DISCLAIMER:

This document does not meet the
current format guidelines of
the Graduate School at
The University of Texas at Austin.

It has been published for
informational use only.

The Dissertation Committee for Cari Elizabeth McDonnell Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Genre in Context:
Toward a Reexamination of the Film Musical in Classical Hollywood

Committee:

David Neumeyer, Supervisor

Byron Almén

James Buhler

Charles Carson

Thomas Schatz

Genre in Context:

Toward a Reexamination of the Film Musical in Classical Hollywood

by

Cari Elizabeth McDonnell, B. Music

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

August 2015

Dedication

To my grandmother, Eula Mae King

Acknowledgements

This project would never have seen completion without the love and support of my family, especially my husband, who is by far the kindest and most unselfish man I know. Thank you to my parents for "standing at the fence" all these years. I am indebted also to my supervisor, David Neumeyer, for his wisdom and patient guidance throughout last three years. I thank the members of my committee for offering their time and insight so generously, especially Jim Buhler and Tom Schatz, who provided significant direction when I was in the early stages of this project. The archival research I rely on so heavily in this study would have been much more difficult to accomplish without the assistance of the welcoming staff at the Margaret Herrick Library and the Autry National, and I am grateful to my dear friend Misty Crouch for opening her home to me during my research trips to Los Angeles. Finally, I am thankful for the faculty and students in the music theory department at the University of Texas. Their cooperative spirit and collegial support both eased the difficulty of and inspired me to persevere through the challenges of doctoral study.

Genre in Context:
Toward a Reexamination of the Film Musical in Classical Hollywood

Cari Elizabeth McDonnell, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

Supervisor: David Neumeyer

Though no single history of the Hollywood musical exists as such, a historical narrative nevertheless emerges from the extensive body of scholarly work on the genre. Most studies of the American film musical have used as texts a limited canon of films. Though these studies have illuminated many stylistic and critical constructs at work in the film musical, they have also presented an incomplete picture of the historical development of the musical in classical Hollywood. We need to contextualize our critical understanding of the American film musical by broadening the scope of films we study and by investigating the cultural and industrial circumstances in which these films were produced. The purpose of this study, then, is twofold: I offer a historical context in which to conduct critical examinations of the Hollywood film musical, and I provide examples of how this historical understanding can inform further investigations of the genre.

By far the most attention in the literature is given to MGM musicals, particularly those produced by the Freed unit in the 1940s and 1950s, with RKO's Astaire-Rogers films in the 1930s trailing not far behind. Yet almost every other Hollywood studio, whether major, minor, or independent, made cycles of musicals during the studio era. Paramount Pictures, through its Bing Crosby and Bob Hope *Road* films, provides a significant contrast to the MGM Freed unit among the large studios in the prosperous 1940s, while Walt Disney Productions, through its animated musicals in the 1950s, offers a rare example among independent studios during the dismantling of the studio system.

Taken together, these two case studies present a cross-section of production and reception practices through the height of the classical Hollywood era and into the immediate post-classical period. I will use these two prominent cycles of film musicals to examine the dynamic relationship that existed between the industrial and cultural conditions of the entertainment industry and the film musical's aesthetic style and content. This study will work alongside the existing literature to create a more complete and historically grounded understanding of the American film musical in the classical Hollywood era.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Examples

Chapter 1: Genre and the Classical Hollywood Film Musical

A Problematic Narrative

The Hollywood musical is now among a handful of the most frequently discussed classical genres in the film studies literature, but that level of attention is a relatively recent phenomenon.[1] As late as 1981, Rick Altman published a groundbreaking edited anthology of essays in order to make up for what he saw as a long-standing lack of critical scrutiny. The approaches used by contributors to that volume represented, in Altman's words, "most of the important currents of film criticism" at the time: "the auteur 'theory', ideological concerns, structuralist analysis, the ritual function of entertainment, [and] the contribution of technology" (1981, 4). Several of the book's essays have since become the cornerstones upon which an academic body of work on the film musical has been built: gender politics in the films of Busby Berkeley (Lucy Fischer), utopianism of the musical in its cultural context (Richard Dyer), narrative structure (Altman), and entertainment myths fostered by the musical (Jane Feuer).

The narrative that has emerged from these and more recent studies of the development of the American film musical during the classical Hollywood era, however, is largely based on ahistorical analyses of the films themselves. Most scholars have chosen to discuss developments in the musical by examining the genre through the lenses of various critical theories. In this chapter, I will argue that we need to contextualize our critical understanding of the American film musical by investigating the industrial circumstances in which these films were produced. Case studies of two prominent cycles of film musicals, to be undertaken in the remaining chapters, will analyze the dynamic relationship that existed between the conditions of the entertainment industry and the film musical's aesthetic style and content.

---

[1] A majority of the text in this chapter is a revised and expanded version of a previously published essay (McDonnell 2014).

The overall goal of this dissertation, then, is to work alongside the existing literature to help create a more complete, historically grounded understanding of the American film musical in the classical Hollywood era. Three important aspects of the genre will be given particular attention: the aesthetics of performance in the films, the industrial conditions that affected the films' production, and the reception of the films. Performance is probably the most discussed aspect of the musical. The production and reception of musicals, though, are usually neglected. For example, Altman's book-length study of the musical, which continues to be a cornerstone of the literature on the genre, is rather pessimistic regarding the audience's role in determining meaning in a film, and is completely dismissive of filmmakers' genre concerns, stating, "For the critic, however, the industrial definition of the genre is of extremely limited interest" (1987, 12–13). It should be noted that his term "critic" here refers not to entertainment journalists, but to film scholars. Altman goes on to compare a generic 'Hollywood,' taken as a reference to the American film industry writ large, to an unenlightened medieval fisherman who is unable to differentiate between a fish and a whale. Unsurprisingly, mentions of the films' production and reception histories are sparse in his extensive analysis of the musical.

Music scholars have consistently ignored not only the film musical, but also the industrial conditions that affect the composition and dissemination of the film music they choose to study. When discussing the instrumental film score, scholars have tended to trace histories of great underscore composers while largely ignoring the commercial contexts in which these composers worked. Scholars who have discussed the use of popular music and popular music styles in film have been slightly more successful at including the commercial circumstances of film and popular music in their discussions, but they often explicitly exclude the film musical from their studies, as in Jeff Smith's otherwise excellent work on the film soundtrack album (1998).

The industrial conditions of the classical Hollywood era are certainly a common topic in film studies in general and in film history in particular, the topic of a number of

monographs, notably Thomas Schatz's *The Genius of the System* ([1988] 2010) and Douglas Gomery's *The Hollywood Studio System: A History* (2005). These histories do mention the musical as a substantial part of Hollywood's output in the classical era, but the focus of the volumes is such that no single film genre can be considered in detail, nor can much space be given over to the relationships between film and other entertainment industries. Even those film scholars who have looked at the film industry as one component in a web of entertainment industries have not given much attention to the roles popular music and the film musical have played in these cross-industry relationships. For example, Michelle Hilmes's account of the relationship between Hollywood studios and radio networks lacks any discussion of music or the recording industry (1990), as does Christopher Anderson's look at Hollywood's role in the rise of the television industry (1994).

With respect to the film musical itself, most scholars' work has been limited to the realm of genre studies, though recent years have seen an increase in work focused on representations of race, gender, and sexuality (see, for example, Griffin 2002, Wolf 2002, Cohan 2005, Kessler 2010, and Dyer 2012). When film scholars have considered the commercial nature of the musical, they have chosen to discuss entertainment as an ideology at work in the musical rather than analyzing the commercial practices involved in producing musicals (the most prominent examples being Dyer 1981 and 2002).

The reader will now understand why, in selecting film cycles for analysis, I have deliberately chosen to stay away from the traditional canon of musicals. The films of song-and-dance stars such as Judy Garland, Fred Astaire, and Gene Kelly; auteur filmmakers such as Busby Berkeley, Stanley Donen, and Vincent Minnelli; legendary composers and lyricists such as Rodgers and Hammerstein or Lerner and Loewe; and "auteur" studios and production units (notably, RKO and the MGM Freed Unit) carry certain types of baggage from the existing literature on the film musical. These films are usually discussed in terms of their level of narrative integration. Such integration is often

assumed as a value in an analysis, and though the term is usually vaguely defined, for most authors integration refers to the relationship of the musical number to the development of plot and character. Such analyses eschew, or at the very least devalue, any potential uses for the number that are unrelated to the film's narrative.

The film cycles I have chosen, on the other hand, highlight the film musical's commercial nature. Most, if not all, classical Hollywood musicals were used to sell box office tickets, sheet music copies, recordings, licensed merchandise, particular star personae, and even corporate brands. Paramount's Hope-Crosby *Road* films in the 1940s are firmly grounded in these commercial goals. These musicals emphasize the films' connections with radio, recording, and other entertainment forms, using the two male stars as the center of this web of multimedia relationships. The resulting films are more about their two stars performing their specialties and displaying their rapport together than they are about any fictional narrative. Walt Disney's animated features in the 1950s are often highly integrated according to the traditional definition, but they also serve Disney's commercial diversification goals. The films and their musical numbers are styled in ways that reinforce the Disney image, even when elements are divorced from the films in order to appear in television shows, on records, in books, and on toy store shelves: all participate in multi-industry cross-promotional strategies that have become hallmarks of the Disney Company. The ever-changing and experimental business practices that marked Disney in the 1950s resulted in animated musical films that contain a wide variety of narrative structures, musical styles, and performance participations.

In this chapter, I will survey the principal topic areas in the study of the film musical, in the course of which I will set out the consequences of a historically lopsided critical attention. To prepare the ground for critique of the central issue in the critical literature—integration, or a bias toward musicals that approach the characteristics of a typical dramatic feature film—we must first address the broader question of film genre, because studies of the musical are mostly grounded in studies of genre. This chapter is

therefore divided into six sections, the first of which summarizes relevant issues in genre theory within the film studies discipline. Three subsequent sections focus on how the classical Hollywood musical has been depicted in the scholarly literature and offer a critique of the historical narrative of the integrated musical, the repertoire with which almost all published work concerns itself.[2] The fifth section offers a brief case study—a preview of sorts of subsequent chapters—as an illustration of one path toward achieving a more comprehensive view of the genre. The final section offers an overview of the remaining chapters, placing them in the context of the ideas discussed in this chapter.

Defining Genre: Theory and History

As Frans de Bruyn puts it, genre is "one of the most ancient theoretical concepts in the history of criticism," but because it "raises fundamental questions about the nature and status of literary texts, there are perhaps as many definitions of 'genre' as there are theories of literature" (1993, 79). Starting with Aristotle's Poetics, the idea of organizing literature around stable categories according to shared characteristics of performance, textual properties, or use was a given for historians and critics:[3] it met serious opposition only in the early nineteenth century from the individualist-minded Romantics, whose dialectical relationship with existing genres quickly became intertwined with a distinction between high and low art. After the mid-twentieth century, this model became closely linked to ideological critique, to the point that genre was considered out of date or irrelevant compared to questions of identity and representation. By this time, however, semiotics and discourse studies had undermined the Romantic critique of genre by showing that individuals use generic categories as devices fundamental to

[2] For another historical account of the critical literature on the musical, see Grant 2012, 37–54.

[3] On early uses of the word "genre" and on different understandings of "genre" and "style" in English and in Latin languages (especially French and Italian), see Fabbri and Shepherd 2003.

communication, far beyond their status as tools for high-art or political criticism. As Fabbri and Shepherd put it, speaking specifically with reference to music, "categorizing and naming 'kinds', referring to established genres or inventing new ones" are processes that "form the basis for all human knowledge" (Fabbri and Shepherd 2003, 402).

In terms of their treatment in the scholarly literature, film texts and the repertoire of the cinema, especially feature films, are understood to be closely analogous to novels and similar literary products, and thus questions of genre inevitably arise. In addition to his well-known work on the musical, Altman is also one of the most prolific writers on film genre theory. In order to discuss the various aspects and issues involved, he has often used colorful examples, ranging from animal taxonomy (Altman 1987, 8–12; 1998, 16–17) to sports (1987, 349–50; 1999, 192–93), trips to Walt Disney World (1999, 101–2) and to the supermarket (1999, 113–15), and memorably, a stop by the nut aisle (1999, 96–99). Some of the classifications that result have clear criteria, as for example in animal taxonomy (1998, 16). Mammals and fish are clearly distinguished from each other based on specific characteristics; some may share living space, such as whales and sharks, but their generic classifications are mutually exclusive. It is possible for the boundary between two species to be unclear, but no organism can be both mammal and fish.

Not all classifications—and by extension not all genres—are so clearly defined, however. Altman uses sports to discuss genre film spectatorship (he says both are based on "constellated communities, existing without physical interaction among fans" [Altman 1999, 192]). Unlike animals, sports can be classified differently according to a variety of shared characteristics. Games can be divided into winter and summer sports, for example, as in the Olympics. Basketball will be found in categories such as sports that use a ball, team sports, sports that involve scoring, sports played on a court, and both amateur and professional sports. Institutions use sports genres differently based on their institutional goals. The NCAA, a governing institution, looks at a university's sports programs in terms of men's and women's sports and individual and team sports, whereas a sporting

goods retail store defines sports genres according to the merchandise and equipment needed. Unlike the NCAA, retail stores use categories based on gender only when the equipment necessarily differs, as in apparel, footwear, or golf clubs. The differentiation between team and individual sports is rarely relevant in such a store.

If animal taxonomy and sports are taken as the two options, it is clear that film genres are much more like the latter than the former—that is to say, films should not be regarded as having a true generic identity that needs only to be discovered (an essentialist view), but as capable of being classified in many different ways (a functionalist view). From the screenwriter to the advertising copy writer to the online streaming service, everyone connected in some way to the film industry uses genre categories, but because the needs of these users vary, there can be no consensus as to what determines a film genre: as in sports, genres in film can feasibly have any number of things as their defining characteristics. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, to cite the example of one prominent institution, uses categories for their annual awards based on length (feature length versus short subject), medium (animated versus live-action), language, and even literary class (fiction versus nonfiction). The definitions are functional and utilitarian.

Scholars have shown that such multiplicity is of long standing in the history of the film industry. Both Tino Balio (1993) and Thomas Schatz ([1988] 2010; 1997) explain that, for studio executives in the 1930s and 1940s, films were grouped first according to their budgetary needs, markers that in turn dictated a particular set of filmmaking personnel and also determined the marketing strategy. Schatz demonstrates that at MGM, executives usually categorized films according to "star units," or star vehicles that required budgets of a particular size. Advertising personnel in the studio era also made extensive use of genre, as Steve Neale (2003) and Rick Altman (1998) have shown. Neale points to generic iconography present in studio-era movie advertisements, and Altman

uses both the language and iconography in these ads to call attention to the range of genres often present there.

Janet Staiger (2003) finds this kind of multiplicity in film reviews as well. For the advertisers, at least one goal of the generic discourse was to draw attention to the many relationships a particular film might have with other financially successful films and filmmaking patterns. In a straightforward example, the poster advertisement for the 1937 MGM picture *Captains Courageous* uses imagery appropriate for a child-focused nautical adventure story, while the text links the film to MGM's 1935 Oscar-winning drama *Mutiny on the Bounty*. The generic identification is not enough to ensure audience interest; the advertisement must also link the film with another similar successful film.

Finally, Lincoln Geraghty and Mark Jancovich have demonstrated that filmmakers even exploited generic language in order to please censors while still appealing to exhibitors. They offer as an example MGM's 1941 release *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which was presented to the Production Code Administration as a literary adaptation while being pitched to exhibitors as "horror, melodrama or romance"—whichever "draws best at your box office" (Geraghty and Jancovich 2008, 4–5).

Altman (1999) and Andrew Tudor (1973) both assert that scholars often have in mind a "predefined genre and corpus [of films]" (Altman 1999, 24) when they begin doing genre analysis. Geraghty and Jancovich characterize this predetermined group of films as "key works that are either claimed to be the artistic high points, the markers of key shifts within historical development, or are taken to represent key features, periods or tendencies within the genre" (Geraghty and Jancovich 2008, 1)—or virtually the definition of "canon," which can thus be understood as a slice through the possible generic categories that includes only the best in each. The vast majority of these "key works" discussed by scholars are what industry executives would have classified as prestige pictures or A-class pictures, the films with the largest budgets and most extensive advertising campaigns. Low-budget and B-class films have tended to garner attention

mainly from amateur scholars and tradebook writers, rather than from academics—a curious thing, perhaps, considering these films were so numerous and were often extremely formulaic, a trait that should make generic definition easy. It may, of course, be exactly that ease of definition that limits interest for the academic scholar, yet the potential rewards can be substantial, as Peter Stanfield has demonstrated with his thorough study of 1930s Hollywood Westerns (Stanfield 2001) and John Mundy with his look at the dance-craze films of the early 1960s (Mundy 2006). Defining a genre in terms of a predefined group of films, however, clearly suffers from circularity: a set of films believed to be Westerns or musicals or gangster films becomes the basis for defining an entire genre that may consist of hundreds of films (Tudor 1973, 135). A tendency to define genres according to aesthetic criteria—that is, aspects of representation, both visual and aural, as well as those of characterization, narrative logic, and plot structure—compounds the problem: conclusions drawn from analysis of a small group of A-class films are at best too narrow to be applied to other films that could be considered part of the genre and at worst a misrepresentation of the genre (Neale 2000, 207–30).

Staiger (2003), Neale (2000), and Altman (1998, 1999) all point to the problems that arise in historical accounts of film genres based on such criteria. Staiger argues that much of genre theory has created a "purity thesis," the assumption that classical Hollywood ("Fordian Hollywood," in Staiger's terminology) created generically pure films. Sampling critical methods often used by genre theorists, she demonstrates that these films "do not provide clean examples of the critically defined genre" and that "historically, no justification exists to assume producers, distributors, exhibitors, or audiences saw films as being 'purely' one type of film" (Staiger 2003, 194–95). Neale makes very similar claims, saying that genre theory has "constructed a series of misleading pictures of Hollywood's output," focusing on "exemplary films," however defined, and ignoring both the majority of Hollywood films and the way in which these films were produced, distributed, and consumed (Neale 2000, 251–55). Altman (1998)

recognizes the kinds of problems identified by Staiger and Neale, but he approaches the issues differently. In discussions of film genres, critics and scholars tend to use generic terms as if they had fixed, ahistorical meanings, instead of recognizing that generic terms often had different meanings to filmmakers and audiences at different points in time. Some years after he published work on the Hollywood musical, Altman acquiesced to the multiplicity of generic terms and their users, which led him to redefine genre as an ongoing discourse rather than a fixed category: critics and scholars participate equally with filmmakers, audiences, and others in the "genrification" process, by which genres become confirmed and defined (1999, 62–68). Despite the evident difficulties, Staiger, Neale, and Altman all encourage further work in genre studies—specifically, work that takes into account the historical and industrial realities of Hollywood films as well as the multiple uses and users of generic terms.

Defining the Film Musical as a Genre: (1) Differing Views

Many scholars find definitive aesthetic characteristics of the musical by examining the genre's stage-bound historical influences. Raymond Knapp, for example, has mapped sources from mid-nineteenth-century European operetta to early twentieth-century American stage entertainments (vaudeville, burlesque, pantomime, among others) (2005, 19–63). Neale's brief survey of the film musical (2000) is divided into subgenres, many of which are based on these theatrical influences, and Jerome Delamater (1978) and Knapp (2005; 2006) incorporate discussions of the stylistic influences of these historical predecessors into their studies of dance and identity in the musical, respectively. Richard Traubner (1983), Gerald Mast (1987), James Collins (1988), and Griffin (2002) all differentiate between narrative-focused musical dramas that find their roots in opera and operetta, on the one hand, and more episodic musical comedies that descend from

burlesque, the variety show, and vaudeville, on the other.[4] Traubner's thorough study of operetta points to the narrative-focused musical or the "musical play," which he says is "a euphemism for romantic operetta" (1983, 377), as the primary heir of the operetta tradition in twentieth-century America, epitomized by the stage and film works of Jerome Kern, Oscar Hammerstein II, and Richard Rodgers. In his brief study, Griffin provides insight into the racial politics of the film musical by examining the episodic, variety show-influenced musical comedies of 20th Century Fox that continued to thrive in cinemas alongside the musical dramas of studios such as MGM.[5]

Other scholars focus more on the structure and narrative content of the film musical, defining it based largely on textual analyses of numerous films. Schatz (1981), Altman (1981; 1987), Feuer (1993), and Dyer (1981) all argue that the musical's narrative structure attempts to resolve two diametrically opposed poles. These poles may be represented by the male and female members of a romantic couple (Schatz; Altman), work and entertainment (Altman; Feuer; Dyer), narrative and number (Dyer), performers and spectators (Feuer), or fantasy and reality (Feuer; Dyer).

Altman's and Schatz's focus on the romantic couple works well for many musicals, but, as Altman admits, does exclude a substantial number of films, particularly child-focused titles such as *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *Dumbo* (1941), and *Mary Poppins* (1964) (Altman 1987, 103–6). Neale questions the prevalence of Altman's genre-defining dual-focus romance narrative and observes that it is also a structural element of the nonmusical romantic comedy (2000, 112). Neale suggests that the romance-musical is not the only type, but rather just one point where the musical intersects with another genre. Knapp's discussion of the fairy-tale musical, one of Altman's three musical subgenres, shows that

---

[4] On connections between nineteenth-century theatrical forms and later cinematic forms, see also Pisani 2014.

5 For a survey and critique of racial politics in the musical theater, specifically with respect to miscegenation, see Riis 2011. See also the editor's introduction to the section "Racial Displacements" (155–56) and the section's essays in Cohan 2002b.

this type of genre intersection is not an isolated case (2006, 121–63). Knapp argues that in their stage-bound forms operetta and fairy tale are two separate entities that can, but do not always, share generic characteristics. Not all operettas, with their penchant for "contrived happy endings" and "sexually charged intrigue," are fairy tales, and not all fairy tales, which often feature magical happenings and child protagonists, are operettas. Knapp asserts that Altman "simply conflates the two, thereby essentializing the 'happily ever after' component of operetta," while leaving out many of the child- and fantasy-oriented aspects of the fairy tale (2006, 121). In Knapp's view, Altman's fairy tale musicals are more operetta than fairy tale, which "has almost no presence within the broader category that bears that name in Altman's typology" (2006, 396). Indeed, Altman's inclusion of RKO's Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers films, which contain no conventional elements of fantasy, in the category of fairy tale musical supports Knapp's argument (1987, 161-167). Altman himself observes that films such as *Pinocchio* (1940), *Dumbo* (1941), and *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) are part of a group of films that "borrows heavily from a widely shared European fairy tale tradition," yet he excludes them from the fairy tale musical subgenre and even from the musical genre writ large because they do not correspond with his romance-focused definition (1987, 105).

Dyer (1981) uses dualities effectively to argue that the musical promises utopian solutions to real-world problems. Feuer (1993), Schatz (1981), and Altman (1987) imply that the musical's utopianism is generally uncomplicated and usually fulfilled by the film's end, but Kenneth MacKinnon (2000) argues that what endures long after the film's finale is the sense of longing for utopia, rather than a sense of fulfillment. Dyer (2000), Griffin (2002), and Kessler (2010), among scholars who focus on the presentation and participation of race and gender in musicals, each take a more skeptical view, questioning

not only the strength of the utopian fulfillment, but also the race and gender constitution of that utopia.[6]

The narrative/number duality is perhaps the most prevalent issue in scholarship on the musical. Although, as we shall see, the narrative side of the equation is the principal site for theoretical and critical discussion, the number (musical performances) has also garnered some analytical attention from scholars. Altman's development of the concept of the audio dissolve (fluid shift from the diegetic to a layering of diegetic and nondiegetic musical elements) does offer key insights into the way the soundtrack accomplishes the transition from narrative to number (1987, 62–74), but he limits his discussions of the musical numbers to general remarks about style and narrative content. Feuer offers a bit more insight insofar as she delineates a few techniques, such as bricolage, folk choreography, and the passed-along song, that are often used to make the performances seem more spontaneous and natural (1993, 1–22). Richard Barrios (1995), Mast (1987), Geoffrey Block (2002), and Timothy Scheurer (1974) discuss the general styles of the songwriters and lyricists responsible for the music in these films. Barrios, Schatz ([1988] 2010; 1997), and Griffin all describe individual studios' and filmmakers' signature styles, with general remarks about musical and performance styles. Scheurer, Greg Faller (1987), Delamater, and John Mueller (1984; 1985) all examine the use and style of dance in musicals, though only Delamater and Mueller discuss music in conjunction with specific dance numbers. Knapp (2005; 2006) and Mast use analyses of specific songs to inform and add depth to their expansive studies. On a smaller scale, Heather Laing's

---

[6] My focus here is on historical narratives and genre models as they relate to the integrated musical, and therefore I have not addressed questions of gender and sexuality at a level that reflects their importance in the literature. For a succinct summary, see Wolf 2011; on camp with respect to film musicals, see Knapp and Morris 2011b, 146–50; on gay readings, see Feuer 1993, 139–43; on gender and sexuality in film musicals, see Wolf 2002 and Kessler 2010; on gender in music and film (not musicals), see Flinn 1992 and Laing 2007, 9–24; on theories of gender and sexuality in film and film music, see Buhler 2014.

work demonstrates how music analysis can form a strong basis for critical study as she argues that the structure of the musical number, relying heavily on the essential structural elements of the popular song, "[allows] a particular representation of emotional, physical, and formal excess," all of which is safely confined within the formal boundaries of the popular song so that the excess only temporarily disrupts the film's narrative (Laing 2000, 10).[7]

Defining the Film Musical as a Genre: (2) Privileging Integration

If only a relatively small number of scholars have examined the detailed makeup of the musical number, nearly everyone discusses how numbers are related to narrative. For most authors, integration refers to the relationship of the number to the development of plot and character. With this idea in mind, Mueller outlines six types of integration, ranging from "numbers which are completely irrelevant to the plot," through "numbers which enrich the plot, but do not advance it," to "numbers which advance the plot by their content" (1984, 28–30). His list is comprehensive, but the wording, ordering, and ensuing discussion reveal his belief that the best performance numbers are those that are fully integrated, that "advance the plot by their content." Mueller uses his list to argue for a more sophisticated view of Fred Astaire's musicals—a sophistication born out of the highest level of integration. Schatz (1981), Collins, and Delamater all reinforce both the hierarchy of the narratively integrated musical and the idea of Fred Astaire as progenitor of this ideal, focusing on Astaire's innovative use of dance in his films with Ginger Rogers at RKO. Schatz, for example, has an entire section devoted to the topic of "Fred Astaire and the rise of the integrated musical" (1981, 191–93), and Delamater argues for Astaire to be considered as an auteur performer (1978, 51).

In a manner similar to histories of great men in politics, literature, and the arts, studies that champion the integrated musical have traced a history of the musical film that

[7] On this see also Knapp and Morris 2011a, 81–96.

privileges star personae such as Judy Garland, Fred Astaire, and Gene Kelly; auteur filmmakers such as Busby Berkeley, Stanley Donen, and Vincent Minnelli; legendary composers and lyricists such as Rodgers and Hammerstein or Lerner and Loewe; and even "auteur" studios and production units (notably, RKO and the MGM Freed Unit).[8] After a nod to predecessors in stage-bound forms of entertainment, this historical narrative typically presents the Astaire/Rogers films of RKO as ushering in a new type of musical in the early 1930s through performance numbers that arise from dramatic contexts—numbers usually designed and choreographed by Astaire himself. The prototype of these integrated numbers is "Night and Day" from *The Gay Divorceé* (1934), in which Astaire's character (Guy Holden) gradually wins Rogers's (Mimi Glossup's) affections. In this way narrative integration finds its way out of the old European stylings of operetta and into the distinctly American musical comedy.

Taking another place in this history during the 1930s are the Busby Berkeley productions, which are considered the quintessential backstage musicals. In the backstage musical the performances, which rarely have anything to do with the film's plot, are sufficiently motivated by the fact that the characters are all show people involved in putting on some kind of live entertainment. Though these films are not considered part of the evolution toward the fully integrated musical, they are included in the canon largely due to their innovative visual style and because Berkeley's name continues to pop up in subsequent decades, though few of his later films are discussed by scholars in any detail.

Judy Garland's star ascends in the 1940s at MGM, as does Gene Kelly's. They appear together in Kelly's first film, *For Me and My Gal* (1942), directed by Berkeley, and again in *The Pirate* (1948), directed by Vincent Minnelli. All of these films are discussed often in the literature, but the Garland/Minnelli production that is considered a cornerstone of the integrated musical is *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944). Described by

---

[8] See Lovensheimer 2011 for an extended critique of the concepts of "author" and "text" in relation to the stage musical.

Altman as a folk musical (1987, 274), the film takes place in a comfortable neighborhood of family homes at the turn of the twentieth century—nowhere near a night club or professional theater. Thus, even the diegetic performances, such as Garland's "Skip to My Lou" and Garland and Margaret O'Brien's "Under the Bamboo Tree," are presented as somehow integrated into the dramatic narrative of a family facing a move to a distant large city and the threat of an end of their happy way of life.

Kelly helps bring the integrated musical into the 1950s, starring in hits like *On the Town* (1949), which he codirected with Stanley Donen, Minnelli's *An American in Paris* (1951) and *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), again codirecting with Donen. Whereas Astaire usually portrays a seasoned professional in his films, Kelly tends to portray an amateur who makes music out of his expressive energy, as in *On the Town* and *An American in Paris*. Even *Singin' in the Rain* counteracts Kelly's role as a silent film star by presenting most of his musical performances not in a rehearsed professional setting, but in spontaneous moments of light-hearted fun ("Moses Supposes"), sudden joy ("Good Morning"), and romantic love ("You Were Meant for Me," "Singin' in the Rain," and "You Are My Lucky Star"). These MGM films of the early 1950s also represent attempts to move the musical toward the realm of high art. Both Astaire and Kelly partner with ballet-trained dancers such as Cyd Charisse and Leslie Caron. Astaire's graceful tap-dancing style remains the same with all his partners, but Kelly increasingly uses elements of ballet and modern dance in his film performances. If MGM's appeal to the realm of high art is not made clear enough by these elements, Minnelli also references highlights of French painting styles in *An American in Paris*.

The integrated musical continues to dominate the rest of the decade primarily through the film adaptations of Rodgers and Hammerstein's stage hits. *Oklahoma!*, staged in 1943 and adapted to film in 1955, is considered by many musical theater scholars as the apotheosis of the integrated stage musical. As a film adaptation it has its flaws, but it is still considered a highly integrated dramatic musical, due in large part to

the use of folk stylings in many of the songs and dances. At the same time, Agnes de Mille's dream ballet, choreographed in the modern dance style, represents yet another attempt to push the musical genre toward high art.

The later Rodgers and Hammerstein film musicals reveal a shift, or possibly a division, in the priorities of the integrated musical, away from the abstract world of high art and toward the realism of dramatic narrative film. The team continued to have success with film adaptations such as *The King and I* (1956) and *South Pacific* (1958), which address social problems such as racism and sexism.[9] It is *The Sound of Music* (1965), however, that is considered by many scholars to be the best and most dramatically integrated of their film adaptations, notably with more changes made to the musical score in the adaptation process than any previous Rodgers and Hammerstein production. The cinematic realism of the location sets (as opposed to the abstract sets of *An American in Paris* or the theatrical sets of *Oklahoma!*) provides one of this musical's strongest links to nonmusical dramatic narrative film. As in those two earlier adaptations, *The Sound of Music* also presents a potentially less idealistic plot, with the unhappy resolution of the secondary romance (Liesl and Rolfe) and the somewhat open ending as the Von Trapp family become refugees in a foreign country. These films are certainly still quite optimistic, but they do not follow the typical plot formulas of films such as the Astaire/Rogers/RKO cycle, nor do they offer the contrived happy endings of *Meet Me in St. Louis* or *An American in Paris*.

These are the highlights of the historical narrative of the integrated musical in the classical Hollywood era. *The Sound of Music* is generally considered to be the last, dying breath of the integrated musical as the genre either moves toward the darker, more pessimistic films of Bob Fosse and Robert Altman or is eclipsed by the teen-focused rock and roll films of Elvis Presley and other recording stars.

---

[9] For a contrary view of *South Pacific*, in its original Broadway production, as a "jerrybuilt collage" rather than a fully integrated musical, see Savran 2011, 245–47.

Decentering the Integrated Musical

Although scholars' descriptions of the films mentioned above are generally accurate and often insightful, many of the conclusions drawn from studying this canon can be misleading, primarily because the sample is small and unrepresentative but also because ties to canons and model films remain mostly unexamined. In Neale's words, priority to integration "has tended to produce a canonic crest-line, a tradition of landmark films, shows and personnel" in the history of the development of the film musical (2000, 106–7). Altman dubs this the "proper noun history" of the American musical film, which, he says, "tends to exclude from consideration all those films not associated with a canonized proper noun" (1987, 111–12).[10] Those scholars who have resisted narrative integration as the determining aspect of the genre have usually done so by organizing their studies in terms of chronology, ideology, or subgenre—avoiding focus on names (directors, composers, actors) whenever possible. Though Barrios's introduction reiterates the traditional belief in the integrated musical, his comprehensive chronological study of pre-Depression musical films focuses primarily on film production, reception, and style rather than on a canon of names. Both Feuer and Knapp organize their studies by ideological concepts. Feuer does not stray outside the canon in her sample of films, relying primarily on RKO Astaire-Rogers films and MGM Freed unit musicals, but Knapp adds Disney fairy-tale musicals, a group of films routinely ignored in the academic literature, to his analytical repertoire, which includes a wide range of stage musicals with film adaptations. As mentioned above, Neale's brief survey of the genre is organized loosely by subgenres such as operetta, musical comedy, musical drama, and the rock musical. Bruce Babington and Peter Evans (1985) are haphazard in their approach to subgenres, identifying such content- and setting-defined groups as "the musical biopic" and "the pastoral musical" as well as traditional proper-noun groups such as "the Astaire-

[10] See Morris 2011 for an extended critique of the construction of historical narratives, with reference to the stage musical, not the film musical.

Rogers musical" and even mixed categories such as "Minnelli and the introspective musical."

Altman's expansive study (1987) is also organized by subgenres, but despite his insight into the historical problems of the focus on integration, he inadvertently reinforces traditional narrative priorities. Though his subgenres (the fairy-tale musical, the show musical, and the folk musical) are useful typological categories, they are essentially based on settings and plot formulas that, as discussed above, emphasize a particular set of oppositions that must be resolved through the workings of a dual-focus narrative. Not only does he eliminate from his corpus those films that do not revolve around a central romance, but his discussions assume that performances must be integrated since they help mediate essential plot conflicts.

Another way scholars resist privileging the integrated musical is by using film history rather than, or in conjunction with, theoretical models of genre. Faller (1987), Griffin (2002), and Shari Roberts (1993), grounding their work in film reception and star studies, argue that the nonintegrated Hollywood musical was important because it allowed star personae, especially those of minority performers, to take center stage. Even Delamater, a champion of the integrated musical, notes this phenomenon in connection with Eleanor Powell: "Few attempts were made to integrate her dances into the narrative, for the dances represented an aggressive individuality which was the Powell persona. The stylistic consistency of her work manifested that persona in all her roles" (1978, 77–78).

Delamater's statement about the consistency of Powell's star persona could be said of many musical stars. Todd Decker (2011) uses archival evidence to argue that Astaire in fact considered himself a song-and-dance man first and foremost, rather than a dramatic actor, and he presented that persona both on and off screen. Decker asserts that Astaire never worried about integrating his performances into the surrounding plot and focused exclusively on creating, performing, and filming his performance numbers. Any subsequent narrative integration was simply a matter of course (2011, 53–71). Steven

Cohan (2002a) also uses evidence of Astaire's star persona to argue that his performances were part of a uniquely gendered spectacle that often superseded and directed the narrative, challenging traditional notions of integration that place the musical number in subservience to the plot. Evidence of a recognizable Astaire persona even shows up in studies that tend toward privileging integrated musicals. Both Feuer and Altman regularly refer to Astaire by his real name, rather than his character name, in their film analyses. They also note Astaire's trademark technique of moving seamlessly from non-dancing (usually walking) into dancing (Feuer 1993, 113–17; Altman 1987, 67). Delamater remarks that Astaire and Rogers's "foot-loose and easy-going personae" seemed to be the impetus behind every aspect of their films—so much so that, as noted earlier, he suggests the idea of "a possible theory of performer as auteur," with Astaire as author (1978, 51–52).

Feuer's overview of the musical careers of Astaire and Garland strengthens the argument that their star personae often overshadowed any attempt at character portrayal in their films (1993, 113–22). Deanna Durbin, Shirley Temple, Betty Grable, Mickey Rooney, Bing Crosby, and many other musical stars also had star personae that tended to overwhelm whatever fictional character they were playing in their films. One major reason for this is the prevalence of star-genre formulas in classical Hollywood. According to Schatz, "each studio's stable of contract stars and its repertoire of presold genre variations were its most visible and viable resources" (1997, 43). Studios operated under the belief that the presentation of stars was at least as important as any narrative formula in a genre film.

In addition to other signature star-genre cycles, most of the major and minor studios in Hollywood had a musical cycle whose star neared the top of the box office polls at some point during the studio era. In the 1930s Fox starred Shirley Temple in a series of musicals, many of which were based on classic children's stories (such as *Heidi* [1937] and *The Little Princess* [1939]). In 1933, Paramount signed Bing Crosby, by far the most

bankable radio and film star from the 1930s through the mid-1950s. In addition to the occasional dramatic film, the studio starred him in dozens of musicals held together primarily by comic bits and Crosby's signature crooning. Also in 1933, RKO stumbled upon the fortuitous pairing of Astaire and Rogers in *Flying Down to Rio* and featured them in eight more films in the 1930s. Starting in the mid-1930s Universal starred Deanna Durbin in several films that featured the classical singing abilities of the teenaged ingenue (notably *One Hundred Men and a Girl* [1937], about the daughter of an orchestral musician). In a move similar to that of Paramount with Crosby, Republic capitalized on Gene Autry's radio popularity beginning in 1935 by creating a highly profitable series of singing cowboy films starring Autry as himself. These were some of the best-known, highest-grossing box office stars of the 1930s (to be discussed in detail in the next section below).

In the late 1930s and early 1940s MGM adapted some of the popular Hardy family films into musicals that featured established favorite Mickey Rooney and, occasionally, the ascending starlet Judy Garland (*Love Finds Andy Hardy* [1938] being the best known). The pair also starred in a cycle of kids-putting-on-a-show films during this time, which Busy Berkeley directed. One of the most prolific producers of musicals, MGM also developed a series of immensely popular operettas for established star Jeanette MacDonald and newcomer Nelson Eddy. In both pairings the settings and character names change from film to film, but the characterizations and general style of the films remain consistent throughout the cycle. At Fox in the 1940s, as Temple's box-office value faded, Betty Grable rose from popular costar and pin-up girl to full-fledged star. Her films, such as *Down Argentine Way* (1940) and *Mother Wore Tights* (1947), did not have the consistency of plot and character that marked many other musical star-genre formulas, but they all provided Grable with ample opportunities to showcase her million-dollar legs and her song and dance skills in diegetic performances that usually took place in nightclubs or theatrical revues.

Along with Grable, Crosby continued to dominate the list of the top box office stars year after year. Beginning in 1940, Paramount teamed Crosby with comedian Bob Hope and the exotically beautiful Dorothy Lamour in the enormously successful *Road* movies, which are the focus of Chapters 2 and 3. The series ran to six entries, starting with *Road to Singapore* in 1940 and ending with *Road to Bali* in 1952.[11] Just as Paramount capitalized on Crosby's already established radio career, Warner Bros. turned the up-and-coming recording artist Doris Day into the studio's new musical star in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Day often starred opposite Jack Carson or Gordon McRae and played irrepressible, unsophisticated young women with dreams of being a musical star.

The film cycles listed above were some of the most profitable, most widely disseminated musical films of the classical era, and the stars were among the most popular in Hollywood. One consequence of their weak representation in the canon is that significant industry trends and practices have been almost entirely overlooked, in particular the relations of radio, recording, and television to the feature film. Crosby, Autry, and Day, for example, all started in the radio and recording industries and then became film stars. Others, such as Astaire and Garland, developed radio and recording careers as an extension of their screen careers. Also, as the number of traditional musicals declined in the 1950s, many musical stars increasingly took advantage of variety shows and other opportunities afforded by television. Decker (2011), Stanfield (2002), and Grant (1986) have all examined aspects of the relationship between the musical and the popular music industry as regards specific stars and film cycles, but no scholar has yet undertaken a more comprehensive study of this relationship.

The traditional canon points to the films of Vincent Minnelli and Gene Kelly in the 1950s and high-profile Broadway adaptations in the 1950s and 1960s as the culmination of the integrated musical, but as Neale points out, films such as *An American in Paris*,

---

[11] Ten years later Crosby and Hope continued the series when they independently produced and starred in *Road to Hong Kong* (1962).

Singin' in the Rain, *A Star is Born* (1954), and *The Sound of Music* were not typical of classical Hollywood's output (Neale 2000, 107). Despite their high artistic profile, these films do not represent the musical genre as a whole: the Freed unit at MGM did move in this direction, but other studios and even other MGM units continued to produce films according to earlier generic models and the star-genre formulas. Joe Pasternak, also an MGM producer, even made several traditional operettas in the late '40s and '50s, often starring Kathryn Grayson, Howard Keel, and Jane Powell. Paramount introduced the team of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis in a new series of madcap musical comedies. Other new cycles appeared as well, such as Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello's beach-blanket teen pics for American International and the Rat Pack films, most of which were released by Warner Bros. If these and other cycles are taken into account, the historical narrative does not take the form of an evolutionary model moving toward the fully integrated musical and then dying out. Rather, the musical remains heterogeneous throughout its history, with cycles and subgenres appearing, changing, and disappearing for a wide variety of reasons.

Expanding the Canon: Singing Cowboy Films

In order to demonstrate how the musical cycles and subgenres listed above might suggest paths to broader accounts of the film musical, I introduce here a brief case study—a condensed version of what the following chapters contain. The repertoire is singing cowboy films, which enjoyed many years of production and exhibition success (from the mid-1930s through the 1950s). I will focus my discussion specifically on Republic's Gene Autry films released beginning in 1934 and going into the early 1940s. This highly successful film cycle only halted when Autry volunteered for military service at the outset of World War II. The methodologies presented in this discussion represent those I employ in the more thorough examinations of the following chapters. I place filmmaking trends alongside developing trends in other entertainment industries, specifically

recording and radio. Production circumstances, such as the studio's stake in other media industries, and the cultural conditions of the moment, are considered important determinants of the films' style and structure, which bear many similarities to the genre conventions of the classical Hollywood musical. The films' reception in the press is also taken as indicative of how some audiences interpreted his films.

Gene Autry's musical westerns for Republic, first produced in 1934, became the cornerstone of the studio's film output. As the most successful B film studio, Republic is representative of the low-budget, high-output Poverty Row studios, and Autry's singing cowboy films were the most profitable B films for several years running. His films were aimed at rural and small-town audiences rather than major urban markets such as Los Angeles and New York. Thus the narratives in his films targeted the tastes and values of these audiences, resulting in plot components that were at times strikingly different from the dominant narrative conventions in Hollywood. His films and his clean-cut, wholesome image benefited from increased enforcement of Hollywood's strict censorship policies. Autry is widely recognized as the quintessential singing cowboy, and, though his were not the only films of their kind being released at the time, they were certainly the most successful. As such, his films provided a generic model that influenced both contemporaneous and later productions.

Singing cowboy films are intimately tied to the rise of country and western music in the 1930s, and Autry's films are no exception. Don Cusic argues that although cowboy songs themselves were not new, the singing cowboy during this time became the central figure in the development of music aimed specifically at rural radio audiences (2011, 11–17). This was, in Allen Lowe's words, the "mainstreaming of country music" (1997, 155). "Mainstreaming" is indeed the correct term, according to Mark Fenster:

> As the musical Western proved commercially successful, a larger national audience began following the music of the singing cowboy, and the singing styles of the performers gradually became smoother, less rural and closer to the conventions of mainstream popular music. (1989, 274)

Douglas B. Green (1996) credits Autry with helping to establish the cowboy as the face of country music, replacing the mountaineer, and Fenster associates Autry with updating the romanticized image of the cowboy, through song, to appeal to wider audiences (1989, 272–275).

By the time Autry made his first film appearance in 1934, he was already a radio and recording star, with an established persona as a singing cowboy on the nation's most popular country music radio show at the time, WLS's National Barn Dance, broadcast from Chicago. He was a big enough star to sell records and personally endorse merchandise through Sears, Roebuck and Co., and he did this to such an extent that Stanfield describes Autry as "a singing merchandise store" (2001, 67). Enabled by Herbert Yates, who owned both the film studio and the recording company that held Autry's contracts in the 1930s, the singer's film stardom enhanced rather than eclipsed the other elements of his entertaining career, giving him a consistent star persona that was equally successful in the radio, recording, rodeo, film, and television industries from the 1930s through the mid-1950s.

