern mother. Historians have charted the (relatively) large numbers of women entering higher education in this period, the number of women remaining childless, the increase in lesbian relations, despite their having to be carefully hidden (see e.g. Filene 1986). Through all this, the nuclear family remained intact and the mother was still central but defensively so. This shift may be said to mark the "high modernist" mother."<sup>35</sup>

As one can expect, melodrama's take on these 'feminine' subjects was far from optimistic. In fact, Elsaesser points out that the female characters in the melodrama film constantly end up facing the hard truth of their socially-induced fate:

"The family melodrama [...] more often records the failure of the protagonist to act in a way that could shape the events and influence the emotional environment, let alone change the stifling social milieu. The world is closed and the characters are acted upon. Melodrama confers on them a negative identity through suffering, and the progressive self-immolation and disillusionment generally ends in resignation: they emerge as lesser human beings for having become wise and acquiescent to the ways of the world."<sup>36</sup>

For instance, the Great Depression and New Deal Era sparked a discussion on the problem of capitalism and exploitation which are translated through Stahl's *Imitation of Life* (1934) and its

---

<sup>35</sup> Kaplan, E. Ann. *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama* (London: Routledge, 1992) 18.

<sup>36</sup> Elsaesser, Thomas. "Tales of Sound and Fury." *Home Is Where the Heart Is*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. (London: BFI, 1994) 55.

interracial duo formed by two women, Bea and Delilah. The latter's pancakes recipe led her white counterpart, Bea, to start her own business. This first version already acknowledges the exploitation of the black protagonist, but the issue of racism is mostly emphasized through Delilah's daughter, Peola, a light-skinned mulatto struggling to pass as white, "a casualty of American racism" as described by J.Hoberman.<sup>37</sup> Twenty years later, Sirk's remake effaced the New Deal backdrop to enhance the race issue, according to Hoberman, by downgrading the black mother who, instead of being a business partner, is now just a housemaid.<sup>38</sup> The story of the new Peola, Sarah-Jane, still faces the harsh situation of passing as white but still suffering from America's racism with the addition of a scene where she gets beat up by her white boyfriend as he discovers her true identity. Sarah-Jane's condition is clearly compared to that of the new Bea, Lora, as they both seek to "realize [themselves] in show business."<sup>39</sup> But the young girl's aspirations and rejection of her racial heritage – along with the rejection of her own mother – collide with her mother's objections and her constantly reminding of her condition as person of color. Both of their behaviors clearly highlight the issue of internalized racism. Sirk's remake somehow enhances the lack of progress of Civil Rights but also the hypocrisy of early feminism which kept the issues faced by women of color aside. The casting itself tells more than the story: The actress who played Peola was herself struggling with her biracial identity. The implied miscegenation in the characterization was a problem in the thirties but the movie was authorized anyway. In the remake, however, Sarah Jane was played by an African-American but one with Hispanic ancestry. The gap between Stahl's *Imitation of Life* and Sirk's remake is mostly caused by the evolution – or lack thereof – of social issues dealt within the book and its first screen adaptation. We must note, that these movies – and the books they are based on for instance – were quite bold in dealing with the country's latent racism at this particular epoch, while most woman's films focused on the condition of white women as mothers, as wives, as lovers but mostly as women who suffer from their internalized sexism, just as Sarah-Jane and Annie from their internalized racism.

As for the themes recurrent in family melodramas, those induced by the patriarchal system were recurrent but, as critics in the 1960s pointed out with the development of feminist film studies, what appears to be in favor of a status quo actually attempts to be subversive.<sup>40</sup> For instance, Elsaesser

---

<sup>37</sup> Hoberman, J. "Two Takes on 'Imitation of Life': Exploitation in Eastmancolor." *New York Times*. New York Times, 14 May 2015. Web. 11 Feb. 2017.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Gledhill highlights this paradox stating that "melodrama's investment in 'woman' as patriarchal symbol conflicts with the unusual space it offers to female protagonists and women's concerns". - Gledhill, Christine. "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation". *Home Is Where the Heart Is*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. (London: BFI, 1994) 13.

notes that “the ambiguity attached to the melodrama [as in melodramatic imagination]” brought with a conflict between “attitudes of submission” and the presentation of “fundamental social evils” seems to “[hold] even more for the film melodrama.”<sup>41</sup> This subversive side of melodramas was only pointed out then, by scholars, as melodrama regained some visibility. This is how a genre which appeared to be a piece condoning society and encouraging the status quo was rediscovered as a genre denouncing women’s condition as a result of the patriarchal system. But this does not necessarily mean that it yearns for a “revolutionary future”, Gledhill notes, it instead tends to show what should have been.<sup>42</sup> But, after all, the present holding the consequences of the past, we could consider that, by showing what should have been the melodrama also shows what should be. This is what seems to emanate from Haynes’s own melodramas. Choosing stories of or from the past, while referring to very contemporary social issues, Haynes seems to make both what should have been and what should be converse at the same time.

## B) Introduction to Haynes’s Nostalgic and Revisionist Art

Melodrama, and the women’s film in general, lost the grandeur that it acquired during the early stages of Hollywood film. Because “it’s a man’s celluloid world,” as Martha M. Lauzen announces in the title of her study on female presence and representation in the top 100 films of 2015, woman’s films lost their initial status in the industry as more and more movies were made for a masculine audience.<sup>43</sup> In the face of it, Haynes’s reworking of the melodrama at a time when women struggle to have a fair and equal representation in the film industry shows a resistance to gender bias. More importantly, instead of using the genre to solely focus on women’s condition, he opens up the discussion to other oppressed minorities. This contemporary melodramatic subject can be explained by Haynes’s ties with the New Queer Cinema which, as described in *Sight & Sound*, “renegotiat[es] subjectivities, annex[es] whole genres, revis[es] histories”.<sup>44</sup> According to the same online article, the films belonging to the New Queer Cinema are very different aesthetically and content-wise. Nonetheless, they are united by a common style based on “appropriation and pastiche, irony, as well

---

<sup>41</sup> Elaesser, Thomas. “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama.” *Home Is Where the Heart Is*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. (London: BFI, 1994) 47.

<sup>42</sup> Gledhill, Christine. “The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation”. *Home Is Where the Heart Is*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. (London: BFI, 1994) 21.

<sup>43</sup> Lauzen, Martha M. *It’s a Man’s (Celluloid) World: on-Screen Representations of Female Characters in the Top 100 Films of 2015*. (San Diego: Dr. Martha Lauzen for the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film, 2015). PDF file. <[https://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/files/2015\\_Its\\_a\\_Mans\\_Celluloid\\_World\\_Report.pdf](https://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/files/2015_Its_a_Mans_Celluloid_World_Report.pdf)>

<sup>44</sup> Rich, B. Ruby. “New Queer Cinema”. *Sight & Sound*. BFI, 25 June 2017. Web. 29 Dec. 2017. <<https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/features/new-queer-cinema-b-ruby-rich>>

as a reworking of history with social constructionism very much in mind”.<sup>45</sup> According to this definition of the genre, it seems to be dependent on both nostalgia and revisionism as a necessary couple in a queer approach of social criticism. With the inherent expressive mise-en-scène of the melodrama genre, a reworking of said genre today is visible at first sight. However, Haynes’s movies present several degrees of imitation and are still quite similar in their nostalgic narration from the very beginning.

### *1. Imitation of Art*

In Haynes’s interpretation of the melodrama genre, imitation appears in various shapes with the interaction between pastiche, mannerism, nostalgia and revisionism. In his paper entitled “Postmodernism and Consumer Society”, Jameson explains that imitation, and more precisely the pastiche style, is the result of the impossibility of moving forward regarding “stylistic innovation,” hence the need to enter what he poetically describes as an “imaginary museum”.<sup>46</sup> This museum where all of the “dead styles”, as he says, are to be explored through the present lens. Just like a museum would, he goes on to say that this postmodernist artistic mode inevitably will be about art itself. According to Dyer, there are several ways to induce pastiche in an imitational process. For instance, it can be the imitation of a “specific work or else a kind of work,” or it can be “an aspect of a work, something contained inside a wider work that is not itself pastiche”.<sup>47</sup> He then explains that “pastiche is always the imitation of an imitation” and adds that it “is a rather knowing form of the practice of imitation.”<sup>48</sup> Pastiche, therefore, plays with “the cultural perception of the real” to “[enable] us to make a sense of the real” according to him.<sup>49</sup> and For instance, *Far From Heaven* – partly because of its imitational reinterpretation of Sirk’s commenting-upon-Hollywood melodramas – highly relies on the pastiche mode both through its form and content, as highlighted by Joyrich:

By alluding to Sirk’s films, style, and stars, *Far from Heaven* thus reminds its viewers of the history of Hollywood and melodramatic entertainment in addition to, or as it is interwoven with, the history of various social and identity struggles.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Jameson, Fredric. “Postmodernism and Consumer Society.” *Postmodernism and Its Discontents: Theories, Practises*. Ed E. Ann Kaplan (London: Verso, 1988) 18.

<sup>47</sup> Dyer, Richard. *Pastiche*. (London and New York : Routledge, 2007) 2.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>50</sup> Joyrich, Lynne. “Written On the Screen: Mediation and Immersion in *Far From Heaven*.” *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism, Culture and Media Studies* 19.3 (2004): 187-219.

Pastiche shows in countless ways throughout the movie: from the film within the film occurrence with the inclusion of *The Three Faces of Eve* (1957) as some sort of a commentary upon Frank's characterization, to the obvious references to *Imitation of Life* (1959), *All that Heaven Allows* (1955) or even Fassbinder's remake *Ali, Fear Eats the Soul* (1973), through both narrative and narrational elements. While his homage to Sirk in *Far From Heaven* draws its nostalgia directly from 1950s film and the exaggeration thereof, thus invoking the pastiche mode, the nostalgic aesthetics in *Carol* and *Mildred Pierce* are not as intensified. Cook explained this change for *Mildred Pierce* with its being TV material:

"*Mildred Pierce* is the latest in a series of period pieces in which his aesthetic has become increasingly stylized and hyperbolic, from *Safe* (1995) to *Velvet Goldmine* (1998) and *Far from Heaven* (2002), culminating in *I'm Not There* (2007), a biopic of Bob Dylan in which Dylan is portrayed by six actors, including Cate Blanchett. This assertive stylistic gesture uses pastiche as a distancing device to remind viewers that they are watching a reinterpretation from the perspective of the present. For the miniseries Haynes appeared to have abandoned hyperbolic excess for a more naturalistic aesthetic appropriate to television and the home viewing situation."<sup>51</sup>

In fact, this change might be symptomatic of another kind of imitation, that is mannerism. Belén Vidal focused on the question of mannerism applied to cinema in her book entitled *Figuring the Past: Period Film and the Mannerist Aesthetic*. She writes:

"The Mannerist work [...] is essentially figurative; an idiom in which the desire to preserve entails both imitation, but also an irremediable anamorphosis (via saturation) of the classical perspectival model. Mannerism betrays its models either by a conscious departure from established rules, or by excess of fidelity. [...] Mannerism as a mode allows us to conceive both conformity and deviation within narrative films that trade on the conventional realism of period reconstruction – a realism built on intertextual (and intermedial) iterations. Historical, literary, architectural, pictorial, but also technological citations make the period film image a layered construct."<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, a pastiche work can be mannerist through an excessive fidelity, but a mannerist work is not always pastiche. Vidal notes that a mannerist work can show pastness through:

---

<sup>51</sup> Cook, Pam. "Beyond Adaptation: Mirrors, Memory and Melodrama in Todd Haynes's *Mildred Pierce*". *Screen*. 54.3 (Sept. 2013) 379.

<sup>52</sup> Vidal, Belén. *Figuring the Past: Period Film and the Mannerist Aesthetic*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012) 30-31.

“reconstruction rather than preservation, visibility rather than the written word, incorporation rather than allusion, the privileging of the fragment within known overarching narratives, and the proliferation of framed texts rather than belief in direct access to ‘facts’.”<sup>53</sup>

These manifestations, as one can expect from a revisionist deconstruction of the melodramatic narrative, are part of the narration of Haynes’s movies under study, here. It is with regard to Haynes’s both pastiche and mannerist imitation that we will analyze the interaction between nostalgia and revisionism. Indeed, both imitational styles inherently have the potential to create, at the same time, a fusion and a fission of the two.

## 2. Credits and Primary Appearance

Most of the imitation, both pastiche and mannerist, relies on the expressive mise-en-scène of the movies. The expressiveness characteristic to the melodrama genre – and Haynes’s appropriation thereof – can be observed right from the very beginning of his movies: the credits.

### At First Sight

I compiled an ensemble of credits from all three films under study and from Sirk’s *All That Heaven Allows* (1955) whose credits are extremely almost perfectly reproduced in *Far From Heaven*.



Fig. 1.1a: *All That Heaven Allows*



Fig. 1.1b: *ATHA*



Fig. 1.1c: *ATHA*

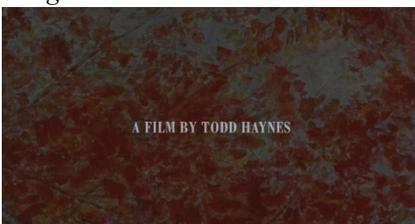


Fig. 1.2a: *Far From Heaven*

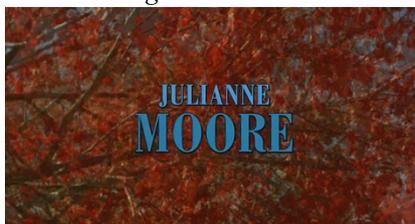


Fig. 1.2b: *FFH*



Fig. 1.2c: *FFH*

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 32.



Fig. 1.3a: *Mildred Pierce*



Fig. 1.3b: *MP*



Fig. 1.3c: *MP*

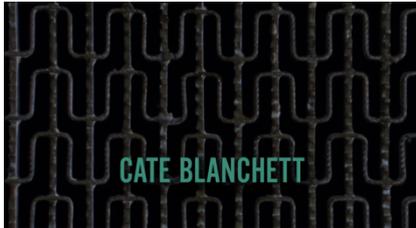


Fig. 1.4a: *Carol*

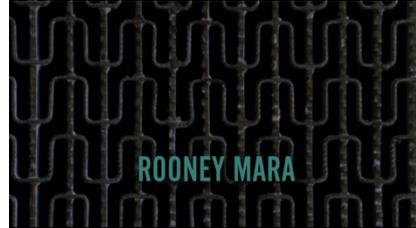


Fig. 1.4b: *Carol*



Fig. 1.4c: *Carol*

From this compilation we can observe a similar presentation with first and foremost the actress' name playing the main female character – or of the eponymous character in the case of *Carol*, since Rooney Mara's *Therese* is also the main female character – which fades in and then out to be replaced by another actor's/actress' name or by the title of the film (Fig. 1.1a to Fig. 1.4c). Mentioning the name of the female character(s) first is part of the melodramatic code which puts the emphasis on the female character(s) – and therefore on the actress(es) – as a woman's film should. A first difference can be seen between the movies. While *Far From Heaven* soon provides the spectators with an establishing shot (Fig. 1.2c), the way *All That Heaven Allows* does (Fig. 1.1a-c), *Carol* shows a close up of a subway grate to then draw back slowly and mix with the crowd in a street of New York (Fig. 1.4a-c). It progressively becomes more of an establishing shot when *Far From Heaven* and *All That Heaven Allows* start with an establishing shot to then join the characters in a suburban street. As for *Mildred Pierce*, the credits show a simple background with shapes executing a repetitive motion (Fig. 1.3a-c).

### Melodramatic Music

We must not forget that the word “melodrama” itself refers to the use and omnipresence of music with the prefix “melo-”, deriving from the Greek word “μέλος” (pron. “mélos”) meaning “musical phrase”. Music is one of the characteristics which, from the beginning of a movie belonging to the classical Hollywood era, helps you identify the type of film you are watching. While noir movies usually begin with a very loud and impressive music composed of both very low and very high ranged notes, melodrama presents a more harmonious musical theme, with medium or high ranged notes and

dominant strings often accompanied by a solo instrument such as the piano or the flute. For instance, *All that Heaven Allows* starts with a loud music with overly present strings playing high-ranged notes. The strings then play at a lower volume to allow a delicate piano melody to start. The strings pick up again afterwards more progressively. *Far From Heaven* doesn't exactly follow this pattern at the beginning of the movie. A few piano notes start a calm melody which is, a minute later, joined by other instruments, including strings, playing a redundant pattern composed of low-ranges notes, and a woodwind solo instrument. As the strings take on, the music plays slightly louder and with more energy which is inflected by a dramatically ascending melody. As in *All that Heaven Allows*, the music slowly fades, as the blue car parks in front of a suburban house. In the credits for *Carol*, the musical theme is not what announces the start of the movie so to speak. The viewers first hear sound without image. They hear the sound of a (subway) train approaching and then of its brakes screeching. This peculiar sound hints to the train sounds in Lean's *Brief Encounter* (1945) (see also the visual reference: Fig. 1.5a-b), and more broadly of the train motif in films which symbolizes separation. However, with the breaks screeching, *Carol* reverses the motif foreshadowing the reunion of the character, hence already announcing the "departure from established rules" of Haynes's mannerist style.



Fig. 1.5a: *Brief Encounter*



Fig. 1.5b: *Carol*

*A visual pastiche reference to Lean's Brief Encounter in Carol.*<sup>54</sup>

These sounds are followed by the main musical theme of *Carol* accompanying the opening scene, uncovering the agitation of New York at night. Once again, strings are part of the arrangement, giving out the first notes, soon joined by a piano and gradually other instruments take part including a harp and woodwinds. This accumulation of instrument makes the music grow more powerful, giving it an

<sup>54</sup> N.B. : *Carol* also follows the narrative pattern found in *Brief Encounter*. The narration starts with a scene which is repeated towards the end of the movie, and everything in between is a flash-back.

intense emotional dimension, which Jeff Smith describes as a “mixture of passion and distance” on David Bordwell’s website.<sup>55</sup> Finally, each episode of *Mildred Pierce* starts with the musical theme plating as the credits appear on screen. The ensemble playing is similar to that used for *Carol*. It starts with a harp playing a repetitive melody, joined by a stand-up bass playing low ranged notes, several woodwinds playing variations of the same melody, a piano and, of course, strings. In this musical theme, every time higher-ranged notes are reached, the instruments end up immediately going back to lower-ranged notes with a descending melody. This to and fro type of melody gives a feeling of melancholy as the higher notes which tend to sound more hopeful never last long. The credits are meant to already set the general atmosphere of the oeuvres, with the music acting as introduction to the characters’ musical themes which will accompany the main character(s)’ storyline.

In fact, the music in *Far From Heaven* and *Carol* is made out of themes. Carter Burwell explains that he composed three themes for the movie *Carol*.<sup>56 57</sup> One is the main theme which symbolizes, in his own words, “the active engagement and passion of Carol and Therese”, with an overwhelming ensemble slowly appearing as their relationship reaches its peak (the movie starts with this theme because the opening scene is actually one of the last of the movie).<sup>58</sup> This theme seems to develop throughout the movie, as fragments of the main theme are gradually added from one scene to another like puzzle pieces completing the overall final picture. One theme in particular is extremely reflective of the way music expresses the characters’ inner state, the one Burwell calls “Therese’s fascination with Carol”.<sup>59</sup> In this scene, Carol is driving Therese to her place. The scene is essentially shot in close-ups and extreme close-ups, sometimes blurry conveying Therese’s daydreaming. The “cloud of piano notes”, as Burwell describes it, is composed of a muffle piano part (left hand) and a clear piano part (right hand) playing a slow, high-ranged melody on top. This studio arrangement makes the notes sound as if they were reverberating in the air, in a thick “cloud”, in the middle of nowhere.

---

<sup>55</sup> Smith, Jeff. “Oscar’s Siren Song 2 : Jeff Smith on the Music Nominations”. *Observations on Film Art*. Ed. Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell. n.p., 25 Feb. 2016. Web. 24 Apr. 2017.  
<<http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2016/02/23/oscars-siren-song-2-je-smith-on-the-music-nominations/>>.

<sup>56</sup> N.B.: Carter Burwell wrote the music for *Carol* and *Mildred Pierce*. The music for *Far From Heaven* was written by Elmer Bernstein.

<sup>57</sup> Burwell, Carter. “Carol.” *The Body*. The Body. n.d. Web. 24 Apr. 2017.  
<<http://www.carterburwell.com/projects/Carol.shtml>>

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

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



*Fig. 1.6: Carol*  
Close-up on Therese (Rooney Mara) discretely observing Carol.



*Fig. 1.7: Carol*  
Extreme close-up on Carol's (Cate Blanchett) lips.



*Fig. 1.8: Carol*  
Blurry close-up on Carol's face.



*Fig. 1.9: Carol*  
Blurry 'future' Therese remembering the moment.

Even the period music which starts playing in the tunnel is muffled and its rhythm slowed, which increases the expression of Therese's inner state hinted at by the image through the multiple close-ups on Carol's face and hands.<sup>60</sup> The scene reaches its climax when the image of 'future' Therese remembering the moment fades in and out right after. The last theme is the theme of "emptiness", using "open intervals such as the fourth, fifth and ninth", which plays for the first time when Therese is on a train back home after Carol sent her away because of her altercation with her husband.<sup>61</sup>

Undoubtedly, music can be as mannerist as the image even though it is rarely commented on by scholars. While, up until now, we have only encountered music which followed the established codes, we will also see that each film will more or less break with the typically melodramatic style in the third part. For instance, the presence of period music in lieu of their classical equivalent – such as 'Chasing Rainbows'<sup>62</sup> based on Chopin's 'Fantaisie Impromptue' in *Mildred Pierce* or 'No Other Love' based on Chopin's 'Tristesse' in *Carol* – denotes a mannerist inclusion of music since classical

<sup>60</sup> Helen Foster & The Rovers. "You Belong to Me". *Carol* OST, Starr Score Holdings, 2015.

<sup>61</sup> Carter Burwell. "Carol." *The Body*. n.d. Web. 24 Apr. 2017. <<http://www.carterburwell.com/projects/Carol.shtml>>

<sup>62</sup> Carolina Club Orchestra, Hal Kemp. "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows." *Mildred Pierce (Music From the HBO Series)*. Varese Sarabande Records, 2011.

melodramas often used or referred to classical music.<sup>63</sup> In fact, Michel Chion notes that pre-existing classical music was more and more used in films throughout the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>64</sup> We must note that Chion also points out that you could hear pieces of classical music Lean's *Brief Encounter* (1945) or Ophüls' *Werther* (1937) – both melodramas – at a time when films rarely used them.<sup>65</sup> We must admit, however, that this mannerist intervention, like some pastiche or mannerist visual codes, may be understood solely by an informed audience. Most viewers may primarily rely on the feeling of pastness and on the lyrics' empathetic accompaniment of the characters' pathos.

### 3. Haynes's *Indirect Lens on the Past*

This slight 'discrimination' of the audience is caused by Haynes's – and his collaborators' – subjectivity and indirect look on the past. Starting with Fassbinder's lens: following the reinterpretation of the melodrama genre by scholars beginning in the 1960s, the German filmmaker started revisiting the melodrama of Classical Hollywood, adapting it to the social context of 1970s Germany. He kept the woman at the center of his movies, dealing with relationships that eventually bring conflicts mostly symptomatic of the patriarchal system and which, more broadly, involve prejudices and the consequent oppressions of the minorities. His revisiting the melodrama at such a crucial time for the rediscovery of the genre was not ignored and it shows in Haynes's own reinterpretation of the genre. Proof of that appears in *Far From Heaven* – his homage to Sirk's melodramas and for the most part inspired by *All That Heaven Allows* (1955) – where he included a scene which reciprocates one from Fassbinder's own adaptation of the movie, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1973).

