The British Trauma Film:
Psychoanalysis and popular British cinema in the aftermath of the Second World War

Adam Plummer

Queen Mary University of London

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Statement of Originality

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Abstract

While the historical influence of psychoanalysis on Hollywood cinema has received considerable attention, the same cannot be said for its influence on British cinema. This thesis assesses the position that psychoanalysis occupies in British cinema in the years immediately following the Second World War. At the outset, I demonstrate how the critical theory of Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault can enable an understanding of the role that psychoanalysis plays in British culture at this time as an historical discourse, and in British cinema as a narrative, a cultural, and an ideological discourse. I then examine the historical psychoanalytic discourses themselves, which are defined as being comprised variously of Freudian, post-Freudian, and neo-Freudian concepts. I categorize these under the headings of trauma and anxiety, sexual difference and gender roles, and the theory of object relations.

I employ a critical/psychoanalytic model to analyse five films: *Dead of Night*, *The Seventh Veil*, *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, *They Made Me a Fugitive*, and *Mine Own Executioner*. These have been chosen to provide a cross section of the different types of films of the period that were influenced by psychoanalytic concepts. In respect of each film, I examine how psychoanalysis operates in three discreet ways. First, as a narrative and formal structuring mechanism. Second, as a means by which the trauma of the war and the consequent breakdown in social formations can be confronted. Third, as a medium for reproducing the dominant beliefs and practices of the ruling ideology, and reinscribing the pre-war status quo of sexual difference. However, while psychoanalysis is thus revealed as mainly operating in these films as a normative ideological force, it is also found that it is countered by a subversive discursive force that seems to be immanent to the films themselves.

Acknowledgements

My first thanks must go to my supervisors at Queen Mary, Dr Lucy Bolton and Dr Charles Drazin. They have afforded me encouragement, support, and levels of attention that far exceeded their responsibilities. I am grateful to both of them for their distinct contributions to my thesis, and for their limitless insight and guidance.

I am grateful for the award of the Queen Mary Principal's Studentship that funded me throughout my research. I am also grateful to the Film Studies Department and the School of Languages, Linguistics and Film at Queen Mary, where I have studied, on and off, for the last eight years. I could not have been afforded more opportunities or a friendlier environment in which to work. I would like to thank in particular Dr Libby Saxton, who supervised my early research into trauma in the context of British cinema, and who provided extremely useful comments as my upgrade examiner. I am also thankful to Sharon Bernor, postgraduate administrator at Queen Mary, and to the Queen Mary Research Degrees Office and Doctoral College, for their help and attention throughout my PhD.

I am indebted to Dr Lawrence Napper and the Film Studies Department at King's College London for their support during my MA research; this enabled some of the ideas that became the basis for this project. I am also grateful to Dr Christine English and Dr Jonathan Sklar of the Psychoanalysis Unit at University College London. Without them, and many others in the Unit, the psychoanalytic aspects of this project would have remained tentative and underdeveloped. Thanks must go also to the indefatigable staff of the British Film Institute and the British Library, where much of my research was carried out.

Lastly, I could not have undertaken, and far less completed, this project without the unquestioning help, support, encouragement, and generosity of my family as a whole, and of my wife, Anna, and my daughters, Clementine and Eloise, in particular.

Contents

Introduction

A number of films made in Britain in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War clearly evidence the central role that psychoanalysis had come to play within British culture by the mid-1940s. These films are constructed using Freudian, post-Freudian, and neo-Freudian ideas, and they often feature characters labouring under various forms of psychopathology, psychoanalyst figures, and the psychoanalytic setting. My approach to these films employs both critical theory and psychoanalytic theory. However, no claims are made in this thesis for or against the universal or specific truth of psychoanalysis. Instead, psychoanalysis is proposed as being central to the ambient culture in Britain at this time, and therefore key to a productive reading of these particular films. The psychoanalytic ideas that are particularly influential to these films are informed by three particular strands of psychoanalytic thinking. These are categorized under the headings of trauma and anxiety, sexual difference and gender roles, and the theory of object relations. In the main body of the thesis, I analyse five films that have been chosen to provide a cross section of the different types of films of the period that were influenced by psychoanalytic concepts. My reading of these films is founded on a process of critical and psychoanalytic textual analysis that enables both an effective interpretation of their formal and narrative components, and of their belief systems, opinions, and world-views. These are proposed as shaping these films' engagement with the trauma and anxiety that afflicted the population during this particularly difficult period of British history.

In the Ealing Studios production *Dead of Night* (Alberto Cavalcanti, Charles Crichton, Basil Dearden, Robert Hamer, 1945), a group of guests who are staying at a country house for the weekend recount their experiences of the supernatural to a psychoanalyst, Dr Van Straaten. One of the group, a confident young woman, Joan

Cortland, tells a story that revolves around a gift that she has given some time before to her then fiancé, Peter. The gift turns out to be an ornate Chippendale mirror in which Peter gradually begins to see visions of a room of a much earlier period; this is later revealed to be the scene of its previous owner's murder of his wife and his subsequent suicide. The previous owner, Francis Etherington, a man of 'dominating character, arrogant, reckless, handsome and of a violent temper', has been rendered immobile and thus impotent as a result of a tragic accident. As the story unfolds, Peter becomes increasingly listless as he begins somehow to identify with Francis Etherington's past traumatic experience. The film is careful to differentiate between the 'reality' of the mirror's reflection as it appears to Joan, and the 'fantasy' of Peter's traumatic visions, but this distinction is called into question in the story's final sequence. Believing Joan to have been unfaithful to him, Peter attempts to strangle her as they struggle in front of the mirror, and, as she is held in his grasp, Joan too, for a second, sees Peter's vision, before smashing the mirror and so breaking the spell. In having Joan share Peter's traumatic vision, *Dead of Night* challenges the viewer's presumption of Joan's 'normality' and Peter's 'abnormality', and also any belief that the viewer might hold of a dividing line existing between ideas of reality and fantasy, subjectivity and objectivity, and the internal and external psychical worlds.

Dead of Night is one of the five British films of the mid-1940s that I examine in detail in chapters three, four, and five of this thesis. The others are *The Seventh Veil* (Compton Bennett, 1945), *Madonna of the Seven Moons* (Arthur Crabtree, 1945), *They Made Me a Fugitive* (Alberto Cavalcanti, 1947), and *Mine Own Executioner* (Anthony Kimmins, 1947). However, I introduce *Dead of Night* at this point because its 'Haunted Mirror' story clearly evidences the presence of the three strands of contemporary psychoanalytic thinking that I argue are formative to many British films at this time. The figure of Peter chimes with the many other haunted male characters in British films

of this period that Andrew Spicer has grouped together as examples of the 'post-war psychotic damaged man.'[1] Spicer draws attention to the tormented and yet passive, sexually repressed and 'feminized' (Spicer's inverted commas) facets of these characters, who 'would have been recognized, metaphorically, as [damaged veterans], in need of understanding and compassion.'[2] The figure of Joan is typical of the representations of strong femininity in postwar British cinema, and Googie Withers' performance as Joan calls to mind the resourceful and independent women that she had portrayed in wartime films such as *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, 1942), and *The Silver Fleet* (Vernon Sewell, 1943). I have argued that, in making it clear that Joan shares Peter's traumatic vision, *Dead of Night* calls into question the idea that a strict border exists between reality and fantasy, subjectivity and objectivity, and the internal and external psychical worlds. The psychoanalytic school of object relations theorists, whose work had become well-known in Britain during the 1930s, and which today constitutes the major theoretical parameter within psychoanalytic thinking, defines the human being as existing precisely in this dual world of internal and external relationships. Object relational thinking permeates British films of the time in various different ways. It can be found to operate, for example, formally in the hyper-subjectivity of the various point of view shots in *A Matter of Life and Death* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, 1946), and narratively in the unusual (and sometimes unreliable) first-person story-telling of *Brief Encounter* (David Lean, 1945). I would like to propose that it is these three elements of psychoanalytic thinking that are fundamental to how a number of British films of the immediate post-Second World War period are configured.

[1] Andrew Spicer, *Typical Men: The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001), pp. 175-177.
[2] Andrew Spicer, *Sydney Box* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 54.

These groupings of psychoanalytic ideas had begun to coalesce in the years following the Great War, as the psychoanalytic movement became motivated to respond to the population's experience of that war and the atmosphere of cultural change that characterized the interwar period. These Freudian, post-Freudian, and neo-Freudian responses now took three distinct but related turns.[3] An account of the development of these ideas constitutes the second chapter of this thesis. However, a brief overview will serve at this point to introduce them, and to establish their relevance to the thesis as a whole.

The first of these groupings orientates itself around the attempts of psychoanalytic theorists to account for the connection between trauma and the psychical consequences that trauma has for the individual and for the wider society. Whereas, since the late 1890s, Freud had come to privilege unconscious phantasy[4] or fixations at one of the stages of libidinal development in accounting for the pathogenesis of neurosis, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, published in German in 1920 and in English in 1922, he had begun to acknowledge the traumatic consequences of historical events. In similar terms, traumatic neurosis emerges during the 1930s in the work of post-Freudians such as Sándor Ferenczi and Melanie Klein as a phenomenon that results more from exogenous traumatic experience than from endogenous fault-lines that have come to arise within the early development of the individual.

The second psychoanalytic grouping becomes visible in the popularity that Klein had begun to enjoy in the 1920s and 1930s as a result of her numerous published writings on the centrality of the role of the mother to the healthy development of children.

[3] Throughout this thesis, the term 'post-Freudian' is used to denote the work of the European and British followers of Freud who maintained the centrality of drive theory, whilst the term 'neo-Freudian' is used to refer to the work of the mostly American psychoanalysts that followed the path of what would later become known as 'ego-psychology'.

[4] In this thesis, I have used the word 'phantasy' in its psychoanalytic sense to denote the *unconscious* scenarios that are elemental to, for example, the Oedipus complex or the castration complex. The word 'fantasy' has been used in its normal sense to denote a product of the *conscious* imagination.

Whereas Freud had defined infantile development in terms of the relationship of the child to the father within the matrices of the castration complex and the Oedipus complex, by the 1930s Klein had departed from Freud in theorizing the child as existing in fear of *maternal* retaliation, and she described female sexuality not in terms of lack but of presence. Similarly, the neo-Freudian work of Karen Horney that was published at this time suggests male neurosis as resulting sometimes from 'womb envy', and she reconfigures female neurosis in terms of the problem of the dependency of others on women, rather than the dependency of women on others.

The third psychoanalytic grouping is motivated by the concomitant development of object relations theory, which seeks to account for how the internal world of the individual comes to be constructed, and how the internal world is formed by, and interacts with, the often-traumatic experience of external reality. Object relations theory defines the individual's need to interact with other people as taking the central position in human development, and it declares that the personal sphere evolves within the context of its perception of the outside world. As Lavinia Gomez has summarized with precision: 'Our inner world is a changing dynamic process, with some fixed and some more fluid patterns, both conscious and unconscious. These dynamics influence how we experience external reality and are themselves influenced by our experience of external reality.'[5]

The starting-point of this thesis is an observation that many British films made in the mid-1940s display forms of narration and representation that set them apart from wartime productions, and from those films that would come to be made in the relative security of the late 1940s and 1950s. It is proposed that this difference emerges as a result of British cinema's motivation to engage with the traumatic effects of the Second

[5] Lavinia Gomez, *An Introduction to Object Relations* (London: Free Association Books, 1997), p. 2.

World War, as well as anxieties that emerged at this time as a result of the destabilization of British society's dominant social formations.

The end of the war in Europe in the early summer of 1945 had initiated a period in which the British public was compelled to confront the traumatization, not only of many returning servicemen, but also of significant numbers of its civilian population who were living with the individual and collective effects of the Blitz, the mass evacuation of children, and many other factors. In addition, the British population soon came to realize that many of the structures that had bound society together in the face of the common enemy had disappeared with the onset of peacetime. For example, David Kynaston reports that, even amidst the euphoria of the VE day celebrations on the 8th May 1945, some had begun to feel the discomfort of imminent change from a condition that, for all its inconveniences, had become familiar: 'There were awful thoughts and anxieties in the air – the breaking of something – the splitting apart of an atmosphere that had surrounded us for six years.'[6]

Three months later, the war in the Pacific would be brought to an end by the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and although the British public's reactions to these events are enormously diverse and therefore difficult to quantify, there is little doubt that the advent of the atomic age brought with it a general feeling of insecurity, and in some cases one of moral crisis.[7] The Nuremberg Tribunal would commence in November 1945 and would last for almost a year, during which time the extent and consequences of the Holocaust would gradually become clear to the British population. Over the course of the next eighteen months more than four million British servicemen would be demobilized, and for most the transition from active service to civilian life would be far from easy. More often than not their pre-war jobs

[6] David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-1951* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 16.
[7] Mass-Observation, 'Atomic War?', in *Peace and the Public* (London, New York and Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947), pp. 8-13.

were no longer open to them, many were suffering from various forms of traumatic psychopathology, and advice and support were at this time not readily available.[8] The strains on marriages were severe; husband and wife had often not seen each other for months or even years on end, and with many women having taken over absent servicemen's jobs in the workplace during the hostilities, there was little chance of a return to the pre-war status quo, and traditional gender roles would need to be renegotiated.[9]

A third of British homes had been damaged and a quarter of a million destroyed during the war, but the economic difficulties of this period, which resulted partly from the withdrawal of the American Lend-Lease contract in August 1945, meant that little could be done in the way of reconstruction in the short term. The recently-elected Attlee government did, however, embark on a programme of radical social and economic reforms that would transform many aspects of British life, including the nationalization of major industries and public utilities, the creation of the Welfare State, and the decolonization of large parts of the British Empire. Rationing, price controls, and production controls were maintained and in some cases even tightened, with the consequence that increasing numbers of consumers and producers felt compelled to find ways to circumvent the regulations.[10] Many normally law-abiding people thus became criminalized, and the black market 'spiv' and the juvenile delinquent now emerged as recognisable social types.[11] During the months that followed the divorce rate and the crime rate would soar, the economy would deteriorate further, and to make matters

[8] Kynaston, pp. 97-98.
[9] Ibid., pp. 98-100.
[10] Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 151-153.
[11] H. D. Willcock, *Mass-Observation Report on Juvenile Delinquency* (London: The Falcon Press, 1949), pp. 20-30.

worse, the winter of 1946/1947, which became popularly known as the 'big freeze', would be the worst in more than fifty years.[12]

The percolation of psychoanalytic ideas within British culture in the first half of the twentieth century

The diverse effects of the experience of the war and its painful aftermath find expression in British cinema at this time by means of its engagement with ideas connected to the 'new psychiatry' of psychoanalysis. The key question to be addressed at this stage is how did psychoanalysis come to be the particular mode of expression that some elements of British cinema would adopt in the post Second World War period in order to enunciate these effects?

In order to answer this question, it becomes important to delineate the ways in which psychoanalysis had come, before this period, to occupy a position of prominence within British culture. As Robert Hinshelwood has noted, psychoanalysis had achieved a foot-hold in Britain in the early years of the twentieth century at a moment of particular tumult, the characteristics of which would strongly determine its various points of access.[13] Britain's position of global economic dominance, which had been established partly as a result of the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, had, by the second decade of the twentieth century, come to be increasingly threatened by the new methods of mass industrial production that had been established in other countries, most notably America and Germany. Meanwhile, the confident expectations of social and economic progress that those in power in the Victorian era had based on the application of the sciences were beginning to lose momentum, with

[12] For a first-hand description of the 'big freeze' see James Lees-Milne, *Caves of Ice* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1983), pp. 131-142.
[13] Robert Hinshelwood, 'Psychoanalysis in Britain: Points of Cultural Access, 1893-1918', in *Psychoanalysis and its Borders*, ed. by Giuseppe Leo (Lecce: Frenis Zero Press, 2012), p. 241.

the consequence that many of the long-established assumptions that had underpinned the predominance of European culture were becoming increasingly unsure.

At the same time, changes to the status of women in British society had at last begun to achieve momentum, and the first phase of the move towards female emancipation, which since the middle of the nineteenth century had involved incremental gains in the rights of women to employment, education, property ownership, and enfranchisement, would come to its initial conclusion with the passage of the Representation of the People Act in 1918. As a result of these changes, established attitudes to sexual relations and the position that women held in the family unit – and the position that the family unit occupied within society – were beginning to be discussed openly and were often being called into question.

The trade union movement and the general belief in a right to education were becoming widely established, and, through the increasing economic importance of the professions, the middle classes were beginning to encroach on the positions of power that had hitherto been the territory of the aristocracy. In addition, Britain's relationships with foreign powers were becoming increasingly strained, and in some areas of the world – most notably in Russia and Germany – revolution and social unrest were once again beginning to rise to the surface after being contained in Europe for more than a century.[14]

Hinshelwood identifies several different cultural locations in which psychoanalysis became influential in Britain in the atmosphere of change that characterised the first two decades of the twentieth century. The first point of engagement was established via the wide contemporary interest in the scientific investigation of spiritualistic phenomena that was being pursued in Britain by institutions such as the Society for Psychical Research. Various influential members of

[14] Hinshelwood, pp. 241-242.

the Society, most notably F. W. H. Myers and Henry Sidgwick, claimed that Freud's theories of repression and the unconscious,[15] which he had developed as a result of his studies of the dissociative states of hysteria, supported their own case for the scientific proof of the existence of the spirit world.[16]

The second point of access was opened by those who were campaigning at this time for changes in social attitudes towards sexuality. The doctor and writer Havelock Ellis, for example, saw similarities in Freud's theory of sexual repression to his own widely-published theories surrounding sexuality, narcissism, auto-erotism, and childhood sexual development.[17] At the same time, the application of psychoanalysis was gaining popularity in the areas of clinical psychiatry and the new experimental science of psychology. The psychiatrist and psychologist W. H. R. Rivers famously and successfully adapted a form of psychoanalytic psychotherapy during the First World War for the treatment of victims of 'shell-shock' at the Craiglockhart Military Hospital in Edinburgh,[18] whilst in the field of psychology Rivers and others drew upon psychoanalysis to support their research into a new scientifically-based empirical form of psychology that distinguished itself from both philosophy and neuroscience.[19]

Meanwhile, in the realm of literature, Freud's theories were attracting writers who saw the value of their application to understanding human emotions and motivations and even the creative process itself. Writers more or less connected to the Bloomsbury Group such as Adrian Stephen, Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, and Joan Riviere engaged with Freud's works in diverse ways and thus ensured the circulation of

[15] Ibid., pp. 244-247.
[16] The investigations of the Society were still holding the attention of the British public during and after the Second World War, as evidenced by the popularity of Society member Harry Price's accounts of the purported haunting of Borley Rectory in *The Most Haunted House in England* (1940) and *The End of Borley Rectory* (1946).
[17] Hinshelwood, pp. 247-250.
[18] Ibid., pp. 250-254.
[19] Ibid., pp. 255-258.

psychoanalytic ideas throughout metropolitan radical political circles.[20] Another Bloomsbury member, James Strachey, would eventually translate Freud's complete works into English,[21] and these would be published after the war by Virginia and Leonard Woolf's Hogarth Press.[22]

Finally, in the sphere of education, Freud's ideas concerning the developmental stages of children were beginning to inform the 'progressive' and 'permissive' systems of learning that sought to privilege children's free development both within the school system and as future members of society.[23] Hinshelwood concludes that it is the multivalent nature of Freud's work that enabled it to engage with so many sites in the vast and varied British cultural domain, and that would ensure its place in British language, and create 'an eventually vibrant new dialogue: a psychoanalytic dialogue' in the years to come.[24]

Whilst the first two decades of the twentieth century saw psychoanalytic thinking gaining a foot-hold in many corners of the British cultural milieu, Graham Richards argues that it was the Great War, and the changes that this wrought in all aspects of British life, which would ensure that the dissemination of psychoanalytic ideas would effectively become complete in Britain by the 1930s.[25] Richards reports that, within a few years of the end of the war, a 'fashionable craze' for psychoanalysis had taken hold in the popular consciousness, and he evidences this by providing an account of the wave of popular texts written by psychoanalysts and their sympathizers

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[20] Gregorio Kohon, Introduction to *The British School of Psychoanalysis: The Independent Tradition*, ed. by Gregorio Kohon (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 46-47.
[21] Hinshelwood, pp. 258-264.
[22] Freud's works were being translated into English and published in Britain from 1909 onwards. His two most popular works *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* appeared in 1913 and 1914 respectively.
[23] Hinshelwood, pp. 264-269.
[24] Ibid., pp. 278-279.
[25] Graham Richards, 'Britain on the Couch: The popularization of Psychoanalysis in Britain 1918-1940', in *Science in Context* 13:2 (2000), p. 183.

on diverse subjects such as war trauma and neurosis, childhood problems and education, dream analysis, criminal psychology, religion, and female and male sexuality. According to Richards, the public's fascination with these psychoanalytic ideas was fuelled by a widespread dissatisfaction with the existing social order, and also a demand 'for new ideas on all topics, as if the dominant pre-war world-views could not be abandoned fast enough.'[26] Writing in 1921, D. H. Lawrence caricatured the public mood of the moment when he observed that:

> By this time psychoanalysis had become a public danger. The mob was on the alert. The Oedipus Complex was a household word, the incest motive a commonplace of tea-table chat. Amateur analyses became the vogue. 'Wait till you've been analysed,' said one man to another, with varying intonation. A sinister look came into the eyes of the initiates – the famous, or infamous, Freud look. You could recognize it everywhere, wherever you went.[27]

What Richards feels to have been the motivational factor in the outstanding success of psychoanalysis in Britain during this period was a convergence of the psychological needs of a substantial section of the population with the appearance of a system of ideas that promised to meet these needs. Whilst the emergence of psychoanalysis in British culture in the first two decades of the twentieth century had been located at the intersection of the moves towards modernity, female emancipation, new ideas surrounding sexuality, and the interrogation of established ideas surrounding established religion that Hinshelwood has described, Richards proposes that, although these issues certainly endured, 'they were all transformed by the experience of the war itself.'[28] In similar terms, Dean Rapp argues that 'the serious interest in psychoanalysis was stimulated primarily by its use as a treatment during the war. As *Discovery* explained it: "thanks largely to its successful application to shell-shock cases

[26] Graham Richards, p. 199.
[27] D. H. Lawrence, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2005), p. 3.
[28] Graham Richards, p. 221.

[psychoanalysis] took the public by storm towards the end of the war."'[29] The popular appeal of psychoanalysis in the 1920s and 1930s can be defined, therefore, as being rooted more than anything else in the experience of the Great War itself, and precisely in the enduring traumatic effect that the war had inflicted on the British population.[30]

The experience of the treatment of 'shell-shock' during and after the First World War would lead to a re-evaluation of all the basic beliefs of psychiatric practice in Britain, both in civilian life and in the armed forces.[31] Many lessons were learnt from the findings of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into Shell Shock, which met for the first time in 1920, and which concluded in 1922 that 'it is clear to us that during 1916 and 1917 the question of the condition of the nervous system of the recruit did not receive adequate consideration'.[32] As the psychoanalyst and historian Pearl King has observed, by the early years of the Second World War psychoanalytic and other psychological practices had been integrated into many aspects of the war effort.[33] Soon after war had been declared, Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham opened the Hampstead War Nurseries in response to the social and emotional upheaval that was being faced by children who had been traumatized by the Blitz. At the same time, the psychoanalysts Donald and Clare Winnicott were working on the problems of caring for difficult and disturbed children suffering from the effects of evacuation.[34] Meanwhile, the British Psycho-Analytical Society was becoming involved in the planning for the

[29] Dean Rapp, 'The reception of Freud by the British Press: general interest and literary magazines 1920-1925', in *Journal of the Behavioural Sciences* 24 (1988), pp. 191-192. Rapp quotes from the December 1921 edition of *Discovery*.
[30] Graham Richards, pp. 220-221.
[31] Anthony Richards, 'The British Response to Shell Shock: An Historical Essay', in *Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into "Shell-Shock"* (London: Imperial War Museum, 2004), p. iv.
[32] *Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into "Shell-Shock"* (London: Imperial War Museum, 2004), p. 166.
[33] Pearl King, 'Activities of British Psychoanalysts During the Second World War and the Influence of their Inter-Disciplinary Collaboration on the Development of Psychoanalysis in Great Britain', in *International Review of Psycho-Analysis* 16:15 (1989), pp. 15-33.
[34] King, p. 18.

medical and child-care services that would be needed in the postwar period to address the widespread dislocation of life that the war had caused.

Faced with the problems that resulted from mass conscription, the armed forces had realized that there was a need for skilled psychological help with the process of the selection of personnel, and they appointed consultant psychiatrists for the Navy, the Air Force, and the Army. Psychological testing and psychiatric interviews were sanctioned by the Army Council, and the first experimental War Office Selection Board was established for the vetting of officer recruits and staffed by psychoanalysts W. R. Bion, Jock Sutherland, and Eric Wittkower, and the psychologist Eric Trist.[35]

In 1944, the psychoanalyst A. T. M. Wilson was appointed to investigate the psychiatric problems that ex-prisoners of war might face on their return to Britain and during their re-integration into civilian life, and as a result of his report twenty Civil Resettlement Units were established, and approximately fifty thousand men would pass through them over the following two years.[36] The wartime consultant psychiatrist to the Army, John Rawlings Rees, reported in 1945 that psychoanalytic or other psychological methods had also been widely deployed during the war in the fields of training, the boosting of morale, discipline, education, psychological warfare, and the treatment of the psychotic and psychoneurotic symptoms of war trauma.[37] By the end of the Second World War, therefore, as a result of the developing public engagement with psychoanalysis that Hinshelwood, Richards, King, and others have described, and also by means of the exposure of the population to a wide variety of psychoanalytic and other psychological wartime interventions, psychoanalytic knowledge had come to be firmly ingrained within British culture.

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[35] Ibid., p. 24.
[36] Ibid., p. 26.
[37] John Rawlings Rees, *The Shaping of Psychiatry by War* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1945), pp. 77-117.

But what are the processes by which this cultural appropriation of psychoanalytic knowledge occurs, and what part had psychoanalysis come to play within British culture – and specifically within British cinema – as a result of these processes by the mid-1940s? In order to provide a conceptual model capable of addressing these questions it becomes necessary to think of the cultural proliferation of psychoanalytic knowledge at this time with reference to Michel Foucault's idea of 'discourse', and to Louis Althusser's idea of 'ideology'.

Foucault and Althusser: discourse, ideology, power relations, and the unconscious

Foucault proposes that knowledge comes to circulate within culture by means of sequences of signs, figures, marks, or traces that exist in both written and spoken form, and he names these sequences 'statements'.[38] Statements that may meaningfully be grouped together because of their interest in the same subject, their derivation from the same place of origin, or their association with the same institutional apparatus, Foucault terms discourses. The word discourse, therefore, describes groupings of statements that are freely dispersed and redistributed, and that belong to a single system of formation, such as one relating to, for example, medicine, or sexuality, or psychiatry. According to Foucault, an historical analysis of the discourses that have existed at a particular time should question them as to their mode of existence, what it means for them to have come into being, and what can be learned from the fact that they appeared when and where they did.[39] An evaluation of the conditions necessary for a particular discourse to be able to form, and so be able to express and redistribute a given system of thought within a particular period, can reveal something of that period's 'cultural unconscious' or 'episteme'.

[38] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 89-98.
[39] Foucault, pp. 119-132.

Foucault's epistemological system for examining the cultural forms of exchange can be considered as being informed by psychoanalysis in that it admits the possibility of unconscious mental functioning, however it defines this as operating not within the psyche of an individual, but instead on a collective cultural level. As Lisa Downing has explained, in employing the term 'unconscious', Foucault is referring to:

> hidden, inaccessible rules, codes and beliefs that have effects in the world; but effects which appear as facts of nature. However, it is distinct from psychoanalysis insofar as it does not offer interpretations or propose 'cures' for misguided beliefs based on unconscious phantasy. It simply describes what it uncovers or lays bare, as the metaphor of 'archaeology' would suggest.[40]

For Foucault then, discourse operates both within and outside the awareness of the author of the statement, and the systems of communication that provide the means of expression of the statement. Thought of in these terms, psychoanalysis comes, in Britain by the mid-1940s, to be not only a distinctive form of psychological treatment and a model for psychological functioning, but also something that emerges as an historical discourse, a factor that is consciously and unconsciously appropriated by British culture, and in the context of cinema, one that is redistributed in different arrangements by the films in which it forms a constituent part.

Foucault also argues that the interconnected structures of knowledge and discourse are ordered by their relationship to dominant systems of power that are coercive on the population at particular historical moments. What Foucault is proposing is therefore different to the structural model of power that Marxist critical theorists such as Althusser have put forward in order to describe the mechanisms of coercion that hold sway over the individual within society. Althusser considers that power is wielded within a hierarchical system of control that is operated both by the 'repressive State apparatuses' (for example, the army, the police, or the courts) and the 'ideological State

[40] Lisa Downing, *Michel Foucault* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 10.

apparatuses' (for example, the family, schools, or the media) working together in 'very subtle or tacit combinations'.[41] Althusser also admits the influence of the Freudian notion of the unconscious on his conception of ideology when he defines his ideological model with reference to Freud's proposition that 'the *unconscious is eternal*, i.e. that it has no history.'[42] Althusser continues to state that:

> If eternal means, not transcendent to all (temporal) history, but omnipresent, trans-historical and therefore immutable in form throughout the extent of history, I shall adopt Freud's expression word for word, and write *ideology is eternal*, exactly like the unconscious. And I add that I find this comparison theoretically justified by the fact that the eternity of the unconscious is not unrelated to the eternity of ideology in general.[43] (Althusser's italics)

Althusserian theory, therefore, takes the view that consciously or unconsciously-held ideological positions, opinions, or world-views, are always supported and reinforced by the apparatuses of the state, and that power is first and foremost derived from the institutions of government. While Foucault accepts this to be true, he believes that power should *also* be understood 'in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization.'[44] In the words of Lisa Downing again, Foucault's model of the relations of power should, therefore, be considered to be defined

> in stark opposition to earlier theories of power, such as the dyadic model of the Hegelian Master-Slave dialectic or the Marxist critique of class oppression which borrowed from it, in which the proletariat is the 'single locus of great Refusal' and the bourgeoisie the single oppressor.[45]

Power, according to Foucault, can be understood not as being the preserve of a group of institutions that are intended to ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state,

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[41] Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), p. 98.
[42] Althusser, p. 109.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Michel Foucault, *The Will To Knowledge: The History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin Books, 1978; repr. 1998), p. 92.
[45] Downing, p. 90.

but instead as 'the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.'[46]

For Foucault, power is not something always exercised from above, but it is instead a force that emerges at innumerable points within culture 'in the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations.'[47] Nor is it something that is necessarily imposed onto different types of relationships – economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations – but a factor *immanent* to those relationships. That is to say, one which arises as the result of the divisions, fault-lines, and asymmetries that are to be found *within* them. An analysis of the psychoanalytic discourses that exist in British cinema in the aftermath of the Second World War would, therefore, be sensitive to the prevailing power relations that defined what discourses were able to circulate at that time, the form that those discourses were permitted to take, and who was awarded the ability to enunciate or receive the particular statements that constituted those discourses.

My close reading of five British films of this period draws heavily on Althusser's hierarchical concept of ideology as well as on Foucault's concept of the discursive nature of power in order to reveal the different ways that these films recirculate psychoanalytic knowledge. My conceptual model draws on both Althusserian and Foucauldian approaches because I believe that the opinions, positions, and world-views that shape how these films engage with contemporary cultural concerns come to exist and operate within them as a result of both hierarchical *and* discursive influences. As Charles Barr has pointed out, in British cinema at this time:

> Often there is an eloquent and poignant disjunction between surface drama, as observed in talk and action, and interior drama, which may be conveyed through the eyes […] and/or through expressive gaps in the film's narrative structure, creating a strong sense of something *other* that is being repressed, or sought in vain.[48]

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[46] Ibid., p. 93.
[47] Ibid., p. 94.
[48] Charles Barr, 'Introduction: Amnesia and Schizophrenia' in *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London: BFI Publishing, 1986; repr. 1996), p. 25.

Or, to put this in Althusserian and Foulcauldian terms, there are levels at which these films operate both as part of the hierarchical system of the ideological state apparatus *and* under the influence of discursive systems that are immanent to the films themselves, and these may motivate different world-views, and therefore provide contrasting messages for their audiences.

Both Althusser and Foucault emphasise how knowledge comes to circulate and have influence *unconsciously* on a collective cultural level. In the context of this thesis, this idea provides a conceptual model that enables an understanding of how psychoanalysis informs the opinions and world-views of these films outside the awareness of their authors. However, there are also levels at which psychoanalysis is *consciously* appropriated by the films' authors, and this can most obviously be found to be the case in their decision to exploit the popularity that psychoanalysis had in Britain at this particular time with the general public. For example, Sydney Box, the producer of *The Seventh Veil*, attributes the film's financial success primarily to the central space that psychoanalysis and war neurosis occupies in the film's narrative. Box explains that the original idea for the story of *The Seventh Veil*

> grew out of one of Verity's War Office documentaries, *The Psychiatric Treatment of Battle Casualties*. This was an enthralling and often heartrending subject that gave me my first insight into the theory and practice of psychiatry. It was this insight that gave *The Seventh Veil* its extraordinary appeal to its audiences – that and the fact that the time of its appearance was so right. Psychiatry was a novelty in those days […] and its use as a storytelling device was new to the screen. Within a year or two, of course, psychiatrists were popping up in every other movie, but when *The Seventh Veil* appeared they were unheard of, and there is no doubt that our picture benefitted considerably from what Jung liked to call synchronicity.[49]

In similar terms, Derek Collett, the biographer of Nigel Balchin, author of both the novel *Mine Own Executioner* and the eponymous film's screenplay, states that

[49] Sydney Box, *The Lion that Lost its Way*, ed. by Andrew Spicer (Lanham, MA, Toronto and Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2005), p. 49.

> it was probably the topicality of psychoanalysis that proved to be the prime factor in ensuring the success of *Mine Own Executioner*. In 1945, the discipline was still regarded in the media as a new and exciting one, with public interest in it being stimulated and sustained by the movie industry.[50]

There is little doubt that in Britain in the 1940s – just as in America – opportunities abounded for novelists, scriptwriters, and film producers to exploit at an economic level the public's interest in psychoanalysis. Therefore, an assessment of the hierarchical and discursive influences of psychoanalysis on the formal and narrative systems of films of this period should take into account both these industrial factors *at the same time as* acknowledging the signs, figures, marks, and traces of psychoanalytic knowledge that may have had influence on these systems both hierarchically and discursively at an unconscious level.

In this thesis, the contemporary psychoanalytic discourses that make up the component parts of these systems are referred to as 'historical discourses'. When these are found to have entered a cultural medium such as cinema, they are defined as either 'narrative discourses', 'cultural discourses', or 'ideological discourses'. A narrative psychoanalytic discourse is formed when psychoanalysis, in the form of, for example, psychopathology, psychoanalyst figures, or the psychoanalytic setting appear *in* a film's narrative. When psychoanalytic *concepts* are appropriated by these films as part of their structural systems, this is referred to as a cultural psychoanalytic discourse. Narrative or cultural discourses that are employed by the films to express certain opinions or world-views are designated as ideological discourses.

As I will demonstrate during the course of the thesis, the part that psychoanalysis plays at this time in British culture is often complex and oppositional, and, in the specific context of these films, it operates sometimes in forms that work towards the

[50] Derek Collett, *His Own Executioner: The Life of Nigel Balchin* (Bristol: Silverwood: 2015), p. 166.

reinforcement or restoration of the dominant relations of power, and at other times in ways that call into question the power relations themselves. The relationship that these films have with psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic knowledge can therefore be described as being often extremely ambivalent. This ambivalence manifests itself most obviously in the unresolved nature of the films' narrative scenarios and conclusions, and I would like to propose that what renders them often incapable of achieving narrative closure is precisely the traumatic nature of the historical context in which they were made.

The place of psychoanalysis in British cinema in the aftermath of the Second World War

In his assessment of the British cinema of the mid-1940s, Barr sheds light on the interest shown by some government ministers at this time in films and film policy, and he quotes from a speech made by Harold Wilson in the House of Commons in June 1948. Wilson stated that:

> We are getting tired of some of the gangster, sadistic and psychological films of which we seem to have so many, of diseased minds, schizophrenia, amnesia and diseases which occupy so much of our screen time. I should like to see more films which genuinely show our way of life, and I am not aware…that amnesia and schizophrenia are stock parts of our social life.[51]

Barr argues that the preoccupation of many films at this time with mental illness and transgression defines a strain of British cinema that is radically different from the reticence and understatement of British social realism, one that is therefore able to confront the difficult issues of the time such as postwar readjustment and the black market economy. He cites films such as *Dead of Night*, *Brief Encounter*, and *A Matter of Life and Death* as examples of 'a spectacular shift which occurs in British films

[51] Barr, p. 14.

around this time from the public sphere to the private, with a stress on vision and fantasy.'[52] Barr also draws attention to the 'modes of subjectivity and cinematic self-reflexivity' of these films, which enables them to externalize impulses, fantasies, and conflicts that are at work within the minds of their characters.[53] Barr's views have been formative to my observation that a number of films made in Britain during this period display distinctive forms of narration and representation.

Like Barr, I am interested in how British cinema at this time is characterized by expressive gaps and preoccupied with mental illness and transgression. However, my approach to these films is concerned specifically with the part that psychoanalysis plays in informing these characteristics, and how a system of critical and psychoanalytic textual analysis can shed light on the ideological positions of these films, as well as on the power relations and sexual politics that inform those positions.