Stanfield attributes the singing cowboy figure's success in linking together the various media industries to his representation as an authentic and trustworthy member of a community (2002, 5). In order to accomplish such a representation, these films must come to grips with the singing cowboy's prominent position as a radio star with commercial endorsements (virtually every radio show in the mid-1930s was sponsored by corporations). As one film reviewer noted, Autry "seems to be making a habit of appearing in films titled after popular songs that he sings over radio" (Dallas Morning News, 10 March 1941, I-9). This practice was so common that Autry even had two films titled after the same song: *South of the Border* (1939) and *Down Mexico Way* (1941). Many of Autry's films do not attempt to hide the fact of the singing cowboy's simultaneous presence in the radio and recording industries but present him as himself, not as a fictional character, and often directly acknowledge his star status. For example,

in *Tumbling Tumbleweeds* (1935) Autry sings a duet with himself via a phonograph recording, and in the final moments of *The Old Corral* (1936), a close-up of a phonograph playing an Autry record fades into a two-shot of Autry singing to his female co-star (Irene Manning). The sound quality remains unchanged during the transition, depicting in literal fashion how Autry the film character is synonymous with Autry the recording star (see Figures 1.1 a—c).

Figure 1.1 a–c: The Old Corral *(1936), ending: fade from close-up of phonograph to Gene Autry singing.*

At the same time, however, the films find ways to legitimize (or else to efface) the singing cowboy's position as a commercial agent. For instance, in *Tumbling Tumbleweeds* Autry uses the recording of himself singing to outwit the outlaws, thus using his position as a recording star for the good of the community. Lynette Tan (2001) points out that in order to protect the integrity of radio in the public's mind, several of Autry's films, such as *The Old Barn Dance* (1938), *Colorado Sunset* (1939), and *Mexicali Rose* (1939), make an explicit point of punishing those who misuse the influential power of radio. Stanfield goes one step further, arguing that by bringing restitution and justice to the onscreen community in these films Autry "reconfirms the public's trust in radio and in Autry as agent of community values," despite his actual position as an agent of commercial industry (2002, 106).

These comments sound strikingly similar to Feuer's claim that, although the musical's status as mass entertainment produced by professionals for audience

consumption effectively stifles any possible communal connection between the performers and the audience, the musical continually attempts to efface this condition by "[aspiring] to the condition of a folk art, produced and consumed by the same integrated community" (1993, 20). This aspiration is eminently clear in the singing cowboy films. Stanfield attributes Gene Autry's unparalleled popularity to "his ability through song and performance to credibly suggest that he was part of the community that constituted his core audience," and argues that his amateurish acting and unpolished performance style allow him to negotiate the barrier between the media industries and his audience more successfully than any other singing cowboy (2002, 6). In these films the implication to the film audience is that Autry sings for his own enjoyment and the enjoyment of the community, rather than for money or personal acclaim.

Autry's amateurish acting was, for better or for worse, a crucial part of his persona. Some critics railed against his stiff performances, saying, "Autry is as unemotional as a log," and concluding that "Crooner Autry, of course, is the better b.o. bet than Actor Autry . . . for he's still the same expressionless, stodgy performer" (*Variety*, 24 March 1937, 31; *Variety*, 16 September 1942, 8). On a more positive note, Hollywood columnist Jimmie Fidler tried to explain Autry's immense popularity to his skeptical readers: "The answer to Autry's popularity (which increases annually) is as plain as the nose on your face. Clean pictures, starring a man who looks and is clean and sincere—that is the answer (*Los Angeles Times*, 28 January 1942, 8)." As the *Variety* writer above qualified, though, "Crooner Autry" was the most important element in his persona. Reviewers regularly comments that an otherwise bland film was "saved by Autry and his musical," or even that a decent B film benefited from the "music frame [which] lifts it above the usual low-budgeted film" (*Billboard*, 21 December 1935, 23; *Variety*, 25 November 1936, 19). In fact, one of the first *Variety* reviews of an Autry film said his performances were "a welcome change" to the run-of-the-mill westerns, and a *Dallas Morning News*

writer went so far as to say that Autry "overshadows himself in the musical episodes" (11 December 1935, 34; 11 October 1936, II-2).

Autry's persona falls perfectly in line with the musical, which, as Feuer says, displays "a remarkable emphasis on the joys of being an amateur" (1993, 17). She argues that the amateur status of the performer is extremely important in diverting attention away from the commercial nature of the musical film because it assuages the audience's fear that they are being exploited (1993, 13). In many ways Autry's films accomplish the musical's "aspirations to folk art" in an arguably more believable manner than any musical featuring such stars as Fred Astaire, Judy Garland, and Gene Kelly, who are often depicted as amateurs but whose talent and charisma clearly exceed those of any ordinary person, a point only emphasized further by the high production values of their films. Autry's musical performances, in contrast, are simply staged and shot, rarely emotionally charged, and are often cajoled out of him by members of the community or the circumstances of the plot. His displays no virtuosity, and his talents seem well within reach of the everyday person, though still quite enjoyable. His companions and even the entire cast frequently sing along with him, and he often walks or rides among them as he sings, identifying himself with the community rather than as a performer on a stage in front of a formal audience. As one example among many, the opening sequence in *Down Mexico Way*, seen in Figure 1.2 a—c, shows Autry entertaining a community picnic, walking among the tables and encouraging the people to sing with him at times.

Figure 1.2 a–c: Down Mexico Way *(1941), Gene Autry sings for a picnic gathering.*

Stanfield also notes that Autry's performances often take place in private or semi-public spaces, such as a private homes, bunkhouses, or sheriff 's offices, further identifying him as an amateur rather than a professional (2002, 107–9). Such domestic, natural settings also appear in the musical, but the world of the singing cowboy does not become a stage, as Feuer says of the world of the musical (1993, 23–26). Autry typically does not sing in makeshift prosceniums such as doorways or windows, as Judy Garland does in *Meet Me in St. Louis*, the quintessential example of the folk musical (see Figure 1.3 a—b). *The Old Corral* has a revealing sequence in this regard. Autry is in a saloon and ends up being asked to sing a song. He grabs a guitar and stands beside the piano, on the floor, singing to the tavern's patrons, who are both sitting and standing. As Figure 1.3 (c) shows, there is no stage, and although Autry is standing under a large archway, neither he nor the camera uses it as a makeshift proscenium—in fact, his body actually blocks our view of the base of the arch. As also happens in instances where Autry does sing on a

stage of some sort, the audience encroaches upon the performing space, even surrounding him as they do here. In other films the onscreen audience joins him in singing familiar songs from their seats, another way of negating the separation between performer and audience. In a few films, including *Git Along Little Dogies* (1937) and *Stardust on the Sage* (1942), Autry and his co-stars even encourage the cinema audience to join in the sing-along; in the latter film, Smiley Burnette directs "you folks out there in the theater" to sing along to "Deep in the Heart of Texas" as he points to the words appearing on the screen. This kind of direct address is one of the more prominent distance-bridging techniques Feuer recognizes in the musical (1993, 35–42). Yet in these singing cowboy films, the performers on screen are literally including the cinema audience (or attempting to) in the singing instead of performing for them, blurring the boundaries between performer and audience, producer and consumer more thoroughly than most Hollywood musicals. Thus, the singing cowboy film works with much of the same ideology as the musicals in the traditional canon, but with far fewer markers of professional entertainment.

Figure 1.3 a—c: Judy Garland sings in windows (a) and door frames (b) in the family home in Meet Me in St. Louis*, while Gene Autry avoids such framing positions in a saloon in* The Old Corral *(c).*

The music in the singing cowboy film promotes another ideological aspect of the musical genre: utopianism. Dyer says that the musical offers "the image of 'something better' to escape into, or something we want deeply that our day-to-day lives don't provide" (1981, 177). It does not offer a particular plan for achieving utopia, but rather offers a utopian "sensibility."[12] Dyer (1981), Feuer (1993), and Altman (1987) agree that this utopianism is often promoted through a strong sense of nostalgia for a shared, mythicized American past. This mythical past can be signified through setting, such as the turn-of-the century cities in *Meet Me in St. Louis* and *Coney Island* (1943), or through the use of old songs and past forms of entertainment, such as minstrelsy or vaudeville, as well as through other means. In the singing cowboy films, nostalgia is often achieved

[12] For an account of the utopian in musicals, see Grant 2012, 41–45.

through old songs and new songs that seem old, and, similarly, through old forms of entertainment and new forms that seem old.

Autry's films, and many other singing cowboy films, are set not in the mythicized Old West, but in the modern rural America of the 1930s. As a cowboy, however, he stands in the films as a link between the premodern and the modern, between past and present, for the rural community. The film settings are often a blend of nostalgic Old West icons such as the horse, the unfenced prairie, and the six-shooter, and images of contemporary society such as the car, the tractor, and the radio. A simple example in a sequence from *Down Mexico Way* has Autry traveling to the title country, driving a car and hauling his horse in a trailer. When the car breaks down, the next shot shows Autry using his horse to tow the car (see Figures 1.4 a–b). Here, as in many of his films, the traditional ways of the rural community prove to be more reliable than so-called modern 'conveniences.'

The plots of Autry's films often revolve around his helping the community learn to cope with the problems of the Depression and increasing modernization (Tan 2001), while the musical performances invoke a strong sense of nostalgia for the days and values of the frontier. Historical forms of entertainment such as minstrelsy and medicine shows appear from time to time, as do barn dances, which are presented as traditional communal events, although, according to Stanfield, they were actually an invention of 1930s radio programs (2002, 68–70). Thus the films blend new forms of commercial entertainment with venerated traditional forms, presenting both categories as integrated into community life.

Figure 1.4 a–b: Down Mexico Way*, mingling of past and present in horse and car.*

The songs themselves are also often a mixture of the old, like "Oh! Susanna" and "Home on the Range," and the new passing as old, like "When the Bloom is on the Sage (Round-Up Time in Texas)" and "On the Sunset Trail." According to both Stanfield and Tan, these new cowboy songs intentionally use folk-song stylings and lyrical content to invoke nostalgia, as "familiar names, events, and places help locate the songs in a recognizable historical (and firmly American) past" (Stanfield 2002, 55). This seamless blend of old and new, especially in the musical performances, firmly grounds nostalgia for the Old West as the utopian sensibility of the modern rural society depicted in the films. This utopianism is confirmed by the musical involvement of the entire community in many songs. Autry often extends this sensibility to the film audience through the typical musical device of direct address, looking straight into the camera as he sings. In *Git Along Little Dogies* it is he, rather than Burnette, who leads both the onscreen audience and the theater audience in a community sing-along, complete with the words printed along the bottom of the screen.

If nostalgia for a shared but imagined utopian past is the driving force behind such musicals as *Meet Me in St. Louis* and *Oklahoma!*, as Knapp (2005, 119–51) and Altman (1981, 272–327) both have it, then these films have a clear antecedent in the 1930s singing cowboy film. Knapp, however, primarily traces theatrical influences on musical films, rather than looking at influences from other films. Altman's theory of genre, despite being able to take into account "the influence of one genre on another" (1981, 114), nevertheless limits the influence of the western film to the scenery of folk musicals with wilderness and western settings (1981, 182). It should be clear from the case study, however, that singing cowboy films do more than that: they act as a link between the genres of the non-singing western and the musical. Indeed, it is difficult to believe that the 1943 original stage production of *Oklahoma!* did not draw upon the persona of the singing cowboy, by then a well-established fixture in film, radio, and recorded music. Many of Autry's films open as both the stage and film versions of *Oklahoma!* do, with

the star cowboy singing for his own pleasure as he rides through the countryside, and several of the plots of Autry's films center around the idea that, as one song in *Oklahoma!* puts it, "The Farmer and the Cowman should be friends."

In fact, there are only three key differences between Autry's films and Altman's folk musical: first, Autry's films take place in the present time while the folk musical usually takes place in the past; second, Autry's films rarely center on romance, the linchpin for Altman's definition of the musical; and, finally, Autry's films rarely involve folk dancing of any kind. His films, however, do often emphasize family relationships among the members of the community, and although the family home of Altman's folk musical does not have a strong presence in Autry's films, the two film groups nevertheless share the settings of small towns and rural areas, "where everyone is a neighbor, where each season's rituals bring the entire population together" (Altman 1981, 275). In both kinds of films, everyone in the community sings "because music is a natural means of expression" and "is as much a part of the life cycle as eating and sleeping" (Altman 1981, 287). Most importantly, both groups of films use a strong sense of nostalgia for a mythicized past, as presented primarily through musical performance, to establish a distinctly American, conservative community.

The immense popularity and sheer number of Autry's films—he made over fifty features from 1935 to 1942, when he entered military service—solidified his image as an authentic cowboy and torchbearer for the values of rural America—an image that was first developed in his radio appearances, refined in his films for Republic, and carried through to his live performances. It should be remembered that the important elements of his persona, such as amateurism, authenticity, and folkiness, are no less a construction than the personae of Kelly, Garland, and the like. It is telling that Autry's cowboy persona was first developed in the early 1930s by his radio announcer at WLS in Chicago, Anne Williams, who was herself an influential voice on the network owned by Sears, Roebuck. She introduced Autry's performances with fabricated idyllic scenes of a ranch upbringing

and accounts of him arriving at the studio "fresh as a daisy" after an early morning ride. Autry even credits her for inspiring him to start dressing the part in everyday life so that his persona would be both consistent and iconic (George-Warren 2007, 80-81). And, of course, the Sears, Roebuck catalogue soon began carrying Autry-endorsed, western-themed merchandise, such as children's guitars. By the late 1930s, Autry's popularity had reached far beyond his target small-town audience, and his films, recordings, and public appearances garnered attention in both major American and international cities. In an early example of what is referred to as synergy in the entertainment industries, both the narratives and the musical performances in Autry's films worked cohesively with the other aspects of his entertainment career to present a carefully constructed Autry persona to rural movie audiences and emerging western music markets, in which he was a major figure.

Looking Ahead

Neale (2000), Staiger, Altman (1998, 1999), and Tudor all call for genre studies that do not simply organize films under a taxonomic rubric, but rather shed light on the various relationships that were (and are) an inextricable part of Hollywood filmmaking: relationships among different film cycles, relationships among filmmakers in various roles and at various studios, relationships between Hollywood studios and exhibitors, between studios and audiences, exhibitors and audiences, even audiences and the films themselves.[13] The brief look at singing cowboy films above has already suggested one way to put the call into action: by looking at the relationships between the musical genre and other media industries. Hilmes (1990), for example, examines the relationship between Hollywood and radio. Her study, and the history of the American popular music

[13] Obviously, still another way to extend the reach of historical and critical accounts of the film musical is to engage repertoires beyond Hollywood. To this, see especially chapters in Marshall and Stilwell 2000, Cohan 2002b, and Conrich and Tincknell 2006.

industry by Russell and David Sanjek (1996), both point to large-scale interweavings between the film industry and other media industries. If musical films are placed in this kind of industrial context, they become part of a web of relationships among film, radio, recording, and music publishing. In this connection, Barry Keith Grant goes so far as to claim that "any analysis of the film musical is necessarily incomplete without a consideration of the genre's relation to developments in popular music and the recording industry" (1986, 195). Despite the fact that his statement is now more than twenty-five years old, Grant's brief study of early rock'n'roll musicals remains the only work that directly examines this relationship. Decker, Stanfield, and Mundy all offer key insights into the relationship between certain groups of films and the popular music industry, but the focus of their attention is not the musical genre.

The studies mentioned above all reveal various aspects of the relationship between the musical genre and the popular music industries. One way Hollywood assimilated rock 'n' roll music, for example, was by taming it to the conservative conventions of the musical (Grant 1986). Singing cowboy films are inextricably linked to the rise and consolidation of country and western music, primarily consumed via radio and recordings (Stanfield 2002). Astaire created his screen performances both in reaction to and as contributions to popular music trends, particularly those related to jazz (Decker 2011). Even the films in the traditional canon of musicals point to the relationships between musicals and other media. Composer biopics, such as MGM's *Till the Clouds Roll By* (1946), and songbook musicals, such as MGM's *An American in Paris* and *Singin' in the Rain*, have obvious tie-ins with the music publishing industry, which would then use the film's success to revitalize sales of former hit songs. Arthur Freed, as a former Tin Pan Alley songwriter, had a strong stake in these sorts of musicals, although this fact is often left relatively unexamined in studies of the films he produced. Many studios held copyrights to the songs used in their films; some even owned record labels and publishing

houses, further complicating the relationship between musicals and other media industries.

Stars also participated in these intermedia relationships. Autry, Crosby, Doris Day, Elvis Presley, and Annette Funicello, among others, all had a strong presence in other media before they became musical film stars, and they all continued to record and give live or televised performances while they made films. Other musical stars, such as Judy Garland, took the opposite path, becoming radio and recording stars because of their film popularity. As with any prominent film actor, their onscreen characters had to contend or cooperate with their offscreen personae, largely defined by how they were presented in other media. Feuer's assertion that it is important for the star to be presented as an amateur, as someone who performs simply for the love of performing, in the musical genre because it effaces his or her role as a commercial agent could be equally applicable to the star's presentation in all media outlets. Autry's conservative, genuine persona was presented consistently in all his public appearances, and Astaire's television performances were often constructed with the same spontaneous style and bricolage techniques that marked his film performances, albeit without the narrative framework of a feature-length film. Bing Crosby and Bob Hope's appearances in USO and radio shows present their supposed real-life relationship in a manner strikingly similar to their characters' relationship in Paramount's *Road* movies, the repertoire to be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 below. For these and many other musical stars, their film performances must be placed in the context of their presence in other entertainment industries.

The two case studies in the following chapters are intended as a substantial effort to discuss the musical genre in its historical contexts. These analyses draw on production histories as evidenced in archival documents, promotional campaigns demonstrated in multiple media outlets, and audience reception as indicated by film reviews and box-office performance. The limitations of reviews and theater receipts in studying reception are many, yet to ignore reception entirely would be an overcorrection. These accounts of

reception, then, should be taken for what they are: evidence of the opinions of mainstream entertainment journalists and indications of theatregoers' choices among limited options. For all their limitations, though, these accounts still provide useful evidence of mainstream interpretations of the films and of the commercial success of the films at hand against Hollywood's larger output. As in the brief case study of singing cowboy films above, these production, promotion, and reception circumstances are placed alongside aesthetic examinations of the films, so that genre conventions are considered in light of the web of commercial, intermedia relationships in which Hollywood films participate.

Chapters 2 and 3 presents Hope and Crosby's *Road* films, which were made at Paramount Pictures, one of the major film studios, from 1940 to 1952. These films include *Road to Singapore* (1940), *Road to Zanzibar* (1941), *Road to Morocco* (1943), *Road to Utopia* (which went into production in 1943 but was shelved due to product backlog until its 1945 release), *Road to Rio* (1947), and *Road to Bali* (1952). The pair made one final film in this cycle, *Road to Hong Kong* (1962), but this was produced independently of Paramount and thus is not included in this study. The films made by the two stars, both together and separately, helped make Paramount the most profitable studio over the course of the 1940s (Gomery 2005, 91–93). Crosby and Hope were consistently among Hollywood's top box office stars in the 1940s, and both had successful careers prior to their film pairing. Like Autry, Crosby was a popular radio singer whose success as such was intricately tied to the rise of a popular music genre—in Crosby's case, swing and the singing style of crooning. Crosby continued to develop his star persona in his films, which then tied in with his recordings and radio shows. Hope also had a successful radio career as a comedian and vaudevillian performer. The pair presented characters in their Paramount films that remained consistent when they appeared together in other media. In fact, as is evident in the stars' contracts and other production documents, the style and narratives of the films were subservient to the presentation of the stars'

personae. Far from behaving as studio contract players, Hope and Crosby exercised a great deal of control over the content and even the production of their films for Paramount.

Chapter 2 presents a brief account of the intermedia relationships in Hollywood in the late 1930s. Vaudeville's influence looms large in the historical moment before the initial *Road* film, and the application of Henry Jenkins' (1992) vaudeville aesthetic to the *Road* films seems more than appropriate in light of the film cycle's contexts. To this end, I then discuss the design of the Hope-Crosby *Road* films with respect to their musical performances, especially the ways in which the vaudeville aesthetic influences both the cycle's presentation of its stars and its use of reflexivity—two common concerns in discussions of the musical genre. Eight act types that recur throughout the films—the Con, La Lamour, Bing Swings, the Song-and-Patter, the Crooner, Comic Seduction, the Dialect Act, and the Exotic Specialty—are then examined in turn, with the first four appearing in Chapter 2 and the latter four appearing in Chapter 3. The final section of Chapter 3 draws together several strands in a critique of camp readings, another common topic in discussions of the musical, of the *Road* film cycle.

Chapters 4 and 5 presents Disney's animated features in the 1950s: namely, *Cinderella* (1950), *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), *Peter Pan* (1953), *Lady and the Tramp* (1955), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). Walt Disney Productions was the most successful independent studio in Hollywood, as well as the dominant studio in animation. Disney's post-war products were innovative in that they targeted children and young families—the growing suburban middle class—and presented an increasingly consistent corporate brand across multiple media outlets. While the major studios were struggling to come to grips with the developing television industry and with the Supreme Court's 1948 anti-trust ruling, Disney was experimenting with cross-platform promotion and revenue sources outside the box office that led directly to media conglomeration.

Chapter 4 offers an investigation of the promotional campaigns for each film, which were enacted across a wide variety of media and merchandise and which demonstrate the studio's goals both for each film and for the larger corporation. As the nature of Disney's corporate activities changed, so, too, did the campaign's messaging and interpretive framework, so that by the decade's end the promotions emphasized the Disney brand over any individual film. Chapter 5 looks at how the aesthetics of the films changed over the course of the decade. The narrative that emerges from this style study is neither one of progression nor one of dissolution of the musical genre. Rather, conventions of the musical, as well as those of other genres, are deployed in each film to suit the studio's current goals, resulting in a consistent house style of which the musical genre is one primary component.

When considered together, these case studies demonstrate how the classical Hollywood musical has long been part of a larger network of synergistic practices across the entertainment industries. Many of the conventions and styles that genre theorists say define the film musical are present because of the specific commercial situations in which the films were produced and consumed. More studies of this sort are needed—particularly studies revisiting the traditional canon of musical films—in order to place our critical understanding of the musical into a historical framework and take into account the external commercial conditions that influenced the aesthetic style and narrative content of the classical Hollywood musical.

Chapter 2: The Vaudeville Aesthetic, Star Performance, and Reflexivity in Paramount's *Road* Films

Introduction

"Well, here we are, off on another Road!"

—Bing Crosby in *Road to Utopia*

> A comedy that sought to integrate some central aspects of the vaudeville aesthetic into dominant studio practice would be a strange-looking film, indeed. It would be a text shaped by competing if not directly contradictory aesthetic impulses. Such a film would assert the centrality of narrative only to puncture that narrative with a series of self-contained performance sequences that are often far more memorable than any story the film might tell. Such a film would rupture character consistency to allow for a constant display of performer virtuosity. (Jenkins 1992, 98)

Henry Jenkins is referring to early 1930s slapstick comedy films, but he might as well be describing the Hollywood musical. These films are frequently remembered by scholars, journalists, and fans alike more for the musical numbers in a given film than for the details of the plot, and for the star performers rather than complex characters. Because of these and other similarities in musical and comedy film genres, the discussions in this chapter will often apply theoretical concepts describing film comedy to the musical. This seems especially appropriate since the *Road* films I analyze here enjoy extremely limited attention in the literature on musicals, but a great deal in analyses of film comedy. In particular, I draw on the work of Steve Seidman (1981) and Frank Krutnik (1995), who both discuss the *Road* films as part of the comedian comedy film genre. Tellingly, both of these scholars recognize an affinity between the musical and the comedian comedy, which Krutnik connects to the cinema of attractions (1995, 22-23).

Comedies have gag sequences as their primary source of spectacle, while musicals feature performances of song and dance. As both comedian comedy and musical, Paramount's Road films contain both types of spectacle, as indicated by the use of Bing

Crosby, a star known primarily for his singing, and Bob Hope, known for his verbal wit. Gags and musical numbers have much in common, and, as Neale and Krutnik have observed, the two often work together (1990, 48). Jenkins' discussion of the possible functions of gags in comedy films applies equally well to musical numbers (1992, 101-107). Like gags, musical numbers may be "more or less integrated" into the narrative progression of a film, may provide moments of visual spectacle or emotional release, may simultaneously intersect with plot development and disrupt the narrative unity, may operate as semantic elements contributing to the thematic concerns or genre identification of a film, may resolve character or plot conflicts, or may participate in the process of narration by participating in multiple diegetic levels of a film. Both musical numbers and gags are closed narrative units, with each type of piece operating according to its own internal formal logic regardless of the narrative logic of the film. In the studio era, both units also held unique status in the production process in that gags and musical numbers required specialized writers that tended worked as independent contractors rather than studio personnel and thus enjoyed greater control over their careers.

Scholars also discuss the film musical in ways that highlight the genre's disjointed structure. Altman describes the musical as "a series of nearly independent fragments," which he then sees as pairing neatly in order to resolve essential conflicts between the central male and female characters (1987, 16-58). The traditional causalities of plot, he concludes, have "little importance" in the narrative structure of the musical. Though I will argue in this chapter that Altman's "dual-focus narrative" is but one type of narrative available to the musical, his language is telling. He demonstrates that the genre is not defined by inventive plot or compelling character development, which "are to such an extent conventional in the musical that they leave little room for variation." Instead, it is the way performance numbers are structured and arranged that creates meaning in film musicals.

The style, structure, and arrangement of musical numbers are the focus of this chapter. The film comedy literature that examines the *Road* films tends to focus on gags and jokes rather than musical performance, and on Hope's comic persona, dismissing Crosby as little more than a crooning straight man even though he was paid more than Hope and received top billing. In discussing these films as musicals, I give the musical performances a central role in the deployment of the vaudeville aesthetic, placing Crosby and Hope on equal terms as I demonstrate how both performers use musical numbers to showcase their star personae. I draw upon the work of Jenkins and others to show how the vaudeville aesthetic system could be employed in the classical Hollywood film in general, and in the musical comedy in particular, to privilege the performance of a clearly defined star persona over the presentation of fictional plot and character. I then discuss the design of the *Road* films with respect to their musical performances, especially the ways in which the vaudeville aesthetic influences both the films's content and the narrative trajectory. Eight act types—the Con, La Lamour, Bing Swings, the Song-and-Patter, the Crooner, the Comic Seduction, the Dialect Act, and the Exotic Specialty—are examined in turn in Chapters 2 and 3. The first four of these acts, which are discussed in this chapter, exemplify the ways in which the vaudeville aesthetic consistently undermine the integrity of the films' fictional plot through reflexivity and the foregrounding of star performance.

Vaudeville Roots

"I feel like I'm back in vaudeville"

—Bob Hope in *Road to Utopia*

"Films Use More Vauders" was the headline in *The Billboard* issue on September 6, 1941. The accompanying article lists over fifty performers who started in vaudeville and variety shows but were adding Hollywood features and shorts to their resumés. The unnamed staff writer cites the recent box-office success of the films of Bob Hope, Abbot

and Costello, Red Skelton, and the Andrews Sisters as the main reason why variety performers were filling Hollywood rosters in such numbers. It should also be noted that the term "vaudeville" was, at that time, being applied to any kind of stage-based variety entertainment, including the Ice Capades, night club floor shows, and musical revues. In other words, vaudeville in the early '40s had become a recognizable style of entertainment and was not strictly associated with a specific kind of venue or professional entertainment circuit, as it had been earlier in the century—and as recently as the 1920s.

The *Billboard* writer was actually documenting a longstanding historical trend. The American film industry had grown up alongside—in the case of the nickelodeon, literally inside—the well-established vaudeville circuit. As the technology-based entertainment media of film and radio grew into large commercial enterprises, they quickly cannibalized the best vaudeville talent, including performers and writers. By the time of the first Hope and Crosby *Road* film in 1940, the traditional vaudeville circuit was all but dead as an entertainment form; yet vaudeville continued to exert a powerful influence in both radio and film, and even later in television.[1]

Much of vaudeville's influence over Hollywood came by way of the radio waves. Michele Hilmes describes the 1930s radio variety show, "the single most popular genre on the nighttime air," as being largely based on vaudeville entertainment forms and even populated by veteran vaudeville performers (1997, 183-184; 1990, 63).[2] Seidman also argues that as increasing numbers of vaudevillians found work in radio programs, the medium's wide dissemination "[allowed] for the increased accessibility of the performing style generated by vaudeville" (1981, 19). As writers in both *Broadcasting* magazine and *Variety* documented in 1941, dozens of actors, musicians, writers, producers, and even

---

[1] John E. DiMeglio (1978) has briefly chronicled the importance of vaudeville professionals in the creation of radio variety shows.

[2] For an extended discussion on the influence of the minstrel show tradition on radio programming, see her chapter "Who We Are, Who We Are Not: The Emergence of National Narratives" in Hilmes 1997, 75-96.

popular sketches made the jump from radio to film in the late 1930s and early 1940s, so that the relationship between Hollywood and radio became, according to Hilmes, "increasingly symbiotic" (1990, 70). This symbiotic relationship is also confirmed by Thomas Schatz's account of Hollywood's increasing reliance during this time on pre-sold story properties and established stars, many of whom first gained popularity on the radio and the variety stage (1997).

Shifting international political climates also affected Hollywood filmmaking practices. Throughout 1939, John L. Scott of the *Los Angeles Times* reported on changing trends in Hollywood. In June he listed nine films that were recently either canceled or shelved because studios "don't know quite what to do with their controversial subjects which treat of political conditions in this country and abroad." In September and October of that same year, Scott noticed a marked shift in trending genres, reporting on increased numbers of musicals and slapstick comedies in development. The main reason he identified for this change was "the belief of movie makers that theatergoers are ready for gay, light screen entertainment at this time to relieve tension caused by the international situation" (24 September 1939). Roy Chartier of *Variety* observed the same changes in his 1939 retrospective, noting that "there is somewhat of a tendency, in view of the war, to turn to lighter entertainment on the psychological ground that the public mind is ripe for that now. Everything of a war character, notably anti-Nazi or anti-neutrality material, is out . . . " (3 January 1940).

The perceived public attitudes seemed to be confirmed by increased box-office receipts, as a May 1940 *Boxoffice* headline illustrates: "Musicals Again Register Gain; Viewed as Gloom Chasers in the Lowering Pall of War." In the spring of 1941, a writer in *The Billboard* magazine summarized the Hollywood genre situation as follows:

> The poor box-office returns of war propaganda and anti-Nazi pictures, as well as the unsatisfactory receipts grossed by heavy dramatic fare, are forcing producers, more than ever before, to turn to comedy and music. Exhibitors are crying for tunefests, claiming that customers come into their theaters to while away a couple of hours and don't want thought-provoking fare to tax their troubled minds. (22 March 1941)

Less than a week later a *Washington Post* critic observed, "Maybe Hollywood is just trying to take the minds of theater-goers off their respective troubles, but it appears that comedy reigns supreme in the screen capital today" (27 March 1941).

Because both slapstick comedies and musicals surged in popularity in the early 1940s, they provided jobs (if not always lucrative ones) for many vaudeville-trained performers, writers, and producers. By 1943, *The Billboard* was announcing a "Vaude Revival—On Screen": "It is the terrific popularity of musicals, primarily, which has the film moguls literally begging for big attractions. Musicals have to have talent of the type used on vaude and night club stages, and Hollywood is doing all it can to land that talent" (1 May 1943).

These trends held true at Paramount Pictures perhaps more than at any other studio in Hollywood. In May of 1940, Paramount Vice President of Sales Neil Agnew announced the studio's upcoming slate of films, framing the new season of releases in the same way as the newspaper and magazine writers had done: as a response to the worsening war in Europe:

> With the whole world filled with apprehension and uneasiness over the terrible drama now being enacted on the battlefields of Europe, we need as never before the antidote of laughter, music, romance and thrills. We will leave the problem and propaganda pictures to the others and will give the world the laughs and escapist excitement it needs. (*New York Times*, 25 May 1940)

A Paramount ad in *Boxoffice* that same month followed suit with copy that read, "Get on the sunny side with Paramount! What Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Public want is to RELAX!" (11 May 1940). The twelve-page advertisement presented over a dozen

upcoming films as escapist entertainment in the genres of musical, comedy, thriller, and adventure films. The next month a Paramount advertisement in *Motion Picture Herald* in reiterated this message with "Light entertainment is the right entertainment! And Paramount has nothing else but!" (19 June 1940). Less than two weeks later Paramount's *Variety* ad boasted the studio's commitment to escapism:

> We were the first to kick Old Man Gloom in the pants. We were the first to give the sob stuff the big brush off. We were the first to start building the biggest bunch of belly-laugh bonanzas in the history of the business. Now we see all the other companies climbing on the Paramount Band Wagon for a joy ride of LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT. (10 July 1940, original emphasis)

In order to specialize in "light entertainment," Paramount hired the "largest list of radio and record talent" at any film studio, according to one *Variety* writer (13 August 1941). Crosby, Hope, and their *Road* show co-star Dorothy Lamour were all among Paramount's box-office stars who had established themselves in other popular media before signing film contracts.

In pairing escapist films with stars from radio and recording, Paramount clearly intended to create a recognizable house style. Schatz has established that, in the years leading up to and during WWII, "each studio's stable of contract stars and its repertoire of presold genre variations were its most visible and viable resources," and that these "star-genre formulas" were "a means of stabilizing marketing and sales, of bringing efficiency and economy to high-end feature production, and of distinguishing the company's collective output from that of its competitors" (1997, 43). As Paramount's highest profile and highest grossing films of the 1940s, then, the *Road* film cycle serves as a quintessential example of the studio's house style. As escapist fare featuring stars from vaudeville, radio, and recording, the film cycle is also a prime example of some of the dominant trends in Hollywood in the late 1930s and 1940s.

Bing Crosby and Bob Hope both began their show business careers on the vaudeville circuits, and at the time of the first *Road* film's release, both were variety

entertainers with their own radio shows. Malcolm Macfarlane (2001) has documented Crosby's collegiate variety show performances while attending Gonzaga University in the early 1920s, and Gary Giddins has detailed at length Crosby's pre-Paul Whiteman vaudeville experience with hometown buddy Al Rinker (2001, 125-140). Though the pair toured for less than a year before they were offered singing spots with Whiteman, their time on the vaudeville stage helped Crosby define his performance style. Crosby and Rinker's act, "Two Boys and a Piano," was marked by scat singing, humor, and "the illusion of spontaneity" (Giddins 2001, 139). After a short nightclub stint with two fellow Whiteman singers as the Rhythm Boys, Crosby starred as himself in a series of slapstick musical shorts for Mack Sennett. By the filming of the first Road picture, he had starred in his own variety radio show for six years and continued to headline live performance venues. Crosby's partnership with Hope, thus, was not a new performance style for Crosby, but a return to his own vaudeville roots.

Hope spent a considerable amount of time in vaudeville and theatrical entertainment in the 1920s and '30s, first in a two-man dance act with George Byrne, then as a solo comedian and emcee. Vaudeville reviewers called him a "nervy gag dispenser" (*Variety*, 27 November 1929), a "breezy talker" (*Billboard*, 16 November 1929), and "a good nut comic" (*Billboard*, 11 January 1930). After starring as "the most engaging" principal, according one *Variety* writer, in the otherwise much maligned *Ballyhoo of 1932*, Hope actually shared a bill and a comedy bit with Crosby at the Capitol in New York. One routine they created was repeated in *Zanzibar* as the dueling orchestra conductors (Giddins 2001, 302, 563). Hope continued to perform in high-profile revues and musical comedies throughout the 1930s, refining his signature rapid-fire wisecracking and continuing to incorporate song and dance into his comedy acts. After making guest appearances on radio variety shows, Hope gained his first network radio contract in 1937, and in 1938 he began hosting his own variety comedy show for Pepsodent on NBC. That year also saw Hope's first full-length film, *The Big Broadcast of 1938*, for Paramount.

Actually, both Crosby and Hope garnered attention early in their film careers due to their appearances in *The Big Broadcast* films, though Crosby made his mark six years earlier than Hope. Paramount's four *Big Broadcast* films (1932, 1936, 1937, and 1938), each of which involves putting together an on-air revue to save a troubled radio station, are just a few examples of the studio's attempt in the 1930s to capitalize on the popularity of radio personalities and also the cultural pervasiveness of radio entertainment.

The *Road* films, then, carry vaudevillian influences from the general trends in Hollywood filmmaking at the time, from the particular house style Paramount employed and promoted, and from the performance backgrounds of the two major stars. Two aspects of the film cycle's production practices offered further opportunities for the influence of the vaudeville aesthetic. The first involves the level of control Crosby and Hope were allowed to wield over certain production elements. The second involves the structure and pacing of the films.

Starting with a contract dated April 26, 1935, Paramount allowed Crosby approval of stories, directors, music directors, and leading ladies in each of his films. By the time John Burke and James Van Heusen were contracted to write songs for *Road to Zanzibar* in September 1940, Crosby was also given approval over the individual songs he was to perform for most of his films. In 1948, Crosby gained control over the hiring of songwriters for his Paramount films.[3] From the first *Road* film onward, he even exercised a great deal of influence over the arrangements and recording practices. According to one retake request, the music for "I'm Too Romantic" had to be rerecorded in a lower key, at a faster tempo, and with fewer musicians "to meet Crosby's objections" to the first

[3] According to Crosby's contract with Paramount dated December 30, 1940, the only time Crosby did not have song approval was in films for which Irving Berlin provided the score. Contracts for Crosby and for the team of Burke and Van Heusen are located in the Paramount Pictures contract summaries, Margaret Herrick Library (MHL), Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS).

recording.[4] In a memo dated September 27, 1939, production manager Harold Schwartz states that "all songs will be shot with direct recording of the voices on the set to low playback."[5] These practices continued during production for the second film when Crosby insisted on having Tommy Dorsey's orchestra record with him directly on set for "You Lucky People, You."[6] This departure from the dominant filmmaking practices in Hollywood at the time, which typically involved capturing the audio tracks for onscreen performances in a recording studio rather than on set, clearly demonstrates the amount of power Crosby held over his musical performances.

Though Hope did not have the approval rights or musical control granted to Crosby, he was expected to have his personal comedy writers collaborate with the studio's screenwriters to develop gags and sketches for all of his films. Beginning with his contract dated January 5, 1940, Hope was paid a salary as a writer, separate from his actor's salary, out of which he was to pay his writers. In fact, no record survives showing that any of Hope's writers ever received his own contract unless he became a screenwriter for Paramount, which a few did. Instead, Hope's writer's contract always included instructions that Hope was to "furnish services of his then current radio writers necessary for writing dialogue, skits, gags, routines, comedy sequences, etc., for each production in which he appears."[7] Anecdotal evidence maintains that Crosby's radio writers were often also involved in writing some of Crosby's on-set 'ad libs,' comic retorts, and signature lingo (Giddins 2001, 569-578).

---

[4] *Road to Singapore*, retake request dated October 5, 1939, Paramount Pictures production records, MHL, AMPAS.

[5] Memo from Schwartz to R.L. Johnston, Paramount Pictures production records, MHL, AMPAS.

[6] *Road to Zanzibar*, retake request dated November 4, 1940, Paramount Pictures production records, MHL, AMPAS.

[7] Paramount Pictures contract summary dated June 12, 1941, MHL, AMPAS. Similar language appears in all of Hope's 1940s Paramount contracts in this collection.

These practices had two aesthetic consequences. First, the two men's writers brought with them the vaudeville aesthetic, since most, if not all, of the professional writers Hope and Crosby used for their radio shows and personal appearances got their start in vaudeville and other variety entertainment, notably including Barney Dean, Mort Lachman, and Jack Rose. One does have to acknowledge, however, that it would be difficult to find comedians and comedy writers working in Hollywood at that time who had not started their careers in variety entertainment. Second, the control of specific elements of production ensured a consistency of star persona across multiple media platforms that was beyond Hollywood's usual typecasting practices. This is especially important since both men were entertainers with established personae before they made the first *Road* film. Because they had lucrative careers outside their film contracts, the two men retained a great deal of control over their own star images instead of relinquishing their public personae entirely to the studio's publicity machine. Crosby's control over the musical details allowed his *Road* film performances to seem like a natural extension of his work in radio and recording. His unofficial use of outside writers also allowed him to inject his idiosyncratic manner of speaking, which was a distinct feature of his radio show (Giddins 2001, 406-412). Similarly, the studio's mandate for Hope to involve his comedy writers demonstrates the filmmakers' intent for the gags and sketches in the films to resemble those of Hope's non-film performances. This practice also allowed Hope to assert some level of control over the kind of comedy he performed in the films, since the writers were contracted to him rather than to the studio.

If the *Road* films are beginning to sound like a collection of musical and comic performances, it is because they are just that. As one reviewer said of *Morocco*, in these films, "They sing intermittently, kid incessantly and 'gag' outrageously to a mounting storm of hilarity" (*Washington Post*, 16 January 1943). Plot is so conventionalized and unimportant in these films, as I will demonstrate, that reviewers rarely even mentioned it.

A look at the structure of the films and the changes the scripts underwent reveals evidence of the vaudeville aesthetic at work in the very framework of the films.

Jenkins has demonstrated that the fragmented and performer-centered nature of the vaudeville show meant that, at the level of the act and the show, plot and character development were relatively unimportant (1992, 63–65, 78–81). Instead, the vaudeville bill was arranged "with an eye toward the creation of the highest possible degree of novelty and variety" (63). If there is a sense of progression, it is due to an energetic trajectory consisting of intensification rather than a narrative trajectory of plot development. Jenkins says that the organization of gags in an act often focused on cohesion rather than narrative integration, and the organization of acts in a show had as its goal intensification and affective climax rather than narrative arc or plot resolution.

Intensification is a clear goal in the *Road* films. Each film has near its end a climactic sequence in which the audiovisual spectacle reaches new heights, and the jokes and gags fly in rapid succession. The first three films feature feasts for the local natives. In *Singapore*, Hope and Crosby sneak into the Kaigoon wedding feast; in *Zanzibar*, they are the main course for village of African cannibals; and in *Morocco*, the pair turn a desert feast into a war between cutthroat bands of Arabs. *Utopia*'s climax involves a bomb, a dog, and an avalanche. Both *Rio* and *Bali* end with elaborate wedding ceremonies, and *Rio* throws in a thundering cavalry that never arrives. Pacing and intensification are so important in the films that the filmmakers even cut two musical numbers because they slowed down the flow of gags too much.

The number excised from *Zanzibar* was the Crosby-Hope number, "Birds of a Feather." A sheet of "Suggested Cutting Changes" dated February 1, 1941, includes a note to "Cut out boys' song 'Birds of a Feather.' Substitute the orchestra leader routine in place of the song or have the police come up and get the boys immediately after their dance with girls."[8] The routine in the memo is indeed the one Crosby and Hope first

[8] Paramount Pictures scripts, MHL, AMPAS.

performed at the Capitol Theatre in 1932. Two days later writer Don Hartman sent a memo to producer Paul Jones explaining the suggestion: “Cut song in cafe. I would try the orchestra leader bit, but the story would have pace if the police closed in almost as soon as the boys reach the stage.”[9] For this sequence, the filmmakers’ priority was clearly the “pace” of the sequence, rather than any narrative progression. If "the story” had been the driving goal, there might be no performance at all at the moment in question. Yet the sequence does include the narratively irrelevant orchestra leader routine, allowing the two stars an opportunity for an entertaining performance.

The song cut in *Morocco* was supporting actress Dona Drake’s spotlight number “Aladdin’s Daughter,” which she was to sing at some point during the climactic series of pranks in the desert oasis. In an early version of the script, she performed her song while Crosby and Hope prepared their sabotaging tricks.[10] An undated sheet of “Cuts & Changes,” as discussed by producer Buddy DeSylva and writer Frank Butler at “First Running,” contains a directive to move the song, so that Drake performs after Hope and Crosby have prepared the tricks, but before they actually set them in motion: “DeSylva feels once they start they should play right through.”[11] Drake recorded the song on March 31, 1942, but on September 2, the rights to the song were returned to the songwriters.[12] Though no direct statement of the reason for the cut exists in the available production

---

[9] Paramount Pictures scripts, MHL, AMPAS.

[10] Paramount Pictures scripts, MHL, AMPAS.

[11] Paramount Pictures scripts, MHL, AMPAS.

[12] Recording Program, 31 March 1942, Paramount Pictures scripts, MHL, AMPAS. The song may have been cut as early as April 3. On that date Louis Lipstone sent a letter to Luigi Luraschi informing the Production Code Administration that a certain verse to the song would not need to be rewritten, per the PCA’s instructions, because it would no longer be used in the film (Paramount Pictures Censorship Department records, MHL, AMPAS). It is unclear from the wording if Lipstone means that the particular verse or the entire song was cut from the film.

papers, DeSylva's direction that the series of pranks should be played "right through" suggests that the song was eventually cut for pacing, rather than plot, purposes.