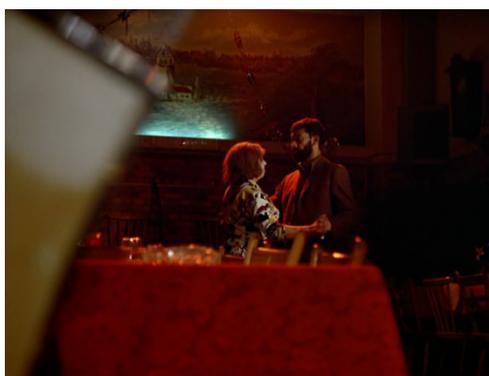


Fig. 1.10: *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*



Fig. 1.11: *FFH*

<sup>63</sup> The music theme from Sirk's *All That Heavens Allows* (1955), for instance, features a fragment of Liszt's 'Consolation N°3 in D Flat Major.'

<sup>64</sup> Chion, Michel. *La musique au cinéma*. (Domont: Fayard, 1995) 250.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

Moreover, the two scenes (Fig.1.10 & 1.11) have the same overall atmosphere: the couples are fighting the odds by daring to cross racial boundaries that constitute one of the issues of each movie.<sup>66</sup> Given that the scene is nowhere to be found in Sirk's movie, it is telling of Haynes' thorough perspective and research on the genre and the re-appropriations it went through up until now.

Haynes's university-built knowledge of film theory was certainly influential in the making of his movies. Amongst others, he likes to evoke Mary Ann Doane – to whom he refers as a film theory mentor – and her study of the female figure in relation to film genre including melodrama.<sup>67</sup> Cook highlights the residual traces of the first adaptation of Cain's novel, which she explains with Haynes's academic background:

“Despite Haynes's insistence that the miniseries was not a remake of the film but an adaptation of the novel, it seems he found it difficult to erase the film from his mind: in interviews he recalled seeing the Joan Crawford vehicle as a student on a feminist film theory course at Brown University in the 1980s.”<sup>68</sup>

It is, thus, all the more important to study him not only as an auteur-inspired filmmaker but also as a scholarly-informed one whose critical point of view must be considered. We will, thus, avoid shortcuts which would only take into account the imitation or homage factors as these works, while they do present intertextuality, also discuss and add to the legacy of the genre.

As we will see countless throughout this work, Haynes's films are a patchwork reminding of movies and other pieces of art – such as paintings and period photography – which belong to the past. The nostalgia that we, as viewers, indulge in will not only help us remember or discover the past times as they were represented, it will also reveal how different or how similar past and present are.

---

<sup>66</sup> Another one being homosexuality in *Far From Heaven* and age gap in Fassbinder's version of *All that Heaven Allows*.

<sup>67</sup> MacDonald, Scott. “From Underground to Multiplex: An Interview With Todd Haynes” *Film Quarterly*. 62.3 (Spring 2009) : 54-64. p.54.

<sup>68</sup> Cook, Pam. Beyond Adaptation. “Beyond Adaptation: Mirrors, Memory and Melodrama in Todd Haynes's *Mildred Pierce*”. *Screen*. 54.3 (Sept. 2013) 378.

## II – Fragmented Melodramatic Place and Space

Spatial motifs of the melodrama genre are not in Haynes' movies just for the sake of referring to past aesthetics. These motifs are significant in the way they interact with the storylines and the way they reflect the characters' struggles and their characterization. From the cliché patriarchal space of the woman to the physical places inside and outside of the home, whether it is liberating but also exposed to others' (possibly judgmental) looks, cinematic space will be studied by commenting both on the depiction of the home and the outdoor places. We will pay particular attention to the way these places occupy the cinematic space. Building on Bordwell's assessment, which states that the melodrama genre's *mise-en-scène* participates greatly in telling the characters' inner feelings, will allow a discussion about the dichotomy between appearance and reality through the study of inside and outside.<sup>69</sup> What needs to be highlighted is that the “melodrama is iconographically fixed by the claustrophobic atmosphere of the bourgeois home and/or the small town setting” in Elsaesser's own words.<sup>70</sup> Gabrielle Esperdy reveals that at the beginning of the genre's heydays, the 1930s, because of the traumatic impact of the Great Depression upon society, “set designs became, in effect, a quasi-character. It did not just accompany, but commented upon the action of the plot, reinforcing and promoting the vision of the American society it depicted.”<sup>71</sup> The space being closely linked to the characters, this part will rely on the way the characters participate in the narrative and narration. Their interaction with the environment typical of the melodrama genre will be commented upon in order to grasp their meaning behind the nostalgic aesthetic.

### A) Architectural Oppression: There Is No Crowded Space like Home

People's conception of “home” is not universal. In fact, several signified can be linked to the signifier “home”. The home should not be equated to the house or the place where one lives. The concept of the home is usually more or less linked to the resident's affect as the well-known collocations “home is where the heart is” and “feeling at home” show. The home, or rather house in this case, symbolizing the imprisonment of women, constitutes a central place in melodramas. Keeping in mind the importance of the expressive *mise-en-scène* of the genre, Rodowick goes further

---

<sup>69</sup> Bordwell, David. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. (London: Routledge, 1997) 70.

<sup>70</sup> Elsaesser, Thomas. “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama.” *Imitations of Life*. Ed. Marcia Landy. (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991) 84.

<sup>71</sup> Esperdy, Gabrielle. “From Instruction to Consumption: Architecture and Design in Hollywood Movies of the 1930s.” *The Journal of American Culture*. 30.2 (June 2007) : 198 - 211. 199.

and says that it “did not so much reproduce as produce the inner turmoil of the characters”.<sup>72</sup> For instance, in the movie *Martha* (1974), showing the progressive decline of a woman cloistered in a violent marriage, Fassbinder anchors his main character’s dreadful situation through her constant presence inside the house, unable (and not daring) to set a foot outside.<sup>73</sup> In several scenes, she stands at the door while her narcissistic pervert of a husband, who refuses that she leaves the house in his absence, goes to work and socializes. Her moving into the house itself marks the beginning of her turmoil and the death of her independence. The house represents the pressure of patriarchy upon women and by extension mothers. Elements of the house and the way they occupy the cinematic space surrounding the women are quite telling of the way the female characters position themselves socially. Fassbinder’s representation of the woman inside the house in *Martha* is more radical than Haynes’ but perfectly illustrates Elsaesser’s observation of the “claustrophobic atmosphere” lying behind the domestic melodrama setting.<sup>74</sup> While most elements commented upon in this subpart are part of the house, some of them are to be found in outside places making these motifs more than just domestic ones – as in linked to the home and familial setting. In fact, the domestic inexorably links the woman to her housewife condition but once she leaves this domestic space, she exposes herself to suspicion and scrutiny. As we will see, Cathy and Carol both suffer from these repercussions provoked by their leaving the domestic space. The constriction of the domestic place is particularly visible through an excess of lines and frames. Therefore, we will first focus on the presence of stairs and on the controlled appearance of overly geometrical spaces to try and analyze the way these elements of domestic interiors match “psychological interiors and relationships”.<sup>75</sup>

### *1. Stairway to the State of Mind*

According to Bourget, stairs are one of the “ultimate dramatic space[s]” common to many types of movies, but it is a particularly recurrent element on melodrama sets. Stairs are the link between downstairs and upstairs, the first symbolizing public life (exteriorizing, opening up) and the second private life (interiorizing).<sup>76</sup> We must note, however, that this idea of passage between public and private is somewhat difficult to apply to our body of work. Notably, taking the case of Therese in

---

<sup>72</sup> Rodowick, David N. “Madness, Authority, and Ideology in the Domestic Melodrama of the 1950s.” *Imitations of Life*. Macia Landy ed. (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991) 243.

<sup>73</sup> *Martha*. Dir. Rainer W. Fassbinder. Perf. Margit Carstensen. Pro-ject Filmproduktion and Westdeutscher Rundfunk, 1974. DVD.

<sup>74</sup> Elsaesser, Thomas. “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama.” *Imitations of Life*. Ed. Marcia Landy. (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991) 84.

<sup>75</sup> Babineau, Dan. *Stairs in Cinema*. (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 2003) 10.

<sup>76</sup> Bourget, Jean-Loup. *Le Mélodrame Hollywoodien* (Paris: Stock, 1985) 193.

*Carol*, the stairs belong to a shared building and allow her to access the phone, her means of communication with Carol after they are drawn apart at two different times. In one instance she goes up the stairs to answer it, on another she descends to make the call but, in both situations, she ends up standing in a public area, with a phone shared amongst all of the tenants. Therefore, the idea of separation between what is public and what is private really cannot apply here. In *Stairs in Cinema*, Dan Babineau tried to shed light on the diverse uses of the staircase motif in classical cinema. In his work, he investigates several uses of the stairs, notably in the musical, the melodrama and in Hitchcock’s movies. From the architectural specificities of stairs and their significance on the matter of the evolution of mankind to their hierarchical symbolism, Babineau makes a detailed analysis of the stairs. His study of their occurrence in the melodrama genre demonstrates that the motif is quite telling of the situation of women and the commentary the genre makes upon such a condition. He states for instance that “[Doane’s] feminist reading recognizes the stairway in the melodrama as representative of a male-dominated social hierarchy” and goes on to say that the melodrama female protagonist “is a woman trapped in the social order, forever doomed to unfulfilled desires, not just objectified but victimized, by both the masculine antagonists of the narrative as well as by the possessive male gaze of cinema itself.”<sup>77</sup> He also describes the classical narrative as the ascension of a flight of stairs towards a climax leading to the denouement which is, symbolically, a descent.

#### Climactic Ascension and Incidental Descent

In both *Far From heaven* and *Carol* the stairs motif seems to follow the narrative. After the initial incident, the characters tend to keep on ascending stairs, until they reach the climactic incident which will cause their descent. Cathy’s ascension, however, is very different to Therese’s or Carol’s. The initial incident in *Far From Heaven* – which has Frank arrested for loitering – causes Cathy’s first descent. From then on, we will essentially see Cathy ascending stairs, in an attempt to fix her doomed marriage because of her husband’s affair.



Fig. 2.1: FFH



Fig. 2.2a: FFH



Fig. 2.2b: FFH

---

<sup>77</sup> Babineau, 78-79.

Unfortunately for her, this so-called ascension (Fig. 2.2a-b) calls for personal sacrifice: after her argument with Frank about her relationship with Raymond, she decides to let go of Raymond. The close-up of her face at the top of the staircase provides us with her pathos. We must also note the blue which can be seen at her first descent (Fig. 2.1), hence symbolizing her failing marriage and, probably, the inexorable downfall to follow.



Fig. 2.3: FFH



Fig. 2.4: FFH

Her climbing the stairs also denotes deception. First, when she walks up a small staircase with Eleanor who is worried about Frank's conduct, Cathy lies to try and maintain the illusion of the perfect life



Fig. 2.5: FFH

(Fig. 2.3). Later on, after Cathy and Frank's coming home from their New Year's Eve trip, she is shown walking up the stairs as if everything was getting better (Fig. 2.4). Contrary to her, the viewer knows that Frank cheated on her during the trip and that Raymond's daughter was assaulted. She is now the one who is being deceived. This ascent is just the calm

before the storm. In fact, her descent starts after her husband admits to being in love with the young man he met in Miami. She descends a first small flight of stairs after Sybil tells her about the identity of the little girl who was assaulted. Her ultimate downfall imitating her first descent highlights Cathy's inability to change the narrative (Fig. 2.5) no matter how many times she has tried to climb up and grasp what could be grasped, trying to fix her marriage in between. She is now wearing a pale suit highly contrasting with her usual flamboyant feminine dresses.

In *Carol*, the first incident happens with Harge's surprise visit to Carol and becomes suspicious of Therese whom she had invited. The older woman then sends Therese home unnerved by Harge's scrutiny. As she goes back home, we see Therese climbing up the stairs as the phone starts ringing (Fig. 2.8a-c). This ascension foreshadows a hopeful advancement in their relationship since it is Carol

calling.



*Fig. 2.6: Carol  
Therese's last ascension.*



*Fig. 2.7: Carol  
Reunion at the Oak Room.*



*Fig. 2.8a: Carol  
Phone Call 1 – Ascension.*



*Fig. 2.8b: Carol*



*Fig. 2.8c: Carol*



*Fig. 2.9a: Carol  
Phone Call 2: Descent.*



*Fig. 2.9b: Carol*



*Fig. 2.9c: Carol*

Indeed, during their trip away from New York, they are shown climbing flights of stairs together, both advancing through the narrative, sharing a room together, knowingly defying social boundaries. This ascension will be cut short by the involvement of the Private Investigator hired by Harge, prompting their separation. Back in New York, we see Therese descending the other flight of stairs of her building, heading towards the phone (Fig. 2.9a-c). As expected, given the previous descent, Carol will remain silent before she hangs up. These echoing 'phone-call scenes' make the descent all the more dramatic, showing that "everything comes full circle" as Carol would say, meaning that nothing can change the way things are. It also infers Carol's powerlessness over her own life which marks a great descent when we look at the first similar scene, where she overcomes social constructs asking Therese if she would like to meet again the next day. One last ascension however, after an ultimate incident happening when Carol renounces Rindy's custody. The last scene of the movie repeats the first ascension (Fig. 2.6) with Therese responding to Carol's 'call', leading to their reunion at the Oak Room (Fig. 2.7).

We clearly see now the difference between the two movies use of the stairs: While Cathy's ascension symbolizes her struggle to keep up with appearances, Carol and Therese's ascensions seem to symbolize their detachment from social norms. Given these analyses of the staircase motif in *Carol* and *Far From Heaven*, it appears that the staircase works as a metaphor for the characters' pathos

### Hierarchical Order

Apart from corroborating the character's affect, stairs can also be the indicator of hierarchical order. With the story being set in the 1950s, we would expect Sybil, the black maid, to be kept downstairs or at least not physically above Cathy or Frank. Black characters are often kept at the lower level of the house, as in Sirk's *Imitation of Life* (1959), for instance, which places Annie in the kitchen only accessible through a flight of stairs while the daughter gets a room upstairs. This discrepancy highlights Sarah-Jane's ability to for white along with her rejection of her mother who reminds her of her black origins. In the case of Therese walking down or up the stairs, given the lack of privacy they induce while only leading her to shared space, it is safe to say that stairs – or the absence thereof – also hint at the social rank of characters. Therese's stairs reflect her precarious situation as they are “everybody's stairs”. Above all, they look very dull compared to Mildred's stairs.



Fig. 2.17: *Carol*



Fig. 2.18: *MP pt. 5*



Fig. 2.19: *MP pt. 5*



Fig. 2.20: *MP pt. 5*

The former is dark brown, made of straight lines, no curves while the latter seem to be made of marble, they look sophisticated and expensive with their complex architecture. Moreover, Mildred's stairs seem to be placed at the center of the home and are the only furniture, so to speak, of the entrance making them look even bigger and more important when it comes to showing wealth. This visual emphasis on richness is all the more meaningful as it is embedded in a narrative set in the Depression era. Things became more expensive and the housing market was not spared. The mini-series *Mildred Pierce* includes this issue in its narration as Monty is forced to leave his inherited mansion since he cannot pay for it anymore. The stairs already underline the value of the house at this point. There is nothing else but the stairs and some rudimental furniture in the attic, where Monty lives. The stairs then seem disproportionate in the light of Monty's resources/living. When Mildred is able to buy the same house, with these gigantic stairs, the narration indicates that she has supposedly reached her goal thanks to her business: she is now upper-class. According to Babineau, the stairs, from an architectural perspective, are the consequence of the "upward striving of the human race".<sup>78</sup> They are also the consequence of Mildred's upward striving in the series. Even more so since she goes from owning a modest home, whose stairs were never shown, to owning a mansion with expensive-looking stairs often included in the frame. We have here a high angle shot of the crowd from the top of the stairs. This scene takes place at Mildred and Monte's wedding reception which marks yet another peak in Mildred's success. It seems to foreshadow the downfall to come as everything starts falling apart after that scene. Mildred's business is actually in bad shape because of her buying Monte's old house and the return of her daughter and her expensive taste will make the situation worse. It will all result in the very dramatic denouement with Veda running down the stairs, her mother chasing her in a frenzy to kill her. This use of the staircase motif fits greatly with the traditional narrative of the melodrama genre, i.e., a narrative which explores the gap enforced by the caste system. In *Far From Heaven*, however, there is some sort of discrepancy as to this assessment. We would expect the movie to always place the black characters downstairs or rather not "above" the white characters – as in *Imitation of Life* for instance which sees its black character, Annie, stay downstairs in the kitchen while her daughter who passes as white is often upstairs – to reflect on the social ladder of the 1950s, more so when it comes to Sybil since she is Cathy's maid.<sup>79</sup> It is not the case all through the movie as this situation shifts. While at the beginning of the movie Cathy is placed "above" Raymond, at the top of the small staircase of the porch, when they first meet, reaching out to him as an adult would a

---

78 Babineau, Dan. *Stairs in Cinema*. (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 2013) 14.

79 Cathy and Sybil's duo could be paralleled with that formed by Beatrice and Delilah in Stahl's version of *Imitation of Life* or by Lora and Annie in Sirk's remake.

child. The second time they meet, at the art gallery, Raymond appears taller this time and proves his self-worth as Cathy learns from him about Miró against all prejudices.

From Cathy and Raymond's first encounter to Carol and Therese's phone calls through Mildred's change in social class, the stairs appear at crucial moments of change in narration. The melodrama genre being the place for romantic and/or domestic plots, the staircase motif adds to the affect in climactic, incidental and sentimentally charged scenes. Stairs also function as indicators of the state of romantic relationships.

## 2. *Overly Geometrical Suffocating Places*

### The Hearth As Center Of the Household

While stairs bring curves and anarchical lines to the frames, they are just a fragment in the middle of other numerous ones. In the three oeuvres, houses are often composed of an extreme amount of lines obstructing the view, adding to the geometrical appearance of culturally controlled places, and therefore diametrically opposed to nature which represents what is essential and untamed by culture. This overuse of lines reveals several frames within the frame, especially during home scenes. The first effect that can be granted to these lines is confinement. The home – or rather the house since the feeling of confinement can hardly be linked to the comfort of a home – symbolizes society's view of a woman's place and role. However, we could also argue that the omnipresence of lines created by walls, furniture, stairs, windows denote a certain abundance and wealth. In fact, after the Second World War, the US saw the consumerist behavior increase which caused the phenomenon to be called the "high mass-consumption stage".<sup>80</sup> Architecture and the excess thereof can give out hints as to the family's social class. Whiteley affirms that possessions were key to the establishment of a social hierarchy within the suburbs which the middle-class moved into in the 1950s. It "told the rest of the world who you were or, at least, how you wanted to be seen".<sup>81</sup> Appearances are key to the consumerist aspect of the 1950s in the U.S., and so are they in the melodrama genre since the genre often relies on a plot defying boundaries imposed by culture, conflicting with the social hierarchy supposedly maintained by suburban appearances. The *mise-en-scène* in *Far From Heaven* depicts Cathy's struggle with these appearances. Consumerism and appearances are put forward right from the beginning of the movie, when Cathy is designated as "Mr. and Mrs. Magnatech", referring to her

---

80 Nigel Whiteley. "Toward a Throw-Away Culture. Consumerism, 'Style Obsolescence' and Cultural Theory in the 1950s and 1960s." *Oxford Art Journal*. 10.2 (1987) : 3-27. pp.4

81 *Ibid.* 6

husband's firm, and serves as the face of the business, posing for the newspaper in her home. Cathy is not so much considered as an individual since the reporter describes the readers of her gazette as "Women just like yourself with families and homes to keep up." This sentence takes all its meaning when they start taking pictures of Cathy in her living room. These pictures will supposedly end up in the gazette for everyone to see and witness the success symbolized by the large hearth against which Cathy is posing. The signifier "hearth" can be understood as either a "fireplace" or a "household". These two signified bring together the fireplace and the home and by extent, the family. In fact, Alan Krell argues that the discovery of fire caused the gathering of people, and subsequently the need for language followed by the building of dwellings.<sup>82</sup> In Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows*, the hearth appears in all moments of conviviality but most importantly creates a tension between Carrie's past and present with Ron. She is torn between two hearths, one on which one of her dead husband's trophy sat and the one Ron restored for her in the old mill. In the same way Cathy's hearth stands for her middle-class family life. Haynes makes the fireplace a symbol of the traditional place of the woman, given that it is "a focal point of the household" – according to Krell and Fernandez-Galiano cited by Grace Moore – holding the nuclear family together.<sup>83</sup>



Fig. 2.21: FFH



Fig.2.22: FFH



Fig. 2.22: FFH



Fig. 2.23: FFH

82 Krell, Allan. *Burning Issues: Fire in Art and the Social Imagination*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2011) 98

83 Moore, Grace. "Home Was Where the Hearth Is: Fire, Destruction, and Displacement in Nineteenth Century Settler Narratives." *Antipodes*. 29.1 (June 2015) : 29-42. 31

It is hard not to notice the fireplace which occupies most of the frame and living-room wall (cf Fig. 2.22). However, if we start comparing Cathy's and Mildred's household, the stairs are not the only piece of architecture that splits the two women apart as the fireplaces do their own share on that matter. Mildred's search for grandeur is undoubtedly reflected through this other element of the house she bought from Monty (cf. Fig. 2.24). The seemingly infinite lines composing Mildred's home mostly show off her success and new wealth. The front porch cannot even be contained in the frame, as can be seen on fig. 2.25. The high angle shot of its pillars make the characters, including Monty, seem extremely small, suggesting that the mere façade of the house is out of proportions. This particular shot makes for a nice summary of what the house has in store for anyone who would come to visit. Abundance is what would best describe the place, hinting at Mildred's wish – success – to make her daughter proud and to reach the upper-class sphere. Owning this house, however, will not suffice to reach this ultimate goal. The house being out of proportion may in fact be a means to convince people that she belongs in this sphere, thanks to the earnings of her business. But as soon as Mildred gets an opportunity to show off and bathe in this illusion, that is her grazing the upper-class sphere, Veda comes around with a place of even more abundance: the opera room (cf. Fig. 2.27).



*Fig. 2.24: MP pt.5*



*Fig. 2.25: MP pt.5*



*Fig. 2.26: MP pt.5*



*Fig. 2.27: MP pt.5*

Mildred then goes back to being unable to belong to this upper-class which her daughter has always considered she was a part of because of her father's business, "Pierce Homes." The frame-like

presence of the hearth in *Mildred Pierce* also gives this impression as the family has been freshly reunited after Mildred and Monte’s marriage and Veda’s surprise come-back. Bearing in mind that Mildred’s wealth is what brought her daughter back “to the teat,” as Monty puts it, the out-of-proportions hearth foreshadows Mildred’s return to the sacrificing-mother state caused by Veda’s surprise come-back, and which will eventually destroy her business and make all this wealth disappear. Her wealth is what causes her downfall it appears, as if it were all too big for the woman she is supposed to be in this era still relying on patriarchy. In *Carol*, it is the crumbling of the nuclear family that is symbolized by a discreet use of the hearth, through yet another architectural frame within the frame.