The textual analyses that follow in the later chapters of this thesis also rely heavily on the concepts of trauma and anxiety, and I employ these terms in their strict psychoanalytic sense. The word 'trauma' is used to describe an event that is defined by its intensity, by the victim's incapacity to respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval that it brings to the victim's psyche.[54] The term is used, therefore, to refer to a specific detrimental event, and the effect of that event is defined as a neurosis or psychosis. The word 'anxiety' is used to describe a type of neurosis that is caused, either by the mobilization of a defensive strategy designed to avoid trauma ('signal anxiety'), or by the detrimental effect that the trauma has on the victim ('automatic anxiety'). The particular films that form the corpus of this thesis often do not represent the traumatic events or effects of the war directly, indeed in many it appears as if the war has never

[52] Ibid., p. 16.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac Books, 1973; repr. 2006), p. 465.

happened at all. Building on Barr's idea that these films can be found to display expressive gaps, I would like to propose that, by means of narrative and formal elisions, these films activate an operation of 'fragmentation' within their various structures that has, as one of its results, the effect of initiating an alternative mode of expression that 'displaces' these events and effects onto others that are less threatening.

I derive the idea of cinematic fragmentation from the post-Freudian work of Ferenczi, Klein, and Anna Freud, who think of mental fragmentation as a defensive mechanism that operates in circumstances where the individual, when faced with the threat or consequence of trauma, does not consciously acknowledge that threat or consequence. In similar terms, in this group of films, the detrimental effects of traumatic experience often come to be displaced, and the neurotic or psychotic consequences of trauma become apparent only by reading between the lines of narrative and film form. Within Freudian thinking, displacement is the process often observed in dreams, whereby the traumatic intensity of an experience is liable to be detached from it, and attached instead to ideas that are less threatening but that are nevertheless related by a chain of associations.[55] So, in many British films of this period, the neurotic or psychotic effects of trauma are often displaced onto symptoms that are easily recognizable within classical generic paradigms, such as obsessional behaviour, dysfunctional familial relationships, dysfunctional sexual behaviours, or the perception of supernatural phenomena.

It is films of this period that orientate themselves around these types of psychoanalytic concepts that I group together and term 'British trauma films'. These films have, as their common factor, a preoccupation with neurotic or psychotic symptomatic *effects* that are often not acknowledged by their central characters, and even by their own narrative processes. This preoccupation renders them different from

[55] Laplanche and Pontalis, p. 121.

British films that were made during the war such as *In Which We Serve* (Noël Coward and David Lean, 1942), and *Went the Day Well?* (Alberto Cavalcanti, 1942). Films such as these certainly centralize traumatic *events*, but they are often less inclined to confront the devastating personal or collective psychical consequences of those events. Examples of British trauma narratives can be found in a wide variety of films that found popularity with audiences at this time. These films define the traumas and anxieties that they centralize in psychoanalytic terms, either explicitly, in the way that they build their narratives around the psychopathologies of their distressed central characters, and around psychoanalyst figures or the psychoanalytic setting, or implicitly in the way that they are formally structured using psychoanalytic concepts.

In defining their anxieties in this way, British films of this time were, to an extent, following the example of successful Hollywood 'psychiatric' films of the mid-1940s such as *Now, Voyager* (Irving Rapper, 1942), *Lady in the Dark* (Mitchell Leisen, 1943), and *Spellbound* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1945) and contemporaneous British newspaper reviews recognised the phenomenon of the 'psychiatric' film as being primarily an American one. For example, in a review of *Spellbound*, the *Daily Telegraph* critic stated in May 1946 that 'Hollywood has discovered Freud – too late, alas to sign him up, not too late to cash in on his theories […] of this week's five new films two are concerned with schizophrenia and murder, two with paranoia and murder.'[56] In similar terms, writing in *The Observer* about *Mine Own Executioner* a year later, C. A. Lejeune suggested to her readers that: 'From its subject – psychiatry – you might expect it to be American'.[57] British reviewers of the time were also critical of what they felt to be the somewhat unconvincing nature of the representations of psychoanalysis in some Hollywood films. For example, in a review of *Spellbound* in

[56] *Daily Telegraph*, 20 May 1946.
[57] *The Observer*, 23 November 1947.

May 1946, the *News Chronicle* critic reported that: 'I am assured by those who know that the psycho-analytic data is authentic. But there is not one diagnosis made by the film's assortment of psychotherapists that I could not have given myself.'[58] These kinds of sentiments were not limited to Hollywood films. For example, writing about the seminally psychoanalytic British film *Dead of Night* a few months earlier, the *Daily Telegraph* critic had observed that: 'For each [story] the psycho-analyst has a glib polysyllabic explanation and it is a pity he does not live to discuss them in the three-volume case-book he is undoubtedly preparing.'[59]

By 1947, British critics were recognising that psychoanalytic storylines were now widely established in British films, and that they were also becoming rather more sophisticated. For example, reviewing *Mine Own Executioner* in November 1947, the *Daily Telegraph* reporter described it as one of those films that were 'now exploring the darker coast of the human mind. Psycho-analysis is the vogue – some would say the craze'[60]. In similar terms, the *News Chronicle*'s correspondent declared that that this was 'the first psycho-analytical film that a grown-up person can sit through without squirming.'[61] What is fascinating about these reviews is that, while they recognise the 'Americanness' of these films' use of psychoanalysis, the unconvincing nature of their representation of psychoanalysis – or of psychoanalysis itself – and their popularity with the British public, they fail to recognise any link as existing between these films' interest in psychoanalysis and either the American or the British collective traumatic experience of the war.

The films that make up the corpus, all of which were released between 1944 and 1947, have been chosen to provide a cross section of the British films of the time that

[58] *News Chronicle*, 18 May 1946.
[59] *Daily Telegraph*, 10 September 1945.
[60] *Daily Telegraph*, 24 November 1947.
[61] *News Chronical*, 22 November 1947.

were influenced by psychoanalytic concepts. In his history of Ealing Studios, Charles Barr proposes that Ealing's output during the 1940s, rather than being grouped under the headings 'pre-war', 'wartime', and 'postwar', could more effectively be classified in the categories 'up to 1941', '1942-43', and '1944-48'. Assessing the films that fall into the third of these classifications, Barr argues that,

> the crisis of the war having passed or at least shifted to more distant locations, attention turns to what happens afterwards, specifically to ways of learning from the experiences of the war, consolidating social changes, carrying over the discovery of unity and solidarity into the postwar world.[62]

In similar terms, in her assessment of the effects of the trauma of the Second World War on Hollywood films, Kaja Silverman points to a number of films made between 1944 and 1947 that 'attest with unusual candor to the castrations through which the male subject is constituted'.[63] In many of these films, Silverman argues,

> the 'hero' returns from World War II with a physical or psychic wound which marks him as somehow deficient, and which renders him incapable of functioning smoothly in civilian life. Sometimes the veteran also finds himself strangely superfluous to the society he ostensibly protected during the war; his functions have been assumed by other men, or – much more disturbingly – by women.[64]

Barr and Silverman are proposing that certain films made in both Britain and America between 1944 and 1947 – or 1948 – address the collective experience of the war *and* the social effects that this experience has wrought on the population. Barr's and Silverman's views have been formative to my belief that many British films made in the last year of the war, and in the two or three years that followed the war, are concerned, either on an implicit or explicit level, with working-through the political and social ramifications of the physical and psychical effects that the experience of the war has had for the British population. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, it is argued that the 'aftermath' of

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[62] Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios* (London: Studio Vista, 1993), p. 50.
[63] Kaja Silverman, 'Historical Trauma and Male Subjectivity', in *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 52.
[64] Kaja Silverman, 'Historical Trauma and Male Subjectivity', p. 53.

the war began a year before the end of the war as the detrimental effects of the war came to achieve widespread cultural recognition, and ended three or four years later, as British cinema culture finally began able to look ahead towards the postwar future.

Selecting the films in the corpus has posed several difficulties primarily because of the constraint of space dictated by my stated undertaking to approach the films via close textual analysis. As I have observed, the films of this period that seem the most influenced by psychoanalysis are those concerned primarily with either war neurosis, problematic female or male sexualities, crime and cultural fatigue, or various combinations of these factors. Therefore, I have decided that one or two examples from each of these categories should be selected. However, in each of these categories quite a number of candidates presented themselves.

Those that were considered for inclusion in the corpus that engage, either implicitly or explicitly, with the war neurosis of the returning serviceman were *Dead of Night*, *Wanted for Murder* (Lawrence Huntington, 1946), *A Matter of Life and Death*, *The Years Between* (Compton Bennett, 1946), *The October Man* (Roy Ward Baker, 1946), *The Upturned Glass* (Lawrence Huntington, 1947), *Mine Own Executioner*, and *The Small Back Room* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, 1949). Because the nature of the engagement with war neurosis in British cinema changes markedly between the beginning of the period and the end of the period, both early and late examples of these films have been included. Those films that focus on the problematic nature of female and male sexualities at this time that were contemplated include *Blithe Spirit* (David Lean, 1945), *The Seventh Veil* (Compton Bennett, 1945), *Brief Encounter*, *Piccadilly Incident* (Herbert Wilcox, 1946), *The Captive Heart* (Basil Dearden, 1946) and *Daybreak* (Compton Bennett, 1948). Films that are primarily concerned with crime, punishment, and cultural fatigue that could have been chosen are similarly plentiful. Those that were considered were *Appointment with Crime* (John Harlow, 1946), *They*

Made Me a Fugitive (Alberto Cavalcanti, 1947), *Dancing with Crime* (John Paddy Carstairs, 1947), *It Always Rains on Sunday* (Robert Hamer, 1947), *Brighton Rock* (John Boulting, 1947), and *Good-Time Girl* (David MacDonald, 1948). Lastly, because of the box office importance of Gainsborough Pictures at this time, and because of Gainsborough's particular interest in the representation of female subjectivity and female desire, it was considered important to include one film out of their list of releases. In this category, *The Man in Gray* (Leslie Arliss, 1943), *Fanny by Gaslight* (Anthony Asquith, 1944), *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, *The Wicked Lady* (Leslie Arliss, 1945), and *Caravan* (Arthur Crabtree, 1946) were all considered for inclusion.

Taken together, Chapters One and Two lay out the theoretical framework for this thesis, as well as reviewing the relevant published literature. Chapter One provides an assessment of Althusser's hierarchical model of ideology, which describes the coercion of the individual by the 'ideological State apparatuses', and also of Foucault's approach to the historical analysis of discourse and knowledge. I proceed to lay out my theoretical approach to the films that make up the corpus. Next, I review the published literature of those who have thought of psychoanalysis as an element of narrative or cultural discourse in both literature and in cinema. Finally, I review how various scholars has engaged with the theories of Althusser, Foucault, and others, in describing psychoanalysis as an ideological discourse.

Chapter Two assesses the three historical psychoanalytic discursive formations that I argue are influential on many elements of British cinema at this time. Foucault states that an analysis of historical discourses must presuppose

> that one takes phenomena of *recurrence* into account. Every statement involves a field of antecedent statements in relation to which it is situated, but which it is able to reorganize and redistribute according to new relations. It constitutes its own past, defines, in what precedes it, its own filiation, redefines what makes it possible or necessary, excludes what cannot be compatible with it.[65] (Foucault's italics)

[65] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 140.

Therefore, within each section, I place the series of historical discourses that make up each discursive formation in the order that they found currency; however the earlier ones should not be thought of as having less significance to these films than the later ones, rather, all should be thought of having the *potential* to exist within the cultural episteme that prevailed in Britain at this particular time.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five consist of my textual analyses of the films in the corpus from a critical/psychoanalytic perspective. In Chapter Three, 'The Perpetual Recurrence of the Same Thing', I provide a close analysis of the Ealing Studios film *Dead of Night*. As all three historical psychoanalytic discursive formations are central to how this film is configured, I provide a separate section on how the film appropriates each one. In the first, I demonstrate the film's formal and narrative uses of the defensive strategies of elision, fragmentation, and displacement in its representations of trauma and traumatic neurosis. In the second, I examine the film's interest in female and male sexual development, and also its interaction with psychoanalytic concepts that are relevant to femininity, motherhood, and hysteria. In the third, I scrutinize the film's relationship with the psychoanalytic theory of object relations, and particularly its employment of Klein's notion of projection, and Ferenczi's and Anna Freud's idea of identification, in its calling into question of the boundaries that exist between subjectivity and objectivity, and reality and fantasy.

Chapter Four, 'What Does a Woman Want?', explores childhood trauma, female desire, and female subjectivity in *The Seventh Veil* and *Madonna of the Seven Moons*. The section on *The Seventh Veil* begins with an assessment of the part that early detrimental experiences and the predisposition to traumatic neurosis play in the film's presentation of the childhoods of its central figures, Francesca and Nicholas. I proceed to analyse how the processes of psychoanalysis provide a framework for the film's narrative, and how these are integral to the film's ideological reinscription of the status

quo of sexual difference in its conclusion. In the section on *Madonna of the Seven Moons* that follows, I trace that film's engagement with the discourse of schizophrenia and the pathologization of female desire, before proceeding to examine what is at stake in the ambivalent and fragmented nature of the film's narrative irresolution.

In Chapter Five, 'The World is Full of Neurotics', I look at how the films made towards the end of the period, *They Made Me a Fugitive* and *Mine Own Executioner*, engage with the traumatized serviceman and the crisis of male subjectivity in more literal terms than the earlier films in the corpus. In the section on *They Made Me a Fugitive*, I begin by examining how the opposite but complementary figures of Clem and Narcy provide the means for the recirculation of contemporary discourses surrounding the effect of traumatic events, and of individual and collective moral responsibility. I proceed to explore how various characters in the film function within wider societal discourses that describe a neurotic collapse of both paternal and maternal functions in the atmosphere of Britain's postwar cultural malaise. Finally, in the section on *Mine Own Executioner*, I begin by exploring the nature of the traumatized war veteran Adam's psychical affliction, and the film's unusual placing of the Oedipus complex at the centre of the origin of his traumatic psychosis. I continue to examine the film's broadening of the scope of male affliction, and the consequences of both Adam's, and the psychoanalyst figure Felix's, psychopathological impulses towards destruction and self-destruction. Finally, I assess *Mine Own Executioner*'s proposition that the British collective experience of the Second World War has initiated an ideological breakdown in the cultural systems of communication, and its suggestion that a solution to this dilemma may be found within the inter-personal processes of psychoanalysis.

Chapter One

Psychoanalysis as an historical discourse, a narrative discourse, and as a cultural and ideological discourse

1.1 Introduction

This chapter lays out the first part of the theoretical framework for this thesis by exploring how psychoanalysis might be considered to be an historical discourse, how it might operate within a text as a narrative and formal structuring mechanism, and how it might work within culture as part of an ideological framework or a discursive formation. I begin by examining two works that have been influential to my conviction that the beliefs, opinions, and world-views that are expressed in these films come about as a result of both ideological *and* discursive influences working together closely within the fabric of the texts. The first is Althusser's essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', first published in 1970, which builds on Marx's concepts of infrastructure and a superstructure in describing the workings of what Althusser terms the 'ideological state apparatuses'.

In the context of this thesis in general, I am interested in whether Althusser's ideas can reveal the extent to which psychoanalysis operates in these films *beneath the ruling ideology* in order to ensure the reproduction of the dominant beliefs and practices of the ruling ideology itself. I proceed to examine Foucault's description of the discourses that have circulated around 'transgressive' sexual practices in *The History of Sexuality*, first published in 1976. I look first at Foucault's assessment of what he terms the 'repressive hypothesis' – a phrase that he uses to describe the role that repression has been widely accepted to play within culture – and second at the function that he claims medicine, psychiatry, and specifically psychoanalysis, to have

performed in classifying, interpreting, and pathologizing transgressive or non-productive sexualities. Again, in the context of this thesis in general, I am interested in exploring whether this work can assist an understanding of how psychoanalysis is positioned in these films in relation to other established power structures.

My purpose here is not to provide a general overview of these texts, but to extract elements of Althusser's and Foucault's work that will assist an understanding of how psychoanalytic ideas circulate in culture generally and in these films in particular. I proceed to summarize my critical/psychoanalytic approach to the films that make up the corpus of this thesis. Because these films employ psychoanalysis as an element of narrative and formal structure, I review the published literature of those who have thought of psychoanalysis as operating in both literature and cinema as a narrative or cultural discourse. Lastly, I assess the published work of several scholars who have employed the theories of Althusser, Foucault, and others, in describing psychoanalysis as working in cinema as an ideological discourse.

1.2 Althusser: ideology and the reproduction of the relations of production

Althusser's essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' was published in the wake of the civil unrest that had brought Paris to a halt in the summer of 1968, and it quickly became central to what Fredric Jameson has termed the 'heated polemics and ideological battles that characterized the Marxisms of the 1960s and 1970s.'[1] In the essay, Althusser proposes that what we normally think of as ideological beliefs or world-views never exist only in the consciousness of the individual, but are supported, reinforced, and reproduced by the apparatuses of state power. Althusser's argument is developed from the classical Marxist principle that the structure of every

[1] Fredric Jameson, Introduction to 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), p. vii.

capitalist society is constituted by unities that exist on two different levels. At the base level is the infrastructure, which contains the productive forces and the 'means of production', and above this rests the superstructure, which contains the 'repressive' state apparatuses such as the government, the army, the police, and the courts. What Marx terms the *means* of production are the various material components that, taken together, form the *processes* of production, as well as the labour power that is needed to keep the processes of production running smoothly.

According to Marx, the idea of the 'state' is synonymous with the superstructure, and in order to maintain its position of power over the infrastructure it must make certain that the means of production, at the same time as being productive, are also themselves able to be reproduced. For Marx, the reproduction of the means of production is achieved mostly at the level of the corporation, the responsibility of which is to ensure that the raw materials and fixed installations needed for production are replenished and replaced. The corporation must also provide its labour force with the means with which to reproduce itself, in other words, sufficient wages to pay for the housing, food, and clothing that are necessary to ensure that the worker is able to return to work day after day.[2] Althusser proceeds to build on Marx's theory by proposing that it is not enough merely for the state to ensure that the labour power has the material conditions to ensure its reproduction, it must also make certain that the labour power has the potential to fulfil the different requirements that are expected of it within the socio-technical division of labour. Whilst a certain amount of the education that is needed to achieve this potential is provided at the corporate level by means of training and apprenticeships, according to Althusser this is largely achieved outside the sphere of the company by means of the state's educational apparatus.[3]

[2] Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), pp. 85-92.
[3] Althusser, pp. 87-88.

But what, asks Althusser, are children taught within this educational apparatus? Certainly, to read, to write and to add, as well as a number of other skills that are directly useful to be able to fulfil the different roles that they will come to occupy later in life within the system of production. But in addition to these skills, claims Althusser, they are also taught the rules of good behaviour, morality, and civic and professional conscience:

> To put this more scientifically, I shall say that the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class 'in words'.[4]

For Althusser then, the process of the reproduction of the labour force can be revealed as having at its core not only the reproduction of its skills, but also the reproduction of its subjection to the rules and practices of the ruling ideology itself. In order to reconcile the concept of ideological subjugation with Marx's proposal that society is comprised of infrastructure and superstructure, Althusser introduces the idea that the superstructure, instead of being made up solely from the repressive state apparatuses, also contains a disparate body of entities that he terms the 'ideological state apparatuses'. These present themselves in the form of other distinct and specialized institutions that include, as has already been mentioned, the educational system, and also the systems of the different churches, the family unit, the political parties, the trade unions, and the various forms of the arts and the media.

But what constitutes the difference between these ideological state apparatuses and the repressive state apparatuses that Marx has described such as the army, the courts, or the police? While the repressive apparatuses exist within the public domain and are unified by their common membership of the institutions of government, the

[4] Ibid., p. 89.

unity of the ideological apparatuses as a body is not so immediately visible because they *seem to exist*, for the most part, within the personal domain. Moreover, while Marx considers the repressive apparatuses to function mostly by means of repression and violence, Althusser claims that the ideological apparatuses function, predominantly, by means of ideology:

> What unifies their diversity is precisely this functioning, insofar as the ideology by which they function is always in fact unified, despite its diversity and its contradictions, *beneath the ruling ideology*, which is the ideology of 'the ruling class'.[5] (Althusser's italics)

Althusser argues that, while in the Middle Ages the church represented the one dominant ideological state apparatus, concentrating as it did the religious, educational, and cultural functions, in modern social formations these functions have devolved to the school system, as well as to other ideological apparatuses such as the systems of communication and culture.

But what is the function of these modern-day ideological state apparatuses? According to Althusser, *all* ideological state apparatuses, whatever they are, contribute to the same result, that is the reproduction of the *relations* of production that the state relies on for its survival. Or to put this another way, although the aim of these various apparatuses is to effect the 'training' of the population and to ensure that the population has the potential to fulfil the roles that have been assigned to them within the division of labour, their purpose is to ensure that the asymmetry of the power relations that exists between the superstructure and the infrastructure is maintained and reproduced. Each of the ideological state apparatuses contributes towards this purpose in the way that is proper to it, for example, the political apparatus by subjecting individuals to the political state ideology, and the communications and the

[5] Ibid., p. 98.

cultural apparatuses, Althusser claims, by 'cramming every citizen with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, and moralism.'[6]

As well as describing the aims and functions of the ideological state apparatuses Althusser also reflects on the nature of ideology itself, and he presents the idea that the defining feature of all ideologies is their demand for beliefs that exist outside the realm of normal consciously-held ideas.[7] He argues that these beliefs become ingrained in the popular consciousness by virtue of their 'obviousness':

> It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are 'obviousnesses') obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot *fail to recognize* and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the 'still, small voice of conscience'): 'That's obvious! That's right! That's true!'[8] (Althusser's italics)

Althusser proposes that this type of reaction signifies the existence of a system by which ideology works to claim an 'individual' as a 'subject', and he argues that this system operates by means of a process that he terms 'interpellation' or 'hailing'. In order to illustrate this system, he uses the everyday example of a policeman who calls out to a member of the public 'Hey, you there!':

> Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn around. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and that 'it was *really him* who was hailed' (and not someone else). Experience shows that the practical telecommunication of hailings is such that they hardly ever miss their man: verbal call or whistle, the one hailed always recognizes that it is really him who is being hailed.[9] (Althusser's italics)

In the same way, ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects. But instead of defining this subjectification as occurring during the course of life as a result of the

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[6] Ibid., p. 104.
[7] I have drawn on Kaja Silverman's clarification of some of Althusser's points on the subjectification of the individual in this section. See Kaja Silverman, 'The Dominant Fiction', in *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 16-23.
[8] Althusser, p. 116.
[9] Ibid., p. 118.

individual's gradual exposure to specific ideological influences, Althusser proposes instead that we have all, always, lived in ideology. For Althusser, ideology exists – as Freud describes the unconscious as existing – trans-historically and therefore eternally, and thus individuals are 'always-already' interpellated as subjects because they '*are always-already subjects*.' (Althusser's italics)[10] In stating this, Althusser follows the psychoanalytic idea that individuals are, in essence, always 'abstract' as a result of the rituals that surround the expectation of their birth, such as the understanding that the child will bear the father's name. Althusser concludes that individuals are, therefore, always-already claimed as ideological subjects almost from the time of their conception.[11]

Althusser's work is of fundamental importance to the thesis in two distinct ways. First, his expansion of the Marxist theory of superstructure to include the ideological state apparatuses fits well with my view that psychoanalysis often operates in British cinema at this time *under the ruling ideology*. As I will demonstrate, psychoanalysis, psychopathology, psychoanalyst figures, and the psychoanalytic setting, all form an important part of these films' ideological apparatuses. These apparatuses most often operate in ways that are designed to reproduce their own dominant practices, and also to reinscribe the pre-war status quo of sexual difference. Second, his description of how, by a process of interpellation, ideology comes to claim the individual as a subject, provides a conceptual framework for how psychoanalytic knowledge comes to be communicated outside the realm of normal consciously-held ideas, and therefore outside the intentions of these films' authors. This framework is of crucial importance both for an understanding of how the beliefs, opinions, and

[10] Ibid., p. 119.
[11] Ibid.

world-views of these films are defined, and also how these come to be communicated to their audiences.

1.3 Foucault: discourse, the repressive hypothesis, and the pathologization of transgressive sexualities

Foucault studied under Althusser at the École Normal Supérieure in Paris during the early 1950s where he was heavily influenced by Althusser's brand of intellectual Marxism. Like Althusser, Foucault is consistently interested in exploring how the individual comes to be subjectified by the network of influences that is the preserve of the social institutions; however, Foucault proposes alternative mechanisms by which this subjectification occurs. As he stated in the early 1980s:

> The goal of my work during the last twenty years has not been to analyze the phenomena of power, nor to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis. My objective, instead, has been to create a history of the *different modes* by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects.[12] (My italics)

In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault provides an account of the widely-held belief that considers sexual practices during the nineteenth century to have been controlled, confined within the home, and largely absorbed within the function of procreation. On the subject of sex, apparently, silence now came to be the rule:

> The legitimate and procreative couple laid down the law. The couple imposed itself as model, enforced the norm, safeguarded the truth, and reserved the right to speak while retaining the principle of secrecy. A single locus of sexuality was acknowledged in social space as well as at the heart of every household, but it was a utilitarian and fertile one: the parents' bedroom.[13]

[12] Michel Foucault, quoted in *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 5-6.
[13] Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 3.

This idea, which Foucault terms the 'repressive hypothesis', conceives the marginalisation of non-procreative and transgressive sexualities to have been achieved, to an extent, by the prohibitions of the penal law under which they came to be consigned either to the brothel or to the mental hospital. However, the larger part of this process is claimed to have been effected by what psychoanalysis names as the process of repression, operating on 'errant' sexualities with similar results: 'as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence'.[14] Foucault observes that, in allocating the primary role in the silencing of these discourses to repression, the repressive hypothesis proposes it as occupying the pivotal position in the balance between sexuality, power, and knowledge. However, he proceeds to call the repressive hypothesis into question by interrogating, in Lisa Downing's words, 'the very forms of power and knowledge that the repressive hypothesis presupposes.'[15] Rather than being characterised by its silence on the subject of sexuality, Foucault argues instead that the nineteenth century saw a veritable explosion of sexual discourses, and that these discourses were stimulated by the very agencies that the repressive hypothesis suggests as having attempted to silence them.

Foucault is careful to stress that it is certainly true that there was a widespread expurgation of the language of sex in the Victorian era. New rules of propriety screened out the use of certain words, and there was more often than before strict regulation about where and when it was not possible to talk about certain things. However, according to Foucault, the opposite phenomenon occurred at the level of discourse. He proposes that a multiplication of sexual discourses of an extremely varied nature now occurred, and all of these proliferated, crucially:

[14] Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality*, pp. 4-5.
[15] Lisa Downing, *Michel Foucault* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 88.

> in the field of exercise of power itself: an institutional incitement to speak about it, and to do so more and more, a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause *it* to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail.[16] (Foucault's italics)

Foucault identifies several different locations in which this 'institutional incitement' emerged. First, in the continually increasing scope of confession in church, where the sinner was exhorted to transform all of the thoughts, desires, and imaginings of the flesh into the form of a confessional discourse. Second, in the rise of clinical sexology, which sought both to describe and transform social attitudes towards sex by revealing the modes, determinations, and effects of sexual conduct. Third, in the secondary schools, where, though one might have the impression that sex was hardly talked about, the 'internal discourse of the institution' – sex education, punishments, responsibilities, and even architecture – was largely based on the assumption of the sexuality of the child.[17] Similarly, in the field of medicine in its attention to the nervous disorders, and in psychiatry and then psychoanalysis by means of their interest in the origin of mental illness and their 'focussed gaze' on sexual excess, onanism, and frustration.[18] Whilst it might appear that these various incitements to discourse had as their objective the proscription of wayward or unproductive sexualities, Foucault claims that they functioned in precisely opposite terms to ensure the proliferation of both those discourses and the sexualities themselves.

Foucault provides examples of how those with non-productive or transgressive sexualities came at this time to be incorporated into the medical and psychiatric spheres by means of the 'pathologization' of their sexual practices. He references, for

[16] Downing, p. 18.
[17] Foucault claims, for example, that: 'The space for classes, the shape of the tables, the planning of the recreation lessons, the distribution of the dormitories (with or without partitions, with or without curtains), the rules for monitoring bedtime and sleep periods – all this referred, in the most prolix manner, to the sexuality of children.' See Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality*, p. 28.
[18] Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality*, pp. 18-31.

example, the attention paid to the sexuality of children, and particularly to their 'solitary habits':

> Educators and doctors combatted children's onanism like an epidemic that needed to be eradicated. What this actually entailed, throughout this whole secular campaign that mobilized the adult world around the sex of children, was using these tenuous pleasures as a prop, constituting them as secrets (that is forcing them into hiding so as to make possible their discovery), tracing them back to their source, tracking them from their origins to their effects, searching out everything that might cause them or simply enable them to exist.[19]

Foucault claims that a similar strategy was employed in relation to hysteria, and he describes a three-stage process of pathologization of the hysterical woman that began when:

> The feminine body was analysed – qualified and disqualified – as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality; whereby it was integrated into the sphere of medical practices, by reason of a pathology intrinsic to it; whereby, finally, it was placed in organic communication with the social body (whose regulated fecundity it was supposed to ensure), the family space (of which it had to be a substantial and functioning element), and the life of children (which it produced and had to guarantee, by virtue of a biological-moral responsibility lasting through the entire period of the children's education).[20]

Foucault claims that, while being designated as the evils that needed to be eliminated or repressed, *by virtue of their being declared pathological* the child's sexuality and the woman's hysteria were able to be harnessed as means of support for the agencies that defined them as such. In this way, the agencies were able to ensure their advancement. But more than this, it is suggested that the agencies were, at the same time, seeking to encourage the errant sexualities that were their targets in order to expand their own activities. Foucault provides an example from the field of psychoanalysis in which, he claims, a double-relay of power originated from the 'proximities' of the analytic setting. In the analysis, power is proposed to have proceeded 'through examination and insistent observation, it required an exchange of

[19] Ibid., p. 42.
[20] Ibid., p. 104.

discourses, through questions that exhorted admissions, and confidences that went beyond the questions that were asked.'[21] These proximities of exchange, according to Foucault, functioned to extend the domain of power that was controlled by the analyst, but at the same time there was pleasure to be gained by the analysand, and also a certain amount of power to be exercised, in 'showing off, scandalizing, or resisting' during the vicissitudes of the analysis itself.[22]

Foucault has made clear his argument that a broad range of sexual discourses were encouraged to multiply by the very agencies that the repressive hypothesis suggests had attempted to quiet them. Specifically, in the field of medical and psychiatric practice, Foucault has claimed that transgressive sexualities came to be codified, and that transgressors came to be pathologized and encouraged to confess their activities, and as a result the proliferation of non-productive sexualities was assured. But what was to be gained by means of this medicalization and pathologization of the sexually transgressive child or adult, and by the consequent proliferation of these sexual discourses and practices?

According to Foucault, since ancient times, society has mobilized the family cell and its elements of marriage, kinship, and inheritance, for society's own security. Foucault terms this mobilization the 'deployment of alliance'. The relationships that together form the family cell he terms the 'relations of alliance'. He claims that the deployment of alliance is built around a system of rules defining what is permitted and what is forbidden, and that it has as one of its key objectives the reproduction of the interplay of the relations of alliance. In both structure and purpose, the parallels between Foucault's deployment and relations of alliance, and Althusser's idea of the family unit existing as an element of the ideological state apparatuses, are clear.

[21] Ibid., p. 44.
[22] Ibid.

However, Foucault proceeds to build on Althusser's idea by proposing that, from the nineteenth century onwards, the family cell began to lose some of its importance, and political structures could no longer rely on it as an adequate instrument of support. Therefore, Foucault claims, Western societies created a new apparatus which was superimposed onto the deployment of alliance, this Foucault terms the 'deployment of sexuality'.

It is proposed that, while the deployment of alliance – like the ideological state apparatuses – had the goal of the reproduction of the interplay of relations and the maintenance of the law that governed them, the deployment of sexuality was designed to engender the continual extension of the areas and forms of control:

> The deployment of alliance is attuned to the homeostasis of the social body, which it has the function of maintaining; whence too the fact that the important phrase for it is 'reproduction'. The deployment of sexuality has its reason for being, not in reproducing itself, but in proliferating, innovating, annexing, creating, and penetrating bodies in an increasingly detailed way, and in controlling populations in an increasingly comprehensive way.[23]

Foucault argues that the deployment of sexuality first developed on the fringes of the family alliance in that parents and relatives were originally its chief agents, however they began gradually to draw in support from doctors, educators, and later psychiatrists. Rather than merely being declared taboo, transgressive sexualities were now declared to be pathological, and this, Foucault claims, is the context in which psychoanalysis was set to work. While seeming to call family relations into question by examining the sexuality of individuals outside family control, Foucault declares that psychoanalysis actually worked to reinforce the deployment of alliance by guaranteeing that, in the Oedipus complex, one would find the parent-child relationship to be at the root of everyone's sexuality. This made it possible, even when

[23] Ibid., p. 107.

everything seemed to point in the reverse direction, to keep the deployment of sexuality coupled to the system of alliance, and for both elements of the relations of power to work together to ensure the subjectification of the individual, the control of the population, and the continuity of the dominant social institutions.[24]

Foucault's work, just as much as Althusser's, is central to how this thesis seeks to account for the different functions that psychoanalysis performs in British films of this period. One function becomes obvious, as I will demonstrate, by means of a reading of the discourses in these films that classify and pathologize non-productive or 'errant' sexualities. An understanding of these discourses has direct relevance to how many of the marginalised characters and narrative scenarios of these films are configured in terms of their various psychopathologies, and these will be shown to be distinctly normative. No less important, however, is Foucault's description of how knowledge and power is not merely the preserve of a group of institutions intended to claim the individual as a subject. This last factor provides the starting-point for a conceptual framework that assists how I account for the fragmented nature of these films, and the way that these films also often encompass subversive discursive forces that run counter to their own stated ideological beliefs.

1.4 Summary of the theoretical framework of this thesis

It is proposed that the films that make up the corpus of this thesis are influenced by many of the Freudian, post-Freudian, and neo-Freudian psychoanalytic discourses that had found traction within British culture during the First World War and in the inter-war period. In the thesis, these various discourses are grouped together into three discrete discursive formations. These formations are centred around the concepts of trauma and anxiety, sexual difference and gender roles, and the theory of object

[24] Ibid., pp. 112-114.

relations. These formations, and the discourses that make up their component parts, are referred to in the thesis as 'historical discourses'.

When historical discourses are found to have entered a cultural medium such as cinema, they are designated in this thesis as either narrative discourses, cultural discourses, or ideological discourses. A discourse is defined as a narrative discourse when psychoanalysis appears *in* a film by means of its presentation of psychopathology, psychoanalyst figures, or the psychoanalytic setting. When it is found that psychoanalytic concepts such as, for example, the compulsion to repeat or the Oedipus complex, are appropriated by these films in order to build their formal or narrative *structures*, this is referred to in the thesis as having become a cultural discourse. Narrative and cultural discourses that are employed by these films to express certain opinions, positions, or world-views are designated in this thesis as ideological discourses. This last term is employed with the specific purpose of signalling my combination of Althusser's hierarchical and Foucault's discursive approaches in order to achieve a better understanding of the relations of power that these films describe.

When assessing the ideological discourses that shape the films, the work of both Althusser and Foucault is central to my analysis. As I have already demonstrated, there are parallels between Foucault's concept of the deployment and relations of alliance, and Althusser's concept of the ideological state apparatuses. Moreover, there is considerable common ground in their work in relation to their appropriation of the Freudian concept of the unconscious to explain the workings of their respective models. It has sometimes been claimed that Foucault's concept of power stands in opposition to Althusser's, as the former describes a 'bottom-up' process of coercion, and the latter a hierarchical one.[25] Within this thesis, their theories are regarded as

[25] See, for example, Lisa Downing, *Michel Foucault*, p. 90.

complementary and not oppositional, as it is considered that Foucault does not refute Althusser's work, but instead builds on it by arguing that power can operate in *multiple* directions. As Foucault states:

> We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.[26]

Therefore, when analysing the films in the corpus, close attention is paid to the dynamics of the power systems that the films describe, and especially to whether the idea of psychoanalysis operates in normative terms, in order to ensure the reproduction of the dominant beliefs and practices of the ruling ideology, or in subversive terms, in opposition to those same dominant beliefs and practices. As has already been stated, it is most often in the unresolved nature of the films' narrative conclusions that this sense of ambivalence is most often to be found, and it is argued that it is the specific nature of their historical context that prevents them from achieving convincing closure.

Whilst it has been important to separate and differentiate the historical, narrative, cultural, and ideological discourses for the purpose of clarity of usage, it is not claimed that these discourses operate discretely one from another. On the contrary, as I will demonstrate, these various discourses are almost-always employed in conjunction with each other, sometimes working in common directions, but often in ones that are oppositional, and towards radically different ends. In the next section, I review the published literature of those authors who have recognised psychoanalysis to be an element of narrative or cultural discourse both in literature and in cinema. I then

[26] Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality*, p. 101.

proceed in the following section to assess how various scholars have engaged with Althusser and Foucault in describing psychoanalysis as an ideological discourse.