If the films' structures are thought of in terms of a vaudeville show, the musical numbers become individual acts that help make up the bill for each film. The term 'act' here refers not to a narrative unit in a dramatic form (i.e., three-act structure in a play or film), but to the basic unit of variety entertainment. Table 2.1 demonstrates that the performance numbers in the *Road* films are remarkably consistent in their aesthetics. My purpose here is not to promote the creation of hardened categories into which a film's songs must fit, but to show that viewing a musical's performances through the lens of the vaudeville aesthetic can reveal hitherto unconsidered issues in the genre's aesthetic style and narrative structures. As column 3 in Table 2.1 demonstrates, the *Road* films make repeated use of a relatively small number of generic acts: the Con, La Lamour, Bing Swings, Two-Man Song-and-Patter, the Crooner, the Comic Seduction, the Dialect Act, and the Exotic Specialty.[13] The Con is a get-rich-quick scheme that generally ends unsuccessfully for Crosby and Hope; La Lamour is the leading lady's solo number; Bing Swings is Crosby's uptempo solo; the Song-and-Patter is a vaudeville-style duet with comic banter for Crosby and Hope; the Crooner is Crosby's romantic ballad, sung directly to Lamour; the Comic Seduction is a farcical love-making scene for Lamour and

---

[13] Other acts are apparent in the films, such as the animal act, but are not included here because they do not involve musical performances and are thus outside the scope of this study. These other acts, however, might be useful for a more thorough study of comedy and the vaudeville aesthetic in the film cycle. For instance, the animal act, which in vaudeville was an act that involved some kind of trained animal, occurs in four of the six films. In *Morocco* and *Utopia* talking animals (camels in the former and a fish in the latter) toss off one-liners in what would be called a bit, rather than a full act, on the variety stage due to its length. Another bit involves briefly turning Hope into a monkey in *Morocco* and *Bali*. Animal acts of greater length and more narrative involvement occur in *Zanzibar*, *Utopia*, and *Bali*. Hope wrestles a gorilla in *Zanzibar*, snuggles with a bear in *Utopia*, adopts a dog named Veronica with a peekaboo bang in *Utopia*, and attracts the attention of a widowed ape in *Bali*, prompting Crosby to rescue Hope by briefly crooning to the ape.

Hope in which she sings and he clowns; the Exotic Specialty is a large chorus number performed by the local natives; and the Dialect Act is Crosby and Hope's ethnic comedy act.

These eight labels are derived from terms used by vaudeville professionals and entertainment journalists. Three of them were borrowed directly from vaudeville. "Song and patter" was, by 1900, a standard term used to discuss variety acts in entertainment publications such as *Variety* and *The Billboard* in the U.S. and *The Stage* in Great Britain.[14] Similarly, "dialect act" appears in American papers as early as 1895, referring to variety acts involving ethnic humor and stereotyped characterizations, usually of black or Jewish Americans or German ("Dutch"), Irish, or Italian immigrants. The label "exotic specialty" originated in early twentieth-century variety and is still used in today's entertainment industry to indicate any act that seems non-western in origin and requires specialized skill beyond the standard acting-singing-dancing training of the professional entertainer. On the vaudeville bill of the early twentieth century, an exotic specialty was usually a spectacle-driven dance act involving a star performer, a family, or a troupe of dancers who were supposed to be foreigners performing their native dances.[15]

Two acts, the Con and the Comic Seduction, fit nicely into some standard vaudeville types, but I have chosen to give them more descriptive labels. The Con is a vaudeville sketch, a very general type of vaudeville act that, as Brett Page defines in his 1915 manual, *Writing for Vaudeville*, can last up to twenty minutes and involves a thin narrative that gives rise to amusing incidents (146–150). Because the label "vaudeville sketch" is so generalized, and because this sketch in the *Road* films deploys a consistent

---

[14] These publications occasionally use the variations "songs and patter" and "song and patters."

[15] As with "song and patter," variations of terms appear frequently, though the label "exotic" is used very consistently to refer to acts that make a spectacle out of foreign cultures. It should also be noted that scandals were common in which a vaudeville agent or circuit manager would create a fake foreign act with unknown American performers.

basic narrative frame, I chose to use my own descriptive term. Likewise, the Comic Seduction works nicely as a "Parody Two-Act," as Page describes it (1915, 134-135), though the act parodies a style of song rather than a specific hit song. As with the Con, I have used a label that demonstrates the consistency of the act's content rather than the generalized function expressed in the vaudeville term.

I derived the remaining three act labels from entertainment writers or more generally from characteristics of the performers' careers. Because these three are simply solo song performances, I have used terms that reflect the way they highlight aspects of the stars' personae. "La Lamour" was Dorothy Lamour's nickname in the press from the late '30s, and generally referred to her sex appeal. This seems a fitting label for an act intended to showcase her allure. "The Crooner" refers both to Crosby's signature singing style and to his nickname in the press beginning in 1932. The final term, "Bing Swings," references Crosby's association with that style of music. The labels for Crosby's two solo acts also allude to the expectation in both his films and radio programs that he will sing a sentimental ballad and an uptempo number.

In this and the next chapter, the eight acts are grouped and discussed according to specific narrative and critical concerns. The remainder of this chapter consists of an examination of star performance, in which the Con and La Lamour both figure, and a discussion of reflexivity, which includes analyses of Bing Swings and the Song-and-Patter. Chapter 3 focuses on how the vaudeville aesthetic inflects representations of gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity in the *Road* films. The subsequent discussion of romantic coupling includes the Crooner and the Comic Seduction, and the second section assesses nationalism and exoticism in the *Road* films, focusing on the Dialect Act and the Exotic Specialty. Each section, except for the conclusion of Chapter 3, begins with a brief definition of the acts in that group, then presents analysis of the style and function of those performances in the film cycle.

Table 2.1: The musical performance numbers in the Road *films and the act types to which they belong. The list is chronological for each film. For more on the terms in the "Act" column, see the discussion below.*

Film	Song	Act
Road to Singapore (1940)	"Captain Custard"	Two-Man Song-and-Patter
Road to Singapore	"The Moon and the Willow Tree"	La Lamour
Road to Singapore	"Sweet Potato Piper"	Bing Swings; The Con
Road to Singapore	"Too Romantic"	The Crooner
Road to Singapore	"Kaigoon"	Exotic Specialty; Dialect Act
Road to Zanzibar (1941)	"You Lucky People, You"	Bing Swings; The Con
Road to Zanzibar	Cut number, "Birds of a Feather" (replaced with orchestra leader sidewalk act)	Two-Man Song-and-Patter; Dialect Act
Road to Zanzibar	"African Etude"	Exotic Specialty
Road to Zanzibar	"You're Dangerous"	Comic Seduction
Road to Zanzibar	"It's Always You"	The Crooner
Road to Morocco (1942)	"Road to Morocco"	Two-Man Song-and-Patter
Road to Morocco	"Ho Hum (Ain't Got a Dime)"	Bing Swings
Road to Morocco	"Constantly"	Comic Seduction
Road to Morocco	"Moonlight Becomes You"	The Crooner
Road to Morocco	"Moonlight Becomes You" reprise	Parody of romantic ballad
Road to Morocco	"Desert Retreat (Sword Dance)"	Exotic Specialty
Road to Morocco	Cut number "Aladdin's Daughter"	Exotic Specialty?
Road to Utopia (1945)	"Good Time Charlie"	Two-Man Song-and-Patter; The Con
Road to Utopia	"It's Anybody's Spring"	Bing Swings
Road to Utopia	"Personality"	La Lamour
Road to Utopia	"Welcome to My Dream"	The Crooner
Road to Utopia	"Put It There, Pal"	Two-Man Song-and-Patter

Film	Song	Act
Road to Utopia	"Would You"	Comic Seduction
Road to Rio (1947)	"Apalachicola, Fla."	Two-Man Song-and-Patter; The Con
Road to Rio	"But Beautiful"	The Crooner
Road to Rio	"You Don't Have to Know the Language"	Bing Swings
Road to Rio	"Experience"	La Lamour
Road to Rio	"Batuque Nio Morro"	Exotic Specialty; Dialect Act
Road to Bali (1952)	"Chicago Style"	Two-Man Song-and-Patter
Road to Bali	"Moonflower"	La Lamour
Road to Bali	South Seas Ballet	Exotic Specialty
Road to Bali	"Hoot Mon"	Two-Man Song-and-Patter; Dialect Act
Road to Bali	"To See You Is To Love You"	The Crooner
Road to Bali	"Merry Go Runaround"	Bing Swings
Road to Bali	"Moonflower" reprise	La Lamour
Road to Bali	"Jungle Wedding March"	Exotic Specialty

Star Performance

"We run the gamut! We sing, we dance, we recite and then—you do your specialty."

—Bing Crosby in *Road to Rio*

I begin with the aspect of the vaudeville aesthetic that Henry Jenkins calls the "cult of personality," in which performers are known for their unique acts, virtuosic abilities, and mastery of the audience's emotions (1992, 73). What Jenkins labels "personality" can also be thought of as the star's public persona, which is always on display while he or she is performing. When the vaudeville aesthetic is in operation, then, the star's goal is to

make this singular persona evident and even conspicuous throughout the performance, regardless of the fictional character he or she is portraying. This element of the vaudeville aesthetic is apparent in many aspects in the *Road* film cycle, some of which will be discussed later in the chapter. In this section I will be focusing on how star persona is showcased in two particular acts: the Con and La Lamour.

> *The Con.* In variety entertainment, this would be a sketch comedy act. It involves Crosby and Hope working a get-rich-quick scheme by deceiving diegetic audience members in some way. In the *Road* films the scheme often serves as a plot catalyst: it appears early in the film, and its failure gets the two men into trouble. The Con takes two forms: (1) Spot-O in *Singapore*, which is the only film that does not place this act at the beginning, and Ghost-O in *Utopia* involve fooling audience members with false sales gimmicks; and (2) Fearless Frazier in *Zanzibar* and Barton the Magnificent in *Rio* involve faked or over-promised sideshow acts, both of which end with the carnival going up in flames. Only *Morocco* and *Bali* do not contain this act, though they still present the two men looking for easy ways to make a buck, such as Crosby selling Hope into slavery in *Morocco*. The Con always contains some combination of the two men's singular traits: Hope's quick one-liners and cowardice, often highlighted through physical comedy, and Crosby's singing and idiosyncratic lingo. The musical performances, which consist of either Bing Swings (*Singapore* and *Zanzibar*) or two-man song-and-patter numbers (*Utopia* and *Rio*), are discussed below in the section on reflexivity.

> *La Lamour.* This act, which I have titled after Lamour's nickname in the Hollywood press, is Lamour's spotlight number. The act is marked by a lack of screen time for Hope and Crosby and a proliferation of closeups of Lamour, who sings about her desire for romance. The two ballads, "The Moon and the Willow Tree" in *Singapore* and "Moon Flowers" in *Bali*, convey her desire for her true love to appear. In *Utopia* and *Rio* Lamour sings moderate-tempo swing numbers in staged performances backed by a band. These two numbers, "Personality" in *Utopia* and "Experience" in *Rio*, offer Lamour a chance to be flirtatious and a little bit humorous as she sings about getting a man's amorous attention.

As Jenkins explains, the emphasis in the world of vaudeville stardom was not on the performer's ability to play different kinds of roles, but on his or her ability to put a novel or virtuosic spin on a familiar act or stereotype. A vaudevillian was a specialist who branded himself as a particular type of performer with a specific and virtuosic skill set—an impersonator, a dancer, a singer, a ventriloquist, etc., or some impressive combination of standard acts. Within the variety act, narratives were worked around a performer's particular persona and skill set, with the persona always conspicuously visible within any role the performer is playing (1992, 71).

This particular kind of performance style is evident not only in the 1930s anarchist film comedies that Jenkins discusses, but also in other film genres that descend from variety entertainment, including the comedian comedy and the musical. Both of these genres often feature star performers who are known for particular kinds of acts, such as slapstick physical comedy or virtuosic tap dancing. Many of the actors and writers that became big names in these film genres started out in stage-bound variety entertainment, as I discussed above. Scholars discussing these genres tend to invoke elements of the vaudeville aesthetic, though they do not always recognize the hereditary traits as part of an established aesthetic system.

Steve Seidman defines the comedian comedy as being "generated by two seemingly contradictory impulses: (1) the maintenance of the comedian's position as an already recognizable performer with a clearly defined extra fictional personality . . . and (2) the depiction of the comedian as a comic figure who inhabits a fictional universe where certain problems must be confronted and resolved" (1981, 3). These two contradictory impulses, however, are not given equal importance. As Frank Krutnik explains, the emphasis in the comedian comedy is on the recognizable performer, jeopardizing the stability of the film's fictional world as the star is allowed to "[disrupt] the codes of behavior and action which sustain the fictional regime" in order to demonstrate his or her "cultural recognizability," as Seidman calls it, or "privileged individuality," in Krutnik's

terms (Krutnik 1995, 24-25). Using one of Hope's solo films, *The Paleface* (1948), Krutnik demonstrates how a familiar film genre or highly conventional plot often provides "both a context and a register for the process of disruption set in motion by the comedian figure" (1995, 27-29). In other words, the tension between the frame and the performer, between teleological energy and arresting spectacle, between conventional character types and irreducible individualism, is a governing aesthetic principle in the comedian comedy.

The same principle is at work in the musical, especially those that feature recognizable star performers. Jane Feuer acknowledges this principle when she says, "Gene Kelly might play an American in Paris in one film, a silent-movie idol in another, but when he danced, he always seemed to be 'Gene Kelly'" (1993, 113). As one part analysis, one part nostalgic rhapsody, her statement is revealing. First, Feuer displays the tension between the star performer and any fictional roles the film places upon him by drawing attention to the performer's real name, Gene Kelly, and iconic act, dancing, as the common denominators in his films, ready to momentarily burst out of whatever narrative he is in. Second, Feuer places Kelly's name in quotation marks, drawing attention to the fact that the 'Gene Kelly' she remembers fondly is a construct, a persona, an utterance deserving of punctuation, rather than a private individual. The performer's star persona—Krutnik's "privileged individuality"—is clearly visible through the frame of the fictional character when he is performing his signature act, if not at other times as well.

Just as Gene Kelly's persona is never really masked by the fictional characters he portrays, so also the star personae of Crosby, Hope, and, to some extent, Lamour are always foregrounded in the *Road* films. Indeed, all three stars have a "privileged individuality" in that their performances are clearly what is most important about these films. This is especially evident in the way contemporary reviewers wrote about the films: they tend to discuss plot as a vehicle for star performances, and discuss character

development not at all. Except as a means to an end, the plot of any *Road* film was of little consequence. Three different critics writing about three different *Road* films all agreed that in this film cycle, "the story doesn't matter" (*New York Times*, 30 January 1953; *New York Times*, 19 February 1948; *Photoplay/Movie Mirror*, June 1941). The plot in any one film was "goofy," "fanciful," "thin," and simply "not important" (*Cue*, 6 December 1952; *Variety*, 2 October 1942; *Hollywood*, June 1941; *Los Angeles Times*, 22 March 1946). Instead of disparaging the films for their lack of "terminal facilities," though, critics regularly discussed the plot of the *Road* films as an "adequate excuse" or a "framework on which to drape the situations for Crosby and Hope" (*Washington Post*, 4 May 1941; *Hollywood*, June 1941; *Los Angeles Times*, 22 March 1946; *Variety*, 31 December 1940). As *New York Times* critic Bosley Crowther remarked about *Road to Bali*, "The substance is in the flock of gag and comical situations . . . " (30 January 1953). Critics praised the films for containing "more gags, situations and dialogue than actual story," being "fairly well loaded with laughs," and having "entertainment values [that] run high regardless of plot" (*Film Daily*, 10 April 1941; *New York Times*, 19 February 1948; *Los Angeles Times,* 21 February 1940).

These comments all evoke the vaudeville aesthetic as it was realized in the musical revue. A descendant of vaudeville and the minstrel show, the revue was a form of variety entertainment that came of age in the early twentieth century. Like the vaudeville show, the revue showcased a diverse array of acts that were intended to display novelty, virtuosity, and high entertainment values. The two variety genres also shared many of the same writers and performers. The revue, however, was more organized and refined than its older sibling. As Gerald Bordman (1985) has documented, shows like Florenz Ziegfeld's famous *Follies* series were often held together by a thin plot, such as historical figures taking a tour of modern-day New York City (*Follies of 1907*) or vacationers returning from Europe to New York (*Ziegfeld Follies of 1911*). Like those of the *Road* films, these plots were often so thin that one reviewer of the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1917*

stated that after the opening scene, "everyone, including the audience, forgets all about [the plot], until the final scene of the evening, when the lost plot is recalled through seeing the opening setting once again" (*Variety*, 15 June 1917). The "lost plot," however, did not keep that reviewer from declaring the show the biggest success of the series thus far.

With plot serving only as a scaffold for the show, the revue used lavish spectacle and a collection of big-name stars to draw in audiences. In other words, production values and stars were the main attractions. By adding expensive sets, lavish scenery, and elaborate costumes to the variety show, revue became, in Ethan Mordden's terms, "vaudeville's apotheosis" (1988, 35). And though producers' names initially determined the revue's signature style and reputation, star comics gradually garnered a more central place in the development and reception of the show, culminating in the popularity of one-man shows in the 1920s (Jenkins 1992, 91-94; Mordden 1988, 58-71). Mordden suggests that these comics shined because they "supplied necessary spontaneity, mischief, something *happening*," and because they "had trademarks—business, a look, a sound, a character: style" (1988, 59). The signature personality that was essential for the vaudeville performer, then, became the primary attraction in the revue.

Though the *Road* films contain more involved plots than a typical Broadway revue, the films' emphasis on the "inherent native abilities of its stars rather than . . . any conspicuous novelty or originality in story," as one reviewer stated, resembles the revue's aesthetic hierarchy of star performance over narrative content (*Washington Post,* 4 May 1941). Other critics also identified the Hope-Crosby comedy duo as the central attraction, saying that the purpose of the story is to provide opportunities for "chuckle competition between the two male stars," and that "the gags and ribbing between the two are the whole show" (*Variety*, 19 November 1952; *Photoplay/Movie Mirror*, June 1941).

The Crosby and Hope comic pairing is showcased in a few acts in the films, one of which is the Con. Even though the Con is the most narratively integrated of the eight acts

I listed earlier, at its core the Con is a performance piece for the two men. This act occurs in four of the six films: *Singapore*, *Zanzibar*, *Utopia*, and *Rio*. The scenes occur at the beginning of three of the four films and serve as the impetus for the pair's travels, but they also contain musical numbers, extratextual references, and signature personality traits that emphasize Crosby and Hope's star personae. These performance elements are often given so much emphasis that they temporarily rupture the narrative continuity of each film in order to showcase the stars' specialties.

Musical numbers, during which one or both of the men put on a show, serve as ballyhoo to gather a crowd for the pair's get-rich-quick schemes in each of the four scenes. In *Singapore* and *Zanzibar* Crosby performs his signature Bing Swings act, while in *Utopia* and *Rio* Crosby and Hope perform the Song-and-Patter. Though the musical numbers serve a narrative purpose in that they are part of the Con in each scene, the central function of each number is to give the stars a chance to perform—the Con could certainly proceed without such a performance. The songs themselves have nothing to do with the plot, nor do they contribute to character development by revealing inner thoughts and feelings. Instead, these musical numbers are similar to those performed on Hope and Crosby's weekly radio shows. Crosby displays his relaxed vocal style in the modern, uptempo swing numbers "Sweet Potato Piper" and "You Lucky People, You," and he and Hope demonstrate their comic rapport in the old-fashioned (though newly written) song-and-dance numbers "Good Time Charlie" and "Apalachicola, Fla."

Perhaps more than any other number in the *Road* films, Crosby's performance of "You Lucky People, You" at the beginning of *Zanzibar* is a direct presentation of his star persona. The film starts in the conventional manner, with an orchestral version of the love theme playing over the main titles. About thirty seconds into the title sequence, though, Crosby's voice breaks in singing, "Are you wearing old dreams . . . ," with a sustained note on the first word. As his voice enters, a swing band immediately supplants the orchestra, providing syncopated fills in Crosby's melodic breaks. The titles continue, so

that the audience listens to, but does not watch, Crosby sing the first two A sections of the 32-bar song. He does not appear on the image track until the B section starts. The effect is that of listening to one of his weekly radio shows, which often started with an uptempo swing number, or one of his many recordings. From the beginning of the film, which is also the beginning of the Con, Crosby is introduced by his familiar voice, eschewing any fictional character whatsoever in favor of his star persona and effectively delaying the start of the narrative.

Scenes with the Con not only have musical numbers that serve as reminders of the two men's status as professional entertainers, but they also contain extratextual references to other films. At the beginning of the Spot-O Con in *Singapore*, Crosby, Hope, and Lamour sing a line from "An Apple for the Teacher," which Crosby sang in his most recent film *The Star Maker* (1939). In *Utopia*, the Con is called Ghost-O, riffing on the Spot-O title, and Crosby's fake Hindu chant of "Batum-bamba" is borrowed from the natives' chorus in "African Etude" in *Zanzibar*. The Con in *Rio* also references *Zanzibar* by placing Hope in a strikingly similar carnival costume, as Figure 2.1 a—b shows, and by using a re-edited version of the same footage of the carnival burning down.

Figure 2.1: (a) Hope as Fearless Frazier in Road to Zanzibar (1941)*; (b) Hope as Barton the Magnificent in* Road to Rio (1947)*. In both films Hope sports a fitted, white, long-sleeved shirt and tights with embellished collar piece, wrist cuffs, and shiny striped trunks.*

These extratextual references have the potential to take the audience out of the diegesis momentarily, but they can also be extended to the point where the narrative ruptures to allow for a specialty performance, as happens during the Spot-O Con in *Singapore*. Jerry Colonna, a regular cast member on Hope's radio show, appears in the audience, which is otherwise made up of island natives. He is quickly chosen by Crosby for the Spot-O demonstration, and the ensuing bit between Colonna and Hope simply adds a visual track to the comic sketches they performed on the weekly show. Hope delivers rapid-fire wisecracks and Colonna, whose physical appearance was as iconic as his loud singing and zany comments, bugs his eyes while making wacky, off-the-wall jokes. Colonna's signature handlebar mustache is even worked into the gag. Just as Crosby's opening number in *Zanzibar* recreates the sonic experience of his weekly radio show, so too the Hope-Colonna bit in the Spot-O Con mimics Hope's weekly show, suppressing the fictional characters in order to draw attention to his and Colonna's star personae. Seidman calls this the "guest star" technique, which "[draws] on what are well-known extra fictional relationships between the 'guest star' and the comedian" (1981, 48).

When Crosby and Hope banter together in the Con scenes, the personality traits that are essential to their star personae are put on display. Steven Cohan describes their repartee as "[emphasizing] their star personae as famous entertainers over any diegetic characterizations" (1997, 117-118). By the start of the *Road* film cycle, Crosby was already well known both for his ad-lib style of singing and for his singular way of talking, or "Bingese," which Giddins defines as "mixing highfalutin words with slang" (2001, 407). Both of these traits find their way into the *Road* films, and especially into the Con scenes. The Ghost-O Con in *Utopia* in particular uses "Bingese" nearly to the point of parody. Crosby plays a Hindu mystic, "Professor Zambini," as part of the confidence game. In order to sound properly foreign and mystical, he mixes pig-Latin, Italian musical terms, and nonsense syllables from other songs ("batum-bamba" and

"didiwa-didiwa") into his pitch. He also adopts the professorial lingo he and writer Carroll Carroll refined as part of his weekly radio show for Kraft (Giddins 2001, 403-412). For example, after demonstrating the game's premise, Crosby (as Zambini) propositions the audience with his aristocratic elocution and multisyllabic vocabulary: "Why am I monopolizing this lucrative phenomenon?" When an audience member offers up a mere one-dollar bill for the game, Crosby drops back into the vernacular with, " . . . a buck is a buck."

Hope also places his personality on display during the Con, primarily through his sarcastic one-liners and physical comedy. He is often either confined in tight spaces, wisecracking about his physical discomfort (*Zanzibar* and *Utopia*), or he is placed in dangerous situations and quips about his unwillingness to risk life and limb (*Zanzibar* and *Rio*). One such moment in *Rio* deftly exposes the constructed nature of the film, rupturing what is otherwise a fast-paced narrative sequence. While he is dangling from the high wire above the electrical fire he has accidentally started, Hope looks straight into the camera and announces, "As far as I'm concerned, this picture can end right here." Though the moment is brief, it lays the film bare. First, Hope directly addresses the film audience as himself rather than as his character. Second, he quotes a line he delivered in the previous *Road* film (*Utopia*), directly referencing something outside *Rio*'s diegesis. Third, he references the structures and processes of narration in film. If the film ended "right here," he would not need to find a way out of his predicament; but, of course, the film has just started and must run its narrative course, and so his resigned delivery of the line carries the qualifier, "as far as I'm concerned."

A *Variety* reviewer summarized the films' aesthetic best, saying, "The gags are familiar but all are humdingers, and the fanciful story hangs together just enough to allow full display of situations in which the boys shine best" (2 October 1942). Just as in vaudeville, the *Road* films did not require much original material in the script in order to be successful. Rather, Crosby and Hope's virtuosity was often found in their ability to

offer new twists on well-worn gags (thanks at least in part to their writers). Similarly, the entertainment value of the films was not in novel plot situations. Instead, the narratives merely needed to "[hang] together just enough" to serve as a revue-like framework for the stars' specialty acts. Finally, the goal of the film cycle was for "the boys" to "shine," or for the Crosby and Hope personae to entertain audiences with their signature musical and comic performances.

If this discussion of Crosby and Hope as the central stars in the film cycle makes Lamour out to be a supporting actor, a second-class star, it is because she was just that. After the first film her billing was moved from second, just after Crosby, to third, so that she appears as a third wheel to Crosby and Hope's comedic pairing. By the third film, she was making a fraction of the male stars' salaries—for *Morocco*, Crosby was paid $150,000, Hope $100,000, and Lamour a mere $27,500.[16] Her role as female lead in each successive *Road* film even had to be approved by Crosby, according to the terms of his contract. Lamour was replaced by Ginny Simms and Peggy Lee in two *Road* film-related media appearances: the former in 1943, when the long-running anthology series *Lux Radio Theatre* featured a condensed version of *Road to Morocco*, and the latter in 1952, when Crosby and Hope recorded songs from *Bali* for Decca. Lamour was also reduced to a cameo appearance in the independent Hope-Crosby production *Road to Hong Kong* (1962), while the female lead was given to the much younger Joan Collins.

The reviewers' comments regarding Lamour demonstrate that her star persona in the films was mostly limited to performances that supported the two male stars. Critics consistently identified three main functions of Lamour's persona in the film cycle: "decorativeness," the romantic "prize," and the straight man for Crosby and Hope's comedy routines (*Hollywood Reporter*, 2 October 1942; *Los Angeles Times*, 24 November 1942). The first of these three functions is perhaps the only one that allows

---

[16] Budget dated 3 March 1942, Paramount Pictures production records, MHL, AMPAS.

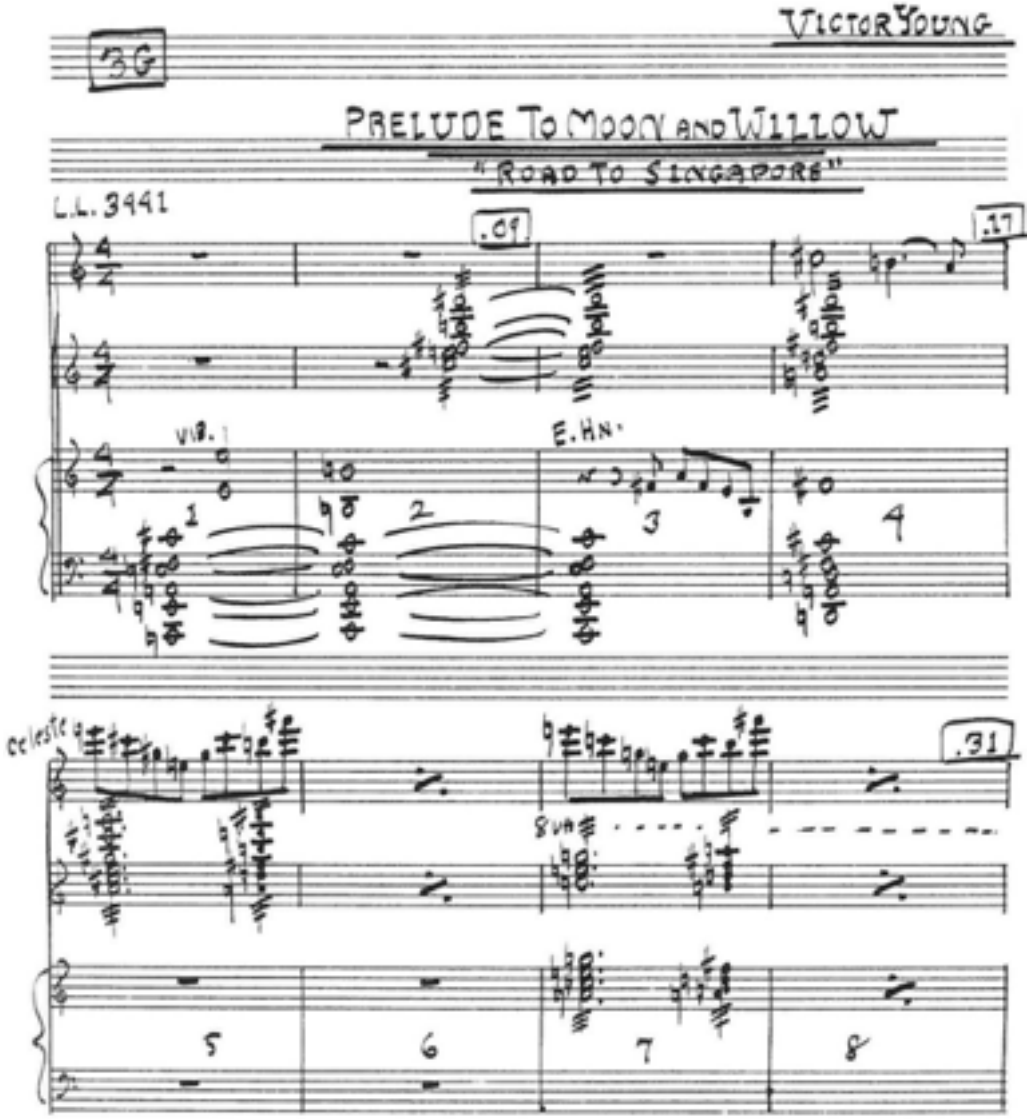
Lamour to be a star in her own spotlight. Almost every mention of Lamour in the film reviews referenced her "decorative character" or "wonderful physical equipment" in some way (*Variety*, 31 December 1939; *Cue*, 6 December 1952). A *Boxoffice* staff writer described her as "contributing the eye appeal" in the first film, and by the third entry in the cycle reviewers were commenting that she was "decorative, as usual" (2 March 1940; *Variety*, 7 October 1942).

Her role as physical decoration is perhaps most evident in the two exotic La Lamour numbers: "The Moon and the Willow Tree" in *Singapore* and "Moonflower" in *Bali*. In these numbers she is presented as an exotic "other" through the use of visual stylings—such as her Eve-like long hair in *Singapore* and Southeast Asian clothing and headdress in *Bali*, as shown in Figures 2.2 (a) and (b), respectively—as well as through some musical elements, such as metallic melody instruments, hand percussion, and chromaticism. The orchestral introduction for her "Moon" song in *Singapore*, shown in Example 2.1, demonstrates this romanticized exoticism. The cue, which actually begins in m. 5, is marked by high strings playing extended tertian chords in tremolo while the celeste plays arpeggios. The harmonic motion is mostly nonfunctional as it is limited to parallel tertian chords that move mostly downward without a clear tonal goal until m.14. As Lamour pulls back the covers of her bed and rises, revealing her waist-length hair for the first time in the film, a low clarinet plays a melodic figure based on a B-flat pentatonic scale (mm. 9-10), though the B-flat key area is destabilized by major-minor seventh and ninth extensions (A-flat and C) in the upper strings. When she looks toward the window, a matched shot shows the rippled shadows of the moonlight reflecting off the water outside, and the music follows suit with extended harp glissandi. Lamour's shapely shadow moving across the bungalow curtain is marked with a vibraphone chord and celeste arpeggio on a B major-minor ninth chord, which turns out to be the first functional dominant chord in the cue. Atmospheric musical elements, rather than thematic content, communicate Lamour's exotic femininity in this scene. The high strings

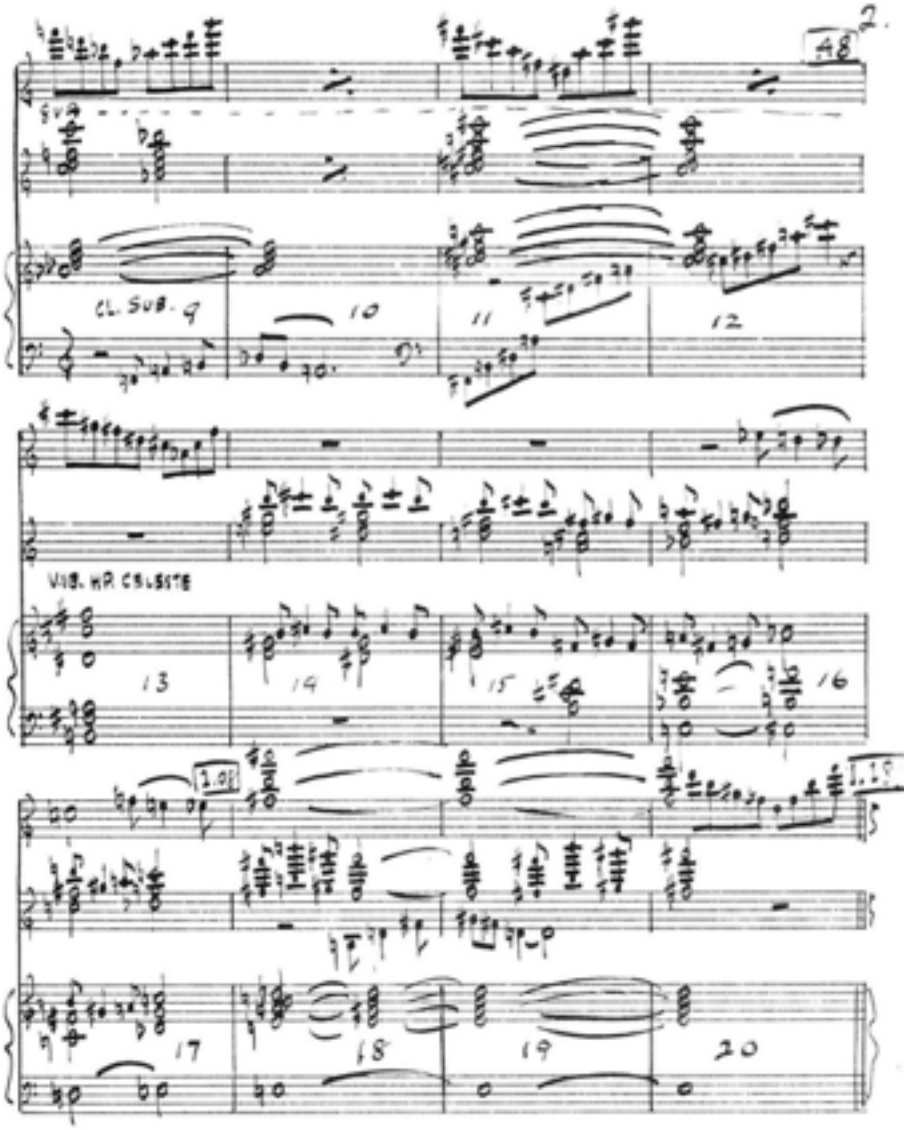
and harp mark her as the feminine romantic object in the traditional manner of Hollywood film scoring, while the modal shifts, the timbres of the celeste and vibraphone, and the extended tertian harmonies communicate the non-Western exoticism of her character and the South Seas locale.

Figure 2.2: (a) Dorothy Lamour's Eve-like long hair in Road to Singapore (1940)*, "The Moon and the Willow Tree"; (b) Southeast Asian clothing and headdress in* Road to Bali (1952)*, "Moon Flowers."*

Example 2.1: Cue 3G, "Prelude to Moon and Willow," by Victor Young, from Road to Singapore. *Measures 1-4 are not heard in the film. Courtesy of Robert D. Farber University Archives and Special Collections Department, Brandeis University.*



Example 2.1 (cont.): Cue 3G, "Prelude to Moon and Willow," by Victor Young, from Road to Singapore. *Measures 1-4 are not heard in the film. Courtesy of Robert D. Farber University Archives and Special Collections Department, Brandeis University.*



Lamour's other two functions are only definable in relation to the two male stars. She served as the requisite romantic complication in the films' plots, with roles and situations so typified that *New York Times* critic Frank Nugent described her in *Singapore* as the "inevitable native girl . . . dancing in the inevitable sarong in the inevitable

cabaret" (14 March 1940). Writers for the *Los Angeles Times* were perhaps less disparaging in saying that "Miss Lamour supplies the romance" and serves as "the prize" in the narratives (21 February 1940; 24 November 1942). Her performance of the flirtatious "Personality" in *Utopia* demonstrates this function well. Mistaking Hope and Crosby for hardened outlaws who have murdered her father and stolen the map to his gold mine, Lamour uses her spotlight performance to woo the two men so that she can later retrieve the map from them. Her "sizzling saloon song," in the words of one *Cue* writer, catapults the two men into romantic rivalry that continues all the way through to the film's epilogue (28 February 1948).

When placed alongside Crosby and Hope, Lamour was often described by reviewers in terms of her role as a veritable straight man for the comic duo. The highest praise she received in this regard was that she was "an asset," "keeps step with the male team" and seemed to be "a pleasant person who can not only see but take a joke" (*Hollywood Reporter*, 11 November 1947; *Variety*, 2 October 1942; *Los Angeles Times*, 22 April 1941). Crowther in particular seemed merely to tolerate her presence, calling her "passingly amusing in her frequent attempts to be" and praising her for being "helpful" by "never [getting] in the way" of the comedy (10 April 1941; 12 November 1942). Although Lamour's straight-man function is perhaps best displayed in the Comic Seduction, which is discussed below in the section on romantic ballads, her La Lamour number in *Rio* and the reprise of her ballad in *Bali* both demonstrate how the personae of Crosby and Hope occasionally encroach on the little bit of spotlight given to Lamour, relegating her to the supportive role of the straight man. Lamour's night club performance of "Experience" in *Rio* includes a rare comic interlude in a La Lamour number: during the instrumental break and again at the song's end, Hope's trumpet blows musical soap bubbles, upstaging her in her only number in the film. The two men also break up Lamour's reprise of "Moonflower" in *Bali* with a sight gag and reflexive comic banter about their status with Paramount.

One particular sequence in *Morocco* demonstrates all of Lamour's three functions in the *Road* film cycle. When Crosby and Hope are wandering through the desert after escaping from the evil Kasim, they both hallucinate Lamour appearing as a mirage, singing a reprise of Crosby's earlier ballad, "Moonlight Becomes You." The song starts as another La Lamour spotlight number, especially since it is yet another "Moon" song. Indeed, she is allowed to sing a full chorus with only a one-liner from Hope detracting from her performance. As Figure 2.3 (a) shows, she is dressed in a sequined gown and turban, demonstrating her function as exotic decoration. As the chorus starts again, though, her function changes to that of the straight man. Crosby and Hope attempt to join in the song, but, presumably as a part of their hallucination, the voices on the sound track become jumbled. Each one of the three sings with someone else's voice. The two men take this as an opportunity to mug and clown, presenting exaggerated reactions and impressions of each other, while Lamour, as the straight man, simply smiles and continues singing (see Figure 2.3 (b)). At the end of the song, she becomes the romantic prize in the male stars' competition. After flirting with her in between gags during the song, both men lean in to kiss her, but, as Figure 2.3 (c) shows, at that moment her image disappears and the performance culminates in one final gag as the men accidentally kiss each other.

Figure 2.3, a-c: Road to Morocco (1942), *"Moonlight Becomes You" parody. (a) As decoration, Lamour 'certainly knows the right thing to wear'; (b) Crosby and Hope clown around with switched voices while Lamour plays the straight man; (c) Lamour is the disappearing romantic prize the two men vie for. (As (b) suggests, throughout this scene, Lamour has trouble refraining from laughing.)*

Reflexivity

"You mean they missed my song?"

—Bing Crosby in *Road to Morocco*

Many of the elements of star performance discussed in the previous section are necessarily also elements of reflexivity. By referencing Hope's radio show, which exists outside the film's narrative, Jerry Colonna's appearance in *Singapore*'s Spot-O Con draws attention to the fact that the film is an artificial construct and not a self-contained narrative world. Similarly, Crosby's opening song in *Zanzibar* is indirectly reflexive in that it draws attention to his real-life radio show and to his existence as a real person outside the film's narrative. Hope's comment to the camera in *Rio*—"As far as I'm

concerned, this picture can end right here"—is a direct reflexive statement referencing his nonfictional self, the film's audience, and the narrational processes of filmmaking. Though these kinds of reflexive elements are a part of, or perhaps a consequence of, the star persona aspect of the vaudeville aesthetic, they also carry aesthetic consequences of their own. In this section, I will look at these aesthetic consequences in two particular acts that make extensive use of reflexive techniques: the Two-Man Song-and-Patter and Bing Swings. These two acts present star performances in much the same manner as the Con, but here I will focus exclusively on reflexivity.

> *The Two-Man Song-and-Patter Act.* The most iconic number in each of the *Road* films is the two-man song-and-patter act performed by Hope and Crosby.[17] Song-and-patter is one of the oldest and most basic of vaudeville acts, offering performers plenty of opportunity for variation and inflection of personal style. Generally speaking, song-and-patter numbers are performed in the popular style of the day, which at the height of vaudeville would have included jazz and ragtime musical stylings. The duo usually sing in harmony and/or dialogic exchange, sharing the musical weight, and they interpolate humorous spoken banter into the song, either in a clearly demarcated musical break or simply in between sung lyrics. Dance, mime, impersonation, and other kinds of performance may be included in this act, but they are not required.
>
> *Bing Swings*. This act, which involves Crosby singing a modern uptempo popular song, serves as a reminder of his status as a major radio and recording star: the uptempo song and the romantic ballad were two essential elements of any Crosby radio appearance. In the *Road* films, Crosby usually performs the Bing Swings number for an onscreen audience as a professional entertainer or as part of the Con. "Sweet Potato Piper" in *Singapore* and "You Lucky People, You" in *Zanzibar* are used as ballyhoo for the Con. Crosby sings "Ho Hum" in *Morocco* in an attempt to find Hope, whom he has sold into slavery. He performs "It's Anybody's Spring" in *Utopia* and "You

---

[17] Only *Road to Zanzibar* does not have a song-and-patter number. As discussed above, "Birds of a Feather" was originally shot and edited as part of the film, then cut for length and pacing. Some frames that show Crosby and Hope's ending pose from the song remain in the final cut of the film.

> Don't Have to Know the Language" on ships to try to earn money for the cash-strapped pair of stowaways. Ironically, the Bing Swings act is marked by lyrics referencing romantic idealism and a lack of interest in money, even though Crosby is usually performing for monetary gain. These songs give Crosby a chance to demonstrate his jazz "chops" and, though other characters sometimes support his performances through instrumental accompaniment, only "You Don't Have to Know the Language" in *Rio* and "Merry Go Runaround" in *Bali* involve other singers. In the case of the latter, Crosby elbows his way into what started out as a solo for Hope, and the song ends up as a trio for the three stars.

Jane Feuer says that musicals are "about Hollywood," "about entertainment," "about singing and dancing," and ultimately "about themselves." In other words, Hollywood musicals are inherently reflexive (1993, ix-x). This reflexivity is communicated through strategies such as direct address and extratextual reference, and is used, according to Feuer, to "[create] humanistic 'folk' relations . . . to cancel out the economic values and relations associated with mass-produced art" (1993, 3). For example, one reflexive technique involves presenting the professional entertainers who are cast in these films as amateurs. Feuer says that this strategy works to eliminate "the more exploitative aspects of professionalism" in the musical by ascribing the attributes of the amateur, who sings and dances for the love of performing rather than for money, to the star (1993, 13-15). She concludes that these reflexive, de-professionalizing strategies strive to present the Hollywood musical as "a mass art which aspires to the condition of a folk art, produced and consumed by the same integrated community" (1993, 3).