Fig. 2.28: *Carol*



Fig. 2.29: *Carol*



Fig. 2.30: *Carol*



Fig. 2.31: *Carol*



Fig. 2.32: *Carol*



Fig. 2.33: *Carol*

The scene under study (Fig 2.28-2.33) occurs during Therese’s visit at Carol’s house. While she plays piano in the living room, we can see Carol in the background wrapping her daughter’s gift in front of the fireplace and the Christmas tree. The scene is visually divided into two spaces by the wall in the middle of the frame, and the difference in floor covering. With this split appears a partial frame within the frame displaying two scenes unfolding simultaneously: Therese is placed in the main frame and Carol in the secondary one. Frames within frames have different ways of interacting depending on what Andreas Treske calls the energy they convey:

Setting up a window or frame you will always have to deal with the energy to the frame, from the frame, inside and outside of the frame. With energy I mean the relation of the objects, their sizes,

forms, shapes and tones to each other, their distances, closeness, the graphical or visual tension built through this.<sup>84</sup>

Here, the focus is set on the secondary frame, highlighting Carol's actions (cf. 2.28). As the scene unfolds, the energy changes as the focus shifts from the secondary frame to the first, in harmony with Carol's movement. She is first shown as the traditional mother preparing for Christmas but when she crosses the line – symbolized by the contrast between the two floor coverings – separating the two rooms, she turns her back to this traditional life and nuclear family to join Therese in focus (cf. 2.30, 2.31). When she hears Harge, her husband, coming back home, she is forced back into her motherhood and wifehood. She walks hastily back to the room with the hearth to get her shoes and crosses it to, so to speak, welcome her husband in the entrance (cf. 2.33), in an attempt to hide her – figuratively and literally – crossing the line that she should not have crossed. This foreground versus background energy, provided by a frame within the frame through architectural elements, was already present in the aesthetic of Sirk's movies, as Roger D. McNiven analyzes in an article dedicated to the use of architecture in the depiction of the middle-class home of the fifties:

Sirk's use of architecture [...] is geared to conveying the disruption of family integrity. Essentially, it consists in showing family activities or groupings in the depth of the image while framing them by foregrounding architectural feature such as window frames, doorways, mirror frames, screen, railings, etc. The background is thus presented as (so to speak) ontologically distinct from the more "real" foreground space.<sup>85</sup>

This scene from *Carol* makes it clear that Haynes imitates this old-fashioned architectural representation of the conflict between the role in which the female character is trapped, by social convention, and her true aspirations and/or true self. The motif also appeared regularly in his earlier works, *Far From Heaven* and *Mildred Pierce*.

---

84 Andreas Treske. "Frames within Frames - Windows and Doors". *Video Vortex Reader II*. (INC Amsterdam, 2010). *Academia.edu*. Web. 1 May 2016. <[https://www.academia.edu/4673037/Frames\\_within\\_Frames\\_-\\_Windows\\_and\\_Doors](https://www.academia.edu/4673037/Frames_within_Frames_-_Windows_and_Doors)>

85 Roger D. McNiven. "The Middle-Class American Home of the Fifties: The Use of Architecture in Nicholas Ray's "Bigger than Life" and Douglas Sirk's "All That Heaven Allows"" *Cinema Journal*. 22.4 (Summer 1983) p.38-57. 40.



Fig. 2.34: FFH



Fig. 2.35: FFH



Fig. 2.36: Carol



Fig. 2.37: Carol

For instance, the first scene where we see Cathy and her best friend interact (Fig. 2.34), in *Far From Heaven*, introduces the theme of the imprisonment of the female character as mother in a very stylized way. The foreground shows Cathy and Eleanor discussing décor arrangements for the Magnatech annual party, while the kids are quietly keeping busy in the background which, on the face of it, seems rehearsed. The son is reading a book while the daughter is practicing her classical dance skills. Their activities are displayed in a tiny frame materialized by two walls. This ‘secondary scene’ is contained in between the two female protagonists as if all of Cathy’s activities were perfectly balanced and under control. The scene, however, shows Cathy in need of her best friend to arrange the décor of her own party, which she cannot plan all by herself because of her family life shown in the background. This superimposition of scenes might actually show Cathy’s unconfessed yearning to be more like her friend, Eleanor, who seems to spend less time at home and more time planning events outside of her home like, for instance, the gallery show. Eleanor’s clothes, which contrast with the extreme femininity displayed by Cathy’s flamboyant dresses are another element that confirm her emancipation from the image of the nurturing housewife. Cathy, however, does not appear as “anchored” in the home as Sybil who, towards the end of the movie, appears as *the* housewife (Fig. 2.35), with the same kind of work on depth as for Therese (Fig. 2.36) and Carol (Fig. 2.37) at home. Sybil’s frame within the frame moment cannot be summed up as the display of the dichotomy between

appearances and reality. The energy here resides in what is outside of the second frame and inside of the main frame that is Cathy.

Sybil's character is based on the black maid in Ophuls' *The Reckless Moment* (1949), also called Sybil, who basically takes care of the other woman of the household, Lucia – becoming what Doane calls a “metamother” – but is seldom acknowledged.<sup>86</sup> Haynes throws a hint so that the informed audience can link the two characters which is the grocery list reminder: both Sybil and Annie constantly remind their respective housewives where they left their grocery lists. Somehow, through his own Sybil, he makes up for the times when black women were mostly represented taking care of households as if it were perfectly natural, standing beside white women who, despite their ties to the home and family, were still allocated some social life outside and, above all, a feminist representation. As a matter of fact, Frances E. Williams, who portrayed Ophuls' Sybil, didn't even make it to the credits, along with secondary characters, even though her character is more essential than that of the son (whose portrayer is, of course, credited). This is a step Sirk already took with Annie in *Imitation of Life* (1949), giving her more backstory and credibility than Stahl did his Delilah in the 1934 version of the story. The shot of Sybil polishing the wooden table (Fig. 2.35) in a frame within the frame confrontation allows her the same treatment as the white characters for once, highlighting the social standard imposed on her. Most importantly, the energy conveyed through the interaction of the two frames suggests that we witness Cathy watching Sybil taking care of the housework. It is Sybil who is in focus here, in the secondary frame, while Cathy stands in the foreground, back turned to the camera, as a mere spectator. This energy leaves a question pending. Is Cathy finally becoming aware of Sybil's oppression? We must note that Cathy never got a similar shot in the home contrary to Therese (Fig. 2.36), Carol (Fig. 2.37), and Mildred (Fig. 2.38). Overall, Haynes seems to be “upgrading” Sybil to the housewife status, both in the eyes of the audience but also of Cathy, as she becomes a single mother who has taken charge of more (said-to-be) masculine tasks.<sup>87</sup> What might give us pause, regarding Cathy's perception of Sybil, lies in her unfinished sentence, when Sybil reminds her, for the umpteenth time, not to forget her grocery list: “I don't know how on earth I would manage...,” followed by an uneasy silence. But the audience guesses the unspoken words: “without you”. This tension could suggest that Cathy feels ashamed for pushing Sybil further in the housewife's place she used to occupy before. On another note, having Sybil remind her, once again; where she

---

86 Doane, Mary Ann. *The Desire to Desire.: The Woman's Film of 1940s* (Indianapolis & Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) 80

87 For instance, she is in charge of the finances as we saw her signing a check in the previous scene. Moreover, given the clothes she is wearing, she is probably going out to find a job.

left the grocery list, reveals that the dynamic of the household has not really changed, that Sybil might have been the actual housewife right from the beginning.

While *Far From Heaven* is very much articulated around Cathy's superficial image of perfect mother and wife, *Carol* develops around the age difference of its two protagonists – which is a recurrent theme in melodramas – through the coming of age of the younger. The two scenes which anchor them in their respective homes display this dynamic. On the one hand, we have a young Therese (Fig. 2.36) starting the day in her rudimentary apartment which looks rather blank, like a book awaiting stories to be filled with, for the shot does not show much furniture nor decorative elements and presents a simple architectural frame within the frame. On the other hand, however, Carol's house seems full of history (Fig. 2.37), it is not as pale as Therese's flat and there are more lines filling up the space in depth. The first vertical line on the left side of the shot is dark and blurry which places it right in front of the camera. The second splits the shot almost in its middle associating contrasting colors (dark brown and pale red), it is placed a little further depth-wise and constitutes the first edge of the secondary frame. The third, on the right side of the shot, is the farthest and completes the secondary frame with pale beige colors. While obstructing the view, the lines and the color contrast between the different layers bring more depth to the image as it draws the eye to the background of the shot, where Carol is decorating the Christmas tree with her daughter. The difference in depth itself tells a lot about Carol's and Therese's degree of establishment in what Betty Friedan calls the "feminine mystique".<sup>88</sup> Therese is a young unmarried woman who is reluctant to commit with boyfriend, Richard, who tries to persuade her several times, proposing to her and offering her to travel around Europe with him. To his umpteenth attempt she answers "I'm not ready for that, I can't just make myself". Displaying her in a frame within the frame in the first scene of the flash-back – doubly framing her – highlights the pressure imposed upon coming-of-age women to follow the "feminine mystique" trend of the Fifties (Fig. 2.36). The energy provided by the multi-layer frames within frames showing Carol's motherly moment with her daughter implies her further burial under this social pressure (Fig. 2.37). Moreover, the horizontal place of the last frame, in each shot, bears witness to their life experience; Therese's frame is placed on the left side of the main frame which typically evokes the beginning, the starting point while the right side, on which Carol's frame is placed, represents the end of the journey. Their being at distinct chapters in their lives is what provokes their separation later in the movie. Indeed, Carol's emancipation from the social institution

---

88 Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. (New York and London: W.W.Norton & Company, 2013)

requires more effort and sacrifice than Therese's, whose greatest struggle against her own oppression occurs before they go away together.



Fig. 2.38: MP Pt.1

Finally, *Mildred Pierce* starts with a very stereotypical display of gender roles, with close-ups of Mildred's hands revealing her baking skills, while her husband, Bert, is taking care of the front yard. At once, we get a shot of them both in the kitchen with, once again the use of a frame within the frame. At first glance here, they are presented as husband and wife, core of the nuclear family, united inside the same frame within the frame (Fig. 2.38). However, this picture perfect is torn into pieces right after Mildred brings up the subject of her husband's unemployment, resulting with her having to bake and sell pies and cakes. There, her being in the kitchen shows both the housewife and the active woman trying to get money from her housewifery, therefore making feminine and masculine roles collide. This depiction announces her forthcoming change in character as she has to get out of the home and find a job. Social constructs represented through the frame within the frame are meant to be challenged and overcome by the melodramatic characters, but once they are, the space soon becomes more disorganized and less welcoming. It seems that the closer we are to the climax of the narrative ascension, the more the characters find themselves in constricting spaces reminding them of their social position.

## Oppression Unleashed



*Fig. 2.39: FFH*



*Fig. 2.40: FFH*



*Fig. 2.41: FFH*

In a scene following Cathy and Raymond's afternoon together outdoors, the same frame within the frame process is used. Except this time, the process is meant to enhance the disruption in assigned social roles. When Cathy goes to the dance recital, she finds her daughter rejected by the other girls and their mothers (cf. Fig. 2.40). The shot reverse shot between Cathy and Janice and the other mothers and daughters creates a violent contrast. Cathy's intentions of reflecting the perfect mother standing in front of the dance recital are challenged by the other mothers. They heard the rumor spread by Mona about her relationship with Raymond and are standing in isolation with their little dancers, revealing their own reliance on social codes through the intricacy of the space allocated to them. In these frame-within-the-frame shots, Cathy is never in the background contrary to Carol who is represented as trapped in her role of mother by the fireplace or even Mildred baking in her kitchen (Fig. 2.38). In some way, we could argue that the reason behind this is either that Cathy is content with the role she has been assigned at this point or that, contrary to Sybil and despite appearances, she does not completely assume this role. However, once the rumor spreads, Cathy becomes trapped, like the other female counterparts, as the lines of her home tighten around her, materializing her entrapment, or as McNiven would call it, the disruption of harmony.

[...] family home becomes almost a mental state rather than a physical structure fulfilling material functions. Family life is conceived in terms of a harmony resulting from the distribution of roles among the family members, together with the disruption of that harmony whenever individuals deviate from their prescribed roles.<sup>89</sup>



*Fig. 2.42: FFH*



*Fig. 2.43: FFH*



*Fig. 2.44: FFH*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 40



Fig. 2.45: FFH



Fig. 2.46: FFH



Fig. 2.47: FFH

We must note that both Cathy and her husband stand in the middle of this suffocating architectural frame within the frame (Fig. 2.42-2.45). Both are oppressed by their own imposed role. Cathy, as a middle-class white woman, finds herself unable to maintain her relationship with her black gardener Raymond without people gossiping about their “unseemly relationship”. As for Frank, the dialogue in this scene stresses how the rumor about Cathy’s relationship with Raymond challenges his status as head of the family and, therefore, his masculinity, which he has been trying to retrieve through conversion therapy. This is what provokes his outburst which appears as a sign of his seeking to fulfill his masculine duties as Cathy’s husband.<sup>90</sup> Cathy’s point of view enhances this paradoxical ambivalence: both characters are, in the end, trapped. As Cathy learns about the rumor, the camera is placed right behind her (fig. 2.43), so that we can see Frank waiting for her at the end of the intricate corridor, almost in the same way as she sees him. It allows the audience to apprehend Frank’s anger as an element of surprise, given his own inner struggle and the usual fragility emanating from him. About only a third of the frame displays the scene, which is rather unusual compared to other shots in the house (Fig. 2.39, 2.46). The harmony is disrupted as it was after Cathy saw her husband kissing another man (Fig. 2.47), rendering the same frame composition. The shot of the oppressed couple could also be assimilated with that of the judging mothers at the dance recital (cf. Fig. 2.40) analyzed above. These two scenes are close to one another in terms of cinematic time, they are both the consequence of the same rumor. While in figure 2.40 the mothers are trying to protect their daughters and themselves from the bad influence Cathy could have on them and their perfect acceptance of social rules, in figure 2.45, Cathy and Frank are suffocated by the same rules imposed on them and which they, themselves, challenged. Haynes delivers the powerlessness of the two characters facing social constraints and the quasi-impossibility to overcome them in a space. This, as Niall Richardson argues in his paper, is the overall goal of *Far From Heaven* in opposition to Sirk’s *All that Heaven Allows*.<sup>91</sup> *Far From Heaven* is unconventional in the way it focuses on the male character, who is

<sup>90</sup> Seeing that, at this point, Frank is depressed and has become an alcoholic because of his conversion therapy.

<sup>91</sup> “Although the characters’ identifications are the products of social prejudice, the narrative asserts the difficulty in rejecting these limiting labels of identity.” Richardson, Niall. “*Poison* in the Sirkian System: The Political Agenda

usually left aside for the sake of the woman's story of rebellion against patriarchal social codes. Richardson notes that Frank actually embodies the Sirkian oppressed female character through his romantic and sexual desire, in opposition to his wife's deprivation of such desire.<sup>92 93</sup>



Fig. 2.48: *FFH*



Fig. 2.49a: *Carol* – 38'04''



Fig. 2.49b: *Carol* – 38'09''



Fig. 2.49c: *Carol* – 38'11''



Fig. 2.49d: *Carol* – 38'21''

His oppression, however, mostly appears outside of the home, either in the streets, at night, or at his office, which could be associated to the noir genre (cf. Fig. 2.47 & 2.48). This matter will be commented on further in the next subpart. In a similar scene from *Carol*, while the male character is present, the intricate place does not allow him the same treatment as Frank. It is partly caused by the point of view adopted by the movie at this point which is Therese's. The editing of the scene – alternating between shots of the kitchen and of Therese discreet peeking through an intricate opening between walls – implies that she is witnessing the argument between Carol and her husband. She is herself, in the process, awkwardly confined in the divorcing couple's house, already decorated for family celebrations. The obstruction of the space leading to the kitchen where Carol paces up and down – sometimes disappearing from the secondary frame (cf. Fig. 2.49c) as if challenging the constraints of her wifehood – displays the obstacles standing between the two women which looked less claustrophobic in the scene with the daughter (Fig. 2.37). Here, the lines are numerous and prevent the spectators from clearly seeing. Carol's movements out of the secondary frame enhance

---

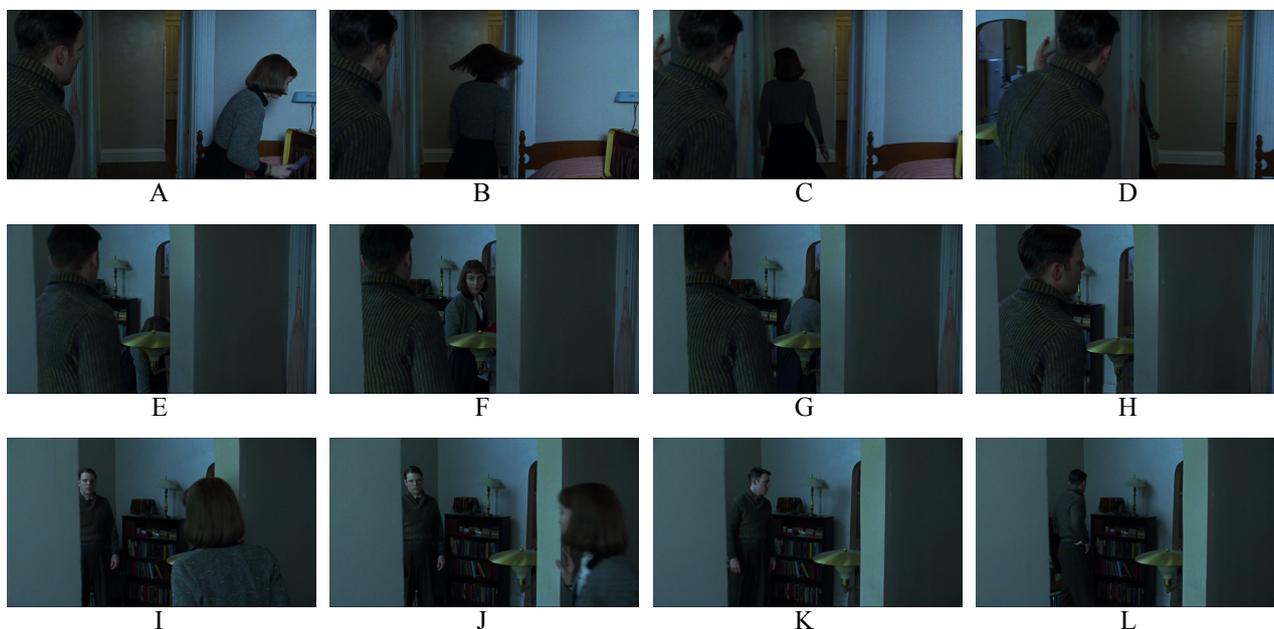
of Todd Haynes's *Far From Heaven*." *Scope*. 6 (October 2006). Web. 12 March 2017.  
 <<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/scope/documents/2006/october-2006/richardson.pdf>>

92 *Ibid.*

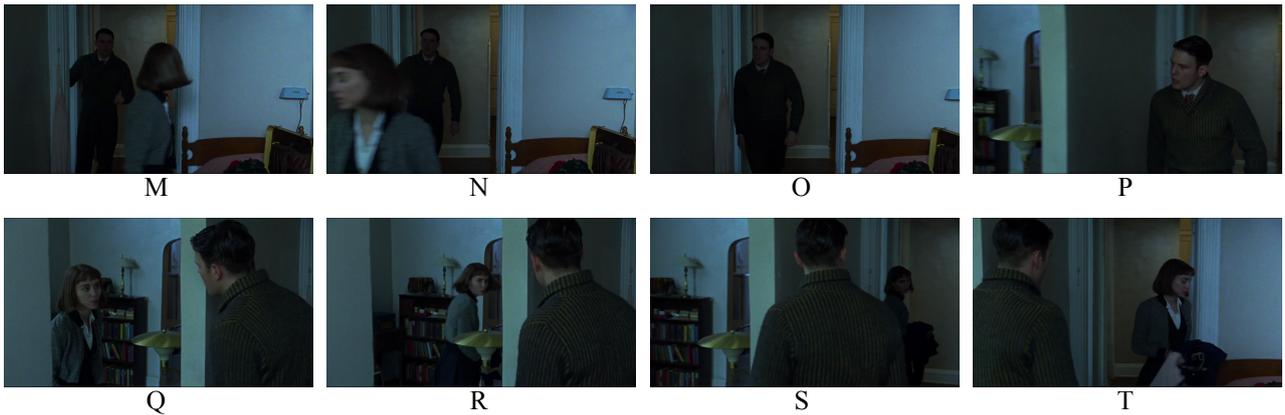
93 Cathy, however, becomes aware of her romantic desire towards Raymond when her best friend points it out while rejecting her.

her entrapment provoked by the presence of her husband. The audience gets a glimpse of the kitchen scene from another angle – out of Therese’s sight and provided for the spectators only – which accentuates Carol’s attempt to get away from her suffocating marriage. Once again, the case of Therese is different thanks to her only coming of age and resistance to the traditional commitment. There are less constraints in her movements when she argues with her lover about her going away with Carol. The apartment looks very geometrical and split vertically by several lines, which makes its architectural structure difficult to comprehend. From shot A to shot H, Richard stands in between the two rooms as if Therese were unable to leave his patriarchal sight as he seems to try and prevent her from going away. However, Therese keeps on preparing her luggage but still tries to get his approbation when she walks up to him on shot I. There, she faces the source of her not yet settled oppression, Richard, showing that she does not need his permission to do as she pleases. This resistance, to him, means the end of their relationship. He chases Therese one last time (from L to T) trying to prevent her from going away before dramatically leaving, after reminding her of his devotion to her and their semi engagement which she never asked for and merely agreed to. During most of the scene, the architectural lines either keep the two characters apart as they move from one room to another, or traps them in an intricate frame (cf. Sc. 2.1 F).

*Sc. 2.1:<sup>94</sup> Carol -*



<sup>94</sup> Selection of shots, more shots of the scene on page 98.



According to the analysis of this motif, marriage – or the heterosexual relationship in general – and the subjection it imposes on women, and on queer men in the case of Frank, is often the cause of this claustrophobic architectural frame within the frame. The architecture used in Haynes’s movies symbolizes the social structure in which the characters are supposed to fit. A different sort of subjection, and still nonetheless a very melodramatic one, is represented in *Mildred Pierce* through the Mother-Daughter relationship. This conflict is pushed to its incestuous limit in *Mildred Pierce*, for the mother clings to her older daughter, after the passing of the younger, no matter how conflictual their relationship turns out to be.



Fig. 2.50a: MP pt.2



Fig. 2.50b: MP pt.2



Fig. 2.50c: MP pt.2



Fig. 2.50d: MP pt.2



Fig. 2.51: MP pt.5



Fig. 2.52: MP pt.5

Instead of simply depicting Mildred as a prisoner of her motherly role, the frame within the frame motif highlights Mildred’s obsession and need to keep her daughter around. This visual hint is introduced after Moire, her younger daughter, has passed. Coming home to her now only child, Mildred tries to find comfort laying by Veda’s side in her bed (cf. Fig. 2.50a, b, c and d). While this scene unfolds, the door seems to slowly shut causing the frame to shrink around the two protagonists. Now Mildred is ready to fully devote her life to her only daughter who will soon feel oppressed by

her mother's commitment. In fact, Mildred lives her dream of thriving, socially speaking, through her daughter who she always knew, according to what she told Lucy, had a potential for greatness. In the last episode, Mildred's obsession to keep Veda – and her success – close to her appears once again (cf Fig. 2.51). In this scene, Veda is rehearsing at her mother's home. Though, given her entrapment in it, it might as well be hers. The composition of the frame reminds of another shot (cf. Fig. 2.52), earlier in the same episode, when Mildred and Monty get settled in the new house. Monty has dedicated an entire room to Mildred's success, showing off several framed souvenirs of various sizes, exposed as trophies. The frames decorating Veda's rehearsal room recall these souvenirs, turning Veda into yet another trophy herself. A trophy preciously and selfishly kept in Mildred's home, as testified by the tight secondary frame inside of which the rehearsal room is shown. To some extent it could also suggest that Veda has taken place in Mildred's home because of Mildred's success as she stands in the middle of a fully decorated room, dedicated to her rehearsal seeing that the piano occupies the secondary frame from left to right. Both are quite plausible given the characters' motivations: Mildred formed a close-to-incestuous relationship with Veda, trying to keep her from leaving her side, growing suspicious – or maybe even jealous – when Veda spent nights with friends, breaking-up with her as she broke-up with Bert when she tried to take her independence, kissing her lips while asleep (cf. Fig. 2.53); as for Veda, she clearly has always selfishly used her mother's money and always asked for more, nevertheless still ending up undermining her work at one point, as it is never upper-class enough to her taste. This excessive use of frames, in the face of it, about Mildred wanting to cross social boundaries but about her and Veda's illicit relationship, caused by a gap in social class within familial bonds. It would be quite inadequate to think that Mildred is not affected by the relationship with her daughter. In fact, she is affected by both her daughter and Monty, whose relationship with Veda using Mildred's work to ridicule her – which Mildred loathes because of her upper-class aspirations – and reducing her to her physical attributes. Evidently, to try and get her daughter to love her, Mildred decides to break it off with him, after Veda spitefully reveals the numerous talks she's had with Monty about her mother's exquisite legs. Mildred's mixed feelings about her relationship with her lover are symbolized by the claustrophobic *mise-en-scène* induced by the narrow door frame when Mildred comes in (cf. Fig. 2.54), and a second time when she comes out of the attic. Her roles of mother and lover seem incompatible because of Monty and Veda's relationship right from the beginning, as it is essentially fueled by their respective identification with the upper-class world. Then, the dynamic of the mini-series moves from the melodramatic mother-

daughter centered plot to an incestuous love triangle including Monty, slightly hinted at after Mildred's first opening and the two others' first meeting.