1.5 Literature review: Psychoanalysis as a narrative and cultural discourse

In his essay examining the genre of film melodrama, 'Minnelli and Melodrama', Geoffrey Nowell-Smith finds that representations of psychopathology can be found to operate not only as the object of a film's enquiry, but also as a cultural discourse that is fundamental to its narrative structure. Nowell-Smith claims that a sense of 'excess' is fundamental to melodrama, and that this acts within melodramatic texts in ways that are connected to the psychopathology of hysteria.[27] According to Nowell-Smith, melodrama defines the problems that face its characters 'realistically', and the way in which it constructs its narratives leads to the generation of an excess which cannot be accommodated within the framework of realism. Therefore, the more that melodrama presses towards its resolution, the harder it is for its narrative to accommodate this excessive element, and this must be 'syphoned off' by being expressed in music, or in certain elements of the mise-en-scene. Nowell-Smith suggests that music and mise-en-scene not only serve to heighten the emotionality of the action, but they substitute for it in ways similar to the psychopathology of hysteria, where the energy attached to a repressed idea is converted into the somatic symptom. Nowell-Smith offers as an example the musicals of Vincente Minnelli, in which characters are often defined by their hysteria, and where music and dancing are the principal vehicles for the siphoning off of the excessive tendencies of their narratives.

Melodramas, for Nowell-Smith, not only contain representations of excessive psychopathological behaviours, but they can also be categorised by their inability to contain their own excessive tendencies within their realistic narratives, and thus

[27] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'Minnelli and Melodrama', in *Screen* 18:2 (1977), pp. 113-118.

hysteria comes, within melodrama, to be not only an object of the film's enquiry and part of its system of signification, but also a mechanism that is fundamental to its structure.

The idea that psychoanalytic theory can form the basis of the structure of a text, and not just its subject, is proposed by Peter Brooks in 'Freud's Masterplot'. Brooks claims that Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) can be usefully read not only as a psychoanalytic text, but also as an essay about the dynamic interrelationship of the beginnings, middles, and endings of narratives. Brooks argues that narratives always make the implicit claim to be in a state of repetition, and he suggests that repetition is equally initiatory in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, as Freud confronts the repetitive dreams of patients who are suffering from war neuroses and the traumatic neuroses of peacetime. Brooks claims that:

> If repetition is mastery, movement from the passive to the active; and if mastery is an assertion of control over what man must in fact submit to – choice, we might say, of an imposed end – we have already a suggestive comment on the grammar of plot, where repetition, taking us back again over the same ground, could have to do with the choice of ends.[28]

Brooks argues that Freud notes the need of the analysand to repeat in the analysis. Here, previously-repressed material is not simply remembered, but exhaustively 'worked-through', and thereby 'mastered' as if it were in the present. Similarly, according to Brooks, literature orders all of its mnemonic elements such as rhyme, alliteration, assonance, meter, and refrain, to point us, as readers, backwards in the text to previous narrative events in order to make connections between different textual moments.

[28] Peter Brooks, 'Freud's Masterplot', in *Yale French Studies* 55/56, Literature and Psychoanalysis. The Question of Reading: Otherwise (1977), p. 286.

Brooks also notes that Freud establishes a connection between the compulsion to repeat and the death drive.[29] Brooks refers to Freud's declaration that 'an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things', [30] and to his description of the death drive as being an expression of the conservative tendency of human beings to strive towards the reduction of tensions to the zero-point. Brooks observes that the death drive is at the heart of Freud's description of organic life, and that it is also suggestive of what a reader engages with when he responds to the drive of the narrative towards its conclusion. Brooks argues that *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* functions as a text that has much to tell us about textuality itself, and also about how psychoanalytic textual analysis can be employed in relation to literature. For Brooks, psychoanalytic literary criticism should form itself around 'the superimposition of the model of the functioning of the mental apparatus on the functioning of the text' rather than a study of the author's, a character's, or the reader's unconscious.[31]

While both Nowell-Smith and Brooks claim that psychoanalysis can have a role as a cultural discourse in how a text is structured, in his essay 'Images of the Mind', Irving Schneider is concerned with how psychoanalysis and psychiatry have been represented *in* cinema as a narrative discourse. Schneider argues that while psychiatrist figures have appeared in films at least since the early days of the First World War, it was not until the arrival of European refugee analysts in America during the 1930s and 1940s that popular interest was stimulated in the themes and methods

[29] The *Standard Edition* of Freud's complete works translates the German word '*Trieb*' as 'instinct', however Freud himself on several occasions uses the German '*Instinkt*' to describe the sense of instinct that exists in animals. Throughout this thesis, I employ the terms 'drive' or 'instinctual drive' rather than 'instinct'.
[30] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in *The Standard Edition vol. XV111*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955; repr. 1981), p. 36.
[31] Brooks, pp. 299-300.

of psychiatry and psychoanalysis.[32] This interest was fuelled during the Second World War, according to Schneider, by the public recognition of the high rejection rate of draftees because of mental illness, and because of the growing awareness of the high number of casualties resulting from the war neuroses.[33] From 1944 onwards, Hollywood films, which Schneider considers were mainly Freudian in concept, began to emerge, and these would be followed after the war by a flood of psychological films, whose increasing sombreness of theme, and greater realism of depiction, would differentiate them from their predecessors.[34]

Schneider argues that while many of these films deal effectively with psychologically-related social issues, others find common ground in their depiction of psychotherapists as charlatans or villains. He notes that the portrayal of the psychiatrist as villain has a history that dates at least back to *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920) and *Testament of Dr Mabuse* (Fritz Lang, 1933), and he suggests that in both these films 'the psychiatrist symbolized the unbridled power of the state.'[35] Schneider proposes that American *film noir* of the 1940s and 1950s depicted the prevailing mood of pessimism, cynicism, and despair through their preoccupation with 'the world of dark, slick city streets, crime, corruption, psychopathy, and psychosis.'[36] Whilst crime was the primary subject of these films, they also frequently portrayed both their main protagonists and their psychiatrist figures as corrupt and psychopathic. Schneider proposes *Nightmare Alley* (Edmund Goulding, 1947) as the outstanding

[32] As Andrea Sabbadini has usefully pointed out, many American films make little distinction between psychoanalysis and psychiatry, possibly because until recently all American psychoanalysts were also psychiatrists. See *Moving Images: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Film* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 3.
[33] Schneider cites the French film *Dr Goudron's System*, directed by Maurice Tourneur and released in 1913, as being the first cinematic representation of psychiatry, p. 614.
[34] Irving Schneider, 'Images of the Mind: Psychiatry in the Commercial Film', in *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 134.6 (1977), p. 615.
[35] Schneider, p. 616.
[36] Ibid.

psychological film of this genre, and he draws our attention to the frightening power that is ascribed by the film to the figure of the therapist.

Whilst Schneider takes a general view of Hollywood's 'psychological' films, in *The Dark Mirror* Marlisa Santos looks specifically at the centrality of psychiatry as a narrative discourse within *film noir*. She argues that this engagement is a direct by-product of the popularity of psychoanalysis in America in the 1940s, and that this is both displayed by, and internalized within, the narratives of these films. Santos claims that the figure of the psychiatrist appears in *film noir* nearly as often as other *noir* characters, such as the femme fatale or the private eye, and that the psychiatrist figure usually serves, not only as a narrative signpost or a flashback catalyst, but also as an articulation of contemporary preoccupations with repression, paranoia, and psychopathology. In *film noir*, argues Santos, these characters are more than simply doctors, they 'also embody, to varying degrees, equal measures of priest, fortuneteller/oracle, and private detective, as they strive to make sense of a wayward patient's mind, using tools that are alternatively inspired by faith, mystery, and science.'[37] Santos also describes it as no accident that the characters of *film noir*, who often display psychopathological symptoms, are also returning and traumatized war veterans. For Santos, the psychological issues that are displayed by these characters embody a distinct shift from filmic depictions of the psychical traumas that derived from the First World War, in that they are inspired by contemporary concerns with, for example, Nazism or atomic warfare, as well as inspiring behaviour that often borders on the criminal.[38]

Instead of looking at how psychiatry is configured within one particular genre, in *Psychiatry and the Cinema* Glen Gabbard and Krin Gabbard provide a survey of

[37] Marlisa Santos, *The Dark Mirror* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, and Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2011), p. 2.
[38] Santos, p. 64.

more than four hundred and fifty American films that engage with psychiatric practices. They argue that many of these films employ the figure of the psychiatrist, and the process of psychiatry, in specific ways as narrative discourses intended to fulfil particular purposes. Psychiatry, according to Gabbard and Gabbard, is appropriated by film narrative in the first instance to serve the mechanical expository needs of the plot. This operates as what Henry James has termed a *ficelle*: a faceless character who may not even speak, but whose presence allows another character to engage in intense self-scrutiny. The use of the analytic setting in cinema thus provides ample opportunity for characters to verbally communicate important narrative information, and the hypnotic or narcoleptic state of the analysand opens up plentiful opportunity for the use of narrative tools such as flashbacks.[39] It is proposed that psychiatrist figures also function within narratives in a variety of other ways:

> They can also supply the legitimization of sexual themes, the rationalist contrast to supernatural 'truths', the secular salvation of troubled souls, the romantic interest for misunderstood individuals, the convincing explanation for mysterious behaviour, the common sense solution for domestic crises, and the repressive opposition to free-spirited heroes.[40]

The authors argue that, because psychoanalysis is itself both unsettling – in that it suggests that we are not fully conscious of the motivations that direct our lives – and comforting – in that it offers a beneficent means to self-help, this leaves the portrayal of psychoanalysis open to opposite usages. They also point towards how psychoanalysis can operate within cinema as a means by which to convey and bind audiences to dominant cultural ideologies. Gabbard and Gabbard follow Althusser in defining ideology as a system of representation that operates through the use of images, myths, ideas, or concepts, and they cite *Lady in the Dark* as one example of how cinema can be found to harness the psychiatrist figure as a means of distribution

[39] Glen O. Gabbard and Krin Gabbard, *Psychiatry and the Cinema* (Washington, DC and London: American Psychiatric Press, 1999), p. 7.
[40] Gabbard and Gabbard, p. 309.

for a particular ideological message, specifically the justification of the exclusion from the workplace of women at the end of the Second World War.[41]

1.6 Literature review: Psychoanalysis as an ideological discourse

In a series of essays written after fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe for America on the eve of the Second World War, Siegfried Kracauer evokes the immediate post-war atmosphere of what he terms 'ideological fatigue' by assessing aspects of post-war American cinema. His work can, therefore, be thought of as predicting the later turn within film studies towards an interest in the cultural and ideological aspects of psychoanalytic engagement. In two essays published in 1948, he describes the cinema of this period as appropriating new concepts such as psychiatry, liberalism, and individualism, while at the same time expressing a certain sense of hesitance and apathy towards these new concepts. Kracauer argues that Hollywood's 'psychological' films often endow their analysts and the analytic processes with almost super-human powers: 'the very speed of their therapies adds to their stature as masterminds, [and] once restored to normal, the patients usually return to the tasks of life and solve them with the greatest of ease.'[42] The shift of emphasis that occurs at this time in American films from the outer world of wartime narratives to ones concerned with these explorations of the inner world of neurotic conditions, suggests to Kracauer a shift within society as a whole:

> The vogue for psychiatry in my opinion owes its existence to two attitudes forced upon us by the present pressures of American civilization. One attitude amounts to an evasion. The other results from an attempt to compensate for the lack of what I would call emotional behaviour patterns.[43]

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[41] Ibid., p. 13.
[42] Siegfried Kracauer, 'Psychiatry for Everything and Everybody', in *Siegfried Kracauer's American Writings* ed. by Johannes von Moltke and Kristy Rawson (Berkeley, LA and London: University of California Press, 2012), p. 63.
[43] Kracauer, 'Psychiatry for Everything and Everybody', p. 64.

Kracauer sees this 'evasion' as arising from the need of society to provide an antidote to the prevailing atmosphere of menace that had been motivated by the nightmare of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath. The lack of emotional patterns of behaviour arises, according to Kracauer, from within American society itself, and he defines it as the consequence of an historical inheritance that is conditioned 'to cultivate utilitarian ends more intensely than emotional aspirations', a privileging of practicality over emotion, therefore, which blocks the ability of America culture to directly articulate its own trauma.[44]

Kracauer also differentiates between what he sees as the 'visionary' dimension of a wartime Hollywood cinema that is confident in its expectations of a peaceful and prosperous future, and post-war films that confront their audiences with the stark realities of contemporary life. Kracauer examines films such as *The Best Years of Our Lives* (William Wyler, 1946) and *Crossfire* (Edward Dmytryk, 1947), and he concludes that, whilst these films can be thought of as 'progressive' in the way that they promote liberal values, 'upon closer inspection one cannot help noticing that they reveal the profound weakness of the very cause for which they try to enlist sympathy.'[45] Kracauer argues that films of this period, far from being able to be defined in the same terms as wartime films that sought to promote a spirit of community, suggest instead a waning of spiritual substance, and an unfamiliar sense of passivity:

> We are not disillusioned; we are insensitive to anything ideological, even to the word itself. The apathy of this country today might be called ideological fatigue, a fatigue which in part accounts for the present vogue of psychiatry, with its emphasis on psychological relations rather than social meanings.[46]

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[44] Ibid., pp. 69-70.
[45] Siegfried Kracauer, 'Those Movies with a Message', in *Siegfried Kracauer's American Writings* ed. by Johannes von Moltke and Kristy Rawson (Berkeley, LA and London: University of California Press, 2012), 74.
[46] Kracauer, 'Those Movies with a Message, p. 79.

Kracauer contrasts American cinema with 'engaged' quality of Italian neo-realism in films such as *Paisan* (Roberto Rossellini, 1946), and he concludes that Hollywood's retreat into apathy is an act of self-defence against the threats of a post-war world in which the individual has been rendered powerless and confused.

In her essay 'Clinical Eyes: The Medical Discourse', Mary Ann Doane assesses what she defines as the patriarchal configurations of the woman's film of the 1940s. Doane proposes that there can often be found an association between femininity and the psychopathological, and that the psychopathology that can most often be observed in these films is hysteria.[47] Doane argues that, in hysteria, the borderline between physical and mental illness is often of little consequence, and she employs the work of Foucault to argue that the illnesses associated with women in films that activate a 'medical discourse' are never localized, but instead they seem to be suggested as being effects of the woman's 'character', or her 'essence'. Whereas mainstream classical cinema represents the female body as spectacle, in films of the medical discourse, according to Doane, the female body 'is not spectacular but symptomatic, and the visible becomes fully a signifier, pointing to an invisible signified.'[48] These films, for Doane, therefore allocate to the woman both a surface and a depth that is often absent within classical cinema, in that they activate a 'medical gaze' that operates through the figure of the psychoanalyst, who has the function of revealing the woman's hidden essence. Doane argues that the symptom that most often presents itself in the woman's film is the marked lack of narcissism on the part of the sick woman, in that her illness is most often signified by the fact that she no longer cares about her appearance. For example, in *Now, Voyager*, the character of Charlotte

[47] Mary Ann Doane, 'Clinical Eyes: The Medical Discourse', in *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 38-69.
[48] Doane, p. 39.

Vale displays her neurosis in the first part of the film through her undesirable appearance, and her 'cure' consists of the beautification of her body and face. The narratives of these films, according to Doane, trace a totalizing trajectory in relation to the central female figure 'from the medical gaze to the erotic gaze', and by attributing their psychopathology to an 'essence' they at the same time can be found to display a particularly extreme form of essentialism. [49]

Doane also examines the system of signification that motivates the spectator's engagement with the figure of the psychoanalyst in the woman's film. She argues that the popularisation of Freudian psychoanalysis that occurred in America during the 1930s and 1940s produced a social representation of psychoanalysis that was markedly different from psychoanalysis itself, and that an element of this representation manifests itself in cinema in its magnification of the sexual or erotic aspects of psychoanalysis. Doane declares that the woman's film utilises this social representation in its use of the psychoanalyst 'to validate socially constructed modes of sexual difference which are already in place – although potentially threatened by wartime reorganization.'[50] To illustrate the point she explores films such as *Now, Voyager*, *Lady in the Dark*, and *The Snake Pit* (Anatole Litvak, 1948), in which women's psychopathological behaviour, usually defined by their sexual repression, is cured by the intervention of a psychoanalyst, who becomes the instrument through which these films explicitly work to reinforce a status quo of sexual difference.[51] Doane also suggests that the films of the medical discourse, with the exception of a very few examples such as *Now, Voyager*, do not encourage their female audience to identify solely with the psychopathological female central figure. Instead, according to Doane, they encourage a primary identification with the medical gaze of the

[49] Ibid., p. 41.
[50] Ibid., p. 46.
[51] Ibid., pp. 45-46.

psychoanalyst, and only after this identification has been made can a secondary identification be made with the female character. Through this dual and asymmetric process of proscriptive identification, the woman's film can be found to have as its purpose the defining of the female spectator outside the psychopathic 'disease' of her own femininity.[52]

In *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, Kaja Silverman draws both on Althusser's model of ideological belief and Foucault's concept of discourse to conceptualise an illusory integration of the individual and cultural ideas that operates within society's hierarchical system of control. She claims that it is through ideological belief that a subject lays claim to a normative identity, and she terms this belief the 'dominant fiction'. Silverman argues that one of the central tenets of the dominant fiction is the belief in the predominant position of classical masculinity, and she refers to Kracauer as suggesting that this belief is so ingrained that 'at those historical moments when the prototypical male subject is unable to recognise "himself" within its conjuration of masculine sufficiency, our society suffers from a profound sense of "ideological fatigue"'.[53] In accounting for the existence of this level of collective belief Silverman refers first to Althusser, who in *Lenin and Philosophy* had put forward the idea that ideology may have less to do with consciously held ideas, and more to do with the adoption of rituals, and then to Freud, who makes it clear that psychical reality can correspond not only to 'facts', but also to 'mere representations.'[54] Silverman asserts that society's dominant fiction exerts its influence in culture through our exposure to these representations, which might consist of, for example, stories, popular culture, or other forms of mass communication. It is by means of the dominant fiction, according

[52] Ibid., pp. 68-69.
[53] Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 16.
[54] Silverman, p. 18.

to Silverman, that the normative social structures of the family, the law, religion, and inheritance, are constructed, organised and mediated, and she proposes that these constructions provide the framework within which both male and female subjects find their respective places within society.

Silverman suggests that one of the important ways in which these demarcations of sexual difference are reinforced is in the constructions of classical cinema:

> Its images, sounds, and narrative structures are drawn from the ideological reserve of the dominant fiction, and its suturing mechanisms function both to insert the viewing subject into that fiction, and to inspire confidence in its capacity to resolve conflict and neutralize opposition.[55]

This confidence in the dominant fiction, according to Silverman, is pivotal to our belief in the normative demarcations of sexual difference, but there are occasions when, as a result of enormous collective trauma, that the belief in the dominant fiction is withdrawn. She uses as examples a number of films made in Hollywood between 1944 and 1947 that dramatize the temporary collapse of the mechanisms through which these demarcations are sustained. Films such as *Spellbound*, *It's a Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, 1946), and *The Best Years of Our Lives* (William Wyler, 1946) can be categorised, according to Silverman, by a loss of faith in the familiar that derives from the crisis of masculinity caused by the trauma of the Second World War, and the period of recovery. Rather than representing the historical events that motivate this crisis, the existence of those events can be read within these films only through their after-effects – in alcoholism, missing limbs, recurrent nightmares, home-breaking women, and the claustrophobia of small-town life.[56]

In similar terms to Doane and Silverman, Janet Walker argues in her essay 'Couching Resistance' that the post-Second World War period defines the historical

[55] Kaja Silverman, 'Historical Trauma and Male Subjectivity', in *Psychoanalysis and Cinema* ed. by E. Ann Kaplan (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), p. 113.
[56] Silverman, 'Historical Trauma and Male Subjectivity', p. 118.

crux in America between women and psychiatry. According to Walker, this occurred because 'American psychoanalytic and psychiatric practices served as agencies of women's adjustment to stereotypically conceived roles proscribed by society.'[57] Walker explains that 'adjustment' is defined within psychiatry as the functional alteration by which one can adapt better to the immediate environment, and within feminism as 'the imposition of socially legislated behaviour on a reluctant person by an authority figure so that feminine adjustment becomes a process of gender normalization.'[58] The impulse towards the adjustment of women that existed at this time within psychoanalysis, according to Walker, has its roots in the conclusion that both war neurosis and the crisis of the post-war family were to an extent the result of the abrogation by women of their marital and familial responsibilities. Walker examines two Hollywood films, *The Three Faces of Eve* (Nunnally Johnson, 1957) and *Tender is the Night* (Henry King, 1962), which demonstrate how this impulse towards adjustment is recirculated, and she argues that, in these films as well as in many others, it is the narrativized analyst/analysand relationship that reiterates the configuration of power by returning the female patient to mental and marital health. However, concludes Walker, the films can also be found to suggest a critique of this relationship's ideological ramifications. She cities *The Three Faces of Eve* as an example of how this critique may be found in the lessening enunciative power attributed to the analyst as the narrative unfolds.[59]

Chapter one has laid out the first part of the theoretic framework of this thesis, having given an account of both Althusser's hierarchical model of ideology and Foucault's discursive approach to the historical analysis of knowledge and power. I

[57] Janet Walker, 'Couching Resistance: Women, Film, and Postwar Psychoanalytic Psychiatry', in *Psychoanalysis and Cinema* ed. by E. Ann Kaplan (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), p. 143.
[58] Walker, pp. 144-145.
[59] Ibid., p. 152.

have also outlined my critical/psychoanalytic approach and given an account of how scholars have engaged with psychoanalysis operating in culture as a narrative, a cultural, and an ideological discourse. In Chapter two, I lay out the second half of the theoretical framework by assessing the three dominant historical discursive formations that I argue are most influential on British cinema at this time. I do this by giving a short account of the individual discourses that make up each of the three discursive formations.

Chapter Two

Three British psychoanalytic discursive formations of the mid-twentieth century: trauma and anxiety, sexual difference and gender roles, and the theory of object relations

2.1 Introduction

This chapter lays out the second part of the theoretical framework for this thesis by assessing three historical discursive formations that are influential on British cinema in the aftermath of the Second World War. In the first section, I scrutinize the discourses surrounding trauma and anxiety. I begin with the phenomenon of 'railway-spine', then proceed to psychoanalytic ideas of hysteria, the Oedipus complex, and 'shell-shock', and end with Ferenczi's trauma theory, and Ferenczi's and Anna Freud's concept of the identification with the aggressor. These various concepts have been chosen to demonstrate how psychoanalytic ideas of trauma and anxiety developed between the middle of the 19th century and the middle of the 20th century. In the second section, I explore psychoanalytic ideas surrounding sexual difference and gender roles, beginning with Freud's theory of female sexuality, and the connection that he proposes between femininity and passivity. Then, I examine Klein's departure from Freud in her account of the child's fear of maternal retaliation, and her description of female sexuality as existing, not in terms of passivity, but activity. Also, in this section, I assess the psychoanalytic contribution of Karen Horney, who suggests male neurosis as sometimes resulting from 'womb envy', and who configures female neurosis in terms of the problem of male dependency. Finally, in the third section, I describe the rise of theories of internal object relationships that transformed psychoanalysis in Britain in the 1930s, and that replaced Freud's

biological model of the mind with one based on the individual's subjective experience of reality. Across the three sections of this chapter, I privilege those ideas that gained traction with the psychoanalytic community at this time, and, more importantly, with the general British public by means of their dissemination in English translations of psychoanalytic literature, general psychological publications, and a wide range of popular texts.[1]

2.2 The first discursive formation: trauma and anxiety[2]

The word 'trauma', which derives from the Greek word for wound, has a long history of usage in both medical and general contexts. In medicine, the term is used to describe an injury where the skin is broken as the result of some external violence, and also the effects of such an injury on the organism as a whole.[3] In general usage, the word can signify anything from a life-threatening event to something that merely causes the individual to experience disturbance or distress. Freud appropriates the term within psychoanalytic theory to describe 'an experience which within a short period of time presents the mind with an increase of stimulus too powerful to be dealt with or worked off in the normal way.'[4] British traumatic discourse in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War draws on medical and general ideas of trauma, as well as on the psychoanalytic trauma theories of Freud and his followers that had first

[1] For an in-depth assessment of how psychoanalytic ideas came to popularized in Britain in the inter-war period primarily by means of popular texts, see Graham Richards, 'Britain on the Couch: The Popularization of Psychoanalysis in Britain 1918-1940', in *Science in Context* 13:2 (2000), pp. 189-199.
[2] Some parts of this chapter, particularly those on traumatic neurosis and the work of Ferenczi, are based on my unpublished MSc dissertation 'History, Remembrance, and Reconstruction in Psychoanalysis: The place of history in the trauma theories of Freud and Ferenczi, and its relevance to current psychoanalytic approaches to collective and transgenerational traumatic encryption'. This was submitted to University College London in August 2015.
[3] Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Laplanche, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac Books, 1973; repr. 2006), pp. 465-469.
[4] Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* in *The Standard Edition vol. XVI*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1963), p. 275.

entered public consciousness via English translations of their works that had been in circulation in Britain since 1909.[5]

British trauma discourses are affected, in turn, by other contemporary discourses that surround sexual difference and gender roles, and those relevant to the psychoanalytic theory of object relations. The first of these discourses develops gradually in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century in the atmosphere of women's enfranchisement, the increasing acknowledgement of the importance of women's role in society, the activity of female sexuality, and the male fear and envy of women's capacity for motherhood and attachment. The second discourse develops from Freud's subjective view of the mind as the focus of experience and Klein's concepts of introjection and projection in defining the individual as existing in the uncertain dual world of internal and external relationships. All three of these discourses combine in the atmosphere of trauma, danger, and uncertainty that characterised Britain at the time of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath.

Railway-spine

As railway historian Ralph Harrington has argued, the railway accident occupied a unique position in the public consciousness of mid-Victorian Britain:

> Few events in ordinary civilian life could equal the railway accident for violence, terror, and destruction, and it is unsurprising that this event, the product of industrialized modernity, should be seen as capable of bringing about new, insidious, highly disruptive forms of injury and disorder in the human body.[6]

While railway travel in the Victorian era was generally safe, the number of highly publicised railway accidents that occurred between 1840 and 1860, and the number of

[5] Graham Richards, 'Britain on the Couch', p. 186.
[6] Ralph Harrington, 'On the Tracks of Trauma: Railway Spine Reconsidered', in *The Journal of the Society for the Social History of Medicine* 16:2 (2003), p. 209.

connected deaths and injuries, gave rise to a deep-rooted public anxiety about the possibility of injury, and a general mistrust of the companies that operated the railways. From 1864 onwards, these companies became liable in law for the safety and health of their passengers, and if the victim of an accident could show that her experience had motivated significant 'pathologically demonstrable damage', understood at this time to mean physical injury, the railway company could be legally bound to pay compensation.[7] However, many victims of railway disasters, who had suffered either little or no somatic abrasion, later began to display somatic symptoms such as hysterical fits, spasms, vomiting, and vasomotor instability, and in addition they often came to be troubled by distressing dreams.[8] The railway companies, and the insurance companies who underwrote the risk to health that rail travel represented, often sought to escape legal liability in these cases by claiming that these victims were feigning their illnesses, and even if they were not, that these illnesses were unconnected to the accident. From the 1860s onwards, public concern about traumatized accident victims who had no little or no physical injury, and who had therefore no recourse to the law, increasingly motivated the attention of the medical profession. Some of these medical researchers proposed that these symptoms could be directly attributable to the accident, and they concluded that they arose from a theoretical concussion of the spinal cord that they termed 'railway spine'.

The first full-length medical text on railway-spine, *On Railway and Other Injuries of the Nervous System*, was published in Britain in 1866. Written by John Erichsen of University College Hospital, it gained a wide general circulation, and it exerted immense influence on mid- and late- 19th century medical and medico-legal

[7] Jill Matus, 'Trauma, Memory, and Railway Disaster: The Dickensian Connection', in *Victorian Studies* 43:3 (2001), p. 417.
[8] Matus, p. 418.

discourses.[9] Erichsen argued that the unique degree of violence that was occasioned by railway accidents could give rise to intensive 'shocks' to the system, and he distinguished the railway accident from other accidents by emphasizing the psychological and somatic effects that involvement in such an accident could motivate. In assessing Erichsen's work, Peter Harrington argues that he was the first to draw a direct connection between the psychological experiences of railway accident victims and their somatic disorders, and that he showed 'that in the case of railway spine victims, the mind is acting, through some little-understood mechanism, on the physical condition of the body.'[10] The origins of later psychological models of traumatic wounding can be traced to Erichsen's conception of railway spine as a psychosomatic disorder, and his conclusions would have direct relevance to how the medical profession would approach the late-19th century problem of hysteria.

Hysteria and the theory of seduction

The term 'hysteria' as a descriptive category has been employed in a number of ways in the history of medicine for over two thousand years. It has been used to describe an illness that manifests itself in strange groupings of symptoms such as persistent vomiting, paralysis of the limbs, phobias, and the loss of the ability to speak. Deriving from the Greek word for womb, hysteria has had a long association with the feminine, and although theories that attributed these symptoms to the malfunctioning of the uterus had been long obsolete by the end of the 19th century, it continued at this time to be seen as mostly a woman's disorder. Julia Borossa argues that the widespread popular interest in hysteria in this period unveiled 'the location of hysteria within the

[9] Harrington, 'On the Tracks of Trauma', p. 209.
[10] Ralph Harrington, 'The Railway Accident: Trains, Trauma, and Technological Crises in Nineteenth-Century Britain', in *Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870-1930* ed. by Mark S. Micale and Paul Lerner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 47.

realm of sexual politics. Within a predominantly patriarchal world-view, the hysteric came to embody femininity itself, as problem and enigma.'[11] According to Borossa, the figure of the hysterical woman operated within the extreme patriarchal system of the late Victorian period, both as a victim of the prevailing oppressive social conditions, and as one who rebels against that system, and whose symptoms express in bodily form her protest towards the system's proscriptive limitations.[12] All five of the case histories outlined in Josef Breuer's and Sigmund Freud's seminal work *Studies on Hysteria*, first published in German in 1895, and in English in four editions between 1909 and 1922, are of women patients who are found to suffer from a variety of spectacular physical disorders. What sets their work apart is their declaration that these women's symptoms can be attributed to sexual traumas that they have experienced around the time of puberty, which they have then unconsciously repressed. In doing this, they draw a parallel between the sexual trauma that they believe to be at the root of hysteria, and the accidents that motivate the condition of railway spine:

> During the days following a railway accident, for instance, the subject will live through his frightful experiences again both in sleeping and waking, and always with the renewed affect of fright, till at last, after this period of 'psychical working out' or of 'incubation', conversion into a somatic phenomenon takes place.[13]

For Breuer and Freud therefore, in cases of railway-spine and hysteria, the victim is compelled to repeat the traumatic event over and over again, until the traumatic affect is converted into the physical symptom.

In his paper 'The Aetiology of Hysteria', published in German in 1896, and translated into English in 1924, Freud distinguishes between two forms of hysteria:

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[11] Julia Borossa, *Hysteria* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2001), p. 5.
[12] Borossa, pp. 6-7.
[13] Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria* in *The Standard Edition vol. II*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955; repr. 1957), p. 213.

'conversion hysteria' in which the symptoms are physical complaints, and 'anxiety hysteria' in which the symptom takes the form of a phobia, and he concludes that, whichever symptom is taken as the point of departure, '*in the end we infallibly come to the field of sexual experience*. So here for the first time we seem to have discovered an aetiological precondition for hysterical symptoms.' (Freud's italics)[14] Freud supports this claim by stating that, in the eighteen cases of hysteria that he has had the opportunity to examine, he has been able to discover this connection in every single instance, and that in most cases the sexual experiences has taken place around the time of puberty. These may have been the consequence of assaults by strangers, but most usually they are the result of assaults by an adult charged with caring for them, most often the father.[15]

Freud presented 'The Aetiology of Hysteria' to the Vienna Society for Psychiatry and Neurology in April 1896, but the audience afforded it an icy reception. Writing nearly twenty years later Freud recounted that, by concluding that the symptoms of hysteria were caused most often by patriarchal sexual assault, he had now become one of those that had 'disturbed the sleep of the world'.[16] And yet, during the course of the following year, Freud would gradually come to conclude that this 'theory of seduction' was overly simplistic. In a letter to his friend Wilhelm Fleiss, written in the of autumn of 1897, he reveals 'the great secret that has been slowly dawning on me in the last few months. I no longer believe in my *neurotica* [theory of the neuroses].' (Freud's italics)[17] Freud continues that he has been forced to revise his theory partly because, in order for it to be true, 'in all cases the *father*, not excluding

[14] Sigmund Freud, 'The Aetiology of Hysteria', in *The Standard Edition vol. III*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1962; repr. 1999), p. 199.
[15] Freud, 'The Aetiology of Hysteria', pp. 199-200.
[16] Sigmund Freud, 'On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement', in *The Standard Edition vol. XIV*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957; repr. 1999), p. 21.
[17] Jeffrey Masson, ed., *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904* (London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 264.

my own, had to be accused of being perverse […] surely such widespread perversions against children are not very probable.' (Freud's italics)[18]

The death of Freud's father in 1896, and the three-year self-analysis that he embarked upon the following year, were pivotal events in his fundamental re-thinking of his theories of the traumatic causes of hysteria and the neuroses.[19] During this period, Freud came to realise both the fundamental role that sexuality had played in his own childhood, which he considered free from historical events of sexual abuse, and the importance of dreams as organised mental activities distinct from the mental processes of everyday life. In a letter to Fleiss of October 1897, Freud recounts that an idea of 'general value' has dawned on him:

> I have found [the phenomenon of] being in love with my mother and jealous of my father, and I now consider it is a universal event in early childhood […]. If this is so, we can understand the gripping power of *Oedipus Rex*, in spite of all the objections that reason raises against the presupposition of fate.[20] (Freud's italics)

The significance of early childhood traumas in Freud's work now gives place to that of unconscious phantasy and to fixations that may occur at the various stages of libidinal development, particularly those that occur at the Oedipal stage.

The Oedipus complex

In its simple form, Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex is developed on the model of the male child, aged around five or six years. His first love-object is his mother, whom he desires to possess to the exclusion of all others, and this love brings him into conflict with his father. The boy fears that the father will castrate him because of the incestuous wishes that he feels for his mother, and the jealous hatred that he feels for his father. Under the impact of the anxiety aroused by this threat, the boy gives up

[18] Ibid.
[19] Jean-Michel Quinodoz, *Reading Freud* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 23.
[20] Masson, p. 272.

the idea of fulfilling his incestuous wishes towards his mother, and he is able to enter the period of sexual latency, which is followed, in turn, by puberty.[21] English translations of Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex were available to the British public from 1913 onwards, and these would be followed after the end of the First World War by a raft of psychoanalytically-inspired popular works.[22] In his history of the popularization of psychoanalysis in Britain after the First World War, Graham Richards describes the fascination that the Oedipus complex had engendered in the public soon after English translations of his theory became available. Such was the popular obsession with these ideas that they gave rise, according to Graham Richards, to the widespread use of what he terms 'Freudish':

> Mastery of psychoanalytic language opened up novel possibilities for diagnosing and analysing all kinds of personal and social issues. People were projecting their own feelings onto others, regressing to infantile stages, defending their egos, symbolically assaulting their father-figures, suffering from fixations and complexes or blockages to their libido, in the grip of unconscious wishes. A whole new way of navigating one's course through everyday life, of making sense of the behaviour both of oneself and others, was opened up.[23]

The public obsession with psychoanalytic ideas can be defined as being firmly embedded by now within popular culture, and this can be attributed, in part, to a wider interest in psychoanalysis that had arisen in the early years of the First World War, one that had been motivated by press reports of what would become popularly known as 'shell-shock'.

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[21] For a more wide-ranging account of the Oedipus complex and of the negative Oedipus complex, see Quinodoz, pp. 63-64.
[22] Freud's theory was outlined in his *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which first appeared in English translation in 1913, and followed by a second edition in 1915. For a wide-ranging account of popular psychoanalytic texts of this period see Richards, pp. 189-199, and also Dean Rapp, 'The Reception of Freud by the British Press', in *Journal of the History of the Behavioural Sciences* 24 (1988), pp. 191-201.
[23] Graham Richards, p. 201.