Yet many musicals retain markers of professionalism, even when the stars play the part of an amateur. As Feuer points out, musicals tend to refer overtly to the entertainment industry, often by referencing past forms of entertainment like vaudeville and earlier films (1993, 87-94). Musicals also have a tendency to reveal some of the behind-the-scenes workings, however simplified and fictionalized, of theater and film production (42-47). Finally, performers in musicals usually retain elements of their professional star personae (113-122) and perform directly to the audience, via direct

address to the camera, at one point or another (35-42). John Mundy says as much in his discussion of *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944), noting that, in Judy Garland's performances, the consistent use of "proscenium-arch framing" of her in windows and doorways, as in Figure 1.3 a—b, "[codes] Garland's performances as 'professional', encouraging the audience to make connections with that extratextual construction 'Judy Garland'" (1999, 73-74). Contrary to what Feuer concludes, these reflexive techniques all invoke the professional nature of performance.

Seidman, writing about a different film genre, presents a contrasting interpretation of these reflexive strategies. Specifically, Seidman identifies self-referentiality, a recognition of the artifices of film, references to the star's public persona, and direct address to the film audience as consistent elements of the comedian comedy genre (1981, 15-53). Because of his acknowledgement of a star-centered performance tradition directly descended from vaudeville, Seidman does not see these strategies as pointing toward an integrated community of amateurs, of producers and consumers of folk art; rather, these techniques lend the films "the basic sense of community that was an integral part of live show business performance" (159). In other words, they retain the sense of rapport between the audience and the professional performer characteristic of vaudeville. If this interpretation is applied to the classical Hollywood musical, then, the genre becomes a recorded professional entertainment that aspires not to a live amateur "folk art,"as Feuer says, but to a live professional entertainment form.

The live vaudeville theater allowed audiences to interact with performers through the audible and visible emotional reactions, at the very least, and, according to Jenkins, vaudeville performers relied heavily on this immediate feedback to shape their acts, to the point of improvising and adjusting the act while on stage (1992, 73-77). Of course, filmed performances are just that—filmed, not live—and no amount of audience feedback in the theater can shape the stars' performances once the film has begun. Yet the reflexive strategies found in the Hollywood musical work to approximate this performer-

audience rapport, as both Feuer's and Seidman's discussions show. For instance, one of Feuer's "community-building" strategies involves bridging the distance between cinematic audience and on-screen performer. During musical numbers in which a diegetic audience is present, Feuer demonstrates that the cinema audience is often placed in the diegetic audience through a predictable series of shots which then replace the diegetic audience entirely with the cinematic one, so that, "Through a dialectic of presence and absence, inclusion and replacement, we may come to feel that we are at a live performance" (1993, 26-30). Similarly, Seidman considers performance conventions borrowed from vaudeville and music hall entertainment, such as direct address, asides, and even bows to the camera, as ingratiating acknowledgements of the film audience (1981, 15-25).

The film musical does more than attempt to approximate a live entertainment experience, though. These films often place demands on their spectators, assuming a great deal of familiarity with entertainment conventions, star personae, important figures in the entertainment industry, and a broad range of other films, shows, and songs. Reflexive strategies such as exposure of the artifice of film and extratextual reference draw upon this assumed knowledge not only for humor, but to acknowledge a language of show business shared between performer and audience. This shared language was an integral part of the revue and the radio variety show, both vaudeville descendants. According to Bordman, the revue "required knowledgeability on the part of playgoers—an awareness of current events and personalities, of trends in all the arts" to ensure the comprehensibility of the many topical references in the show's songs and sketches (1985, 4). Michelle Hilmes has demonstrated that "satire, parody, and self-consciousness," including direct address to the audience and humorous references to the technology and commercialism of radio, were characteristic of many '30s and '40s radio programs, especially those with a variety format (1997, 186-188; 2007, 92-94). These programs required audiences that could "recognize the contradictions and inconsistencies in radio's

role and laugh at them" (1997, 211). This shared language of show business is intended to invoke a sense of community, which, as Feuer notes, is a central tenet of the Hollywood musical (1993, 3). Instead of creating a folk community to "cancel out the economic values" of professional entertainment as Feuer describes, though, these films set up an idealistic show business community in which consumers are willing members of a knowledgeable and interactive audience.

Because the *Road* films continue in the aesthetic traditions of these other entertainment forms—vaudeville, revue, and radio—they are full of the kinds of reflexive strategies Seidman, Feuer, and Hilmes discuss. These strategies appear throughout the films in the form of quips directed to the audience, jokes about the film industry, references to Crosby and Hope's star personae, references to earlier *Road* films, and references to other entertainment forms—just to name a few. This reflexivity is perhaps most concentrated in the two acts that are the focus of this section and that occur in nearly every film: the Two-Man Song-and-Patter and Bing Swings.

As one of the oldest and most traditional of variety acts, song-and-patter numbers are standard fare in many musical films that invoke the vaudeville aesthetic, though the style and structure of these numbers may vary. One prominent example is Judy Garland and Gene Kelly's performance of the title song in *For Me and My Gal* (1942)—see Figures 2.4, (a) and (b). The number involves harmony singing as well as a verse where Kelly inserts spoken patter between Garland's sung lines, and the two performers share a good deal of the musical weight, with Garland singing more than Kelly. The performance also includes a hefty dose of dance, and it is during the clearly demarcated dance break that the substantial patter section occurs. Note also, that this example shows the label "two-man" should be considered gender neutral.

Figure 2.4: For Me and My Gal (1942), *title song, (a) Kelly and Garland sing in harmony, (b) Kelly mugs and Garland cringes after he tells a bad joke in the patter section.*

There can be a great deal of overlap between the song-and-patter act and the song-and-dance act, as in the Garland-Kelly number. A comic song-and-dance act, however, is not necessarily a song-and-patter act as well. In "Moses Supposes" from *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), the two performers, Kelly and Donald O'Connor, share the singing and dancing weight equally, but the number is not a song-and-patter simply because of the lack of spoken jokes. At the other end of the spectrum, Crosby and Frank Sinatra's song-and-patter number in *High Society* (1956), "Well, Did You Evah," involves no dancing except for a few drunken steps by Sinatra and a brief reprise of Crosby's pseudo-samba dance step from Road to Rio. Rather than isolating the patter in a musical break, the two insert spoken jokes after nearly every sung line and rely heavily on reflexive humor, including references to Crosby's wealth, his crooning, and his and Sinatra's age difference.

As a recognizable stock act, song-and-patter numbers necessarily reference vaudeville in a general sense or are part of a diegetic vaudeville show, as "Chicago Style" is in *Bali*. As Figure 2.5 demonstrates, Hope and Crosby are often dressed in stereotypical vaudeville attire such as straw boaters in (d), (f), and (g); bow ties in (a), (b), (d), (f), and

(g); and matching outfits in (b), (d), (e), (g), and (h); and hold canes in (b) and (g). Many of these numbers in the Road films also reference other entertainment traditions. "Captain Custard" is about theater ushers wrangling the crowd on bank night, "Appalachicola, Fla." is performed as part of a carnival side show, and "Hoot Mon" is a Scottish dialect act. The songs themselves often reference older musical styles. Both "Apalachicola, Fla." and "Good Time Charlie" feature rag-style rhythms and imply barbershop harmonies, complete with portamentos in thirds, and "Chicago Style" references early jazz with a Dixieland-style opening, swung rhythms, and brass-heavy melodic licks. "Apalachicola, Fla.," "Good Time Charlie," and "Chicago Style" also include gag sections in which Hope and Crosby reference well-known vaudeville stock acts. Hope performs a brief mime act with Crosby narrating in the middle of "Good Time Charlie." In "Apalachicola, Fla.," the pair invoke Jolson-style blackface acts, albeit without the actual blackface, by singing bits of the minstrel songs "The Old Folks at Home" and "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" and doing exaggerated 'Mammy' soliloquies.[18] Indeed, the entire number comes off as a Jolson parody. The gag section of "Chicago Style" is played as a series of asides heard only by the cinematic audience, rather than the diegetic audience, yet the duo utilize the vaudeville tradition of doing basic dance "walks" side-by-side during the patter section of the number, as Garland and Kelly do in the aforementioned performance in *For Me And My Gal*.

[18] These quotations are marked by their omission of direct racial references. Instead, the minstrelsy tradition is communicated through the use of iconic minstrel songs, body posture, exaggerated Southern accents, and references to Mammy, cotton, and the Confederacy.

Figure 2.5: Two-man song-and-patter acts (from top left): (a) "Captain Custard" from Singapore*, (b) sidewalk comedy act and cut "Birds of Feather" number from* Zanzibar*,*[19] *(c) "(We're Off on the) Road to Morocco" from* Morocco*, (d) "Good Time Charlie" from* Utopia *(1945), (e) "Put It There, Pal" from* Utopia*, (f) "Apalachicola, Fla." from* Rio *(1947), (g)"Chicago Style" from* Bali*, and (h) "Hoot Mon" from* Bali.

The Bing Swings numbers follow suit in their inherent reflexivity. Instead of referencing vaudeville, though, Crosby's performances reference radio and recording. According to Giddins, Crosby's *Kraft Music Hall* show often began with an uptempo swing number, continued with two or three other numbers interspersed throughout the program, one of which might be a medley, and finished with a ballad (2001, 410). As

[19] I include a still from *Road to Zanzibar* here to show that if the song-and-patter number "Birds of a Feather" had been left in the film, it would have been consistent in style with the rest of the acts of this type in the *Road* film cycle.

discussed in the previous section, "You Lucky People, You" in *Zanzibar* invokes this radio show structure from the very start by placing Crosby's voice over the main titles before revealing his image, thus introducing him only by his iconic voice. The Bing Swings number in *Morocco*, "Ain't Got a Dime to My Name (Ho Hum)," also acknowledges the iconicity of Crosby's voice. Aunt Lucy (Hope in drag) cajoles Crosby into singing the song through the town streets in order to find Hope, who has been sold into slavery. Hope is supposed to recognize his buddy purely by his singing voice, then reveal his whereabouts so that he can be rescued.

Other Bing Swings numbers make more direct references to Crosby's radio and recording career. The Spot-O sequence in *Singapore* begins with Crosby, Hope, and Lamour singing a phrase from "An Apple for the Teacher," a Crosby hit from his most recent Paramount film, *The Star Maker* (1939). *Rio* exemplifies Seidman's "guest star" technique as Crosby performs "You Don't Have to Know the Language" with the Andrews Sisters, who had been performing with him for years on many recordings and radio appearances. Hope acknowledges the Crosby persona in *Bali* when the crooner takes over "Merry Go Runaround," which up until then had been Hope's solo. After Crosby steals a verse, Hope makes a crack about Crosby's ears and quips, "You'll never go any place with your singing." Crosby responds with insults of his own, then proceeds to scat loudly over Hope's attempt to take the song back. The reference to Crosby's music career coupled with the singer's exaggerated scatting turns this moment into a parody of the previous films' Bing Swings numbers.

The song-and-patter and Bing Swings acts also refer overtly to the professional side of entertainment by displaying entertainment as work and by performing for financial gain. As many of the images in Figure 2.5 demonstrate, in most of the song-and-patter numbers Crosby and Hope appear as unpolished vaudevillians, visibly working hard and relying on entertainment clichés. When the pair dance they often perform side-by-side stock soft-shoe or cakewalk steps, and their dancing is unpolished, lacking in

synchronization, and paired with a great deal of mugging. These films contain none of the techniques Feuer describes as masking the work of dancing, such as *bricolage*, non-choreography, or using "bogus rehearsal scenes" for polished performances (1993, 3-13). Instead, the pair's ineptitude is itself a performance, not unlike Fred Astaire's poor dancing before and during "Pick Yourself Up" in *Swing Time* (1936). The mediocrity of Hope and Crosby's song-and-patter performances is a form of clowning for these two highly talented and successful entertainers. This intentional clowning is especially evident when the Bing Swings numbers are taken into account. In these numbers Crosby is smooth and charismatic, making the work of entertaining look easy and natural. Even his limited dancing skills are here passed off with the confidence of a seasoned entertainer instead of the mugging of a subpar hoofer, as Figure 2.6 shows.

Figure 2.6: Crosby dances with a bit of panache in several of his swing numbers. (a) Singapore*, "Sweet Potato Piper"; (b)* Utopia*, "It's Anybody's Spring"; (c)* Rio*, "You Don't Have to Know the Language," with the Andrews Sisters.*

Rather than performing for the love of it, as Feuer says of amateurs in musicals, in the *Road* films Crosby and Hope perform the majority of the song-and-patter and Bing Swings numbers for some kind of monetary gain. "Sweet Potato Piper," "You Lucky People, You," "Good Time Charlie," and "Apalachicola, Fla." are all performed as ballyhoo the pair's get-rich-quick schemes. In both *Utopia* and *Rio* the pair are caught as stowaways aboard a ship, then Crosby performs to try to earn their passage. In Utopia he sings "It's Anybody's Spring" for the express purpose of trying to win the prize money in

an amateur talent contest; when he loses to a monkey the two men are forced to work for their fare. In Rio the pair are allowed to work off their debt by performing; Crosby sings and dances with the Andrews Sisters in "You Don't Have to Know the Language" as part of the cruise ship's floor show while Hope plays the trumpet in the band. In *Bali*, "Chicago Style" is part of the pair's professional vaudeville act.

The song-and-patter and Bing Swings acts are also reflexive in that they are always performed for an audience of some kind. The pair's "Captain Custard" in *Singapore* and "Hoot Mon" in *Bali* are performed at parties. Most of the other songs are performed as a stage or floor show for a diegetic audience, including Crosby's "Sweet Potato Piper," "You Lucky People, You," "It's Anybody's Spring," and "You Don't Have to Know the Language," and the duo's "Good Time Charlie," "Apalachicola, Fla.," and "Chicago Style." In *Morocco*, "Ain't Got a Dime to My Name (Ho Hum)" is not performed for an audience in its entirety, but Crosby does attract the rapt attention of a lovely lady on a balcony, only to be violently redirected by Aunt Lucy's lightning bolt. Even "Merry Go Runaround" in *Bali*, which is an anomalous Bing Swings act, ends with an applauding audience of monkeys. Two particular song-and-patter numbers, the title song in *Morocco* and "Put It There, Pal" in *Utopia*, are performed directly for the cinema audience, with no pretense of a diegetic audience. As such, these are the best, though by far not the only, examples of direct address in the *Road* films.

Direct address tends to come in two forms in cinema, which both Feuer and Seidman identify: the modernist distanciation of avant-garde cinema, epitomized in the films of Jean-Luc Godard, and the direct address of live entertainment, mimicked or invoked in the classical Hollywood film musical. In both cases actors speak directly into the camera, rupturing the integrity of the narrative world and drawing attention to the artifice of the cinematic work, often using extensive extratextual references. The direct address of live entertainment, which is used in those films that descend from the vaudeville tradition, "[disrupts] the passive, voyeuristic perspective that the spectator

normally assumes," but ultimately "becomes integrated into the conventions of entertainment" (Seidman 1981, 158). For Feuer, this reintegration is a result of messaging that valorizes, rather than critiques, the artifice of show business. Direct address and the extratextual references that accompany it may encourage the cinematic audience to stop and consider the nature of show business, but the ultimate message, according to one iconic song, is that "everything about it is appealing" (1993, 35-42). Seidman comes to the same conclusion as Feuer, but his discussion offers a more convincing explanation of how this messaging is communicated.

Seidman says that direct address and extratextual references are used to create "two coexistent [narrative] levels: that *of* the film, and that which *mediates about* the film's presuppositions and formal devices" (1981, 57, original emphasis). The "mediating" level "privileges the spectator" by "pointing to the intrinsic artificiality of the film medium" in order to reward and reinforce the spectator as an integral participant in the show business institution (158-159). Cohan would seem to agree, as he says that "extradiegetic awareness characterizes the entire series, underscoring each film's coherence as a show in contrast to its exaggerated incoherence as a narrative" (1997, 119). To put the two together, then, the *Road* films operate in two distinct registers: that of the "incoherent narrative" "of the film," and that of the "coherent show," which does indeed "privilege the spectator" by "mediating about the presuppositions and formal devices" of the "incoherent narrative."

Feuer downplays this kind of narrative rupture when she asserts that the Hollywood musical makes frequent use of a predictable process of demystification and remystification first "splits open the narrative, exposes the world backstage, speaks in the first person," only to fuse the narrative back together by the final celebratory scene (1993, 42-47). Though this process applies well enough in most of the backstage musicals she discusses, Feuer does not take into account the many musicals that involve instances of direct address and extratextual reference without a clear remystification process, of which

the *Road* films are only one set of examples, nor does she allow for the possibility that remystification may fail to repair the narrative rupture of these reflexive moments.

The two song-and-patter numbers in the *Road* films that are performed directly for the cinema audience are prime examples of Seidman's two narrative levels. Both songs begin with lead-ins that clearly shift to the mediating level of narration. "We're Off on the Road to Morocco" is introduced with a directional sign bearing the film's title, followed by Hope's quip, "They could've thought of another way to get us here," and Crosby's line, "Here we go again, Junior." Similarly, "Put It There, Pal" is preceded by Hope's reflexive comment, "Well, here we are, off on another road," and a sight gag involving the Paramount logo in the mountains of Alaska. The lyrics of both songs remain in this mediating mode and have nothing to do with furthering that particular film's narrative. "Morocco" is about that particular entry in the *Road* film cycle. Though the two travelers sing that they have no idea "where we're going, why we're going," they mention the people they expect to meet on their journey, such as beautiful girls, violent men, and, of course, Dorothy Lamour. The lyrics pair comical depictions of Arabic stereotypes, such as references to harems and "the dance of the seven veils," with jokes about the issues of filmmaking, such as, "We'd tell you more but we would have the censors on our tails." They also assuage any fears they have about the dangers ahead with reminders that they are on multi-year contracts with Paramount, who will therefore ensure their safety. Clearly this is a song that "mediates about the film's presuppositions and formal devices," as Seidman says.

"Put It There, Pal" steps even further outside the film's narrative in that the song is entirely about the two entertainers' rapport; the lyrics barely reference the film. Instead, the song nicely sums up their style as a comedy team. They bookend their signature insult comedy with statements confirming their friendship, such as the opening line declaring, "I don't care where I'm going just as long as I'm with you." For insult fodder, they draw

on each other's performance styles, physical appearance, and recent films.[20] Crosby sings about Hope's bad jokes and sloped nose, and Hope answers with lines referencing Crosby's radio sponsor, Kraft ("You've got that something in your voice so right for selling cheese"), and gaudy personal wardrobe. Most of the jokes rely on the audience's familiarity with each star's professional work and the team's established comedy style.

These two songs clearly "split open the narrative," but they do not work to fuse it back together, as Feuer says is common in the Hollywood musical. No effort is made to reintegrate the songs or the two performers back into the film's narrative by the end of the numbers, as in Feuer's examples of Maurice Chevalier's "Paris, Stay the Same" in *The Love Parade* (1929) or Gene Kelly's "You Were Meant for Me" in *Singin' in the Rain*. Instead, both "Morocco" and "Put It There, Pal" end with Crosby and Hope miming the musical instruments in the swing band that accompanies them, commenting, as Seidman says, on the "materiality" of the conventional film sound track that characters supposedly don't hear (1981, 35-40). These two songs also do not valorize show business in the same manner as Feuer's "ode to entertainment," exemplified by songs such as "That's Entertainment" in *The Band Wagon* (1953) and "There's No Business Like Show Business" in *Annie Get Your Gun* (1950) (1993, 36-38).

The references in the *Road* films do ultimately reaffirm the cultural value of popular entertainment, but through strategies that maintain the narrative fracturing. As "Morocco" and "Put It There, Pal" demonstrate, the *Road* films continually poke lighthearted fun at Hollywood filmmaking, as contemporary reviewers recognized. In fact, critics celebrated

---

[20] One prominent extratextual reference that is potentially lost on modern audiences occurs in *Morocco* as the ghost of Aunt Lucy (Hope dressed in drag) continually refers to "Mr. Jordan," who seems to be an authority figure in heaven, dictating the behavior of the spirits residing there. The same reference to Mr. Jordan occurs again in *Rio* as Hope is being forced to do the high-wire act. These comments would make sense to a contemporary film-going audience familiar with *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* (1941), a top-grossing Oscar-winning film released two years before *Morocco*. Because the popularity of *Mr. Jordan* did not stand the test of time, though, these quips are potentially nonsensical and even distracting for modern audiences.

the reflexivity of the *Road* films, and repeatedly used words such as "farce," burlesque," "spoof," "satire," and "lampoon" to describe the latest *Road* release. They praised the films for, as one reviewer said of *Morocco*, "[pouncing] upon every opportunity to kid itself, its stars and its plot" (*Hollywood Reporter*, 2 October 1942). The *Road* films also turned their jokes outward toward the film industry. After seeing *Zanzibar*, Richard Griffith announced, "nobody will ever dare to make a safari picture again" (*Los Angeles Times*, 22 April 1941), and Philip K. Scheuer appreciated that the film "kids itself up to the hilt; kids what Hope calls the 'so far, safari,' the wild animals of the jungle, the gibberish of the cannibal tribes, the full orchestra that throbs out of nowhere to accompany the crooner, and even the players themselves" (*Los Angeles Times*, 18 April 1941). Crowther called the next entry, *Morocco*, "a lampoon of all pictures having to do with exotic romance" (*New York Times*, 12 November 1942), and the fourth film, *Utopia*, "a titanic burlesque of brawny adventure pictures and of movies in general" (*New York Times*, 28 February 1946). The "satire on Hollywood itself," in Edwin Schallert's words (*Los Angeles Times*, 1 January 1948), continued with *Rio*, while Richard Coe called this fifth *Road* film a "spoof [of] the screen's vogue for psychological yarns" (*Washington Post*, 21 January 1948), and *Bali*, the last of the Paramount *Road* films, employed "every South Sea gag in film history," according to John L. Scott (*Los Angeles Times*, 18 May 1952).

From these critics' comments it is clear that the reflexivity of the *Road* films rewards those spectators who are well-versed in entertainment conventions and the filmmaking trends of the day. In other words, if some musicals use reflexivity to "[ask] us to give thanks to show business for the pleasures we are about to receive," as Feuer says, (1993, 42), then others, to paraphrase Seidman, offer gratitude to audiences for continually sustaining show business (1981, 159). Indeed, these ideas are simply two perspectives on what Jenkins has called the most important aspect of the vaudeville performance: "establishing and maintaining a bond between performer and

patron" (1992, 77). Crosby's line in *Morocco*, which heads this section, makes such a statement of thanks. His reflexive question communicates his disappointment that audiences may have missed his song, humorously affirming that the performance is pointless unless someone is there to witness it.

It is most telling that these reflexive statements affirming the spectator's role in upholding the cultural value of popular entertainment tend to come from star performers via direct address to the camera.[21] Feuer's examples include Gene Kelly's larger-than-life appeal to the cinema audience in *The Pirate* (1948) and Dick Powell's musical coercion in the title number of *Dames* (1934) (1993, 40-42), and among Seidman's numerous examples is the ending of the Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis vehicle *Pardners* (1956), in which the two stars actually thank the cinema audience and ask them to keep patronizing their films (1981, 23). In these examples the star addressing the camera plays the role of the showman, the ringmaster or what Seidman calls the "enunciator," the one who "articulates the 'somewhere' from which the tale comes" (35-40). If, as Feuer says, the musical demystifies and remystifies the behind-the-scenes work of entertainment, a star performer usually leads the audience through this process, as Kelly does in "You Were Meant for Me" in *Singin' in the Rain*. If the extreme close-up of Kelly in *The Pirate* draws attention to "the tradition to which *The Pirate* belongs—that of the magic show, hocus-pocus, illusionism," as Feuer says, then Kelly takes on the role of the magician, the illusionist. If "We're Off on the Road to Morocco" and "Put It There, Pal" draw attention

---

[21] A brief review of direct address in musicals reveals that it is almost exclusively a privilege for male performers. Indeed, Tom Brown has observed that, in many of Judy Garland's films, her lack of direct address seems to corroborate her emotional authenticity (2012, 67-70). Brown briefly links direct address with Laura Mulvey's feminist critique of the camera's gaze (1975), but does not examine the gender politics of direct address beyond the two Garland films he discusses (*Easter Parade* (1948) and *A Star Is Born* (1954)). Those women who do break the fourth wall, such as Mae West and Ann Miller, often perform in an unabashedly sexual manner, to mixed reviews. As Brown points out, Miller's fame-hungry exhibitionism in *Easter Parade* gives feminine direct address a "negative inflection."

to the fact that Hope and Crosby are making yet another formulaic *Road* film, then the star duo act as tour guides through the production. As a star performer mediates about a film's artificiality, that star simultaneously mediates between the industry that manufactures these entertaining illusions and its patrons. Reflexivity and direct address are often the means of negotiating continued patronage. This negotiation may be direct, as in Martin and Lewis's friendly plea for audiences to keep paying the price of admission, or it may take the form of an offer to share in the common language of show business, as in Feuer's "ode to entertainment" and in the extratextual references Crosby and Hope throw out like candy to what they hope is a gratified audience.

Chapter 3: Romantic Coupling and Representation in Paramount's *Road* Films

Introduction

"They could've thought of another way to get us here"

—Bob Hope in *Road to Morocco*

This chapter examines the final four act types: the Crooner, the Comic Seduction, the Dialect Act, and the Exotic Specialty. These acts demonstrate how the vaudeville aesthetic affects representations of gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity in the films. The final section draws together several strands in a critique of camp readings of the Road film cycle. Although this chapter tackles some large concepts, I do not claim to cover them exhaustively. My primary goal is to provide detailed scene analyses in an effort to demonstrate how the vaudeville aesthetic affects the way these concepts manifest themselves in the Hollywood musical, and therefore I have chosen to bypass what could otherwise be lengthy examinations of gender performance, racial and ethnic representation, and camp interpretation. The first of three sections below takes up gender and romance in the musical, and the ways in which star performance and reflexivity affect the supposed centrality of heterosexual romance. The second section looks at how the vaudeville aesthetic shapes representations of race and ethnicity in the musical and displays a popular culture-driven form of nationalism that speaks to a specific historical and cultural moment in American history. The concluding discussion of camp draws these two ideas together. I examine how the coupling of the two men during a time when strong homosocial bonds were culturally sanctioned opens up interpretive space for camp readings, while at the same time certain elements of the vaudeville aesthetic problematize these readings. Gender, race and ethnicity, and camp are common topics of discussion in analyses of the Hollywood musical; yet, as the title of this introduction suggests, more attention needs to be paid to the different ways musicals engage with these concepts.

Gender and Romantic Coupling

"What's the matter, gal? Want another chorus?"

—Bing Crosby in *Road to Utopia*

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Rick Altman makes heterosexual romance a defining feature, even a dividing line, of the musical genre (1987). Yet Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson have established that heterosexual romance was a mainstay in classical Hollywood film, regardless of genre, so much so that it was emphasized in screenwriting manuals (1985, 16-18). Furthermore, in emphasizing heterosexual romance over every other consideration, even when that romance functions as mere backdrop for a nonromantic star such as Shirley Temple, Altman precludes the possibility that any other type of pairing might occur in the film musical. The following analysis of the Crooner and Comic Seduction acts looks at the ways in which romantic songs in the *Road* films undermine heterosexual coupling and instead set up a same-sex dichotomy that highlights performances of masculinity. The discussion of coupling in this section, then, should be considered as casting new light on, for instance, the pairing of Gene Kelly and Donald O'Connor in *Singin' in the Rain*, Kelly and Frank Sinatra in *Take Me Out to the Ball Game* (1949), or Jane Russell and Marilyn Monroe in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953).[1]

> *The Crooner*. The romantic ballad is a fixture in any Crosby film and was often the climactic number in his radio shows. In the *Road* films, Crosby sings the song directly to Lamour. As both he and she are featured in closeups throughout the performance, the romantic affect of the ballad is supported by Crosby's sincere delivery of the song and Lamour's visible emotional response. This number is directly undermined on the spot or later in the film through comedy.
>
> *The Comic Seduction*. This number highlights Hope's ineptitude with women—a consistent part of his entertainment persona in film and radio. In the *Road* films, this number serves as a foil to Crosby's romantic ballad, and acts as Hope's spotlight performance even though it is Lamour, rather than Hope, who does the singing. Lamour

[1] For such an examination, see Jeanne Fuchs's essay on the pairing of Crosby and Fred Astaire (2007).

> seduces Hope, always with ulterior motives, and Hope's humorous physical and verbal responses draw laughs. In all of these scenes Lamour is the "straight man" for Hope's mugging and one-liners. She never responds to his humor, nor does she address the camera even when Hope does directly. In *Road to Zanzibar* Hope tries to rebuff Lamour's advances during her song, "You're Dangerous." In *Road to Morocco* Hope's response to Lamour's "Constantly" is primarily found in sight gags such as the toes of his shoes curling and uncurling. *Utopia* shows Hope getting so hot during Lamour's "Would You" that he melts the snow he is sitting on.

If, as Altman says, "the [male-female] duet is the musical's center of gravity, its method of summarizing in a single scene the film's entire structure," then the lack of such duets in the *Road* films is striking (1987, 37). Altman identifies several different ways in which film musicals present romantic duets, or at least the semblance of duets. True duets—a man and woman singing the majority of a song simultaneously, whether in unison or in harmony—are rare except in films with a tendency toward operatic styles, such as MGM's Jeanette MacDonald/Nelson Eddy operetta films in the late 1930s, or the same studio's Broadway adaptations in the 1950s starring Kathryn Grayson. Instead, the musical comedy couple usually trade lines, as Fred Astaire and Audrey Hepburn do in "S'Wonderful" from *Funny Face* (1957), or trade refrains, as Betty Grable and John Payne do in "Still Crazy for You" from *Footlight Serenade* (1942). In some musicals, the couple sings paired songs instead of a duet, as Snow White and her prince do in Disney's iteration of the fairy tale (1937), with Snow White's "I'm Wishing" immediately followed by the prince's "One Song." Still another strategy, which is a combination of the last two, has one partner reprising an earlier solo by the other partner, as happens rather strikingly near the end of *The Music Man* (1962), when Professor Hill and Marian trade reprises of each other's earlier songs, "Seventy-Six Trombones" and "Goodnight, My Someone."

In the *Road* films, Crosby and Lamour sing a duet only in the first film, *Road to Singapore*, trading refrains of "Too Romantic." Crosby sings his refrain first, then speaks a little light banter in between the sung lines of Lamour's refrain, and the two end the

song singing the last line in harmony. The ending of the song is punctuated by Hope pulling Crosby out of the frame with a hooked cane—perhaps the oldest bit of vaudeville schtick in the book. See Figures 3.1, (a) through (d).

Figure 3.1: Road to Singapore*, "Too Romantic," (a) Crosby sings; (b) Lamour sings; (c) they end the song together; (d) Hope with the hooked cane.*

The *Road* films contain several reprises of romantic ballads, but in ways that comically undermine, rather than reinforce, the emotional power of the song. Three of the films (*Zanzibar*, *Morocco*, and *Utopia*) contain romantic solo ballads performed by Crosby and Lamour, but they are not really male-female paired performances in the way Altman describes. Though Crosby sings all of his ballads to Lamour to win her love, Lamour sings her love songs to Hope to persuade him to do her bidding. Instead of presenting an emotional mirror image to Crosby's performances, as Altman says of paired songs, Lamour's ballads are an opportunity for Hope to clown.

As in many of the *Road* film acts, reflexivity plays an important role in the romantic songs. Several of Crosby's ballads, or the reprise thereof, are used to poke fun at

Hollywood filmmaking conventions. His performances in *Bali* and *Zanzibar* take advantage of the typical musical lead-ins for the ballad. In *Bali*, the music for Crosby's song "To See You" begins after he has exited the scene, leaving Hope sitting in the ship's hold alone. Hope hears the clearly coded romantic music—consisting of woodwinds, harp glissandi, and legato strings playing a clear melodic lead-in—then looks straight into the camera and informs the cinematic audience, "He's gonna sing, folks. Now's the time to go out and get the popcorn." Similarly, Crosby's ballad in *Zanzibar*, "It's Always You," sends up what was by 1941 a typical strategy for introducing a musical number in a film. While he and Lamour take a moonlit canoe ride, she says, "You know, this reminds me of a picture I saw once," and goes on to describe the exact situation they are in themselves. She recounts that the "fella" in the film sang to the girl, and that "from nowhere an orchestra started. You know, violins and everything, right in the middle of the jungle. Isn't that silly?" Crosby responds with an account of a similar film, in which the guy "sticks his hand in the water, runs it along, and out comes the sound of a harp, out of the water." They are incredulous at these illogical and unrealistic films. The coup d'etat occurs when Crosby runs his own hand through the water and is accompanied by the sound of a harp. The pair are shocked, but then decide to go along with it. A bird sings with the voice of a flute, and Crosby instructs him to "take it down a half-tone." The bird complies and 'sings' the melodic fragment in a lower key. As Figure 3.2 shows, Crosby conducts his jungle orchestra, with Lamour 'playing' the river-harp, and launches into the song. Perhaps the most amazing part of the scene is that Crosby sings his ballad anyway. Rather than ending the scene with the emotional affect of the song or a romantic kiss, though, the scene ends with a reaffirmation of the artifice of filmmaking conventions as the pair 'conducts' the jungle orchestra's closing gestures.

Figure 3.2: Crosby conducts Lamour's river harp and the rest of the jungle orchestra in Road to Zanzibar*, "It's Always You."*

The emotional affect of the romantic ballad is also the butt of the joke in several other scenes across the film cycle. In *Zanzibar* Crosby reprises "It's Always You" at Lamour's mock funeral. Believing her to have been eaten by wild animals, Hope suggests that a song would be appropriate to mark the solemnity of the occasion. Crosby begins to sing a chorus of the earlier ballad, without the jungle orchestra. After the first A section, he asks Hope to join him. The two men put arms around each other and stifle sobs as they sing the second A section of the song in harmony. Throughout the scene the men oscillate between exaggerated sorrow and mounting anger at Lamour's previous dishonesty, performing these emotions for comedy rather than as sincere feelings. Their use of the romantic ballad for this comic performance casts doubt on the sincerity of the amorous feelings associated with the ballad.

Crosby and Lamour's romance scene in *Utopia* comments further on the performative nature of the ballad. The song, "Welcome to My Dream," is introduced with Crosby explaining to Lamour his "usual routine" for wooing a pretty girl, which involves flowers, dinner with the parents, a ride in the park, and "a little song." She retorts, "Oh, so it's the song that does it?" and dares him to work his musical magic on her, which, of

course, he does. After the song, he confidently stands up to embrace and kiss Lamour. Though clearly affected by his song, she manages to put him off, prompting him to respond, "What's the matter, gal? Want another chorus?" The jokes that bookend his musical performance are predicated on the expectation—both the audience's and Crosby's—that he can win over any woman with his crooning. This expectation is taken quite literally in *Bali*. Crosby reprises "To See You Is To Love You" in an attempt to distract a widowed ape who has claimed Hope for her new mate. In mock tribute to Crosby's musical wooing prowess, the ape turns her affections to the crooner as soon as he starts singing.

The ballad sequence on the ocean liner in *Rio* offers the most direct deconstruction of onscreen romance. As Crosby and a despondent Lamour watch an onboard showing of a film, he explains to her how nothing in cinema is really as it seems. The couple dancing on the screen, "Max and Gertrude," are experiencing their own troubles in life and are even in love with other people, yet "there they are up there, floating through the air as if they didn't have a care in the world." Though the scene has its humorous moments, as when Hope and Crosby show up in the film-within-the-film as extras (Figure 3.3), Crosby's speech about the artifice of the cinema is perhaps more poignant than comedic, and is the closest the *Road* films come to Feuer's "ode to entertainment." He presents the fiction of a film as something both actors and audiences can use as a means of escape from the troubles of life. Still, as Crosby draws attention to the performative nature of onscreen romance, he potentially undermines the sincerity of his ensuing ballad, "But Beautiful." As Figures 3.4, (a) and (b), show, at the end of the song, the silhouette of the embracing Crosby and Lamour replaces the onscreen image of the dancing couple in the film-within-the-film, visually equating the Crosby-Lamour screen romance with the artificial, performed romance of "Max" and "Gertrude." This visual replacement is not a poetic comparison but a sight gag, as the onscreen audience for the film-within-the-film

laughs at a couple caught in an intimate moment. Yet again, the romantic scene ends with comedy rather than with a sincere emotional expression.

Figure 3.3: Road to Rio*, Crosby and Lamour on film watch Crosby and Hope on film.*

Figure 3.4 a—b: Road to Rio, *"But Beautiful," the silhouette of the embracing Crosby and Lamour replaces the onscreen image of the dancing couple in the film-within-the-film.*

Morocco contains the most absurd instance of lampooning a romantic ballad in the entire series. Crosby first sings "Moonlight Becomes You" to Lamour in a straight romantic, moonlit scene in a palace garden. The performance is the only one in the films left untouched by comedy—at least, it is until the song is reprised. Later, when Crosby and Hope are near death from wandering in the African desert in search of Lamour, they both hallucinate her standing before them as a mirage. She appears first as an offscreen voice reprising Crosby's ballad; then they see her rising from the sand, looking

transparent and ghost-like. She continues singing while she becomes more and more corporeal. Once she fully solidifies and walks toward the two men, the song becomes a comic bit of cinematic ventriloquism, foregrounding Hollywood's practices of prerecording and voice dubbing. The trio sing a full chorus, each taking a line of the song, but they are dubbed with each other's voices. Hope and Crosby take advantage of the clowning opportunity, offering impersonations of each other's and of Lamour's performance mannerisms, as demonstrated in Figure 3.5, (a) and (b). Yet Lamour does not react to or join in the clowning, even when she looks invitingly at Crosby while singing with Hope's voice. The potential gender subversion of this mixed up romantic ballad, with the wrong voices singing to the wrong people, is fully realized at the end of the song. The two men go in to kiss Lamour, who disappears, causing the two men to accidentally kiss each other.

Figure 3.5 a—b: Road to Morocco, *"Moonlight Becomes You," (a) Hope impersonates Crosby; (b) Crosby impersonates Lamour.*

Though both Crosby and Lamour's romantic ballads are marked by reflexive humor, her performances differ from his in narrative purpose. Crosby's performances are earnest attempts to woo Lamour, but Lamour always has ulterior motives for seducing Hope. She sings "You're Dangerous" in *Zanzibar* simply to hone her seductive skills for when she reunites with her millionaire fiancé. In *Morocco* Lamour is marrying Hope

because she was told her first husband would die soon after the wedding. In *Utopia* she sings to Hope to entice him to give her his half of a map to a gold mine.

Her performances also differ from Crosby's in that Lamour is continually upstaged by Hope's sight gags, interpolated one-liners, and direct address. In *Zanzibar* he responds to her musical advances by bulging his eyes, transferring his cash to another pocket, and appearing unable to control his body. Lamour physically manipulates his head, turning it this way and that, and wraps his limp arms around her. When Lamour starts the song Hope asks her, "Sure you have the right fella?" Then when she finishes her first chorus with the line, "You're dangerous, but who's afraid?" Hope responds, "Me." At the end of the the scene he is literally weak in the knees and crawls, rather than walks, away. In *Morocco* Lamour's second refrain of "Constantly" is background music for Hope's flamboyant display. He wears a sequined Arabic costume with several large jeweled rings and a plumed turban, and puffs on a long cigarette holder. His outrageous appearance is made even more ridiculous when he is offered milkshakes and lollipops on gilded trays. One part pansy and one part child, Hope is clearly not a viable lover no matter what Lamour sings, and indeed she does not intend to consummate the marriage. The final comic seduction in the film cycle is Lamour's "Would You" in *Utopia*. When the music for her song starts, Hope is startled and looks around for the source of the music. He then looks directly into the camera and shrugs. The biggest gag in the sequence is that Hope is apparently so steamed by Lamour's song that the snow melts beneath him, creating a hole into which he gradually sinks. Lamour, however, continues her seductive performance unaffected by either Hope's comical reactions or his sinking into the snow.

At first glance Lamour's ballads may seem like spotlight numbers for her, but they are really opportunities for Hope to give a signature comic performance. Lamour operates as a straight man for Hope's clowning, just as she operates as an impetus for Crosby's romantic crooning in his performances. She never reacts to Hope's clowning, never performs her own diegetic break by communicating directly with the film audience, never

becomes a true participant in the joke. Even during the reprise of "Moonlight Becomes You," when she sings with Hope or Crosby's voice supposedly emanating from her body, she continues her unaffected, straight performance. Only the La Lamour solo numbers are true spotlight performances for her. These stand-alone sequences include minimal screen time for the two men and are rarely involved in burlesquing gags.

Crosby and Lamour's paired romantic ballads, then, are really a pairing of the two men, rather than a pairing of Crosby and Lamour. In fact, if the two men are thought of as the central couple, the *Road* films look more similar to that of Altman's romance-centered musical. All of the films contain a true duet: the song-and-patter number performed by Hope and Crosby, usually early in the film. These numbers establish the two buddies as the primary couple, and the ensuing narrative trajectory revolves around their relationship. They fight over women and money, break up, make up, verbally confess their affection for each other, face near-death experiences together, and very often end the film with some sort of reconciliation or confirmation of their friendship. The films also pair the two men through matched scenes—often romantic scenes with Lamour—and parallel dialogue, rather than pairing either man with Lamour. As Figures 3.6, (a) and (b) show, *Morocco* features matching scenes between each man and the ghost of Aunt Lucy; *Utopia* has Hope and Crosby in opposite attire in opposite company on opposite ships heading in opposite directions (Figures 3.7, (a) and (b)); and *Bali* presents them on opposite sides of the stage dealing with shotgun-wielding fathers (Figures 3.8, (a) and (b)). In *Singapore*, both men tell Lamour that the other is a woman-chaser, then follow up with, "I know how he works—and I'm the best friend he's got." In *Utopia*, they each kiss Lamour in her saloon dressing room (Figures 3.9, (a) and (b)), then give into her request for a late dinner with, "I'll go work up an appetite."

Figure 3.6 a—b: Road to Morocco, *"Aunt Lucy" confronts Jeffrey (Crosby) and Orville (Hope), each in turn.*


Figure 3.7 a—b: Road to Utopia, *Hope sails to New York with leisure travelers while Crosby sails to Alaska with prospectors.*


Figure 3.8 a—b: Road to Bali, *Crosby and Hope are each pulled into opposite wings of the stage by angry fathers insisting on shotgun weddings to their blonde, curly-haired daughters in puff-sleeved, ruffled frocks. Even the clothing is matched: Crosby's intended bride is in blue while the father is in red, while Hope's betrothed is in red and her father in blue, and both sets of fathers and brothers wear matching hats.*


Figure 3.9 a—b. Road to Utopia, *Crosby and Hope have matched romantic scenes with Lamour in her saloon boudoir.*

Cohan has demonstrated the centrality of the Hope-Crosby buddy relationship in the *Road* films and the ways in which their coupling evokes queerness. He says that as a "socially permissible object of desire" for both men, Lamour's presence allowed Hope and Crosby "more license than usual for transgression, for pushing the buddy relation past its official limits" (1999, 27). Though I agree with Cohan's larger argument concerning the "queer shading" of the Hope-Crosby relationship (see the final section in this chapter), I disagree that Lamour's presence is what legitimates the homosocial bonding of the two men and renders harmless (to social norms) the homoerotic implications of their relationship. Instead, their scenes with her are part of the structural underpinnings of the film, establishing the two men as the central couple through the paired love scenes discussed above and offering each man a chance to demonstrate his version of masculinity in response to Lamour's alluring femininity. The paired ballad scenes, which are some of the only scenes in which one man appears without the other, provide excellent opportunities to compare the two men in terms of gender performance.

When Crosby sings his ballads, he is confident, compelling, and fully competent as a lover. As discussed above, *Utopia* and *Bali* use these qualities as an object of jest, but Crosby is nevertheless successful in his romantic endeavors, even in those films. The songs he sings are unembarrassed confessions of his growing affection, yet he is never

desperate or pleading. He often presents his affection as a hypothetical possibility: in "Too Romantic" in *Singapore* he asks, "Wouldn't I look a sight on a bended knee?"; in "Moonlight Becomes You" in *Morocco* he declares, "I could get so romantic tonight"; and in "But Beautiful" in *Rio* he muses, "I'm thinking, if you were mine I'd never let you go." The camerawork during his songs consists of close-ups, often filtered, of both Crosby and Lamour. He sings sincerely, consistently making eye contact with her (implied through matched shots and spatial relationships), and she alternates between returning his ardent look and gazing thoughtfully at the moon, presumably, or some other bit of scenery. See Figures 3.10, (a) through (e). Like Astaire-Rogers films, in which the camera frequently shows Ginger Rogers emotionally melting as she dances with Fred Astaire, Lamour's languor-in-close-up communicates that Crosby is indeed successful in his musical lovemaking. As Walter Raubicheck observes, "Crosby's ballad singing literally casts a spell over her" (2007, 83). In this way Lamour serves as a model for the audience to follow as she listens with rapt attention, allowing his singing to work its magic on her.