*Fig. 2.53: MP pt.5*



*Fig. 2.54: MP pt.3*



*Fig. 2.55: MP pt.3*

While the shot of the two of them waiting for Mildred to come home could seem innocent (cf. Fig. 2.55) – picturing family life as if everything were getting back to normal, thanks to a new father figure who reinstates social norms by his mere presence inside the home – Veda and Monty's intimacy seems already displaced, seeing that Mildred keeps away from their space, at first, and when she approaches, her head and the right side of her body are kept outside of the frame. Her position only changes when she tells Veda to go to bed, that is to say when she uses the authority of her motherly role.

After her daughter decides to leave the home in the third episode, Mildred reunites with Monty in the fifth, requesting his help in her search for a bigger house to buy with the earnings of her growing business. As soon as Monty shows Mildred around his family house, they are displayed in frames within the frame: first as they reach the front door (cf. Fig. 2.58) and then towards the end of the visit. This inclusion of Monty by Mildred's side foreshadows their getting back and living together in harmony. However, once Veda comes back home on their wedding day, Monty progressively leaves Mildred's side while she takes her daughter in and resumes her sacrificing motherly role. Comparing figures 2.59 and 2.60, while the former brought Mildred and Monty together, the distance displayed in the latter is palpable, thanks to the in-depth organization of the frame, with Mildred in the background and third frame, far away from Monty who stands closer to the foreground, surrounded by a second frame. At this point, Mildred is completely devoted to Veda's well-being and career forgetting and sacrificing her marriage and her business in the process. The climax of the destruction of the family has its own frame within the frame, showing Mildred, alone, looking for her daughter in the nooks of her ridiculously big house. Except, this time, the frame within the frame is more suffocating than ever, showing Mildred rush into an intricate dark corridor, frantically looking for her missing daughter (cf. fig.2.61). Mildred is about to lose her business, but she is also about to discover

her daughter and her husband’s treason. The frame within the frame, here, symbolizes the backfiring of her obsession with greatness.



Fig. 2.56: MP pt. 5



Fig. 2.57: MP pt. 5



Fig. 2.58: MP pt. 5



Fig. 2.59: MP pt. 5



Fig. 2.60: MP pt.5



Fig. 2.61: MP pt.5

The same way he discussed the problematic of overcoming social constructs in *Far From Heaven*, Haynes shows yet another pessimistic take on the “implausible” nature of a woman’s independence during the culturally normative 1930s induced by a resisting patriarchy.<sup>95</sup> Is there a better place to show this other than houses? There actually *is* such a place in *Carol*. If not better, a department store full of dolls, people with Christmas hats on, and children running around might come quite close to the level of the domestic place.



Fig. 2.62: Carol



Fig. 2.63: Carol

The title “ARE YOU FRANKENBERG MATERIAL?” shows on the employee’s handbook which Therese is reading on her first day at work. At this point in the movie, all we know of Therese is that

95 Niall Richardson discussed this pessimistic point of view he observed in *Far From Heaven*, and argued that “*Far From Heaven* asserts that identity *cannot* exist beyond the confines of normative culture” – Richardson, Niall. “Poison in the Sirkian System: The Political Agenda of Todd Haynes’s *Far From Heaven*.” *Scope*. 6 (Oct. 2006). PDF.

she has her own apartment, has a boyfriend who takes her to work on his bicycle. The handbook presents her as an employee like many others in Frankenberg's department store – except for her being one of the two not wearing the Christmas hat in the refectory – deprived of any identity or sense of self. She is then visually put in a glass case in the middle of dolls (Fig. 2.63), enhancing what she is made to be, a stereotype of a woman in a girly world imbued with innocence, pastel colors, dresses, who is predisposed to care for children and familial matters. However, the hints addressing her malaise regarding this conformity resulting in the dismissal of her self quickly appear. The most obvious one is conveyed through a long shot of her face, from the inside of her locker whose edges form a secondary frame, accompanied by the endless deafening ringing of a bell causing her to shut her eyes (Fig. 2.64). The unnerving sound of the bell complements the lack of harmony provided by the very standard locker acting as secondary frame, greatly impacting the depiction of Therese's unease. Overall, whether in a familiar space or outside, these characters are constantly bearing the frame of social norms, warning them not to cross worlds where they might not belong. It does not mean however that these characters are not tempted to cross the socially defined line to overcome their claustrophobic condition.

## B) Cracking the Shell

While the home – or the house, depending on the feelings emanating from it – and its architectural components reflect the female character's accredited role in society and its consequences on her mental state, some other elements show the true face of characters in the middle of this architectural oppression condoning gender roles. These elements account for the resistance against and critical look of the movies upon social constructs based on gender. The first elements shows more or less open barriers between the internal and external worlds, tempting the characters to cross the line that is in between. The second, completing the already charged cinematic frame, is another Sirkian motif meant to betray the characters' duplicity: mirrors.

### *1. Windows and Doors:*

To escape from the oppression of the house, some openings on the external world take part in the architecture of houses. Several scholars – amongst Bourget and Doane whose comments on the motifs I will be quoting here – have analyzed the window because of its recurrence in classical melodramas and, probably, because of its aesthetic appeal. Indeed, its see-through aspect is more significant than the door, regarding its “interface between inside and outside” nature, “facilitat[ing] a communication

by means of the look between the two sexually differentiated spaces, but also act[ing] as the site of the specific pathos associated with the woman.”<sup>96</sup> I, for one, and in light of Haynes’s indirect look on the past with Fassbinder preceding him, think that including the door in the analysis of the dynamic displayed by the passage from the inside to the outside, and vice versa, could constitute an interesting complement to the *transparence* of the window. The openings this part will be dealing with, namely windows and doors, symbolize the line standing in between the domestic and the social spheres, or the internal and external worlds, the inside and the outside. Stereotypically, the safe space and the unpredictable space. Or as Mary Ann Doane puts it, “the feminine space of the family and reproduction and the masculine space of production.”<sup>97</sup> While they allow characters to contemplate the outside world, to enter it, they do not induce a real possibility for the outside and the inside to mix. Haynes willfully indulges in this discriminating motif but also in its significance, making it extremely explicit in *Mildred Pierce*, using the window as a screen to show the traditional place of a man and of a woman: while Mildred is baking, Bert is mowing the lawn (Fig. 2.78 & 2.79). Each of them in their own dedicated space. Moreover, his choosing to show Bert from a thick window, causing the shot to be blurred, hints at the inaccessibility and, paradoxically, permeability of the outside world from Mildred’s point of view. As a means to contrast, the shots showing her through the window from the outside are clearer.

### Windows of Contemplation

Bourget stresses that the interpretation of the viewer, fed with contextual elements, constitutes a major factor in how the window will be deciphered.<sup>98</sup> Given that Haynes makes use of this motif as a tool to remind of the older melodramas, we must keep in mind that, depending on their knowledge of the genre, some viewers might grant more significance than others to the motif. From a very prosaic perspective, the window is first and foremost an object which allows sight to the outside, creating a continuity between the inside and the outside. While it comprises the limitation of space between the domestic and the social spheres, its use and meaning revolve around its fragility compared to thick walls. It may allow a sight to the outside within the confines of the comfort and safety of home, it nonetheless still reveals the harsh truth of the outside world. Their fragility is so that Raymond has his home invaded by the outside with “rocks coming through the windows every night,” compelling

---

96 Doane, Mary Ann. “Pathos and Pathology: The Cinema of Todd Haynes.” *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism, Culture and Media Studies*. 19.3 (2004) : 1-21. EBSCOhost. Web. 9 Jun. 2016. 2.

97 Doane, Mary Ann. “Pathos and Pathology: The Cinema of Todd Haynes.” *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism, Culture and Media Studies*. 19.3 (2004) : 1-21. EBSCOhost. Web. 9 Jun. 2016. pp.2

98 Bourget. *Le mélodrame Hollywoodien*. p.187

him to leave and find soundness someplace else. He is, somewhat deprived of the only thing that might allow him to put up with the external world, to retreat from it, the way melodramatic female characters do to flee reprisal. Bourget, however, highlights the imprisoning consequence of domestic safety:

“[...] This leitmotiv mostly corresponds to a moment of pause, a pathetic punctuation: the woman at the window is a passive witness in between the interior closed world and the exterior world, i.e. on the line between the domestic life and the social sphere. However, while she contemplates the external world, she never crosses the line and never ceases to be part of the domestic life which both protects her and imprisons her.”<sup>99</sup>

Windows were a common motif not only in classical Hollywood cinema, but in other art media as well. An American painter made use of windows in the fifties. Hopper was very keen on showing the everyday 1950s American life through landscapes, houses and people. In his original *Far From Heaven* scenario, Haynes makes an explicit reference to one of his paintings.<sup>100</sup> Haynes's habit of feeding on period art, such as photography, music and film, leaves space for Hopper's art as well. The American painter has represented quite a number of scenes involving women behind windows, either from the outside or from the inside. These different perspectives show, on the one hand, the woman as an object of contemplation – which can involve the male gaze – and, on the other hand, as a subject “contemplating otherworldliness.”<sup>101</sup> With an atmosphere ranging from fierceness to fragility, occasionally tainted with stillness, his paintings portray women in a man's world, often in cities and more particularly New York. One of the photographers who inspired Haynes's work on adapting *Carol* to the screen, Saul Leiter, was keen on taking pictures through windows in New York City (cf. *Red Curtain*, *Phone Call* and *Walking* on the next page).<sup>102</sup> It is interesting to see the influence of his photographs on Haynes's depiction of 1950 New York city life. *Walking* for instance, photographed circa 1948, reminds of a scene shot from a car window, where Therese comes home from Carol's (Fig.

---

99 Translation of “[...] ce motif correspond le plus souvent à une pause, à une ponctuation pathétique : la femme à la fenêtre est un témoin passif, situé à la frontière du monde clos, intérieur, et du monde extérieur, à la limite de la cellule familiale et de l'univers social; mais – quoiqu'elle regarde à l'extérieur – elle ne franchit pas cette limite, elle ne cesse pas d'appartenir au cercle domestique qui simultanément la protège et l'enferme.” - Bourget. *Le mélodrame Hollywoodien*, 185.

100 Haynes, Todd. *Far From Heaven, Safe and Superstar: Three Screenplays*. (New York: Grove Press, 2003)

101 Translation of “La fenêtre [...] marque la projection d'une **intériorité médiative vers l'ailleurs**” from Valance, Hélène. “Le regard à la dérobée : *Night Windows* (1928) d'Edward Hopper.” *Transatlantica*. 2 (2012). [Transatlantica.revues.org](http://transatlantica.revues.org). Web. 24 Mar. 2017. <<http://transatlantica.revues.org/5912>>

102 To see more of Leiter's photographs, visit *FIFTY ONE Fine Art Photography*: <<http://www.gallery51.com/index.php?navigatieid=9&fotograafid=15>>

2.64). This intertext inherently induces a realistic aesthetic to Haynes’s sometimes mannerist film. It shows the 1950s as less idealized through the reproduction of an actual past lens. In the case of this shot, the viewers are the ones observing Therese, but the context does not imply spying – though it could foreshadow the surprise appearance of the private detective during the yet unplanned road trip. Here, given the plausible reference to Leiter’s photograph of a similar sight it seems that what is aimed at in this shot is the idea that Therese is thrown back into the crowded city space and its tedious hustle and bustle, contrasting with the stillness of Carol’s place which allowed them some privacy.



Edward Hopper, *Room in Brooklyn*  
1932<sup>103</sup>



Edward Hopper, *Hotel Window*  
1932<sup>104</sup>



Saul Leiter, *Red Curtain*  
1956<sup>105</sup>



Saul Leiter, *Walking*  
c. 1948<sup>106</sup>



Fig. 2.64: *Carol*



Saul Leiter, *Phone Call*  
1957<sup>107</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Hopper, Edward. *Room in Brooklyn* 1932. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. *Mfa.org*. Web. 26 Apr. 2017. <<https://www.mfa.org/collections/object/room-in-brooklyn-32499> >

<sup>104</sup> Hopper, Edward. *Hotel Window*. 1932. Private collection. *Edwardhopper.net*. Web. 26 Apr. 2017. <<https://www.edwardhopper.net/hotel-window.jsp> >

<sup>105</sup> Leiter, Saul. *Red Curtain*. 1956. *ArtStack.com*. Web. 18 Oct. 2016. <<https://theartstack.com/artist/saul-leiter/red-curtain> >

<sup>106</sup> Leiter, Saul. *Walking* c.1948. *Gallery51.com*. Web. 18 Oct. 2016.

<sup>107</sup> Leiter, Saul. *Phone Call*. 1957. *Gallery51.com*. Web. 18 Oct. 2016.

Looking at these paintings and photographs, the use of windows seems to go beyond the simple imitation of melodramas, at least in the case of *Carol* and *Mildred Pierce*, since *Far From Heaven* is more pastiche in its approach (referring to *All that Heaven Allows*, *A Reckless Moment*, *Imitation of Life* amongst others). They involve what seems to be a general motif, on the one hand, in a period-artistic consideration of the condition of women and on the other, in a period-artistic depiction of city life. Getting a view through windows, be it from reflections or from a secondary frame, forces the viewer to question the picture or shot itself. On the subject of his shots through windows including weather elements, Haynes explains that:

“ [they] diffuse the image and obstruct the frame but it almost makes the desire more pronounced because there are obstacles between where you are and what you want to see. So, you feel the boundaries and the things in the way of what you want. So, I think that became a useful way of externalizing or visualizing what’s going on inside, the subjectivities.”<sup>108</sup>

Windows are regularly blurred with raindrops, ultimately conveying the inner sadness of the woman in a metaphorical way, emphasizing the pathos lining as Bourget notes.<sup>109</sup> He adds that the woman-behind-the-window motif also renders the awaiting of the woman for her husband to come home from the outside world where he belongs. The frame within the frame once again reminds the viewer of the woman's status but this time she stands in between two spheres: the domestic one and the social one. On figure 2.65, Cathy is drawn to the security of her home after seeing her husband kissing a man at the office. The inner state is emphasized as the camera dollies in on the window behind which Cathy is seated, in the dark. Barely seeing her behind the window induces her withdrawal from the cruelty of the outside world, which destroyed her illusory perfect domestic sphere. As to erase this event, she goes back to her housewife’s space, so to speak, which consists of waiting for her husband’s return. Once he returns, she is unable to mention her earlier visit and the unexpected turn it took.



Fig. 2.65: FFH



Fig. 2.66a: Carol



Fig. 2.66b: Carol

<sup>108</sup> Film4. “Carol Interview Special.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 19 Nov. 2015. Web. 6 Jan. 2017.

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E68Y6vvpD5M>>

<sup>109</sup> Bourget, 185.

Getting a peak of the inside of a home through windows tends to provide a voyeuristic approach as in Hitchcock's infamous *Rear Window* (1954). To some extent, melodrama itself, because of its clinging to pathos, is somehow voyeuristic in its unveiling of inner states through cinematic motifs. Curiosity is regularly piqued with Haynes's blurry window frames, for the lack of a clear shot inevitably triggers a certain urge to break this concealing barrier and see more clearly. Haynes transfers this desire from the viewer's point of view to his characters'. For instance, Therese is shown looking at and waiting for Carol through windows (Fig. 2.66a & b) which in itself brings quite a change to the motif, as the young woman is waiting for another woman and, therefore, far off the patriarchal unconscious of the time. In contrast, the first scene of the flashback in *Carol* has Therese going to her window to greet her boyfriend, Richard, who has come to pick her up to go to work. Another change is notable since she is not waiting for Richard to come home, she is waiting to leave with him. Moreover, once she reaches the window, she opens it, getting rid of the object enhancing desire. Ironically, the person who really is waiting for someone is Richard. In the next scene, he talks to her about leaving to Europe, but she does not give any clear answer and never really will make him wait yet again.



Fig. 2.67: *MP pt.1*



Fig 2.68: *MP pt.1*



Fig. 2.69: *FFH*

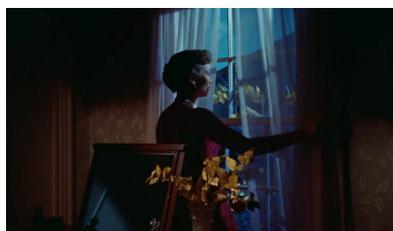


Fig. 2.70: *All That Heaven Allows*



Fig. 2.71: *Carol*

Haynes's indulging of this motif in *Far From Heaven* goes as far as showing Cathy shutting her curtains (Fig. 2.69), reminding of Cary's similar gesture in *All That Heaven Allows* (Fig. 2.70). While the first seems to be waiting for her husband, the second lets sink in the fact that every man in town sees her as a lonely widow who they can now marry, when she is only longing for her gardener's love.

Except for Cathy, while the nostalgic window motif is used for Mildred and Therese’s first appearance (Fig. 2.68 and 2.71).<sup>110</sup> However, the minimal change with the window interaction may appear clumsy and paradoxical. While Therese can technically leave her home, she still waits for Richard to do it, probably every day since they both work at the same place. As *Mildred* tries to grow more independent with her business, Mildred ends up looking out the window, still waiting (Fig. 2.74). Her seemingly unchanged situation despite her being a businesswoman – seeing that she is still standing in a kitchen as she was in the first shot (Fig. 2.68) – brings alone the issue of internalized sexism. She is still very much dependent on the will and judgement of the external world. Cathy indulges in this internalized sexism in a more extreme way considering her inclusion in motifs in the style of classical melodramas. Her role is rather passive and only switches to active mode once she understands that the mold does not work. The other characters in *Far From Heaven* however, use the windows of her home in a more active way by spying on her (Fig. 2.72 & 2.73), placing her further back into the passive naive housewife role, unaware of the negative effect of suburbia.



Fig. 2.72: FFH



Fig. 2.73: FFH



Fig. 2.74: MP pt.3

### Behind Closed Doors

In the same way, the door serves as a gateway to cross this line punctually. However, they also have the greater power to make the constraints of the domestic sphere imposed on women feel worse, because they are not just a one-way passage, as they allow a transfer from the outside to the inside. Once again, Fassbinder’s *Martha* makes an extremely toxic use of the door as an element of frustration. The line that seems so easy to cross is, in fact, uncrossable as the main character is obliged to stay home while her husband is away. And if crossed, all hell breaks loose. In Haynes’ films, the doors are crossed both ways. As we have witnessed earlier on with the scene between Mildred and Veda after Moire’s death (cf. Fig. 2.50a-d), the shutting of the door after a retreat inside the home can indicate a need to find comfort in a family environment, in the safety and stability of social roles, but also the suffocating of characters. Confronting the outside world, after opening and/or closing this

<sup>110</sup>Doane, Mary Ann. “Pathos and Pathology: The Cinema of Todd Haynes.” *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism, Culture and Media Studies*. 19.3 (2004) : 1-21. EBSCOhost. Web. 9 Jun. 2016. 2

ultimate barrier between the inside and the outside, tends to bring troubles. The most relevant example might be that of Cathy opening the door of her husband's office uncovering his homosexuality and the lie behind her marriage. Even Raymond's daughter, Sarah, suffers from this exposure after her father suggests she plays outside with white boys while he talks with Cathy. We get a glimpse of her from behind the glass at the end of the scene, left alone not only because of her gender but also because of her skin color. There, no matter the age of the protagonist, being a black girl is shown as worse than being a woman in the outside world. Taking into account the previous statement made about the father and daughter's broken windows, *Far From Heaven* does not only picture white women as prisoners and refugees of the household but includes minorities as a whole by creating a sort of gradation of the protagonists' situations, and Sarah may have the worst one despite her young age because of both her gender and her skin color. The point of view adopted in *Carol* is more hopeful since, looking at Therese's character, youth leaves the possibility for an unwritten future, even though the patriarchal point of view only considers one future for women: marriage.

Here, with Richard's reaction to her going away (Fig. 2.76), Therese is slapped with the realization of his perception of her: his future wife who, he expects, will be waiting for him behind the door and will not go outside without him. Even when Carol comes to pick her up her the first time, he is there. When she goes to work, he is there too since they work at the same place. He is the one who got her the job which, to him, means that she owes him. It seems now clear, considering the slamming of the door to her face, that he did all this selfishly, as a means to keep her, live with her and marry her. The shot is also particularly claustrophobic. We barely even see Therese because of the walls surrounding her. Ironically enough, a similar shot was taken when Carol came to visit earlier on (Fig. 2.75). The shot is more open, as we are able to see both characters, when we could barely decipher Therese in the other one. Going further we could even say that Richard's demanding behavior caused Therese's individuality to disappear. While the previous shot abruptly broke the relationship between Richard and Therese, the one with Carol brings the characters together in an intimate reduced frame. The intimacy is highlighted by the warm shades of color as opposed to the other shot's cool ones. To some extent, Carol is the one who shows Therese a way out of the house and everything that it incarnates including the Feminine Mystique.



*Fig. 2.75: Carol*



*Fig. 2.76: Carol*



*Fig. 2.77a: Carol*



*Fig. 2.77b: Carol*



*Fig. 2.77c: Carol*



*Fig. 2.77d: Carol*



*Fig. 2.77e: Carol*



*Fig. 2.77f: Carol*

Doors, like windows, serve as protection from the outside. Even inside of her house, Carol shuts the door on the outside world and its temptations (Fig. 2.77a – f), signified by Therese, to protect herself and the young woman from her soon to be ex-husband's anger. Though she is physically inside the house, the presence of Harge somehow keeps her outside, as she disappears with the shutting of the door initiated by Carol who imprisons herself under masculine pressure. Eventually, she sends Therese home.

The positioning of these characters behind windows and doors makes obvious that they are conditioned to think that they belong to the inside world. When things go wrong, instead of leaving, they mostly tend to stay inside, imprisoning themselves in the process. This self-imprisonment creates a tension brought by the cohabitation of two conflicting sides of the characters: one which caves in and obeys patriarchal rules because of an internalized sexism, and the one which was prevented from defying these same rules in an attempt to set free. These two conflicting personas are caused by the denial of one's true self for the sake of appearances.

### *1. Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Tell Me Who's the 'Fakest' of Them All*

In their practical use, mirrors can be seen as a symbol of vanity. Mirrors help with keeping up looks, that is, in melodramatic context, keeping up appearances. This primary characteristic is highlighted in *Far From Heaven* when Cathy's daughter, Janice, compliments her on her looks and tells her that she wants to "look exactly as pretty as [her]" when she grows up, looking at her mother through the mirror, while she is refreshing her make up. With this line, the movie's critical stance towards the weight of appearances, which will be backed up by the mirror motif, is revealed. What it does in terms of cinematic aesthetics is that it duplicates the image or the face of a character twice or more. Mirrors are, with other reflective surfaces, an allegoric motif revealing the multiple faces of characters or foreshadowing a disruption between what is shown and the hidden truth which will eventually be revealed. We will take for instance two examples from Douglas Sirk's movies, one from *All that Heaven Allows*, which cannot be left out given the references made to it in *Far From Heaven* and the second from *Written on the Wind* to be more thorough in the upcoming analysis of the motif.