Shell-shock, the compulsion to repeat, the death drive, and anxiety

Within months of the outbreak of the First World War a significant number of British servicemen who had suffered no physical injury, began to display symptoms such as paralysis of the limbs, the inability to speak, depression, and recurring nightmares. These often grew so acute that they were incapable of active service. By 1915, the huge numbers of casualties returning from the front with psychical wounds motivated in the British public a need to learn more about their symptoms and causes, and the British press presented itself as the medium to meet this demand:

> By early 1915, the English public was reading a startling variety of newspaper stories about shell-shock. A series of articles appeared in *The Times*, for example, referring to hysterical blindness (8 April), 'The Wounded Man' (24 April), and deafness and paralysis resulting from 'Wounds of consciousness' (25 May) among soldiers in the trenches. By mid-1916, the shell-shocked soldier had become a virtual cliché in the English press.[24]

According to historian Anthony Richards, because of the similarity between the symptoms of shell-shock and the symptoms of 'feminine' hysteria, many elements of First World War society would dismiss these victims as in some way unmanly: 'Psychologically traumatised soldiers were tarnished with a degree of effeminacy or homosexuality, and the term "shell shock" therefore went some way towards avoiding the uncomfortable parallels between feminine hysteria and masculine war neurosis.'[25] Differing medical attitudes towards shell-shock gave rise to a range of methods of treatment for the condition. The most widely used was a combination of bed-rest and regimental drill, intended to take the soldier out of the front line for a period of recovery. In extreme cases, however, evacuation back to Britain was deemed to be

[24] Ted Bogacz, 'War Neurosis and Cultural Change in England, 1914-1922: The Work of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into Shell-Shock', in *The Journal of Contemporary History* 24:2 (1989), p. 189.
[25] Anthony Richards, 'The British response to Shell-Shock: An Historical Essay', in *Report of the War Office Enquiry into "Shell-Shock"* (London: Imperial War Museum: 2004), p. ii.

necessary, and treatment under these conditions became sometimes more specialised. Rank-and-file soldiers were often subjected to methods that had been devised with the purpose of a quick cure, and these sometimes took the form of the application of electric shocks, a treatment deemed necessary for differentiating between malingerers and genuine patients.[26] Popular publications such as *Shell-Shock and Its Lessons* questioned the adequacy of these treatments, and the institutional facilities that the army had at its disposal.[27]

The Great War forced Freud to redefine his psychoanalytic system of trauma by giving greater emphasis to aggressiveness, anxiety, and death. Other psychoanalysts such as Ferenczi, Karl Abraham, Ernst Simmel, and Ernest Jones had already published papers that attributed the traumatic symptoms of wartime to a 'predisposition' to neurosis caused by libidinal fixations that had been experienced in earlier life.[28] Freud developed his own ideas on war trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, published in German in 1920 and in English in 1922,[29] stating the existence of a protective shield or 'stimulus barrier' that is designed to protect the psyche from large quantities of excitation from the external world that threaten to overcome psychical organisation. In cases of war trauma, attempts to master this excessive excitation fail and the stimulus barrier is overwhelmed. Freud now proposes that a combined series of events form the aetiology of war trauma. He states that an early libidinal fixation leads to a predisposition in the subject. This internal event, combined with a later external event, then lead to the breakdown of the psychical organisation. Freud observes that the repetitive quality of the symptoms of traumatic neuroses, in particular recurring

[26] Anthony Richards, p. ii.
[27] See, particularly, 'Treatment' in Sir Grafton Elliot Smith and Tom Hatherley Pear, *Shell-Shock and Its Lessons* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1917; repr. Memphis, TN: General Books, 2010), pp. 18-31.
[28] See Sándor Ferenczi, Ernst Simmel and others, *Psycho-Analysis and the War Neuroses* (London, Vienna and New York: The International Psycho-Analytic Press, 1921).
[29] A second English language edition was published by the Hogarth Press in London in 1942.

nightmares that recall the traumatic event, are similar to the games that children play that reproduce situations that have troubled them, thereby enabling them to gain mastery over the situation.[30] But Freud also argues that these repetitive tendencies, along with others that may be found in the analytic setting, can be self-destructively motivated, and can therefore take on what he terms a 'daemonic' quality. The aim of this tendency, the drive towards death, is the return to the '*old* state of things, an initial state from which the living entity has at one time or another departed and to which it is striving to return by the circuitous paths along which its development leads.' (Freud's italics)[31] Finally, in his work *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, published in German in 1926 and in English in 1927 and again in various editions in the 1930s, Freud revises his theory of anxiety. Now the notion of trauma assumes renewed significance in normal life, aside from any reference to the notion of traumatic neurosis. In this work Freud differentiates between two forms of anxiety, the first he terms 'signal anxiety', which acts as an alerting mechanism that forewarns the subject of impending danger to the psychical equilibrium, and the second he terms 'automatic anxiety', which he defines as a spontaneous response by the subject to a traumatic situation or to a reproduction of a traumatic situation, such as a waking recollection or a recurring dream. Anxiety is, therefore, both a defensive mechanism intended to ensure that a potentially traumatic situation is not experienced, and a direct result of the subject's exposure to a traumatic event.[32]

Whereas Freud had no direct experience of treating war neurosis victims, and therefore had no opportunity to observe their symptoms at first hand, other

[30] For an account of repetitive play and the fort/dà game, see Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in *The Standard Edition vol. XVIII*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955; repr. 1981), pp. 14-16.
[31] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 38.
[32] See Freud's summary of his revision in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, in *The Standard Edition vol. XX*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1959; repr. 1986), pp. 164-168

psychoanalysts such as Ferenczi, Abraham, and Simmel certainly had. The work of Ferenczi provides a paradigm shift in the way that psychoanalysis would define trauma from the mid-twentieth century onwards, and from now on the balance between endogenous and exogenous factors would shift to the latter. This development can be defined as a common theme in the British School of psychoanalysis in the work of Anna Freud, who herself had experience of treating traumatized children during the Second World War at the Hampstead War Nurseries.

Sándor Ferenczi and Anna Freud: the identification with the aggressor and fragmentation

Ferenczi's seminal paper, 'Confusion of Tongues between Adults and the Child', lays out the framework for contemporary psychoanalytic trauma theory by shifting the emphasis of analytic investigation from libidinal fixation to the experience of real events.[33] Ferenczi had been a close friend and collaborator of Freud's since 1908, but his paper would be so controversial within the psychoanalytic community that it would be suppressed by Freud and his followers, and not published in English until 1949.[34] In his paper, which is principally concerned with the psychoanalytic investigation of cases of child abuse, Ferenczi states that he has obtained corroborative evidence that 'trauma, especially the sexual trauma, as the pathogenic factor cannot be valued highly enough', and that he has found that instances of real violence or rape occur much more often within the family setting than one had dared to suppose. Ferenczi states that the first impulse of the traumatized victim is one of 'rejection, hatred, disgust and energetic refusal', and if these anxieties are allowed to grow, and

[33] Sándor Ferenczi, 'Confusion of Tongues Between Adults and the Child', in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 30 (1949), pp. 225-230.
[34] For an account of the suppression of Ferenczi's essay, see Arnold Rachman, 'The Suppression and Censorship of Ferenczi's Confusion of Tongues Paper', in *Psychoanalytic Enquiry* 17 (1997), pp. 459-485.

to reach a certain level of extremity, they will lead to dissociation, and to the 'introjection' of certain elements of the aggressor's psyche.

This idea of the victim of attack adopting the process of identification as a defence mobilized again the aggressor can also be found to be a defining element of trauma in Anna Freud's widely-distributed *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense,* first published in German in 1936 and in English in 1937. Here, she argues that 'by impersonating the aggressor, assuming his attributes or imitating his aggression, the child transforms himself from the person threatened into the person who makes the threat.'[35] Judit Mészáros sees the identification with the aggressor as an example of a characteristic survival strategy that ensures the survival of the victim, but sometimes at the cost of perpetuating the traumatic situation, 'that is of allowing the possibility of repetition; taken *ad absurdam*, the aggression becomes acceptable.' (Mészáros' italics)[36] In addition, the split between reality and fantasy that this desperate defence entails, poses the risk for the victim of entering a state of pathological fragmentation.

In summing up the influence of Ferenczi's work on the real nature of trauma, Mészáros argues that the paradigm shift that the 'Confusion of Tongues' represents in trauma theory restores the validity of Freud's 'seduction model' that he had abandoned after his discovery of the Oedipus complex in 1897. For Ferenczi, according to Mészáros, 'trauma is a real event. It is not fantasy that takes the place of real events; it is not fantasy that causes trauma.'[37] In addition, the strongest pathogenic factor in traumatic attack is the identification with the aggressor, which leads to the introjection

[35] Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1966), p. 113.
[36] Judit Mészáros, 'Building Blocks Toward Contemporary Trauma Theory: Ferenczi's Paradigm Shift', in *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 70 (2010), p. 336.
[37] Mészáros, p. 335.

of the aggressor's guilt and anxiety, and to the potential fragmentation of the victim's psyche.[38]

This idea of traumatic neurosis as resulting more from the lived experience of real traumatic events than from libidinal fixation has, as will be demonstrated in chapters Three, Four, and Five of this thesis, very profound implication for how trauma is configured in British cinema in the immediate aftermath of the trauma of the Second World War.

2.3 The second discursive formation: sexual difference and gender roles

Penis envy and passive female sexuality: Freud's phallic monism

Between the late 1890s and the early 1920s Freud's concept of the Oedipus complex can be thought of as being founded on his belief that the girl's passage through the early years of sexual development is merely a psychical mirroring of the experience of the boy. Within this paradigm, the boy's jealous hatred towards his father, and his incestuous wishes towards his mother, are replicated in the girl's jealous hatred for the mother, and her incestuous wishes towards her father. Freud believed that the specificity of female development is hinged, not on her passage through a particular libidinal stage, but instead on a misconception. This misconception, according to Freud, is shared by pre-Oedipal girls *and* boys, and its nature is to attribute '*to everyone*, *including females*, *the possession of a penis*, such as the boy knows from his own body.' (Freud's italics)[39] While this false belief has little significance for the sexual development of the boy, it has profound consequences for

[38] Introjection would become a key element in object relations theory, and it will be discussed in detail in the third section of this chapter.
[39] Sigmund Freud, 'The Sexual Theories of Children', in *The Standard Edition vol. IX*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1959; repr. 1973), p. 215.

the girl when, at the age of about five, she begins to show interest in observing the penis of her brother or father. However, according to Freud, this interest:

> promptly falls under the sway of envy. They feel themselves unfairly treated. They make attempts to micturate in the posture that is made possible for boys by their possessing a big penis; and when a girl declares that 'she would rather be a boy', we know what deficiency her wish is intended to put right.[40]

This feeling of envy generates in the girl what Freud terms a 'castration complex'; an anxiety that is motivated, and then reinforced, by the knowledge of her lack of a penis. This, in turn, leads to feelings of what he terms 'penis envy', which takes the form even in the healthy female child of a feeling of inadequacy that can only be assuaged by the sublimation of her lack into the desire to bear a child. At this point, explains Juliet Mitchell:

> The boy and the girl who both thought all had a penis, who both were attached to the mother as the only important 'other', must part ways, never to coincide again except in neurosis or psychosis, except in perversions, and except in all those perpetual neurotic, psychotic and perverse moments that lie behind normality.[41]

Jean-Michel Quinodoz asserts that Freud's concept of the girl's early stages of psychosexual development is an example of what has come to be known as his period of 'phallic monism', in that Freud at this time effectively focuses both the girl's and the boy's development on the one fact of possessing or not possessing a penis, and that he, by extension, defines the procreational drive as being purely masculine in nature.[42]

Freud enlarges on this notion of the masculine nature of the libido in his paper 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis' (The 'Wolf Man'), published in German in 1918 and in English in 1925, in which he emphasizes the clear difference between the 'active' nature of masculine sexuality and the 'passive' nature of feminine

[40] Freud, 'The Sexual Theories of Children', p. 218.
[41] Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 95.
[42] Jean-Michel Quinodoz, *Reading Freud* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 180.

sexuality. As Freud observes: 'I can well imagine the difficulties that in the reader must find sharp distinction (unfamiliar but essential) which I have drawn between "active" and "masculine" and between "passive" and "feminine"'.[43] Around this time, Freud also makes a direct connection between what he defines as the passive nature of feminine sexuality and the 'perversion' of masochism. In employing the term 'feminine masochism' in his paper 'The Economic Problem of Masochism', published in German and in English in 1924, Freud is proposing, according to Laplanche and Pontalis, both that the existence of an innate masochism in women amounts to a determining part of the female subject's 'feminine essence', and that this condition is an immanent possibility also for men.[44] Freud argues of the male masochist, for example, that '…if one has an opportunity of studying cases in which the masochistic phantasies have been especially richly elaborated, one quickly discovers that they place the subject in a characteristically female situation.'[45] Freud concludes that the fundamental quality of the perversion of male masochism is one that can only derive its nature from the passivity of the female subject; masochism in its male form cannot exist, in other words, without referring to female passivity as the source of its 'problem'.

This idea of 'active' masculinity and 'passive' femininity would be called into question particularly in the post-Freudian work of Melanie Klein and the neo-Freudian work of Karen Horney that emerged in the wake of the first tangible victories that had been won by the first wave of the feminist movement. This shift is also central – as

[43] Sigmund Freud, 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis' (The 'Wolf Man'), in *The Standard Edition vol. XVII*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955; repr. 1991), p. 111.
[44] Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac Books, 1988; repr. 2006), p. 245.
[45] Sigmund Freud, 'The Economic Problem of Masochism', in *The Standard Edition vol. XIX*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961; repr. 1999), p. 162.

will be demonstrated later in this thesis – to how femininity would come to be configured differently in British cinema in the mid-twentieth century.

The psychoanalytic turn towards the mother of the 1920s and 1930s

The first phase of the move towards female emancipation in Britain ended with the passage of the Representation of the People Act in February 1918. This legislation granted more than eight million women over the age of thirty the right to vote. Nancy Astor would be elected as the first female member of Parliament the following year, and by 1928 the Representation of the People Act would grant equal voting rights to all women over the age of twenty-one. Whilst the position of women in public life in Britain was in the majority of cases by no means equal to that of men, the attention of some advocates of women's emancipation now turned from the public sphere to the private, specifically towards the exploration of the nature of gender difference.

Historian Eli Zaretsky argues that changing ideas surrounding femininity at this time had their roots partly in the transformation of the role that women now came to play within the family, and in changes in the position that the family occupied within society as a whole:

> As production left the household, as the war economies mobilized women, and as women won the vote, women were drawn into public life. At the same time, they found themselves at the emotional centre of the new, family-based consumer economy. Thus, their ties to the family were simultaneously loosened sociologically and reconstructed at a psychological level.[46]

Zaretsky argues that these changes can be usefully assessed by examining two contemporary areas of engagement with gender difference, specifically those surrounding mothering and female sexuality. As regards the first, Zaretsky points out that, whereas the idea of maternal responsibilities had previously been used to keep

[46] Eli Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), p. 193.

women confined within the home, now many began to argue that mothering involved social, and not just private responsibilities.[47] In other words, the function of effective mothering was increasingly found to have profound consequences, not just for the well-being of children within the family unit, but, by extension, for society as a whole. Zaretsky points towards two contemporary publications as examples of this change in public discourse:

> Robert Briffault's *The Mothers* (1927) argued that all forms of social organization arose from the need for prolonged maternal care, and Lewis Mumford's *Technics and Civilization* (1934) portrayed the maternal village as the basis of the paternal town. As a result, attention to women's mothering often implied emancipation rather than privatization. In the words of H.G. Wells, 'the discipline of cooperation' implied the emergence of women 'from the cell of the home' and pointed toward a new culture in which man would be more 'social and cooperative' and women 'less cloistered.'[48]

However, even within the context of this move towards admitting the importance of mothering as fundamental to the well-being of children, and as having repercussions for the wider society, the position of women within the family was often still bound by severe strictures. For example, many women found themselves still confined within unhappy marriages by rigid divorce laws that until 1937 admitted only adultery as the only legal grounds for divorce.

The changing attitudes of society towards female sexuality at this time is perhaps best illustrated by the huge success of the book *Married Love*, written by British academic Marie Stopes, and published in Britain in March 1918, which in the author's own words 'crashed English society like a bombshell.'[49] *Married Love* was banned in the United States until 1931, and it was the only publication in Britain at this time to provide women with explicit anatomical information about their own

[47] Zaretsky, p. 194.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Marie Stopes, quoted in Ellen Holtzman, 'The Pursuit of Married Love: Women's attitudes toward Sexuality and Marriage in Great Britain, 1918-1939', in *Journal of Social History*, 16:2 (1989), p. 39.

sexual responses. It sold two thousand copies within two weeks, and it was in its sixth edition by the end of 1918, its sixteenth by 1930, and its twenty-third by 1940.[50] *Married Love* is a sexual primer specifically aimed at women; it urges its readers to express themselves sexually, and it stresses that female sexual satisfaction should be thought of as being of equal importance to male satisfaction within a successful marriage.

In her assessment of Stopes' work, Ellen Holtzman examines the popular reception of the book via a sample of the five thousand letters that the author received from readers, the majority written between 1918 and 1926. Holtzman finds that the great majority of the women correspondents were united in their disappointment at their inability to experience sexual satisfaction within their relationships with their husbands.[51] Holtzman argues that the gains in public life that had been achieved by women in the first two decades of the twentieth century, combined with the new role that women had by now come to occupy within the family, made Stopes' 'sexual ideal' of equal satisfaction for women particularly attractive to her readers. According to Holtzman, the stresses of the First World War had caused both women and men

> to grow more interested in experiencing pleasure than in controlling themselves. As thousands of men lost their lives on the battlefields, young men and women began to feel, as one woman who lived through the war put it, that if they "did not seize experience at once…for many of them it would elude them forever", sex therefore, "became precious as a desired personal experience." While this attitude has been seen as a cause for the rise in pre-marital sexual activity within the middle class during and following the war, it has rarely been viewed as having an effect upon married women. This widespread desire to grasp pleasure where they could perhaps made married, middle-class women feel, as it did their single sisters, that their own sexual pleasure was a legitimate pursuit.[52]

[50] Holtzman, 'The Pursuit of Married Love', p. 39.
[51] Holtzman takes as her sample 200 letters from married, middle class women who wrote to Stopes particularly about sexual issues.
[52] Holtzman, p. 41.

Holtzman also points out that the rapid rise of unemployment in Britain in the early years of the 1920s had the effect of increasing pressure on women to leave the workplace and return to their domestic roles, and that this made Stopes' sexual ideal even more attractive to women. According to Holtzman, by arguing that women were sexual beings who had an equal right to satisfaction, Stopes was, in effect, providing women with a sexual role within marriage, and through her descriptions of the heights of ecstasy a woman could reach, a goal to aim for within the confines of their homes.[53]

Klein: fragmentation and the activity of female sexuality

Within this context of changing public attitudes towards the significance of mothering and female sexuality, the time was right for a new engagement between psychoanalysis and femininity that would challenge early Freudian concepts of penis envy and passive female sexuality. Born in 1882, Melanie Klein had been brought up and educated in Vienna. After an unsuccessful marriage she moved to Budapest, where she lived between 1910 and 1919 and where she was analysed by Ferenczi, who subsequently encouraged her to train as a psychoanalyst.[54] Klein was one of the growing number of female analysts who were trained in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, many of who would occupy important institutional positions within the movement, as well as playing a fundamental role in the development of psychoanalytic theory.[55] Klein is known for her analysis of often very young and severely disturbed children, and this work enabled her to contribute to psychoanalytic theory via her understanding of normal, neurotic, and psychotic pre-Oedipal psychical

[53] Ibid., p. 42.
[54] Jay Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 119.
[55] Nellie L. Thompson has shown that between 1902 and 1909 only 2 women were trained as psychoanalysts compared with 80 men. Between 1910 and 1919, the number of new women analysts grew to 39 compared with 221 male recruits, and, between 1920 and 1930, 92 women became analysts and 219 men. See 'Early Women Psychoanalysts', in *International Review of Psycho-Analysis* 14 (1987), p. 404-405.

organizations. Much of her published work includes detailed case-studies of children who are most often in the first three months of life, and therefore completely dependent on their mother; the figure of the mother is therefore at this time the infant's only internal object.[56] Klein describes the process of the infant's psychical formation at this time as being most affected by alternating states of happiness and anxiety that are defined solely by the relationship that the infant forges with the mother. Whilst Freud had believed that the psyche is formed by the passage through the various stages of libidinal development and ultimately through the negotiation of the Oedipal stage, for Klein the internal object world of the child is continually shifting between different 'positions', in an attempt to defend against the constant threat of neurotic anxiety.[57] Klein is best known for her depiction of what she terms the 'paranoid-schizoid' and the 'depressive' positions, both of which have their roots in the exclusive relationship of the pre-Oedipal child with the mother.

In her paper 'Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms', published in 1946, Klein summarizes her ideas on the earliest feelings that the pre-Oedipal child has towards the mother-object, and she begins by stating that 'object-relations exist from the beginning of life, the first object being the mother's breast.'[58] The infant's relationship with the breast (in Kleinian terms a 'part-object' that, for the infant, represents the mother) is dominated by two sharply polarised states. In the first the infant feels enveloped in love as she ingests her mother's milk, and she thinks of this breast as the good, or gratifying, breast.[59] However, at other times, when the breast is not offered

[56] The concept of internal objects, object relations, and the internal world are explored in detail on pages 89-98, below.
[57] Klein prefers the term 'position' to 'phase' as, although the organizations that she describes occur during the infant earliest stages, they occur and recur during the later years of childhood and beyond.
[58] Melanie Klein, 'Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms', in *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 27 (1946), p. 99.
[59] In this account of Klein's theories, I have used the preposition 'her' throughout. However, within the context of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, Klein make no distinction between the female or male infant.

to her, the infant experiences physical pain, and she therefore feels persecuted by the breast, and her fear and hatred lead her now to define it as the bad, or frustrating, breast. The infant's mother-object is therefore fragmented or 'split' by the infant into good and bad parts because, as Lavinia Gomez explains:

> It is more important at this stage to achieve some order than make an accurate picture of reality. […] In the paranoid-schizoid position there is no neutral zone, only good and bad. There is no experience of absence, regret or loss, because absence is simply felt as something bad rather than something good not there.[60]

The periodic absence of the mother accentuates the infant's tendency towards disintegration; in fear of annihilation she is flooded, in Klein's words, by 'the anxiety of being destroyed from within' and she must 'project' this death drive outwards towards the mother-object.[61] At first this takes the form of phantasized oral-sadistic assaults on the mother's breast, but these often materialise as actual physical attacks such as biting. She may also 'introject' some of the badness that she believes to exist within the mother-object, in an attempt to make the outside world safer for her.[62] The deployment of these defence mechanisms increases the split nature of the paranoid-schizoid infant, and in this fragmented state she loses her grasp on what constitutes the self and what constitutes the other. This state of fragmentation, which is elemental to the paranoid-schizoid position, describes the infant's first attempt to master the threat that the mother-object represents, and this position precedes, in normal psychical development, the child's entry into what Klein terms the 'depressive position'.

The concept of the depressive position is introduced by Klein in her paper 'A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States', published in Britain

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[60] Lavinia Gomez, *An Introduction to Object Relations* (London: Free Association Books, 1997), p. 37.
[61] Klein, 'Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms', p. 101.
[62] The concepts of introjection, projection, and projective identification are key concepts of Kleinian object relations theory, and they are outlined on pages 94-98, below.

in 1935, and it describes the progression of the infant, in the second six months of life, to a state in which she is able to define the mother as a whole object. The gap between the infant's internal object of the mother, and the mother as external object, is therefore narrowed, however along with this accentuated perception of external reality comes feelings of ambivalence and grief.[63] Lavinia Gomez comments that, 'as splitting diminishes, different experiences fit better together. The bad is less bad, but by the same token, the good is less good.'[64] As a corollary of the modifications of the depressive position, the infant's anxiety changes in character, centring now on her feelings of guilt that have arisen from the previous real and phantasized attacks that she has inflicted on the mother-object.

As Charles Rycroft points out, healthy people are thought of as having passed through the depressive position, while those with depressive issues are thought to be fixated at it, and persons with paranoid and schizoid orientations have failed to negotiate it all.[65] However, all of us may revert at times to the depressive position, for example when we experience traumatic events, that may range from normal mourning in situations of loss to severe depression. Summing up the influence of Klein's psychoanalytic work on feminist theory, Margaret Whitford argues that Klein's focus on the infant's pre-Oedipal period of development, and her analytic work with young children, is a crucial enabling factor in feminist accounts of the mother-daughter relationship, and that Klein's work 'enables feminist theory to move beyond victimology to examine the more problematic aspects of women's psyche and behaviour, such as aggression, their paranoia or depression and their

[63] Melanie Klein, 'A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States', in *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 16 (1935), p. 149.
[64] Gomez, p. 42.
[65] Charles Rycroft, *Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin Books, 1968; repr. 1995), p. 36.

sadomasochism.'[66] By withdrawing the idea of passivity as a psychoanalytic principle of sexual differentiation, the work of Klein therefore moves beyond Freud's 'phallic monism', countenancing women instead as being able to be defined as much as men by their procreational, aggressive, destructive, and self-destructive drives. This tendency is developed further in the Neo-Freudian work of Karen Horney.

Horney: from 'penis envy' to 'womb envy'

Karen Horney was born in Germany in 1885 and began training as a psychoanalyst in 1910 under Karl Abraham, while still a student at Berlin University. She emigrated to the United States in 1932 and, in the course of her work, she proposes the first systematic argument against Freud's theory that 'penis envy' is universal in women, and that it is central to the woman's psychical organization. In her later work, she concludes that the general assumption that the female feels that her genitals to be inferior is, in fact, a cultural product of the male's envy, and his fear of the woman's reproductive capacity. In this, her work was supported by Ernest Jones and Melanie Klein, but ultimately her radically unorthodox ideas led her to break with the Freudian New York Psychoanalytic Institute, and to found the neo-Freudian American Institute for Psychoanalysis in 1941. She wrote many books on psychoanalysis such as *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (1937), *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (1939), and *Self-Analysis* (1942), which enjoyed a wide popular readership in both the United States and Britain in the 1930s and 1940s.[67]

In her paper 'On the Genesis of the Castration Complex in Women', published in Britain in 1924, Horney asks whether it is really the case that the feminine form of

[66] Margaret Whitford, 'Melanie Klein' in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* ed. by Elizabeth Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 192-193.
[67] For a detailed account of the career of Horney, see M.M. Berger, 'Introduction: Paying Homage To My Teacher: Karen Horney (1885-1952)', in *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 51:3 (1991), pp. 191-207.

the castration complex is due to a dissatisfaction due to her coveting a penis. In answering this question Horney takes as her starting point the way in which Freud has suggested that 'penis envy' most frequently manifests itself: the desire to urinate like a man. Horney uses many examples of case-studies of her patients to illustrate that this desire is made up of two component parts. The first she terms 'urethral erotism', and she acknowledges that 'phantasies of omnipotence, especially such as are of a sadistic character, are as a matter of fact more easily associated with the jet of urine passed by the male.'[68] But whilst admitting that the pre-Oedipal girl may thus experience feelings of envy, Horney argues that the motive of this feeling is not envy of the penis itself, but instead envy of the act of urinating in this way. This envy derives, according to Horney, from the fact that, in the act of urinating, a boy can both display his genital and look at himself, thus satisfying his sexual curiosity every time he passes urine.[69] The second component of female envy that is connected with urination is founded, for Horney, on 'suppressed onanistic wishes, as a rule deeply hidden but none the less important on that account.'[70] This element may be traced to a connection of mostly unconscious ideas by which the fact that boys are permitted to take hold of their genital when urinating is construed as a permission to masturbate. Horney concludes that, while the pre-Oedipal girl is at a disadvantage compared with boys in that she is restricted as regards the possibility of gratifying certain drives, her envy is neither the cause nor the result of the castration complex. On the contrary, the vast majority of girls pass this stage without becoming fixated at all, and Horney points out that in later life – far from being at a disadvantage – 'a great part in sexual life (as regards creative power perhaps even a greater part than that of men) devolves upon a

[68] Karen Horney, 'On the Genesis of the Castration Complex in Women', in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 5 (1924), p. 52.
[69] Horney, 'On the Genesis of the Castration Complex in Women', p. 52.
[70] Ibid., p. 53.

woman.'[71] A sentiment that looks forward to her work during the 1930s on what she will term 'womb envy'.

In her paper 'The Dread of Woman', first published in Britain in 1932, Horney provides examples from literature that, since antiquity, have described the 'violent force by which man feels himself drawn to the woman, and, side by side with this longing, the dread lest through her he might die and be undone.'[72] Horney argues that it is remarkable, considering the overwhelming mass of this type of material, that so little attention has been paid to the fact of men's secret dread of women, which reveals itself so clearly within the analytic setting. Horney refers to Freud's essay 'Fetishism' (1928), in which he argues that the desire to escape the female genital is a fundamental trait in fetishism, and he believes this fear to be based on a feeling of abhorrence due to the absence of the penis in women. Horney argues, contra Freud, that 'a boy's castration-anxiety in relation to his father is not an adequate reason for his dread of a being whom this punishment has already overtaken.'[73] In fact, Horney thinks it probable that:

> The masculine dread of the woman (the mother) or of the female genital is more deep-seated, weighs more heavily and is usually more energetically repressed than the dread of the man (the father), and that the endeavour to find the penis in women represents first and foremost a convulsive attempt to deny the existence of the sinister female genital.[74]

Although the boy has already acquired, by the time of puberty, a conscious knowledge of the vagina he nevertheless still fears women because, she 'something uncanny, unfamiliar and mysterious'. This fear, for, Horney, ultimately relates to one thing: the mystery of motherhood. Catherine Silver comments that Horney's description of this fear as 'womb envy' was a shorthand formulation, also used by Melanie Klein and

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[71] Ibid., p. 54.
[72] Karen Horney, 'The Dread of Woman', in *Psychoanalysis and Male Sexuality* ed. by Hendrick M. Ruitenbeek (New Haven, CT: College & University Press, 1966), p. 84.
[73] Horney, 'The Dread of Woman', p. 87.
[74] Ibid., p. 88.

Joan Riviere in *Love Guilt and Reparation* (1937), which refers to men's fear and envy of women's capacity for pregnancy, motherhood, lactation, and attachment.[75]

As I have argued in the previous section on trauma, contemporary cultural developments, in this case the gains made by women in their struggle for enfranchisement, dictated the course that psychoanalysis would take during the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century. The works of Klein and Horney, conceived in the post-enfranchisement world of the 1920s, have most relevance to British cinema in the period that the thesis is concerned with. This is most obviously expressed by British films of this time in their representations of strong female characters, who rarely play central roles in the films' narratives, but which are nevertheless often defined by the threat that they pose to male subjectivity. The ambivalent attitude that many of the films of this period have towards their strong female characters can be seen, therefore, as a conflated reaction to both sides of the Freudian and the neo-Freudian dialectic.

2.4 The third discursive formation: the theory of object relations

While the concept of internal objects played a part in the work of Freud from the early years of the twentieth century, in Britain since the 1930s object relations theory has come to form the basis of the majority of psychoanalytic thought. Object relations psychoanalysis departs from Freud primarily in the way that it proposes that the organism exists and develops, not only under the influence of its own internal drives, but also, and for some theorists most importantly, as a result of the relationship that the organism forms with its environment.[76] Within psychoanalytic theory, internal

[75] Catherine B. Silver, 'Womb Envy: Loss and Grief of the Maternal Body', in *Psychoanalytic Review* 94:3 (2007), p. 412.

[76] Object relations theory has a long history, and the drives and the external environment have been allocated varying levels of importance by different theorists over the decades. I have chosen to focus primarily on the object relations theory of Klein, which I believe to

objects are psychical representations of those external objects with which the individual has formed interpersonal connections. These representations are considered to take hold gradually within the psyche via unconscious processes, and to be coloured by aspects of the self that are projected onto them as a result of the mobilisation of defensive strategies. Internal objects are therefore in a constant state of flux, as the individual's experience of the external world changes, and as the individual's own psychical orientation alters.

The accumulation of internal objects, which most often begins for the child with the internalization of the mother-object, gradually forms the internal world, and the individual's mode of relation with the internal world is a definitive element in both the normal and the pathological relationships that the individual may maintain with the world outside. Object relationships are therefore approached within psychoanalytic theory from both metapsychological and phenomenological perspectives, in that they are considered to be influenced by the static internal drives, and by our conscious and unconscious experiences of the external world. The state of flux that exists between the individual's internal world and the individual's experience of the world that exists outside forms the basis of many aspects of object relational psychoanalytic enquiry.[77]

It is outside the scope of this study to provide an in-depth account of the development of internal object theory within Freud's work.[78] However, the discursive formation surrounding object relations that would emerge within British culture in the 1940s, for example in British cinema's blurring of the lines between objectivity and

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have been most influential on British culture in the 1940s, and within which drive theory is still allocated a pivotal role.

[77] Elizabeth Bott Spillius and others, *The New Dictionary of Kleinian Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 41.

[78] For an account of the origins of object relations theory in the work of Freud see Jay Greenberg and Stephen Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge, MA. And London: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 50-78.

subjectivity, and in its sometimes overlapping representations of the internal and external worlds of its characters, betrays the influence of Freud as well as post-Freudians such as Klein. Therefore, in this section I outline the progression of Freud's ideas in brief, before turning to examine Klein's theories in the following section.

Freud's theory of internal objects

As Lavinia Gomez has argued, psychoanalytic object relations theory begins with Freud's need to move beyond his early theoretical premise that had defined the psyche in the purely biological terms of the drives:

> His early psychology presents the mind as concrete, measurable and ultimately physiological. His later work, however, includes a more subjective view of the mind as the focus of experience, highlighting the importance of relationships with other people and also the internal relationships that make up the complexity of the person. Concepts such as the Oedipus complex with its interpersonal structure, and the super-ego as an internalization of the parent, demonstrate the addition of a relational perspective to his earlier view that emotional development was based on endogenous processes.[79]

In the early part of his work, Freud employs the term 'object' to mean another towards whom the libidinal drive is directed. The term is therefore not used in its normal sense that might describe an inanimate 'thing', but instead to describe an individual in whom the subject 'cathects' (or invests) drive energy: 'Let us call the person from whom sexual attraction proceeds the *sexual object* and the act towards which the instinct tends the *sexual aim*.'[80] (Freud's italics) At this time, Freud defines the object principally in terms of its function, which he defines as enabling the individual to experience satisfaction via the discharge of the energy that has its seat in the instinctual drives.

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[79] Lavinia Gomez, *An Introduction to Object Relations* (London: Free Association Books, 1997), pp. 2-3.
[80] Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in *The Standard Edition vol. VII*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957; repr. 1999), pp. 135-136.

In what might be termed the 'middle period' of Freud's work, and particularly in his work on narcissistic and depressive psychical orientations, the idea of how the individual relates to the object develops to include the concepts of 'object-choice' and 'object-loss'. In his paper 'On Narcissism', published in German in 1914 and in English in 1925, Freud proposes that a narcissistic object-choice has two aspects: first, the choosing of an object on the basis of similarity to oneself, and second the choosing of an object, not because of the love that one feels toward it, but because of the love that one feels to emanate from it.[81] As Jay Greenberg and Stephen Mitchell point out: 'With the concept of narcissism we have a set of aims that have a life of their own, free of the quality of the drives, which can use the energy of the drives to pursue these independent goals.'[82] In his paper 'Mourning and Melancholia', published in German in 1917 and in English in 1925, Freud turns to experience that he has gained in analysing depressive patients, and he notes that in those patients that are bereaved, a sometimes distorted relationship comes to exist between the conscious effects of bereavement, and the unconscious internal damage to the ego that is occasioned by the loss of the loved object.

Freud argues that when the libido is withdrawn from an object following its loss, it is sometimes not immediately transferred to a new object, but it is instead drawn back into the ego. In cases where this has occurred Freud observes that the

> libido served to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus, the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object.[83] (Freud's italics)

[81] See Sigmund Freud, 'On Narcissism', in *The Standard Edition vol. XIV*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957; repr. 1999), pp. 73-102.
[82] Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 60-61.
[83] Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *The Standard Edition vol. XIV*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957; repr. 1999), p. 249

In Freud's concept of identification, as Greenberg and Mitchell note, we encounter for the first time in his work the ability of the object to be taken within the self, and so to influence the nature of the individual's psychical structure.[84]

The final part of Freud's development of a subjective and interpersonal view of the psyche comes to exist in his proposal of a new tripartite formation of the mind in *The Ego and the Id*, published in German in 1923 and in English in 1927. In this work, Freud moves away from a spatial, or topographical, model of the mind that is based on the existence of conscious, preconscious, and unconscious systems, to one that instead operates structurally, and which describes permanent psychical components that he terms the ego, the superego, and the id. Here all parts of the mind are thought of as having unconscious elements, and identification, assimilation, and loss, emerge as normal and inevitable parts of the process of development. Within this model, according to Greenberg and Mitchell:

> The Oedipus complex constitutes the cornerstone of both healthy and neurotic development. The dissolution of the Oedipus complex leads to the identifications that constitute the superego and to the capacities for sublimation that allow the ego to operate most effectively. The Oedipus complex also gives rise to the reactive guilt which is the most important source of neurotic conflict in later life.[85]

Freud's idea that identification is a key part of the process of the installation of the superego, and therefore an element in the subject's formation of ideals, conscience, and self-observation, enormously increases the potential of the role that the internal object can play within the mental economy. It also predicts the work of the British School of psychoanalysis, and specifically that of Klein and Winnicott, whose theories would place the role of internal objects at the centre of the individual's process of psychical formation and development.

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[84] Greenberg and Mitchell, p. 71.
[85] Ibid., p. 72.

Klein: projection and introjection

Through her clinical experience of working with often very young and severely disturbed children in Britain between the 1920s and 1940s, Melanie Klein built on Freud's concept of the object to develop a theory of internal object relationships that provides the foundation of psychoanalysis as it exists today. Klein's development of a theory of internal objects was dependent on her extension of the concept of unconscious phantasy as it existed in Freud's work; one that existed as the focal point for wishes, repression, and desire, to one that forms the basis of all interpersonal relationships, and that is constitutional in the individual from childhood. Unlike Freud, whose professional background was in medicine and neuropathology, Klein was not a scientist, and her work is not restricted by Freud's biological and economical frameworks.[86] As Lavinia Gomez points out, Klein employed Freud's ideas:

> To listen to the *experience* of what her patients told her. She was imaginative, intuitive and bold, making wild leaps that could be backed up only by inner resonance. The premises of her theory are philosophical rather than scientific, and subjective rather than objective.[87] (Gomez's italics)

Klein proposes a developmental theory in which the psychological growth of the child is ordered not so much by the passage through Freud's stages of libidinal development, but by the working-through of 'positions' that the child experiences during the early years of development, and which the individual may return to later in life as a result of trauma, anxiety, or depression. These positions are governed by the processes of projection, introjection, and splitting, and it is these processes, according to object relations theorists, that form the basis of interpersonal relationships.