Figure 3.10 a—e: Paired close-ups during the Romantic Ballad Act: (a) Road to Singapore*, "Too Romantic"; (b)* Road to Zanzibar*, "It's Always You"; (c)* Road to Morocco*, "Moonlight Becomes You"; (d)* Road to Utopia*, "Welcome to My Dream"; (e)* Road to Rio*, "But Beautiful."*

By comparison, Hope is incompetent, bordering on frightened, and wholly naive as to the typical procedures for lovemaking. Two of Lamour's songs address Hope as if he were an aggressive lover. In "You're Dangerous" in *Zanzibar* she sings, "You kiss me with your eyes" and declares, "With your arms around me, I should call for aid." In "Would You" in *Utopia* she asks, "You wouldn't dare be too bold, would you?" and, "You shouldn't be quite so near, should you?" These songs offer Hope golden opportunities to play against them for comedic affect. During Lamour's "You're Dangerous," Hope is clearly anything but dangerous. Though she sings that she should call for aid, it is Hope who calls to Crosby for help. She is the one making aggressive sexual advances while he looks positively frightened of her. The sequence in *Utopia* shows Hope enjoying Lamour's attention, but as he melts into the snowbank he (literally) loses his cool and becomes distracted from his clumsy lovemaking. As Figures 3.11 (a) and (b) shows, Hope's romantic ineptitude reaches its peak in *Morocco*. As Lamour sings "Constantly" to Hope, petting him and giving him opportunities to kiss her, he instead smokes his ridiculous cigarette holder and considers the milkshakes and lollipops that are offered him by servant girls. Like an inexperienced adolescent, he seems wholly ignorant of what to do now that he has supposedly won Lamour's affections. This interpretation of his behavior is corroborated later in the film, as a wide-eyed Hope is seen reading *Six Lessons from Madame Lazonga*,[2] a lovemaking tutorial, in order to learn what to do with his bride after their upcoming wedding. All three of the Lamour-Hope sequences are devoid of the glamorous close-ups that characterize Crosby's ballads, and instead use mostly full-body shots of the pair and close-ups of Hope in order to showcase his performance. Rather than operating as a model for the preferred audience response, Lamour is Hope's straight man, feeding him opportunities to demonstrate his comedic virtuosity.

---

[2] The title of the book Hope reads is a reference to the popular song that exploded in 1940 and was recorded by Helen O'Connell and the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra, among others. The song also inspired a film of the same name released in 1941.

Figure 3.11 a—b: Hope pays little attention to Lamour as he clowns in Road to Morocco*, "Constantly."*

Nationalism and Exoticism

"I'm just an average, all-around, all-American boy with an excess of charm."

—Bing Crosby in *Road to Bali*

This section considers how the political and cultural climate into which the *Road* films were released interacts with the representational conventions of the vaudeville aesthetic. In each film, Hope and Crosby sing, dance, and fast-talk their way through exotic, mostly foreign locations. As the American servicemen traveled the world and radio broadcasts and newsreels exposed the American public to distant countries and foreign cultures, Crosby and Hope ambled through backlot jungles engaging in the kind of ethnic humor characteristic of a Dialect Act in a vaudeville show. The pair also played tourists as they witnessed spectacular performances put on by the supposed natives in what would be known as an Exotic Specialty Act in variety entertainment. Just as Hope made a trademark on his radio show out of inserting his current, often remote location into his name ("This is Bob [location] Hope"), demonstrating the sameness of his persona despite his globetrotting USO activities, so Crosby and Hope could travel anywhere in a *Road* film and remain, as Raubicheck says in his essay title, "American archetypes" (2007). Though all but one film is set on foreign soil (the sole exclusion being *Utopia*, set in the

Alaskan territory), the pair's cultural identities remain unchanged by the surrounding milieu. Perhaps more importantly, Crosby and Hope also Americanize, through appropriation and influence, every culture they inhabit, demonstrating, in Cohan's words, "the global hegemony of US entertainment" (1997, 119).

> *The Dialect Act.* A dialect act in vaudeville was usually one or more comics who specialized in presenting stereotyped characters from other cultures or people groups, such as Southerners, Jewish Americans, or foreigners from pretty much any country.[3] As the title suggests, this type of act focused on both unusual accents and culturally specific lingo, and sometimes involved costuming ranging from a simple hat change to full wardrobe. In the *Road* films, Crosby and Hope engage in dialect acts in nearly every film, often with ridiculous costumes. Much of the humor in their dialect comedy lies in their seemingly poor execution of the act. Often the dialect act is narratively integrated in that it serves as a disguise of some sort.
>
> *The Exotic Specialty*. These performances, which were common in circuses, Wild West shows, nightclubs, and stage revues, are spectacles of foreign culture, though the performers need not be actual foreigners nor the performance an accurate representation of a foreign culture. As Figures 3.12, (a) through (d), demonstrates, these numbers usually make extensive use of exotically coded music, dance, costumes, and sets. In the *Road* films, the exotic specialty involves the primitive "locals" performing in a stereotyped representation of the native culture. At some point in each film, Hope and Crosby usually make a comical, ultimately unsuccessful attempt to integrate into the local ethnic culture.

[3] For an especially good account of a female dialect act, see Kibler, 1997.

Figure 3.12: Exotic Specialty Acts stereotyping (a) Pacific Islander in Road to Singapore*, (b) Middle Eastern in* Road to Morocco*, and (c) and (d) Southeast Asian cultures in* Road to Bali.

In Chapter 2 I demonstrated that the first *Road* films were produced and released at a time in Hollywood when politically conscious films were eschewed in favor of light, escapist genres. Of course, the avoidance of war-related films came to an end after Pearl Harbor was bombed and the U.S. could no longer remain uninvolved. Yet as war films surged in popularity, so, too, did escapist pictures continue to garner large box-office returns. The competition between the two types of films was so fierce that in late 1942 Edwin Schallert declared, "The question of whether the war or the escapist film shall take precedence is no longer a question. The answer, pretty emphatically stated, is that the public is attuned to both" (*Los Angeles Times*, 4 October 1942). Even Paramount entered the war film foray with pictures such as *Wake Island* (1942) and *Five Graves to Cairo* (1943), though the studio remained focused mostly on comedies, musicals, and adventure films throughout the 1940s.

From the first release, the *Road* films were understood by contemporary reviewers in the context of the current political climate. A *Washington Post* staff writer called *Singapore*, "a merry, jestful matter which will make war and rumors of war seem pleasantly distant" (22 April 1940). Six months earlier John L. Scott charged Hollywood with providing "some good 'belly laughs'" as "a national service" to "build morale" (*Los Angeles Times*, 22 October 1939). The *Road* films released before the end of World War II seem to have delivered, as *Zanzibar* was called "a national blessing" and *Morocco*'s "two hours of forgetfulness" was described as a "brief moment of happiness in so many moments of tragedy" (*Los Angeles Times*, 22 April 1941; *Photoplay/Movie Mirror*, January 1942).

One remarkable aspect of the film cycle is that each entry manages to avoid any possible mention of the war, international politics, the military, or life on the homefront. Even *Morocco*, which was released as American troops began fighting in North Africa, seems to be set in a version of Morocco reviewers characterized as "completely remote from time and place" and "undiscovered as yet by the Africa Korps, British Eighth Army or the American A.E.F." (*New York Times*, 15 November 1942; *Washington Post*, 16 January 1943). This aspect of the *Road* films is perhaps less surprising when the activities of the Office of War Information (OWI) are considered. As Koppes and Black (1995) have demonstrated, the OWI attempted heavy censorship of any film that had as its subject matter or backdrop a war of any kind, conditions on the homefront, politics and government, and past or present international relations. Thus, whether for censorship or box-office purposes, and despite Crowther's claim that "geography means nothing in a 'Road' film," the avoidance of all things war was intentional and calculated, as Paramount's aforementioned publicity campaign demonstrates. Several press reports indicate that the third *Road* film was supposed to have traveled to Moscow, but was changed due to worsening fighting in Russia (*Film Daily*, 29 April 1941; *Los Angeles Times*, 30 April 1941). In December 1941, the Paramount executives in New York sent a

telegram to the Los Angeles producers to suggest changing *Morocco*'s title "in view of probable war developments." When *Utopia* was announced, which used the winter sets and costumes the studio had created for the abandoned *Road to Moscow*, a *Variety* writer remarked that the turn-of-the-century Alaskan setting succeeded in "avoiding all possible war zones, which is a pretty tough job nowadays" (6 October 1943).

The escapism of the *Road* films takes on new meaning when considered in this historical and political context. As Jennifer Jenkins has pointed out, even when Hollywood films avoided all mention of war, they still often served as a form of propaganda "by strengthening what most profoundly motivated public support for the international struggle—the American cultural values it was meant to uphold" (2001, 331). She explains the contradiction inherent in such films: "Escapism proved to be an ambivalent desire, seeking at once distance from current strife and greater intimacy (either maintained or reclaimed) with the values in whose name the strife was being fought." The reviewers' comments above effectively demonstrate that the *Road* films were understood, at least by the entertainment press, as attempting to give audiences "distance from current strife." By placing their distinctly American stars in sharp relief against foreign cultures, the *Road* films also encouraged audiences to recognize and take pleasure in a uniquely American brand of entertainment.

Considering these films as equally at home in the musical and road movie genres, Cohan places these films in the context of the nation at war, saying, "Films from this era equate 'America' with popular entertainment, the nation's traveling showbiz culture that brought 'home' to the road, as best exemplified by the USO shows during the war" (1997, 113). The connection Cohan draws between popular entertainment, especially traveling shows, and nationalism is key. Knapp (2005), Woods (1999), and Lebovic (2013) all confirm the importance of American popular entertainment in the establishment of a distinct national identity, especially in the first half of the twentieth century. Knapp identifies film, jazz, and musical theater as the three "quintessentially

American" art forms, and as such, these kinds of artistic works often provide a site for negotiating the terms of American national identity (4). Looking more specifically at American vaudeville, Woods calls the conventionalizing effects of its assembly-line style of entertainment a form of "cultural imperialism" that worked to erase or stereotype the national and ethnic characteristics of imported European stars in the 1910s and 1920s (74). Lebovic also considers vaudeville a form of American nationalism, at least as it was employed in USO Camp Shows during World War II., which Cohan likewise holds up as the model of nationalist popular entertainment. Lebovic points out that such a tactic was not unique to America: "All nations, democratic and undemocratic alike, tried to use popular culture to tie soldiers to the home front, and to boost nationalist morale during the global conflict" (265).

It would be difficult to find two American entertainers who, in the 1940s, were more popular and who more thoroughly embodied American entertainment than Crosby and Hope. Crosby appeared on *Motion Picture Herald*'s Exhibitor's Poll of Top Ten Box-Office Stars every year but two (1941 and 1942), and topped the list from 1944 through 1948. He was unseated in 1949 by his *Road* costar Hope, who appearing on the list in 1941. The two entertainers also vied regularly for top awards for their radio shows, and both helped sell war bonds and traveled extensively with the USO Camp Shows. Throughout the 1940s, both Crosby and Hope were known as quintessentially American entertainers—so much so that Crosby created propaganda recordings for the American military to blast via loudspeakers to German towns (hence his nickname "Der Bingle") and Hope was given numerous awards beginning in the mid-'40s for his work entertaining American servicemen. Though it would be nearly impossible to gauge whether these films affected the opinions and attitudes of the American moviegoing public, the fact is that the *Road* films, and their depictions of American entertainers traipsing unaffected through exotic locales, were among the most popular and widely disseminated films in the U.S. in the 1940s. Every *Road* film was among or at the top of

Paramount's biggest moneymakers for the year in which it was released. *Morocco*, *Utopia*, and *Rio* all ranked in the top eight of *Variety*'s list of the most profitable box-office films from any studio in their respective release years, and *Bali* listed at 21st on *Variety*'s 1953 box-office chart.

Though the *Road* films are decidedly escapist, which was undoubtedly a large part of their draw, they display nationalist politics in tangible ways. As in the title of this section, the two men are repeatedly identified by their nationality throughout every film with a foreign setting (all but *Utopia*). Cohan concludes that "by way of its association with show business, the road represents the nation cohering around its popular entertainment as exemplified by Hope and Crosby" (1997, 121). Giddins' description of the films' appeal highlights their nationalist ideals in similar language: "Wherever Bing and Bob travel, they bring American outlooks, American morals, and most of all, American show business, primarily vaudeville" (2001, 584). Indeed, vaudeville in general and USO shows in particular both involve entertainers taking the same basic show from one place to another, with the audience-drawing star personae remaining consistent from one show to the next and from one location to the next, even if some of the topical content of the acts changed to suit the audience at hand.

Cohan argues that "the Americanness of these two famous road men, then, is not the 'otherness' of the foreign culture they encounter while on the road, since the films render their exotic locales and adventure plots cartoonish enough to make the condescending stereotypes ideologically transparent" (1997, 119). Because he does not seem to recognize the extent of the vaudeville influence in the *Road* films, Cohan misses the fact that these "cartoonish" and "condescending stereotypes" play an indispensable and active role in the nationalist politics of the vaudeville aesthetic as realized in the film cycle. Raubicheck recognizes the essential role these foreign sites play when he comments that "much of the humor of the series stems from the clash between the boys' unshakeable Americanness and the traditions of the exotic cultures they encountered" (2007, 79). The

films offer reductive depictions of foreign cultures, put (supposedly) foreign bodies and rituals on display as entertainment for American audiences, and turn these cultures into a two-dimensional backdrop for Crosby and Hope's distinctly American star performances. Like Raubicheck, Giddins drives this point home when he says that in every exotic land, the duo "adapt and burlesque local customs and rituals, ultimately changing them into exotic reflections of home. The natives are their straight men, the villains their stooges, the women their props, the clothing their costumes" (584). Instead of depicting American show business as "the universal language," as Cohan says, the *Road* films assert that any culture can be assimilated into American show business—a message intended, perhaps, to be comforting to a nation whose servicemen were dispersed in a variety of unfamiliar international settings (1997, 118).

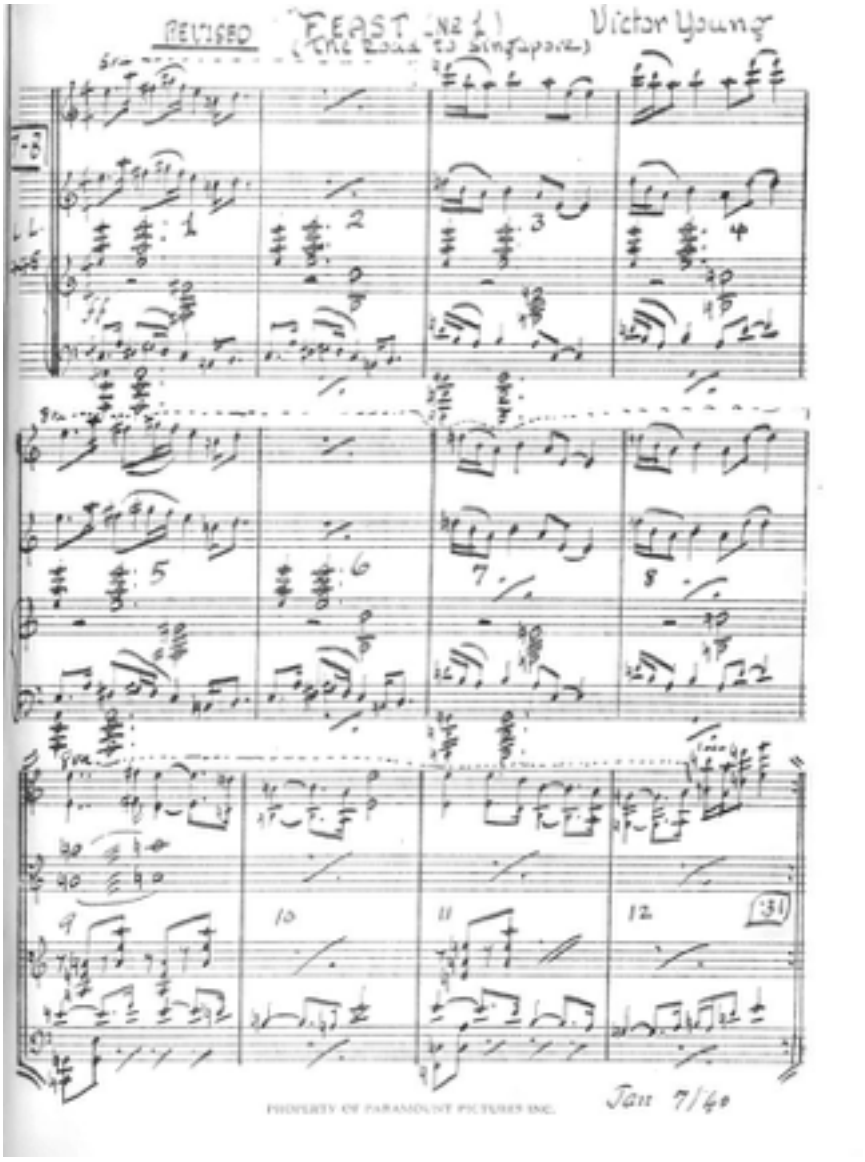
As I have mentioned, all of the films but *Utopia* are set on foreign soil. Exotic settings were common in Hollywood films and in musicals in particular throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and the *Road* films often parody other popular film genres. Cohan is more correct than he realizes when he comments that "the entire series seems a throwback to the colonial narratives of Kipling and Conrad as filtered through jingoistic American eyes" (1997, 118). For instance, *Singapore* pokes fun at the jungle melodramas that made Lamour Paramount's "Queen of the Sarong," and *Zanzibar* spoofs colonialist adventure films set in Africa, such as *Sanders of the River* (1935) and *King Solomon's Mines* (1937). Jennifer Jenkins explains some of the problems with Hollywood's penchant for exotic settings, especially in escapist musicals:

> . . . The musical numbers typically convey only the barest understanding of the music of these newly discovered cultures. A large part of their success as escape mechanisms lay in avoiding any serious engagement with the nation's actual experience in many of these "exotic" lands. (2001, 320)

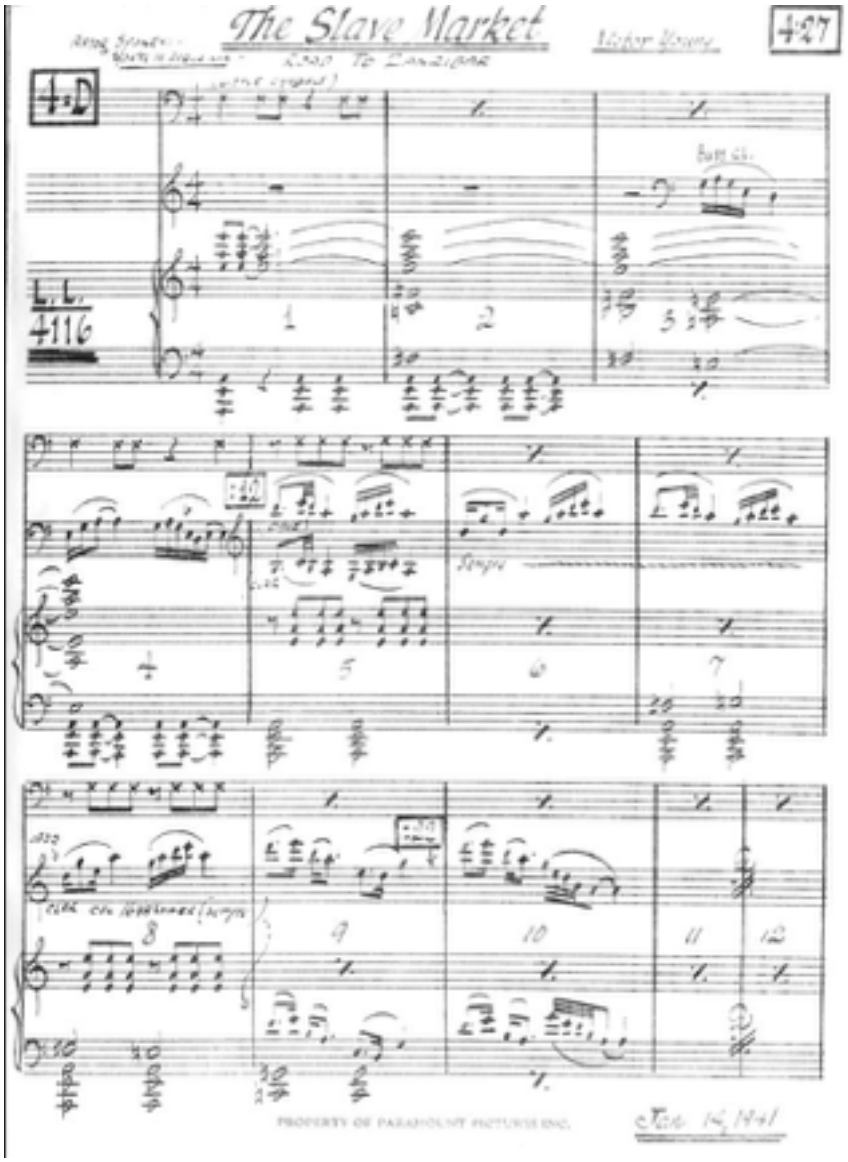
I would go even further and suggest that, at least in the *Road* films, the musical numbers convey no understand whatsoever of the music of the foreign cultures represented, and that the films avoid serious engagement with any aspect of these cultures.

Two musical cues from the first two films exemplify the lack of accurate musical understanding. As Examples 3.1 and 3.2 show, both films use similar musical characteristics to introduce a foreign setting, even though one film is set on an island off the coast of Southeast Asia and the other is set in Africa. Both of these cues occur at moments in the films when Crosby and Hope are infiltrating a foreign culture. The "Feast" cue in *Singapore* is the first music heard when the two men and Lamour attend the native wedding feast on Kaigoon. The "Slave Market" cue appears in *Zanzibar* underneath the clamor of the African open-air market where Crosby and Hope are conned into buying damsel-in-deceit Lamour out of human trafficking.

Example 3.1: Road to Singapore*, Victor Young, cue 7-B, "Feast (No. 1), Revised," mm. 1—12. Courtesy of Robert D. Farber University Archives and Special Collections Department, Brandeis University.*



Example 3.2: Road to Zanzibar*, Victor Young, cue 4-D, "The Slave Market," mm. 1—12, cue is largely inaudible until around m. 5. Courtesy of Robert D. Farber University Archives and Special Collections Department, Brandeis University.*



As these two cues demonstrate, the *Road* films rely on generic style topics, which are common in Hollywood cinema, to convey their exotic locales (Buhler, Neumeyer and Deemer 2010, 205-210). The *Singapore* and *Zanzibar* cues use elements of a generic

"oriental" topic as well as one denoting primitivism. Both cues consist of rhythmic, open-fifth harmonic support that accents the downbeat, representing the primitive native. The "oriental" topic is evident in the ornamented, modal melodies played in unison by reed instruments separated by multiple octaves. Both pieces feature heavy percussion, and the *Zanzibar* cue includes metallic finger cymbals. The sameness of the two musical cues demonstrates that the actualities of the foreign culture are unimportant; rather, a generic exotic backdrop is needed in order to foreground the Americanness of Crosby and Hope.

The Exotic Specialty is the best example of this generic backdrop. These acts present groups of people tied together by their non-American ethnicity, singing their supposed native songs during the rituals of work ("African Etude" in *Zanzibar*), marriage ("Kaigoon" in *Singapore*, "Batuque Nio Morro" in *Rio*, "Jungle Wedding March" in *Bali*), and hospitality ("Sword Dance" in *Morocco*, "South Seas Ballet" in *Bali*). As Figure 3.12 (a)—(d) and Examples 3.1 and 3.2 above show, these performances are heavily marked as non-American through language, dress, choreography, and musical style. As in the two cues discussed above, most of these Exotic Specialties use style topics to convey their difference from Western culture. All but "Batuque Nio Morro" use heavy percussion consisting mostly of hand drums, and "Kaigoon," "Sword Dance," and "South Seas Ballet," place a strong accent on the downbeat in simple quadruple meter. Like the cues above, "Sword Dance" and "Kaigoon" feature ornamented, modal melodies played by reed instruments in octaves, while the two Exotic Specialties in *Bali* present more angular, jazz-tinged melodies played by brass instruments. Both performances in *Bali* emphasize open fourths and fifths, as does "Kaigoon," employing the primitive style topic. "Kaigoon," "African Etude," and "Jungle Wedding March" also feature the choral singing by the natives in foreign languages, affirming the idea that these are established communities which are set apart from our own.

As with most things in the *Road* films, foreign cultures and their showcase performances are often hijacked by Crosby and Hope, usually for laughs. The two stars'

attempts to operate smoothly in these unfamiliar countries are often played as a type of comic dialect act or failed impersonation act. Hope and Crosby "perform" these types of character sketches when they don disguises and attempt to integrate themselves into the local culture. They inevitably bring their distinct Americanness to bear on the foreign disguise they have adopted, often interpolating American music into their performance of the foreigner. In *Singapore* Hope, Crosby, and Lamour's attempt to join in the natives' wedding dance is marked by a conspicuous shift from the tribal music on the soundtrack to a swing version of the tune. In *Zanzibar* Crosby joins in the natives' feast ritual performance by singing an American folksong, "Old Dan Tucker," over the tribal drumbeat.[4] Even in *Rio*, with an exotic other far less removed from American culture, Hope and Crosby can only parody Brazilian culture as Hope impersonates Carmen Miranda, Crosby sings his own improvised lyrics intended to mimic the sound of Portuguese, and the pair make a travesty of the Brazilian samba dancing the previous virtuosic performers had exemplified.

One particular instance of cultural hijacking drives home the fact that the American stars, Crosby in particular, are able to inject American popular music anywhere they like. "African Etude" in *Zanzibar* begins as a work song for the African natives as they carry the baggage and even the bodies of the white American travelers. The native men sing a cappella in their own language, with only their hand drums for accompaniment, as they begin the journey. Crosby, smoking his pipe and lounging in a hammock-style sedan carried by native men, takes up (or takes over) the song by improvising neutral syllables. As soon as he starts his first "da da da de," the volume of the choral singers—numbering over fifty according to archival records—is instantly lowered so that Crosby's voice,

---

[4] I have not considered this as an Exotic Specialty since the performing natives are almost never actually in the frame. The music consists entirely of drums and one dancer is featured for about two seconds. Instead of a special performance, then, the natives' drums function as background sound for the dialogue-driven scene.

though soft at first, can be clearly heard.[5] As he sings English lyrics the native chorus responds to his musical direction, settling into chord changes that correspond to Western popular music conventions (the progression is largely based on the circle of fifths) and reserving their own exotic musical flourishes for breaks in Crosby's phrasing. This aural equivalent of the colonialist image of the safari establishes Crosby not as part of the musical community of African natives, but as outside the community, appropriating the exotic musical style in ways that complement American popular music conventions. Even the title of the song, "African Etude," displays this kind of appropriation, with the foreign cultural marker relegated to an adjectival inflection of a Western musical form, though it should be noted that the actual music bears no resemblance to the European instrumental genre of the etude.

The "African Etude" performance is a remarkable but rare instance of cultural appropriation that is not intended to be humorous. More often, these moments are an opportunity for comic performance. As Table 3.1 shows, from the very first film, Crosby and Hope engage in Dialect Acts as they perform a comically exaggerated American identity. In *Singapore* the two men disguise themselves by darkening their skin and donning sarongs with Lamour in order to take advantage of the free food at the natives' wedding feast. They scat their way through conversations with the locals, who never seem concerned that the two men are speaking gibberish. On seeing the natives dance, Hope asks, "Do they have jitterbugs down here, too?" When a native woman entices Crosby (oblivious to the matrimonial implications) to join the dance, growling jazz trumpets briefly intrude into the exoticized orchestra; then when Hope and Lamour go in to rescue Crosby from the marriage dance, a swing band replaces the high reed instruments, the hand percussion recedes somewhat, and blue notes and syncopation replace the chorus's pentatonic melodies and straight rhythms. Neither man successfully

---

[5] *Road to Zanzibar* budget sheet dated October 26, 1940 shows a fifty-voice male chorus for the scoring session of the "safari number." Paramount Production Records, Margaret Herrick Library Special Collections.

imitates the natives' dance style, and Hope actually does the Charleston. Through language, music, and dance, then, the two men demonstrate the subjugating capabilities of American popular culture.

Table 3.1: Instances of Dialect Acts in the Road *films. Note that all but one of these acts ("The Great Zambini" in* Utopia*) involve Crosby and Hope interacting with a foreign milieu.*

Film	Situation	Costume	Narrative Goal	Speech
Road to Singapore	Crosby and Hope as local Kaigoon natives	Brown-painted skin and curtain sarongs	Sneak into a local native ceremonial feast	Two men speak gibberish to the native, who don't seem to notice
Road to Zanzibar	African natives speaking in subtitled foreign language	Their own supposed native dress	Natives deciding whether Crosby and Hope are white gods	One uses American slang in subtitles—a reversed dialect act
Road to Morocco	Crosby and Hope as Arabian tribesmen	Turbans, robes, browned skin	Infiltrate the villain's desert base and rescue the girls	Disguise only
Road to Utopia	Crosby as Indian guru, "The Great Zambini"	Jeweled turban, long beard, robe	Carry out the "Ghost-O" con	Pig-latin, foreign words borrowed from *Zanzibar*'s "African Etude"
Road to Rio	The Weire Brothers as Portuguese musicians learning American slang	None	Pass the "Portuguese" musicians off as American for a swing gig	Reversed dialect act as Crosby teaches the musicians stereotyped "hep talk"
Road to Rio	Crosby and Hope as Brazilian dancers	Crosby with fake mustache, earring, and bandana; Hope as Carmen Miranda with fruit-basket hat, tied crop top, and sarong skirt	Evade capture by the villains	Hope vocalizes, Crosby sings improvised English nonsense lyrics in imitation of Portuguese
Road to Bali	Crosby and Hope as Scotsmen in "Hoot Mon"	Both wear kilts and knee socks and carry bagpipes	Entertain at Lala's court	Exaggerated Scottish accents, jokes about Scotsmen

The influence of American popular culture appears even stronger in *Zanzibar*. Hope and Crosby find trouble when they come upon a room full of drums in an abandoned native village and start improvising swing rhythms, attracting the attention of a nearby tribe of cannibals and presenting the language barrier between the two Americans and the African cannibals as a musical one. The characteristic wit of the *Road* films is displayed when the natives' language is translated into onscreen subtitles. The presence of the American entertainers seems to bring out the slang in one of the chief's advisors, as his intertitles use American idioms like "phoney-baloney," "a lotta hooey," and even popular culture references: "If he's a god, I'm Mickey Mouse!" This kind of assimilation, with foreign peoples adopting American culture, is also the basis for a running gag in Rio. Crosby hires a a trio of Brazilian musicians, played by the Wiere Brothers, for his American jazz band. Crosby assures Bob Hope that the trio need only learn a few "hep talk" phrases, such as "You're telling me," to pass as American jazz musicians. This strategy eventually fails and the boys are fired by the irate club-owner, but not before the trio's attempt at hep talk turns into a "Who's on First"-style, vaudevillian cross-talk act.

The most well-known Dialect Act in the *Road* films is the samba sequence in *Rio*, which involves multiple layers of ethnic representation. The musicians performing the song "Batuque Nio Morro" are the Carioca Boys, a Brazilian group. They, however, are not prominently featured on the image track. Instead, the Weire Brothers, an American vaudevillian act who play a trio of Brazilian musicians in the film, perform an acrobatic clowning act to the song (see Figure 3.13 a). The next group visually featured are two pairs of professional samba dancers, immediately followed by Hope and Crosby performing a travesty of a samba (see Figure 3.13 b). Hope is clearly dressed as a makeshift drag version of Carmen Miranda, whose own star persona was a conflation of all things Central and South American (Roberts 1993), and Crosby looks more like a Caribbean pirate than any specific ethnicity. Crosby's main dance move is a hop coupled with a hand wave and Hope alternates between a sort of donkey kick and various

shimmies. When they dance together they do a tango promenade step and get tangled up trying to do turns in two-handed holds. In fact, most of their tangles occur because both men are clearly trying to lead. Hope's drag performance ends with the standard gesture of removing the wig, though it is one of thugs who performs this gender reveal. Crosby improvises English lyrics that have the same percussive sounds of the original Portuguese words: "Ev'rybody here likes chick'n cacciatore / And there's a few like chopped chicken liver." This improvisation comes across as a comical linguistic ineptitude, but is problematized by the fact that in previous scenes Crosby has been able both to understand and to speak Portuguese.

Figure 3.13: Road to Rio, *"Batuque Nio Morro," (a) Weire Brothers featured instead of the actual Brazilian musicians, the Carioca Boys, who can be seen in the background; (b) Hope and Crosby's samba.*

As in other *Road* films, the pair appropriate the surrounding culture for the sake of a disguise, which then becomes a dialect act in the film's variety structure. Hope's drag impersonation of Carmen Miranda, an icon of the nation's Good Neighbor policy, was itself an American tradition born out of wartime G.I. variety shows, according to Shari Roberts (1993). The diegetic laughter of the Brazilian wedding guests potentially assuages any feeling of inappropriateness the cultural parody might cause, and Crosby's nonsensical improvised lyrics seem an attempt to make up for the less-than-flattering Weire Brothers' caricature of Brazilians in the "hep talk" scenes by showing that the

linguistic ineptitude goes both ways. Crosby and Hope are completely unable to convert themselves to Brazilian culture, but their seeming lack of skill in Brazilian dancing and singing is actually yet another display of their comic virtuosity. Crosby could speak Portuguese earlier in the film, he moved well in his shipboard performance with the Andrews Sisters in the somewhat prophetic song, "You Don't Have to Know the Language," and Hope was known to be a trained dancer.

In the majority of these scenes, the two stars comically place their Americanness in sharp relief against the background of an exotic culture by engaging in the conventions of American popular entertainment. It is worth noting that most of the sequences involving Crosby and Hope bumbling through a foreign culture are climactic sequences in the films. If the films structural units are considered as part of a vaudeville bill, these sequences are the act next to closing. *Singapore*, *Zanzibar*, *Morocco*, and *Rio* all contain extended sequences involving a rapid succession of gags, both verbal and visual, predicated on Crosby and Hope negotiating sticky situations often caused by cultural misunderstandings. Of course, the pair inevitably escape any serious trouble, not by successfully communicating with the local people, but by literally performing their way out. In *Singapore* Hope and Lamour swing dance Crosby out of a matrimonial ritual. In *Zanzibar* Crosby and Hope accidentally start a craze for slapstick among the African cannibals when they use their familiar patty cake gag on a pair of native warriors. *Morocco* has the two men performing a plethora of standard practical jokes, including an improvised whoopee cushion and the familiar hot foot prank, on the villainous tribesmen that imprisoned them. The climax of *Rio* involves the coalescence of several running gags, such as the patty cake routine, and some new ones, including the memorable samba parody and the Colonna-led cavalry that never arrives. The well-known conventions of American popular entertainment thus become an indispensable toolkit that these two perpetual travelers use to survive difficult circumstances in unfamiliar cultures, presenting in narrative fashion what many performers, Crosby and Hope included,

offered to both military and domestic audiences in the form of morale-boosting nationalist entertainment.

Camp Readings of the *Road* Films

"I don't care where I'm going just as long as I'm with you"

—Crosby and Hope in "Put It There, Pal" in *Road to Utopia*

The consistent pairing of Crosby and Hope in the *Road* films seems to make camp readings easy—almost too easy. The paired scenes and shots I discussed in the above section on romantic coupling corroborate this idea, and after all, the two men set up house together, share a single pair of pajamas, try to avoid female entanglements, speak of their affection for each other, and even kiss, albeit accidentally. Both in the films and in the reviews, the men are continually referred to as a pair, occasionally as a couple, with supposed love interest Lamour left out of the unit. Giddins even remarks, referring to the way *Singapore* closes on a shot of Crosby and Hope instead of Crosby and Lamour, "the audience knows who the real couple is" (2001, 590). Yet the vaudeville aesthetic carries certain consequences for alternative readings such as camp.

James Buhler defines camp as "readings [that] seize on elements of textual spectacle or excess to bifurcate the film into competing structural levels, one that carries a dominant meaning, the other a secret, subversive or at least non normative one" (2014, 372). For Knapp, this bifurcating excess is usually found in modes of performance, so that the interpretive space for camp readings occurs in "a disjuncture between subject matter and performance" (2006, 396n87). He argues that during narrative, nonmusical performance, the artifices of filmmaking have greater potential for disappearing behind the narrative, but during musical performance these artifices are often more visible and thus more difficult for spectators to ignore. For example, during singing and/or dancing, actors become more visible as performers rather than as the characters they portray, and

the mechanics of lip-synching to prerecorded music threaten the illusion that the musical performance is "live" or spontaneous in any sense (2006, 6-9).

Both Buhler's and Knapp's definitions of camp readings depend on competing interpretive levels within a single film, then. Janet Staiger's discussion of camp includes this kind of dual consciousness and adds to it a "purposefully hypergendered" perspective geared toward double entendres and sexual innuendos (2005, 128). She calls camp one kind of "parodic reading," which raises the question: if a film is already a parody, as the *Road* films most certainly are, can a parodic reading be applied to it? Recall that in the previous chapter I applied Seidman's explanation of the dual narrative levels created by reflexivity to the *Road* films. His two levels sound strikingly similar to those Buhler says are caused by spectacle and excess, of which reflexivity is certainly a type. Seidman's second level, the one that "mediates about the film's presuppositions and formal devices" (1981, 57) and gives the star performer a special status in the film, is certainly non normative in its construction of meaning, as Buhler defines his second interpretive level. In employing the vaudeville aesthetic, the *Road* films also foreground star personae, allowing Crosby and Hope to continually step out of the plot, out of the "subject matter," and perform visibly for the cinema audience, thus satisfying Knapp's description of the interpretive space for camp.

With so many of the interpretive strategies for camp built into the films' dominant aesthetic system, a subversive or unintended reading seems nearly impossible. Cohan confronts this issue when he comments that Hope and Crosby likely "did not intend such a queer resonance to be read off of their buddy relation," but then asks, "how else can we interpret the full weight of the jokes and sight gags that abound in the 'Road to' films to dramatize the intimacy and rapport of their teaming?" If his statements are considered in the interpretive frameworks outlined by the scholars above, the queer shading found in the films' gags might be considered part of the dominant, normative reading, though Cohan is unsure if such a reading is intended, while the "intimacy and rapport" Crosby

and Hope display in their performances seem to carry the "secret, subversive" meaning—namely, the true nature of their buddy relationship. Both of these interpretive perspectives bear further investigation.

The "queer resonance" Cohan finds in the *Road* film gags actually extends far beyond what he discusses. For example, Paramount emphasized Hope's gender reversal in *Morocco* in a *Variety* ad, shown in Figure 3.14 (1 July 1942). The ad presents side-by-side promotional stills—one for *The Sheik* (1921) showing Rudolph Valentino with a swooning Agnes Ayres in his arms, and one of Dorothy Lamour holding Hope in the same subordinated position, equating her with the lustful Valentino and Hope with the subjugated Ayres. The caption reads, "Technique in sheikin' hasn't changed much . . . except in who woos who!" Though the advertisement is not homosexually coded by showing Hope and Crosby together, Hope is definitely presented as feminized by receiving rather than perpetrating aggressive sexual advances. He is further feminized by his clothing, which is far more ornamented than that of Lamour. The text of the advertisement even draws attention to Hope's costume, saying it was the same as Valentino's in the earlier film. This comparison would also have contributed to Hope's feminization for those who remembered the so-called "Powder Puff" attack against Valentino in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1926.

Figure 3.14: Paramount Pictures ad in Variety *compares* The Sheik *(Rudolph Valentino with Agnes Ayres) and* Road to Morocco *(Dorothy Lamour holding Bob Hope).*

If the heterosexual romantic pairings in the films are not to be taken seriously, then perhaps the romantic energy in the *Road* films is really focused elsewhere—that is to say, toward the relationship between Hope and Crosby, as Cohan points out (1999, 30). *Road to Singapore* opens with Crosby (as Josh), observing a henpecked sailor, commenting that only women should get married. Hope's (as Ace) response, "Say, can they do that?" establishes the adolescent aspect of his persona through gullibility and sexual naiveté. From these first lines in the film, the space for camp reading is intentionally opened wide, with Crosby's comment replacing heterosexual with homosexual coupling. Crosby then helps Hope escape an impending marriage to the aptly named "Cherry" using their childish patty cake gag. A little bit later Crosby arrives on Hope's fishing boat to announce his engagement, only to become sidetracked by reeling in a large marlin—with hands-on help from Hope. The potentially homoerotic scene works against Crosby's impending marriage to confirm the buddies as the dominant relationship while also presenting the pair as adolescents out fishing while they shirk their adult responsibilities. If the audience is in any doubt at this point as to the potential for a homosexual reading of the relationship, though, Crosby's intended brother-in-law, Gordon, removes this doubt when Hope and Crosby finally arrive at the engagement party and Gordon asks, referring to Hope, "Who is the boyfriend?" Instead of denying the implication of homosexuality, Crosby confirms it when he says, "Come on, Ace, I'll slip you into something flimsy," and the two men leave together to change clothes.

The first musical number, "Captain Custard," is quite different in style from the other song-and-patter numbers in subsequent *Road* films, but it serves the same function of establishing, or establishing further, the pairing of Hope and Crosby. Rather than beginning the number together, as they do in the other song-and-patter acts, Hope begins the song alone, accompanied by a diegetic dance band (see Figure 3.15 a).[6] He plays up

[6] Hope's only other solo of any length is at the beginning of "The Merry Go Run-Around" in *Road to Bali*.

his own feminization in the first part of the song, which is about a formidable theater usher for which the song is named (see Figure 3.15 b and c). Though women surround the Captain, Hope sings that it is not because they desire the usher, "'cause he looks too much like a charlotte russe" in his fancy uniform. Hope then interpolates the exclamation, "Oh, Cap'n Cussie!" with a wink, effete pose, and hip flounce. Of course, Hope is also decked out in a fancy uniform with shiny buttons, a captain's hat, and a cape appropriated from a female party guest. Gordon again verbalizes the homosexual implications of Hope's character when he responds to this effeminate display by asking Crosby, "Do you think sometime I could hire your 'friend' for a stag party?" Gordon sets the word 'friend' apart, insinuating a double meaning, and implies that Hope could entertain a room full of straight men with his act.[7] Again, Crosby responds not by challenging Gordon's assumptions, but by confirming the relationship he has with Hope. He retorts, "You've got to take both of us. We work together." Crosby then takes on the fairy persona himself by putting a gift box on his head as a ridiculous hat, introducing himself into the act as "Private Tutti Frutti," and giving a limp-wristed salute. Giddins declares that once Crosby joins in, the performance "becomes a full-fledged vaudeville number, firmly establishing Bing and Bob as a couple" (2001, 582). The two men even engage in a comical affectionate display (see Figure 3.15 d). In fact, the only time they are offended by Gordon is when he throws coins at them and compares them to an organ grinder and his monkey.[8] Thus, they are more bothered by his insult to their performing talents than by his insinuations that they are a homosexual couple.

---

[7] The fact that Hope did, for many years, successfully entertain rooms full of military men with his solo act is, perhaps, an irony that supports camp readings of the Hope persona.

[8] This is the first of many *Road* movie jokes involving Hope and some kind of primate. Some of these jokes are extended into entire sequences that might be considered animal acts.

Figure 3.15, a—d: Road to Singapore*, "Captain Custard," Hope and Crosby both put on fairy performances.*

These overt queer references occur in every subsequent *Road* film. The most notable instances include Hope appearing in drag as Aunt Lucy in *Morocco*, Crosby and Hope singing with Lamour's voice in "Moonlight Becomes You" in that same film, Crosby and Hope's comical attempts to impersonate the hyper-masculine outlaws in *Utopia* (perhaps a case of male as 'male' impersonation act), Hope's Carmen Miranda act in the pair's samba in *Rio*, and the wedding of two grooms in *Bali*. This final film also includes a Jerry Lewis fairy gag when Lamour dreams of Lewis and Dean Martin kissing.[9] All of these examples except the wedding of two grooms involve gender performances, and most of them involve disguises. These moments of transvestism and

[9] Joseph Breen of the Production Code Administration objected to this scene, saying, "The embracing and kissing scene between Martin and Lewis is a pansy gag and could not be approved," yet the gag made it into the final print of the film anyway. Letter dated April 21, 1952 from Breen to Luigi Luraschi, Paramount executive in charge of censorship.

gender performance are yet another possible opportunity for camp readings, especially from Staiger's "hypergendered" position, yet they are complicated by the use of reflexivity and comedy.