Fig. 2.78: ATHA



Fig. 2.79: ATHA



Fig. 2.80: Written on the Wind

In *All That Heaven Allows*, Cary's dilemma between appearances and her attraction to Ron is referred to when the mirror causes her image to be doubled as she looks at the tree branch he offered her (Fig. 2.78). Afterwards, Cary stands up to greet her children at the bedroom door, but the camera does not follow her. Instead it stays focused on the mirror from which Cary gets away, leaving the main frame in the process. We are then left with the secondary frame, the mirror, featuring the remaining reflection of Cary hugging her children. This scene hints at Cary's setting the priority on family and appearance over her attraction for Ron, for now. Building on this analysis, we could go as far as to say that the absence of reflection, in another scene (Fig. 2.79), bears Cary's ignoring appearances for a short while, as she is shown touching and tenderly gazing the same tree branch, sitting by her mirror. Cary's double image hints to her torn self between her family – and its reputation built on her late husband's legacy – and her feelings for Ron. These are two incompatible sides of herself since Ron's position as a gardener does not fit with her family's social rank and the appearances attached to it. The mirror symbolizes the line with which Cary is dangerously flirting. In

the same way, a male character in *Written on the Wind* (1956), Mitch, plays with a boundary he should not cross, risking a disruption in the Hadley family harmony (Fig. 2.80).<sup>111</sup> In effect, the place of the mirror and its use confirm the love triangle between Lucy, Mitch, and Kyle, which has been hinted at from the beginning of the movie. It does more by visually placing Rock Hudson's character, Kyle, in between the future couple formed by Lucy and Mitch, foreshadowing the disruptive element which will cause the dramatic end of the movie (which was partly presented to the viewer at the beginning of the movie). Mirrors are a second frame transcending appearances whose metaphorical use is clearly addressed to the viewers. The motif traditionally allows the emergence of the character's true self through a duplicated persona. Haynes amplifies this motif by repeatedly introducing three-way mirrors to enhance the split appearance of his characters. Cathy's, Mildred's and Carol's reflections are all shown in such mirrors causing their reflections to be themselves split, making their duplication all the more visible. The screenshots selected from figure 2.81 to figure 2.83, appearing below, are taken at moments where the viewers start being aware of the characters' duplicated selves with, on one side appearances and on the other true self. Cathy and Frank's relationship is slowly fading away but, as always, there is a particular addition with the character of Frank. Indeed, at first Cathy is the only character whose image appears fragmented in three parts; one in the left mirror, a second in the middle mirror with Frank's and last but not least, the "real" her sitting in front of the mirror. But once she stands up, we get to see a second reflection of Frank on the right side of the mirror (fig. 2.84). This *mise-en-scène* induces that she is the one protecting and hiding Frank's duplicity (right side of the mirror), while hers threatens to be exposed (left side of the mirror) despite her attempt at keeping the family together (mirror in the middle). Mildred is slowly starting planning the creation of her business, maintaining a 'close relationship' with Wally whose professional help she is seeking. Her whole being is splitting between two identities: the mother and wife on one side and the independent business woman on the other. As for Carol, her closeness with a certain "Abby" is about to be frowned upon by her husband and her maid. Carol's reflection is accompanied by her daughter's on the left side, but she appears alone on the right side. The mirror in the middle does not show anything, as if the two personas – which I will call 'motherly Carol' and 'independent (and lesbian) Carol' – were forever incompatible. There is no middle ground, contrary to Cathy's situation, she does not rely on appearances since her marriage is already over.

---

<sup>111</sup> *Written On the Wind*. Dir. Douglas Sirk. Perf. Rock Hudson, Lauren Bacall, Robert Stack. Universal International Pictures, 1956. DVD.



Fig. 2.81: FFH



Fig. 2.82: MP pt.2



Fig. 2.83: Carol



Fig. 2.84: FFH



Fig. 2.85: MP pt. 5



Fig. 2.86: Carol



Fig. 2.87a : FFH



Fig. 2.87b: FFH



Fig. 2.88: Carol

In *Mildred Pierce*, this happens when Mildred is suddenly taken by a frenzy to kill her daughter who basically shaded her with her youth and success while feeding off of Mildred's energy and business (cf. Fig. 2.85). It feels almost unreal as it is but the mere reflection of the two characters, revealing Mildred's frenzy which is so far off the motherly road. For a split second, the mirror projection becomes an alternative reality in which the mother-daughter relationship is inexistent and where Veda's true face is displayed to all, including to the viewers. Then on, Mildred is thrown out of her own frenzy, coming back to reality as she witnesses the suffering of her daughter. As for Carol, she dares to break with the maintenance of appearances through her reflection as we see her undoing her robe through the mirror reflection. This mirror reflection almost acts as a protective alternate reality where she can be and see herself. The same goes with Cathy when her emotions show at the end of the movie as she recalls a moment spent with Raymond when he found her lost scarf (cf. Fig. 2.87a & b). We see her staring at the piece of clothing only through her reflection for the sake of modesty. Her emotions will stay inside this alternate reality, with her alternate self, for the exposure of her true feelings only brought her trouble in the past. After having spent time on her trip with Therese, Carol, who is torn between her two selves (cf. Fig. 2.83), eventually leaves off the motherly one to meet Therese's reflection in the mirror (cf. Fig. 2.86). However, we must note the similarity between the motherly reflection of Carol with Rindy and her new reflection with Therese's who happens to have

the same haircut as the child, stroking her hair the way she did Rindy's. Earlier on, a picture of young Therese makes Carol think of Rindy who has been taken away by Harge, making her emotional. We could conclude, given this preceding element in the narrative, that this scene hints to Carol's forgetting her daughter as she spends time with the young woman. In the meantime, it enhances Therese's young age, by playing with the viewer's perception of the age gap and its illicit appearance in such times, which is in adequation with one of the traditional romance disruptions evoked classical melodramas. She must choose between her daughter and her young lover but cannot have both. This new reflection would be paired up with the right side of the three-way mirror. Before she is shown behind Therese, we get a glimpse of Carol in the bathroom (cf. Fig. 2.88), in front of the mirror, leaving her "traditional" self behind, in the other mirror, as she turns off the light, rejecting appearances at last, to join Therese in the other mirror. As if she decided to leave behind this lonely reflection of herself, which the viewers witnessed on the right side of the three-way mirror.

Appearances are challenged by mirrors as the object itself represents a means to maintain a certain image exposed to the public eye. It shows the reflection of a character whose face appears from a different point of view, as if we had two versions of the same character. At times, we don't even get to see the reflected silhouette before the mirror as, for instance, Frank after Cathy leaves revealing the two reflections. Cathy's denial of his gay side therefore shows, completely creating the almost perfect husband he cannot even keep up with as he behaves hostilely. The phenomenon happens in *Mildred Pierce* as well uniting the mother and daughter in the mirror, as if Veda was a projection of her mother in a younger form. Mildred appears in Veda's shadow which could be seen as the epitome of Veda's plot somehow, since she has always tried to benefit from Mildred's granted



Fig. 2.89: FFH

motherly love. But, what happens when this alternative reality is threatened by the actual reality? The lack of privacy Cathy and Frank have to face is triggered when people outside of the family appear in one of their mirrors, as if framed on their wall (Fig. 2.89). The mirror then becomes a window through which people may understand the hidden side of the

household, the alternative reality revealed to the spectators by the mirror. With this mirror, Cathy and Frank appear as if they were observed from two different angles by both the journalist and Sybil – whose role is still a little shady at this point of the narrative. Thus, the mirror looks like a window here, providing sight to the outside world and the people associated to it, onto the alternative reality

encompassing Frank and Cathy's crumbling marriage. Thankfully, this type of "window" is only accessible to those who enter the home contrary to actual windows which grant the possibility of a continuity between the inside and the outside and tend to reveal the pathos lining of characters stuck in between these two spaces.

Many of Haynes's use of melodramatic motifs and his inserting motifs of several film genres in his melodramas, transcend the traditional depiction of melodrama's female characters – and Frank. His making aesthetic references to movies of the past call upon the viewers memory so that they notice the subject discussed and what has been added. From the interracial relationship to the homosexual ones through the independent divorced woman, the exceptional and unusual look on the 1930s and 1950s strikes the viewer thanks to a busy frame. The analyses of motifs above reveal the limits of an analysis based on the female characters only or from an essentially 1930s or 1950s social point of view. Taking *FFH*'s Frank out of the discussion would be counter-productive. The same goes with Monty who, in the end, is also treated as a melodramatic subject who spends most of his time at home, like most female characters and is shunned for it. The female characters also show a great deal of opposition to the melodramatic "motifs" so to speak. Therese, for instance, represents the resistance to gender roles and to heteronormativity. What remains to be discussed now is the extent to which a more contemporary discussion of gender appears in an aesthetics which does not only belong to the melodrama genre, and how these disruptive gender-based elements allow and contribute to the interaction between the nostalgic and revisionist aspects of Haynes' work.

### III- Fragmented Nostalgic Genre for Contemporary Fragmented Genders

Movies, like many other forms of art, inevitably bear the imprint of social changes, whether it be a voluntary gesture from the filmmaker or not. The melodrama genre, as developed in the first part of this thesis, has always tended to follow the changes and the tendencies of feminist movements. In the same fashion, the New Queer Cinema – which is seldom commented on without at least alluding to Haynes’s art – is intrinsically deeply embedded in contemporary times and mores. Haynes’s queer approach efficiently makes his very contemporary subjects – storylines and characters to some extent – converse with our nostalgia for past art and times. The imitation of past aesthetics proper to the melodrama genre, as shown in the second part, depicts women as eternal prisoners trying to step outside of the patriarchal society and interiorized sexism. This previous study has revealed some limitations to a greater level of revisionist content. We must now go beyond the conventions of the melodrama and their displacement. In fact, Through the blending of other genres and their conventions, Haynes displaces the original melodramatic themes and breaks more efficiently with the stereotypical gender-based representations of both men and women. In *Hollywood Heroines: Women in Film Noir and the Female Gothic Film*, Helen Hanson states that:

“Hollywood’s genres have always been a major originating source and modifier, of filmic character types. The construction and marketing of character configurations by Hollywood genres intersects with audience expectations.”<sup>112</sup>

Her statement on character types is especially true with “old-fashioned” genres – such as melodrama, noir or gothic – which have born the marks of both the patriarchal system and the feminist backlash. Hanson later adds that “both genres [Film Noir and Female Gothic] have been fascinating to critics studying gender and genre. They have been discussed as stylistically, narratively and socially interesting”.<sup>113</sup> And this is precisely how the blending of genres must be interrogated regarding Haynes’s genre-gender dance. Since film genres borrow from and share motifs with one another, the blending of genres – or rather of motifs allocated to different genres – can and will most of the time go unnoticed. For instance, while the *chiaroscuro* technique is recurrent and is considered as a Film Noir motif, it has been used in melodramas. In *All That Heaven Allows*, the contrast sharpens when

---

<sup>112</sup> Hanson, Helen. *Hollywood Heroines: Women in Film Noir and the Female Gothic Film*. (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007) xiii.

<sup>113</sup> Hanson, Helen. *Hollywood Heroines: Women in Film Noir and the Female Gothic Film*. (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007) xv.

Cary's son confronts her concerning her relationship with Ron Kirby, threatening to never visit her should she go through with the marriage (cf. *Fig. 3.1 – 3.3*).



*Fig. 3.1: ATHA*



*Fig. 3.2: ATHA*



*Fig. 3.3: ATHA*

Therefore, it is not so much the blending of genres itself which creates the disruption and shatters the expectations regarding gender (roles), but an ensemble of elements from content to form – or from narrative to stylization using Hanson's words – which reinforce the contemporary revisionist nature of these melodramas. Closely observing visual codes of different genres – and how they are more or less played within each movie – leads to another level of analysis. This new level, instead of solely anchoring women further in their condition and struggle, provides us with a new and contemporary discussion of genre in relation to genders. While the different plots still embrace the destinies of women, and their impossible emancipation, they also break with the usual melodramatic codes.

### A) Discrepancy in Content: Shattering the Nuclear Family

In classical melodramas, once you are someone's wife, it seems you cease being an individual in your own right, even after the husband's passing. Some of our more "contemporary" female characters will confront this effacement, and as they do so have fantasized unity of the nuclear family break up. Mildred is ripped off of her past as Mrs. Pierce once she and Bert go separate ways as if the time she spent with her husband had just been a void or pause in her life as an individual. In *Carol*, when Harge refers to "Cy Harrison's wife", Carol corrects him with "Jeannette" implying that she is more than just someone's wife – we might go as far as to say property given the context. There, the resistance to the established superiority of the husband over the wife is textually brought up. Carol opposes the effacement of the individual woman in the couple, while Cathy is seen as endorsing both. In effect, she is referred to as "Mr. and Mrs. Magnatech" which places her in the shadow of her husband's life and success, for which she has to look perfect. She is depicted as the face of her husband's firm, the object for the consumers' gaze. But the minute this perfection breaks, her husband accuses her of ruining what he has worked for. How to remedy this arbitrary hierarchy that goes as

far as to change or even erase one's identity? How do these female characters deal and live with their womanhood? Ironically, two characters benefit from their assigned gender and what is expected of it. In *Carol*, the two women manage to get closer and eventually sleep together, in the meantime defying the moral order of the 1950s, thanks to their womanhood. Their sleeping in the same room is not frowned upon as it would be in the case of an unmarried heterosexual couple. The woman at the front desk of the hotel even suggests that they share a room, because of the attractive rate. From this moment on, this is exactly what they'll do without any stranger being suspicious about it – except for the private investigator hired by Harge. This common eloquent detail, though it might pass as trivial, implies that the nuclear works as long as the woman does not try to retrieve her individual identity, or as long as the father manages to keep *his* family together, as one unit. This brief but, nevertheless, significant rebellion against the erasure of the woman's individuality in "Mr. and Mrs.," brings about a more contemporary understanding of what a family is.

### *1. The Seasonal Celebrations Paradox*

What better events than seasonal celebrations to show the importance of family gathering? Jean Louis Bourget, in his study of seasons and the passing of time in melodramas, calls attention to the recurrence of Christmas and New Year's Eve celebrations in the genre.<sup>114</sup> On the one hand, he presents this recurrent theme as the paroxysm of "familial joy" which therefore often closes the narrative. On the other hand, he demonstrates that it also has the potential to create a dramatic contrast. In fact, when allusions to Christmas or New Year's Eve appear at moments of despair, the paroxysm of joy becomes the paroxysm of sorrow. In *Mildred Pierce*, the Christmas scene highlights the struggle of Mildred's attempt at maintaining familial bonds with her daughter and creating them with Monty. Instead, her daughter is dissatisfied with her present, which she deems not expensive enough, given the professional success of her mother. The latter reveals that this situation was precipitated by her having to pay for Monty's high expenses. Christmas celebration transforms into a 'wealth-meter' for the sake of consumerism, capitalism and superficiality which breaks Mildred's family apart. Despite or because of her successful business, Christmas is not good enough. Meanwhile, Carol suffers the same fate when her husband, prompted by his mother, comes to get Rindy for Christmas. He nevertheless tries to convince her to come as well in an attempt to recreate the "illusion" of a nuclear family. Carol refuses which confirms the end of their relationship and by extension of their

---

<sup>114</sup> *Le Mélodrame Hollywoodien*, 147.

family. This Christmas ‘break-up’ echoes Therese’s answer to Richard when he invites her to spend the holidays with his family earlier on:

“Christmas? It’s for families. I’d feel... I don’t know.”

She does not accompany him but accepts to go on a trip with Carol on the day of Christmas – which is implied by the use of the Christmas song ‘Silver Bells’ as both diegetic and non-diegetic music.<sup>115</sup> This decision starts Therese and Richard’s break up. Given the circumstances, it appears that Christmas in Carol does not just show the despair of a broken family but also the hope of having found a new one and, above all, one that is not governed by culture but by nature. At this moment, by melodrama conventions they are presented as a family. When Carol asks her if she misses Richard, Therese – who has apparently not yet grasped the difference between house and home – answers that she hasn’t thought about home all day which, given the time of the year, is rather suspicious. As the phrase “home is where the heart is” implies, home comes from the simple act of being with a loved one. Ironically, the lack of a house decorated with the traditional Christmas tree and other ‘superficialities’ of this celebration makes their (forbidden) family look more authentic compared to the Whitakers’.



Fig. 3.4a: FFH



Fig. 3.4b: FFH



Fig. 3.4c: FFH

Here, Christmas celebration marks the ultimate attempt at reuniting the family, the last hope to fix what needs to be fixed after Frank and Cathy’s lapsing. It all comes with a particular emphasis on gender norms with a close-up on their daughter’s very pink present – dancing slippers – opening the scene (cf. Fig. 3.4c) while her brother plays with his train set. It all looks too perfect with the extra lush colors, which leads to the expressive *mise-en-scène* pushing *Far From Heaven*’s imitation of life to its peak with the symbolically charged red and green colors (cf. Fig. 3.4a & b). The nuclear family governed by gender norms seems fixed. But, soon enough, the New Year’s Eve escapade – bathed in pink and blue shades – shatters the appearances as Frank is unable to resist his true self and desire despite this gender-polarizing environment.

<sup>115</sup> Como, Perry. “Silver Bells”. *The Perry Como Christmas Album*, RCA Victor, 1968.

This New Year's Eve instance brings us to Bourget's second point on seasonal celebrations. Indeed, he goes on and talks about the ambiguity of New Year's Eve and of its leitmotiv in cinema with the song "Auld Lang Syne" (or "Old Acquaintance"). He says of this time of the year that "it is the end and a new beginning, a farewell and a reunion, the depths of sorrow and the height of joy."<sup>116</sup> The New Year's Eve scene from *Carol* brings about this ambiguity with the consummation of Carol and Therese's relationship both caused by and causing the probable loss of her daughter. A dramatic loss which will also be the temporary end of Carol and Therese's relationship. To sum up, using Bourget's words, Carol and Therese's "height of joy" is trapped between "depths of sorrow." What makes the difference between *Carol* and *Far From Heaven* is the simplicity of the former as opposed to the opulence of the latter. For instance, when in *Carol* the New Year's Eve leitmotiv plays on the radio just for the two women, in *Far From Heaven* they have a whole orchestra playing it for a crowd. "I always spend New Year's alone, in crowds" Therese says before concluding "I'm not alone this year," taking Carol's hand. Based on this line, we could argue that the crowd surrounding Cathy and Frank, instead of showing them closer than ever, increases the feeling that they are alone. Especially so when the camera focuses on Frank and his soon-to-be lover gazing at each other while the former pulls a chair for Cathy. *She*, in fact, has probably never been more alone since this eye contact will lead to Frank's new beginning. Overall, the union of implausible families during seasonal celebrations show the meaning of home, which is not the architectural place where one lives but rather an abstract place, where the characters are comfortable enough to be themselves.

In Haynes' contemporary melodrama, Christmas and New Year's Eve deny the traditional definition of family by showing the natural creation of "implausible" contemporary families, stamping them with the mark of new beginnings as they put an end to their being alone and to the imitation of the cultural nuclear family. On another level, he also uses it to discuss the notion of motherhood and the usual matter of mother/daughter relationships. In *Love Affair* (1939), we are presented with a woman who instantly serves as a mother figure as soon as she meets with the children living in the children's home next door. Her apparent natural ability to connect with the children contrasts with the struggle of the man in charge of them. The movie even goes as far as having the children visit her for Christmas, which reinforces the myth of the naturally nurturing woman and places her a surrogate mother. Through Haynes's mini-series, this same myth induces Mildred's struggle and sacrifices to build a home and family environment for Veda and herself in vain.

---

<sup>116</sup> *Le Mélodrame Hollywoodien*, 149.

## 2. *Dysfunctional Motherhood, Fatherhood and Parenthood*

Mildred and Veda's dividing Christmas celebration, symptomatic of their chaotic relationship, overall seems to question the maternal quality supposedly inscribed in women's genome as an innate behavior. While those two characters contradict a socially built myth resulting in a mother's constant sacrifices, the other mother-daughter – or mother-children – relationship suffers diverse treatments through characters of Cathy and Carol. A common ground seems to stand though, for which we need to look at Doane's remarks on the centrality of children in Haynes's cinema. She affirms of them that while they are "not yet subjects, they are nevertheless witnesses to the scandalous and sublime emergence of subjectivity."<sup>117</sup> They, in other words, learn to become subjects through the subjectivity of those surrounding them. Hence, Veda's greed inherited from her mother who is never satisfied and always wants more. This inherited trait, unfortunately for Mildred, amplified as years passed which ruined her. The more Mildred tries to give to and get for her daughter, the more she sets the bar higher and the more Veda pulls away. For instance, after her piano mentor dies, Veda has a breakdown and Mildred keeps on throwing ambitious plans at her, all rejected before her daughter screams that she is "just no goddamned good and there's nothing you could do about it!" When she keeps on controlling Veda's life including the persons she goes out with, her maid protests: "Why? Why can't you leave her alone?". The fine line standing in between care and control has been, from Veda's point of view, crossed enough and she lets her know as she deals with her (fake) pregnancy:

"It's about time that you got it through your head that I – and not you – am the main figure in this little situation, as you like to call it." – Veda in *Mildred Pierce* part 3.

Mildred's behavior, according to Kaplan, is that of the "phallic mother" which she defines, with the help of Horney's study of feminine psychology, as such:

Horney observes that such mothers often develop an over-attachment to the *daughter* similar to that which other mothers feel toward their *sons* (1967b: 180). The result may cripple the daughter's capacity to establish normal relations with men, since she in turn has developed an over-attachment to *her* mother. Horney tells us that such mothers desire to control the girl-child absolutely by prying into her affairs relentlessly.<sup>118</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> Doane, Mary Ann. "Pathos and Pathology: The Cinema of Todd Haynes." *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism, Culture and Media Studies*. 19.3 (2004) : 1-21. EBSCOhost. Web. 9 Jun. 2016. 4

<sup>118</sup> Kaplan, E. Ann. *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama*. (London: Routledge, 1992) 109

While this phallic mother representation of Mildred can be perceived as toxic, she is not shown as either as good or bad mother Cook explains. She also adds that, contrary to Curtiz's version, in Haynes's adaptation "the conventions of melodrama prevail and Mildred remains a victim of forces she does not understand."<sup>119</sup> In fact, it appears that Veda acts towards her mother the way Mildred did towards Bert, Wally and Monty: with demanding nature. The difference being that Mildred is not Veda's lover but her mother and finds herself unable to escape this situation since Veda is her responsibility. She will eventually realize that her feeding Veda's greed caused the loss of her business but does not seem to notice the inherited nature of this behavior. This almost incestuous relationship is paradoxically driven by an overall commendable motive, that of the devoted mother, symbol of the melodrama. But Haynes's version, rather faithfully based on Cain's novel, results in a toxic mother-daughter relationship, mostly caused by Mildred's subversive double role: the once-nurturing mother and the controlling head of household, also traditionally called the *man* of the house. Monty himself pointed out that she lacked ladylike nature, alluding to the money she gave him every time he would take Veda out.

In light of Mildred's incestuous and above all possessive love for her daughter, Carol's handling of Rindy's custody battle might seem strange. As a reminder, after Carol realizes that Harge has all the proof he needs to get custody of their daughter, she leaves Therese and goes back to New York. There, she is forced to see a psychiatrist, in the hope that she be allowed to see her daughter, provided that she conforms to social mores. In fact, the morality clause that first separated the mother and the daughter implied that Rindy's witnessing the immoral behavior of her mother would be harmful. Nevertheless, she persisted and took her relationship with Therese away from New York, away from her husband's sight. Even though she protested the morality clause saying that "there is nothing moral about keeping Rindy away from [her]", she eventually caves in when the custody battle starts "getting ugly," as she would phrase it, granting the custody of Rindy to her husband. This particular scene, which is not to be found in the book, concludes as such:

"I do regret and I grieve for the mess we're about to make of our child's life. [...] Now, I think that Harge should have custody of Rindy. I am no martyr, I have no clue what is best for me, but I do know, I feel it in my bones, what is best for my daughter. [...] You know, there was a time when I would have done almost anything, I would have locked myself away to keep Rindy with me. What use am I to her, to us, if I'm living against my own grain?" - Carol in *Carol*.

---

<sup>119</sup> Cook, Pam. "Beyond Adaptation", 381.