In the psychoanalytic sense the term 'projection' describes the process whereby qualities, feelings, or wishes that the individual refuses to recognise reside in

[86] For a brief biography of Klein see Spillius and others, pp. 384-386.
[87] Gomez, pp. 33-34.

the self, are unconsciously relocated instead inside an external object.[88] In this way sensitivities that might often make us feel ashamed, can be felt to reside not in ourselves, but instead in other people, much in the same way, as David Bell explains, 'as an image is projected onto a screen.'[89] Similarly, positive internal feelings may be channelled outwards towards external objects in order that the external world might seem to us a more comfortable and less threatening place. The urge to project is also partly a defence mechanism against feelings of anxiety that, Klein argues, arise from the death drive that is present in the child from birth, and that remains with us for all of our lives. In the infant the death drive motivates a feeling of the threat of annihilation from within, and this urge must be projected away from the self, usually onto the maternal object, in order to ensure the infant's survival. As Gomez observes:

> This accounts for the basic and unavoidable internal conflict in Kleinian theory, and for the subjective nature of perception. Each person's external world is in part a reflection of his inner world, while at the same time it reaches into his inner experience and changes it.[90]

The term 'introjection' describes the process by which, in contrast, the functions of an external object are taken into the self, so causing the relationship that the subject has with the external object to be replaced by a relationship with the internal representation of that object. For example, in the first year of life, and while in the paranoid-schizoid position, the infant will introject both the good and the bad breast, the part-objects that represent for the infant the external object of the mother.

This unconscious process ensures that goodness is taken into the self as a support, and that badness is removed from the external world in order to make it a less threatening place. Both projection and introjection, within the paranoid-schizoid

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[88] For Klein's account of the processes of introjection, projection, and splitting see Melanie Klein, 'Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms', in *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 27 (1946), pp. 99-110.
[89] David Bell, 'Projective Identification', in *Kleinian Theory: A Contemporary Perspective* ed. by Catalina Bronstein (London: Whurr Publishers, 2001), p. 126.
[90] Gomez, pp. 35-36.

position, involve the defensive mental process of 'splitting', through which aspects of the self, and of external objects, are separated into 'good' and 'bad' parts. As Klein explains in *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, published in England in 1932:

> In dividing the mother into a 'good' mother and a 'bad' one, it attaches the hatred it feels for its object to the 'bad' one or turns away from it while it directs its restorative trends to its 'good' mother and 'good' father and, in phantasy, makes good towards the damage it has done its parent-imagos in its sadistic phantasies.[91]

The defensive processes of projection, introjection, and splitting dominate the paranoid-schizoid position, but paranoid-schizoid functioning is not something that we grow out of, it is a frame of mind that competes for dominance with depressive functioning throughout our lives. Even though Klein's work is still tied to Freud's belief in the importance of the instinctual drives, her vision of the individual's internal world as being populated by internalized external objects, and her belief that early ego development depends on the introjection of the mother or father, paves the way for the later object relational work of Ronald Fairbairn and Donald Winnicott.

In this chapter, I have laid out the three psychoanalytic discursive formations that I propose to be the most influential on British cinema in the mid-1940s. It might be argued that other psychoanalytic discursive formations received as wide, or even wider, circulation in British culture at this time. An example of such a formation might be the one that surrounded new psychoanalytic ideas put forward by Klein and Anna Freud concerning child development, child trauma, and child analysis. While this argument is undoubtedly justified, it is felt that, for various reasons, these discourses did not have a wide-ranging influence on British cinema at this time, and so they have not been included in this chapter.[92] As I have already stated, the individual discourses

[91] Melanie Klein, *The Psychoanalysis of Children* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1932), p. 222.

[92] The popular Ealing production *Hue and Cry* (Charles Crichton, 1947) and the less well-known *No Room at the Inn* (Daniel Birt, 1948) are two films of the 1940s that are exceptions to this rule. However, these discourses could be argued to emerge strongly in the British

that I have described as making up the three discursive formations have been selected because it was those that gained traction at this time, both with the psychoanalytic community, and with the general British public by means of their dissemination in a wide range of popular texts.[93] The exception to this is the work of Ferenczi, which, as I have already outlined, was suppressed by the psychoanalytic community in the 1930s and would not be published in English until the late 1940s. Ferenczi's work is, however, key to my reading of how films of this period tend to privilege historical trauma over Oedipal fixation in arranging the neuroses and psychoses of their central characters. I provide a rationale for the inclusion of Ferenczi's work in the chapter on *The Seventh Veil*, below, and I summarize this in my concluding remarks.[94] In the next chapter, I assess how all three of these dominant psychoanalytic discursive formations are fundamental to how the 1945 Ealing Studios film *Dead of Night* is configured.

social realist cinema of the 1950s and 1960s. An account of these films is provided by Marcia Landy in 'The Social Problem Film' chapter of *British Genres: Cinema and Society, 1930-1960* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 432-486.

[93] For example, as Graham Richards has noted, Freud's *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* was reprinted pretty much annually between 1920 and 1930. Richards also lists popular psychoanalytic texts written by a wide variety of authors at this time, see Richards, 'Britain on the Couch, pp. 189-199.

[94] See pages 140-141 in the section on *The Seventh Veil*, and pages 226-227 in the concluding remarks, below.

Chapter Three

'The Perpetual Recurrence of the Same Thing'[1]: the compulsion to repeat, and the elision, fragmentation, and displacement of war trauma and traumatic neurosis in *Dead of Night*

3.1 Introduction

Since the 1960s, many authors have emphasized the importance of *Dead of Night* to the history of the British fantasy film, declaring it to be, for example, 'the most important English supernatural thriller prior to the late 1950s'[2] and 'arguably the most famous ghost story ever produced within British cinema.'[3] Over the last thirty or so years, some scholars have adopted approaches to the film that are at least partly psychoanalytic, and the earlier works often tend to highlight the psychoanalytic concept of repression as underpinning many of the film's preoccupations. For example, Charles Barr finds that the Haunted Mirror and the Ventriloquist Dummy segments of the film 'are clearly stories of the return of the repressed: elements of the psyche that have been rigidly kept down find their way back to confront the repressor in a monstrous externalized form.'[4] Barr also highlights the 'repressed' nature of Ealing's wartime output in its role as the dominant studio for war-effort production,

[1] The chapter title is taken from Freud's description of the compulsion of the individual to repeat the traumatic event in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in *The Standard Edition vol. XVIII*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955; repr. 1981), p. 22.
[2] David Pirie, *A New Heritage of Horror* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008), p. 16.
[3] Peter Hutchings, *Hammer and Beyond: The British Horror Film* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 26.
[4] Charles Barr, *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London: BFI Publishing, 1986), pp. 17-18; see also Marcia Landy, *British Genres: Cinema and Society, 1930-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 396-398; Jonathan Rigby, *English Gothic: A Century of Horror Cinema* (London: Reynolds & Hearn, 2000), pp. 34-37; Andrew Spicer *Typical Men: The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), p. 175; and Pirie, *A New Heritage of Horror*, p. 18.

and how *Dead of Night* lifts 'the lid on forces of sex, violence and fantasy which Ealing's wartime project had kept almost out of sight.'[5] Other writers point to the often introverted male figures of the film, and to its confident and resourceful female figures, as reflecting the changing nature of society at a time when many men were 'returning home from overseas and many women giving up, willingly or otherwise, their wartime occupations and adopting again the nurturing roles of housewife and mother within the domestic household.'[6] The film's blurring of the lines between reality and fantasy have also been addressed by some commentators, for example, Ian Aitkin finds that the film ultimately 'undermines the rule of reason itself, and remains fundamentally inexplicable.'[7]

In recent years, the study of the representation of mental illness in the arts has gained momentum, and some scholars have argued their relevance to *Dead of Night*. For example, Leon Balter suggests that the victim of a racing car accident's vision in the 'Hearse Driver' story 'is a form of traumatic repetition – homologous to his post-traumatic dreams and delirium'.[8] While neurosis and psychosis certainly play their part in *Dead of Night*, I would like to argue that these are motivated less by the consequences of endogenous drive defenses such as repression, as Barr and others have argued, and more by exogenous factors that arise from the collective and historical trauma of the Second World War.

The narrative of *Dead of Night* is complex, constructed as it is from a weaving-together of five stories that are recounted by a number of separate narrators and sub-

[5] Barr, *All Our Yesterdays*, p. 18, see also Spicer, *Typical Men*, p. 175.
[6] Hutchings, p. 28; see also Alan Burton and Tim O'Sullivan, *The Cinema of Basil Dearden and Michael Relph* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 36-37.
[7] Ian Aitkin, *Alberto Cavalcanti: Realism, Surrealism and National Cinemas* Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2000), p. 160; see also Burton and O'Sullivan, pp. 75-76; and Hutchings, pp. 34-37.
[8] Leon Balter, 'Dead of Night', in *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 79:3 (2010), p. 761; see also Simon Guerrier, 'Those horrible nightmares again and again', in *The Lancet* 2:10 (2015), pp. 873-875; and Jez Connolly and David Owain Bates, *Dead of Night* (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2015), p. 46.

narrators, and all of these are suspended within a linking narrative that is itself highly important to the film's meaning. As all three of the historical psychoanalytic discursive formations are relevant to an understanding of this film as a whole, I provide a detailed synopsis, which will enable the reader to orientate the three sections that follow, on war trauma, sexual difference, and object relations theory, within the film's overall narrative structure.

3.2 Synopsis

In *Dead of Night*, an architect, Walter Craig (Mervyn Johns), arrives at Pilgrim's Farm, the country house of Eliot Foley (Roland Culver), where he has been invited for the weekend to discuss its renovation.[9] Although he has never visited the area before, Craig finds the house to be strangely familiar to him. On entering the house, he finds Foley's mother (Mary Merrall) serving tea to a group of weekend guests. The group is comprised of a racing driver, Hugh Grainger (Anthony Baird), a young girl, Sally O'Hara (Sally Ann Howes), a confident young woman, Joan Cortland (Googie Withers), and a psychoanalyst, Dr Van Straaten (Frederick Valk). Craig explains that the house and all the guests are familiar to him from a recurring dream. Although Dr Van Straaten is dismissive, the other guests declare their belief in Craig's dream. All of those present – with the exception of Mrs. Foley – proceed to recount to the group their own experiences of the supernatural in support of Craig, and their stories make up the five story sections of the film.[10]

[9] Throughout this chapter, I refer to the various sequences that link the stories together as 'the Linking Narrative'.

[10] It is interesting to note that, of the six characters that Foley initially meets when he arrives at Pilgrim's Farm, only Mrs Foley – who, as Caroline Bainbridge observed to me, bears a strange resemblance to Melanie Klein – does not tell a story. It seems to be a common theme of British films of this time that the traumatic affect no doubt experienced by the older generation as a result of their direct or indirect experiences of the Great War go unmentioned.

Grainger's tale – the 'Hearse Driver' – begins as he suffers a near-fatal crash in his racing car; a week later he is being treated in a nursing home by Dr Albury (Robert Wyndham) and a nurse, Joyce (Judy Kelly). Although he has suffered no damage to his brain, and no obvious physical injuries, Dr Albury is concerned about Grainger's frequent high temperatures, which cause him to be delirious. However, Grainger soon begins to recover, although he admits to still having frequent nightmares. One night, as he prepares to go to sleep, he experiences a vision in which time seems to be out of joint. It is suddenly daylight and, looking down from his window, he sees a hearse in the street below. Its driver looks up and, with a sardonic smile on his face, says to him: 'Just room for one inside, sir'. The following day, Dr Albury explains that the vision was the result of a 'psychological crisis' that had been caused by the crash, and he predicts that Grainger will now make a full recovery. Sure enough, a week later he is discharged from the clinic and, as he is boarding a bus, he recognises the conductor as the driver of the hearse. He steps down from the bus in horror when the conductor says to him: 'Just room for one inside, sir'. He then witnesses the bus swerve to avoid a dust cart, and crashing down a steep embankment, presumably causing the death of its passengers.

In explaining the story, Dr Van Straaten echoes the words of Dr Albury in stating that Grainger was still obsessed by his racing crash, and that he would have been reluctant to board any kind of vehicle. Now Sally begins her tale – the 'Christmas Party' – in which she recounts her experiences of a year before whilst staying in Somerset for Christmas. In the story, she is attending a children's party where, while hiding during a game of 'sardines', she discovers a room where she finds a younger boy who is dressed in clothes of a much earlier period. As she comforts him, she learns from the boy that his name is Francis Kent, and that his sister would like to kill him. Sally then re-joins the party only to be informed by the son of her hostess, Jimmy

(Michael Allen), that the boy must be the ghost of Francis Kent, who had been murdered by his sister Constance in the house many years before. Dr Van Straaten is as dismissive of Sally's story as he had been of Grainger's, suggesting that 'visitations of a tangible character' such as this are common in the accounts of some female saints. Now Joan Cortland tells her tale – the 'Haunted Mirror' – which begins just after she had become engaged to Peter (Ralph Michael). In her story, she presents Peter with a large parcel, and he asks her: 'You haven't gone and had your portrait painted, have you?' to which she replies: 'No, I thought you'd like to look at yourself.' The gift turns out to be an ornate Chippendale mirror, in which Peter gradually begins to see visions of a room of a much earlier period. This, we later find to be the scene of its previous owner's murder of his wife, and of his subsequent suicide. The previous owner, Francis Etherington, has been rendered immobile as a result of a riding accident. As the story unfolds, Peter begins somehow to identify with Francis Etherington's previous traumatic experience and, believing that Joan has been unfaithful to him, he attempts to strangle her. As they struggle in front of the mirror Joan too briefly witnesses Peter's vision.

Dr Van Straaten dismisses Joan's tale as merely a case of 'crypto-amnesia', in which Peter's illusion has been transmitted to Joan as a result of their emotional connection. Meanwhile, as a result of his listening to the stories, Craig has become increasingly convinced that his recurring dream is a warning against some terror that is awaiting him in the house. He has a premonition that Dr Van Straaten will break his glasses, and that he himself will come to be held in the grip of a force that is 'drawing him toward something unspeakably evil'. He now resolves to leave the house before it is too late. In order to defuse the situation, Foley begins his tale – the 'Golfing Story' – that revolves around two friends, George Parratt (Basil Radford) and Larry Potter (Naunton Wayne), who share a common interest in golf. Both are the stars of their

club, and both fall in love with an attractive young girl, Mary Lee (Peggy Bryan). In order to decide who will marry Mary, they decide to play a game of golf. Parratt wins by cheating, and, as a consequence of his losing, Potter commits suicide by drowning himself in a nearby lake. Later, Potter returns as a ghost, and he exacts his revenge by changing places with Parratt, and usurping Parratt's role with Mary in the honeymoon bedroom on their wedding night. Foley's 'decidedly improper' tale does succeed in lightening the atmosphere at Pilgrim's Farm, and even Craig joins in the general laughter.

Now Dr Van Straaten begins the final story – the 'Ventriloquist's Dummy' – in which he recounts an experience of some years before, when he had been acting as a consultant at a London police station. Here, a ventriloquist, Maxwell Frere (Michael Redgrave), is being held after attempting to murder another ventriloquist, an American, Sylvester Kee (Hartley Power). The story hinges on Kee's account of the strange relationship that exists between Frere and his dummy, Hugo Fitch. Hugo seemingly operates independently to Frere, humiliating him in public, and threatening to leave him and to go into partnership with Kee. Frere, an alcoholic who suffers from increasingly paranoid delusions, shoots Kee in a fit of jealousy. In the story, Dr Van Straaten brings Hugo to the cell where Frere is being held for the shooting, and, in a fit of rage, Frere destroys the dummy by repeatedly stamping on its head. Later, Dr Van Straaten persuades Kee to accompany him to the padded cell where Frere lies having descended into a catatonic trance. Frere awakes from his trance and recognizes Kee, but he can talk only in the voice of Hugo, his mind having now been completely dominated by the part of him that was the dummy.

Back in the drawing room at Pilgrim's Farm, as Craig had predicted earlier, Dr Van Straaten now breaks his glasses, and Craig becomes terrified that his premonition is coming to pass. Dr Van Straaten recognizes Craig's panic, and, saying that he now

accepts Craig's dream, he suggests that the others leave them alone. Loosening his tie, Craig walks behind the seated, and now effectively blind psychoanalyst, and strangles him. At this point any distinction between the stories that have been told, and the 'reality' of the setting of Pilgrim's Farm, completely collapses, and Craig finds himself pursued by characters from the various stories. Craig then wakes in up in his own bed at home, only to receive a phone call from Eliot Foley inviting him down to the country for the weekend. The film ends precisely as it had begun, with Craig arriving at Pilgrim's Farm, and his nightmare begins all over again.

3.3 *Dead of Night* and trauma: the mechanisms of elision, fragmentation, displacement, and repetition

In this section, I examine the three aspects of *Dead of Night*'s engagements with trauma and traumatic neurosis that draw on the psychoanalytic concepts of defence and the re-visiting of traumatic experience via repetitive functioning. These engagements are, first, the film's elision and fragmentation of the war as a narrative subject, second, its displacement of the trauma of war onto other events, and third, the significance of its circular narrative.

At the beginning of the Ventriloquist's Dummy segment of *Dead of Night*, Dr Van Straaten introduces his story by saying 'there was one occasion in my professional career that made me wonder … made me wonder quite a lot.' Within his account, we find him in an interview room at Brixton Prison. He is seated with Maxwell Frere and a lawyer who is defending the case against Frere.[11] Dr Van Straaten is shown the witness statement of Sylvester Kee, which is dated 6th February 1938, and it is this statement that provides the sub-narrative of his story. The film's 'present', which can

[11] Some details in my account of the film are derived from the post-production script, which is lodged in the BFI's Special Collections, reference SCR-6531.

be defined as the world of the Linking Narrative, therefore exists at some point after this date. The other four stories seem to be set in the even more recent past, for example, Sally is explicit in stating that her experience at the Christmas party happened only 'one year ago'. The implication is that the film is set in a present, and with the exception of the Ventriloquist's Dummy sequence, in a recent past, which must be the time of the war or its immediate aftermath. However, Peter and Joan Cortland enjoy an affluent lifestyle in their house in Chelsea, unconstrained by rationing, and the view from Walter Craig's bedroom towards the end of the film shows the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral and a London skyline unmarked by any sign of the effects of the Blitz. *Dead of Night* is remarkable in the way that it sets its fantastical narrative events in a present in which the war has never taken place, and instead its variously distressed male and female figures are presented as the victims of traumatic events that have been defensively fragmented, and then displaced onto various other kinds of phenomena. This fragmentation of the present recalls the work of Ferenczi and Klein, who both emphasize the connection between trauma and a splitting of the ego, and who suggest that fragmentation can operate, in effect, as a defence against the detrimental effects of historical traumatic events.[12] As psychoanalyst Jonathan Sklar explains, fragmentation 'represents an adaptation to an unbearably painful and unresponsive environment, and this adjustment comes at the cost of a partial loss of reality.'[13] In this way, *Dead of Night* constructs an alternative reality, one that operates as a re-visiting of traumatic situations without confronting the specifics of the population's collective traumatic experience.

[12] See, for example Sándor Ferenczi, 'Trauma and Striving for Health', in *Final Contributions to the Problems and Methods of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. by Michael Balint (London and New York: Karnac, 1994, repr. 2002), pp. 230-231.
[13] Jonathan Sklar, *Landscapes of the Dark: History, Trauma, Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 2011), p. 113.

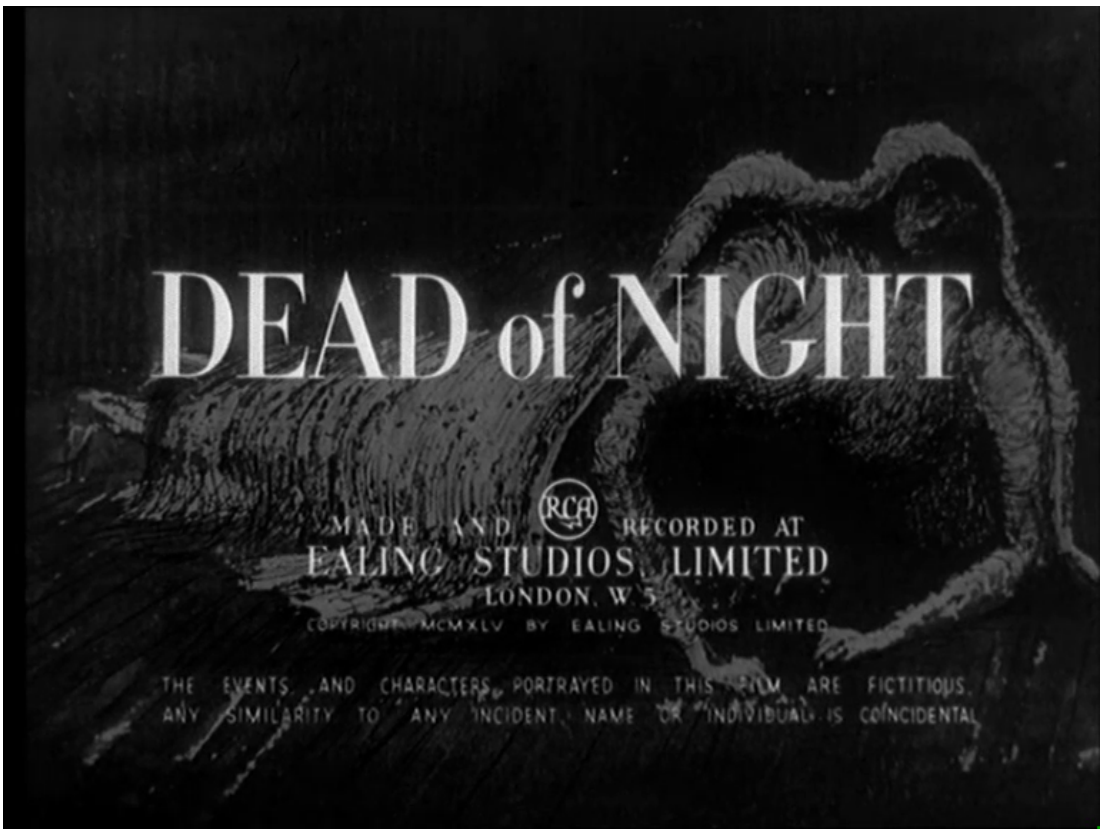

Figure 3-1

Whilst the film elides the existence of the war within its actual narrative, it does point, in very specific terms, towards the collective traumatic experience of war in its opening credit sequence. The credits play in front of a static shot of a drawing that is not referenced in the credits themselves, or during the course of the film's narrative (Figure 3-1). The drawing shows a human figure of indeterminate sex lying on its front; its face is turned towards us, but its gaze is directed downwards at the surface on which it lies. The figure seems shrouded from its ankles to its head, and it is bound to the surface by a proliferation of wires, the ends of which seem securely attached to the surface. The figure is pushing upwards and straining its shoulders and toes in a vain attempt to free itself from its bindings. As it strains away from the surface, it seems to pull the wires ever tighter around its body. The drawing is 'Figure in a Shelter' by Henry Moore, and it is one of a series of his works that present

abstracted blanketed shelterers, squatting or lying on the platforms of underground stations during the Blitz.

According to Moore's own account, his first-hand experience of the German air-raid on London in the late evening of 11 September 1940 had a profound effect on him, and motivated him to begin a series of sketches that, according to art historian David Alan Mellor, 'would become mythical in their status as documents of British resistance against Nazi aggression.'[14] Moore's drawings, including 'Figure in a Shelter', were commissioned by the coalition government's War Artists Advisory Committee, and they were initially reproduced in the magazine *Horizon*, before being placed before the British public in April 1941 in an exhibition in the National Gallery, and then being sent to New York as part of the *Britain at War* exhibition two months later.[15] The art historian Geoffrey Grigson describes the shelter drawings in these terms: 'The figures belong to the mass of life; they are below the edge of will. Rather than life vertebrate, active and thinking, they are life to which terrible things are being done.'[16] The inclusion of Moore's drawing at the beginning of *Dead of Night* signals precisely the film's interest in the collective traumatic effects of war on the British people, but the film does not demonstrate those effects in literal terms, or by reference to real events. Rather than enunciating these effects by referring to the war itself, the film finds ways of displacing them formally onto alternative modes of expression. Another example of this practice can be found in how the traumatic symptoms of war are displaced, in narrative terms, onto the victim of a racing crash in the film's Hearse Driver segment.

[14] David Alan Mellor, 'And Oh! The stench': Spain, the Blitz, Abjection and the Shelter drawings', in *Henry Moore* (London: Tate Publishing, 2010), p. 53.
[15] Mellor, p. 59.
[16] Geoffrey Grigson, *Henry Moore* (London: Penguin, 1943), p. 14.

Figure 3-2

At the beginning of Grainger's story, we witness the racing crash that has been the cause of his trauma. As the cars race around the track, we see that one car is on fire. The camera pans quickly left to follow it, and we see the car trying to avoid another car, and in doing so it spins out of control. The driver is thrown from his seat. This short sequence is accompanied on the soundtrack by the sound of the cars' engines, then of the crash, and then of the screaming of a woman. The shot dissolves to a close-up of Grainger lying in a hospital bed; his face is unshaven, and he is delirious. He says: 'Now's my chance. I can't make it. I can't make it. Yes, I can. Now then. This is it.' It is a week since the crash, and Grainger is being attended to by Dr Albury and a nurse, Joyce, who informs the doctor that the patient's mind had cleared that morning, and that she had been able to inform him that the other driver was unhurt. Grainger has apparently slept soundly after this. Dr Albury says that, while there is no injury to the brain, he is concerned about Grainger's persistent high temperatures and

bouts of delirium (Figure 3-2). Sometime later, Grainger seems to have made a remarkable recovery, although he informs Joyce that he still has 'awfully bad nightmares'. At this point, Grainger experiences his vision of the hearse driver and hears what he interprets as a warning: 'Just room for one inside, sir.' One week later, Grainger is discharged from the clinic, and he has his second vision of the hearse driver, this time witnessed in the form of the bus conductor, the crash of the bus, and the presumed death of its passengers.

In his assessment of the Hearse Driver story, Leon Balter argues that the progression of Grainger's condition after the crash can be thought of in terms of a decreasing trajectory of the symptoms of traumatic neurosis:

> While in hospital during a post-traumatic delirium, Grainger keeps reliving the car crash and is agonizingly worried that both he and the other driver may be killed. Only when he is assured that the other driver is safe does Grainger finally calm down to sleep relatively more peacefully.[17]

The film's ordering of the psychical repetition of Grainger's traumatic event by means of its laying-out of his nightmares and waking visions, has the effect of describing a gradual reduction of the severity of Grainger's neurotic symptoms. This process calls to mind Freud's theory of traumatic repetition, in which the 'passive' victim of trauma takes on an 'active' role via the repetition the traumatic event, unpleasurable as this experience is. According to Freud, this mechanism operates beyond the pleasure principle: 'These efforts might be put down to an instinct for mastery that [acts] independently of whether the memory [is] pleasurable or not.'[18] Balter also draws attention to the fact that, before seeing the first vision of the hearse driver, Grainger hears 'the whoosh of a racing car', and also that this sound signals the beginning of the visual repetition of his accident and links the vision directly to the crash itself. For Balter, Grainger's interpretation of his two visions as supernatural 'warnings' is

[17] Balter, pp. 760-761.
[18] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, pp. 14-16.

similar to Craig's later statement that his recurring dream is a warning of his own impending doom. However, the film is not clear about whether Grainger's visions are hallucinations or supernatural hauntings, and this opposition between the scientific explanation, personified in this story by the figures of the psychiatrists Dr Albury and Dr Van Straaten, and the supernatural, drives the narratives of all five of the stories. Dr Albury explains to Grainger that, after the crash, he had already 'passed the purely physical crisis. That apparition of death was what we term the psychological crisis.' Dr Van Straaten concurs: 'You were still obsessed with your crash.' At the end of the story Grainger is reunited with Joyce at Pilgrim's Farm and there are no signs that he still suffers from nightmares and visions. He has, to all appearances, successfully worked-through his trauma. It is tempting to see Grainger as *Dead of Night*'s metaphorical representation of a fighter pilot, shot down in the Battle of Britain, surviving the crash, suffering, and then mastering the traumatic consequences of his experience. The film, therefore, begins on a hopeful note, but this sense of optimism is not necessarily extended to the figure of Walter Craig in the conclusion of the Linking Narrative.

Several authors have approached the Linking Narrative from the point of view of trying to ascertain what parts of it are 'real' and what parts of it are contained within Craig's dream. For example, Ivan Butler argues that, after Craig wakes at home and receives the telephone call from Foley inviting him for the weekend, a shot of Foley cannot be part of Craig's dream, and consequently 'the dream becomes reality. This time it is really happening. There will be no waking relief for Craig. This time he drives to his doom.'[19] Another view is presented by Bruce Kawin, who argues that, as

[19] Ivan Butler, *The Horror Film* (London: Zwemmer, 1967), p. 78; see also S. S. Prawer *Caligari's Children* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1980), p. 187.

we see at the end Craig arriving again at Pilgrim's Farm in a series of shots that are identical to the opening of the film:

> We do not know whether the dream, with its inevitable events, has started again or whether this is the real-world event at last, because it would look the same either way. No matter how much Craig tries to escape, there is no escape, whether he is dreaming or finally visiting. The dream or event replays itself without a change, precisely as if it were a film that is starting over. *Dead of Night* is a narrative trap.[20]

According to Kawin, the 'narrative trap' that is formed by the final shots of the film is evidence of the film's self-reflexive entwining of the nightmare and the horror film that calls attention to 'the moral, aesthetic and psychological aspects of filming and watching horror, of putting the frightening in a narrative frame and a visual one, of looking.'[21] I agree with Kawin that the end of the film renders it impossible for the viewer to tell what is dream and what is 'reality', and that it provides no escape, and no real conclusion to the story. But I would like to approach the narrative structure of the film from a different angle and suggest that the nightmare does not need to be thought of as Craig's at all, but instead as a representation of compulsive repetition that could be any trauma victim's recurring dream. Thought of in these terms, the narrative structure of the film is representative of Freud's 'perpetual recurrence of the same thing'.[22] It has the quality of a disastrously failed analysis, where the analysand's psychical state does not progress via the process of working-through from passive to active, but instead from passive to fragmented. According to Freud, in cases such as these, the compulsion to repeat takes on a 'daemonic' appearance, and it drives the unfortunate victim self-destructively towards '*an earlier state of things*'[23] (Freud's

[20] Bruce F. Kawin *Horror and the Horror Film* (London, New York and Delhi: Anthem Press, 2012), p. 40.
[21] Kawin, p. 15.
[22] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 22.
[23] Ibid., p. 36.

italics), in other words, a death drive that impels the victim inexorably towards the inorganic state that preceded life.

In the ordering of the Hearse Driver story, Grainger's mental state progresses from the passivity of his delirium, to the activity of his recovery and his union with Joyce, and this trajectory is evidenced by the gradual diminishing of the severity of his visions and nightmares. In contrast, in the Linking Narrative, Craig's condition deteriorates from one that allows him to listen objectively to the stories of the other guests, to one in which the distinction between the stories and his own world collapses entirely. In a moment of what Balter terms 'radical discontinuity', Craig finds himself trapped inside the stories themselves, in Peter Cortland's mirror-image bedroom, then pursuing and striking Sally at the Christmas party, and finally in the prison cell with Hugo Fitch. For Balter, the very content and form of this last part of the film is representative of a state of psychosis. [24] I would like to propose that Craig's regression from passivity to fragmentation also provides a dilemma for the viewer, which is then resolved by Craig's waking in his bedroom in his flat in London, an event that enables us to conclude that everything that we have witnessed was 'only a dream'. In other words, a state of activity is restored. However, the final shots of the film call into question the reality of this active position, turning the film on its head as Craig returns to Pilgrim's Farm, and the nightmare is seen to begin all over again. The conclusion reveals *Dead of Night* as being concerned, not so much with the opposition between the rational and the supernatural, but with states of mind that are so radically traumatized by the events of the war that they cannot be returned to normal by either psychoanalytic or any other form of intervention.

[24] Balter, pp. 779-780.

3.4 *Dead of Night* and sexual difference: sexual development, motherhood, and hysteria

In this section, I examine how *Dead of Night* is informed by the post-war historical discourse that had its genesis in what Eli Zaretsky has termed the psychoanalytic 'turn towards the mother' of the 1920s and 1930s. This discourse manifests itself in the film's foregrounding of sexual difference, and the increasingly dominant role that women had come to occupy within British society in the post-war period.[25] I look in detail at how the film defines the character of Sally O'Hara in the Christmas Party story as operating within three dual relationships: with her young suitor Jimmy Watson, with the phantom Francis Kent, and with the elided figure of Francis' older half-sister Constance. I first show how the figure of Sally demonstrates *Dead of Night*'s interest in the psychoanalytic stages of sexual development, second how the film links female's capacity for sexuality and motherhood with the threat to masculinity, and third how it defines the male as needing to meet this threat with acts of retribution.

Sally introduces her story by stating that she had spent the previous Christmas with her family in Somerset, and that she had been invited to a children's costume party by Mrs. Watson, an old school-friend of her mother. At the party, with the exception of Mrs. Watson's teenage son Jimmy, the guests all appear to be somewhat younger than Sally. The film depicts both Sally and Jimmy as being at the age of transition between asexual latency and sexual adolescence, and the first section of the story revolves around Jimmy's unsophisticated attempts to seduce Sally, and her rather ambivalent responses. This narrative element is reinforced by Jimmy and Sally being dressed in the costumes of, respectively, Harlequin and Columbine, two stock

[25] See Eli Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), pp. 193-217.

Figure 3-3

characters of the Commedia dell'Arte that represent the light-hearted and amorous servant, and his flirtatious serving-maid mistress. As Sally's story begins, the children are playing a game of 'Blind Man's Buff'. Sally is blindfolded and, as she gropes around, she catches hold of Jimmy, and he kneels in front of her. As she feels his face to work out whom she has caught, she catches hold of his nose (Figure 3-3). In his assessment of the Christmas Party story Balter proposes that this action operates as a symbolic allusion to Sally's and Jimmy's mutual sexual attraction: 'in the game […] she holds the boy's nose and pronounces it both his and (in adolescent fashion) "silly". And, in case the audience fails to see the boy's nose as a phallic symbol, the elongated nose on his upturned mask points upward at an extremely suggestive angle.'[26]

[26] Balter, p. 763.

Whilst I agree with Balter that these actions display Sally's and Jimmy's nascent sexuality by positioning them both in relation to the male sexual object, I propose that Sally's drawing attention to, and mocking of, Jimmy's symbolic phallus exposes her relatively advanced level of sexual maturity, and also predicts her demeaning of him in the later scene in the attic. The children then propose a game of 'sardines'. Sally is chosen to hide, and she is then discovered by Jimmy concealed in a small curtained window seat. As Jimmy sits down beside her Sally complains of the cold, effectively inviting Jimmy's proposition, and he responds by putting his arm around her. Jimmy then says that he knows a much better place to hide, and he takes Sally's hand, and leads her up a spiral staircase into a dusty attic. He tells her that the house is haunted, and that a murder was committed there in 1860 by a girl who strangled a boy and 'then half cut his head off'. The two then proceed to elaborate elements of this story to each other, imagining 'a long white nightgown', 'clanking chains', and 'blood curdling screams'. In analysing this sequence, Balter refers to Freud's contention that fright may be sexually stimulating, and he proposes that Sally's and Jimmy's imaginings generate an atmosphere of mutual sexual excitement that culminates in Jimmy making a pass at Sally, and in her bolting from the room.[27] In Balter's words, Sally's flight from her sexual excitement at this point 'indicates that she still has some way to go to integrate her already mature sexuality with her still-lingering latency morality.'[28] After passing along a corridor Sally pauses and shudders, before entering another room that appears to be a nursery. Here she meets a much younger boy, Francis Kent, who is dressed in clothes of a much earlier period (Figure 3-4).

[27] For Freud's views on the various sources of sexual excitation see, for example, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in *The Standard Edition vol. VII*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953; repr. 1986), pp. 203-204.
[28] Balter, p. 764.

Figure 3-4

In his general assessment of the Christmas Party story, Balter claims that, in transitioning between the attic and the phantom nursery, Sally runs away from Jimmy's sexual advances and '*back into the world of children*' (Balter's italics).[29] I would like to propose that the opposite is true: that this transition confirms Sally's passage from asexual latency to sexual adolescence, and therefore her accession to a position of female potency. The effect of this transition, from the point of view of the film's description of Jimmy's actions, is the mobilization of what Karen Horney terms the 'deep-seated masculine dread of the woman (the mother) or of the female genital'. According to Horney, this male dread of the woman's genital can be traced, not to

[29] Ibid.

what Freud had theorized earlier as the male fear of his potential castration, but instead to the male's envy of the female's capacity for motherhood.[30]

In the attic, after Jimmy has asked Sally for a kiss, he grabs her hand and pulls her towards him. She pulls a sack down from the roof onto Jimmy, smothering him in dust. Sally watches him for a moment, a little staggered by the effect of her act. Jimmy coughs and sneezes overcome by the dust. As soon as Sally sees that he is alright, she turns away and leaves the room. According to Jez Connolly and David Owain Bates, Jimmy's uncontrolled sneeze recalls 'an involuntary loss of physical control common to teenage boys upon first physical encounter with a girl in somewhat more intimate situations.'[31] At any rate, Sally's treatment of Jimmy here certainly has the effect of demeaning him. As she crosses the threshold into the nursery Sally pauses and looks around; the camera tracks back and holds her, giving the impression that she is very tall, an imposing image that poses a contrast with the last vision that we had of Jimmy. The phantom Francis Kent re-enforces this image of Sally as an adult by saying that his half-sister Constance is 'grown-up' like Sally; and now Sally acknowledges the fact of this transformation for her, by stating that all the other girls at the party had seemed much younger than her. By means of its emphasis of her passage from the attic to the nursery, *Dead of Night* foregrounds Sally's leaving of the latency of the world of the tentative games that she had played with Jimmy, and her adopting of the role of the mother in relation to Francis. Seeing that Francis is crying Sally comforts him, wipes his face with her handkerchief, kisses him, and tucks him up in bed, before calmly leaving him to return to the party. There is, however, a third duality that features in the story, which serves, within the film's logic, to pathologize Sally's

[30] Karen Horney, 'The Dread of Woman', in *Psychoanalysis and Male Sexuality* ed. by Hendrick M. Ruitenbeek (New Haven, CT: College & University Press, 1966), pp. 88-91.
[31] Jez Connolly and David Owain Bates, *Dead of Night* (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2015), p. 63.

accession to sexual maturity, and to present her potential motherhood as a 'problem'. This is mobilized by Francis Kent's suggestion that Sally is 'like' his older half-sister Constance.