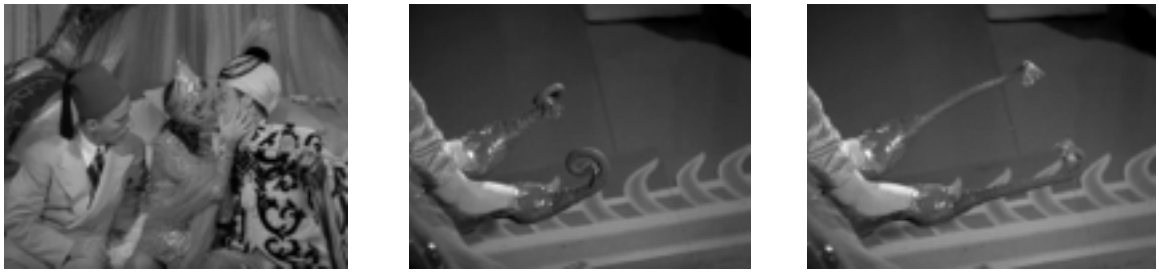
In examining the queer possibilities of the *Road* films, Cohan effectively presents the fairy component of Hope's persona (1999, 34–38), yet the *Variety* ad demonstrates that Hope's gender performance is just that—a performance—as are all the gender performances in the *Road* films. Krutnik and Seidman both recognize such performances a generic feature of comedian comedies, which regularly include, in Krutnik's words, "a play of disruption and containment that circulates around questions of gendered identity" (1995, 36). Examining Hope's solo films alongside the *Road* films, and using many of the same scenes as Cohan, Krutnik and Seidman also identify in the Hope persona a contradictory mixture of overblown sexual aggression and childish naiveté (Krutnik 1995, 27–38; Seidman 1981, 103–121). The difference is that Krutnik and Seidman, via the comedic reflexive strategies systematically deployed throughout the films, see the fairy persona as "a guise under the control of comedian Bob Hope" (Krutnik 1995, 33).

As I discussed above, the romantic ballad scenes are prime examples of this comedic reflexivity, as they continually draw attention to the constructed nature of such scenes. Crosby's ballads are always undermined through reflexive jokes and gags which continue even after the song ends, and Hope frequently breaks the 'fourth wall' with glances and even dialogue directed to the cinema audience. Just before his love scene with Lamour in *Utopia* Hope even asks the audience, "Quit following me, will ya?" His looks and comments to the camera show that he is aware he is performing for an audience, rather than interacting with Lamour as a sincere and passionate lover. As an invocation of the vaudeville aesthetic, these diegetic breaks confirm that Hope is a professional entertainer in full control of his performance, and thus, that any gender inversion in these scenes must be read as performance.

The *Road* films consistently use comedy both to undermine heterosexual love scenes, seeming to open up a space for a possible gay buddy relationship. Yet Chris Straayer says that the use of comedy in such circumstances "both creates and controls homosexual possibilities" (2012, 484). Though these films are not the full-fledged temporary transvestite films Straayer discusses, the cycle nevertheless plays frequently with gender identities and sexual disguises and uses some of the same strategies to reinforce traditional sexual norms. For example, Straayer points to "an emphasis on physicality and a signaling of biological sex differences," as well as sexual desire, as common methods for 'correcting' gender inversions (2012, 490-91). In the boudoir scene in *Morocco*, which contains Hope's most outlandish display of the fairy persona in that film, his 'true' heterosexual masculinity is revealed when Lamour kisses him in front of Crosby and the toes of Hope's curled shoes uncurl and stand erect. The visual gag is comical, but also phallic. See Figure 3.16, a—c. Crosby's response to this event links the effects of the kiss more directly to Hope's physical body when he asks if she can straighten out his nose. Again, the comment is a joke, but one predicated on the biological operations of an aroused, heterosexual male body. Hope's subversion of "traditional gender construction" through his performance of the fairy persona is corrected when his (hetero)sexual desire results in his body's visual and involuntary reaction to Lamour's kiss. In fact, in all of Lamour's musical love scenes with Hope, he has an intense, visually evident physical reaction to her sexual advances which precipitates a sight gag of some kind. In *Zanzibar*, he loses control of his limbs, and in *Utopia*, his rising body heat melts the snowbank on which he is sitting. If the visual codes of transvestism or other gender subversion, such as Hope's performance of the fairy, work to open up a space for homosexual interpretation, Straayer says that representations of heterosexual desire and "biological authority" end up "reinforcing society's heterosexual hegemony" and creating an interpretive conflict, if not potentially closing down the homosexual reading (2012, 490-91). Hope's body-oriented sight gags seem able to go either way, either pointing to

the ‘true’ nature of his heterosexuality or demonstrating through comedy that even his sexual response to Lamour’s allure is a performance.

Figure 3.16, a—c: Road to Morocco, *boudoir scene: (a) Lamour and Hope kiss; (b) & (c) the toes of Hope’s shoes uncurl.*



It is clear that the queer shading Cohan finds in many *Road* film gags is intended, so much so that the sheer number of gender- and sexuality-related jokes, especially those involving Hope, are too numerous to catalog here. Yet the foregrounding of performance that is an essential element of the vaudeville aesthetic problematizes homosexual readings of the two stars’ personae. The fictional plot is not the dominant reading of the film, as contemporary reviewers confirm, but is instead an excuse for a reflexive performance by the two male stars, whose jokes draw attention to certain aspects of the entertainment industry’s operations and even to their own public personae.

The real plot of each *Road* film, then, especially from the second film onward, might be summarized by Crowther’s comment regarding *Utopia*: “A ‘Road’ show is always an occasion for the cut-ups to have a marvelous time . . .” (*New York Times*, 28 February 1946). Review after review refers to the pair’s “obvious enjoyment of playing roles” (*Variety*, 12 November 1947). Critics observed that Crosby and Hope “seem to convulse each other, to be having the time and making the picture of their lives,” “to be enjoying themselves thoroughly” as they “romped with such abandon,” “cast all restraint aside in the interests of fun,” and “work together hand in glove” “with evident relish” (*Los Angeles Times*, 22 April 1941; *LAT*, 22 March 1946; *Variety*, 7 October

1942; *Film Daily*, 5 December 1945; *Hollywood Reporter*, 2 October 1942; *New York Times*, 30 January 1953). From the very first film, one critic observed, "The Crosby-Hope team is a natural, the talents of each complementing those of the other. Neither has ever appeared better and the reception of this film will demand further co-starring" (*Boxoffice*, 2 March 1940). After his prediction came true, that writer's sentiment was echoed in strikingly similar language two films later: "The Crosby-Hope ability as a comedy team is something to watch. Complementing each other, actors apparently had as much fun making this as ticket buyers will have watching it" (*Variety*, 2 October 1942).

The rapport between Crosby and Hope was undeniable, at least by entertainment writers, if not also by audiences. Some film critics attempted to describe the charm of this "engagingly irrepressible team," discussing their "unique chit-chat manner" and "easy-going, anti-stuffed shirt attitude" (*LAT*, 15 March 1940; *Film Bulletin* 24 November 1947; *Washington Post* 15 April 1940). Again, Crowther's comments perhaps best summarize the appeal of the Crosby-Hope teaming:

> Their style of slugging each other with verbal discourtesies is quite as familiar as ice cream—at least to the patrons of their films. And their can-you-top-this vein of jesting runs straight through our national attitude. … Bing and Bob have apparently been needling each other for so long that they naturally stitch along a pattern which shapes the personalities of both. (*NYT*, 28 February 1946)

Crowther's statements suggest that the comedy style and affability of the Crosby-Hope team tapped into a unique moment in American culture, when "Bing and Bob" were "familiar as ice cream," in large part due to their immensely popular radio shows which were broadcast every week into living rooms all over the country, making the pair a part of daily life for many Americans. Their teaming extended far beyond their films into regular appearances on each other's radio shows, frequent well-publicized charity golf

matches, and even cameos in other films.[10] As Crowther and the other reviewers demonstrate, Crosby and Hope's verbal sparring seemed both the cause and the result of a natural relationship between the two that was constantly on display in film, radio, and various types of live personal appearances.

Perhaps most telling is the way Crowther connects the pair's comic style with a national—or perhaps nationalist—attitude. The consistent depiction in the *Road* films and the impression given by the two men's USO performances of Crosby and Hope as true-blue Americans traipsing through a variety of foreign lands would have been particularly relevant for American audiences in the 1940s, both at home and on the war front. Both Giddins and Cohan (1999) rightly place the two men's buddy relationship in the general context of the nation at war and in the specific context of American servicemen's homosocial military experiences. However, just as the same-sex environment of the American military simultaneously provided a space for and actively pathologized homosexual behavior, as Cohan points out, so, too, the gags in the *Road* films engage in queer-shaded humor while continually foregrounding the artificial nature of such performances.

In response to Cohan, then, I would argue that it is not the "intimations of homoeroticism" in the "comedic framework of the series," which are part of the surface-level reading of the films, that opens up space for camp interpretations of the pair's buddy relationship (1999, 25). Rather, it is the "intimacy and rapport" between Crosby and Hope that is at the heart of Cohan's interpretation of the films. In addition to describing their "intimacy and rapport," Cohan also refers to the pair's "camaraderie before an audience" (1997, 117) and the "obvious pleasure" the two men seem to have "in performing together," echoing the reviewers who interpreted the onscreen chemistry of the two men as evidence of a personal relationship (1999, 25–27). Cohan is not the

---

[10] Most frequently, Crosby made brief gag appearances in Hope's solo films, such as *My Favorite Blonde* (1942) and *The Princess and the Pirate* (1944). The pair make a cameo appearance together in *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952).

only scholar to respond to Crosby and Hope's onscreen chemistry. Giddins, too, describes the appeal of the *Road* films as arising "not from the jokes . . . but from the infinitely appealing and enigmatic rapport between the two principals" (2001, 582). Likewise, Raubicheck sees the pair's "camaraderie" as "most in synch when they are performing within the film" (2007, 85).

It is telling that these scholars tend to see the two men's pairing as most intimate when they are giving musical performances. If camp readings depend on multiple interpretive levels, one dominant and one subversive, then the dominant interpretation of the *Road* films must include the self-conscious performance of queer humor as part of the larger surface-level narrative of Crosby and Hope romping through a series of films together. The subversive reading relies on the apparent chemistry between the two, which both scholars and contemporary reviewers have noticed. Cohan's reading further relies on details of Arthur Marx's biography of Hope, which the Hope family contested, demonstrating that camp readings require knowledge of the two men's private lives. Giddins' account of Crosby and Hope's relationship as purely professional during the '40s and '50s complicates the potential for this kind of camp reading, though, suggesting that the pair's rapport was merely another component of their star personae (2001, 561-563).

In conclusion, it is clear that the deployment of the vaudeville aesthetic affects the critical interpretations of musical films. In a reversal of traditional camp readings of musicals, the *Road* films demonstrate that reflexivity can mark gendered, homoerotic performances as artificially constructed, undermining, though not eliminating, the potential for subversive camp readings. The vaudeville aesthetic also has the tendency to reduce foreign cultures, even Western ones, to a set of stereotypes—a two-dimensional frame against which the distinctly American star performer stands in sharp relief. A greater examination of the racial constructs of the vaudeville aesthetic in the Hollywood musical might lead to a better understanding of the ways in which minority musical stars

engaged with these aesthetic conventions in their performances and in their star personae. Finally, the ways in which star performances are foregrounded in musicals, often addressing audiences directly with apparent authenticity, encourages conflation of a star's public and private selves, so that audience members and even scholars may regard elements of the star's public performance as evidence of private circumstances.

Chapter 4: Media Conglomeration and Disney's Animated Features in the 1950s

Introduction

Disney's animated features are popular subjects of discussion in film studies. They have enjoyed focused attention from scholars studying topics as diverse as technical innovation, the history and economics of the film industry, and representations of race and gender. Despite their inclusion in the film canon and their uncontested status as an enduring group of films, the Disney animated features have nevertheless been generally ignored in discussions of genre. Perhaps the fact that they are all produced by a single studio in a unique format targeting primarily young audiences seems to preclude questions of genre. While these facts bind the films together nicely as a group, they do not say much about the narrative structure, content, or style of the films—all common topics of discussion in genre studies and of course issues that are central to the argument of this dissertation.

Scholars focusing on cultural representation and media history pay the most attention to Disney's animated films, yet that literature is incomplete because there exist significant gaps in terms of the films discussed. It is an understatement to say that the 1950s animated features are overlooked. In the well-known *History of the American Cinema* series, Tino Balio's (1993) tome covering the 1930s describes the financial success of *Snow White*, and Thomas Schatz's (1997) volume on the 1940s extensively discusses Disney's filmmaking output, but Peter Lev's (2003) work on the 1950s does not discuss Disney's animated features at all, focusing instead on the studio's live-action films and television programming. Similarly, Chris Pallant's (2011) otherwise excellent work, which is subtitled "A History of Disney Feature Animation," offers extensive coverage of the studio's pre-World War II animation work and the studio's changing styles and fortunes from the 1970s through the Pixar years, but summarizes the years

between WWII and Walt Disney's death in 1966 in about two and a half pages. Significantly, Richard Schickel's biography of Walt Disney, now in its third edition, dispenses with the 1950s animated features in about three pages in a chapter called "Disney's Land," illustrating the tendency of scholars to place that decade's animated films in the shadow of the studio's television and theme park ventures (1997, 295–297).[1]

In addition to these prominent entertainment ventures, the studio initiated or expanded several other enterprises that laid the foundation for today's familiar media conglomerate. Disney first entered music publishing, then music recording, began producing television specials before the iconic weekly programs appeared, and greatly expanded its merchandising efforts before opening the long-planned theme park. Over the course of the decade the company's cross-promotional, or "total merchandising," strategies became incredibly sophisticated as, in Anderson's words, "Disney's movies were subsumed into an increasingly integrated leisure market that also included television, recorded music, theme parks, tourism, and consumer merchandise" (1994, 135). More than ever before, the studio's feature films—traditionally the marketed product—became marketing tools themselves, used as attractions to draw consumers into the Disney brand and all its entertainment products and services.

Disney's filmmaking and marketing strategies in this decade are at first glance very specific to a unique situation. Yet they mark one studio's answer to challenges facing every Hollywood film studio at the time—namely, the growing instability of the film industry and the decline of genre film production. The 1950s were a time of great upheaval in the entertainment industry. The Paramount Decree of 1948 signaled the end of the studio system, and as the major film production companies were forced to divest themselves of their theater holdings, many studios experienced major financial crises. The post-war suburban migration and the growing popularity of television also

---

[1] For more on Disney's television and theme park operations, see especially Christopher Anderson (1994), J.P. Telotte (2004), and Alan Bryman (1995).

contributed to a general decline in audience numbers, causing further financial trouble for the film industry. The musical, which had been one of the most popular genres in the 1940s, declined in production and profitability by the end of the 1950s, so much so that even well-known MGM producers Arthur Freed and Stanley Donen moved into non-musical film production after 1960 (Lev 2003, 222), though it should be noted that musicals never disappeared entirely from Hollywood film production.[2]

During the 1950s, Disney strengthened its merchandising business and created a strong presence in both the television and popular music industries, a position they used to buttress their filmmaking and theme park endeavors. In addition to the diversification strategies discussed in this chapter—namely, music publishing, music recording, television, and tourism—the studio moved into live-action and documentary film production, both of which proved to be quite profitable. Indeed, *The Shaggy Dog* (1959), raking in over $8 million, out-grossed *Sleeping Beauty* and cost a mere fraction of the animated feature's expense (*Variety*, 6 January 1960, 34).

The changes in both the inner workings of the Disney Company and the larger entertainment industry dramatically affected the way the studio produced and marketed animated feature films. As Douglas Gomery points out, while other studios were selling off parts of their businesses and moving toward independent production units, the Disney studio made the jump from an independent, niche production company to a major studio, with entertainment products moving through vertically integrated subsidiaries (2005, 262-268). Disney put its newly created or expanded entertainment enterprises to work, developing and refining the synergistic practices that have become synonymous with the Disney brand. The line between product and advertisement quickly blurred as the studio pursued its cross-promotion strategy throughout the decade. As a result, some of Disney's

---

[2] For instance, by the end of the 1950s a new cycle of rock'n'roll musicals, many starring Elvis Presley or Pat Boone, had taken hold and continued to flourish well into the '60s, when American International Pictures made the profitable Frankie Avalon-Annette Funicello beach party musicals.

animated films worked better as source material for other products, such as television programs, recordings, and books, than they did as entertaining feature films. The studio also exploited its saturation of the popular culture entertainment markets, particularly television, to present a deliberately constructed corporate brand. Past entertainment products and carefully selected behind-the-scenes production footage framed its current animated features as part of a long history of entertainment excellence and artistic innovation. Audiences were encouraged, then, to see in the latest Disney feature the conceptual elements of the Disney brand, which at times overwhelmed the film's narrative and genre identification. Doubtless some films were more successful and more profitable as television, theme park, and merchandising material than as box-office products.

My purpose in Chapters 4 and 5 is to look at the production circumstances, critical reception, and stylistic conventions in Disney's 1950s animated features. I will demonstrate how the aesthetic elements in these films reflect the studio's response to the growing instability of the film industry, the declining viability of the musical, and new opportunities in other entertainment industries. The five animated feature films released by Disney during the decade—*Cinderella*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, *Lady and the Tramp*, and *Sleeping Beauty*—will serve as case studies. These case studies demonstrate how Disney's corporate activities shaped the aesthetics of the animated features, which employ narrative structures and performance styles that often deviate from the norms of the musical genre.

In the following three sections of this chapter I discuss how Disney's business ventures affected the way the studio's animated features were presented to the public. I examine the advertising campaigns for each of the five films in order to show how Disney's specific promotional activities changed as the company established itself in different media outlets. By the decade's end the company no longer simply used its media presence to advertise films; rather, as my examination of the marketing campaigns for

Lady and the Tramp and *Sleeping Beauty* demonstrates, the company employed its films as promotional products to advertise specific aspects of the Disney brand.

Disney Tunes and the Cinderella Year

Disney was one of the few Hollywood studios that entered the post-WWII era strapped for cash. Other studios enjoyed some of their most profitable years during the war, but the Disney studio was crippled by poor returns from *Pinocchio* and *Fantasia* (both 1940), as well as a labor strike in 1941. The small production company survived the war years largely by making training films for the U.S. military and by releasing cartoon shorts in theaters. When the war and the steady government work ended, Disney looked for other ways to increase income. One strategy the company employed was to try to keep as many of the profits generated by their films as possible, while another involved intentional diversification into other entertainment industries. To both ends, Disney established subsidiaries for music publishing, music recording, and film distribution in the late 1940s and 1950s. In late 1949, the studio unexpectedly began to satisfy these aims when Disney took over its own licensing operations upon the untimely death of Kay Kamen, whose private firm had handled Disney licensing for eighteen years and had played a significant role in establishing the studio's dominance in the toy industry (*Variety*, 9 November 1949, 3).

Disney's first planned business venture outside the film industry was announced in the fall of 1949 with the establishment of the Walt Disney Music Company. Disney came to the music industry quite a bit later than other studios, who had been buying and selling music publishing houses and even recording companies for decades. Disney's new publishing firm, however, probably had little to do with following the major studios' example. In October 1946, the Disney studio sued Southern Music Company "for failure properly to exploit music from [the studio's] films" (*Billboard*, 2 November 1946, 15). After three more years of licensing film songs through different independent publishers,

Disney finally formed the Walt Disney Music Company to exert greater control over the promotion of the studio's films and film songs and to give the studio a greater share of the licensing fees collected from cover recordings of the songs (*Billboard*, 24 September 1949, 16). Though the move was not revolutionary in the landscape of the entertainment industry, it did change the way Disney conceived of and promoted its first feature film in almost a decade: *Cinderella*. It also set a precedent for how the studio would gradually take over all aspects of its merchandising and licensing activities as the decade progressed.

The music publishing company's first properties were Mack David, Jerry Livingston, and Al Hoffman's songs for the fairy tale adaptation. The addition of music publishing certainly added to Disney's ancillary revenues, and while the exact contribution of music royalties is unknown, in 1951 *Variety* reported that the studio's gross income from non-film sources grew from just under $1.3 million in 1949 to over $1.9 million in 1950 (17 January 1951, 20). This first move toward media conglomeration was marked by an intentional choice to align Walt Disney Productions more closely with popular music trends. As early as 1933, with "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf" from the cartoon short *Three Little Pigs*, Disney songs enjoyed occasional success outside the cinema as they sparked cover versions by the music industry's top singers and sold large volumes of sheet music. These runaway hits were more accidental, though, than they were the result of any intention to create songs that would work as well on *Your Hit Parade* as in the films for which they were written. In the 1940s, on the other hand, the Disney executives made the choice to align their film products more closely with the popular music industry when they featured Benny Goodman, Bing Crosby, the Andrews Sisters, and other top recording stars in their animated shorts. With the production of *Cinderella*, Disney went two steps further in their bid to take a piece of the lucrative music industry: the studio licensed and promoted the film's songs with its own publishing firm and, perhaps equally significant, for the first time the Disney Company

hired outside songwriters and arrangers with an established record of success in the music industry rather than relying on the studio's in-house music personnel for a feature film. These decisions had a profound effect on the way *Cinderella* was presented to the public.

Premiered in January of 1950, *Cinderella* was Disney's first full-length animated film since *Bambi* in 1942. The rags-to-riches fairy tale turned out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy for the studio, as a *Variety* headline noted: "Disney's Own 'Cinderella' Yarn: His Prospects Look Like Some Pumpkins" (24 May 1950, 5). The article reported that the studio's half-year profits were nearly $100,000 higher than the same period in 1949, signaling the studio's dramatic financial turn-around. In fact, the financial success of *Cinderella*, which brought in almost five million dollars in domestic rentals alone, helped Disney finish the fiscal year in the black for the first time in three years. As the original trailer states, 1950 truly was Disney's "Cinderella Year"—the studio's most profitable year in over a decade.

The marketing campaign for *Cinderella* began in earnest on March 25, 1948, with the announcement of Ilene Woods as the voice of Cinderella on the *Village Store* radio show, where she was a regular performer. Even at this early date, the campaign's main emphasis was on the film's popular songs. The advertising sheets printed in newspapers and magazines heavily emphasized the film's musical component, featuring phrases such as "Magical Musical," "Magic Set to Music," and "A Love Story with Music." The actual song titles were listed on almost every poster and magazine ad, headed by either "Even the birds will be singing" or "It's That Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo Music!"

Beginning with the *Village Store* announcement show, Woods sang *Cinderella*'s music on radio and television programs throughout 1948 and 1949, including the highly rated *Perry Como Show*. The studio was apparently keen on advertising the film's songs as early as possible, even though the songwriting team would not complete their task until March 1949—a full year after the first two *Cinderella* songs had their radio premiere (*Billboard*, 5 March 1949, 40). Though Disney did not yet have a subsidiary

with which to release their own recordings, sheet music sales were undoubtedly boosted as cover versions of the film's songs were released by Como, Jo Stafford, Jimmy Durante, Bing Crosby, Lawrence Welk, Dinah Shore, and many other high-profile recording stars.

To ensure that the songs in *Cinderella* would be chart-topping hits and represent the latest in popular music style, Disney looked outside the studio's own staff composers and hired personnel firmly entrenched in the music industry. Vocal arrangements for *Cinderella* were done by Lyn Murray, best known for his work as an arranger for Bing Crosby and Louis Armstrong. The songs were penned by veteran Tin Pan Alley writers Mack David, Jerry Livingston, and Al Hoffman, who had just climbed the charts with their hit novelty song "Chi-Baba Chi-Baba." The first song they wrote for *Cinderella*, "A Dream Is A Wish Your Heart Makes," was immensely popular beginning in 1948, long before the film was released. It was the song they wrote for the fairy godmother's sequence, "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo," however, that ultimately became the biggest hit from the film. It inspired the most cover recordings**,** motivated a feature in the *Los Angeles Times* on Al Hoffman's nonsense lyrics for this and other novelty tunes (*Los Angeles Times*, 11 December 1949), and ultimately was nominated for an Academy Award.

Each song in the film is performed in a contemporary popular musical style. "Cinderella" and "Sing, Sweet Nightingale" are arranged and performed as vocal group numbers, with jazz-inflected, closely spaced harmonies. Woods sings the ballads "A Dream Is A Wish Your Heart Makes" and "So This Is Love" in the crooning style made popular by Bing Crosby, Doris Day, and others. "The Work Song" and "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo" represent two different styles of novelty songs: the former is marked by its use of character voices (the mice) and the latter features nonsense lyrics.

The film proved to be a successful marketing vehicle for the songs, and reviewers praised the combination of music, humor, and fantasy as "one delight after the other" (*Hollywood Reporter*, 13 December 1949). One reviewer from *Boxoffice* who

previewed the film wrote that "the music, an outstanding asset, contributes to the film's vast overall exploitability, and such . . . entertainment values and tremendous merchandising possibilities add up to a stratospheric commercial potential" (24 December 1949). The reviewer's words proved prophetic. Disney's decisions to turn to seasoned pop music industry professionals and to emphasize the songs in both the film's marketing campaign as well as the film itself paid off when *Cinderella* hit the mark with listening audiences. Some of the nation's top recording stars climbed the charts with singles from *Cinderella*, and the film's soundtrack, produced and released by RCA Victor, sold over 750,000 copies. In May 1950, the *Cinderella* album became the first children's album to top the Billboard pop charts.

Disney's success with the *Cinderella* music marked the beginning of a lucrative arrangement with RCA Victor and was part of an industry-wide surge in "kidisk" business—a term apparently coined by *Variety*. Over the next few years the Disney-RCA Victor partnership provided a model of merchandising success in children's records. By 1952, *Variety* touted Disney as the only film studio successfully merchandising its characters (6 February 1952, 4), and both *Billboard* and *Variety* used Disney as a prime example of how to succeed in the kidisk business, "one of the fastest growing segments" of the recording industry (*Billboard*, 2 August 1952, 47; *Variety* 1 October 1952, 35). Disney's children's records proved so successful that, just as the studio had done with music publishing, in late 1955 it formed its own label, Disneyland Records, a move that gave the company further control over its merchandising efforts and ensured an even greater share of the profits.

Alice and Peter in TV Land

Disney's next significant move toward expansion and conglomeration was its experimentation with television. By far the most important early events were the studio's inaugural television program on Christmas Eve, 1950, and the October 27, 1954 debut of

the *Disneyland* show. Of course, the studio did not simply jump from a single Christmas special to an expensive weekly television program. In the intervening years Disney films were extensively advertised on other television shows, including *The Fred Waring Show*, *The Billie Burke Show*, *Omnibus*, and Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town*. The studio exploited these guest spots to develop corporate branding strategies that would become essential elements of the *Disneyland* television show and of the company's public image.

Alice in Wonderland was the first Disney film advertised extensively through television. Specifically, the ad campaign shows the Disney Company's serious effort at using television to present not just a feature film, but the Disney brand. The programs that advertised *Alice* used Walt[3] as emcee for the first time, showed behind-the-scenes production footage, and placed *Alice* as the latest entry in Disney's historical entertainment lineage. These strategies were later refined in the *Disneyland* show and remain hallmarks of the company's brand image even today.

The first excerpt from *Alice* appeared on Disney's own inaugural television program. *One Hour in Wonderland*, a Christmas special, aired on December 24, 1950, to popular and critical acclaim. According to *The Washington Post*, the Christmas special captured 90% of the television viewing audience, showing the Disney studio, the television networks, and potential advertisers that there was indeed an audience for a televised Disney product (1 January 1951, B8). The title of the program displays the conflation that would become a standard commercial strategy for the company. Disney encouraged consumers to think of the studio, its films, its merchandise, and even its advertisements as one comprehensive world of entertainment. The "Wonderland" of *One Hour in Wonderland* is a superficial allusion to Alice's dreamland; after all, only five and a half minutes of the hour are given over to a preview of the film. "Wonderland" is also not simply a reference to the location and happenings of the Disney studio; instead, the

---

[3] Here and throughout the rest of the dissertation I refer to Walt Disney by his first name in order to distinguish between the man and the company.

Christmas party that anchors the program is scripted and takes place on a constructed set, not in Walt's actual office at an actual company event. Rather, "Wonderland" refers to an abstract world of entertainment—a world carefully constructed and presented by Walt Disney Productions. In this world, according to the television special, the Magic Mirror from *Snow White* hangs in Walt's office as a sort of magical television and security camera, and studio animators participate in swing band jam sessions during their workday breaks.

In another first for the Disney Company, Walt tested his emcee abilities by hosting the televised Christmas party. *New York Times* reviewer Jack Gould praised Walt in his role as master of ceremonies, calling guest star Edgar Bergen's humor "coarse in contrast to the subtle delicacy of Mr. Disney's comedy," and attributing every successful element of the studio's output to "Mr. Disney's genius" (26 December 1950, 24). Both Walt's discourse and the carefully chosen program of clips presented a historical narrative of Disney's excellence in entertainment. In fact, most of the program advertises not *Alice in Wonderland*, but the Disney studio's past awards and innovations. John Crosby first praised the program of past Disney works, then actually complained that the Mad Tea Party excerpt from *Alice* was "a little disappointing," demonstrating the potential dangers of this kind of historical posturing (*Washington Post*, 1 January 1951, B8). For this reviewer, at least, the expectations built up by reviewing the best of Disney's past work could not be met by its future product.

The next appearance of *Alice* on television further developed the ideas of the Disney studio as a magical place and of Walt as its sole visionary leader. On June 14, 1951, "Operation Wonderland" aired as a segment of *Ford Festival*, a weekly show hosted by James Melton (*TV Today*, 9 June 1951, 18). The piece was subtitled "a camera visit behind the scenes during the preparation and filming" of *Alice in Wonderland* and used documentary-style footage to turn the Disney Studios into a real life Wonderland—or Disneyland, as the entertainment world of Disney was later known. Both the style and

the title presage the Emmy-winning "Operation Undersea" episode of *Disneyland* and develop the strategy the studio experimented with in *The Reluctant Dragon* (1941), of using the documentary genre to straddle the space between reality and fantasy.[4]

The ten-minute piece presented the studio as a place where a miniature steam engine transports employees from one soundstage to another, and the "work" of making an animated film involves playing elaborate games of make-believe. Melton's voice-over narration placed him as a tourist while Walt served as tour guide and instructor, educating the audience about the process of creating an animated film. The show offered audiences the first view of a live-action mock-up film created as a model for the Disney animators.[5] The clips from the mock-up showed actors in costume, using barebones props and sets, acting out scenes from the film. An older man in baggy clothes and clownish shoes danced around an empty soundstage, then became the animated Walrus leading the oysters away like a pied piper; a young man in a soldier costume marched and skipped along taped lines on the floor, then was multiplied into the army of cards in the animated "March of the Cards" sequence; and twelve-year-old Kathryn Beaumont, dressed as Alice, left her algebra homework to attend a tea party with comedians Jerry Colonna and Ed Wynn, whose performances were changed first into rough animated sketches, then into the fully animated Mad Tea Party. These clips presented the actors' work as games of pretend that were then turned into animated sequences through the use of technology so advanced as to seem magical. Melton reaffirmed the conflation of the reality of the studio's work with the magical nature of its product when he ended the segment with, "I

---

[4] For more on the use of documentary filmmaking in "Operation Undersea," see Telotte 2004, 68-74; 2010.

[5] This filmmaking technique was also featured heavily in the print advertising campaign for *Alice in Wonderland*. One nationally syndicated multi-page feature titled "Alice in Movie Land" included full-color images comparing the live-action reference film to the animated version (Louis Berg, *This Week Magazine*, in *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 14, 1951: G8.).

kind of hated to wake up and leave that shining world of Wonderland" —referring, potentially, to both Alice's dream world and to the Disney studio.

Despite the sophistication of some of these programs, Disney's "total merchandising" branding strategy was in its infancy, and the television advertisements and ancillary products were not consistent in their presentation of the actual film, even to the point of misrepresentation. In "Operation Wonderland," the *Alice* film clips are presented with no narrative context and in no particular order. The presentation gives no sense of the film's overall trajectory. Instead, the episodic structure of the film provides the television show with self-contained scenes that offer many different kinds of humor and spectacle. The unifying thread in the show, then, is less the promotion of the film and more the theme of work-as-play at the Disney studio, and *Alice in Wonderland* is presented as little more than the studio's current project.

As "Operation Wonderland" demonstrates, *Alice in Wonderland*'s advertising campaign owed much to the flexibility of the film's narrative. The film is structured like a musical revue which, according to story editor Charles Palmer's notes, was an intentional aesthetic choice made as early as 1945.[6] In a script draft dated December 28, 1945, he describes "Specialty" numbers and "Production Routines," including "The Great Trial," which is described as "a comic-opera sort of routine." On January 18, 1946, the actual words "A musical-comedy type of revue" appear at the top of an "Episode Board" for *Alice*. From Palmer's notes, it appears that the musical revue structure was employed as a solution for the problem of the fragmented nature of Lewis Carroll's stories: "In which — the best episodes from the book are developed into solid entertainment episodes—song, ballet, dance, fantasy, and comedy-action." Because these narrative sequences were only loosely bound together by Alice's pursuit of the White Rabbit, they were also easily extrapolated from the film and repackaged to suit the needs of television advertising.

---

[6] Story notes from the Charles Palmer papers, MHL, AMPAS.

Another consequence of the revue structure of *Alice* is that more emphasis is given to the supporting characters than to the heroine herself, who does little more than introduce the specialty acts. Palmer envisioned "each episode to be built around the specialized talents of top 'name' (but good) performers . . . who supply the voices and key the routines for the Carrol [sic] characters." Reviewers of the television specials and of the film had mixed feelings about the visibility of Ed Wynn and Jerry Colonna, and in the television cut of the film aired on *Disneyland* Alice's only two solos are omitted for length, confirming that the title character is not the focus of the film.

The musical revue structure of Disney's *Alice*, and the potential for confusion and misrepresentation, is especially obvious in the *Fred Waring Show* episode that debuted the film's musical score. On March 18, 1951, *Alice*'s songs were presented on an especially elaborate episode of the musical television show (*TV Today*, 17 March 1951, 3). Waring's in-house musical group, the Pennsylvanians, joined with Disney cast members Kathryn Beaumont and Sterling Holloway to create a televised musical variety show, which appears to have been filmed in a three-camera setup. Rather than simply offering a shortened version of the film, though, the show presented a completely different *Alice in Wonderland* narrative. The story segments appeared in a different order than in Disney's film and the musical arrangements drastically changed; moreover, this *Alice* used events and characters that do not appear in Disney's *Alice* at all. After the entire company presents the title song, the story begins with Alice lost in the Tulgey Wood—a scene that occurs rather late in the Disney film. The songs from this segment are reversed from the film's order, as the Cheshire Cat sings snippets of "'Twas Brillig" before Alice sing-speaks her way through "Very Good Advice." Alice then attends the Mad Tea Party, which occurs before the Tulgey Wood sequence in the Disney film. The televised Tea Party includes a larger cast of Wonderland characters than are present in Disney's film version and ends with a full-length version of "'Twas Brillig," which is only sung in fragments in the film, but not in the film's tea party sequence. During this

performance a loose montage ensues as all kinds of Wonderland characters dancing briefly in front of the television cameras; however, several of these characters, including chess pieces and the Duchess with her Pig Baby, do not appear in the animated film. The montage showcases a balletic fight between the Jabberwocky and a young swordsman, who are also absent from the film. Other story episodes that are suggested in the montage include the Walrus and the Carpenter number, the rose-painting sequence, and the Queen's (played by a man in drag) croquet game. The episode obviously sparked some confusion about the upcoming film, as the *Variety* television reviewer reported that the characters and story in the television show were presented as they are in Disney's film and even mistakenly described the upcoming animated feature as part live-action (21 March 1951, 28).

The show also used song arrangements that were very different from those in the film, as did commercial cover recordings of Disney's songs. *Alice in Wonderland* boasts fourteen songs—the most of any Disney animated film. As shown in Table 4.1, many of the songs are incomplete, appearing in the film only for a few seconds, yet several were recorded as full-length versions by popular recording stars before the film's premiere in July 1951. The variety of styles in which the songs appeared in the popular music marketplace and the ease with which some of them were completely divorced from their filmic context again speak to the revue aesthetic at work in the film.

Table 4.1: Song timings in Alice in Wonderland*. Song fragments shorter than seven segments are not included because of their multitude and because they are all reprises of longer performances. Songs that are interspersed with dialogue are marked with an asterisk (*).*

Song Title	**Start**	**End**	**Duration**
"Alice in Wonderland"	00:21	01:46	01:25
"In a World of My Own"	03:35	04:52	01:17
*"I'm Late"	05:17	05:35	00:18
"The Sailor's Hornpipe"	10:45	11:03	00:18
*"A Jolly Caucus Race"	11:44	12:18	00:34
"How D'Ye Do And Shake Hands"	14:02	14:09	00:07
"The Walrus and the Carpenter"	15:16	20:19	05:03
"Father William"	20:35	20:55	00:20
*"We'll Smoke the Blighter Out"	24:48	25:25	00:37
"All in the Golden Afternoon"	27:43	30:08	02:25
"A E I O U"	31:58	32:36	00:38
*"'Twas Brillig"	38:44	39:43	00:59
"A Very Merry Un-Birthday"	41:44	42:33	00:49
"A Very Merry Un-Birthday," reprise	43:54	44:45	00:51
"Very Good Advice"	54:33	56:13	01:40
*"Painting the Roses Red"	57:30	59:01	01:31
"March of the Cards"	59:12	1:00:14	01:02
*"Painting the Roses Red," reprise	1:00:57	1:01:40	00:43
"A Very Merry Un-Birthday," reprise	1:09:49	1:10:12	00:23
"A Jolly Caucus Race," reprise	1:12:23	1:12:33	00:10
"Alice in Wonderland," reprise	1:14:05	1:14:23	00:18

Commercial recordings of Disney's *Alice* songs exhibit a wide range of popular music styles. Fred Waring released an extended swing arrangement of "'Twas Brillig," taken from the television episode. Both Guy Lombardo and Rosemary Clooney recorded dance-band versions of "The Unbirthday Song," in the spring of 1951. Mindy Carson and Danny Kaye released their own recordings of "I'm Late" in April 1951. Carson's version

features the swing vocal group Three Beaus and a Peep singing in a conversational, patter style with Carson whereas Kaye's version showcases one of his signature musical gags, ending with the song speeding out of control. Also in April 1951, Doris Day released her rendition of the ballad "Very Good Advice." In September 1951, while *Alice* was still premiering in first-run theaters across the country, two star-studded recordings of "How D'ye Do And Shake Hands" hit the radio. The RCA Victor recording brought together Betty Hutton, Dinah Shore, Tony Martin, and Phil Harris for their version of the novelty number, while the Decca single featured Danny Kaye, Jimmy Durante, Jane Wyman, and Groucho Marx. Both recordings showcased their musical comedy stars in a multi-versed version of the Tweedle twins' song.

These covers also included unused lyrics from the songs, many of which are shorter than a minute in duration in the film, in order to have full-length commercial recordings. "'Twas Brillig" and "The Unbirthday Song" were extended into multi-versed songs for *The Fred Waring Show* and other commercial recordings without significantly altering the narrative content of each song. "I'm Late" was unchanged in mood, but the full-length version of the song that is featured in Carson's and Kaye's recordings reveals that the song in its entirety would simply not have worked in Disney's *Alice in Wonderland*. The film prominently features only one section of the song's refrain, though both recordings use the entire song: the AABA (32 bars) refrain that begins with "I'm late," as well as two verses (8 bars each). The two verses that do not appear in the film would have muddled the film's narrative because they present events out of order. The full version of "How D'ye Do And Shake Hands" would also not fit into the film, which only uses seven seconds of the song. The RCA Victor and Decca recordings use different combinations of the nine verses that were written for the song; neither uses all nine. Each star sings one verse in his or her signature character voice, which probably explains the different combination of verses on each recording. The verses describe awkward scenarios, such as running into an ex-lover now married to your best friend or hitting on a manicurist who

turns out to be your barber's wife, in which case the only course of action is to follow the advice of the refrain ("Say how d'ye do and shake hands . . . "). The verses are so clearly written for adult audiences and so completely irrelevant to any aspect of *Alice in Wonderland* that it is difficult to imagine that the songwriters intended the verses to be sung in the film. The song's humor lies in the interaction between verse and refrain, but in the film Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum sing only the chorus as they pedantically instruct Alice in the use of good manners.

When the film was presented to the public, reviewers and entertainment journalists were attuned to the segmented nature of the film and frequently commented on the film's lack of a clear narrative structure, praising only specific sequences or performance numbers. The *Dallas Morning News* reviewer summarized the film's narrative in this way: "The film's sixteen episodes carry Alice from the underground room in the rabbit hole to the Caucus Race; the Tulgey Woods, where she encounters Twiddledum and Twiddledee [sic]; the rabbit's house; the Garden of Live Flowers; the Mad Tea Party, and so on" (29 July 1951, Part 6, 1). This "and so on" was the chief complaint of another reviewer for the same paper, who later stated the narrative problem more directly by saying, "We miss a clear destination to the story. The episodes merely string along until Disney decides to wake up Alice" (9 August 1951, Part 2, 6). Both Bosley Crowther praised "isolated but welcome sequences of typical Disney charm," such as the Mad Tea Party, the Garden of Live Flowers, and the March of the Cards scenes (*New York Times*, 30 July 1951, 12). Philip K. Scheuer also appreciated independent sequences, but, like the Dallas reviewers, complained that Disney had "thrown [the Carroll characters] together willy-nilly with small regard for sequence of episodes" and "scattered a batch of songs throughout" (*Los Angeles Times*, 16 August 1951, B9). Scheuer pointed out how easily the brief tunes could be forgotten, predicting that the "only tune you're likely to remember 10 seconds afterward is ''Twas Brillig.'" Though *Alice in Wonderland* was not

the resounding critical and financial success *Cinderella* had been, the film marked an auspicious beginning for Disney in the fast-growing television industry.

The studio's experimentation television advertising continued with *Peter Pan*, the last animated feature released before the *Disneyland* program's premiere. The film was promoted through the presence of its main stars, Kathryn Beaumont (the voice of Wendy) and Bobby Driscoll (the voice of Peter), in Disney's second Christmas special, *The Walt Disney Christmas Show*, which aired Christmas Day 1951 on CBS. Though I have been unable to locate a copy of the program, *Variety*'s television reviewer gave a detailed summary of the special (26 December 1951, 31). As Beaumont had done in the 1950 Christmas special, the two teens spent at least part of the show dressed in character. Unlike the first television special, though, this show presented no clip or behind-the-scenes footage pertaining to *Peter Pan*. Instead, the upcoming rerelease of *Snow White* received the most attention in the form of the Magic Mirror character, reprising his role from *One Hour in Wonderland*, and a film clip with a multilingual sound track in keeping with the show's international theme.

Disney also produced a 16mm short film called "The Peter Pan Story," which was "for pre-selling to local schools and via local TV [stations]," according to *Boxoffice*'s promotional guide for the feature film (17 January 1953, A9). The twelve-minute film traces a history of storytelling from the prehistoric to the modern era with Disney's animated films as the pinnacle of narrative presentation. This carefully constructed historical narrative appears to have started as a small exhibit Disney contributed to a larger attraction called "Hollywood at the Fair" that toured several state fairs in 1952. Later, the idea was extended into a full *Disneyland* episode, "The Story of the Animated Drawing" (first aired 30 November 1955), then developed in 1958 into a nationally touring museum exhibition with accompanying book, *Walt Disney, the Art of Animation*.

This short film differs greatly from "Operation Wonderland" in that it focuses exclusively on story development rather than technical wizardry. *Peter Pan* is taken from

Barrie's original play to initial character drawings, through a storyboarded musical number, on to the animators and background artists, then into the Foley studio, and finally revealed in a fully animated sequence from the film. Though Walt's discourse emphasizes the film as an adventure story in the same tradition as Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (complete with footage from Disney's 1950 live-action adaptation), the film clips shown, including the storyboarded sequence, are all musical numbers. Like the television promotions for *Alice*, the sequences are shown out of narrative order.

As the promotional guide suggests and a later *Boxoffice* article confirms, "The Peter Pan Story" was used as a segment on various television programs (21 March 1953, 39-40). Reviews of *Omnibus* and Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town* episodes refer to promotional segments for *Peter Pan* that are consistent with the 16mm film, and the writers complain about the shortcomings of the presentation. The *Omnibus* review for the episode airing December 28, 1952, declared, "Shots from the forthcoming Walt Disney cartoon pic, "Peter Pan," and an inside on the way cartoon films are sketched out and put together, were only mildly effective" (*Variety*, 31 December 1952, 26). The review of the February 8, 1953 episode of *Toast of the Town* suggested that the program needed "more of the Disney personality and a bigger slice of behind-the-scenes reportage on the complex work of animation" (*Variety*, 11 February 1953, 27). By 1953, then, Disney was developing recognizable brand elements that audiences, or at least reviewers, were beginning to expect from the studio's television programming.