Her decision is apparently motivated by what she imagines her daughter would witness if she does not give up. She paradoxically manages to put her daughter first and still go with her own grain. Talking about grain, the last sentence in the quotation above suggests a deeper concern of Carol. She says “what use am I to her” and then corrects adding “to us,” which suggests that she has a duty, not only towards her daughter but also towards their relationship, to be true to herself. She consequently stands up against a patriarchal system which does not feel right. Her sacrifice is meant to show her daughter that women do not have to be controlled nor owned. Considering this analysis, we can say that there is a somewhat hopeful sound behind this pathos-filled monologue which confirms the partly forced, partly accepted separation of two supposedly powerless victims. To quote Doane on the notion of pathos linked to the centrality of children in Haynes’s movies:

“The presence of children is also significant because emotion is so crucial to Haynes’s filmmaking practice – not only as a desired effect but as an object, a topic, a content – primarily in the form of pathos. Pathos, the central emotion of melodrama, is reinforced by the disproportion between the weakness of the victim and the seriousness of the danger so that, as Nothrop Frye points out, “the central figure of pathos is often a woman or a child” and “pathos is increased by the inarticulateness of the victim.” Pathos closely allies itself with the delineation of a lack of social power and effectively characteristic of the cultural positioning of children and women (so frequently the protagonists of Haynes’s films).”<sup>120</sup>

I used the words “supposedly powerless victims” before because, in this moment of intense pathos, Carol does not show “inarticulateness”, though she does struggle to actually speak the words. On the contrary, she takes back every bit of control she can, leaving behind her passivity, making her own decision before others do it for her. Now, can we talk about a dysfunctional motherhood? Considering that the story is set in the 1950s, yes. It is implausible for it to function because of external forces which deny Carol her motherhood. But is Carol a bad mother? While this question is still pending concerning Mildred, the answer here is no. It is decidedly so because of our present perspective on the matter and of the pathos which Carol manages to overcome for the better – i.e. to break patriarchal principles as her duty towards her daughter. Moreover, Harge’s presence throughout the movie trying to get Carol back suggests that the reason he wants to have custody of Rindy is to force her to come back. It inevitably makes the viewer side with Carol and perceive him, if not as the bad guy, as a terrible father and patriarchal nuisance to the mother-daughter relationship.

---

<sup>120</sup> Doane, Mary Ann. “Pathos and Pathology: The Cinema of Todd Haynes.” *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism, Culture and Media Studies*. 19.3 (2004) : 1-21. EBSCOhost. Web. 9 Jun. 2016. 4-5

There is one man who is not going to ruin his wife's bond with her children for two reasons. First and foremost, because he is a mostly – film-noir like as we will see later on – absent father and, secondly, because his wife is an emotionally absent *mother*. I am, of course, talking about Frank and Cathy here. With the very pastiche appearance of the film, we could forget the far from perfect fatherhood and motherhood of those two characters. One can spot several scenes where the slight association of father and son on the one hand, and mother and daughter on the other, reinforces the passing on of the masculine and feminine dichotomy to the children. These gender-conforming fatherhood and motherhood moments are rare and when they occur, they bring along subject corresponding to the gender involved. The one scene Cathy really shares with her daughter happens at the very beginning of the movie, when Janice confides that she would like to look as pretty as her mother when she grows up. Later on, she goes to her ballet recital where only mothers and daughters are to be seen, surrounded by shades of pink. Whereas Frank and David's conversations revolve around sports and violence and essentially occur when Frank mutes his true self and tries to conform to society: once after his first therapy session, and the second time when Cathy and Frank are back from Miami.<sup>121</sup> Apart from these rare moments, the parents barely really worry about their children, even when they ask for their help. David complains about their passive motherhood and fatherhood at dinner:

“Hey what about me, no one care one bit what I'm doing Saturday.” – David, Cathy and Frank's son, in *FAR FROM HEAVEN*.

Later on, as Janice asks for her mother's help with her homework, Cathy answers that she is busy as we see her phoning the NAACP, in reaction to the beating up of a black girl at school. This scene is meant to hint at her relationship with Raymond, which is apparently more important than her children whom she mostly dismisses. Raymond, on the contrary, embodies the motherly figure of the movie when he chooses to sacrifice himself for the sake of his daughter, after Cathy suggests that they run away together, apparently forgetting about her own children. Overall, it seems that, as long as the façade is up, nobody really worries about her motherhood. But, to the spectators, it shows that having kids and fitting in social norms does not make a mother. Cathy is good at hosting parties, looking good for her husband's business – at least until she is seen outside with Raymond – and keeping up appearances by socializing. However, her lacking in the traditional motherly qualities of

---

<sup>121</sup> As a reminder, David talks to his dad about baseball and as soon as his sister tries to talk about ballet with him, he gets jealous.

the melodramatic woman, along with Frank's absence, is reflected in the children's attempt to be worthy of their parents' attention, in vain.

### *3. Masculinity and Femininity Questioned*

At the core of these broken families lies a problem of blurred lines between masculinity and femininity, inconsistent with the 1950s nuclear family. Richardson writes about *Far From Heaven* that:

"The film not only offers a "sustained critique of the dominant ideology" but also suggests a "uniquely queer perspective on human existence" and, like all of Haynes's films, challenges "clichés about representation, sameness and difference and identity".<sup>122</sup>

We have seen on multiple occasions that the codes of the melodrama genre serve the purpose of challenging such clichés. Melodrama has a way of showing the socially induced weaknesses preventing its female characters to move forward and decide of their own future. In *Desire to Desire*, we are reminded that:

"[...] as Jacques Goimard maintains, pathos – the central emotion of melodrama – is reinforced by the disproportion between the weakness of the victim and the seriousness of the danger so that, as Goimard point out and Northrop Frye emphasizes, "the pathetic is produced more easily through the misfortunes of women, children, animals, or fools...". Melodrama closely allies itself with the delineation of a lack of social power and effectivity so characteristic of the cultural positioning of women."<sup>123</sup>

We have also seen that women's – and children's – weakness is communicated through the *mise-en-scène* of their pathos. In the face of it, seeing the pathos of female characters in Haynes's is not that surprising or game-changing. It is where and why the pathos originates that matters. For instance, seeing Cathy collapse on her bed crying is not at all surprising. But seeing her husband cry is. Crying could be seen as the epitome of the melodramatic characters' pathos, letting out their weakness for everyone to see. In *Far From Heaven*, both the father and the daughter show this form of pathos, paralleling the emotions of two opposite characters. One that is supposedly, because of his sex, a strong character and a typically weak character both because of her age and her sex. In fact, we never see the son cry, almost as a way to highlight the prejudice linking the emotional to the feminine.

---

<sup>122</sup> Richardson, 13.

<sup>123</sup> *The Desire to Desire*, 73

Points out to the reprehension of men's feelings right from their childhood, contrary to women. Frank cries the way women do in melodramas. The displacement of melodramatic femininity onto a male character seems very unlikely in a 1950s aesthetics and carries the feminist discourse further. The stance behind Haynes's melodramas is not solely about the submissive position of women anymore. Instead it focuses on the blending of the supposedly diametrically opposed femininity and masculinity.



Fig. 3.5: Carol



Fig. 3.6: Carol

Another example of this blending, content-wise, is induced through the introduction of Therese. Early in the movie. Right after the scene where she is surrounded with dolls (Fig. 3.5), Therese is shown turning on the store's train set to then observe it, leaning on the edge of its display case (Fig. 3.6). Each toy corresponds to one gender: dolls for little girls – preparing them for motherhood – and train sets for little boys – as a reminder, it is David's Christmas present in *Far From heaven*. The *mise-en-scène* visually indicates Therese's preference. With the dolls, she is shown in a frame within the frame, as if she were confined in a box – which is probably the metaphorical representation of the dolls-are-for-girls social construct. We see a real contrast with the train set which she observes from above, free from frames and social oppression. The same dolls, later on, prevent her from leaving the desk allocated to their sale, as explicitly stated in this exchange between Carol and Therese:

Carol: “Do you know much about train sets?”

Therese: “I do actually. We got a new model in last week. It's hand-built with hand-painted cars, it's a limited edition of five thousand. You might have seen it on the way in over by the elevators. I would show you but I'm sort of confined to this desk.”

Right from the beginning, Therese goes against the socially constructed separation between the masculine and the feminine. Something that Carol will also approve since she then buys a train set for her daughter. We may note that this detail is not faithful to Highsmith's novel since it is a bag that Carol buys for her daughter. We see with the case of Therese that an exhaustive comment on the

blending of gender needs back up from the study of visual hints, notably those which also blend film genres. Indeed

## B) Queer Form: Disruptions in and Invasion of the Woman's Film

From the argumentation of the previous parts and subparts, we can effortlessly deduce the major role of intertextuality in the revisiting of the melodrama. The queer melodramas produced by this inclusion of other works of art, may they be cinematographic or other forms of art, more often than never participate in the construction of the characters. The author of *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut* establishes a causal relationship between Reagan's presidency, "a new conservative Christian version of the Republican Party devoid of [...] love of New York City, queers or arts" – amongst other 1990s problems such as AIDS – and the emergence of the New Queer Cinema.<sup>124</sup> It seems logical, in light of this governmental stance, for this new style to celebrate arts in every possible way, from pastiche to the blending of genres through intertextuality. I will introduce the matter with the latter form of transcendence brought with the New Queer Cinema, a form which has become quite a habit in Haynes's oeuvres. In *Far From Heaven*, we often get to follow Frank's point of view, which itself already quite queer in the melodramatic context, but let us keep this detail for later. One night, as he goes separate ways with his colleagues after a rather unofficial meeting downtown, we see him heading to the movie theatre. There, a close-up of the title of one of the movies scheduled that night reads "*The Three Faces of Eve*". This movie, released in 1957, tells the story of a woman with multiple personalities, based on a true story. There is Eve White, the wife and mother, Eve Black, the unmarried and flirty one, and Jane, the one which will reunite the other two personalities. The reference to this movie denotes Frank's identifying with this female character, bringing out his 'melodramatic female' – or could it be 'femme fatale?' – face, as we see the first manifestation of Eve Black on screen. Eve Black symbolizes his inner need to succumb to his repressed desire towards men. This is, if not the most, one of the most obvious cases of inversion, so to speak. But there is so much more to be said about this scene.

### *1. Stylization: Light, Contrast, Color*

In fact, this scene pretty much assembles everything which is usually used in the other movies to create a queer disruption in the original melodramatic aesthetics. That is to say, a particular shift in light and contrast, shades of particular colors which sets the tone and an unusual non-diegetic music.

---

<sup>124</sup> Rich, B. Ruby. *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*. (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2013) xvi.

First of all, on top of referring to a movie, it also imitates one of Hopper’s paintings which – when they are not showing walls, houses, or landscapes – often show women as main subjects. The one replicated through this scene, entitled *New York Movie*, is no exception as you can see below (Fig. 3.7 & 3.8a,b).



Fig. 3.7: Edward Hopper, *New York Movie* (1939)<sup>125</sup>



Fig. 3.8a: FFH



Fig. 3.8b: FFH

Many similarities lead the informed spectator to create a link between Hopper’s usherette and Frank. Not only is he in a theater room watching a black and white movie, but we can also clearly see very similar stairs with their red curtains. And just like the usherette, there is Frank standing on the right side of the stairs. Not only is he compared to Eve Black, but he is also shown standing in lieu of one of Hopper’s female characters and, just like her, stands unnoticed as the spectators are preoccupied with the fate of a mentally ill woman. He, however, notices two men, also standing at the back of the room, near the stairs. The vision of these two men, it appears, will help him let his inner Eve Black



Fig. 3.9a: Carol

out in the darkness of the room, as the doctor on screen calls for Eve White. His transformation is complete. We then see him outside, following the two men in the darkness of the streets. The low-key lighting is essential to the disruption of the scene and the introduction of the notion of criminality and danger. The chiaroscuro effect, which literally means “clarity-obscurety”, rendered by the combination

low-key lighting and high-contrast, has various effects which depend on the context and the atmosphere of the scene and film. The author of *X-Ray Visions* evokes the creation of a “third-person perspective, simultaneously fictional and real, that looks but fails to see – the vantage points of the

<sup>125</sup> Hopper, Edward. *New York Movie*. 1939. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. [Edwardhopper.net](http://www.edwardhopper.net). Web. 26 Apr. 2017. <<https://www.edwardhopper.net/newyork-movie.jsp>>

unsuspicious public eye”, implying a “complete blindness as to what is transpiring before one’s very eyes.”<sup>126</sup> The spectator, being used to these stylistic methods, is led to see in this chiaroscuro technique a sense of mystery. Taking the restaurant scene between Carol and Therese for instance, a softer chiaroscuro translates Therese’s perception of Carol, since she is the one we have been following (cf. Fig. 3.9a). There is a feeling of uncertainty as to what to believe and think about this woman. In fact, the character of Carol, in the original novel, is meant to be and remain mysterious as we are presented with Therese’s point of view all along. Based on Manon’s affirmation, we can also analyze this use of the chiaroscuro also like the presence of the “unsuspicious public eye” surrounding



Fig. 3.9b: Carol

Carol and Therese – but also Carol and Abby who once were in a relationship (Fig.3.9b) – revealing the ambiguity of their relationship to the spectator. This conflict between the unsuspecting public eye and the perception of the spectator creates a visual intimacy between the two characters. This use of the chiaroscuro in the melodramatic context, not as a

sign of danger but as a sign of intimacy, serves the representation of the “mind of someone falling in love”, using Haynes’s own words, while keeping a sense of the usual “criminal mind” found in Film Noir. In several interviews, the filmmaker refers to Highsmith’s own detachment from the purely criminal mind found in her other books, to make it converse with the feeling of falling in love in *The Price of Salt*.<sup>127</sup> Hence the inclusion of film noir aesthetics to reproduce this fusion of the criminal and the romantic, provoking the growing tension and repression in the middle of an implausible relationship. The criminal/romantic mind cohabitation is also palpable in Frank’s pursuit of his unwanted desires. However, because of the intensity of the chiaroscuro and the shade of cool colors (green and blue) as opposed to warm colors (red and yellow) in the restaurant scene in Carol, the possibility for intimacy is gone. Once he is outside– which is, as highlighted in the second part, an unsafe space – we are led to getting a sense of crime-like atmosphere, through the lighting and colors of the scene, backed up by a tilted shot of Frank and then of the alley where he proceeds.

<sup>126</sup> Manon, Hugh S. “X-Ray Visions: Radiography, “Chiaroscuro”, and the Fantasy of Unsuspicion in “Film Noir”.” *Film Criticism*. 32, 2. (Winter 2007-08) 2-27. JSTOR. Web. Accessed 25 Jan. 2017.

<sup>127</sup> Film4. “Carol Interview Special.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 19 Nov. 2015. Web. 6 Jan. 2017.  
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E68Y6vvpD5M>>

While, seconds ago, he was compared to female figures, here he is shot in the same fashion as the typical man in Film Noir, who too often succumbs to the mysterious and toxic femme fatale. Here, the femme fatale is either his own desire or the man he later on exchanges looks within the hidden bar.



*Fig. 3.10a: FFH*



*Fig. 10b: FFH*



*Fig. 3.11a: FFH*



*Fig. 3.11b: FFH*



*Fig. 3.11c: FFH*

The accumulation of disruptions builds up a tension which visually escalates to efface the usual lush colors of this extremely pastiche melodrama, highlighting Frank's inner conflict between his multiple selves, unable to coexist because of gender norms. The noir-like tilted shot is also used when Cathy runs away after she finds out about his affair, reinforcing his criminal-like homosexual behavior and another time when people react to Raymond reaching to Cathy to stop her from leaving which places him as the criminal. This way of showing criminal-looking behavior only places the Raymond, Frank and Cathy as victims of refrained desires. We must also note that Frank's film noir aesthetics disappears in Miami, when the younger boy meets him in his room (Fig. 3.10b). This time, for the first time, he is surrounded by lush colors. Both characters are bathed in shades of pink and blue, reminding of the masculine and feminine dichotomy which they are contradicting. This time, however, Frank's behavior is not visually linked to criminality, thanks to the lush melodramatic aesthetic allocated to the romantic mind.



Fig. 3.15: *Carol*



Fig. 3.16: *Carol*



Fig. 3.17: *Carol*

Harge appears twice with a chiaroscuro effect, which supposedly makes him what Sylvia Harvey calls the “chief-mover of the plot” regarding the generally male-driven film noir.<sup>128</sup> In fact, he seldom is. Yet, he is perceived as a danger, thanks to the Film Noir low light and high contrast, precisely because he has this ability to disrupt the melodramatic style, for he is a man with noir aesthetics. At first, he does not seem too threatening since he does not appear in chiaroscuro style (cf. Fig. 3.15). But once he finds Therese in his house, he becomes a threat as he tries to take back his socially-given role of head of household (cf. Fig. 3.16). His ability to move around the plot will eventually be effective through the presence of another man: the private investigator. This new character appears for the first time in an intense chiaroscuro, presenting him as the new threat. Carol, however, ceases a fraction of the Film Noir aesthetics, taking a gun and pointing it towards the man.



Fig. 3.18: *Carol*



Fig. 3.19: *Carol*



Fig. 3.20: *Carol*

The scene is bathed in cool shades of green and greenish blue (Fig. 3.17). The camera briefly pans from right to left, only keeping the gun and the PI in the frame, effacing Carol as if she were not herself anymore, effacing the melodramatic female character (Fig. 3.18 to 3.20). The brief swish pan, which contrasts with the overall slow pace of the movie, is itself disruptive. It somehow denotes the ease with which even a female character can become a threatening being, just like the Film Noir protagonists who are, most of the time, captured in a fast-paced narration, inevitably lacking poise and risking making bad decisions induced by passion. The passion-led poor decision-making is something that Film Noir centers around in its settling of crime plots. Taking *Double Indemnity*, Walter is trapped in the usual quick pace of the film noir genre provoked by his obsession for Phyllis,

<sup>128</sup> Harvey, Sylvia. “Woman’s Place: The Absent Family of Film Noir.” *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (London: British Film Institute, 1980) 31.

the murderous femme fatale. But thankfully, Carol is still a melodramatic mother who decidedly wants her daughter back. The gun is lowered and directed towards the recording machine. She pulls the trigger several times but nothing happens. It shows the spectator that Carol was powerless all along, no matter how much she tried to take back that power or how threatening – i.e. not woman-like in the context of melodrama – she looked for a brief moment. This disruption in Carol’s representation effaces the line between the nurturing woman and the killer woman, gathering the two diametrically opposed figures in one character. On the one hand the nurturing woman anchors the female character in the conformist motherly role. On the other hand, the killer woman embodies the suspicion towards the liberation of women. Mildred also incarnates this revisionist depiction of women as non-one-dimensional characters. While we could say that Mildred – with her representation as both (flawed) businesswoman and mother – already is shown as more than one-dimensional, her life still revolves around the nurturing of her daughter. Until it does not anymore. Her switching from nurturing mother to murderous woman happens during the denouement, in the fifth part of the mini-series. We are presented with a situation similar to that of Carol: we were led to think that Mildred had gain some control when, in fact, she never was in control. It turns out that Wally, who has been her advisor all along, has actually betrayed her and is now, with other men, asking her to pay up.



Fig. 3.12: *MP* pt.5

In this moment of weakness, the chiaroscuro makes an appearance as Mildred and her ex-husband, Bert, talk about their respective relationship with Veda. While the film taps into the noir convention of the absent father when Bert admits he's been quite absent from her life, the melodrama genre is reasserted through Mildred when she contradicts him and says that

he's done his own share of the work. However, the noir aesthetics persist with the low-key lighting characteristic of the genre and Bert becomes the “chief-mover of the plot.”<sup>129</sup> In that scene, Mildred is completely overwhelmed by the events as she is on the verge of losing her business, and Bert is the one who actively reacts to the possible scheme set against Mildred and Veda. He temporarily leads her, accompanies her so that she can go “save” her daughter. The darkness in this scene is used to “show uncomprehending characters trapped in a hostile environment” as Pam Cook puts it, talking

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

about the low-key lighting and contrast characteristic of the film noir genre (Fig. 3.12). Mildred looks for her daughter to protect her from the creditors who threatened to go after Veda for money, the bright colors and the light return, albeit briefly (Fig. 3.13). Once she leaves the empty room, the low-key light and enhanced contrast are reinstated with Mildred becoming a shadow running in the corridor (Fig. 3.15a).



*Fig. 3.13: MP pt.5*



*Fig. 3.15a: MP pt.5*



*Fig. 3.14: MP pt. 5*



*Fig. 3.15b: MP pt. 5*

She turns the light on (as she did in the previous scene), allowing her to efface the film noir aesthetic surrounding her, suggesting that the situation is more out of hand than she and the viewer think (Fig. 3.15b). The low-key lighting characteristic of film noir movies is dropped once Mildred pushes the door open and turns the light on, uncovering the truth in the process. Dark red is the dominant color in this scene and reminds us of the gothic genre, as does Veda's nude body bathed in a metaphorical pool of blood, as she gets a taste of revenge against her mother whom she despises (Fig. 3.14). The gothic aesthetics induce a brutal shift in the women's representation, pointing out who they really are under the scratched melodramatic aesthetics. The mother-daughter toxic relationship gives way to a demonic Veda whose wish to get rid of her mother led her to metaphorically suck the life out of her mother. Not only did she take advantage of her mother's money, she even stole her husband which

does sound a lot like incest, which is another recurrent motif in Gothic narratives. Veda might not have killed her mother, but the simple and obvious will to destroy her mother is all the more violent



Fig. 3.16: *MP pt.5*

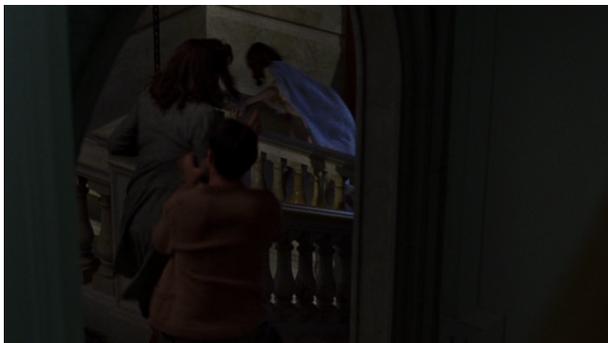


Fig. 3.17: *MP pt.5*



Fig. 3.18: *MP pt.5*



Fig. 3.19: *FFH*

up her body like murder victims in *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947) and Curtiz's *Mildred Pierce*. She

when embedded in the melodramatic narrative. There is an almost Frankenstein-like feeling to this scene as Mildred witnesses the monstrosity of her own creation, stripping her of everything that mattered to her: her success, independence and, last but not least, the illusory love of her daughter.

As her daughter fades behind this new demonic appearance, Mildred enters a murderous frenzy naturally unfit for a mother figure in a melodrama. The monstrous killer woman eventually wins over the motherly figure when she suddenly runs towards her daughter to strangle her (Fig. 3.16). Just like murderous Carol, Mildred's face is kept outside of the frame, effacing yet again the female character which identified as a melodramatic character up until then. Monty stops her before she can become a murderer, Veda goes running down the impressive stairs to escape from her mother who goes chasing her (Fig. 3.17). The daughter looks ghostly with her white robe floating in a low-key lighting, giving the scene a gothic and noir atmosphere, blending in visual codes of violence and danger. Once Veda reaches the piano, her failed attempt at singing sounds more like a ghostly scream. The aesthetics of the melodrama genre come back, still blended with the chiaroscuro of film noir to show Veda at her weakest moment, as she dramatically falls to the ground (Fig. 3.18). She collapses and ends up under the moonlight lighting

also resembles Cathy throwing herself in the bed crying when all hope to be with Raymond is gone (Fig. 3.19). Veda is back to the state of powerless victim, even though it is all an act.

The visual reassertion of the gender roles through visual codes of several genres, though they serve the revisionist purpose quite well, cannot be considered as the only markers of film genre. Sometimes the image says something but the music includes a displacement through another point of view. With melodramatic characters who are constantly going against their grain, the sole analysis of visual codes cannot suffice. The next subpart will analyze some ways in which music communicates the characters' feelings at pivotal points in the narration. For synthetic purposes, I will not be able to analyze music at length but will attempt to highlight the main displacements that it creates either in unison with or in contradiction with the image.