The film's use of the historical figure of Constance Kent is both surprising and significant. Possibly the most famous instant in the Victorian era of the murder of a child by a female, the case of Constance Kent fascinated the public at the time and motivated a raft of popular literature over the decades that followed.[32] In 1865, Constance Kent confessed to the murder of her half-brother Francis Saville Kent, who was aged 3 years and 10 months, at his home Road Hill House in Road, Somerset in 1861. He had been stabbed in the chest and hands, and his throat was cut so deeply that his head was almost severed from his body. Although suspicion initially fell on Constance's brother William, Constance was sentenced to death for the crime, although this sentence was later commuted to one of life imprisonment. In her assessment of Victorian constructions of female insanity, legal historian Samantha Pegg argues that this case, and others of the time where women were found to have murdered children, describe the point where, in the Victorian sensibility, femininity, homicide, and 'madness' intersect.[33] Although she did not seek to benefit from a plea of insanity at her trial, Pegg's investigation of contemporary newspaper reports points to the fact that Constance Kent was, nevertheless, widely assumed to be insane. According to Pegg, this assumption is indicative of the proscribed nature of femininity at this time:

> We have an idea of the Victorian female as one suppressed, fragile and innocent. While this is a stereotyped presentation, it holds some truth in

[32] Constance Kent died in 1944 at the age of 100, a year before the release of *Dead of Night*. Even in the late 1920s, accounts of the case were still being published. See, for example, John Rhode, *The Case of Constance Kent* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1928).
[33] Samantha Pegg, 'Madness is a Woman: Constance Kent and Victorian Constructions of Female Insanity', in *Liverpool Law Review* 30 (2009), p. 207. For a study of how both female and male murderers have more recently been made to signify specific problematic social subjects, see Lisa Downing, *The Subject of Murder: Gender, Exceptionality, and the Modern Killer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013)

> that the state of being female was then strictly socially prescribed. The feminine ideal regarded dependency and compassion as central traits, not only in terms of womanhood itself but as indicative of the health of Victorian society. Had then Constance and her fellow child murderers belied their femininity in such a way that to hold them insane would be the only way to understand this breach?[34]

This idea of women 'belying their femininity' by acting in ways that do not live up to the expectations of a predominantly patriarchal world-view recalls the later psychopathology of hysteria. By means of the diagnosis of hysteria, physical actions and symptoms come to represent both the psychopathological 'problems' of the hysteric, and her protests against the prevailing patriarchal system that is able to define, by virtue of its position of power, those actions and symptoms as 'problems'.[35]

Thought of in these terms, *Dead of Night*'s doubling of Sally and Constance Kent reveals the dilemma that it sometimes poses in its various representations of women. At several points we find female figures that are portrayed as being strong and resourceful, and at the same also defined as problematic precisely because of their strength and resourcefulness. This is noticeable, for example, in the Haunted Mirror story and the Golfing story, where it is suggested that Joan Cortland and Mary Lee both require the sexual attentions of two men in order to be fulfilled. By means of the doubling of Sally's actions towards Jimmy and of Constance Kent's brutal murder of Francis, *Dead of Night* poses femininity as powerful and threatening, and it constitutes it as a 'problem' that is most easily defined in terms of psychopathology.

At the end of the film, when Walter Craig's ability to distinguish between the stories and his own world completely collapses, he finds himself inside the Christmas Party story. He takes the place of Jimmy, taking Sally's hand and leading her up the spiral staircase into the attic. At this point, and in the exact place that Sally has earlier

[34] Pegg, pp. 219-220.
[35] For an assessment of the sociological impact of Breuer and Freud's work on hysteria see Julia Borossa, *Hysteria* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2001), pp. 5-7.

demeaned Jimmy, he hits her 'savagely, viciously' as he has predicted earlier that he will do. Sally collapses into a chair, seemingly unconscious, or even dead. By having Craig, a character for whom we have great sympathy, act as the instrument by which Sally is punished for her actions, the film seems at first glance to operate in normative terms. The reproduction of dominant patriarchal beliefs seems ensured by the male figure's gaining retribution for the threat that the female has posed to him. However, by defining this need as existing within Craig's obvious state of psychosis, the film seems, in its conclusion, to call this position into question. The ending of *Dead of Night* can be read, therefore, as operating as an ideological discourse that is subversive in the extreme, in the way it defines the male need to gain retribution as *itself* a symptom of psychopathology.

3.5 *Dead of Night* and object relations psychoanalysis: projection and identification, reality and fantasy

Within an object relations framework, the mind is held to exist in the form of an 'internal object world', which is made up of psychical representations of those external objects with which the individual has formed interpersonal connections. In object relations theory, these representations are considered to take hold gradually within the psyche via unconscious processes, and they are then coloured by aspects of the self that are projected onto them as a result of the mobilization of defensive strategies. Internal objects are, therefore, in a constant state of flux, as the individual's experience of the external world changes, and as the subject's own psychical orientation alters. Within this framework, the line between inner and outer worlds is necessarily blurred. In normal development, the structure of the inner world is constantly held to account by a process of 'reality testing' against the individual's perception of the world outside. The individual's mode of relation with the internal

world is a definitive element in whether the relationship that the individual has with the world outside is either normal or pathological.

As I have already detailed, Charles Barr has proposed *Dead of Night* as an example of the spectacular shift that occurs in British films in the mid-1940s. One way that this can be found to operate in the Haunted Mirror story is in the making visible the internal object worlds of its two main characters via the visions that they see in the mirror. I would like to argue that the film configures these visions in terms of Peter's and Joan's respective psychopathologies; in order to place these configurations in the context of contemporary psychoanalytic influences, I position these visions in relation to Klein's concept of projection in the paranoid-schizoid position, and Ferenczi's and Anna Freud's concept of the identification with the aggressor.

As has already been stated, in his assessment of *Dead of Night* Charles Barr finds that both the Haunted Mirror and Ventriloquist Dummy sequences are 'clearly stories of the return of the repressed: elements in the psyche that have been rigidly kept down find their way back to confront the repressor in a monstrous externalized form.'[36] He argues that the repressors of these elements are the characters themselves, complacent in their assumption of rational male control over their worlds. Behind these are the actors and the associations that they bring with them, and behind them Ealing, the dominant studio for war-effort production, making films for 'social use', and 'keeping out of sight the forces of sex, violence and fantasy.'[37] In psychoanalysis, repression is the process by which unacceptable 'primary' drive impulses are contained within the unconscious. A primary mental process is an unconscious activity, in contrast to the 'secondary' processes that are characteristic of conscious or pre-conscious thinking. The return of the repressed consists of the involuntary

[36] Barr, *All Our Yesterdays*, pp. 17-18.
[37] Ibid, p. 18.

eruption into consciousness of unacceptable derivatives of primary impulses, for example in the remembered content of dreams.[38] Barr uses the term 'repression' to cover a wide range of mostly conscious and pre-conscious operations that go a long way beyond the psychoanalytic meaning of the word, and a more appropriate term for his purposes might have been 'suppression', a non-psychoanalytic term that the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as 'the action of keeping something secret'. By means of looking at Peter and Joan's visions through the lens of object relations theory, I would like to propose that the film does not employ the concept of 'repression' in the general way that Barr describes, but instead very specifically, and in terms that are particularly relevant to object relations psychoanalysis.

Peter's visions in the mirror can be separated into three groups of experiences that differentiate themselves by their increasing clarity and intensity. These are separated from each other by lapses of time; in each case a period of a few weeks. The first set occurs on Peter's birthday, after Joan has given him the ornate Chippendale mirror. In his bedroom, Peter fixes the mirror onto the wall behind his dressing table, and he asks Joan 'what sort of journey did you have', to which she replies that she had been given a lift by her friend, Guy, in his 'nice comfortable Bentley'. When Peter lightly criticizes Joan for pleasing her 'disgusting feminine vanity' by keeping Guy 'on a piece of string', Joan replies more seriously: 'You be careful. I'm very fond of Guy.' Immediately after this exchange, the couple stand together in front of the mirror and gaze at their reflections. Joan pronounces them to be a 'handsome couple', but Peter thinks he sees something in the mirror that he cannot define.

That night, when Peter returns alone to his flat after dining with Joan, he sees the first vision of the other room with its heavily carved and decorated four-poster bed,

[38] See Charles Rycroft, *Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), pp. 157-158 on repression, and pp. 137-138 on the primary and secondary mental processes.

Figure 3-5

and a log fire burning in the grate. A few weeks later, the second set of visions occur. Joan is again visiting Peter's flat and she is full of the arrangements for their wedding, but Peter is quiet and preoccupied. He reveals to her that his visions have recently got much worse:

> At first, if I made an enormous effort of will, the reflection used to change back to what it ought to be. But lately, however hard I try, it – it doesn't change any more. The only thing to do is to try not to look in it at all. But in a queer sort of way, it fascinates me. I feel as if that room – the one in the mirror – were trying to – to claim me, to draw me into it. It almost becomes the real room and my bedroom imaginary.

Joan bids Peter to stand with her in front of the mirror, and, as she clasps his hand, he is able to make the vision disappear, and he sees his own room again reflected in the mirror (Figure 3-5). A few weeks after this, the third set of visions materializes. Peter and Joan are now married, and they have moved into their house in Chelsea; we learn that during this time the visions have not occurred. The couple are both invited to Joan's mother's house in Chichester, but Peter has to stay behind in London because

of the pressure of his work. After Joan has left him alone, Peter's visions return with a vengeance, and he finds that he can no longer differentiate between his own room and the one that he sees in the mirror. Joan rushes back to London after learning from the antiques dealer the terrible history of the mirror's previous owner. She says to Peter: 'I've found what's wrong with the mirror', to which he replies: 'There's nothing wrong with the mirror. I look in it often. I sit here and look at these four walls, and then, for a change, I look at them in the mirror.' Peter accuses Joan of making a public laughing stock of him by pursuing her affair with Guy, and he announces his intention to punish her as she deserves to be punished. As they struggle in front of the mirror he attempts to strangle her.

There is no accounting for the fact that Peter's first two sets of visions predict the details of the story of Francis Etherington that will be told later to Joan by the antique dealer from whom she had originally bought the mirror. This is a supernatural element of the story that is part of an upward trajectory of the occurrence of strange phenomena that unfolds during the film's narrative, which culminates in the many unexplainable elements of the Ventriloquist Dummy sequence. Setting this element of the story aside, all three sets of Peters' of visions can be found to be ordered around the Kleinian object relational concept of projection. This concept describes the externalization of feelings and wishes that the individual refuses to recognise reside in the self, and their relocation instead inside an external object.[39] In commentating on Klein's work, Elizabeth Bott Spillius and others explain that projection is the system by which Klein articulates the child's externalization of the conflict with the mother:

> Klein's original observations were of children acting out a relation between toys and the external world, in which it is the internal conflict or internal relationship that is projected into the external world […] Thus part of the ego – a mental state, for instance, such as unwelcomed anger, hatred

[39] For Klein's account of the process of projection see 'Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms', in *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 27 (1946), pp. 99-110.

> or other bad feeling – is seen in another person and quite disowned (denied) in oneself.[40]

According to Klein, projection can form part of normal psychical functioning in that it deflects the death drive outwards, and therefore helps the ego in overcoming anxiety by ridding it of danger and badness. However, projection can also form part of abnormal paranoid-schizoid object relations, and these are characterized by the violent splitting of the self, and by excessive projections of the ego that lead to a state of total mental fragmentation.[41]

Dead of Night configures the Haunted Mirror story around Peter's sexual insecurity with regard to Joan. This insecurity is seen to manifest itself in his paranoid jealousy towards Guy, a feeling that he is initially able to repress and externalize. Peter's first set of visions begin, not with the arrival of the mirror, or even when the couple look into the mirror for the first time, but with the stinging hurt for Peter of Joan's defence of Guy.

The second set of visions, which occur in the lead-up to the wedding, happen in Joan's absence, and when he later tells Joan about them, and when Joan clasps his hand in front of the mirror, he is able to master them. In the way that it orders this phase of his psychopathology, the film describes Guy as still being able to tell the difference between the real world and the imaginary one; the phantom room is only 'almost' the real room.

Finally, in the third set of visions, Peter can no longer distinguish between fantasy and reality at all, and he cannot tell his room and the phantom room apart. Peter Hutchings argues that Peter's visions 'are associated with a crisis of gender (and

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[40] Elizabeth Bott Spillius and others, *The New Dictionary of Kleinian Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 455.
[41] For an explanation of the child's use of splitting and projection as defences, see Melanie Klein, 'The Importance of Symbol Formation in the Development of the Ego', in *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 11 (1930), pp. 24-39.

especially male) identity' and that 'this of course is an anxiety specific to the post-1945 transition from war to peace and the social and representational dislocations that this involved, an anxiety acknowledged throughout this film, in all its stories'.[42] Hutchings is suggesting that Peter's personal crisis is representational of the wider crisis of masculinity faced by many men at this time of great social change. I agree with this idea, and I argue further that this crisis of male subjectivity is laid bare in the Haunted Mirror story via the process of the film's representations of Peter's gradually fragmenting internal object world. As a defence against his sexual insecurity towards Joan, Peter is presented as repressing his feelings of sexual insecurity and projecting them outwards into the fantasy of the story of Francis Etherington. In similar terms, the film externalizes this psychopathological inner world into the series of visions that we, and Peter, see in the mirror. Peter's increasing inability to adapt by reality-testing, and by altering the structure of this inner world, mirrors, therefore, the general crisis of the male in adjusting to the new world that the film suggests orders the immediate post-war period.

But what of Joan's vision of the phantom room that she sees as Peter attempts to strangle her? (Figure 3-6) *Dead of Night* carefully underpins the idea that this is her vision, and not Peter's, by having Joyce state after the end of the story that 'Joan saw the room in the mirror as well as Peter'. Joan sees precisely the same vision of the phantom room as Peter's, but this cannot be explained by being a projection of her internal object world as she betrays none of Peter's sexual insecurities, and even if she did, her internal world would certainly be configured differently to Peter's.

After the story is over, back in the drawing room of Pilgrim's Farm, Dr Van Straaten accounts for Joan's vision by calling it 'a case of crypto-amnesia. The

[42] Peter Hutchings, *Hammer and Beyond: The British Horror Film* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 35.

Figure 3-6

transmissibility of an illusion by one person to one or more other persons who are emotionally cohesive is well established.' Dr Van Straaten's words recall the concept of the identification with the aggressor as put forward during the 1930s by both Ferenczi and Anna Freud. Ferenczi, in his 'Confusion of Tongues' essay, establishes the paradigm shift in psychoanalytic trauma theory away from endogenous Oedipal fixation and towards the importance of exogenous historical traumatic events. Ferenczi describes how, after the initial sexual attack by the adult, the child victim's immediate impulse is one of 'rejection, hatred, disgust and energetic refusal.' If these anxieties are allowed to grow, and to reach a certain level of extremity, they will lead to fragmentation of the ego via an 'introjection' of certain elements of the aggressor's psyche:

> *The same anxiety, however, if it reaches a certain maximum, compels them to subordinate themselves like automata to the will of the aggressor, to*

> *divine each one of his desires and to gratify these*; *completely oblivious of themselves they identify with the aggressor*.[43] (Ferenczi's italics)

As Anna Freud argues, by taking on some elements of the aggressor's nature, by assuming his attributes or imitating his aggression, the child victim is able, to an extent, to change herself from the person threatened into the person who is making the threat.[44] By means of the defence of identifying with the aggressor, both the attack and the attacker therefore cease to exist for the victim as rigid external realities, but this relief also comes, in many cases, at a very high cost to the victim. As Judit Mészáros explains, the defence 'brings about a paradoxical situation: it ensures survival but at the price of perpetuating the traumatic situation, that is of allowing the possibility of repetition; taken *ad absurdum*, the aggression becomes acceptable and the aggressor is tamed' (Mészáros' italics).[45]

The film's laying-out of Joan's vision can be interpreted in psychoanalytic terms, therefore, as defining her temporary identification with the psychotic delusions of her husband, and as an unconscious defensive action that, if pursued, would have led not only to the preservation of his condition, but also to the establishment and maintenance of her victimhood. Barr, and several other commentators, argue that Joan's action of breaking the mirror has the effect of restoring 'normality' in their relationship: 'He no longer remembers the nightmare, and they are free to go back to being a charming young couple, which is what they presumably will do. It is like a lobotomy.'[46]

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[43] Sándor Ferenczi, 'Confusion of Tongues Between the Adults and the Child – (*The Language of Tenderness and of Passion*)', in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 30 (1949), p. 228.
[44] Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1966), p. 113.
[45] Judit Mészáros, 'Building blocks Toward Contemporary Trauma Theory: Ferenczi's Paradigm Shift', in *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 70:4 (2010), p. 336.
[46] Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios* (London: Studio Vista, 1993), p. 57.

I would like to argue the opposite of this: that by smashing the mirror Joan is shown to destroy her subordinated vision of Peter's projection. In doing this, Joan declines to surrender herself to the will of the aggressor, Peter, and her action indicates her absolute refusal to identify with his vision, and, by extension, with his defensive re-ordering of the postwar world of uncertain gender relationships. In this way, the conclusion of the Haunted Mirror story is particularly transgressive in making no attempt to re-impose an ideology of the pre-war dominant social formations, as many other films of the immediate post-war period seek to do. As we re-enter the world of the Linking Narrative, at the end of her story, Joan has rejected completely any male control over her world. Unlike the characters of Grainger and his wife Joyce, who are re-united in the present of the Linking Narrative, Peter has completely disappeared and is never mentioned again, and the strong and independent figure of Joan emerges as the only survivor of her story.

In this section, all three of the discursive formations outlined in Chapter Two have been found to have significant influence on the text. In the next section, which centres itself on female desire and female subjectivity in *The Seventh Veil* and *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, the discourses surrounding sexual difference and gender roles take on the central role. However, as will be demonstrated, these discourses are always expressed in terms that are filtered through the psychoanalytic lenses of trauma, anxiety, and the theory of object relations.

Chapter Four

'What Does a Woman Want?'[1]: Childhood trauma, female desire, and female subjectivity in *The Seventh Veil* and *Madonna of the Seven Moons*

4.1 Introduction to *The Seventh Veil*

The Seventh Veil was enormously successful in both Britain and America at the time of its release in the winter of 1945/1946, and it would win the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay, and also appear the following summer as one of the official British entries in the Cannes Film Festival.[2] *The Seventh Veil* has many of the qualities of the romantic drama, but it is unusual in that the romance between its two main figures, Francesca and Nicholas, is rendered fraught for much of the film's narrative by their respective mental issues, which have the effect of forcing them into positions that are reminiscent of the idea of narcissistic self-absorption. The narrative of *The Seventh Veil* makes it clear that the neuroses that affect Francesca and Nicholas have their roots in the traumas that they have suffered during their childhoods, and it defines these as originating in events such as physical abuse, parental loss, and abandonment. A psychoanalyst, Dr Larsen, enables Francesca to address her dilemma, enabling her, by the end of the film, to re-enter the world of human relationships. In the first section of this chapter I assess how *The Seventh Veil* centralizes the

[1] The chapter title derives from a letter that Freud wrote to his friend and analysand Princess Marie Bonaparte towards the end of his life. In the letter, he describes this as the 'great question that has never been answered and which I have not been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research.' The letter is reproduced in Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), p. 421.

[2] According to research conducted by the British Film Institute, in 2005 *The Seventh Veil* was still the tenth most successful film ever released in Britain when measured by audience attendance, see Ryan Gilbey and Jonathan Ross, *Ultimate Film: The UK's 100 Most Popular Films* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005).

psychoanalytic concept that early detrimental experience can result in a predisposition to neurosis. In the second section, I investigate how the film employs the psychoanalytic setting as a means of both subjective narration and objective investigation, and how the actions of the psychoanalyst figure, Dr Larsen, are employed by the film in an attempt to effect the reproduction of the status quo of dominant patriarchal beliefs.

4.2 Synopsis

In *The Seventh Veil* a brilliant young concert pianist, Francesca Cunningham (Ann Todd), is placed in the care of a psychoanalyst, Dr Larsen (Herbert Lom), after she has suffered a neurotic breakdown and has attempted to take her own life. Dr Larsen administers a drug to Francesca that effects a narcoleptic trance, in which she reveals the story of her troubled past. In her trance, she re-lives various past events. She recounts that her mother had died when she was six, and that she was then sent to a boarding school. At the school, Francesca fails to obtain a music scholarship after she has been caned on her hands for a minor misdemeanour. At the age of fourteen, following the death of her father, she is sent to live at the London home of a wealthy older second cousin, Nicholas (James Mason), who has been made her guardian. Like Francesca, Nicholas also has a troubled past. Nicholas encourages Francesca to develop her talents as a pianist; he becomes her mentor and arranges for her tuition at the Royal Academy of Music. Here she meets Peter Gay (Hugh McDermott), an American saxophonist, and they fall in love and decide to marry. When Francesca announces her intentions to Nicholas, he forbids the marriage and, in an attempt to prevent her from seeing Peter, he takes her away to Europe where he oversees her successful career as a concert pianist. Nicholas controls every aspect of Francesca's

life, and for seven years they travel Europe together, before they finally return to London.

Nicholas arranges for Francesca to have her portrait painted by a famous artist, Maxwell Leyden (Albert Lieven). Francesca and Max become romantically involved, and she agrees to live with him in his villa in Italy. However, when she informs Nicholas of this, he flies into a rage and strikes her hands repeatedly with his walking stick. Francesca flees the house with Max, but, as they drive away, their car crashes. Francesca suffers superficial burns to her hands, and, following a neurotic breakdown, she is consigned to the care of Dr Larsen. Now the narrative returns to the present. As a result of her breakdown, Francesca believes that she will never be able to play the piano again. Dr Larsen declares his intention to hypnotise her, and thereby remove the fixation that he feels is the barrier to her recovery. Whilst this is initially unsuccessful, Dr Larsen is subsequently able to help Francesca to face up to the her trauma and to return her to health. He assembles her three suitors, Nicholas, Max, and Peter, and he announces that Francesca's past is over for her, and that she is now able to decide who she wants to be with. Francesca chooses Nicholas.

4.3 The troubled pasts of Francesca and Nicholas: early detrimental experiences and the predisposition to traumatic neurosis.

Early in *The Seventh Veil*, we find the fourteen-year-old Francesca at her boarding school. After an escapade with her friend Susan, Francesca is summoned to the office of the headmistress. In the office, Francesca stands in front of the headmistress, who towers over her holding a cane in her hand. Francesca says: 'Oh I know I must be punished of course but not on the hands, please not on my hands. Today is the music scholarship and if you cane me my hands will…oh please.' The shot dissolves to a close-up of Francesca as she flinches in pain as she is beaten

Figure 4-1

repeatedly on her upturned hands (Figure 4-1). In the next sequence, we see her sitting forlornly at a piano after having failed the scholarship, her hands so swollen and blistered that she has been unable to play at all. Later, after Francesca is orphaned by the death of her father and she is sent to live with Nicholas. Having arrived at his well-appointed London house she is shown into his drawing room, and she stands nervously by the door at the rear of the frame, while Nicholas sits facing us in the foreground. The huge room dwarfs her; and although perspective dictates that Nicholas must appear much larger than Francesca, his figure is rendered just as small as hers as a result of his being seated in an oversized armchair (Figure 4-2). As Nicholas addresses Francesca, he looks upwards and to his left at something outside the frame. He says:

> Listen carefully. This is a bachelor establishment; it means I don't like women about the place. When I came to live in this house I promised myself that no woman should ever enter it, and so far, none has. You are the first.

Figure 4-2

In the next sequence, we find that his look had been at a portrait of his mother that hangs above his fireplace, and yet we learn that his mother's name is never mentioned in the house as she has run away with a singer, abandoning Nicholas when he was twelve.

As has already been stated, the producer of *The Seventh* Veil, Sydney Box, claimed that the screenplay of the film grew out of a War Office documentary called *The Psychiatric Treatment of Battle Casualties*. Andrew Spicer, the editor of Box's autobiography, reports that he has been unable to trace this film. However, it seems likely that Box is referring to a documentary produced by Basil Wright for the Ministry of Information called *Neuro Psychiatry 1943*. This film, directed by Michael Hankinson, was made with the intention of convincing influential policy makers in North America that effective treatments had been found for servicemen with traumatic

neuroses, and civilians suffering from the effects of the Blitz. According to medical historian Edgar Jones, the film presents the administration of a wide range of treatments to combat veterans, including group therapy, electro-convulsive therapy, and analysis under narcosis.[3]

During the pre-production of *The Seventh Veil*, Box sought the services of an American psychiatrist, Victor Alheim, to advise on the script. Alheim, who had been attached to the American Army in England during the war, had gained experience of dealing with extreme cases of shell-shock and other severe forms of mental illness.[4] Some commentators have discerned these psychiatric influences in their readings of the film, for example, Spicer states that 'Nicholas would have been recognised, metaphorically, as a damaged veteran, in need of understanding and compassion.'[5] Certainly the film's mise-en-scene seems to emphasize this idea by presenting Nicholas as having a limp and walking with a stick, thus drawing on historical discourses of hysteria and shell-shock, which define victims as often expressing their psychical conflicts symbolically by means of their somatic symptoms.

In the two sequences that I have described, *The Seventh Veil* signals its interest in the concept of traumatic affect, but it also anchors its narrative in the idea that psychical problems can be traced back to traumatic events that have occurred in childhood. In positioning Francesca and Nicholas within the frame in ways that define them as being dominated by their surroundings, the film signposts the common ground that can be found between the damaged veteran and women who are themselves psychically wounded. To this end, many aspects of the film's narrative are concerned

[3] Edgar Jones, '*Neuro Psychiatry 1943*: the role of documentary film in the dissemination of medical knowledge and promotion of the UK psychiatric profession', in *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 69:2 (2012), p. 300.
[4] Kit Porlock, *The Seventh Veil* (London: World Film Publication, 1946), p. 81.
[5] Andrew Spicer, *Sydney Box* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 54.

with the symptoms of Francesca's neuroses, such as her obsessive behaviour in relation to her hands, her inability to sustain relationships, and her suicidal tendencies.

By allocating more or less equal importance to both Francesca's and Nicholas' dilemmas, and by making the resolution of those problems its narrative goal, the film broadens out its trauma narrative into one that would have had resonance with the majority of its contemporary viewers, many of whom would themselves have had first or second-hand experience of the trauma of war. In this, the film is certainly influenced by contemporary historical discourses that revolved around the general effects of the demobilization of men who suffering from battle neurosis.[6] However, it is in the particular way in which it foregrounds the early traumatic experiences of Francesca and Nicholas that the film can be found to position itself in relation to these discourses, rather than merely appropriating their various ideas.

In *Psychoanalysis and the War Neuroses*, published in 1921, leading psychoanalysts including Ferenczi, Karl Abraham, and Ernst Simmel address many of the theoretical dilemmas that had emerged from the widespread traumatic experience of the First World War. One important question for psychoanalysis in the inter-war years was why only a minority of men who had served at the front developed traumatic neuroses, while the majority of veterans emerged from their experiences free from any lasting traumatic affect. In addressing this question, they proposed that:

> It is often necessary to appreciate the relation between a current conflict and an older one, for the real strength and importance of the current one is often due to the fact that it has aroused buried and imperfectly controlled older ones.[7]

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[6] For example, Mass-Observation's *The Journey Home*, published in 1944, looks back to the experience of the years following the Great War in order to predict the effects of demobilization on the British population at the end of the present war. Mention is made, for example, of the 'prevailing spirit of unrest' that had been motivated in 1918 by 'men, suddenly released from the strain of war and almost all in an abnormal social condition', see pp. 26-27.

[7] Sándor Ferenczi, Ernst Simmel and others, *Psychoanalysis and the War Neuroses* (London, Vienna and New York: The International Psycho-Analytic Press, 1921), p. 51.

In tackling what specifically this older conflict might consist of, the authors follow classical Freudian theory in declaring that it must be 'an unresolved infantile conflict which means that the person has not satisfactorily developed past a given stage of individual evolution'.[8] They do admit, however, that some dissenters within the psychoanalytic community oppose this view, suggesting instead that traumatic neurosis is different to the neuroses of peacetime because 'in war the conflict with the instinct for self-preservation and the ego-ideal is enough to lead to neurosis.'[9] In other words, whilst at this point the majority of influential psychoanalytic theorists still believed, as Freud had done since the late 1890s, that the emergence of traumatic affect revealed fissures that had their psychogenesis in Oedipal fixations, others were beginning to believe that war trauma was different, it that it could emerge from factors beyond the psychical orientations of its victims.

In her assessment of the trauma narrative of *The Seventh Veil*, Marcia Landy points to Oedipal fixation as underpinning the film's ordering of Francesca's and Nicholas' troubled pasts. She states that:

> The film is replete with father figures – Francesca's suitors, the psychoanalyst – all competing for Francesca. Mother figures are absent except as they appear in Francesca's childhood in the guise of the schoolmistresses. She is bereft of a female figure with whom she can identify and bond. The doctor is the one who unravels Francesca's oedipal attachment to Nicholas, thus enabling Francesca to return to him not as a child but voluntarily as a woman. Nicholas must work through his negative attachment to his mother. Francesca, who has taken his mother's place in his life, exacerbates his mistrust of women.[10]

Laplanche and Pontalis define the Oedipus complex as 'a desire for the death of the rival – the parent of the same sex – and a sexual desire for the parent of the opposite

[8] Ferenczi, Simmel and others, p. 54.
[9] Ibid., p. 55.
[10] Marcia Landy, *British Genres: Cinema and Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 225-226.

sex', and they point out that the complex usually takes hold between the ages of three and five.[11] In fact, *The Seventh Veil* takes great pains to make it clear that the neuroses suffered by Francesca and Nicholas have their roots, not in Oedipal phantasies that have established themselves during their early childhoods, but in historical traumas such as physical abuse, parental loss, and parental abandonment, which have occurred in their later lives.

The key question is, given the film's ordering of its narrative around broadly psychoanalytic ideas, why is it that it refuses to countenance the classical Freudian theory that Oedipal desire acts as an ordering mechanism for later neurotic orientation, when the majority of psychoanalytic theorists still upheld this view? To put this another way, how is it that *The Seventh Veil*, and several other British films of this period, seem to anticipate the paradigm shift in psychoanalytic trauma theory that would only enter the mainstream in the post-war period?[12]

An indication of the answer to this question can be found in the huge popularity that *The Seventh Veil* found with its audiences. In removing Oedipal desire as the determining factor in Francesca's and Nicholas' traumas, the film defines their later neurotic behaviour as being solely caused by exogenous events that are outside their control, and not by endogenous factors motivated by their own psychical dysfunctions. Within this model, the victims of trauma have no need to look within for a reason for their traumatization, with all of the implications of guilt and fault that this implies. In adopting this model, *The Seventh Veil* and, as I will demonstrate, several other films of this period, are responding to the British population's own experience of the two world wars, one formed, to an extent, by the witnessing of real and not imagined

[11] Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1973), p. 283.
[12] This is the case in four out of the five films that are examined in the thesis. Another example of a film of this time that is careful to underline the historical nature of traumatic experience is *A Matter of Life and Death*, in which the young airman's neuroses are configured in terms of the effect of the loss of his father at an early age.

traumatic events. Soon after the war, psychoanalytic theory, which had begun to adapt to the more exogenous trauma model that had been outlined by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, would be compelled to follow this path. This move would ultimately result in Ferenczi's 'Confusion of Tongues' paper – suppressed by the psychoanalytic community since 1932, and proposing precisely this paradigm shift – being published in Britain in 1949.[13] In other words, both cinema and psychoanalysis were responding to the emotional needs of their audiences *at the same time*, and adapted themselves in similar ways, motivated as they both were to respond to their experiences of real, and not imagined, traumatic conflict. At the close of the film, Francesca seems to have been cured of her debilitating illness, and therefore able to re-enter the world of human relationships. In the next section, I look at what the film defines as being at stake in that outcome.

4.4 The processes of psychoanalysis: narration and reliving past events, and the re-inscription of the status quo of sexual difference

Near the beginning of *The Seventh Veil*, the psychoanalyst Dr Larsen confers with two English medical doctors, Kendall and Irving, whose attempts at treating the neurotic, suicidal, and now cataleptic Francesca via conventional methods have been unsuccessful. The disapproving Dr Kendall demurs that psychiatry 'savours a little of prying', and he winces when Dr Larsen likens the psychoanalytic process of uncovering the unconscious to the method of a surgeon who 'does not operate without first taking off the patient's clothes'. Dr Larsen says:

> The human mind is like Salome at the beginning of her dance, hidden from the outside world by seven veils, veils of reserve, shyness, fear. Now with friends the average person will drop first one veil then another, maybe three or four altogether. With a lover she will take off five, or even six, but

[13] For an assessment of the paradigm shift in psychoanalytic trauma theory that was finally acknowledged by the publishing of Ferenczi's 'Confusion of Tongues' paper, see pages 76-77, above.

Figure 4-3

> never the seventh. Never. You see the human mind likes to cover its nakedness and keep its private thoughts to itself. Salome dropped her seventh veil of her own free will, but you will never get the human mind to do that, and that is why I use narcosis. Five minutes under narcosis and down comes the seventh veil, and we can see what is actually going on behind it, and then we can really help.

Although *The Seventh Veil* orders its narrative around the psychological problems of Francesca and Nicholas, the primary object of Dr Larsen's investigations is Francesca. By administering the narcotic, Dr Larsen returns to her the power of speech, and she is thus able to reveal to us her traumatic past. The film presents her account in the form of an extended flashback, and the psychoanalytic setting, along with the figure of Dr Larsen, recedes into the background as Francesca begins her narrative (Figure 4-3). The film encourages the audience to enter Francesca's subjectivity as she re-experiences those events that have influenced the make-up of her internal world, and which have motivated her breakdown. The subjective nature of the film's narrative

mechanism is striking, and in this it calls to mind other British films of the immediate post-war period such as *Brief Encounter*, *A Matter of Life and Death*, and *Mine Own Executioner* in which fundamental elements of their characters' makeups are revealed by means of our access to their internal worlds. According to Ann Todd, the original script of *The Seventh Veil* described an even more marked representation of female subjectivity:

> In this story the girl was the only person who appeared on the screen. The other characters were to be filmed in shadow "voices-off" and reflections in the piano and mirrors – avant-garde and experimental for that time.[14]

Many British films in the immediate post-war period employ subjective modes of narration in order to tell their stories in new and interesting ways, quite unlike wartime narratives that were, in the most part, motivated to stress the external links that bound British society together in the face of the common adversary. By foregrounding the mechanisms of subjectivity – internal monologues, visions, and psychoanalytic narratives – films of the post-war period also suggest that they are revealing essential aspects of their characters that would have remained inaccessible within the limitations of traditional story-telling.

As I have already outlined, in her assessment of the Hollywood 'Woman's Film' of the 1940s, Mary Ann Doane argues that many of these films activate what she terms a 'medical discourse', in which the traumas of their troubled female characters are made visible by the organization of clinical experience and, specifically, by the intervention of the medical professional. In these films, it is often the role of the psychoanalyst, psychiatrist, or psychologist – Hollywood often making no distinction between these categories – to read the symptoms that are presented by the psychopathologies of these women, and by doing so to 'reveal the essential kernel of

[14] Ann Todd, *The Eighth Veil* (New York: Putnam, 1981), p. 13.

truth' which would normally escape the eye of the unqualified.[15] The psychoanalyst is thus often afforded extraordinary powers of vision, through which she or he is able to penetrate the barrier that is posed by the exterior bodily surface. In the woman's film, unlike in the majority of classical Hollywood narratives, 'the female body is located not so much as spectacle but as an element in the discourse of medicine, a manuscript to be read for the symptoms which betray her story, her identity.'[16] In allocating these powers to their psychoanalyst figures, and in having them use these powers to unveil some fundamental feminine quality, the woman's film, according to Doane, promotes an ideology that rests on 'a particularly extreme form of essentialism.'[17] Also, by declaring the issues that confront the central female figures of these films as signs of neurosis or psychosis, which can only be read by the psychoanalyst by virtue of his position as a medical professional, the purported subject of these films becomes their object, and her difficulties become organized solely for purposes of medical observation and cultural recuperation. Within this formulation, the figure of the psychoanalyst becomes readable as an instrument of power and constraint rather than one of liberation.[18]

Whilst *The Seventh Veil* does construct a large part of its narrative around Francesca's subjective account of her traumatic past, the nature of this subjectivity is only superficial. In his speech to Kendall and Irving, Dr Larsen describes the human mind as being 'like Salome at the beginning of her dance', and he states that 'with friends the average person will drop first one veil, then another…maybe three or four altogether. With a lover she will take off five or even six'. In stating that the human mind is 'like Salome', and by using the female pronoun, Larsen defines the object of

[15] Mary Ann Doane, 'Clinical Eyes: The Medical Discourse', in *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 40.
[16] Doane, p. 43.
[17] Ibid., p. 44.
[18] Ibid.

the psychoanalytic gaze in precisely female terms, and the psychoanalytic process itself as entailing the male investigation of the female object, and specifically the essence of that object that is the cause of the female's neurotic symptoms.