These brand elements are especially clear in the *Toast of the Town* episode, titled "The Walt Disney Story," of which the *Peter Pan* segment was a small part. Advertising copy for the episode in the *Los Angeles Times* reads like an ad for Disney's own television show, which was still in the planning stages: "Meet the wizard who gave you your favorite cartoon personalities. Watch them in action. And see preview scenes from Disney's newest production, 'Peter Pan'" (8 February 1953, X11). Though the episode

seems not to have survived, the *Variety* reviewer gave a detailed account of the program (11 February 1953, 27). Tellingly, his description might just as easily be a summary of a *Disneyland* episode. According to the review, the show included a personal appearance by Walt (though apparently too brief for the *Variety* reviewer), a behind-the-scenes look at the process of recording voices for a cartoon (identified as "The Little Train" in another *Variety* article (10 June 1953, 34)), a look at how the Disney studio helped the war effort with their cartoons in the 1940s, historically framed presentations of *Steamboat Willie* and *The Three Little Pigs*, a segment from *Pinocchio* with the Italian voice track emphasizing the international popularity of Disney's films, and, of course, a preview of *Peter Pan*, which was in pre-release showings at the time. The episode boosted the ratings of Sullivan's show and, in the host's words, "brought us a whole new viewing audience which apparently has remained with us" (*Variety*, 11 March 1953, 4). Later in the year *Toast of the Town* made deals with 20th Century-Fox and MGM to use both video clips and appearances by contract stars from their upcoming films. Sullivan attributed the successful negotiations in part to Disney's promotion of *Peter Pan* on the television show. He had been reportedly trying to convince the two major studios to promote their films on his show since 1949, but only won the deal after he previewed Disney's *Peter Pan* and a handful of other films, which then went on to have very profitable box-office runs.

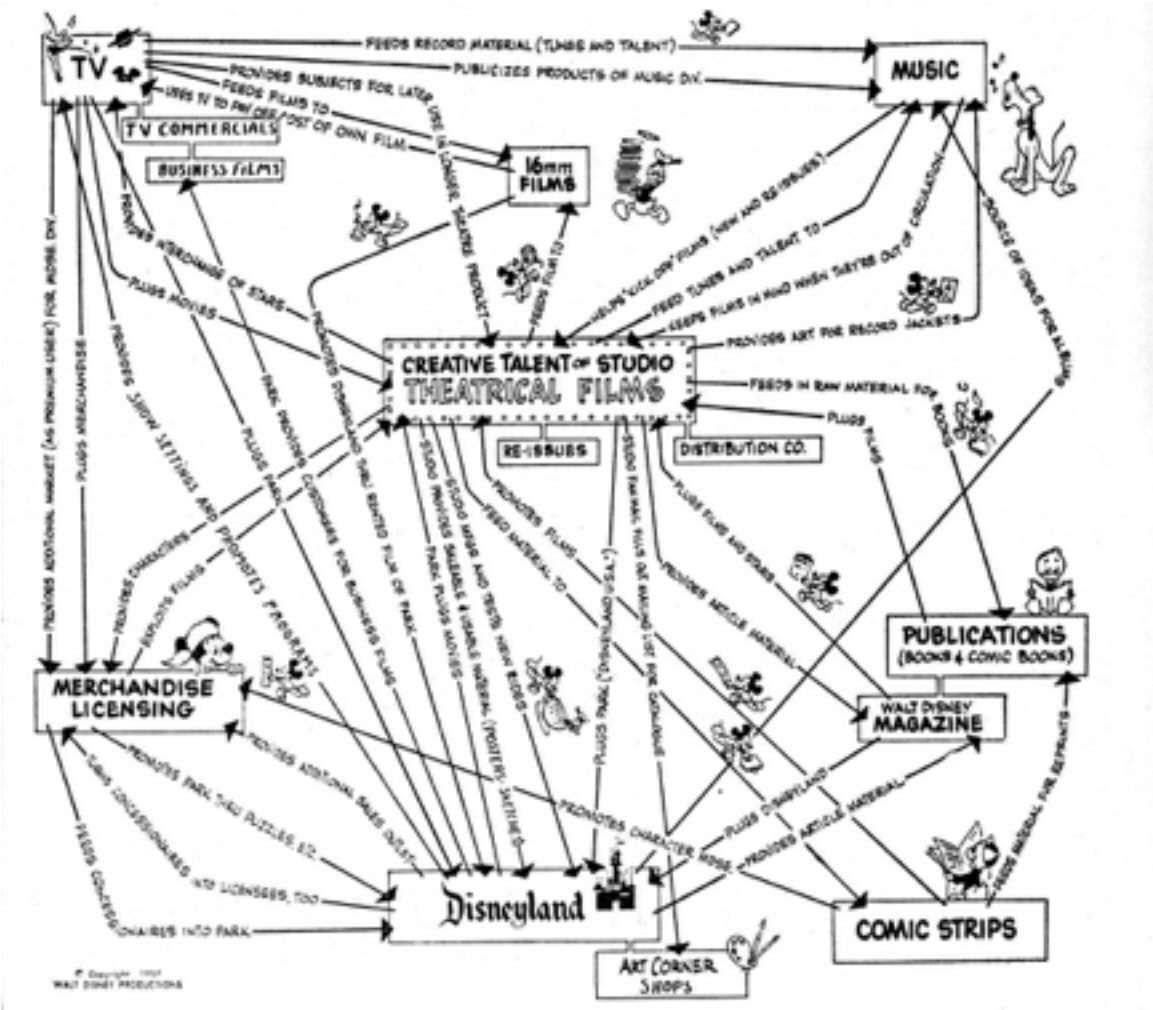
Between Disney's first television program on Christmas Eve 1950 and the premiere of the *Disneyland* series in October 1954, the studio experimented with a variety of branding strategies in television programming. These experiments were extremely valuable as the company established itself in multiple media industries, but sometimes had negative consequences for the films being advertised. As the case of *Alice in Wonderland* shows, however, sometimes the studio marketed aspects of the Disney brand at the expense of the narrative and aesthetic coherence of the film. Nevertheless, programming elements, such as Walt's role as emcee, the presentation of past Disney

cartoons as historical artifacts, and privileged views of the filmmaking process were introduced with *Alice in Wonderland* advertisements and solidified in the campaign for *Peter Pan* as successful strategies that would later be systematically deployed in Disney's own weekly programs as the company further refined its cross-promotional strategies. In January 1954, Walt made the company's intentions clear: "It is expected that before too long we will be on the air with a Walt Disney television show designed not only to produce revenue but also to publicize and exploit all of the company's products," not just the feature films (quoted in *Los Angeles Times*, 9 January 1964, 12).

Lady and the Beauty of Cross-Promotion

Disney followed through with the premier of *Disneyland* on October 27, 1954, and the show did indeed "publicize and exploit all of the company's products." Anderson characterizes Disney's activities at this time as "[weaving] a vast commercial web, a tangle of advertising and entertainment in which each Disney product . . . promoted all Disney products" (1994, 134). Figure 4.1 presents the 1957 version of this "commercial web," demonstrating exactly how each sector of the newly diversified entertainment company promoted and/or supplied source material for another sector. This 1957 'synergy map,' as modern business strategists have dubbed it, places Disney's feature film studio at the center of operations, but the map also clearly shows that the films are viewed at this time not as a goal but as a means through which the company can sustain its larger business of producing and selling a world of entertainment products. The promotional campaigns for both *Lady and the Tramp* and *Sleeping Beauty* demonstrate this shift.

Figure 4.1: Map of Disney's cross-promotional product plan, dated 1957. Reproduced from Todd Zenger, "The Disney Recipe," Harvard Business Review*, 28 May 2013: online at https://hbr.org/2013/05/what-makes-a-good-corporate-st.*



The sophistication of the marketing campaign for *Lady and the Tramp* is evident in the scheduling alone. The film first appeared on the sixth episode of *Disneyland*, "A Story of Dogs," which aired December 1, 1954 (for episode broadcast dates see Cotter 1997). At the same time, the first *Lady and the Tramp* merchandise hit the shelves in time for Christmas, including children's records and books. *Disneyland*'s next *Lady and the Tramp* episode, "Cavalcade of Songs," aired on February 16, 1955, the same week Peggy Lee's recordings of the film's songs were released. The feature began pre-release

showings in April, then went into wider release in late June. Accordingly, reruns of the two *Disneyland* episodes alternated, with one appearing every month from May through August. Clearly, the campaign for *Lady and the Tramp* utilized careful timing intended to maximize the cross-promotional potential of all arms of the Disney enterprise, demonstrating the synergy map in Figure 4.1 while leaving out only the theme park as part of the "commercial web."

These two *Disneyland* episodes provide excellent examples of what Anderson has described as the show's distinct "critical discourse": "It educated viewers to perceive continuities among Disney films, to analyze certain aspects of the production process, and to recognize the studio's body of work as a unified product of Walt's authorial vision" (1994, 144). Walt opens the "Story of Dogs" episode by introducing first Pluto, then Lady and the Tramp as the studio's newest dogs. Then Walt compares the upcoming feature to *Dumbo* (1941), as both films are original stories (rather than well-known fairy tales or classics) about animals. A little less than half of the episode covers the making of *Lady*, with the remainder of the episode serving as a celebratory retrospective on Pluto, highlighting his Academy Award-winning short *Lend a Paw* (1942). Thus, *Lady* is framed in terms of its similarities with two other Oscar-winning Disney properties. Similarly, "Cavalcade of Songs" opens with Walt discussing and excerpting popular songs from *The Three Little Pigs* and *Snow White*, creating a history not only of hit songs, but of a particular way of incorporating songs into cartoons. As Telotte says of the program:

> By the time this episode reaches the contemporary era and shows how songs were developed to fit the plot and realistically enhance the characters of the studio's latest creation, *Lady and the Tramp*, viewers are primed to see this film as part of a continuous topology of classical animation, as a work that will take its place alongside the other films excerpted here—all Academy Award winners and surefire audience pleasers. 2004, 67

Walt also introduces both episode segments highlighting *Lady* with a question. In "A Story of Dogs" he says, "Now, we've had a lot of requests from people who want to

know who we put our pictures together." Similarly, in "Cavalcade of Songs" he explains, "People often ask us where we get the songs for our pictures, how we decide what songs we want to use, and how we go about working them into our stories." Anderson and Telotte both recognize this as a regular strategy employed in the series, one that offers the television audience "privileged knowledge" that is unavailable in the movie theater (1994, 144; 2004, 66). The two *Lady* episodes do offer interesting and factual information about the processes of film production, but they also present fictional versions of production. For instance, "A Story of Dogs" depicts real but over-simplified stages of animated filmmaking, including the development of character sketches, storyboards, and background art. The episode goes beyond oversimplification, though. When an animator presents a simple flip book of the Tramp's introductory sequence, the screen shows a rough sketch animation rather than an actual flip book, and the sound track offers a full support of music, sound effects, and even voice acting. Likewise, in "Cavalcade of Songs," Peggy Lee is shown in a recording studio with the Mellomen and a full band as they record "He's a Tramp." The performance is clearly staged, though, as Lee frequently looks straight into the camera, and the sound quality does not change even when she sings with her back to the microphone. While these techniques might be considered sleight of hand, employed in order to ensure consistent audiovisual quality, the episode becomes truly fictional in the scene regarding the placement of songs. When discussing the placement of the love song, Sonny Burke turns to Lee and says, "But Peg, you wouldn't want Tramp to sing it, would you?" She responds, "Well, no, he's hardly the crooner type." Yet Burke and Lee did indeed write a song for Tramp to sing, albeit in a different scene, titled "I'm Singin' ('Cause I Want to Sing)," as well as other songs not used in the film or mentioned in the episode, which she recorded and released in 1957 (Schroeder 2007). An item appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* on December 6, 1954—well after *Lady*'s songs had been written and recorded—announcing that Lee was postponing her vacation to film an episode of *Disneyland*, confirming that the "Cavalcade

of Songs" episode was likely scripted in its entirety and contained no actual behind-the-scenes footage.

Walt's discourse during each of these segments serves other purposes as well. Although he himself is never shown doing the work of filmmaking, his is the voice, image, and name that ties everything together. He introduces various studio personnel who describe their work, but Walt is the guide who seems to be orchestrating the studio's many departments. He draws connections across the entirety of the studio's output, from early black and white cartoon shorts through to the upcoming Cinemascope feature, educating viewers on Disney's history, style, and vision. Walt eventually even hired a writer just for his introductions in an effort to make his television appearances consistent, further including his personal image as an integral part of the Disney brand (Cotter 1997, 61).

Walt's strategy of posing questions supposedly from viewers also presents the films as, in Anderson's words:

> . . . a problem to be solved by the ingenuity of Disney craftsmen. This approach created a secondary narrative that accompanied the movie into theaters, a story of craftsmen overcoming obstacles to produce a masterful illusion. With this strategy, viewers were given an incentive to see the completed movie, because the movie itself provided the resolution to the story of the filmmaking process as depicted on *Disneyland*. 1994, 145

Anderson's description of a secondary narrative helps explain how Disney could present so much of a film before its release and still expect box-office profits. The two *Lady* episodes of *Disneyland* both present the film's narrative in its entirety via storyboard. They also show several entire sequences, fully animated, colored, and soundtracked. The children's records released in December, Lee's record released in February, and the "Cavalcade" episode first aired in February, all assured that audiences had every opportunity to hear and learn all of the songs before the film was released. Yet audiences still went to see the film in droves, making it the highest-grossing Disney animated

feature, at $6.5 million, since *Snow White* (*Variety*, 4 January 1956, 84). Perhaps it was because audiences were encouraged to believe that, as one writer pronounced after interviewing Walt, "A Disney picture is a Disney dream come true" (*Washington Post*, 1 May 1955, W14).

By the end of the decade Disney's "synergy map" was fully implemented. As one *Variety* writer pointed out, the animated features had clearly become components of the company's "multi-faceted approach" to the entertainment business. Using *Sleeping Beauty* as a prime example, the writer explains:

> The fairy tale provided a full hour of programming last Friday [Jan. 30, 1959] on the producer's ABC network airer. This provided exposure for the songs, the characters and, of course, added up to a long, long trailer for the theatrical feature. . . . The other divisions [of the company] are put to work in like fashion. A visitor to Disneyland could hardly escape contact with some knowledge of the 'Beauty' feature. (4 February 1959, 5)

When the film's entire production history is considered, *Sleeping Beauty*'s participation in Disney's cross-promotional business model is even more extensive than that of *Lady and the Tramp*. The fairy tale film was featured on the 1954 premier episode of *Disneyland* in a segment showing live actors serving as models for *Sleeping Beauty*'s animators. In 1955, the sleeping princess's many-turreted castle became the iconic centerpiece for Disneyland the amusement park, and starting in 1957, Disneyland patrons could walk through the Sleeping Beauty Castle and view a diorama presentation of the upcoming film's conceptual artwork. *Sleeping Beauty* would not be released until January 29, 1959, after more than four years of multifarious marketing activities. As in the case of *Alice*, though, the extensive advertising did not necessarily serve the actual film well.

This multimedia marketing campaign did not highlight the film so much as two specific aspects of the Disney brand: artistic achievement and technical innovation. The teaser trailer for *Sleeping Beauty* perhaps best displays how these two concepts were emphasized in the film's advertising. The film's score was based on Tchaikovsky's ballet

music, and the trailer stressed the fine art aspects of the film by playing the music without distracting song lyrics or voiceover narration. Onscreen text promoted not the film's narrative, but the technical attributes of the film, such as "that fabulous new dimension TECHNIRAMA 70," the visual format in which the film was presented, and "FULL STEREOPHONIC SOUND." Of the images that appear in the trailer, only one showed the title character—or any character, for that matter; the other images consisted of modern artist Eyvind Earl's background paintings for the film. The rest of the marketing campaign followed suit, advertising not the actual film so much as the artistic and technical achievements that it represented.

The high art elements of the film were further advertised on Disney's television programs and even in a traveling art show. Tchaikovsky's music was promoted on an episode of *Walt Disney Presents* (formerly the *Disneyland* television show) in a segment called "The Peter Tchaikovsky Story." The episode aired on 30 January 1959 and focused entirely on the composer's life, albeit in a highly fictionalized version culminating in his writing of *The Sleeping Beauty* ballet. Another *Walt Disney Presents* segment, titled "4 Artists Paint 1 Tree" and originally airing in 1958, depicted four of the main artists for *Sleeping Beauty* both as collaborative animators, working with a team to create the visual style of the film's backgrounds and title character, and as individual artists, each with a unique perspective and style in their own serious artwork, presented here by means of their very different paintings of a single tree. Disney further emphasized the visual art aspects of *Sleeping Beauty* when, also in 1958, the studio created a traveling art exhibition that toured museums all over the world. The exhibit, titled "The Art of Animation," presented the history and inner workings of Disney's animation processes, culminating in the work done for *Sleeping Beauty*. The press book for the film confirms that marketing was at least one, if not the main, purpose of the art exhibition. The text assures film exhibitors that "The Art of Animation" show and accompanying collector's

book has “Publicity Value Galore” and that it is “Selling ‘Sleeping Beauty’ Magic in Museums Throughout the World.”

The marketing campaign also emphasized the technology of *Sleeping Beauty*, which was presented in 70mm Technirama and stereophonic sound. The most commonly employed byline in the advertising campaign was “Wondrous to see! Glorious to hear!” The advertisements make it clear, though, that it is Tchaikovsky’s orchestral music in stereophonic sound that is “glorious to hear,” and make no mention of the film’s songs. *Sleeping Beauty*’s technical aspects were even advertised on television, prompting Jack Gould of *The New York Times* to question Disney’s wisdom in attempting to use “the twenty-one inch picture tube” to demonstrate stereophonic sound and widescreen presentation, saying that such attempts “on TV proved excessively difficult to watch” (31 January 1959, 39).

The studio’s decision to emphasize the film’s technical and artistic aspects over its entertainment values had consequences for the film’s aesthetic logic. George Bruns, a staff arranger and eventually the musical director for Disney, was hired to adapt Tchaikovsky’s ballet for all of the film’s music, including the songs, and was assisted by various lyricists in his task. Consequently, the classical and often operatic musical style of the film is quite different from both the popular music of the day and the music of other 1950s animated Disney features. The film also eschews almost every performance opportunity for supporting comic characters.

Both the title character and the offscreen chorus give performances that are marked distinctly by their classical stylings. The melodies are taken directly from Tchaikovsky’s orchestral score and are only minimally adapted, with no attempt to make the music fit the standard 32-bar AABA form of the popular song—a song form to which most previous Disney tunes adhere. The orchestrations and harmonies are also quite faithful to the original ballet music, whereas earlier Disney films like *Cinderella* and *Peter Pan* often used popular swing orchestrations and jazz-inflected harmonies. The princess’s only

major performance exemplifies the film's classical music style. Briar Rose's (that is, Princess Aurora's) solo, "I Wonder," is structured in the manner of an operatic recitative and aria. She begins the number walking through the forest singing melodic fragments on the "ah" vowel, accompanied only by sounds of a few birds. Her lovely coloratura voice reverberates throughout the forest, setting up the narrative impetus for the fairy tale lovers' meeting. Eventually the orchestra sneaks in, accompanying Briar Rose and helping to shape her vocalization into a recitative-like piece, in which she "converses" musically in short phrases, first with the echoing birds, then with the echoing flute in the orchestra. After a brief comic interlude during which Prince Philip convinces his horse to help him search for the source of the enchanting voice, Briar Rose goes into the strophic portion of the song, which serves as the aria. As in the opening prologue, the music here is only minimally adapted from Tchaikovsky's original ballet to function as a song rather than an instrumental piece.

The film's appeal to high art apparently meant that not only did the musical style need to remain thoroughly classical, but also that the narrative needed to resist any tendency toward musical comedy. The only musical performance by any of the comic characters in *Sleeping Beauty* is "The Skumps Song," a very brief drinking song slurred by the two kings. The song is the only one that does not use Tchaikovsky's music, and it is very much interpolated into the plot as a non-narrative moment of comic relief. Most of the film's limited humor and sight gags are provided by the three fairies, but they miss their most obvious chance to provide a musical comedy performance. When they fail at preparing Briar Rose's sixteenth birthday party without the aid of magic, the trio break out their wands for the first time in nearly sixteen years. This scene had at least two sets of lyrics written for the melody that plays in the orchestral underscoring, both of which would have emphasized the sequence's musical comedy elements. The first version, called "Riddle Diddle," uses tongue-twisting counting lyrics that would have placed the song in the novelty number tradition of *Snow White*'s "Buddle-Uddle-Um-Dum (The

Washing Song)" and *Cinderella*'s "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo" (Schroeder 2007). These lyrics emphasize the magical, spell-casting aspects of the scene, just as the Fairy Godmother's song does in *Cinderella*. The version of the song released on a Mickey Mouse Club record concurrently with *Sleeping Beauty*'s release is called "Sing a Smiling Song" (*Variety*, 14 January 1959, 73). This version's lyrics emphasize the nonmagical work aspect of the scene, following in the tradition of *Snow White*'s "With a Smile and a Song": "When you have a busy, busy day / Here is how you turn your work to play / Here's a little recipe that can't go wrong / Just sing a smiling song." In the final print of *Sleeping Beauty*, however, the fairies sing neither set of lyrics, and the scene relies purely on visual spectacle and sight gags. A possible musical performance is conspicuously absent, and their lack of singing abilities even becomes one of the jokes as Fauna, the green fairy, attempts to sing her cake recipe—"eggs, flour, milk"—only to crack on the high note and instruct the ingredients to read the recipe book for themselves.

Sleeping Beauty received mixed critical reviews, and though it brought in a hefty $6 million at the box office, this was barely enough to offset the cost of what turned out to be a very expensive film. Every reviewer mentioned Tchaikovsky's music, but not all appreciated the adaptation of the ballet into songs. The *Saturday Review* writer complained that the songs' lyrics "turn Tchaikovsky into a syrupy accompaniment" (14 February 1959) and Philip K. Scheurer of the *Los Angeles Times* lamented both the lyrics and "the prosaic way [the characters] sing" them, adding in a later review that the characters are "as stereotyped as the lyrics they sing" (18 January 1959; 30 January 1959). The *Saturday Review* writer even went so far as to say, as an insult, that "the Sleeping Beauty and her Prince might be the leads in an old Schubert operetta," insinuating that the characters were old-fashioned and uninspired.

Several critics compared the film to *Snow White*, due to the similar storyline, and *Sleeping Beauty* inevitably came up short because, according to Dick Williams of *Mirror News*, "neither the humor nor the music are as sharp in this version as the earlier hit" (30

January 1959). The *Harrison Reports* reviewer followed suit, saying that the film "lacks comedy characters that can be compared favorably with the unforgettable Seven Dwarfs" (31 January 1959). Jack Moffitt of *The Hollywood Reporter* focused on *Sleeping Beauty*'s lack of musical comedy spectacle in his comparison:

> The clumsiness of the godmothers in their efforts to do house work without the aid of their magic wands is mildly diverting and provokes occasional chuckles in the theatre. But the rousing belly-laugh routines that the seven dwarfs [in *Snow White*] provoked with their expert and seemingly endless variations of sight gags are grievously missed. So are such stimulating comedy numbers as "Whistle While You Work" and "Dig, Dig, Dig." (16 January 1959)

For Moffitt, the lack of "routines" and "comedy numbers" that showcased virtuosic comic performances made *Sleeping Beauty* an inferior film.

Though *Sleeping Beauty* was not overwhelmingly successful as a film, Disney's use of the film as a branding tool was. The reviewers unanimously praised Disney's technological innovations, and if they did not find the film particularly entertaining, they nevertheless lauded the studio's past efforts as landmarks in the film industry and hoped for more. By 1959, the Disney brand had become multifaceted and storied entertainment company that could surpass the success or failure of a single film—an achievement confirmed by the fact that, despite making no box-office gains from the studio's most prestigious release, the Disney Company still showed a profit for the year (*Los Angeles Times*, 8 January 1960, 21). Thus, each film was now a cog in the wheel of the fast-growing, diversified entertainment company, so that the value of a film lay more in its component parts than in its artistic whole.

Chapter 5: Musical Performance in Disney's Animated Features in the 1950s

Introduction

If any generic category other than "animated" is attached to the Disney feature films that I am examining in this dissertation, it is usually "musical," though no one has examined the basic genre questions of what actually makes these films musicals or indeed whether or not they all *are* musicals. Raymond Knapp postulates that this lack of scholarly attention is due to the fact that animated films are historically expected to have a heavy musical component and therefore their genre status is typically taken for granted (2006, 125). His hypothesis is supported by the evidence of several film historians and scholars who discuss the music of Disney's animated features while simply assuming that the films are musicals. David Tietyen (1990) and Leonard Maltin (1995), for example, make insightful comments about the music of the animated features, but since their discussions are focused more on the history of the films' production and are often anecdotal in nature, they do take the generic term "musical" at face value. Ross Care (2002) and Philip Furia and Laurie Patterson (2010) discuss the music in Disney films from a more analytical and critical perspective, examining details of style and structure. However, Care hurries through his discussion of the musical numbers in order to focus on the orchestral underscoring, while Furia and Patterson are not primarily concerned with genre but with how popular songs are used in Hollywood films.

In what appears to be the first attempt to include Disney's animated features in a genre study, Rick Altman recognizes some Disney films, such as *Cinderella* (1950), *Lady and the Tramp* (1955) and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), as musicals, but only if they contain a romantic couple, thus excluding films such as *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) and *Peter Pan* (1953) (1987, 104-105). He ultimately deems all Disney films as "child-focused" and does not include them further in his lengthy examination of the film musical genre—a

genre apparently open only to films targeting adult audiences.[1] Knapp challenges Altman's conclusion about the child-focused film in his discussion of fairy-tale musicals (2006, 121-163). He effectively demonstrates how child-oriented musicals such as the Disney animated films and live-action films such as Shirley Temple's films and *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) actually target both children and adults alike, and that they fit the fairy tale musical subgenre better than many of Altman's examples.

As I explained in Chapter 1, most scholars have discussed the function of musical performances according to their interaction with the narrative. In that regard, musical numbers in Disney's classic animated features range from those fully integrated into the plot, such as "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo," the anchor piece of *Cinderella*'s transformation sequence, to those for which the plot is momentarily set aside, such as "Little April Shower" in *Bambi*, during which the young deer simply watches raindrops. Rather than continuing this line of inquiry, though, I will use the next three sections of this chapter to investigate a different aspect of the musical number: the participation of characters in the musical performances. Rather than ask why someone is singing, then, I ask who is, and is not, singing, and explore some of the implications of musical participation, or lack thereof.

In his insightful discussion of Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), Knapp argues that one reason animated films turn to the musical genre is so that the characters can become more lifelike through musical performance. For Knapp, in *Snow White*, as in other musicals, the fundamental purpose of musical performance is for a character "to perform [his or her] personal identity" (2006, 131). Susan Smith also describes the function of musical performance in the animated film as a means by which a lifeless, animated figure can assert a distinct identity (2011, 170). Though Knapp's

---

[1] Altman's reductive statement is especially troubling in light of the actual reception of Disney's animated features. These supposedly "child-focused" films often drew large numbers of evening audiences—typically an adults-only crowd—and was especially known by exhibitors for its "sturdy night trade" (*Variety*, 8 March 1950, 3).

analysis of *Snow White* is convincing, his conclusions cannot be applied widely to Disney's animated features since many contain principal characters who do not perform their identities through music, as I shall demonstrate.

As Table 5.1 shows, principal characters rarely perform in these films, leaving supporting characters and an offscreen, presumably nondiegetic chorus to bear much of the musical weight. In *Cinderella* the mice, fairy godmother, and offscreen chorus perform two of the film's most popular songs, "The Work Song" and "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo." In *Alice in Wonderland* supporting characters perform all but three of the film's fourteen songs, and in *Peter Pan* and *Lady and the Tramp* the supporting cast and offscreen chorus do all of the film's singing except for the previously mentioned voiceover performance by Lady. An offscreen chorus sings in every classic Disney animated feature, at least to bookend the film with main- and end-title performances. During the course of the films, the work of the chorus ranges from providing minimal musical support for one song, as in *Alice in Wonderland*, to carrying a substantial portion of the score, as in *Sleeping Beauty*.

The multitude of performances by characters other than the principals, or by principals singing offscreen or in voiceover, raises a question: is it a musical if the lead characters rarely or never sing? Smith acknowledges this complication, calling for further consideration of the concepts of musical performance and "the relationship between body and voice within the animated film musical" (2011, 178). The following three sections offer such a consideration. I present close readings of individual sequences in order to show how specific conventions of the film musical are changed in or even absent from Disney's animated features. I discuss the missing love duet, the multitude of performances by secondary characters, and the presence and function of the offscreen chorus to show how the studio experimented with the genre's conventions to find narrative strategies that might fit both the specific needs of the animated feature and the studio's broader goals. The final section offers concluding thoughts on how the work

presented in this and previous chapters might shape future studies of the Hollywood film musical genre.

Table 5.1 Songs performed by title characters in Disney's 1950s animated features. Note the absence of Peter Pan.

Film	**Song**
Cinderella	"A Dream Is A Wish Your Heart Makes"
	"Sing, Sweet Nightingale" (with soap bubble reflections of herself)
	"So This Is Love" (as voiceover)
Alice in Wonderland	"In A World of My Own"
	"All in the Golden Afternoon" (brief solo near the end, fails to complete the refrain)
	"Very Good Advice"
	"Painting the Roses Red" (interjects herself into the Cards' song)
Lady and the Tramp	"What Is A Baby?" (Lady sings in voiceover)
Sleeping Beauty	"I Wonder"
	"Once Upon A Dream"

So This Is Not a Love Duet

Three of Disney's five animated features in this decade follow traditional romance narratives: *Cinderella*, *Lady and the Tramp*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. In all three the traditional love duet is systematically avoided and displaced away from the narrative world and into the ambiguous diegetic / nondiegetic space of the sound track. This is a marked departure from the live-action musical, in which the romantic duet serves as the couple's direct statement of love to each other and, some argue, as an analogue to or

substitute for love-making, given the heavy censorship of references to sexual behaviors in the studio era.

In *Cinderella*, "So This Is Love" does function as the love duet for the title character and Prince Charming. Close examination of the number, however, reveals some strange practices that run counter to the normal procedure for love duets in musicals. Cinderella begins the song by humming a rubato introduction while the couple waltzes away from other guests at the ball. The accompanying orchestral music presumably comes from the diegetic orchestra, which has been playing an uptempo waltz version of the song at the king's command. Cinderella sings the first few lines as an internal musing —an interpretation supported by the shot, seen in Figure 5.1, of her smiling, non-singing face while her voice sings these opening lyrics: "So this is love, mmmm, so this is love / So this is what makes life divine." The prince hums beneath her solo, then echoes her lyric, "And now I know," joining her in harmony for the next line, "The key to all heaven is mine." This duet-like interaction continues for the rest of the song and implies that the two singers can hear each other and are singing together. Yet the visual images of the couple and the song's lyrics create confusion as to whether or not the two actually sing together at any point, or if the song is happening only in Cinderella's mind. The camera shows several close-ups of the couple at the beginning of the sequence, and though their voices are heard on the sound track, neither Cinderella nor the prince ever sings onscreen. The lyrics add to the confusion, as the song contains no direct address; rather, the song is about one's own personal experience of falling in love. Both singers only use the pronouns "I," "my," and "mine," never "you," "your," or even "our." The focus is entirely on the singer's emotions, and the text never mentions the object of the singer's affection. Because of the song's lyrics and the method of presentation, the love scene remains distinctly private and personal, whereas in the live-action musical we expect the love duet

to be often exhuberantly displayed for the film's audience, if not always for an onscreen audience.[2]

Figure 5.1: Cinderella *(1950), The title character sings the opening lines of "So This is Love" in voiceover while onscreen, her mouth is closed in a smile.*

The love scene in *Lady and the Tramp* goes one step further than *Cinderella* in departing from the romantic duet of the Hollywood film musical. While the title characters have their first dinner date in the alley of an Italian restaurant, the proprietor and his assistant perform the love song, "Bella Notte," accompanying themselves on accordion and classical guitar. The two supporting characters sing the song onscreen as a diegetic, featured performance, like a nightclub entertainment act in a live-action film. When the canine couple leave the restaurant, a nondiegetic offscreen chorus picks up the song and sings the entire number again, *a capella*, during a montage sequence that presents the rest of the romantic evening. The visual images are strikingly similar to the

[2] Many live-action musicals use dance as an integral part of the love scene, especially in the films of Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly. Thus, the couple's profession of love is often performed for the film's audience as a spectacle of physicality—an element of performance that supports the idea that the love duet replaces the couple's actual love-making. One example of a private, personal expression of love similar to the scene in *Cinderella* is "Something Good" in *The Sound of Music* (1965), in which the Captain and Maria quietly profess their love for each other.

dancing sequence in *Cinderella*: the couple moves through a beautiful outdoor garden-like space, the scene is lit by moonlight, and both the couple and the night sky are reflected in the water.

Of course, none of Disney's animal characters in the earlier feature films sang. *Bambi* does have a traditional love duet, sung by offscreen voices with lyrics in first person that address the other lover, while the two young deer frolic through a moonlit prairie in a sort of dream sequence, but *Lady and the Tramp* does not contain such a scene. What marks the love sequence in *Lady* as different is its similarity to live-action Hollywood romance films. The "Bella Notte" sequence neither harkens back to the love scene in *Bambi* nor hints at a film musical's requisite love duet. "Bella Notte" is not in any sense a direct statement of love. The lyrics address an undefined "you" with lines such as "side by side with your loved one" and "when the one you love is near," and do not give any indication that the song is intended to be the personal expression of either character. Instead, the song suits the situation by helping to set a generic romantic mood. In this way, *Lady and the Tramp*'s love scene is more similar to a nonmusical romance film like *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), in which an offscreen chorus sings the film's hit love song "Moon River," with its ambiguously sentimental lyrics, while the lead characters share a romantic kiss. If the characters were human and the film were live-action, the scene would be completely at home in a nonmusical Hollywood film. This comparison with live-action romance is even encouraged by one of the scene's final images, which places the canine couple at a romantic overlook along with human couples.

As in *Cinderella* and *Lady and the Tramp*, the love duet in *Sleeping Beauty* uses the sound track and offscreen voices in revealing ways. Briar Rose has established her coloratura-singing prowess and unknowingly won the attention and admiration of Prince Philip. She starts the film's signature song, "Once Upon a Dream," by herself, supported by the nondiegetic orchestra. As she dances with a make-shift prince mannequin put

together by the friendly woodland creatures, the orchestra plays the melody and she sings in counterpoint, interacting with the nondiegetic orchestra as though she can hear the music. Prince Philip cuts in, taking over both the dance and the song and startling Rose. He sings the first half of the song as he attempts to win her affection. When Rose finally consents to dance with him, they take off whirling near the lake, a montage ensues with imagery similar to the analogous scenes in *Cinderella* and *Lady and the Tramp*, and the offscreen chorus takes up the song. According to a story outline still in use in April 1958, Rose and Philip were originally intended to sing the song as a duet both in this scene and in the film's finale: "With this the music segues into "ONCE UPON A DREAM" and Phillip and Aurora sing a duet as they waltz across the hall." Yet in the final print of the film, the two lovers never actually sing the song together. Even in the film's final scene, which reprises the love song, only the offscreen chorus sings "Once Upon a Dream."

The love song in *Sleeping Beauty* reverses the musical participation of *Cinderella*'s "So This Is Love." In the earlier film, the lovers do not sing onscreen but sing a voice-over duet; in the latter film, the prince and princess each sing onscreen but never in duet. Even though this sequence begins as a love scene in a live-action musical might, with the heroine singing to the music of a nondiegetic orchestra which she can clearly somehow hear, when the couple actually gets together the film abandons the narrative strategies of the musical, employing instead visual montage accompanied by a love song on the sound track. As Figures 3.3–3.6 show, these scenes employ strikingly similar imagery. Instead of displaying romantic energy through the spectacle of expressive song and dance, these montage scenes emphasize the privacy and intimacy of the couple's experience, even when the couple is dancing. As the images demonstrate, the couple is often shown in long shot, in reflections, or from behind. Perhaps this is due to the difficulty of syncing the characters' animated lips to the singing voice in a convincing way—a flaw Knapp observes in *Snow White* (2006, 125). Whatever the reason, instead of showing close-ups of the couple singing their declarations of love, as is common in the musical (see, for

example, Figures 3.10 a—e), these animated features displace the love song away from the onscreen couple and onto the sound track while the audience watches the couple from afar.

Figure 5.2 a—b: Moonlight shines down on the couple crossing a decorative bridge in a wooded landscape in both Cinderella *(a) and* Lady and the Tramp *(b).*

Figure 5.3 a—b: The image of the couple on the bridge is reflected in the moonlit water in Cinderella *(a) and* Lady and the Tramp *(b).*

Figure 5.4 a—b: The dancing couple is reflected in the water in Cinderella *(a) and* Sleeping Beauty *(b).*

Figure 5.5 a—b: The couple embrace under a tree at a scenic overlook in Lady and the Tramp *(a) and* Sleeping Beauty *(b).*

You Can Fly, But You Can't Sing

Disney's three non-fairy tale animated features all employ title characters who do little or no singing. Instead, as Table 5.2 shows, the films' supporting characters do most of the performing. The narrative consequences are quite different in each film. The musical performances in *Alice in Wonderland* often either hinder Alice in her quest to follow the White Rabbit or reveal her identity as an outsider in Wonderland. In contrast, *Peter Pan* often uses performances to present essential characters and further the film's action, mixing narrative conventions from both musical and non-musical genres. *Lady and the Tramp* also borrows conventions from nonmusical narrative film, as in the romance sequence discussed above.

Table 5.2: Songs performed by supporting characters in Disney's 1950s animated features.

Film	Song	Singer(s)
Cinderella	"The Work Song"	Mice
	"A Dream Is A Wish Your Heart Makes," Reprise	Mice and Birds
	"Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo"	Fairy Godmother
Alice in Wonderland	"I'm Late"	White Rabbit
	"The Sailor's Hornpipe"	Dodo
	"A Jolly Caucus Race"	Dodo and other creatures
	"How D'Ye Do And Shake Hands"	Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum
	"The Walrus and the Carpenter"	Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum
	"Father William"	Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum
	"We'll Smoke the Blighter Out"	Dodo
	"All in the Golden Afternoon"	The Garden of Live Flowers

Film	Song	Singer(s)
Alice in Wonderland	"A E I O U"	Caterpillar
	"'Twas Brillig"	Cheshier Cat
	"A Very Merry Un-Birthday"	Mad Hatter and March Hare
	"Painting the Roses Red"	Cards
Peter Pan	"A Pirate's Life"	Pirates
	"Following the Leader"	The Lost Boys
	"What Makes the Red Man Red"	Indians
	"Your Mother and Mine"	Wendy Darling
	"The Elegant Captain Hook"	Captain Hook and his pirates
Lady and the Tramp	"La La Lu"	Darling
	"We Are Siamese"	Si and Am
	"Bella Notte"	Tony and Joe
	"He's a Tramp"	Peg
Sleeping Beauty	"Skumps"	Two Kings/Fathers

Alice in Wonderland features a singing title character, though as Table 5.1 showed, she sings only two songs and interjects herself into two others. Her first song, "In a World of My Own," serves as a bridge between Alice's "real" world and the nonsense world of her daydream. The number ends with the appearance of the White Rabbit and Alice's subsequent fall down the rabbit hole into Wonderland. Alice's second full-length song, the Tulgey Wood lament "Very Good Advice," is marked by a failure in singing as she continually fights back tears and ultimately succumbs to weeping, unable to finish the song. Alice is only able to perform successfully in her real world.

If, as Raymond Knapp suggests, animated characters establish their identities through musical performance, Alice's inability to perform musically in Wonderland

mirrors her struggle to be recognized by the other characters there (2006, 131). She often unsuccessfully tries to interrupt a character's song in order to further her pursuit of the White Rabbit. In these instances the characters either stop momentarily to give her a brief, usually unhelpful answer or wholly ignore her and continue with their performances. Indeed, many of the songs simply fade out as Alice walks away from the uncooperative singers. In their initial encounter, the White Rabbit is in too much of a hurry, and too busy whistling and singing "I'm Late," to stop and explain himself to her. The first two times Alice meets the Dodo he is already in the middle of a song ("The Sailor's Hornpipe" and "A Jolly Caucus Race"), and only during "Caucus Race" does he briefly stop singing to give her useless advice. The Cheshire Cat, too, intersperses mostly irrelevant conversation with his repetition of the first verse of "'Twas Brillig." He even provides a visual depiction of Alice's trouble with the Wonderland characters as he not only moves in and out of musical performance, but also moves in and out of corporeality —both of which are a great inconvenience to her. In each of these encounters the songs fade in and out as the characters approach and leave Alice, confirming the sense that she is interrupting both their activities and their musical performances.

Though most of the characters do not perform for her benefit, Alice occasionally serves as an audience member for the musical Wonderland characters. Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum manipulate Alice into watching their performance of "The Walrus and the Carpenter," which, at just over five minutes, is the longest musical sequence in the entire film. She responds at the end of the performance not with appreciative enthusiasm, but with yawning and clear annoyance that they have delayed her for so long. Then they unsuccessfully try to talk her into staying for their next number, "Father William," which they begin singing even as she runs off into the forest. In this sequence, the Tweedle twins' performances are a hindrance she must escape.

Her attempts at joining the Wonderland characters in their performances have mixed results. When she is offered the chance to join in the flowers' song, "All in a Golden

Afternoon," her voice cracks embarrassingly. This incident is quickly followed by dialogue in which the flowers identify Alice as a weed and unceremoniously banish her from the garden. She joins in with the mad tea party guests and the rose-painting cards in a conversational rather than musical manner, only performing a few lines in each song. As mentioned above, her Tulgey Wood song "Very Good Advice" ends with her weeping, unable to finish. As Figure 5.6 shows, the odd woodland creatures who had surrounded her at the beginning of the song gradually disappear as she sings, leaving her all alone in a no-place.[3] Her lack of musical aptitude is incongruous with the distinct musicality of nearly all of the creatures who populate Wonderland. Even when she attempts to recite, rather than sing, for the Caterpillar, he abruptly interrupts her and performs his own imaginative version of the poem instead.

Figure 5.6: Alice in Wonderland*, The Wonderland creatures disappear, weeping, while Alice sings "Very Good Advice."*

[3] This scene is marked by its break with the Disney fairy tale tradition in which the heroine is helped by friendly woodland or barnyard creatures, as in *Snow White* and *Cinderella* and later in *Sleeping Beauty*.

The film seems to use the vaudeville aesthetic, discussed at length in Chapters 2 and 3, as the governing philosophy of Wonderland. The odd characters Alice finds there, many of whom are voiced by recognizable entertainers such as Ed Wynn and Jerry Colonna, are only interested in their own performances. Indeed, the musical numbers literally halt Alice's narrative progress so that the performance can run its unrelated course, as in "The Walrus and the Carpenter." Alice herself does not fit in with this aesthetic, no matter how much she says she wants to live in a world of nonsense, and thus she is unable to offer entertaining or even finished performances in Wonderland. Her adventure in this vaudevillian world eventually becomes a nightmare from which she must awaken.

Unlike Alice, Peter Pan is clearly the dominant authority in the magical world of Neverland, yet he is the only character, other than the mute Tinkerbell, who does not sing. Neverland, like Wonderland, is populated by surprisingly musical characters who offer vaudevillian specialty performances. The musical numbers in this film, though, are utilized as quick and easy character descriptions in service to the plot. "Following the Leader" clearly defines the Lost Boys as a subservient group, and the tune's military march style portrays the boys as Peter's pseudo-army. The pirates' first number, "A Pirate's Life," describes the typical exploits of the crew—exploits never depicted in the film, actually. The third group of Neverland characters, the Indians, give what is perhaps the most memorable performance in the film, the exotic specialty "What Makes the Red Man Red."[4]

Wendy's lullaby "Your Mother And Mine" is one of the few narratively integrated numbers. This seems appropriate since she is a visitor to Neverland, and since the story is really more about her impending transition into adulthood than it is about Peter. Her performance marks her readiness to return home and thus her willingness to leave

---

[4] This number bears a striking resemblance to "I'm an Indian Too" from *Annie Get Your Gun* (1950).

childhood behind. She sings her song as an answer to the Lost Boys' question about mothers, but her goal is to entice her brothers to return home. As she sings, she gently imposes order on the anarchic activities of the hideout, and the Lost Boys submit to her authority and example rather than to Peter, who has stormed out of the room. The boys all wipe off their Indian paint and settle quietly into their beds. Her singing even casts a momentary spell over the pirates laying in wait outside, and they put aside their violent ways to reflect sentimentally (and comically) on their mothers. After the song ends, though, the pirates return to their plot against the children and Peter is able to reassert himself into the events of Neverland, not through musical performance, but through a heroic rescue.