### *3. Gender Inversions: Queer Sounds and Queer Looks*

As I explained in the first part, the melodrama genre relies a lot on music as a source of expressiveness, to convey the feelings of its characters. And, as Carter Burwell – the composer for *Mildred Pierce* and *Carol* – would say: Music has “the ability to express and relieve emotional tensions that can’t be put into words.”<sup>130</sup> Music in all three movies serve the purpose of characterization and accompanies the characters in the development of the plot. The visual transformation of the characters described above sometimes would not be as efficient as it is without the music accompanying it.

#### *Queer Sound*

This pivotal passage in *Mildred Pierce* provides us with a very empathic non-diegetic music, complementing the image commented on above. Indeed, the music accompanies Mildred's internal progressive shift from mother to murderous woman which, visually speaking, only resides in Kate Winslet's acting. It is also conveyed through the non-diegetic sound which substantially heightens the gloomy atmosphere. At the end of what I call the “empty bedroom” scene (Fig. 3.13), as the melodramatic slowly music dies down, one of the instruments (a lone violin) holds a high note, which sounds very fragile, warning that something is not quite right. This first musical discrepancy reinforces the following noir aesthetics. The nondiegetic music of the climactic scene, where Mildred finds Veda in Monty's room, is composed of two distinct parts. It picks up with violins sounding almost out of tune (echoing the fragile note ending the empty bedroom scene), punctuated by low

---

<sup>130</sup> Burwell, Carter. “Carol.” *The Body*. The Body. n.d. <<http://www.carterburwell.com/projects/Carol.shtml>>

range notes played by a stand-up bass, backed by some minor chords and occasional low-range notes played on the piano. A melody starts repeating the same ascending and then descending pattern performed by a harp with rather high-range notes. Then a similar out-of-sync melody played on the piano is added. This first part ends with a descending melody played by the harp still accompanied by the violins, which sound more and more out of tune, holding high-ranged notes which are not pleasing to the ear. The music is meant to instill a feeling of incongruity, anomaly, and discomfort, fitting with Mildred's and the viewers' perception of the scene. This is what Michel Chion called the "empathetic music" where "music can directly express its participation in the feeling of the scene, by taking on the scene's rhythm, tone, and phrasing" as he puts it, giving the viewers the "ability to feel the feelings" of Mildred.<sup>131</sup> The second part of the non-diegetic music is composed of the original theme of the miniseries, played by the harp in the background and accompanied by a melody which follows most of the musical markers of the funeral march genre. It has a slow pace marked by a "persistent pulse", a minor key, a frequent dotted eighth-note rhythm, and a slowly changing harmony.<sup>132</sup> and reminds of Chopin's "Funeral March" played on the piano. I managed to make up a partial transcript of this segment of the theme entitled "Blindsided" (Fig. 3.19), to compare it to the infamous movement of Chopin's 2<sup>nd</sup> Piano Sonata (1837) (Fig. 3.20) – whose partial transcript I borrowed from Kathryn Louderback.<sup>133</sup> My transcript only includes the piano part which imitates the most recognizable pattern both rhythmically and melodically.



Fig. 3.19: Partial transcript of Carter Burwell's "Blindsided" for *Mildred Pierce*.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Chion, Michel. *Audiovision: Sound On Screen*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 8.

<sup>132</sup> Louderback, Kathryn. "Beethoven and Star Wars Part 2: The Funeral Imperial March." *A Pianist's Musings: A History of your Favorite Classical Music*. n.d. Web. 31 Aug. 2018. <<https://pianistmusings.com/2018/01/12/the-funeral-march/>>

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Burwell, Carter. "Blindsided". *Mildred Pierce (Music From the HBO Miniseries)*. Varese Sarabande Records, 2011.

The green and blue rectangles show the correspondence between the patterns in each music sheet. The first blue rectangle, however, includes two bars that do not correspond to Burwell’s theme, so I used the green rectangle to exclude them. Though they are not identical, those patterns present the same note values: they are composed of quarter notes, dotted-eighth notes, and sixteenth notes. Eighth and sixteenth notes are always paired up. In each similar segment, a pair closes the penultimate bar. As for the melody, it jumps up in the middle of each segment to then descend, reinforcing the similarity between the two themes. The segments marked out with red rectangles also have their equivalent in Burwell’s piece through the two successive descending melodies played by a clarinet, a flute and a violin in between the green segments. In addition, in the “Blindsided” theme, a bass clarinet accompanies these segments punctuating the beat with low-range notes, reproducing a repetitive low-ranged chord pattern playing in the background of Chopin’s composition.



Fig. 3.20: Partial transcript of Chopin’s Funeral March theme in Bb minor.<sup>135</sup>

The reuse of the original theme reminds the viewers that they are still watching the same characters and induces that everything that unfolds now, was right under their nose from the beginning. Its association with the Funeral March calls upon the viewers’ memory but also on their subconscious which links this musical piece to the “macabre” and the “gloomy”. Indeed, the 2<sup>nd</sup> sonata’s third movement is well-known, even if you don’t know its title. Kristine M. McCusker’s article entitled on

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

“Funeral Music and the Transformation of Southern Musical and Religious Culture” could explain this subconscious link:

“Chopin’s famous funeral march from his Piano Sonata no. 2 was almost as popular as Brahms’s lullaby. Chopin’s attempts to disassociate the funeral march genre from public death ceremonies valorizing dead military heroes made it more intimate and appropriate for a private family funeral, as one scholar noted. Struggling with his own poor health and reacting to the recent deaths of family members and friends, Chopin created a musical exploration of grief in the sonata; its “insistent gloom” would have been an appropriate musical match for those Southerners struggling with their own grief and loss.”<sup>136</sup>

However, as it focuses on the 30s-40s, it cannot really account for the perception that we have of the “Funeral March” now. In 2001, Lawrence Kramer wrote an article entitled “Chopin at the Funeral: Episode in the History of Modern Death” in which he explains how this march has, since Chopin’s own funeral, becomes a symbol of death and funeral processions. He mentions how, “a century and a quarter later, on 25 November 1963, the same music, now arranged for military band, helped usher the body of John F. Kennedy through the streets of Washington D.C., to Arlington National Cemetery.”<sup>137</sup> Given the impact of Kennedy’s death, not only nationwide but worldwide, we can assume that Chopin’s Funeral March is indeed recognized by most people as a macabre piece. We may even simply take a look at pop culture to see the impact of this classical piece. Kramer claims that 1950s cartoons used it as an expression mock solemnity.<sup>138</sup> After a search on *ImDb*, I was able to take note of the titles of some famous cartoons in which the Funeral March is used: *Tom and Jerry* (“Jerry and the Lion” 1950), *Looney Tunes* (“Thugs with Dirty Mugs” 1939), *Merrie Melodies* (“Scaredy Cat” 1948, “Circus Today” 1940). It even seems that, according to Kathryn Louderback’s analysis, Chopin’s march might have inspired John William’s “The Imperial March” for the *Star Wars* saga.<sup>139</sup> This analysis – based on her Imperial March transcript (Fig. 3.21) – shows basically the same similarities: the dotted eighth notes following longer notes, and the descending melodies:

---

<sup>136</sup> Kristine M. McCusker. “Funeral Music and the Transformation of Southern Musical and Religious Cultures, 1935-1945”. *American Music*. 30.4 (Winter 2012)446.

<sup>137</sup> Kramer, Lawrence. “Chopin at the Funeral: Episodes in the history of Modern Death.” *Journal of the American Musicological Society*. 54, 1. (Spring 2001) 97-125. JSTOR. Web. 31 Aug. 2018. 97  
<<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jams.2001.54.1.97>>

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, 98.

<sup>139</sup> Williams, John and Boston Pops Opera. “The Imperial March.” *John Williams – Star Wars and Beyond*. U-5, 2016.



Fig. 3.21: John Williams's Imperial March theme in G minor.<sup>140</sup>

“The measures in blue follow the same general rhythmic and melodic pattern. Long notes followed by the dotted-eighth pattern repeats throughout both themes (remember that the dotted rhythm is characteristic of a funeral march). [...]. The measures in red also follow the same general pattern: the melody jumps up an octave and descends gradually until the blue measures repeat themselves.”<sup>141</sup>

Louderback also adds that the Imperial March being Darth Vader's theme, basing it on the Funeral March anchors the character more deeply with death, of which he basically is the symbol since he was born out of the death of Anakin Skywalker. Overall, given the centrality of Chopin's "Fantaisie Impromptue" and of classical music in *Mildred Pierce*, it is highly probable that the "Funeral March" did inspire Burwell's "Blindsided". It is also highly probable that, because of the use of Chopin's march in popular culture relating to death, the second part of *Blindsided* is meant to build up the gloomy atmosphere calling on the spectators' memory and subconscious. This play on the spectators' perception builds up the shift from nurturing woman to killer woman which is not rendered through the visual aesthetics. We could say that, just like Darth Vader and Anakin, for killer Mildred to emerge, nurturing motherly Mildred had to (metaphorically) die. The shift is complete with thundering notes ascending at the end of the theme, first with long notes followed by shorter ones, reaching the climax of the tension and reminding of the music in Film Noir. This kind of ascending melody, can be found

<sup>140</sup>. Louderback, Kathryn. "Beethoven and Star Wars Part 2: The Funeral Imperial March." *A Pianist's Musings: A History of your Favorite Classical Music*. n.d. Web. 31 Aug. 2018. <<https://pianistmusings.com/2018/01/12/the-funeral-march/>>

<sup>141</sup> Louderback, Kathryn. "Beethoven and Star Wars Part 2: The Funeral Imperial March." *A Pianist's Musings: A History of your Favorite Classical Music*. n.d. Web. 31 Aug. 2018. <<https://pianistmusings.com/2018/01/12/the-funeral-march/>>

in Bernstein's "Hit" when Frank accidentally hurts Cathy, or Rózsa's "Inner Struggle" for *Double Indemnity* (1944).<sup>142 143</sup>

It seems that the discrepancy in music – and, therefore, the revelation of the queer nature of the characters – is always presented as a contrast with the main themes of the oeuvres. As commented on before, "Blindsided" includes the harp and melody of the main melodramatic theme right from the beginning with some added alterations for the discrepancy to be felt. In *Carol* the main theme is progressively reintroduced after the gun scene. At first, the combination of low ranged and high-ranged notes in the background builds up the tension, but then the usual high-ranged escalation is replaced by descending low-ranged notes as Carol lowers her gun. The almost out of tune and contrasted noir-like music is eased as the woodwinds and the piano note ranges become less contrasted. The restraint of the noir-like musical aesthetic makes Carol's second-guessing palpable. The music slowly morphs back into a melody resembling the melodramatic original theme while Carol eases out of her killer woman state to transform back into the nurturing woman, comforting Therese in the car. The case of *Far From Heaven* however is more complex in its play with themes. Like Mildred, Carol and Therese or even Cary in *All That Heaven Allows*, Cathy's pathos is developed through several themes. Actually, not only does *Far From Heaven* have themes for its female lead, it also has two others for her husband. It induces that, exceptionally in a melodrama, the female character is not the only one under focus. Listening carefully to its music, four recurrent themes can be singled out, two of which can be allocated to Cathy. These two themes are to be found in the main musical theme of the movie – entitled "Autumn in Connecticut" – which is not surprising since the melodrama genre is centered on female characters and is said to be a woman's film genre.<sup>144</sup> I will start with the one which opens and closes the credits, that of the "implausible" relationship with her black gardener.<sup>145</sup> A variation of the opening segment plays for the first time a little before Raymond brings her scarf back (cf. movie 20'13"), a variation of the piano part of the closing segment is played by the band at the bar where Raymond and Cathy slow dance (cf movie 1:00'04") while the strings part is to be heard when Cathy decides to go with him (cf. movie 53'02"). The second theme is that

---

<sup>142</sup> Bernstein, Elmer. "Hit." *Far From Heaven (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*. Focus Features, LLC, 2002.

<sup>143</sup> Rózsa, Miklós. "Inner Struggle". *Double Indemnity: Classic Film Noir Film Scores Vol. 1 (Original Soundtrack Recordings)*. Red Bitch Music, 2016.

<sup>144</sup> Bernstein, Elmer. "Autumn in Connecticut." *Far From Heaven (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*. Focus Features, LLC, 2002.

<sup>145</sup> A first segment is composed of a piano part from 0' to 1'10" (cf "Autumn in Connecticut"), a second segment starts with a piano part at 2'15" replaced by strings at 2'39".

of the perfect housewife and mother.<sup>146</sup> The theme plays for the first time when Cathy decides to bring dinner to her husband at the office (cf movie: 23'34") and another time as diegetic music during New Year's Eve in Miami (1:14'04"). As for the other two themes allocated to Frank, one symbolizes the perfect father, successful husband and the other one that of the toxic secret and obsession, his hidden homosexuality. The former can be heard when he goes to work the first time (cf movie 11'51") and then the second after Cathy surprised him at his office (33'04"). This second time however, the theme is invaded by a worrying melody when his secretary presents him with the lamp which broke when Cathy saw his digression. The second theme breaks with conventions of the melodrama genre since it brings along music that reminds of the film noir, which is said to be a masculine film genre, contrary to the melodrama genre.<sup>147</sup> This blending of genres through music brings along the question of gender, masculinity and femininity with the character of Frank as he manages to maintain the melodrama appearance during the day, but gives in to his true, frightening self at night. Indeed, the noir-like music builds up a tension which puts Franks as the victim of his own nature. Listening to "Walking Through Town" (0'25"), "Prowl" (from the start), and "Back to Basics" (0'10") we can hear the same melody played by an English horn being preceded and/or followed by disturbing melodies.<sup>148</sup> These disturbing melodies are often repeated and remind of *Double Indemnity's* (1944) recurrent pattern made up of short ascending and descending notes played over and over again. In *Far From Heaven*, when Frank gets out of the movie theater to follow the two men, a similar pattern is played first by a piano (cf "Prowl" 0'27"), then by a flute in a lower range (0'38") and later on by a flute again but in a higher range (1'08"). A similar pattern is even repeated in "Back to Basics" which is played when Frank is about to give into his desire once again in Miami (cf "Back to Basics" 1'15"). The contrast between extremely high-ranged notes and low-ranged notes and the minor mode of the musical piece create a stressful atmosphere which we also find in the theme entitled "Gun" from *Carol*.<sup>149</sup> Overall, it appears that the very intricate blending of music styles, characteristic of both melodrama and film noir in these themes relate to Frank's inner conflict as he appears to be the victim of his own nature. The theme related to the expression of his pathos – and therefore his feminine depiction – is surrounded by the more masculine noir-like melodies highlighting his struggle towards the socially

---

<sup>146</sup> From 1'10" to 2'15": Starts with an alto flute and an English horn part before the strings pick up and ends after a spectacular crescendo and ascending melody.

<sup>147</sup> Bergfelder, Tim and Sarah Street. "Introduction: Mildred Pierce, pedagogy and the canon". *Screen*. 54.3 (Autumn 2013) : 371-377. p.372

<sup>148</sup> Bernstein, Elmer. "Walking Through Town", "Prowl", "Back to Basics." *Far From Heaven (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*. Focus Features, LLC, 2002.

<sup>149</sup> Burwell, Carter. "Gun." *Carol (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*. Starr Score Holdings, LLC, 2015.

constructed dichotomy between femininity and masculinity, reproduced in classical film genres. This blending of genres through music brings along the question of gender, masculinity and femininity with the character of Frank as he manages to maintain the melodrama appearance during the day, but gives in to his true, frightening self at night. This struggle is all the more stressed the night he accidentally hits Cathy: the music sounds noir-like when they get intimate, contrasting with the intimacy of the moment, as if he were becoming a danger trying to erase his true self. When he finds himself unable to get any more intimate, Cathy tries to comfort him saying that he is “all man” to her. This is when Frank accidentally hits her, showing the toxic effect of the imposed codes of masculinity and more generally of gender. We find, once again, a dichotomy with the romantic and the criminal mind both in *Far From Heaven* and *Carol*, highlighting the constant feeling of danger surrounding the 1950s homosexual characters.

### Queer Look

While we access their mind and pathos with the mostly non-diegetic music, their wishes and desire often show through their looks. Now that we have discussed the image and the music as ways to blend in genres, we may now discuss how the costumes give out hints on the characters' identity and role. For instance, in the melodrama genre, the male characters who free the female characters from oppression are often presented as close to Nature – i.e. following their desires, true selves – or to “rustic simplicity” as Bourget would say, wearing checkered or plaid shirts, green, brown and/or reddish clothes.<sup>150</sup> On the contrary, the female characters wearing a mink coat, because of its symbolizing wealth and a certain cult of the appearance, anchors them in culture – i.e. following social codes. Bourget claims that it “denotes more sophistication than sincerity.”<sup>151</sup> Veda, who is obsessed with not looking anything but upper-class, buys a mink coat – with her mother's money – when she starts blending in with richer people (Fig. 3.22). Bourget also says of mink coats that they are “entirely part of the genre and awakes in the spectator a certain fascination.” Carol is a mysterious woman for whom we – both spectators and Therese – feel deep fascination (Fig. 3.23). The mink coat denotes Carol's deep integration in culture, hiding her actual nature under a layer of sophistication...

---

<sup>150</sup> *Le mélodrame Hollywoodien*, 190.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, 189.



*Fig. 3.22: MP*



*Fig. 3.23: Carol*

... Until we actually see her wear the plaid pattern usually allocated to the liberating men in melodrama (Fig. 3.24 & 3.25). She only wears her plaid bathrobe in private, when she is either shown alone or with Therese. Unlike her ex-lover Abby who does not only wear a plaid bathrobe in private (Fig. 3.27) but also a plaid suit in public (Fig. 3.26). Carol wearing the plaid pattern away from the public eye still reminds of the implausibility of her situation, because of her motherhood or rather because of the morality clause threatening it.



*Fig. 3.24: Carol*



*Fig. 3.25: Carol*



*Fig. 3.26: Carol*



*Fig. 3.27: Carol*

I may add that the last time we see her with the plaid bathrobe enhances this conflict between nature and culture, between her love for Therese and the morality problem. It occurs when Therese calls her after their trip was cut short (Fig. 3.25). The plaid pattern referring to one's attachment to Nature

highlights her profound desire to break with the rules, while the content shows giving up and heading in the opposite direction. This participates in the expressive *mise-en-scène* of the melodrama genre, *visually* stating that she is going against her own grain. Earlier on, Therese also confronts such a conflict when Danny, who apparently has a bit of a crush on her and ends up kissing her. This scene encompasses some visual motifs evoked earlier on (Fig 3.28).



Fig. 3.28: Carol



Fig. 3.29: MP

We can see the architectural oppression through the overuse of frames, the chiaroscuro and the green light. While Danny follows his desires, he somehow forces cultural norms onto Therese who, as shown through the visual motifs of both the melodrama and the film noir, appears stuck in the female role. The only way out is on the left side of the frame, Therese stands on the opposite side with Danny in the way and too close to her, as the narrow frame surrounding them implies. This scene is the antithesis of the classical scheme of the melodrama love story: Danny embodies the man who could get Therese out of her stifling relationship with Richard, but here he is yet another source of normative oppression for the growing non-gender-conformist Therese. She will end up wearing a plaid suit at the end of the movie, in public, as a sign of her emancipation and acceptance of her true nature. As she does so, she becomes who Carol once was for her, the liberating (fe)male figure wearing a plaid suit. As for Mildred, she also rejects a man in a plaid shirt, Monty, because of how he sexualizes her in front of her own daughter, talking about how such legs are only to be found in kitchens. As she runs away from Monty, after he tries to have his way with her, she also rejects the submissive-female-object stance, which he tried to impose on her.



Fig. 3.30: Carol



Fig. 3.31: FFH



Fig. 3.32: ATHA



Fig. 3.33: FFH

The case of Raymond, which is not so much in opposition to Carol's, is quite interesting. He does wear the plaid shirt just like Ron in *All that Heaven Allows* (Fig. 3.32). Both end up wearing a black suit and hiding their true selves when they find themselves in the middle of people of a higher class (Fig. 3.33), just like Carol with her mink coat. However, they both still get noticed and never fit in. Eventually, his own neighborhood shuns him for following his nature, "mixing in other worlds" as Raymond would say. He ends up leaving the town, wearing a suit, conforming to the norms imposed on him by both white and black people. The difference with Ron is that he still has a place where he can be himself, a place where he is accepted by his circle. While Raymond caves in, Cathy seems to be growing more powerful from their sad fate. As a reminder, Cathy's attire at the end of *Far From heaven* – a pale pink suit – contrasts with her usually colorful, imposing and dramatic dresses. It is resolutely less flamboyant and, therefore, less conservatively feminine. The façade of the perfect housewife has fallen, she is now the proactive head of family in lieu of her ex-husband. She looks more like her friend Eleanor whose characterization is in contradiction with past Cathy, as commented on in the second part.

Overall, we see that in Haynes version of the melodrama, the plaid clothing traditionally worn by outcast male characters, hereby preferring nature to culture and its social norms, is twisted and

reused to enhance the struggle of minorities. While the costumes serving as façade – Cathy’s flamboyant dresses and the mink coats – reinforce their oppression. We may add that, in light of Haynes’s New Queer Cinema, the costume choices enhance the queer representation of the three women in *Carol*, effacing and questioning the gender norms of the melodrama genre itself, yet again pulling on the nostalgic feeling to exalt a revisionist intent.

## Conclusion

“Right now, I'm charting the correlation between what the characters say and how they really feel.”

- Danny in *Carol* (2015).

This line from *Carol* offers an insight on how to approach melodrama as a whole, but also Haynes's reinterpretation thereof. Feminism in melodrama is included through the dichotomy between what the “characters say” – i.e. how they wish to be seen – and how they really feel. It mostly shows through their rejection of culture to head towards nature. Haynes's New Queer Cinema extends this dichotomy to fit his queer characters. The integration of characters who contradict the codes of the melodrama genre magnifies their already decidedly revisionist characterization. This is done both through the displacement of said genre's motifs or through the invasion of other genres whose use does not normally fit with the maternal or romantic melodrama. Thanks to the nostalgic aesthetics these characters appear very typical at first sight. Looking closely into these codes, we end up with characters who are not only women trying to exit their prison-house and find their home. Instead, we are provided with characterizations that are not typically male or female according to 1930s-1950s standards.

Overall, having these implausible characters and their implausible storylines surrounded by nostalgic – sometimes even pastiche – aesthetics is what makes the revisionism of the whole visible for everyone, not only showing what is not retrievable but what could not have been. Doing so, it necessarily draws on our memory or knowledge of the past, and makes us question how these stories could have worked since, nowadays, the represented minorities are still oppressed. Indeed, the melodrama genre which was once feminist is used by Haynes as a more contemporary platform that can be profitable to multiple minorities. It discusses the perception we have of genders, like so many post-feminist oeuvres, and how it affects the social hierarchy still too close to patriarchy. His movies do not so much show what has changed but what still needs changing half a century later. In 2002, Cathy may have been able to go with Raymond – who would have probably had to deal with racism – but Frank may still have had to hide his true self. He may even have tried to “cure” his homosexuality through conversion therapy, which is still authorized and practiced on minors in most states.<sup>152</sup> In 2011, Mildred may still have suffered from the social construct according to which women are mothers before they are businesswomen. She might have heard questions that are seldom

---

<sup>152</sup> In the U.S., according to HRC, only 15 states protect youth from conversion therapy. – “State Maps of Laws & Policies.” HRC.org. The Human Rights Campaign. 3 Aug. 2018. Web. 12 Sept. 2018. <<https://www.hrc.org/state-maps/conversion%20therapy>>

directed towards fathers such as “how do you manage between the children and work?”, because how could a woman sacrifice everything for her child and still have a job, right?<sup>153</sup> In 2015, Carol and Therese’s age gap may be looked upon, Carol may have still have repressed her homosexuality, growing as a closeted lesbian and her relationship with Therese may still be perceived and described as immoral. Carol’s ability to be a mother may still be questioned.<sup>154</sup> The seemingly common denominator is the persistence of gender roles, of the feminine as opposed to the masculine. Contemporary films now more and more head towards a resolution led by the blurring of genders. After all, Haynes’s characters only meet relief once they yield and cross gender boundaries for good.