Rather than being aligned with Francesca's point of view during her account, the viewer is encouraged to join Dr Larsen as detective, listening to – and watching – Francesca's testimony, and investigating what has been the cause of Francesca's dilemmas, and what are their effects. The causes, like those that circumscribe the character of Nicholas, are, as I have already demonstrated, not defined in relation to infantile Oedipal phantasies, but to real traumatic events that have occurred in later childhood, which have rendered her predisposed to her later traumatic neuroses. While the same goes in the case of Nicholas, the film's mise-en-scene encourages a reading of the somatic symptoms of his neuroses in the context of the discourses of hysteria and shell-shock, and so by extension, they are easily localized by the viewer in the specificity of the effect of war trauma. These formal constructions render Nicholas easily recognisable as the metaphorical veteran, in Spicer's words, in need of 'understanding and compassion', and his neuroses remain largely unaddressed by Dr Larsen.[19] In contrast, Francesca's symptoms, without an available link to the 'acceptable' discourses of war trauma, can only be categorized with reference to her neurotic behaviour in relation to her male suitors, and it is in the transgressive nature of this behaviour that she comes to be aligned by Dr Larsen with 'unacceptable', and psychopathological, female sexuality.

During the seven years that Francesca spends with Nicholas in Europe, she has no contact with Peter at all. On her return to London, Francesca finds Peter at the Mirabel Club. She presents herself to him as if she had never been away, but he greets her coldly. During the course of her analysis, Dr Larsen asks her what happened next.

[19] Spicer, *Sydney Box*, p. 54.

Figure 4-4

Francesca says in her trance: 'I'd rather not talk about it, I don't want to talk about it!' Near the end of the film Larsen asks Peter for his account of what happened that night, and he replies that he had revealed to her that he had married. When Larsen asks how Francesca received this news he replies: 'She just walked out on me, she's like that you know.' That Francesca is presented as feeling that she must repress this event even under narcosis is remarkable, and her assumption that Peter will be waiting for her after an absence of seven years reveals clearly the film's ordering of her neurosis as deeply narcissistic.

The film enlarges on this idea after Francesca has agreed to leave Nicholas to live with Max in his villa in Italy. While she is telling Nicholas, both Francesca and Nicholas are presented as standing in front of the portrait of Nicholas' mother that hangs in his drawing room, a parallel is thus drawn between this event and Nicholas' mother's abandonment of him when he was twelve (Figure 4-4). Dr Larsen's analysis

of Francesca reveals that the long-term effect of her childhood traumatic experiences is her 'neurotic' inability to sustain her relationships, until the end of the film, with Peter, Max, or with Nicholas. In describing Francesca as existing independently outside the bounds of relationships, her sexuality is defined as being unrestrained, and therefore a threat to the authority of the film's male figures. In doing this, the film recalls the threat that was posed in *Dead of Night* by the figure of Sally, which was defined in the previous chapter in relation to Horney's idea of the 'deep-seated masculine dread of the woman (the mother) or the female genital'.[20] However, the masculine dread of the female that was only implied in *Dead of Night* is here rendered in much more explicit terms.

In stating that the human mind is 'like Salome' Dr Larsen brings into play what Lawrence Kramer has termed 'everyone's favourite *fin-de-siècle* dragon lady.'[21] According to Kramer, the figure of Salome stands as the extreme personification of patriarchal fears of female sexuality, 'fears so disruptive that they compulsively play themselves out in a scenario of fetishism and castration'. For Kramer, therefore, the long-lasting popularity of the Salome story is constituted by 'an effort to normalise, by means of aesthetic pleasure, the epidemic male neurosis that coupled sexual potency with loathing and dread of women.'[22]

At the beginning of the Salome narrative, she is portrayed as the icon of dangerous female seductiveness, imbued with the power of her own sexuality, but then, by the action of removing her veils, her power is gradually diminished, leaving her at the end of the dance a marginalized figure. Thus Salome comes ultimately to appear, in Kramer's words, 'not as the personification of castrating feminine sexuality,

[20] See pages 118-119, above.
[21] Lawrence Kramer, 'Culture and Musical Hermeneutics', in *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2:3 (1990), p. 271.
[22] Kramer, p. 271.

Figure 4-5

but as the reverse, a figure for precisely those threatening aspects of the feminine that male power can subjugate.'[23] In similar terms, Dr Larsen's removal of Francesca's 'seventh veil', in other words his exposing of her unconscious desires in the analysis, and his defining of those desires as psychopathological, have the effect of diminishing Francesca's transgressive power, and enabling the beginning of Francesca's return to a submissive position within the dominant patriarchal order (Figure 4-5).

At the end of *The Seventh Veil*, Dr Larsen announces that his analysis has provided a 'complete cure', and that Francesca is now 'a new and very different person' who has the opportunity of choosing the one she loves. That she chooses Nicholas seems initially surprising, given his cruel treatment of her throughout the

[23] Ibid.

film, however, on two specific levels the narrative can have no other conclusion.[24] On an industrial level, it is unthinkable that a character played by a star of the status of James Mason would be marginalised by an ending in which another figure claimed the hand of the leading female character. However, the expediency of this conclusion also mobilizes a secondary system of signification that operates on a deeper ideological level. The relationships that she has had during the course of the film with Peter and Max suggest new 'enlightened' modes of sexuality as existing for Francesca outside the strict boundaries of traditionally repressive social behaviour. For example, with Peter, in spite of her initial shyness, Francesca embraces the possibilities afforded by their romance with an increasing confidence that culminates in her throwing convention aside by proposing marriage to him. In more extreme terms, later in the film, she readily agrees to live with Max in his villa in Italy *outside the bounds of matrimony*. When Max asks whether she wants them to marry, Francesca replies 'I don't think it matters'. In contrast to both of these examples, Francesca's relationship with Nicholas has been, at all times, defined by her subservience to him, and her adherence to traditional – and even Victorian – codes of conduct.

By the process of her being psychoanalyzed, the narrative has revealed that Francesca's neurotic breakdown has its roots in the traumas of her childhood. But, crucially, her breakdown occurs after she has agreed to live with Max outside the traditional boundaries of marriage, and therefore without recourse to the patriarchal social formation. By pathologizing Francesca's desire, and by revealing it to her as such, Dr Larsen has begun the process of her 'cure' and laid the groundwork for her return to this formation. In this film, as in the Hollywood woman's film, the figure of

[24] In her autobiography Ann Todd recounts that, at a private showing of the film for the Royal Family at Marlborough House, Queen Mary turned to her and said: 'Child, you didn't go to that horrid man at the end, did you? I couldn't quite see without my glasses.' See Ann Todd, *The Eighth Veil* (New York: Putnam, 1981), pp. 19-20.

the psychoanalyst therefore acts as a narrative ideological discourse that is constraining and not liberating, in that the cure securely binds Francesca to the dominant devices of power. Just as, within the patriarchal logic of the Salome narrative, Salome's power is diminished by the removal of her clothes and the revealing of her feminine essence, in *The Seventh Veil* the threat that Francesca poses is neutralized by the removal of her 'neurotic' sexuality. So, in the film's conclusion Francesca becomes 'redeemed', in ideological terms, by her choice to marry Nicholas, and this, in turn, enables her to re-enter the status quo of sexual difference. Within the film's logic, by means of the 'cure' that has been effected by Dr Larsen, Francesca is now fit again to be placed in contact with, as Foucault puts it: 'the social body', 'the family space', and, potentially, 'the life of children'.[25]

The conclusion of the film can be read, therefore, as being highly normative. However, the impression that the viewer is left with by this conclusion is very often one of dissatisfaction, for the very reason that Nicholas has been shown, during the course of the film, to have been so unstable a character, and so cruel to Francesca. We wonder whether he has changed at all, and whether he is even capable of fulfilling the role required of him within the dominant social formation. The sense of ambivalence that the film's conclusion provokes has already been demonstrated to exist, for example, in *Dead of Night* at the end of the 'Haunted Mirror' story. This, while seemingly returning Joan and Peter to their respective positions within that formation, actually defines Joan as rejecting any patriarchal control over her world, and Peter as simply disappearing from the narrative. As I will demonstrate in the following analyses of *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, *They Made Me a Fugitive*, and *Mine Own*

[25] Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume 1* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 104.

Executioner, this sense of ambivalence is common to all the fragmented narrative scenarios and conclusions of what I term British trauma films.

4.5: Introduction to *Madonna of the Seven Moons*

Between 1943 and 1947 the British studio Gainsborough Pictures produced a series of films that found commercial success in departing from the social realist subject matter that had, in the main, characterized British cinema during the early years of the war. The Gainsborough melodramas employed glamorous stars, elaborate costumes and sets, and escapist romantic storylines, to appeal to their predominantly female audiences, and they paid unusual attention to ideas of female desire and female subjectivity. These films thus acknowledged the numbers of women that made up the majority of the wartime cinema-going public, while at the same drawing on cultural uncertainties that had arisen from the changing role that women had come to play within British society. These uncertainties had been brought about, in part, by the increasingly significant position that women were by now occupying in the work-place. As Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards note:

> By 1943 90 per cent of all single women between 18 and 40 and 80 per cent of married women with children over 14 were working. Women were also being conscripted into the armed forces. This did not necessarily result in instant equality. Women were for the most part denied equal pay with men and they got less in compensation for industrial accidents than men. But there was an inevitable increase in their sense of responsibility and independence, their mobility and self-esteem.[26]

Whilst acknowledging the importance of women's labour to the war-effort, British society was often conflicted in its view towards the consequences of this new sense of women's self-determination.

[26] Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: British Cinema in the Second World War* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), p. 161.

Since the mid-1930s, there had been widespread apprehension about the falling birth-rate and the disintegration of the family unit, and this period saw what one demographer has described as 'a considerable literature of immoderate dismay'[27] on these subjects.[28] The birth-rate, which had been 743,360 per-annum in 1930, fell to a low of 668,843 in 1941, and the resulting despondency and alarm gave rise to the 'pro-natalist movement', which took the solution of the problem to be encouraging women to leave work and to return to their role as wives and mothers in the home.[29] This conservative tendency was compounded, as Sonya O. Rose observes, by a concern about declining female morality that drew on First World War discourses that had surrounded women and girls who were seen to be 'consorting with soldiers'.[30] As the Second World War progressed, this sense of disquiet was stimulated by the growing presence of American GIs in British towns and cities, and newspapers increased the level of anxiety by printing lurid headlines, feature articles, and editorials that deliberated at length on the causes and consequences of women 'running wild' or 'going out for a good time.'[31] These reports fuelled the panic by going into great detail about women's 'indiscretions', and therefore exciting both the outrage and the prurient attention of the general public.

The Gainsborough melodramas allocate central roles to female characters who consistently challenge the dominant social order, and the films' use of historical or foreign settings provided their contemporary audiences with fantasy spaces in which

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[27] Rosalind Mitchison quoted in Denise Riley, 'The Free Mothers: Pronatalism and Working Women in Industry at the End of the Last War in Britain', in *History Workshop* 11 (1981), p. 90.
[28] A good example of this body of literature is Mass-Observation's *Britain and Her Birth-Rate* (London: John Murray, 1945), which offers its readers the results of a series of questions posed to women relating to marriage, family planning, morality, and attitudes to the decline in the birth-rate.
[29] Denise Riley, 'The Free Mothers', p. 90.
[30] Sonya O. Rose, 'Sex, Citizenship, and the Nation in World War II Britain', in *The American Historical Review* 103:4 (1998), p. 1149.
[31] Rose, p. 1150.

the traditional boundaries of femininity could be interrogated and often transgressed. As Marcia Landy argues, these films 'portray conflicts surrounding choice of sexual partners, marriage, and female companionship', while emphasizing 'the existence of a dual discourse which, on the one hand, sought to dramatize social changes affecting women while, on the other, maintaining a continuity with traditional values.'[32] The Gainsborough melodramas draw on this dual discourse by orientating their narratives around conceptions of female desire and female subjectivity, whilst at the same time presenting female desire in terms that are often excessive, and sometimes as being symptomatic of mental instability.

Madonna of the Seven Moons, released early in 1945, and therefore occupying a central position in this series of films, appropriates elements of the historical psychoanalytic discourse that surrounded the idea of schizophrenia, the film making clear its interest in mental illness in stating in its opening title: 'This story is taken from life. There was a real Maddalena. The medical world have verified her case and other cases like it'. In this chapter, I demonstrate how the discourse of schizophrenia functions in *Madonna of the Seven Moons* at psychosexual, social, and political levels. In the first section, I examine how *Madonna of the Seven Moons* mobilizes schizophrenia as a means of interrogating and categorizing as psychopathological the transgressive and problematic sexuality of its main character, Maddalena, as well as establishing a particular ordering mechanism for its polarized ideological world-view. In the following section, I investigate the opposing ideological discourses and power systems that are revealed by the ambivalence and fragmentation of the film's conclusion.

[32] Marcia Landy, *British Genres: Cinema and Society 1930-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 210.

4.6 Synopsis

In *Madonna of the Seven Moons* a young girl, Maddalena (Phyllis Calvert), is sent by her father to live in the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Florence; here she is raped by a gypsy while out on her own picking flowers in the woods. Sometime later, her father sends word that it is time for Maddalena to leave the convent as he has arranged for her to be married to a wealthy wine merchant, Giuseppe Labardi (John Stuart). Eight months after the wedding Maddalena gives birth to a daughter, Angela (Patricia Roc). Many years later, Maddalena is living in great luxury in Rome with her husband, and Angela, now a young lady, arrives home from her boarding school in England, where she has been for five years. Due to a nervous illness, Maddalena has not been able to visit her daughter at school, and so has not seen her all the time that she has been away.

Maddalena is saintly and retiring, in contrast her daughter turns out to be an unconventional and high-spirited young woman who wears shorts and high-heels and is confident in the company of men. Maddalena is initially shocked at Angela's appearance and behaviour, but she resolves to become a modern woman like her daughter. The anxiety caused by Angela's homecoming, and the impact of her personality on the quiet Labardi household, both affect Maddalena strangely. At her birthday party at the Labardi house Angela becomes engaged to Evelyn (Alan Haines), a young man whom she had met on her journey from England. Later that evening, Maddalena, having experienced a mental breakdown, dresses in gypsy clothes and travels to Florence, taking with her all of the jewellery that Giuseppe has given her. She leaves behind a cryptic sign of the 'Seven Moons' scrawled in lipstick on her bedroom mirror.

We learn from the Labardi family physician, Dr Ackroyd (Reginald Tate), that Maddalena has a 'dual personality' and that she has been living two separate lives.

Maddalena has run off twice before, once immediately after her marriage, and then again following Giuseppe's decision to send Angela to school in England, rather than to a convent as Maddalena had wished. Each time Maddalena has become the gypsy Rosanna, living in the house of the Seven Moons in the 'worst part of Florence' as the gypsy lover of Nino Barucci (Stewart Grainger), a local gang-leader. Angela resolves to find her mother, and, assuming that she has repeated the previous pattern of her affliction, she travels to Florence along with her father.

Here, she enlists the help of Jimmy (Peter Murray-Hill) and Nesta Logan (Dulcie Gray), two artist friends of her fiancée Evelyn, and Sandro (Peter Glenville), a gigolo whom she had also met on her journey from England. Unbeknownst to Angela, Sandro is the younger brother of Nino, and Sandro lures Angela to the Seven Moons with the intention of raping her. A carnival is in progress and Nino and Sandro are dressed alike as Harlequins; Sandro drugs Angela and carries her upstairs. Maddalena/Rosanna sees him bending over Angela and, believing him to be Nino, she kills him, but not before he has mortally wounded her. In a fit of jealous rage Nino has vowed to kill Giuseppe, whom he assumes to be Maddalena/Rosanna's lover during the periods that they have been apart. Maddalena is taken to the Labardi house in Florence, where she dies after receiving the last rites from a priest. Giuseppe and Angela are broken-hearted, and Nino, who is watching from outside a window, realises that Giuseppe is Maddalena's husband and not her lover. As Giuseppe places a cross on her breast, Nino throws a white rose beside it.

4.7 The discourse of schizophrenia and the pathologization of female desire

Amongst the texts that informed the wartime and immediate post-war discourse surrounding schizophrenia, Eugen Bleuler's *Textbook of Psychiatry*, published in English in 1930, and Freud's *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, published in English in

1940, and intended as a handbook for the general public, are perhaps the most influential. Bleuler introduces the term 'schizophrenia' – from the Greek words meaning 'to split', and 'mind' – to stress 'splitting' and 'fragmentation' as the common elements of a discrete group of psychoses. According to Bleuler, the essence of schizophrenia is the dislocation between the intellectual and emotional functions, a symptom that he describes as the 'incongruity of affect', as well as delusions, hallucinations, autistic thinking, and disturbances of the sense of identity. Bleuler also emphasises the importance of ambivalent states of mind to schizophrenic functioning. He states that:

> The schizophrenic defect of the associative paths makes it possible that contrasts that otherwise are mutually exclusive exist side by side in the psyche. Love and hatred towards the same person may be equally ardent without influencing one another (affective ambivalence). The patients want at the same time to eat and not to eat; they do what they do not want to do as well as what they want to do (ambivalence of the will). In the same moment they think 'I am human like you', and 'I am not human like you.' God and Devil, parting and meeting are the same to them and fuse into one idea (intellectual ambivalence). In the delusions too, expansive and depressive ideas very frequently mingle in multi-coloured confusion.[33]

Freud acknowledges the specificity of schizophrenia and the role that fragmentation plays in its makeup, and he states that, in his experience, fragmentation is often preceded by states of anxiety. He argues that anxiety can act as a sign of impending dangers that threaten the cohesion of the ego, a mechanism that operates in a way quite different to repression: 'The ego makes use of the sensations of anxiety as a signal to give warning of dangers that threaten its integrity.'[34] According to Freud, in cases of schizophrenic psychosis the state of fragmentation is rarely complete because some healthy part of the mind always continues to exist:

> Even in a state so far removed from the reality of the external world as one of hallucinatory confusion, one learns from patients after their recovery

[33] Eugen Bleuler, *Textbook of Psychiatry* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), p. 382.
[34] Sigmund Freud, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* in *The Standard Edition vol. XXIII*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964; repr. 1973), p. 199.

> that at the same time in some corner of their mind (as they put it) there was a normal person hidden who, like a detached spectator, watched the hubbub of the illness go past him.[35]

Freud also suggests that fragmentation gives rise within the ego to two contrary attitudes that coexist, but when the abnormal gains the upper hand this signals the onset of psychosis. In cases such as this, one attitude accepts reality and the other rejects it, and Freud terms the latter state of mind 'disavowal'.[36]

In the opening sequence of *Madonna of the Seven Moons* we find Maddalena as a young girl walking alone in a wood. She is dressed in a hooded cloak and her hair is tied in pigtails. As she stoops to pick some white flowers, a man appears and stands staring at her; he is unshaven and has a rough gypsy-like appearance. Maddalena takes fright, drops her flowers and begins to run away. As she runs, the man follows her and the camera tracks backwards, holding her terrified face in close-up. Later, Maddalena arrives back at her cell at the Convent of the Sacred Heart; she is in tears and is overcome with emotion. On the left of the frame a statue of the Madonna and Child stands on a pedestal attached to the cell wall, and on the right a shaft of light from a window is projected onto the wall, the bars of the window making a pattern like the bars of a prison cell (Figure 4-6). Sometime later, Maddalena is summoned to the office of the Mother Superior of the convent and she is told of her father's plans for her marriage. Maddalena protests that she wants to stay at the convent for ever, but the Mother Superior points out that by doing this Maddalena would be contravening her father's wishes. The Mother Superior then gives a prayer book to Maddalena 'for her comfort'. The following sequence reveals two inscriptions on the fly-leaves of the book, presumably written later by Maddalena herself, the first states the date of the

[35] Freud, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, pp. 201-202.
[36] Ibid., p. 204.

Figure 4-6

gift as being July 7th 1919, and the second says: 'Married to Giuseppe Labardi October 3rd 1919' and 'Angela born June 16th 1920'.

The mise-en-scene of the opening sequence is suggestive; that Maddalena is dressed in a hooded cloak and is collecting flowers immediately calls to mind the ancient fairy tale of 'Red Riding Hood'. In the Brothers Grimm version of this tale the 'sweet little maiden' Red Riding Hood is warned by her mother not to stray from the path as she walks through the woods to her grandmother's house. Ignoring her mother's advice, she does stray in order to pick some flowers for her grandmother, and so is way-laid by the wolf. At the conclusion of the tale, Red Riding Hood is saved along with her grandmother by the huntsman, and she promises herself: 'I will never

again wander off into the forest as long as I live, when my mother forbids it.'[37] According to Bruno Bettelheim, the tale 'speaks of human passions, oral greediness, aggression, and pubertal sexual desires'. Red Riding Hood's

> danger is her budding sexuality, for which she is not yet emotionally mature enough. The person who is psychologically ready to have sexual experiences can master them and grow because of it. But a premature sexuality is a regressive experience, arousing all that is still primitive within us and that threatens to swallow us up.[38]

For Bettelheim, the story of Red Riding Hood is universally loved because 'in symbolic form, it projects its central figure into the dangers of her oedipal conflicts during puberty, and then saves her from them, so that she will be able to mature conflict-free.'[39] Maddalena, unlike Red Riding Hood, has no huntsman to save her, and the film suggests that her meeting with the gypsy ends with her rape, and the irretrievable loss both of her 'innocence' and her mental integrity, the lasting trauma of the event gradually shaping the symptoms of her schizophrenia.

The profound effect of this sexual trauma is suggested in the mise-en-scene of the second sequence, which predicts Maddalena's future state of mental fragmentation, and also the film's polarized ideological world-view. By positioning her between the Madonna and Child and the image of the prison bars, the film proposes that Maddalena's psyche will be split between the redemptive potential of her Christian faith and the lasting psychical impression of her trauma. In the following sequence, the film reveals the dates of Maddalena's leaving the convent, her marriage, and the birth of her daughter. These facts might be missed by even the most observant viewer, but they serve to reinforce at a subliminal level the predictive quality of the narrative. The implication is that Angela was conceived out of wedlock only two

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[37] *The Illustrated Treasury of Children's Literature*, ed. by Margaret E. Martignoni (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1960), pp. 175-177.
[38] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meanings and Importance of Fairy Tales* (London: Penguin, 1991), p.173.
[39] Bettelheim, p. 172.

months after Maddalena had met Giuseppe, and a month before their marriage. That Maddalena and Giuseppe seem later to have a caring relationship implies that this act was consensual. In its presentation and emphasis of this information the film reveals its determinist world-view.

At the beginning of the film, Maddalena's pubertal desire is held in check by her Catholic belief, and this provides a resistance to her desire that is reinforced by her being physically confined within the convent walls. The film suggests that the trauma of her rape leads to the eruption of an uncontrollable libidinal excess that Maddalena herself recognises, and she therefore begs the Mother Superior to be allowed to stay in the convent. Such is the over-abundance of her libido that, in spite of her strict Catholic belief, within two months of leaving the convent, and a month before her marriage to Giuseppe, she falls pregnant. According to Giuseppe's later testimony to Angela and Dr Ackroyd, a few days after the wedding Maddalena leaves Giuseppe and begins her affair with Nino, staying away for six months. The film implies, therefore, that for the whole time of Maddalena's first affair with Nino she has been pregnant with Angela, and that she only returns to Giuseppe a month before Angela's birth.

In similar terms to *The Seventh Veil,* as has already been demonstrated, *Madonna of the Seven Moons* anchors its narrative in the psychoanalytic theory that traumatic events that have occurred in childhood can render the victim predisposed to later psychopathologies.[40] All of these films emphasise the traumatic consequences of real historical events rather than Oedipal phantasies, and in doing this they both appropriate wartime discourses that emerged from the population's own collective traumatic experience of the war, and anticipate the paradigm shift in psychoanalytic

[40] Other contemporary films that specify the later effect of childhood traumas are the British production *A Matter of Life and Death* and the Hollywood picture *Spellbound* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1945).

trauma theory that would occur in the 1940s.[41] The film emphasises Maddalena's childhood trauma in its opening sequence, and the scenario of her actions after she has left the convent describes Maddalena's resulting sexual over-abundance in terms that are so transgressive that this can only be rendered acceptable within the film's narrative in the form of her resulting schizophrenia.

As Sue Aspinall argues, the Gainsborough melodramas are based on the conflict between two types of woman, one representing the virtues of marriage and duty, and the other the forces of unrestrained libido.[42] In many of these films, the first type of woman, while suffering for her virtue during the course of the narrative, is rewarded in their conclusions by being afforded the opportunity of marriage. The second is punished for her transgressions and at the end often killed. By employing the metaphors of detrimental childhood experience and schizophrenia *Madonna of the Seven Moons* usefully poses this conflict, not in terms of one that exists between two 'types' of women, but instead as being internalized within the fragmented inner world of the innocent victim of trauma. By linking her desire to her childhood trauma, the film therefore judiciously absolves Maddalena of any guilt for her later actions, but her desire is nevertheless presented as 'unnatural', and as a symptom of her mental fragmentation. The psychopathological symptom of Maddalena's 'illness' is read, to an extent, by the Labardi family physician Dr Ackroyd. But unlike the psychoanalyst Dr Larsen in *The Seventh Veil*, who provides a 'complete cure' in the form of Francesca's abandonment of her 'neurotic' refusal to live within the boundaries of patriarchy, Dr Ackroyd shows no ability to either interpret Maddalena's symptoms, or to suggest a 'cure' for her sexual excess.

[41] For an assessment of the paradigm shift in psychoanalytic trauma theory away from the Oedipus complex that occurred in the 1940s see pages 76-77, above.
[42] Sue Aspinall, 'Sexuality in Costume Melodrama', in *BFI Dossier 18: Gainsborough Melodrama*, ed. by Sue Aspinall and Robert Murphy (London: BFI Publishing, 1983), p. 30.

In *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, the metaphors of trauma and schizophrenia come to operate in similar terms to the metaphors of Francesca's trauma and neurosis in *The Seventh Veil*. Specifically, as a means by which feminine sexual desire can be pathologized, and therefore categorized as deviant and so assimilated into normative structures of patriarchal power. But unlike *The Seventh Veil*, which provides Francesca with the opportunity to return, in its conclusion, to the dominant social order, *Madonna of the Seven Moons* provides no mechanism by which an 'errant' sexuality of this magnitude may be 'redeemed' and therefore re-admitted to this order. Therefore, the ideologies of both films operate within highly conservative patriarchal frameworks, specifically in defining their central female figures as betraying extreme examples of gendered sexual behaviour within the context of their previous traumatic experience. However, in *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, the penalty for sexual transgression is absolute and Maddalena's fate is sealed.

An examination of the pressbook for *Madonna of the Seven Moon* reveals how central the idea of schizophrenic psychopathology was to Gainsborough's marketing strategy for the film.[43] It provides, for example, an idea for a newspaper article entitled 'What is Schizophrenia?' that states that the film was the first 'to be produced with a woman suffering from schizophrenia or dual personality as its central character.' Another article claims that the novel by Margery Lawrence, from which the film was adapted, drew inspiration from a real case in which an Italian girl 'had suffered a shock in her girlhood with the result that she developed the disease known as schizophrenia. She had been treated by the most famous alienists and doctors but could not be cured.' A third, entitled 'Does Schizophrenia Sound Romantic?', suggests that cinema managers should exploit the 'curiosity' of their female customers by asking them:

[43] An incomplete copy of the film's pressbook is held in the BFI Pressbooks Collection, reference PBS-36661

'What Should a Husband Do: His wife is madly in love with him, her home, her child – yet goes away at a mysterious call to the arms of another.' The fan magazine *Picturegoer* ran with these ideas in its 23 June 1945 edition by printing an extended piece on schizophrenia entitled 'Split Personalities' written by 'a psychologist'. In this article schizophrenia is linked to shocks in early life that are often 'connected with sex', and schizophrenia is described as causing the 'normal personality' to be 'blanked out' and 'the dark forces of the libido […] are released'[44] The nature of the articles in the film's pressbook confirms the claim made by many commentators that the Gainsborough melodramas were mainly aimed at female audiences. They also reveal how, in the case of *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, studio publicists sought to attract those female audiences by linking the idea of schizophrenia to femininity, and specifically to female desire.

The key questions are, therefore, how can the extreme conservatism of the world-view of *Madonna of the Seven Moons* be squared with its huge popularity with its mainly female audiences, and why were these audiences attracted by the film's linkage between female desire and schizophrenia?

I would like to argue that the answer to these questions lies in the particular way in which the film employs the metaphor of schizophrenia. *Madonna of the Seven Moons* does appropriate many elements of contemporary psychoanalytic theories of schizophrenia, for example, the ideas of ambivalence of will and affect, disturbances to the sense of identity, anxiety acting as a signal of fragmentation, and healthy parts of the mind continuing to exist within psychosis, are all assimilated into the film's narrative. But, crucially, Bleuler's description of the condition causing the dislocation between the intellectual and the emotional functions, and Freud's idea that schizophrenia gives rise within the ego to two contrary attitudes that co-exist, come,

[44] *Picturegoer*, June 23rd, 1945, p. 7.

in the film, to be transformed into the simplified idea of the schizophrenic 'dual' or 'split' personality. The Gainsborough melodramas evidence the existence of, and themselves become part of, wartime discourses that surrounded new ideas of female agency and female desire, and these ideas circulated in an environment where the vast majority of women were in full-time employment and enjoying relatively high levels of independence and self-determination.

However, in the dynamically-changing cultural environment of wartime and postwar Britain, women also found themselves having to square these new ideas, and new freedoms, with other discourses that often configured these as leading inevitably to irresponsible behaviour and even promiscuity. At the same time, women found themselves confronted with the forces of 'pronatalism', which suggested the solution to the problem of population-fall anxiety to be their leaving work and returning to their pre-war roles as wives and mothers in the home. By means of the metaphors of childhood trauma and schizophrenia, the film usefully enables the ramifications of these polarised positions to be explored and worked-through by its audiences within the blame-free environment of mental aberration, not as elements that exist within the personalities of 'two types' of women, but as contradictory forces that must be assimilated and reconciled within internal psychical mechanisms. In the childhood trauma and 'dual personality' of Maddalena/Rosanna, *Madonna of the Seven Moon*'s female audiences could take pleasure in observing the contrary stimuli of marriage and duty, on the one hand, and an unrestrained libido on the other, as existing side-by-side within the integrity of the self, at least until the film's conclusion.

4.8 The ambivalent and fragmented nature of *Madonna of the Seven Moons*' narrative irresolution

The narrative arc of *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, and the way that it presents female desire in terms of polarised opposites that are revealed by the externalization of the internal world of its female characters, can be traced back to Gainsborough's wartime output. Early in 1943, at the same time as Gainsborough was producing its first melodrama, *The Man in Grey*, work was also in progress at the studio on another film that would prove popular with the British public whilst adopting a very different aesthetic. *Millions Like Us* (Sidney Gilliat and Frank Launder, 1943) is a documentary-inspired social-realist drama that describes the lives of a socially disparate group of women who are working at a large armaments factory in central England, and it focuses particularly on Celia Crowson, the youngest daughter of a closely-knit family who live in suburban London. The film's fictional narrative incorporates recent events of the war such as the evacuation of Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, and the Blitz, and it begins by describing the creeping impact of the war on the working-class Crowson family. The father, Jim, is in the Home Guard, the son, Tom, is serving with the army in Egypt, the eldest daughter, Phyllis, joins the ATS and, near the beginning of the film, Celia receives her call-up papers and reports to the Ministry of Labour and National Service. As she sits in the waiting-room before her interview with Miss Wells, Celia fantasises about the course that her life is about to take, seeing herself as a WAAF, a WREN, in the ATS, a land girl, and finally a nurse. Instead, Celia is persuaded by Miss Wells to opt for factory work: 'The men at the front need tanks, guns, and planes. You can help your country just as much in an overall as you can in uniform these days.' Later, Celia arrives at the fictional town of Stockford, where she works in the armaments factory and lives in the nearby women's hostel.

In describing Celia's life at the factory and the hostel the film, in line with many other British films of this period, broadens out its focus of attention from the family to the wider community, and it follows Celia's fortunes by tracing her interactions with her fellow factory-workers, who come from different parts of the country, and different social backgrounds. The main thrust of the narrative traces the romantic fortunes of Celia and of one of her co-workers, the upper-class Jennifer Knowles, and the actions of Celia are contrasted in the film, first with those of her elder sister, Phyllis, and then with Jennifer.

While Celia is modest and shy with men, Phyllis is shown in a series of romantic trysts, much to the consternation of her father who, when she announces her intention of joining the ATS, says: 'Across my dead body, you're not going to join any woman's army. It may be alright for a girl with her head on her shoulders, but for a daft Nellie like you in amongst all those men…' To which Phyllis replies: 'I can look after myself, I have since I was fourteen.' Later, when Celia begins work at the factory she quickly fits in socially and takes easily to the work, whereas the upper-class Jennifer is initially supercilious and antisocial, and she finds factory-work beneath her social station.

The general aesthetic of *Millions Like Us* has a documentary-like quality and much of the film was shot on location at the Castle Bromwich aircraft factory in Birmingham, using real factory-workers and members of the armed-forces.[45] However, the way that Celia's internal world is presented as she imagines what the future holds for her runs counter to the film's general aesthetic, and this sequence is thus rendered particularly striking. In her fantasy Celia imagines herself in several romantic scenarios with members of the armed forces who have the appearance of

[45] Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: British Cinema in the Second World War* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 303.

Hollywood stars, and it culminates in her being proposed to by a wounded serviceman.

The form of the sequence predicts both the mode of presentation and the centralization of female desire that would come to characterise the Gainsborough melodramas, and the narrative arc of the sequence, from a series of idealized romantic encounters through to marriage, anticipates that of the progression of the 'good' figures of many films of the series. Similarly, that *Millions Like Us* is built upon a series of polarised opposites based on the differences of class and sexual codes of conduct that are displayed variously by Celia, Phyllis, and Jennifer, predicts the polarised way that both femininity and masculinity would be defined throughout this series of films. As Sue Aspinall notes, the heroes of the Gainsborough melodramas

> were either good-natured gentlemen, like Stewart Grainger in *Caravan* or *The Man in Grey* and Griffith Jones in *The Wicked Lady*, or they were arrogant, domineering and sexy, like James Mason in *The Man in Grey* and *The Wicked Lady*, or Stewart Grainger in *Madonna of the Seven Moons*. Similarly, the heroines were either affectionate and naïve, like Phyllis Calvert in *The Man in Grey* or Patricia Roc in *The Wicked Lady*, or they were sexy, unscrupulous and daring, like Margaret Lockwood in *The Wicked Lady* and *The Man in Grey*.[46]

According to Aspinall, the Gainsborough melodramas do not invite unquestioned identification with either one or the other of these polarised opposites, but they instead provoke what Laura Mulvey has termed 'an internal oscillation of desire', which commands an alternate and dynamic identification between two oppositional modes of social identity.[47] In *The Man in Grey*, for example, the pleasures of transgression are motivated by an identification with the actions of the brutish and hedonistic figure of Lord Rohan and the conniving and wanton Hesther, while the film also evokes considerable sympathy for the romantic lovers Clarissa and Rokeby, who are destined in its conclusion to enter into a conventional marriage. For Aspinall, the Gainsborough

[46] Aspinall, p. 33.
[47] Laura Mulvey, 'Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)', in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 39.

melodramas thus 'provide both the vicarious pleasures of sexual passion (which cannot lead to married life, in these narratives, because of class incompatibilities), whilst simultaneously offering the pleasures of romantic love as a prelude to marriage.'[48]

Madonna of the Seven Moons imports many of these narrative elements, but as I have shown, it departs from this model in the way that it internalizes its conflict between the family and marriage on one side, and libidinal expression on the other, within the schizophrenic fragmentation of its central character, Maddalena. More than this, the film also closes off various avenues of narrative resolution that, in other films of the series, are provided by the readmission of their 'good' romantic couples to the dominant social order, and therefore tying them securely to the dominant devices of power. The dilemma that is created by this process of closing-off is best illustrated by an examination of the final sequence of the film.

At the end of *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, the wounded Maddalena is carried back to the Labardi house in Florence and she lies close to death in her bedroom. Angela stands with Evelyn at the foot of the bed, while Giuseppe kneels at Maddalena's side, Maddalena is attended by Dr Ackroyd and a priest. After the others have left the room, the priest hears Maddalena's confession and she says: 'I have sinned so much father', to which he replies, 'You were in the dark, you couldn't see.' When Giuseppe and Angela have returned to the room, the priest administers the Last Communion, and Maddalena then dies. Dr Ackroyd ushers Angela out of the room and consigns her to the charge of Evelyn. Moments later, Nino appears standing at the open window, and he draws his knife with the intention of murdering Giuseppe. He hears Giuseppe say: 'Goodbye Maddalena, my beloved wife. The memory of our life together will always be with me, I wish I had made you happier, forgive me.' On

[48] Aspinall, p. 35.

hearing that Maddalena was Giuseppe's wife and not his lover, Nino appears shocked and seemingly full of remorse, and, after Giuseppe has placed a cross on Maddalena's breast, Nino puts away his knife, and instead throws a white rose beside it.