As a non-singing title character, Peter calls into question the film's identity as a musical. As I discuss in the next section, Peter misses his most obvious chance to sing during "You Can Fly." Peter's lack of musical performance is even more striking when compared with the stage-bound musical adaptations of James Barrie's story—in every one, Peter sings a great deal. If in Disney's iteration his character represents a genre, it is the adventure film rather than the musical. As early as 1948, according to Susan Ohmer, production meeting records describe story analysts and senior animators expressing concern over whether Peter was masculine enough and whether the film would have enough action (2009, 161-162, 173-174). Recall also that in the promotional short film, *The Peter Pan Story*, which I discussed in the previous chapter, Walt's narration traced the story's generic lineage through adventure tales rather than fairy tales. Advertisements in newspapers and magazines followed suit, rarely mentioning the film's songs and offering instead images of pirates, mermaids, and Indians, along with a larger-than-life Peter. As an adventurer, Peter transports the children and the story out of the everyday world into a land of elaborate chases, mysterious caverns, and sword fights. Though the supporting characters express their identities and narrative aims through song, Peter

asserts his identity as a swashbuckling hero through physical virtuosity as he flies, fights, and crows.

The Thingamabob That Does the Job Is the Offscreen Chorus

The offscreen chorus has a strong presence in Disney's 1950s animated features, as Table 5.3 shows. These performances serve a range of functions in these films. Every one of Disney's animated features in the classical Hollywood era has an offscreen chorus singing over the main and end titles—a fairly common practice in classical Hollywood musicals. What is not common in live-action musicals, though, is that the chorus performs within the films.[5] The chorus often either sings songs that are placed entirely in nondiegetic space, as in "Peace on Earth" and the second part of "Bella Notte" in *Lady and the Tramp*, or sings as an active participant in the narrative, supporting or replacing the characters' onscreen performances.

[5] Two notable and rare examples of an offscreen chorus in a live-action Hollywood musical are in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and *Brigadoon* (1954). Both films use the chorus to represent musically a fantastical place—the Emerald City in Oz and the Highland village that appears once a century, Brigadoon.

Table 5.3: Songs performed by the offscreen chorus in Disney's 1950s animated features.

Film	**Song**
Cinderella	"Cinderella" (Main Titles)
	"A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes," reprise
	"Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo" (with the Fairy Godmother)
	"A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes," Reprise (End Titles)
Alice in Wonderland	"Alice in Wonderland" (Main Titles)
	"Alice in Wonderland," reprise (End Titles)
Peter Pan	"The Second Star to the Right" (Main Titles)
	"You Can Fly"
	"You Can Fly," reprise (End Titles)
Lady and the Tramp	"Bella Notte" (Main Titles)
	"Peace on Earth"
	"Bella Notte" (second section)
	"Peace on Earth," reprise (End Titles)
Sleeping Beauty	"Once Upon a Dream" (Main Titles)
	"Hail to the Princess Aurora"
	"One Gift"
	"Once Upon a Dream" (second section)
	"Sleeping Beauty"
	"Once Upon a Dream," reprise (End Titles)

The offscreen chorus plays a critical role in *Cinderella*, often expressing the title character's interior thoughts and desires. This function for the offscreen singers is established early, during "Sing, Sweet Nightingale," when Cinderella's scrubbing

produces soap bubbles. Her reflections in the bubbles join her song in a popular close-harmony style, turning the solo song into a duet, then a trio, then a quartet. Ilene Woods dubbed the harmony parts herself, so that the multiplied voices match the multiplied images of Cinderella.[6] Although there is clearly an onscreen motivation for the offscreen voices, they serve primarily as visible and audible manifestations of Cinderella's thoughts and daydreams.

The pivotal sequence in the film occurs after Cinderella's stepsisters have torn her dress to pieces and left for the ball, and she runs out to the garden to weep. The chorus gradually fades in humming "A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes," which was Cinderella's declaration of faith in dreams at the beginning of the film. As the chorus begins to sing the song's lyrics, Cinderella interacts with the singers, talking to them as if she can hear them:

CHORUS (singing):	You will lose your heartache. Whatever you wish for, you keep.
CINDERELLA:	Oh no. No, it isn't true.
CHORUS (singing):	Have faith in your dreams and someday
CINDERELLA:	It's just no use.
CHORUS (singing):	Your rainbow will come smiling through.

[6] Three earlier songs that were written for this sequence involve Cinderella wishing she had multiples of herself to help her finish all of the house work. "Sing a Little - Dream a Little" by Larry Morey and Charles Wolcott (dated 1946) and "Raga-Daga-Day" by Mack David, Al Hoffman, and Jerry Livingston (dated 1948) can both be found in *Disney's Lost Chords*, edited by Russell Schroeder (Robbinsville, NC: Voigt Publications), 2007. "The Cinderella Work Song," uncredited and undated, is a bonus feature included on the *Cinderella* 2-Disc Special Edition DVD. It is a revised version of "Raga-Daga-Day" which emphasizes the multiplication idea and omits the nonsense chorus; it is unclear if the revisions were done by David, Hoffman, and Livingston or others.

CINDERELLA:	No use at all.
CHORUS (singing):	No matter how your heart is grieving, If you keep on believing,
CINDERELLA:	(overlapping the CHORUS) I can't believe. Not anymore.
CHORUS (singing):	The dream that you wish will come true.
CINDERELLA:	There's nothing left to believe in. Nothing.
FAIRY GODMOTHER:	Nothing, my dear? Oh, now you don't really mean that.
CINDERELLA:	Oh, but I do!
FAIRY GODMOTHER:	Nonsense, child. If you'd lost all your faith, I couldn't be here. And here I am!

During this conversation, the chorus again functions as a manifestation of Cinderella's inner thoughts and desires, an outward display of her inner struggle to hold onto her optimistic beliefs. When the chorus stops singing lyrics and continues on neutral vowels, blending into the nondiegetic orchestral underscoring, the fairy godmother materializes and replaces the chorus in the conversation.[7] Cinderella speaks to her just as she did to the chorus, then is startled to find a real person present. Her interaction with the fairy godmother further establishes that she herself understands the chorus to be the expression of her thoughts and desires. The chorus, bridging between interior desire and exterior manifestation, then performs an accompaniment role for the godmother's song "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo" and the entire transformation sequence.

---

[7] This is not the first time a Disney princess has conjured up a character with wishful singing. Knapp observes this same type of phenomenon in Disney's first feature film, *Snow White*, when that first Disney maiden sings of her romantic longings into the wishing well and the Prince then appears first as a reflection in the well's water (2006, 126).

The offscreen chorus functions similarly in *Peter Pan*'s iconic number, "You Can Fly." Peter introduces the song through rhymed, somewhat rhythmic speech. Wendy, John, and Michael continue the spoken lyrics in dialogue with Peter while the orchestra plays the melody in the underscoring. The children, in fact, never break into song—they speak the entire number. When Peter finally remembers the pixie dust and the children successfully fly, they continue to speak rather than sing the song's hook, "You can fly." As Peter leads them out of the nursery window and off to Neverland, the offscreen chorus takes over, singing, "You can fly! You can fly! You can fly!" The chorus then continues with an entire iteration of the 32-bar song while the children frolic in the nighttime London skies.

As in the garden sequence in *Cinderella*, the offscreen chorus in *Peter Pan* is a manifestation of transformative magic. Unlike the chorus in *Cinderella*, however, the chorus in *Peter Pan* is not associated with any one character, nor do any characters respond to the chorus as Cinderella does. Instead, the chorus simply celebrates the use of magic, singing the prescription for flight just as *Cinderella*'s chorus sings the godmother's nonsensical spell. In both of these films the chorus's performance serves as a narrative bridge from the "real world" concerns of Cinderella's servitude and Wendy's last night in the nursery to the realm of the fantastic, where a scullery maid becomes the fashionably dressed object of a Prince's desire and the Darling children leave adult responsibilities behind to have grand adventures.

The most extensive use of the offscreen chorus in Disney's 1950s films occurs in *Sleeping Beauty*. The chorus serves two main purposes in this film: to narrate the film, commenting on the action, and to represent musically the three good fairies' magic. *Sleeping Beauty* opens as several other Disney films do, with a narrator introducing the film. In this case, the opening narration was originally intended to be sung, and vestiges of this musical opening are still intact in the final, spoken narration (Schroeder 2007). The melody for the sung version appears in the underscoring during this opening

sequence, with a few alterations to fit the timing of the speaker. Also, the text of the narration is taken directly from the song's lyrics, penned by Tom Adair, with only a few minor changes. Most importantly, an offscreen chorus punctuates the narrator's prologue with sung repetitions of his words, arranged as they are in the earlier musical version. Roughly halfway through the prologue the chorus echoes the princess's name, "sweet Aurora," then at the end of the sequence they echo "on that joyful day, on that joyful day!" The chorus's tag at the end of the prologue acts as a transition into the opening number, "Hail to the Princess Aurora," which is sung while the townspeople process through the town and into the castle to celebrate the birth of the princess. This song, performed in a classical style similar to that of an opera chorus, is sung while the townspeople process through the town and into the castle to celebrate the birth of the princess. The image track confirms that the townspeople are not singing despite the fact that the lyrics, such as "We pledge our loyalty anew," are clearly from the people's point of view. Instead, the offscreen chorus continues to function as an extension of the speaking narrator who opened the film and who picks up again when the chorus finishes singing this processional.

When the offscreen chorus serves as the music of magic, the chorus sings instead of, rather than in support of, the film's characters, just as it does in *Peter Pan*. In *Sleeping Beauty*, when Flora, Fauna, and Merryweather present their magical gifts to the infant princess, the chorus sings each fairy's blessing while the animation depicts the gift in an abstract set of visual sequences. It is unclear whether or not the chorus and the images are being treated in a nondiegetically expressive way, solely for the film's audience, or as a real part of the fairies' magic, seen and heard by those in attendance at the ceremony. What is clear is that the fairies could certainly sing their magical blessings for themselves, just as Cinderella's godmother sings her spells with support from the chorus, but these musical spells are instead entirely displaced onto the offscreen chorus. The chorus only sings in support of good magic, however; it is absent from the sound track as

Maleficent performs her curse. The chorus again sings in place of the good fairies after the princess succumbs to Maleficent's curse, when Flora, Fauna, and Merryweather cast their sleeping spell over the entire kingdom. The fairies fly all around the castle grounds putting people to sleep, but instead of singing a sleeping spell themselves, the offscreen chorus sings the title song, accompanying the magical transformation with the same melody that depicted the fairies' blessings to the infant princess.

As Table 5.4 demonstrates, *Sleeping Beauty* only contains three songs that are performed by characters in the narrative, begging the question of how many diegetic songs must be included in order for a film to be considered a musical. Conversely, *Peter Pan* and *Lady and the Tramp* contain more on screen performances by diegetic characters than *Sleeping Beauty*, but only one song out of the two films is sung by a lead character. Which is more important in the musical genre: performances by lead characters or performances on screen? In all of the films, the principal characters do the least amount of performing, leaving the majority of the musical numbers to the supporting characters and offscreen chorus. This lack of musical participation is striking when these films are compared to other popular live-action 1950s musicals. For instance, in *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), Gene Kelly participates substantially or performs solo in seven out of the film's eleven musical numbers; in *The Band Wagon* (1953), Fred Astaire sings and dances in nine out of fourteen numbers; and in *Oklahoma!* (1955), Shirley Jones and/or Gordon MacRae perform in roughly nine out of thirteen numbers, depending on how reprises are counted. Even accounting for the shorter length of the animated features, only *Cinderella* comes close to these live-action musicals in the percentage of lead character performances.

Table 5.4: Number of musical performances in Disney's 1950s animated features by type of performer. Songs are included in the tally when a performer or group of performers participate in a substantial portion of the song, such as Lady and the Tramp*'s "Bella Notte," which is split equally between supporting characters and the offscreen chorus. Main and end titles are excluded from this chart.*

Film	**Title Characters**	**Supporting Characters**	**Offscreen Chorus**
Cinderella	3	3	2
Alice in Wonderland	2	12	0
Peter Pan	0	5	1
Lady and the Tramp	1	4	2
Sleeping Beauty	2	1	4

Throughout the 1950s, Disney experimented with different narrative structures and musical styles in their animated films, often presenting musical numbers on the sound track rather than in on-screen performances. As my examination of the musical numbers shows, the films tend to displace musical performances away from the main characters. The songs, then, often function as nondiegetic support for a narrative sequence or as entertaining interludes that have more in common with cartoon shorts, such as Disney's own Silly Symphonies, than they do with performances in live-action integrated musicals. Some musical numbers, such as "The March of the Cards" and "The Walrus and the Carpenter" from *Alice in Wonderland*, are animated set pieces that could easily have been stand-alone cartoon shorts. Others, such as "What Makes the Red Man Red" from *Peter Pan* and "We Are Siamese" from *Lady and the Tramp*, bear striking similarities to exotic specialty performances in live-action film musicals.

These animated features clearly evoke the musical genre, even if the goal is not to tell a story primarily through music. Instead of deploying musical numbers in order to make a musical film, these animated features present songs as a prerequisite for a Disney film, demonstrating that musical performance had become an important element of

Disney's recognizable style of filmmaking. In fact, audience research conducted by George Gallup's firm in 1943 confirmed, as Ohmer summarizes, that Disney's "winning combination" had to include "romance, music, popular actors, and creative animation" (2009, 159). As the synergy map in Figure 4.1 shows, music had also become an important part of Disney's strategy for brand promotion—so much so that *Sleeping Beauty*, arguably the least like a musical due to the paucity of diegetic performances, was accompanied by no less than fourteen different record releases by Disney subsidiaries alone, not to mention cover versions of the film's songs (Hollis and Ehrbar 2006, 25). Instead of setting out to make musical films, the studio sought to make Disney films, utilizing conventions of the musical genre as one element in a distinct house style intended to serve the studio's larger commercial goals.

Conclusion

The broad goal of this dissertation has been to move film genre out of the historical vacuum in which it is most often discussed and to reconsider its place in the fabric of the American entertainment industry. When film genres are placed in their historical contexts, they resist the oversimplification that reduces them to a set of clear but unchanging definitions. The word *genre* refers to the abstract concept of type or category, but in the arts, those categories are difficult to define by fixed, unchanging criteria. To apply the abstract label to an object—for example, to call a film a 'musical'—is to try to say something definite about the attributes of that object. In the effort to move from abstract to definite, however, scholars run into problems, of which circular logic and flawed historical narratives are only a few. I have not offered a definition of the film musical genre in this dissertation. Instead, I have explored the ways in which techniques and conventions, defined by genre scholars as central tenets of the film musical, materialize differently—or even not at all—in film cycles according to the circumstances of production and reception.

Generic terms are fluid, and mean different things to different people at different times. Filmmakers deploy the terms in order to communicate something about production and often to position the film among others. Advertisers may use generic labels more loosely and in various combinations in order to achieve a certain marketing range. Film critics and audiences use generic terms to describe the expectations and experiences of film spectatorship (often in response to what filmmakers and advertisers have proposed). In the case of Disney's animated productions, the studio's use of the term 'musical' seems to refer simply to the presence of songs and musical performances in the films. Advertisers thus employed the term to refer to nearly all Disney animated films in the 1950s, regardless of how many musical numbers occurred in a specific film and who performed them. Film critics, on the other hand, used the term sparingly, often

mentioning the studio's name instead, as if the term 'Disney film' carried more meaning than any other generic label. From the Disney case, then, we can see that, even when a genre label refers to the same film or group of films, the meaning and usefulness of that label varies from one institution or individual to the next.

Placing genres in their production and reception contexts also recovers the rich and complex history of the films being discussed. These histories demonstrate that a film was never simply a genre film (i.e., a 'musical'), but was also a studio production, a star vehicle, the latest release from a big-name producer, an adaptation of a well-known novel or play or radio show, etc., and that the multiplicity of a film's identities must be taken into account. As was suggested above by the use of the term 'Disney film' instead of a genre label, the Disney and Paramount films discussed in Chapters two through five above are instances of house styles as applied to the musical, cycles produced with relative stylistic consistency by a single studio during a particular time period in that studio's history, and often by a single production unit. Other well-known instances include RKO's Astaire-Rogers musicals, which consist of eight films spanning 1934 to 1939, with all but the final film produced by Pandro S. Berman's production unit; and Arthur Freed's musicals for MGM, which span a great deal of time (1939 to 1962) and are so stylistically consistent they have often been taken to be representative of all Hollywood musicals instead of films from a single prolific production unit.

The multiple identities of a film affect both production and reception in regard to genre, and the aspect of star vehicle has particular force. Bing Crosby and Bob Hope essentially brought their radio personae to the screen from the very first *Road* film, by that means enacting considerable influence on the characters, narratives, and musical numbers in those films. Because the two stars were box-office insurance policies for Paramount in the 1940s, the *Road* films gave the profitable pair every chance to showcase their familiar talents, a strategy appreciated by reviewers and affirmed by theater receipts. One or both of the two men are almost always on screen in every *Road*

film—Dorothy Lamour usually shows up after a third or even half of the film's run-time has passed and she has little screen time without one of the two men. As a Hope-Crosby vehicle, then, the films emphasize the male buddy relationship over the heterosexual romance plot that typically organizes a musical; as a musical, the films structure this unconventional coupling through paired scenes and performances and through duets that showcase the two men's chemistry together.

In the 1950s, Disney's animated features had to have multiple identities because they were required to serve so many different functions, both as complete narrative units and as collections of excerptible parts. These films were used to shore up the studio's other business ventures and help promote the increasingly comprehensive Disney entertainment brand. These strategies are evident in the promotional and ancillary materials released by the studio, in the personnel hired to create and act in the films, and, of course, in the style and content of the films themselves. The ever-changing and experimental business practices that Disney employed in the 1950s resulted in animated musical films that contain a wide variety of genre inflections, narrative structures, musical styles, and performance participations, only some of which follow the conventions of the film musical genre.

In recovering the histories of genre films, then, scholars can discover contextual influences that—as the case studies in this dissertation demonstrate—have significant consequences for how the abstract concept of genre is realized in a given film. Genre studies of the classical Hollywood musical traditionally take into account what is present on screen but are less curious about, or even dismissive of, how the production and reception of those films might affect what does and does not appear onscreen. For instance, Crosby's industry clout and personal preferences affected not only the choice of songwriters and songs for his films, but also the musical arrangements for those songs, who played the instrumental backing for them, and how they were recorded. The terms of his contract, then, had a direct impact on three important aspects of the musical genre in

his films—the use of songs, the performance of those songs, and the specific popular music styles used in the songs. Similarly, the impact of reception is tangible in Disney's animated features, which, according to Susan Ohmer (2006; 2009), were directly influenced by audience research. The surveys conducted by George Gallup and by the Disney studio itself helped to determine not only which projects were chosen for production, but also how narrative, genre, music, and even gender were adjusted to suit audience tastes.

When film genre is used as a lens through which to view film history rather than a rulebook to which history must conform, stylistic developments in the genre become both clearer and more varied. If we view singing cowboy films as musicals, for example, the link that Jane Feuer identifies in later musicals between amateurism and commercialism, or between folk art and mass art, becomes clearer and more compelling: the rise in popularity of these films correlated directly to the rise of country and western music in radio and recording, and the films overtly addressed and attempted to overcome the calculating commercialism of their singing cowboy stars. If we consider musicals such as the *Road* films as inheritors of the vaudeville aesthetic, conventions of the musical genre such as reflexivity and direct address become markers not of amateurism but of professionalism, working to form not folk communities but continued show business patronage. But if we analyze Disney's animated features as musicals, their lack of adherence to basic generic expectations, such as musical performance by principal characters, makes the label seem unsuitable and even misleading for several of the films.

More broadly, the historical narrative of the musical in classical Hollywood changes from one of relatively straightforward progress, in which musicals grow increasingly narratively integrated and more reflexive over time as the genre 'matures' and pushes toward high art or filmic realism, to one of continued heterogeneity and diverse aesthetic priorities. Gene Autry's singing cowboy films in the mid- and late-1930s are so reflexive that the filmmakers did not even bother to give his character a fictional name, and, as I

have mentioned above, his films directly address issues of commercialism and star persona. Paramount's *Road* films are reflexive from the very first entry in 1940, and never bother much with narrative integration in any of the six films. Disney's films provide examples of both highly integrated and nonintegrated musical numbers. *Sleeping Beauty*, released in 1959 after a string of animated features in various musical comedy styles, seems to fit the traditional historical narrative of the progression toward high art and increasing narrative integration, yet its production and reception history demonstrate the potential problems with these aesthetic goals. Though many of the films' songs take on an almost operatic feel, flowing in and out of the narrative and the underscore with ease, two sequences—the birthday party and the kings' drinking song—nevertheless retain vestiges of nonintegrated novelty numbers. Furthermore, sequences from the film were easily extracted for advertising, merchandising, and television programming purposes, demonstrating that even a highly integrated musical is not hermetically sealed. Finally, the film received mixed reviews and failed to recuperate its cost in its initial release, proving that artistic design and narrative integration were not necessarily a bankable formula for success in the years following the break-up of the studio system.

The relative importance of certain genre-defining attributes becomes more arbitrary in light of actual production circumstances. All three of the film cycles I discuss in this dissertation undermine the importance of, or offer alternatives to, the plot stereotype of heterosexual romance in the film musical. Autry's films generally contain a romance plot, but it serves primarily as an impetus for him to catch villains and sing ballads. The romances in his films are almost never sealed with marriage or even a kiss. As I mentioned above, the Hope-Crosby *Road* films emphasize the pairing of the two men over a heterosexual pairing involving Lamour, and romantic scenes and songs are consistently lampooned. Even Disney, purveyor of blissful fairy tale romances, occasionally forgoes courtship stories to adapt a child-focused adventure for the animated screen, as in *Peter Pan*.

Narrative integration also loses its place at the center of the film musical genre in light of actual filmmaking practice and reception. In the films of stars such as Fred Astaire, Gene Autry, Bing Crosby, Judy Garland, Betty Hutton, Gene Kelly, or Elvis Presley, the musical numbers often serve the star persona rather than the narrative, which then serves as an organizing framework for the numbers. Often the performances are in the nature of a contract fulfillment between performer and audience, delivering on a set of perceived audience expectations. In the *Road* films, for instance, Crosby is expected to croon, Hope to clown, and Dorothy Lamour to captivate. Consequently, the structure and aesthetics of the *Road* films do not align with scholars' definitions of the integrated musical; instead, they resemble a revue or variety show, in which specialty acts, comic gags, and musical performances are held together by a theme or loose narrative thread, in which star performers are expected to shine in signature acts, and in which performers and audience members are assumed to share in a common knowledge of show business.

Other musicals traditionally thought of as integrated can be interpreted along these lines. Astaire, for instance, consistently performs an impressive, often imaginative solo tap number as well as a romantic partner dance in his films, no matter who his partner is or what the story frame entails. The vast majority of Kelly's films allow him to do something comedic, something romantic, and something balletic, even when the performances have nothing to do with the rest of the film's narrative, as in the comedic "Worry Song" with an animated Jerry Mouse in *Anchors Aweigh* (1944) or the "Broadway Melody" ballet in *Singin' in the Rain*. And of course, no Garland film would be complete without a pathos-filled ballad or torch song delivered with filtered close-ups of her face, eyes glistening with restrained tears. However the rest of the numbers may be narratively integrated, these kinds of moments—where the star persona drives the musical performance as much or more than the narrative—rupture the narrative cohesion of the film in order to display something more than fictional plot and character development, and to fulfill an obligation beyond narrative cause and effect.

The interaction between the film musical and star personae is just one consideration of production and reception that should take precedence over narrative integration in the study of the genre. Many musicals were made as adaptations of a variety of pre-sold properties, such as musical and nonmusical Broadway plays, biographies of well-known musical figures, and even nonmusical films. Musicals, whether original or adapted, contain music, usually popular music, that was licensed by publishing houses and that was being sung by stars who often had a simultaneous presence in other media industries. Musicals were made by popular-song composers and arrangers and by film studio executives who often had investments in other arms of the entertainment industry; indeed, even the stars often had financial investments in other media. Musicals were consumed by audiences who listened to the radio, watched television, and bought merchandise such as magazines, records, and sheet music. In light of these circumstances, questions I have raised in this study consider the relationship between star personae and the genre, the functions of musical performances beyond narrative integration, the organization of performances in a film, the participation of a films' characters in musical numbers, the roles musical performances play in film promotion, the non-box office revenue streams in which the films, their songs, and their stars participate, and the relationships that exist between the musical, radio, popular music, and television.

Further study of the musical genre in these contexts is needed. The existing canon of film musicals should be reconsidered in light of their actual production histories, and musicals outside the canon should be given attention so that the full picture of the genre in classical Hollywood can emerge. Todd Decker has already done most of the work for a reexamination of Astaire's film musicals, for instance, as one would only need to place Decker's excellent archival reconstruction of the star's creative output in the context of the genre. If Decker is right that Astaire "was not a maker of film musicals" but of "song-and-dance routines" (2011, 2) what are we to make of genre studies that hail him as a

pioneer of the integrated musical? If narrative integration is merely coincidental in Astaire's musicals, what are the films' governing aesthetics? How does considering Astaire's films as nonintegrated musicals change our view of the larger musical genre?

The musicals of Arthur Freed's production unit at MGM, in particular, need to be reevaluated. Instead of canonizing these films for their supposed high degree of narrative integration, we might instead look at how Freed's own background in vaudeville and Tin Pan Alley influenced his films, or how he worked with directors as different as Busby Berkeley and Vincente Minnelli. The musicals of the Freed unit often used a mixture of existing and original songs, a condition that has consequences for the films' musical performances, their reception, and their participation in ancillary revenue streams (i.e., sheet music sales). Some of the producer's musicals have no original music at all, and no less than four of his films are songbook musicals (*Till the Clouds Roll By* [1946], *Words and Music* [1948], *An American in Paris*, and *Singin' in the Rain*). These films were also advertised on radio shows, in magazines, and later on television. One particular avenue of study could look at the fragmentation of the musicals in the short-lived television series *MGM Parade*, which aired on ABC during the 1955—1956 season and borrowed its format and aspirations from *Disneyland*. Freed's musicals also need to be placed alongside those of other MGM producers, so that any large-scale studio strategies or markers of a house style can emerge. Joe Pasternak and Jack Cummings each produced just as many musicals for MGM as Freed, though their films are often overlooked in genre studies.

Moving beyond the traditional canon, we might ask not whether a certain group of films are musicals—as with Elvis Presley's rock 'n' roll films, for example—but, as Barry Keith Grant (1986) does, why Presley's films invoke the musical genre at all. Or we might ask, as Sean Griffin (2002) does, why one studio (20th-Century Fox, in that case) would make musicals that highlight the professional status of their musical stars and the performance status of the musical numbers, whereas another (MGM) often

worked hard to hide any aura of professionalism surrounding their stars and musical performances. Or we might ask whether the industrial practices surrounding the musical changed throughout the classical era in response to—or in sync with—changes in the popular music industry.

Future studies might look at the musicals of 20th-Century Fox's most bankable star in the 1940s, iconic pin-up girl Betty Grable, who, in 1943, topped Hope and Crosby, respectively, in *Motion Picture Herald*'s list of top Hollywood moneymakers (25 December 1943, 14). Many of Grable's musicals were filmed in Technicolor, which was very uncommon at the time, and present her as a professional or aspiring stage entertainer of some kind, though the settings, plots, and co-stars of her films are actually quite varied. The centrality of spectacle in her films certainly emphasizes her iconic pin-up girl image and million-dollar legs, but the striking use of Technicolor communicates that something more than Grable's sexualized body is on display—certainly many sex symbols in classical Hollywood were filmed effectively in black and white. This aesthetic choice is worthy of greater consideration in studies of a genre that systematizes audiovisual spectacle.

Other musicals that bear further study include those of 20th-Century Fox's next blonde bombshell, Marilyn Monroe, and of Elvis Presley for a variety of producers and studios. In both cases filmmakers had to engage, among other things, with the actor's hyper-sexualized public image. In Presley's case, filmmakers also had to take into account the teen idol's large and active fan-base; evidence in Hal Wallis's papers confirms that at least one producer of his musicals took the young fans quite seriously, commenting on Presley's fan mail, audience expectations and public image at virtually every stage of film production.[1]

By adding more of these kinds of studies to the existing work on the genre, we will be able to locate the musical in its historical contexts and add concrete knowledge to

---

[1] Hal Wallis papers, Margaret Herrick Library, AMPAS.

abstract genre theories, resulting in a more complete picture of the musical film in classical Hollywood. From this wider vantage point, the musical genre resists the narrow historical narratives and aesthetic priorities into which it has been pigeonholed and regains the diversity of form and style that always marked the musical. Such a comprehensive view also reattaches to the genre the commercial nature of Hollywood films by exploring the web of relationships that existed between radio, recording, music publishing, live performance, television, advertising, star persona, and the film musical. If the musical is integrated at all, it is irrevocably integrated into the history and fabric of the American entertainment industry.

Bibliography

Altman, Rick. 1981. "The American Film Musical: Paradigmatic Structure and Mediatory Function." In *Genre the Musical: A Reader*, edited by Rick Altman, 197–207. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

———, ed. 1981. *Genre the Musical: A Reader*. London/Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

———. 1987. *The American Film Musical*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

———. 1998. "Reusable Packaging: Generic Products and the Recycling Process." In *Refiguring American Film Genres: Theory and History*, edited by Nick Browne, 1–41. Los Angeles/Berkeley: University of California Press.

———. 1999. *Film/Genre*. London: British Film Institute.

Anderson, Christopher. 1994. *Hollywood TV*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Babington, Bruce, and Peter Evans. 1985. *Blue Skies and Silver Linings: Aspects of the Hollywood Musical*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Balio, Tino. 1993. *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.

———. 1994. "Disney's Business History: A Reinterpretation." In *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom*, edited by Eric Smoodin, 71–86. London: Routledge.

Barrios, Richard. 1995. *A Song in the Dark: The Birth of the Musical Film*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Block, Geoffrey. 2002. "The Melody (and the Words) Linger on: American Musical Comedies of the 1920s and 1930s." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, edited by William Everett and Paul Laird, 77–100. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bordman, Gerald. 1985. *American Musical Revue: From* The Passing Show *to* Sugar Babies. New York: Oxford University Press.

Brown, Royal S. *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Brown, Tom. 2012. *Breaking the Fourth Wall: Direct Address in the Cinema*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Bryman, Alan. 1995. *Disney and His Worlds*. London: Routledge.

Buhler, James. 2014. "Gender, Sexuality, and the Soundtrack." In *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, edited by David Neumeyer, 366–382. New York: Oxford University Press.

Buhler, James, David Neumeyer, and Rob Deemer. 2010. *Hearing the Movies: Music and Sound in Film History*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Care, Ross. 2002. “Make Walt’s Music: Music for Disney Animation, 1928–1967.” In *The Cartoon Music Book*, edited by Daniel Goldmark and Yuval Taylor, 21–36. Chicago: A Cappella Books.

Cohan, Steven. 1997. “Almost Like Being at Home: Showbiz Culture and Hollywood Road Trips in the 1940s and 1950s.” In *The Road Movie Book*, edited by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, 113–142. London: Routledge.

———. 1999. “Queering the Deal: On the Road with Hope and Crosby.” In *Out Takes: Essays on Queer Theory and Film*, edited by Ellis Hanson, 23–45. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

———. 2002a. “‘Feminizing’ the Song-and-Dance Man: Fred Astaire and the Spectacle of Masculinity in the Hollywood Musical.” In *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader*, edited by Steven Cohan, 87–101. London: Routledge.

———, ed. 2002b. *Hollywood Musicals, the Film Reader*. London: Routledge.

———. 2005. *Incongruous Entertainment: Camp, Cultural Value, and the MGM Musical*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Collins, James. 1988. “The Musical.” In *Handbook of American Film Genres*, edited by Wes Gehring, 269–284. New York: Greenwood.

Conrich, Ian, and Estella Tincknell, eds. 2006. *Film’s Musical Moments*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Core Collection. Film reviews and pressbooks. Margaret Herrick Library. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Cotter, Bill. 1997. *The Wonderful World of Disney Television: A Complete History*. New York: Hyperion.

Cusic, Don. 2011. *The Cowboy in Country Music: An Historical Survey with Artist Profiles*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

de Bruyn, Frans. 1993. “Genre.” In *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory*, edited by Irena Makaryk, 79–85. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Decker, Todd. 2011. *Music Makes Me: Fred Astaire and Jazz*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Delamater, Jerome. 1978. *Dance in the Hollywood Musical*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press.

DiMeglio, John E. 1978. “Radio’s Debt to Vaudeville." *Journal of Popular Culture* 12 (2): 228-235.

Dyer, Richard. 1981. “Entertainment and Utopia.” In *Genre: The Musical*, edited by Rick Altman, 175–189. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

———. 2000. “The Colour of Entertainment.” In *Musicals: Hollywood & Beyond*, edited by Bill Marshall and Robynn Stilwell, 23–30. Portland, OR: Intellect.

———. 2002. *Only Entertainment.* Second edition. London: Routledge.

———. 2012. *In the Space of a Song: The Uses of Song in Film*. London: Routledge.

Fabbri, Franco, and John Shepherd. 2003. “Genre.” In John Shepherd, David Horn, Dave Laing, Paul Oliver, and Peter Wicke, eds. *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*. Vol. 1: *Media, Industry and Society*, 401–404. New York and London: Continuum.

Faller, Greg. 1987. *The Function of Star-Image and Performance in the Hollywood Musical: Sonja Henie, Esther Williams, and Eleanor Powell*. PhD diss., Northwestern University.

Fenster, Mark. 1989. “Preparing the Audience, Informing the Performers: John A. Lomax and *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*.” *American Music* 7 (3): 260–277.

Feuer, Jane. 1981. “The Self-reflective Musical and the Myth of Entertainment.” In *Genre: The Musical*, edited by Rick Altman, 159–174. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

———. 1993. *The Hollywood Musical*. Second edition. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Fischer, Lucy. 1981. “The Image of Woman as Image: The Optical Politics of *Dames*.” In *Genre: The Musical*, edited by Rick Altman, 70–84. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Flinn, Caryl. 1992. *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Fuchs, Jeanne. 2007. “A Couple of Song and Dance Men: Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire.” In *Going My Way: Bing Crosby and American Culture*, edited by Ruth Prigozy and Walter Raubicheck, 107–114. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.

Furia, Philip, and Laurie Patterson. 2010. *The Songs of Hollywood*. New York: Oxford University Press.

George-Warren, Holly. 2007. *Public Cowboy No. 1: The Life and Times of Gene Autry*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Geraghty, Lincoln, and Mark Jancovich, eds. 2008. *The Shifting Definitions of Genre: Essays on Labeling Films, Television Shows and Media*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Giddins, Gary. 2001. *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams: The Early Years, 1903-1940*. New York: Little Brown and Co.

Gomery, Douglas. 2005. *The Hollywood Studio System: A History*. London: British Film Institute.

Gorbman, Claudia. 1987. *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Grant, Barry Keith. 1986. “The Classic Hollywood Musical and the ‘Problem’ of Rock’n’Roll.” *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 13 (4): 195–205.

———. 2012. *The Hollywood Film Musical*. 2d ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.

Green, Douglas B. 1996. “The Singing Cowboy: An American Dream.” In *The Country Reader: Twenty-Five Years of The Journal of Country Music*, edited by Paul

Kingsbury, 21–76. Nashville: The Country Music Foundation Press and Vanderbilt University Press.
Griffin, Sean. 2002. “The Gang’s All Here: Generic versus Racial Integration in the 1940s Musical.” *Cinema Journal* 48 (1): 21–45.
Hal Wallis papers. Margaret Herrick Library. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
Hilmes, Michele. 1990. *Hollywood and Broadcasting: from Radio to Cable*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
———. 1997. *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.
———. 2007. *Only Connect: A Cultural History of Broadcasting in the United States*. Second edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
Hollis, Tim, and Greg Ehrbar. 2006. *Mouse Tracks: The Story of Walt Disney Records*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *What Made Pistachio Nuts?: Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Jenkins, Jennifer. 2001. “‘Say It with Firecrackers’: Defining the ‘War Musical’ of the 1940s.” *American Music* 19 (3): 315–339.
Kalinak, Kathryn. 1992. *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
Kassabian, Anahid. 2001. *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music*. New York: Routledge.
Kessler, Kelly. 2010. *Destabilizing the Hollywood Musical: Music, Masculinity and Mayhem*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
Kibler, M. Alison. 1997. “Rank Ladies, Ladies of Rank: The Elinore Sisters in Vaudeville.” *American Studies* 38 (1): 97–115.
———. 1999. *Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
Knapp, Raymond. 2005. *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
———. 2006. *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Knapp, Raymond, and Mitchell Morris. 2011a. “Tin Pan Alley Songs on Stage and Screen before World War II.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, edited by Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf, 81–96. New York: Oxford University Press.
———. 2011b. “The Filmed Musical.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, edited by Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf, 136–151. New York: Oxford University Press.

Koppes, Clayton R., and Gregory D. Black. 1995. “What to Show the World: The Office of War Information and Hollywood, 1942–1945.” In *The Studio System*, edited by Janet Staiger, 279–297. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Krutnik, Frank. 1995. “A Spanner in the Works? Genre, Narrative and the Hollywood Comedian.” In *Classical Hollywood Comedy*, edited by Kristine Brunovska Karnick and Henry Jenkins, 17–38. New York: Routledge.

Laing, Heather. 2000. “Emotion by Numbers: Music, Song and the Musical.” In *Musicals: Hollywood & Beyond*, edited by Bill Marshall and Robynn Stilwell, 5–13. Portland, OR: Intellect.

———. 2007. *The Gendered Score: Music in 1940s Melodrama and the Woman’s Film*. Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate.

Lebovic, Sam. 2013. “‘A Breath from Home’: Soldier Entertainment and the Nationalist Politics of Pop Culture during World War II.” *Journal of Social History* 47 (2): 263–296.

Lev, Peter. 2003. *Transforming the Screen, 1950-1959*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Lovensheimer, Jim. 2011. “Texts and Authors.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, edited by Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf, 20–32. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lowe, Allen. 1997. *American Pop from Minstrel to Mojo: On Record 1893–1956*. Redwood, NY: Cadence Jazz Books.

Macfarlane, Malcolm. 2015. “Bing Crosby—Day by Day.” *Bing Magazine*. Accessed 1 July 2015. http://www.bingmagazine.co.uk. Site is an updated version of the 2001 Scarecrow Press book.

———. 2001. *Bing Crosby: Day by Day*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

MacKinnon, Kenneth. 2000. “‘I Keep Wishing I Were Somewhere Else’: Space and Fantasies of Freedom in the Hollywood Musical.” In *Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond*, edited by Bill Marshall and Robynn Stilwell, 40–46. Portland, OR: Intellect.

Maltin, Leonard. 1995. *The Disney Films*. Third edition. New York: Hyperion.

Marshall, Bill, and Robynn Stilwell, eds. 2000. *Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond*. Exeter/Portland: Intellect.

Mast, Gerald. 1987. *Can’t Help Singin’: The American Musical on Stage and Screen*. Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press.

McDonnell, Cari. 2014. “Genre Theory and the Film Musical.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, edited by David Neumeyer, 245-269. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mordden, Ethan. 1988. *Broadway Babies: The People Who Made the American Musical*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Morris, Mitchell. 2011. “Narratives and Values.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, edited by Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf, 9–19. New York: Oxford University Press.
Motion Picture Association of America. Production Code Administration records. Margaret Herrick Library. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
Mueller, John. 1984. “Fred Astaire and the Integrated Musical.” *Cinema Journal* 24, no. 1: 28–40.
———. 1985. *Astaire Dancing*. New York: Wings.
Mulvey, Laura. 1975. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Screen* 3: 6–18.
Mundy, John. 1999. *Popular Music on Screen: From the Hollywood Musical to Music Video.* Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press.
———. 2006. “Television, the Pop Industry and the Hollywood Musical.” In *Film’s Musical Moments*, edited by Ian Conrich and Estella Tincknell, 42–55. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Neale, Steve. 2000. *Genre and Hollywood*. New York: Routledge.
———. 2003. “Questions of Genre.” In *Film Genre Reader III*, edited by Barry Keith Grant, 160–184. Austin: University of Texas.
Neale, Steve, and Frank Krutnik. 1990. *Popular Film and Television Comedy*. New York: Routledge.
Ohmer, Susan. 2009. “Disney’s *Peter Pan*: Gender, Fantasy, and Industrial Production.” In *Second Star to the Right: Peter Pan in the Popular Imagination*, edited by Allison Kavey and Lester D. Friedman, 151–187. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
———. 2006. *George Gallup in Hollywood*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Page, Brett. 1915. *Writing for Vaudeville*. Springfield, MA: The Home Correspondence School.
Pallant, Chris. 2011. *Demystifying Disney: A History of Disney Feature Animation*. New York: Continuum International.
Palmer, Charles. Papers. Margaret Herrick Library. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
Paramount Pictures Censorship Department records. Margaret Herrick Library. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
Paramount Pictures contract summaries. Margaret Herrick Library. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
Paramount Pictures press sheets. Margaret Herrick Library. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
Paramount Pictures production records. Margaret Herrick Library. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
Paramount Pictures scripts. Margaret Herrick Library. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Pisani, Michael. 2014. “When the Music Surges: Melodrama and the Nineteenth-century Theatrical Precedents for Film Music Style and Placement.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, edited by David Neumeyer, 559-582. New York: Oxford University Press.

Raubicheck, Walter. 2007. “American Archetypes: How Crosby and Hope Became Hollywood’s Greatest Comedy Team.” In *Going My Way: Bing Crosby and American Culture*, edited by Ruth Prigozy and Walter Raubicheck, 79–86. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.

Riis, Thomas L. 2011. “Minstrelsy and Theatrical Miscegenation.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, edited by Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf, 65–80. New York: Oxford University Press.

Roberts, Shari. 1993. “‘The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat’: Carmen Miranda, A Spectacle of Ethnicity.” *Cinema Journal* 32 (3): 3–23.

Sanjek, Russell, and David Sanjek. 1996. *Pennies from Heaven: The American Popular Music Business in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Da Capo.

Savran, David. 2011. “Class and Culture.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, edited by Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf, 239–50. New York: Oxford University Press.

Schatz, Thomas. 1981. *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

———. (1988) 2010. *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era*. New York: Pantheon. Reprint, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Citations refer to the University of Minnesota edition.

———. 1997. *Boom and Bust: The American Cinema in the 1940s*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Scheurer, Timothy. 1974. “The Aesthetics of Form and Convention in the Movie Musical.” *Journal of Popular Film* 3 (4): 307–324.

Schickel, Richard. 1997. *The Disney Version*, third edition. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee.

Schroeder, Russell, ed. 2007. *Disney’s Lost Chords*. Robbinsville, NC: Voigt Publications.

Seidman, Steve. 1981. *Comedian Comedy: A Tradition in Hollywood Film*. Ann Arbo: UMI Research Press.

Smith, Jeff. 1998. *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Smith, Susan. 2011. “The Animated Film Musical.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, edited by Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf, 167–178. New York: Oxford University Press.

Staiger, Janet. 2003. “Hybrid or Inbred: The Purity Hypothesis and Hollywood Genre History.” In *Film Genre Reader III*, edited by Barry Keith Grant, 185–199. Austin: University of Texas Press.

———. 2005. *Media Reception Studies*. New York: New York University Press.
Stanfield, Peter. 2001. *Hollywood, Westerns and the 1930s: The Lost Trail*. Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press.
———. 2002. *Horse Opera: The Strange History of the 1930s Singing Cowboy*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
Straayer, Chris. 2012. "Redressing the 'Natural': The Temporary Transvestite Film." In *Film Genre Reader IV*, edited by Barry Keith Grant, 402-427. Austin: University of Texas Press.
Tan, Lynette. 2001. "The New Deal Cowboy: Gene Autry and the Antimodern Resolution." *Film History* 13, no. 1: 89–101.
Telotte, J.P. 2010. "Science Fiction as 'True Life Adventure': Disney and the Case of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*." *Film & History* 40 (2), Fall: 66–79.
———. 2004. *Disney TV.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
Thomas, Bob. 1958. *Walt Disney, the Art of Animation: The Story of the Disney Studio Contribution to a New Art*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
Tietyen, David. 1990. *The Musical World of Walt Disney*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard.
Traubner, Richard. 1983. *Operetta: A Theatrical History*. New York: Doubleday.
Tudor, Andrew. 1973. *Theories of Film*. New York: Viking.
Wolf, Stacy. 2002. *A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
———. 2011. "Gender and Sexuality. In *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, edited by Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf, 210–224. New York: Oxford University Press.
Woods, Leigh. 1999. "American Vaudeville, American Empire." In *Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater*, edited by Jeffrey D. Mason and J. Ellen Gainor, 73–90. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
Young, Victor. Scores. Robert D. Farber University Archives and Special Collections Department. Brandeis University.