To go further and build on this thesis, we might consider analyzing Haynes’s other movies to figure out how they use film genres in relation to gender. His film on Bob Dylan, *I’m Not There*, might be interesting in this regard given the fragmentation of his persona into six characters, six stories, and varying aesthetics. We may even turn to the extremely queer *Velvet Goldmine* alluding to David Bowie’s extravagance, or *Poison* dealing with the subject of AIDS in the gay community. The characterization of their queer male characters might reveal a more exhaustive picture of Haynes’s depiction of genders. Finally, we could look for other oeuvres from other filmmakers which also present a reworking of the melodrama and/or a disruptive blending of genres. I particularly have in mind the fourth season of *American Horror Story* (FX, 2011) – entitled “Freak Show” – set in the 1950s, which depicts a decidedly strange family composed of outcasts and seems to blend in conventions of both the melodrama and the horror genre. I would also suggest the interesting case of Guillermo Del Toro’s *The Shape of Water*, which is rightfully described as “a romantic comedy, a melodrama, a spy thriller, a heist caper, a superhero blockbuster and a monster movie all at once” in Nicholas Barber’s review for BBC.<sup>155</sup> There probably are as many analyses as there are filmmakers and this thesis represents only one in myriad.

---

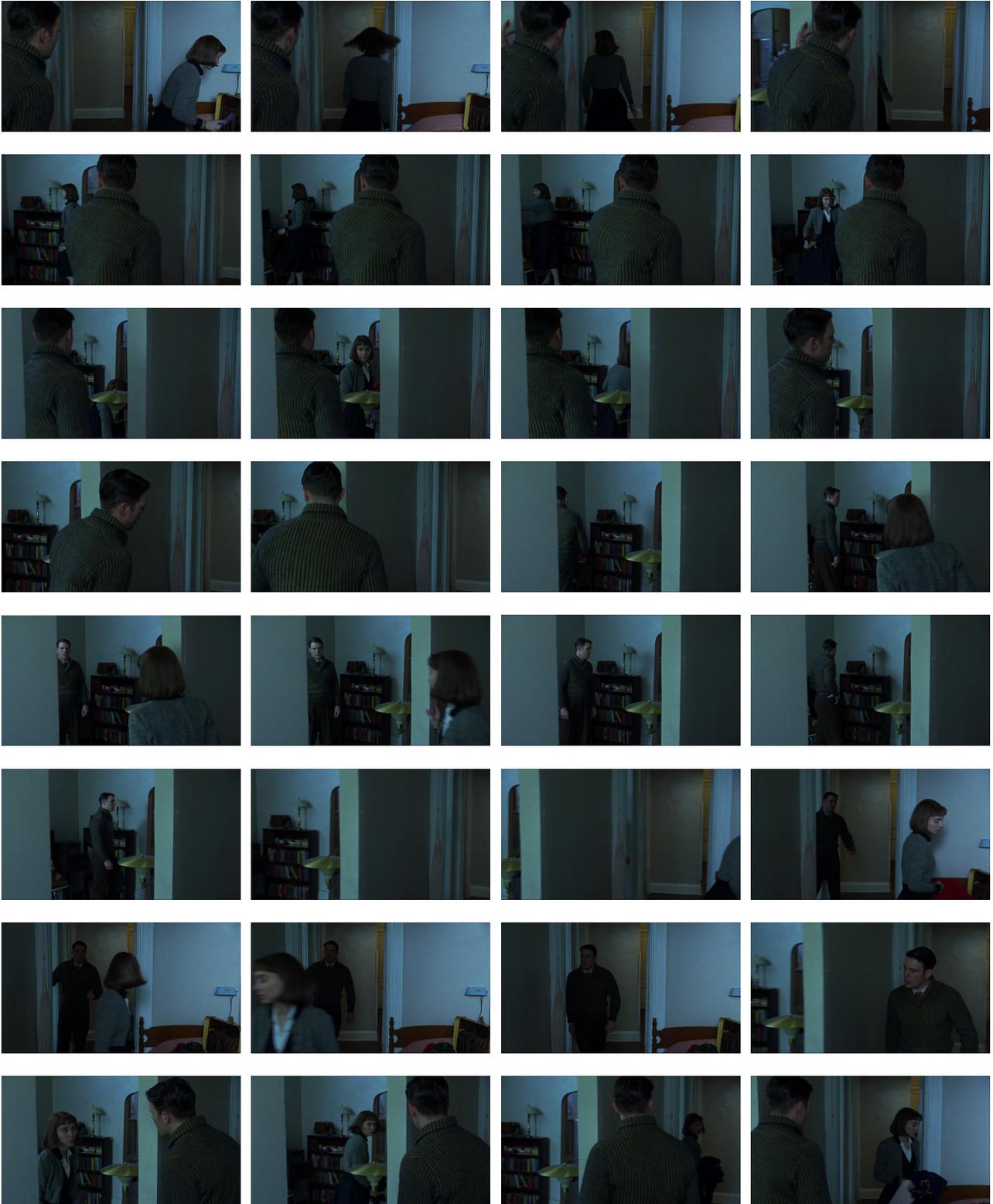
<sup>153</sup> N.B.: “Research from employment lawfirm Slater and Gordon appears to confirm fears that businesses favour men in the hiring process and that some bosses believe having children affects how women perform at work.” – Cara McGoogan. “Third of Bosses avoid Hiring Women Who Could Have Children Soon.” *The Telegraph*. The Telegraph. 21 July 2018. Web. 12 Sept. 2018. <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/business/third-bosses-avoid-hiring-women-could-have-children-soon/>>

<sup>154</sup> N.B.: “In 1981, the Indiana Court of Appeals ruled in a case that homosexuality alone does not make an unfit parent. In 1994, the same court struck down restrictions on the activity of a lesbian mother with her partner. And in 2002, the court overturned a restriction prohibiting an unrelated same-sex person from staying overnight in a custodial parent’s home.” Yet, later on, a woman had to fight for the custody of her children when her ex-husband, thinking that her being in a homosexual relationship would be harmful sued her for sole custody.” – Dana Hunsinger Benbow. “Lesbian Mom Had Tough Fight For Custody.” *USA Today*. Ganett Satellite Information Network. 2 Jun. 2013. Web. 12 Sept. 2018. <<https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/06/02/lesbian-mom-custody-fight/2382765/>>

<sup>155</sup> Nicholas Barber. “The Shape of Water is a new beauty-and-the-beast tale.” *BBC*. BBC. 1 Sept. 2017. Web. 12 Sept. 2018. <<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20170831-the-shape-of-water-is-a-new-beauty-and-the-beast-tale>>

# Annex

## Scene 2.1: Carol – from 57'14" to 58'13"



## Bibliography

### Filmography:

#### - Haynes

*Far From Heaven*. Dir. Todd Haynes. Perf. Julianne Moore, Dennis Quaid and Dennis Haysbert. Focus Features, 2002. DVD.

*Mildred Pierce*. Dir. Todd Haynes. Perf. Kate Winslet, Guy Pearce, Evan Rachel Wood. HBO, 2011. DVD.

*Carol*. Dir. Todd Haynes. Perf. Cate Blanchett, Rooney Mara. Weinstein Company, Film4, Number 9 Films, 2015. DVD.

*I'm Not There*. Dir. Todd Haynes. Perf. Cate Blanchett, Heath Ledger, Christian Bale, Richard Gere. Killer Films, John Wells Production, John Goldwyn Productions et al., 2007. DVD.

*Poison*. Dir. Todd Haynes. Bronze Eye Production, Killer Films, Poison L.P., 1991. DVD.

*Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story*. Dir. Todd Haynes. Iced Tea Productions, 1988.

#### - Sirk

*All That Heaven Allows*. Douglas Sirk. Perf. Jane Wyman, Rock Hudson. Universal International Pictures, 1955. DVD.

*Imitation of Life*. Dir. Douglas Sirk. Perf. Lana Turner, Juanita Moore. Universal International Pictures, 1959. DVD.

*Written On the Wind*. Dir. Douglas Sirk. Perf. Rock Hudson, Lauren Bacall, Robert Stack. Universal International Pictures, 1956. DVD.

#### - Fassbinder

*Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Perf. Brigitte Mira, El Hedi ben Salem. Filmverlag der Autoren, Tango Film, 1973. DVD.

*Martha*. Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Perf. Margit Carstensen. Pro-ject Filmproduktin, Westdeutscher Rundfunk, 1974. DVD.

#### - Others

*The Three Faces of Eve*. Dir. Nunnally Johnson. Perf. Joanne Woodward. Twentieth Century Fox, 1957. DVD.

*Brief Encounter*. Dir. David Lean. Perf. Celia Johnson, Trevor Howard. Cineguild, 1945. DVD.

### Music:

Bernstein, Elmer. "Autumn in Connecticut." *Far From Heaven (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*. Focus Features, LLC, 2002.

Bernstein, Elmer. "Back to Basics." *Far From Heaven (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*. Focus Features, LLC, 2002.

Bernstein, Elmer. "Hit." *Far From Heaven (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*. Focus Features, LLC, 2002.

Bernstein, Elmer. "Prowl". *Far From Heaven (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*. Focus Features, LLC, 2002.

Bernstein, Elmer. "Walking Through Town". *Far From Heaven (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*. Focus Features, LLC, 2002.

Burwell, Carter. "Blindsided". *Mildred Pierce (Music From the HBO Miniseries)*. Varese Sarabande Records, 2011.

- Burwell, Carter. "Gun." *Carol (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)*. Starr Score Holdings, LLC, 2015.
- Carolina Club Orchestra, Hal Kemp. "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows." *Mildred Pierce (Music From the HBO Series)*. Varese Sarabande Records, 2011.
- Como, Perry. "Silver Bells". *The Perry Como Christmas Album*, RCA Victor, 1968.
- Helen Foster & The Rovers. "You Belong to Me". *Carol OST*, Starr Score Holdings, 2015.
- Rózsa, Miklós. "Inner Struggle". *Double Indemnity: Classic Film Noir Film Scores Vol. 1 (Original Soundtrack Recordings)*. Red Bitch Music, 2016.
- Williams, John and Boston Pops Opera. "The Imperial March." *John Williams – Star Wars and Beyond*. U-5, 2016.

### Paintings:

- Hopper, Edward. *Hotel Window*. 1932. Private collection. *Edwardhopper.net*. Web. 26 Apr. 2017. <<https://www.edwardhopper.net/hotel-window.jsp>>
- Hopper, Edward. *New York Movie*. 1939. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. *Edwardhopper.net*. Web. 26 Apr. 2017. <<https://www.edwardhopper.net/newyork-movie.jsp>>
- Hopper, Edward. *Room in Brooklyn* 1932. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. *Mfa.org*. Web. 26 Apr. 2017. <<https://www.mfa.org/collections/object/room-in-brooklyn-32499>>

### Photographs:

- Leiter, Saul. *Phone Call*. 1957. *Gallery51.com*. Web. 18 Oct. 2016. <<http://www.gallery51.com/index.php?navigatieid=9&fotograafid=15>>
- Leiter, Saul. *Red Curtain*. 1956. *ArtStack.com*. Web. 18 Oct. 2016. <<https://theartstack.com/artist/saul-leiter/red-curtain>>
- Leiter, Saul. *Walking* c.1948. *Gallery51.com*. Web. 18 Oct. 2016. <<http://www.gallery51.com/index.php?navigatieid=9&fotograafid=15>>

### The Melodrama Genre (and Woman's Film):

- Byars, Jackie. *All that Hollywood Allows: Re-Reading Gender in 1950s Melodrama*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Bourget, Jean-Loup. *Le mélodrame hollywoodien*. Paris: Stock, 1985.
- Cook, Pam. "Melodrama and Women's Picture." *BFI Dossier 18: Gainsborough Melodrama*. Eds. Sue Aspinall and Robert Murphy. London: British Film Institute, 1983.
- Doane, Mary Ann. *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama." *Home Is Where the Heart Is*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. London: BFI, 1994.
- Kaplan, E. Ann. *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Lavallée, Sylvain. "Mirage de la vie." *Séquences : la revue de cinéma*. 277 (2012) : pp.24-25.
- Rodowick, David N. "Madness, Authority, and Ideology in the Domestic Melodrama of the 1950s." *Imitations of Life*. Macia Landy ed. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991. 237-247.

### Imitation, Nostalgia and Pastiche:

- Cook, Pam. *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema*. Oxon: Routledge, 2005.
- Dyer, Richard. *Pastiche*. London: Routledge, 2007.

- Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." *Film Theory: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, edited by Philip Simpson, Andrew Utterson and Karen J. Shepherdson; Taylor and Francis, 2004, pp. 192-207.
- Vidal, Belén. *Figuring the Past: Period Film and the Mannerist Aesthetic*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012.

### **About Haynes's Movies/Art:**

- Allen, Emily. "Melodrama." *The Oxford Encyclopedia of English Literature*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006). *Oxford Reference*. Web. 13 Feb. 2018.
- Burwell, Carter. "Carol." *The Body. The Body*. n.d. Web. 24 Apr. 2017. <<http://www.carterburwell.com/projects/Carol.shtml>>
- Calhoun, John. "Film: Imitation of Life: Designers Mark Friedberg and Sandy Powell Recreate 1950s Suburbia to Help Director Todd Haynes Pay Homage to Douglas Sirk with *Far From Heaven*." *Entertainment Design - The Art and Technology of Show Business*. 37.2 (Feb. 2003) : 24-28. EBSCOhost. Web. 11 Jun. 2016.
- Cook, Pam. "Beyond Adaptation: mirrors, memory and melodrama in Todd Haynes' *Mildred Pierce*." *Screen*. 54.3 (Autumn 2013) : 378-387.
- Doane, Mary Ann. "Pathos and Pathology: The Cinema of Todd Haynes." *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism, Culture and Media Studies*. 19.3 (2004) : 1-21. EBSCOhost. Web. 9 Jun. 2016.
- Ducharme, Olivier. *Todd Haynes : Cinéaste queer : Liberté, identité et résistance*. Canada: Varia, 2016.
- Elena Gorfinkel. "The Future of Anachronism: Todd Haynes and the Magnificent Andersons." *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, edited by Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener, Amsterdam UP, 2005, pp. 153-167.
- Gill, John. *Far From Heaven*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.
- Haynes, Todd. *Far From Heaven, Safe and Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story: Three Screenplays*. New York: Grove Press, 2007.
- Richardson, Niall. "Poison in the Sirkian System: The Political Agenda of Todd Haynes's *Far From Heaven*." *Scope*. 6 (Oct. 2006). PDF.
- Roger, Philippe. "Généalogie de l'intime : la pensée optique des mélodrames de Todd Haynes." *De l'intime dans le cinéma anglophone*. eds. Isabelle Schmitt-Pitiot and David Roche, CinémAction-Éditions Corlet, 2015, pp. 146.
- Skvirsky, Salomé A. "The price of Heaven: Remaking Politics in *All that Heaven Allows*, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, and *Far From Heaven*." *Cinema Journal*. 47.3 (Spring 2008) : 90-121. JSTOR. Web 9 Jun. 2016.
- Smith, Jeff. "Oscar's Siren Song 2 : Jeff Smith on the Music Nominations". *Observations on Film Art*. Ed. Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell. n.p., 25 Feb. 2016. Web. 24 Apr. 2017. <<http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2016/02/23/oscars-siren-song-2-je--smith-on-the-music-nominations/>>.

### **Interviews**

- Davis, Nick. "Director Todd Haynes on *Carol*." *Windy City Times*. 31.12 (Dec. 2015) : 31. EBSCOhost. Web. 11 Jun. 2016.
- Film4. "Carol Interview Special." *YouTube*. YouTube, 19 Nov. 2015. Web. 6 Jan. 2017. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E68Y6yvpD5M>>
- MacDonald, Scott. "From Underground to Multiplex: An Interview With Todd Haynes" *Film Quarterly*. 62.3 (Spring 2009) : 54-64.

Wyatt, Justin and Todd Haynes. "Cinematic/Sexual Transgression: An Interview with Todd Haynes." *Film Quarterly*. 46.3 (Spring 1993) : 2-8. JSTOR. Web. 9 Jun. 2016.

### **About Specific Films:**

Tim Bergfelder and Sarah Street. "Introduction: Mildred Pierce, pedagogy and the canon". *Screen*. 54.3 (Autumn 2013) : 371-377. p.372

Barber, Nicholas. "The Shape of Water is a new beauty-and-the-beast tale." *BBC*. BBC. 1 Sept. 2017. Web. 12 Sept. 2018. <<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20170831-the-shape-of-water-is-a-new-beauty-and-the-beast-tale>>

Butler, Alison and John Caughie, eds. "The Mildred Pierce Dossier" *Screen*. 54.3 (Autumn 2013) : pp. 371-409.

Butler, Jeremy B. "Imitation of Life (John Stahl, 1934. Douglas Sirk, 1959): Style and the Domestic Melodrama." *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*. 32 (April 1987) : 25-28. *Jump Cut*. Web. 5 Sept. 2016.

Heung, Marina. ""What's the Matter with Sarah Jane?": Daughters and Mothers in Douglas Sirk's "Imitation of Life"." *Cinema Journal*. 26.3 (Spring 1987) : 21-43. JSTOR. Web. 16 Jan. 2017.

Letort, Delphine. "First Glances at Mildred Pierce: adapting hardboiled melodrama." *Screen*. 56.2 (Summer 2015) : pp.262-268.

Roger D. McNiven. "The Middle-Class American Home of the Fifties: The Use of Architecture in Nicholas Ray's "Bigger than Life" and Douglas Sirk's "All That Heaven Allows"" *Cinema Journal*. 22.4 (Summer 1983) p.38-57.

### **Film Genre**

Aaron, Michele, ed. *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2004.

Altman, Rick. *Film/Genre*. London: British Film Institute, 1999.

Babineau, Dan. *Stairs in Cinema*. Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 2003.

Bourget, Jean-Loup. *Hollywood, la norme et la marge: Genres, esthétiques et influences du cinéma hollywoodien (1930-1960)*. Malakoff: Armand Colin, 2016.

Gotteri, Nicole. *Le film noir américain: 1940-1955*. Atelier Fol'fer, 2010.

Kaplan, E. Ann, ed. *Women in Film Noir*. London: British Film Institute, 1980.

Letort, Delphine. *Du film noir au néo-noir: Mythes et stéréotypes de l'Amérique (1941-2008)*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010.

Manon, Hugh S. "X-Ray Visions: Radiography, "Chiaroscuro", and the Fantasy of Un suspicion in "Film Noir"." *Film Criticism*. 32, 2. (Winter 2007-08) : 2-27. *JSTOR*. Web. Accessed 25 Jan. 2017.

Neale, Steve ed. *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*. London: British Film Institute, 2002.

Palmer, R. Barton. *Hollywood's Dark Cinema*. Dwayne Publishers, 1994.

Stanfield, Peter. "'Film Noir Like You've Never Seen': Jim Thompson Adaptation and Cycles of Neo-Noir." *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, edited by Steve Neale, British Film Institute, 2002, pp. 251-268.

### **Film Studies**

Bordwell, David. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. Oxon: Routledge, 1986.

Bourget, Jean-Loup *Le cinéma américain: 1895-1980*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983.

Cook, Pam, ed. *The Cinema Book*. London: British Film Institute, 1985.

Dick, Bernard F. *Anatomy of Film*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010.

Maltby, Richard. *Hollywood Cinema*. 2nd ed. Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 1995.  
Menegaldo, Gilles ed. *Crises de la représentation dans le cinéma américain*. Université de Poitiers, 1996.

### **Feminist & Queer Film Studies**

Cagle, Robert L. "The Mechanical Reproduction of Melodrama: Matthias Müller's 'Home' movies". *Queer Cinema in Europe*. Ed. Robin Griffiths. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.  
Esquenazi, Jean-Pierre. *Le film noir*. CNRS Éditions, 2012.  
Dyer, Richard. *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2003.  
Dyer, Richard. *The Culture of Queers*. London: Routledge, 2002.  
Hanson, Helen. *Hollywood Heroines: Women in Film Noir and the Female Gothic Film*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007.  
Harvey, Sylvia. "Woman's Place: The Absent Family of Film Noir." *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan. London: British Film Institute, 1980. pp.35-  
Kaplan, E. Ann. *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera*. New York and London: Routledge, 1988.  
Rich, B. Ruby. *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2013.  
Rich, B. Ruby. "New Queer Cinema". *Sight & Sound*. BFI, 25 June 2017. Web. 29 Dec. 2017. <https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/features/new-queer-cinema-b-ruby-rich>  
Walsh, Andrea. *Women's Film and Female Experience, 1940-1950*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984.

### **About Music:**

Chion, Michel. *Audiovision: Sound On Screen*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.  
Chion, Michel. *La Musique au Cinéma*. Domont: Fayard, 1995.  
Kramer, Lawrence. "Chopin at the Funeral: Episodes in the history of Modern Death." *Journal of the American Musicological Society*. 54, 1. (Spring 2001) 97-125. *JSTOR*. Web. 31 Aug. 2018. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jams.2001.54.1.97>>  
Kristine M. McCusker. "Funeral Music and the Transformation of Southern Musical and Religious Cultures, 1935-1945". *American Music*. 30.4 (Winter 2012) : 426-452.  
Louderback, Kathryn. "Beethoven and Star Wars Part 2: The Funeral Imperial March." *A Pianist's Musings: A History of your Favorite Classical Music*. n.d. Web. 31 Aug. 2018. <<https://pianistmusings.com/2018/01/12/the-funeral-march/>>

### **Others:**

Andreas Treske. "Frames within Frames – Windows and Doors". *Video Vortex Reader II*. (INC Amsterdam, 2010). *Academia.edu*. Web. 1 May 2016. <[https://www.academia.edu/4673037/Frames\\_within\\_Frames\\_-\\_Windows\\_and\\_Doors](https://www.academia.edu/4673037/Frames_within_Frames_-_Windows_and_Doors)>  
Benbow, Dana Hunsinger. "Lesbian Mom Had Tough Fight For Custody." *USA Today. Ganett Satellite Information Network*. 2 Jun. 2013. Web. 12 Sept. 2018. <<https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/06/02/lesbian-mom-custody-fight/2382765/>>  
Esperdy, Gabrielle. "From Instruction to Consumption: Architecture and Design in Hollywood Movies of the 1930s." *The Journal of American Culture*. 30.2 (June 2007) : 198 - 211.  
Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. (New York and London: W.W.Norton & Company, 2013)  
Halberstam, David. *The Fifties*. New York: Villard Books, 1993.  
Krell, Allan. *Burning Issues: Fire in Art and the Social Imagination*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2011)

- Moore, Grace. "Home Was Where the Hearth Is: Fire, Destruction, and Displacement in Nineteenth Century Settler Narratives." *Antipodes*. 29.1 (June 2015) : 29-42.
- Cara McGoogan. "Third of Bosses avoid Hiring Women Who Could Have Children Soon." *The Telegraph*. The Telegraph. 21 July 2018. Web. 12 Sept. 2018. <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/business/third-bosses-avoid-hiring-women-could-have-children-soon/>>
- Nigel Whiteley. "Toward a Throw-Away Culture. Consumerism, 'Style Obsolescence' and Cultural Theory in the 1950s and 1960s." *Oxford Art Journal*. 10.2 (1987) : 3-27.
- Valance, Hélène. "Le regard à la dérobée : Night Windows (1928) d'Edward Hopper." *Transatlantica*. 2 (2012). *Transatlantica.revues.org*. Web. 24 Mar. 2017. <<http://transatlantica.revues.org/5912>>
- "State Maps of Laws & Policies." *HRC.org*. The Human Rights Campaign. 3 Aug. 2018. Web. 12 Sept. 2018. <<https://www.hrc.org/state-maps/conversion%20therapy>>