The nature of the sexual transgressions that Maddalena/Rosanna has committed leave the narrative unable to endorse even a penitent Maddalena, and there is no other option, as in some other Gainsborough melodramas, but for it to conclude with the death of the transgressor. As I have argued, while both films operate within patriarchal frameworks, *Madonna of the Seven Moons* differs from its contemporary *The Seventh Veil* in the way that, in the latter film, Francesca is afforded the choice to return to the dominant social formation. In many of the other Gainsborough melodramas, the narrative spotlight turns at this point to the 'good' romantic couple, whose potential marriage provides this return.

Along these lines, some commentators have interpreted *Madonna of the Seven Moons* as offering normative closure through the actions of Maddalena's daughter Angela, and of Jimmy and Nesta Logan. Pam Cook, for example, sees the film as shifting the emphasis of its narrative resolution away from Maddalena, and towards

> the need for a new independent woman, resourceful and courageous, capable of forming egalitarian relationships with men. This 'new woman' is seen to be important to the founding of a new social order based on honesty and democracy, allowing for the woman's freedom of action, unlike the 'old' order based on a religious suppression of women's sexuality.[49]

According to Cook, *Madonna of the Seven Moons* suggests Angela as the new, independent, and resourceful heroine whose potential to bring about this cultural change is evidenced by her investigating her mother's secret, when her father and Dr Ackroyd have failed to do so. In similar terms, Sue Aspinall sees that Angela becomes

[49] Pam Cook, 'Melodrama and the Woman's Picture', in *BFI Dossier 18: Gainsborough Melodrama*, ed. by Sue Aspinall and Robert Murphy (London: BFI Publishing, 1983), pp. 24-25.

the focus of the narrative when, towards the end, she has been lured to the Seven Moons by Sandro, and the film adopts her subjective position by moving 'into her sphere of vision, as in a drugged state her dizziness and confusion is represented by a group of grotesque masked revellers dancing round her in a circle.'[50] According to Aspinall, the film's conclusion, being unable to endorse Maddalena, instead proposes 'a third mode of sexuality' in the figure of Angela, and also in the 'mature modern couple, the Logans, who represent the same kind of affectionate, humorous and informal sexual relations as the daughter Angela.'[51]

I agree with Aspinall that, in the marriage of Jimmy and Nesta Logan, the film does provide an alternative model to the state of sexual repression that is central to the marriage of Maddalena and Giuseppe. However, the Logans are minor figures in the story, and they disappear from the narrative some time before the end of the film and are therefore excluded from the film's narrative resolution. Also, the timid and accident-prone figure of Nesta is a long way from the resourceful, independent woman that is demanded by the void in the narrative that is left by the death of the complex and magnetic figure of Maddalena/Rosanna. An analysis of the choreography of the final sequence in the film makes it clear that it is not the Logans, but Angela and Evelyn that the film proposes as the romantic couple that, as in so many of the Gainsborough melodramas, signifies the return to the dominant social order. But what is remarkable is that the film's narrative conclusion can be revealed to be – to an extent – unresolved because of the undeniable flaws that it has presented, prior to the final sequence, as existing in the characters of Angela and Evelyn.

When Angela arrives in Rome after her trip from London her unconventional dress and high-spirited behaviour cause considerable anxiety in the quiet Labardi

[50] Aspinall, p. 36.
[51] Ibid.

household, and these are at least partly responsible for Maddalena's third breakdown. On the night before her birthday party, Angela questions Dr Ackroyd in most insensitive terms about her mother's illness as Maddalena sits playing the piano. She says: 'What form did the illness take? Sleep-walking? Loss of memory? Is it likely to come on again?', and her questions cause Maddalena's, at first physical, and later psychical, collapse. Later, when she resolves to go to Florence to investigate her mother's disappearance, Angela's attempts to find Maddalena are ineffectual, and they lead only to her attempted rape by Sandro, and indirectly to his death, and the death of her mother.

As Robert Murphy observes, Angela's behaviour is consistently 'silly and superficial, a left-over from some thirties British comedy where an ostensibly independent young woman tries to investigate by herself only to reveal that she is weak and helpless and in need of rescue by a strong man.'[52] In similar terms, Angela's fiancée Evelyn is very far from the strong and sexually potent male figure that the narrative suggests is needed to replace the flawed figure of Giuseppe.[53]

Near the beginning of the film, while Evelyn is driving her to Florence, Angela twice puts her head on Evelyn's shoulder, only for him to rebuff her by saying: 'I'm taking no risks!', to which she replies: 'How very unromantic […] I wonder why I like you so much, you're not at all the sort of person I should expect to like' (Figure 4-7). Evelyn's sexuality is also rendered in ambivalent terms by his having a female name, and, as the Labardi household awaits their arrival, there is considerable confusion as to whether to expect a man or a woman to be accompanying Angela. Finally, when

[52] Robert Murphy, *Realism and Tinsel: Cinema and Society in Britain 1939-1948* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 51.

[53] The insufficiency of the figures of Alice and Evelyn in relation to the figure of Maddalena/ Rosanna was picked up on by some contemporary commentators. For example, Helen Fletcher writing in *Time and Tide* said: 'I didn't much take to Patricia Roc as a bright young thing and her young man Evelyn (Alan Haines) seemed the kind of junior attaché one sees in Communist pantomimes at the Unity. Fortunately this didn't matter since the interest of the film lies with the mother.' See *Time and Tide*, 23 December 1944.

Figure 4-7

Angela desperately needs him to take the initiative when her mother has disappeared, Evelyn disappears to London on diplomatic business, and takes no part in the investigation.

The Gainsborough melodramas allocate central roles to strong female characters who challenge, and often transgress, the traditional boundaries of femininity, but just as much as this, the films present scenarios in which conventional masculinities are rendered problematic. Many of the films describe situations in which the paternal function has ceased to operate effectively, or in which it may even act in a way that is detrimental to the social formations that it is designed to regulate and protect.[54] This tendency can be found, for example, in the Gainsborough melodrama

[54] In employing the terms 'paternal function' and 'maternal function', I refer to the positions that the father and mother occupy within the classical Freudian Oedipal triangle. For an explanation of Freud's Oedipal theory, and an account of contemporary discourses that surrounded the Oedipus Complex, see pages 71-72, above.

Fanny By Gaslight, where Fanny's adoptive father keeps a brothel in the basement of the family house, a situation that leads ultimately to his death and the destruction of the family unit, or in the actions of the brutish and malignant characters played by James Mason in *Fanny By Gaslight* and in *The Man in Grey* and *The Wicked Lady*. However, the perilous situations that are caused by these errant males are generally rectified in the films' conclusions by a reproduction of the dominant patriarchal order that is rendered possible by the survival of the romantic 'good' couple.

In *Madonna of the Seven Moons* the collapse of paternal responsibility can be found to operate in three separate areas of the film's narrative, all of which have destructive consequences for Maddalena's psychical integrity. The first is Maddalena's rape at the hands of the gypsy in the film's opening sequence. The second is the marriage between Maddalena and Giuseppe, which is suggested as having been founded not on love, and not even on Maddalena's or Giuseppe's desire, but on the questionably motivated prescription of her father. The third is Giuseppe's admission of his failings as a husband as he kneels at his dying wife's side. The place of marriage as a defining ideological element of the dominant order is never questioned in the film, in fact it is emphasized by Nino's reaction to the revelation that Maddalena/Rosanna is the wife of Giuseppe, and not his mistress.

However, unlike the other Gainsborough melodramas, the film offers no meaningful replacement for the collapsed paternal function, and little potential for a return to the normative social formation in its surviving romantic couple, Angela and Evelyn. In its inability to reconcile the dual poles of female sexual abundance and masculine responsibility and sufficiency by offering a romantic couple who might embody these qualities, the narrative of the film seems therefore, at the end, to be ideologically unresolved. The final shot of the cross and the white rose is similarly inconclusive. Pam Cook claims that Maddalena 'dies with the two signs of the

Figure 4-8

impossibility of her existence on her body, the red rose (passion) and the cross (saintly love).'[55] But this reading of the film ignores the fact that the flower is obviously white and that white flowers have operated during the course of the narrative, both as signifiers of Maddalena's innocence, and of Maddalena/Rosanna's desire (Figure 4-8). The lack of narrative resolution is, therefore, accentuated by the confused iconography of the film's final shot, and, in these terms, *Madonna of the Seven Moons* can itself be found to be ambivalent in regard to the dominant patriarchal belief system within which it operates. In this sense of ambivalence and confusion, the structure of the film itself betrays qualities that are curiously similar to those that Bleuler and Freud define as the symptoms of schizophrenic mental disorganization.

[55] Cook, p. 25.

This chapter, which has assessed two films of this time that centralise childhood trauma, female desire, female subjectivity, reveals that, in the early postwar period, British cinema tends to characterise these problems in ways that elide the existence of the war, and consequently the trauma of the war is often expressed in terms that are metaphoric. In the following chapter, which examines *They Made Me a Fugitive* and *Mine Own Executioner*, two films made at the end of the period in question, the war becomes a narrative event in itself, and the traumatic affect of the war comes to be defined explicitly as having long-term consequences, not only for the individual, but for British society as a whole.

Chapter Five

'The World is Full of Neurotics'[1]: The traumatized serviceman, the crisis of male subjectivity, and the postwar cultural malaise in *They Made Me a Fugitive* and *Mine Own Executioner*

5.1 Introduction to *They Made Me a Fugitive*

Between 1946 and 1948 British studios produced a number of films that organized their narratives around the activities of the criminal underworld and the figure of the gangster or the black market 'spiv'. Examples of these include *Appointment with Crime*, *They Made Me a Fugitive*, *Dancing with Crime*, *It Always Rains on Sunday*, *Brighton Rock*, and *Good-Time Girl*. As has often been observed, in these films' use of expressionist visual style, their adoption of 'hardboiled' conventions of acting and dialogue, their representations of the world as turbulent and often unjust, and their downbeat narrative conclusions, it is possible to find characteristics that are similar to Hollywood *film noir*, and this has led them to be grouped together under the generic heading 'British film noir'.[2] Whilst acknowledging the importance of tracing the similarities and differences that they display in relation to their American counterparts, I am concerned instead with the particularly British nature of these films, how they come to be influenced by the British experience of the

[1] The chapter title is derived from the opening sequence of *Mine Own Executioner* as Dr Norris Pile, the head of the Emily Ward Psychiatric Clinic, explains his need of funding in the context of the enormous public demand for psychiatric treatment.
[2] See, for example, William K. Everson, 'British Film Noir', in *Films in Review* 38:5 (1987), pp. 285-289; Tony Williams, 'British *Film Noir*', in *Film Noir Reader 2*, ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight editions, 1999), pp. 243-269; Robert Murphy, 'British film noir', in *European film noir*, ed. by Andrew Spicer (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 84-111.

war, and by the harsh social and economic realities of the early years of peace. As Robert Murphy notes:

> Britain had different traditions and a very different experience of the Second World War. The temporary but real solidarity induced by the threat of invasion and the ordeal of the Blitz, the emphasis on communal life, and the drive towards greater equality between men and women, made for a more grimly down to earth atmosphere than in America. Nonetheless Britain suffered a heavy price for the war in terms of lives lost, property damaged, debts incurred, distorted economic development, continued austerity, and a rampant black market.[3]

To this list of factors that describes the challenges confronting the British population in the postwar period, might be added the uncertainties faced by the more than four million British servicemen who were demobilised between June 1945 and January 1947. As David Kynaston has described, the majority of these undoubtedly found the transition to civilian life difficult, the jobs that they had held before the war were often no longer open to them, and the consequent pressures on marriages meant that, by 1947, the divorce rate had risen to unprecedented levels.[4]

The individual and collective traumas and anxieties of war, and those related to the transition between wartime and peacetime, are central to the narrative of *They Made Me a Fugitive*, in which a former R.A.F. serviceman and prisoner of war, Clem Morgan, becomes involved with a gang of black market criminals and its brutal leader, Narcy. The film's adoption of the black market as a central motif is significant. As Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska has demonstrated, the use of the black market was extensive in Britain during the war; it peaked between 1946 and 1948, taking the form not only of the theft or receiving of stolen goods, but also the widespread circumvention of regulations that restricted the production and distribution of rationed commodities. The infringement of these regulations thus confronted many of the British public with

[3] Murphy, 'British film noir', p. 89.
[4] David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 97.

the prospect of breaking the law for the first time.[5] The description of black market activities in *They Made Me a Fugitive*, and in other British films of this time, operates as both as a narrative device and as a metaphor that serves to reveal how the transgressions of the marginalized figure of the gangster or spiv can be broadened out, and suggested as having relevance to society as a whole.

I begin by examining how, in *They Made Me a Fugitive*, the opposite but complementary figures of Clem and Narcy provide the means for the recirculation of contemporary discourses surrounding the effect of trauma and individual and collective moral responsibility. In the second section, I expand my view to explore how various characters in the film function within wider societal discourses, which describe a neurotic collapse of both paternal and maternal functions in the atmosphere of Britain's postwar cultural malaise.

5.2 Synopsis

In *They Made Me a Fugitive*, Narcissus (Griffith Jones), known as Narcy, is the brutal leader of a gang of Soho criminals who deal in stolen black market goods and use the Valhalla Undertaking Company as a front for their illegal activities. Also influential in the gang is a seemingly matriarchal figure, Aggie (Mary Merrall). Clem Morgan (Trevor Howard) is a former R.A.F. serviceman and prisoner-of-war with a fine war record. He is invited to join the gang by Narcy because he has 'class', and also because Narcy has romantic designs on Clem's fiancée, Ellen (Eve Ashley). Clem thrives in the racket until he discovers that Narcy is dealing in drugs. He strongly disapproves and so confronts Narcy, but the situation is diffused by Aggie. Clem confides to Ellen that he intends to leave the gang after one more job, although he

[5] Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 151-153.

suspects Ellen and Narcy of having begun a relationship. After Clem and Narcy have robbed Hedley's Warehouse, Narcy deliberately sets off the alarm with the intention of entrapping Clem, and as he and Clem flee the scene in a getaway car driven by Soapy (Jack McNaughton), another of the gang-members, Narcy directs Soapy to run down a policeman who is attempting to stop them. The policeman is killed, and Narcy knocks Clem unconscious. Narcy and Soapy make good their escape, but Clem is arrested by Inspector Rockliffe (Ballard Berkeley), and he is later found guilty of the murder of the policeman and sentenced to fifteen years in Dartmoor Prison.

Clem is visited in prison by Narcy's girlfriend, Sally Connor (Sally Gray), who informs him that Narcy has begun a relationship with Ellen. Sally declares that she has decided to leave Narcy, and that she is considering persuading Soapy to turn King's Evidence and so provide justice for Clem, but Clem does not believe her. Some days later, at the Music Box in the West End of London, the theatre where Sally works as a chorus girl, Sally appeals to Soapy's girlfriend, Cora (Rene Ray), to help her effect Clem's release from prison by influencing Soapy to testify on Clem's behalf. Later that same evening, Narcy, who has found out about Sally's visit to Clem, arrives at the Music Box and brutally beats her. Clem escapes from prison, and travels towards London with the intention of clearing his name. On the journey he is shot and wounded, and he later enters a secluded villa where a woman, Mrs Fenshaw (Vida Hope), provides him with food and clothing, and seeks to persuade him to murder her husband. After Clem has left the house in her husband's clothes, Mrs Fenshaw shoots and kills her husband in cold blood.

Having arrived in London, Clem follows Sally to her flat with the intention of persuading her to reveal Soapy's whereabouts. Clem convinces Sally that he is innocent of the murder of Mr Fenshaw, and after Sally has removed the shotgun pellets from his back, they form a romantic bond. When Narcy and Inspector Rockliffe arrive

at the same time at the flat looking for Clem, Sally helps him to escape. Sally is kidnapped by some of Narcy's gang members. She is taken to one of the gang's hideouts where she finds Cora, who has also been captured. Cora is threatened with a beating by one of Narcy's henchmen, Jim (Michael Brennan), and she is forced to reveal that Soapy is in hiding at the Hotel Nelson. Clem is then arrested by Inspector Rockliffe but immediately released so he can act as bait to entrap Narcy. Soapy is found at the Nelson by Jim, who stabs him to death.

In the film's final sequence, Clem heads for the Valhalla, where Narcy and his gang have taken Sally against her will. Clem and Sally manage to overpower several of the gang members, and Clem and Narcy then fight on the roof. In attempting to escape, Narcy falls and is mortally wounded. As Narcy lies dying on the pavement both Clem and Sally entreat him to reveal Soapy as the killer of the policeman, but he declares that they can both 'rot in hell'. After Narcy has died, Inspector Rockliffe says that he will get all the facts before he is through. Sally states that she will wait for Clem, and, after he has been led away back to prison, the film closes with Sally walking the streets of London alone.

5.3 The figures of Clem and Narcy: the discourses of traumatic affect and moral responsibility in the postwar period

Near the beginning of *They Made Me a Fugitive*, we find Narcy at the Valhalla Undertaking Company with Aggie and several of his henchmen. After they have opened a coffin to reveal that it is packed with cartons of black market cigarettes, Narcy stands filing his fingernails with a large metal rasp that seems more suited for woodwork or metalwork. He announces to the group that, later that evening, he has arranged to meet a potential recruit called Clem Morgan, 'a bloke out of the R.A.F'

Figure 5-1

who has ‘found life a bit tame since being demobbed’, and who has ‘class’. Narcy says, ‘we need a bit of that in our business’, and, while he states that he has class as well, he admits that Clem was ‘born into it’. When one of the gang, Bert, says that Clem ‘sounds like trouble’ Narcy replies: ‘I’m ashamed of you, Bert, standing in the way of a job for an ex-serviceman.’

Later that evening, Narcy arrives at the club where they have arranged to meet; Clem is already at the bar with his fiancée Ellen, and he is drunk. Clem introduces Ellen, and for a moment she and Narcy stare into each other’s eyes. The three sit together at the bar, and Narcy observes to Ellen that Clem sounds like ‘he’s seven thousand feet up in the air’, but Ellen says that Clem is just feeling sorry for himself. Clem admits that, if it wasn’t for Ellen, he would be liable to do himself ‘a mischief and spin-in’. Narcy says to Ellen that Clem has ‘too much animal spirits’ and that what

he needs is an outlet, to which she replies, ‘what he needs is another war’. Clem repeatedly makes to light his cigarette, and then blows out the flame (Figure 5-1).

These two sequences introduce Clem and Narcy as the film’s central figures, and they hint at the oppositional but complementary facets of their characters that will dictate the path of their relationship. By means of its careful choreography, the mise-en-scene of the second sequence emphasizes the connection that exists between the two, which in some way will be mediated by Ellen. It is split into three set-ups and in each Clem, Narcy, and Ellen occupy different positions in relation to the others. Clem is a fundamentally decent ex-serviceman who is finding the adjustment to civilian life difficult, and he finds himself drawn to the criminal world that is offered by Narcy because he hopes it will provide him not just with an income, but also with a substitute for the excitement of the war. As he puts it: ‘Is it my fault that I’ve got too set in my ways?’ However, the sequence also suggests that Clem has suicidal tendencies and has been drinking heavily; we learn later that he has rarely been sober since meeting Ellen: ‘You’ve never seen me like this before have you baby. Stone cold sober.’ In order to reinforce the idea of Clem’s mental disintegration, the sequence also introduces the first signs of his compulsively repetitious behaviour. His constant lighting and then blowing out the flame of his cigarette lighter suggests a mechanism by which he can keep a grip on a world that he feels is outside his control. This pattern of behaviour points towards a later scene in Sally’s flat, when his verbal repetitions will enable him to endure her slow and painful removing of the shotgun pellets from his back.

The film’s narrative will reveal that what lies behind Clem’s mental disintegration is that he has been a prisoner of war for two years, and that he has escaped his captors by killing a German prison guard with a beer bottle. By harnessing the idea of compulsive repetition, the film suggests both the traumatic effect of Clem’s

wartime experiences and the way that this affect predetermines the path that Clem is fated to follow in civilian life.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud illustrates the tendency of the traumatized to repeat by describing the *fort/da* game, in which he observes his grandson persistently throw away and retrieve a wooden cotton reel after his mother has left him alone. Freud argues that, by means of the game, the child is able to turn his passive position into an active one, and the repetitive nature of the game enables the child to work through his experience, and therefore master it.[6] However, Freud also warns that in extreme cases of traumatization the compulsion to repeat may motivate a self-destructive 'death drive'. In cases such as these, according to Freud, the victim gives the impression 'of being pursued by a malignant fate or possessed by some 'daemonic power', and being fated to experience a 'perpetual occurrence of the same thing.'[7] Thought of in these terms, the narrative of *They Made Me a Fugitive* can be defined as ordering itself around Clem's unconscious and suicidal urge to revisit his previous experiences, and also as tracing the consequences, for him and for others, of this desperate and compulsive repetition of his wartime trauma.

While the film suggests that Clem's character has been shaped by the trauma of war, Narcy's is proposed as the product of the dislocation that characterised elements of wartime and postwar life at home. As Cora says of Narcy, he is 'not even a respectable crook, just cheap, rotten, after the war trash.' That Narcy is dressed in garish tie, monogrammed shirt, and silk handkerchief, differentiates him from Clem in his demob suit and 'old school' or regimental tie, and this demonstrates both the success of Narcy's criminal business and his narcissistic self-absorption. Narcy is

[6] For an assessment of Freud's trauma theories, see pages 68-71, above. Also see Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in *The Standard Edition vol. XVIII*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955; repr. 1981), pp. 14-16 on repetition, and pp. 34-36 on the death drive.
[7] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, pp. 21-22.

interested in Clem, and by extension in Ellen, because he believes that Clem has 'class', and he is realistic enough to admit the economic limitations that his lack of being 'born into' class poses for him.

As Andrew Spicer observes, Narcy 'must have the style, and the woman, which Clem possesses', and yet at the same time 'he cannot co-exist with Clem, that contemptible "noorotic…amerchoor" with his well-bred scruples.'[8] Spicer also pertinently points out the connection between the figure of Narcy and the 'cruel, sexy aristocrats of the Gainsborough costume dramas.'[9] Like them, Narcy provides pleasures for the audience that are based on his flaunting of normative codes of moral conduct and accepted behaviour. Also, like the villains of the Gainsborough melodramas, *They Made Me a Fugitive* provides Narcy with a remarkable number of the film's best lines, and an examination of the film's marketing campaign reveals that it often gave precedence to the figure of Narcy over that of Clem. For example, one poster for the film proclaims in a banner over a picture of Narcy pointing a gun at the reader: 'They made me a spiv! The whole town's sizzling over Griffith Jones as Narcy the Spiv, sleek as a snake in the screen sensation you've got to be tough to take!'[10] However, whilst the film renders the character of Narcy attractive to its audiences on a superficial level, it then proceeds to radically undermine this position by revealing the reality of Narcy's state of abjection when he brutally beats Sally in her dressing room at the Music Box.

This complex and textually-rich sequence lasts less than a minute, and it is comprised of fifteen shots, some of which last only a second. In order to provide a meaningful analysis I will describe each shot in detail.

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[8] Andrew Spicer, *Typical Men: The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001), p. 138.
[9] Spicer, *Typical Men*, p. 137.
[10] A copy of the film's pressbook is held in the BFI collection, reference PBS-47926.

Figure 5-2

At the start of the sequence, shot one has Narcy entering the room at the rear of the frame and approaching Sally, who is sitting alone at a dressing table in front of a bank of illuminated mirrors. These seem to tilt precariously over her. Narcy says that he knows that Sally has visited Clem in prison, but she affects a surface of defiance. In shot two, Sally sits in the foreground with Narcy standing over her, we see that there is another bank of dressing tables and mirrors behind her. Narcy accuses Sally of revealing to Clem that he is 'going with' Clem's fiancée, Ellen, and he pulls Sally to her feet. Shot three is of a mirror's reflection of the chair that Sally has been sitting on; Narcy pulls it away, creating a space on the floor behind her. Shot four has Sally facing Narcy at the front of the frame, behind her a mirror reflects them both, in the reflection we can see his face and Sally's back. Narcy then slaps Sally viciously across the face. Shot five is a close-up version of shot four, but it removes Narcy and Sally

Figure 5-3

from the foreground, and shows only their reflection in the mirror. Narcy's face is horribly distorted as if by some impurity in the mirror's surface (Figure 5-2). Shot six repeats shot four. Sally says to Narcy: 'Always the perfect little gentleman'. She is still calm, but her composure is beginning to falter. Shot seven repeats shot five, as Narcy slaps Sally across the face for the second time. Shot eight repeats shot three, and we again see the floor space reflected in the mirror. Sally begins to fall. Shot nine is just a brief flash of Sally's face. Shot ten is a close-up of Cora, who is listening fearfully at the door. In shot eleven, Narcy is seen in medium shot kicking Sally as she lies on the floor. Shot twelve is another close-up of Sally, but the horror of her situation is now obvious to her (Figure 5-3). Shot thirteen is similar to shots five and seven. Narcy's face is again seen as distorted in the mirror as we hear him slapping Sally again. Shot fourteen repeats shot twelve, a close-up of Sally's frightened face, but now

Figure 5-4

the surface of the film itself seems to have become corrupted, and the emulsion partly erased.[11] Finally, in shot fifteen, we see Narcy from Sally's perspective. He is kicking

[11] I have not managed to find the reason for this shot being the only one in the restored version of the film that displays this type of damage.

her over and over again, and her view of him begins to spin faster and faster on a central axis, first one way and then the other (Figure 5-4).

This brutal and shocking scene reveals to us, and to Sally, the truth that lies behind Narcy's superficially attractive façade. Up until this point, Sally has felt that she has the measure of Narcy because she feels that she knows 'how to take care of herself'. As she has earlier stated to Cora: 'I'm not frightened of Narcy, he wouldn't try anything on me.' This scene is a point of no return for Sally, and she is later forced to admit to Cora that she has had to radically change her view of herself, and of Narcy. But how are we to understand why the sequence is constructed in the way that it is, and what is the mechanism by which the film comes to remove the surface that up until now has coloured both our, and Sally's, view of Narcy?

It is useful at this point to revisit Klein's object relational revision of Freudian psychoanalysis, in which she places the individual in a dual world of internal and external objects. The theory of object relations proposes that internal objects are the psychical representations of those external objects with which the subject has formed interpersonal connections. According to Klein, internal objects are thought of as being in a constant state of flux as the individual's experience of the external world changes, and the inconsistencies that develop between the subject's internal world, and the subject's experience of the world that exists outside, lead to a calling into question of the boundaries that exist between subjectivity and objectivity, and between reality and fantasy.[1]

In his analysis of this sequence Ian Aitken observes that Cavalcanti, the director of *They Made Me a Fugitive*, often employs mirrors in his films to enable his

[1] For a more in-depth account of Klein's theory of object relationships, see pages 103-106, above.

characters to see themselves 'as they really are.'[2] Referring to Narcy's distorted reflection, he states that:

> At first, Narcy's reflection appears normal, but, after he has slapped [Sally] for the first time, it becomes inexplicably distorted, as though disclosing the underlying brutality normally masked by his handsome appearance. This shot, achieved through the use of lighting effects, is one of the most literal representations of the naturalist 'inner beast' in all of Cavalcanti's films.[3]

Aitken is implying that the shots in which Narcy's face is distorted can best be understood as existing within a framework of expressionist aesthetics. As Annette Kuhn and Julia Knight have explained, the term expressionism, as used within film studies, refers to 'an extreme stylisation of mise-en-scène in which the formal organisation of the film is made very obvious […]. The overall effect is to create a self-contained fantasy world quite separate from everyday reality.'[4] Thinking of the sequence as being organized in object relational terms, at the beginning both we and Sally are united by the state of un-integration that we have allowed to build up between the reality of Narcy as a brutal drug dealer, and our internally constructed figure of Narcy that has been coloured by the film's ordering of his superficial attraction. The repeated distortions of shots 5, 7, and 13 reveal this state of un-integration to us, but the fact that the distortions exist only within the expressionist formal structure of the film means that, at this point, Sally is still labouring under her illusion about Narcy's true nature. Shots 9, 12, and 14 plot the rapid trajectory of Sally's realisation that she has miscalculated, both the level of her own agency, and Narcy's capacity for evil, and it is the time delay between our realisation, and Sally's realisation, that imbues the sequence with its visceral power. By shot 15, our view of Narcy and Sally's view

[2] Ian Aitken, *Alberto Cavalcanti: Realism, Surrealism and National Cinemas* (London and New York: Flicks Books, 2000), p. 171.
[3] Aitken, p. 171.
[4] Annette Kuhn and Julia Knight, 'Weimar Cinema', in *The Cinema Book*, ed. by Pam Cook (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999, repr. 2007), p. 208.

have again become realigned, and we enter Sally's subjectivity for the first time as the image spins first one way then the other. At this point, we share Sally's perspective of Narcy kicking her over and over again, and this view certainly emphasises the extreme violence of the assault on Sally, but it also signifies that the world that we, and Sally, thought of as existing before has shifted on its axis. In our forced acknowledgement of our previous disavowal of Narcy's true nature, which we have, up until this point, shared with Sally, we are faced with our complicity in Narcy's lack of moral responsibility, and in his state of abjection.

The film's placing of the viewer in a position of complicity in this sequence is something that will recur with increasing frequency as the narrative progresses. From now on, as I will demonstrate in the next section, while Narcy remains at the centre of the atmosphere of insidious moral disintegration that the film describes as pervading post war British society at this time, no one – neither character nor spectator – is absolved from some level of implication.

5.4 The collapse of the paternal and maternal functions, and the wider implications of Britain's postwar cultural malaise

I have demonstrated how *They Made Me a Fugitive* suggests that Narcy's various crimes have implications for the wider society by highlighting the state of disavowal that the audience has allowed to build up in respect of Narcy's true nature. In this section, I begin by examining other means by which the film widens out the theme of moral responsibility, specifically through its presentation of the actions of three of its female characters, Aggie, Ellen, and Sally, all of whom are part of Narcy's criminal world. I proceed to examine how the film enlarges its perspective still further in describing the members of the broader public whom Clem encounters as he makes his way back to London after his escape from prison. Finally, I investigate what is at

stake in the film's conclusion, how it differs from the one intended in the film's shooting script, and how the film can be found to delineate a world-view that suggests a collapse of both paternal and maternal functioning within the atmosphere of Britain's postwar cultural malaise.

Early in the film, we are introduced to Aggie at the Valhalla Undertaking Company as several of Narcy's henchmen carry in a coffin that supposedly contains the mortal remains of Alfred George Dabcock of 21 Poplar Street. Played by Mary Merrall, the British character actor who would have been known to contemporary audiences for her upright matriarchal roles in the Ealing productions *Dead of Night* and *Pink String and Sealing Wax* (Robert Hamer, 1945), Aggie seems at first glance to be the epitome of Victorian era respectability. Always dressed in black and wearing jet mourning jewellery, she acts as the public face of Narcy's business, and she intones that Mr Dabcock 'was playing croquet yesterday, not a care in the world. Sic transit gloria mundi.' However, when the coffin is opened to reveal that it is packed instead with cartons of black market cigarettes, Aggie lights a cigar and tells the group to 'keep out a couple of hundred for me will you? My boyfriend smokes like a chimney.' When Aggie later announces that another criminal gang leader, Limpy, is to deliver a consignment of black market New Zealand mutton, she asks Soapy to 'keep me a leg of it, if it's one thing my boyfriend likes it's mutton', to which Soapy replies: 'Dressed as lamb…'

In his assessment of the character of Aggie, Ian Aitken sees her as acting as one of several in the film that behave in ways designed to contravene conventional mores: 'It is not simply that Aggie is an eccentric older woman here, but that the conventional order of things has, to some extent, been inverted within the world she inhabits with Narcy and the others.'[5] Aggie's tendency towards moral transgression is

[5] Aitken, p. 168.

also apparent in a later sequence, when Clem threatens to leave the gang on discovering that a consignment of black market stockings that he has transported has contained a quantity of cocaine.[6] Aggie intervenes in the resulting stand-off between him and Narcy by saying that 'Narcy ain't going to run this stuff as steady line. He's just passing it through for Limpy, same way as Limpy does for us.' Dealing in illegal drugs is, for Clem, a red line that must not be crossed, but Aggie's intervention is not a sign of her support for Clem's position, but merely her way of defusing a difficult situation, and expediting the gang's return to their criminal activities. Crucially, neither Aggie, nor Clem's fiancée Ellen, who is a bystander in the scene, exhibit any sign that Clem's moral position has any significance for them at all.

The inversion of the conventional order of things also extends to the way that personal relationships are mostly presented in the film as unconventional, and contingent purely on self-interest and economic advancement. When Clem introduces Ellen to Narcy early in the film, a close-up of her reveals her immediate attraction to Narcy, and she abandons Clem soon afterwards purely on the grounds that Narcy seems to her to be a better financial prospect. After Clem has threatened to leave the gang, Narcy seems to be undecided as to what measures to take, but, when Clem privately confides his intention to Ellen, she says to him: 'You can't do that now you know too much.' After Clem says to Ellen that it might break her heart to tear herself away from Narcy, she playfully draws the fingernails of her clawed hand down the side of his face, and the implication is that it is Ellen who influences Narcy to entrap

[6] A close-up reveals the drug to be a white powder that is referred to by Narcy as 'sherbet', but the film's shooting script specifically defines the drug as cocaine. This reference was removed in the film at the request of the BBFC. The shooting script is held in the BFI's Special Collections, reference SCR-17258.

Figure 5-5

Clem as they flee in the getaway car from Hedley's Warehouse. In similar terms, Narcy abandons Sally for Ellen, prompting Sally's approach to Clem in prison, an action motivated to a large degree by her desire for revenge on Narcy. All these of the film's inversion of the conventional order of things exist within the world that these characters inhabit with Narcy, however, the film proceeds to suggest a more general malaise in the sequence that describes Clem's journey back to London after making his escape from Dartmoor Prison.

A montage of shots reveals Clem's journey over Dartmoor as he is pursued by a large contingent of policemen on foot and on horseback. He is able to steal an overcoat and a hat from a sawmill, and a farmer, Mr Keeley, shoots him in the back after issuing him with only the briefest of warnings. As night falls, Clem finds himself at a secluded villa, and, in an extended point-of-view shot, we adopt his position as he

crosses the villa's unkempt gardens and enters the house through an open set of French doors. Clem finds himself in a large drawing room, and he is confronted with the owner of the house, Mrs Fenshaw (Figure 5-5). In another point-of-view shot we now adopt her position as she stares at Clem, who asks whether she is alone, to which she replies that her husband is asleep upstairs. Mrs Fenshaw acts as if in a trance; her face is expressionless, her voice monotone, and her eyes stare vacantly. She states that she knows who Clem is and that she has heard about him on the wireless, and she offers him clean clothes, food, and a hot bath, and in return she says that she expects Clem to do her 'a service'.

After Clem has bathed and shaved, he sits down to a meal that Mrs Fenshaw has prepared. Now Mr Fenshaw appears in a dressing gown, he is clearly drunk, and he shows no surprise at Clem's presence, merely saying to him: 'Just forget you saw me.' While Clem eats, Mrs Fenshaw says that she has heard that he was in prison for killing someone, and while he denies this, Clem admits that, during the war, he had killed a German prison guard. At this point, the 'service' that Mrs Fenshaw requires becomes clear when she offers to give Clem a gun if he will use it to kill her husband. Clem refuses, saying to her: 'You're round the bend', and when he immediately leaves, Mrs Fenshaw proceeds to murder her husband in cold blood, shooting him six times and continuing to pull the trigger over and over again as he lies dead at her feet.

In his assessment of this scene, Aitken describes it as 'one of the most surreal'[1] in the film, and he connects it to others in Cavalcanti's films that betray the influence of surrealism in their employment of 'the structures of the dream, in which the boundaries between the real world and the dream world merge into each other.'[2] I would like to argue instead that this sequence seems to be structured around a realist

[1] Aitken, p. 174.
[2] Ibid., p. 155.

aesthetic, which is reminiscent of two scenes from Cavalcanti's 1942 Ealing production *Went the Day Well?* In that film, in order to combat the threat posed by an invasion of German troops in the small English village of Bramley End, the elderly postmistress, Mrs Collins, is forced to kill a German soldier as he sits in her kitchen. After temporarily blinding him with pepper, she purposefully strides towards her victim before despatching him with a blow to the head with an axe. Later in the film, as the German soldiers are laying siege to the village's manor house, the vicar's daughter, Nora, shoots and kills Oliver Wilsford, a resident of the village whom she loves, after finding him to be a German spy. Both these sequences show acts of extreme violence that are perpetrated by women, presenting them in an uncompromising way, and ending with shots of Mrs Collins and Nora that display their shocked reactions. In highlighting the realist texture of these scenes James Chapman states that:

> The disturbing quality of *Went the Day Well?* lies in the way in which it depicts [these events] with a degree of brutal realism that is quite shocking. This aspect of the film was emphasised in Ealing's publicity material, which said that "the realism of the picture is such that even the hard boiled, sceptical cinemagoers should fall under the spell of its convincing power".[3]

Aitken's description of the scene in *They Made Me a Fugitive* as being 'surreal' is presumably based on the catatonic state that Mrs Fenshaw inhabits both before and after the murder of her husband. While this is undoubtedly true, the question is how can this fact be reconciled with my claim that the scenes from both films are structured within an equally realist aesthetic? In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud proposes the existence within the psyche of a 'protective shield

[3] James Chapman, *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda 1939-1945* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998, repr. 2008), p. 228.

Figure 5-6

against stimuli', which has the purpose of protecting the integrity of the mind against an overload of excitation that attacks it both from inside the self, and from the external world. According to Freud, traumatic neurosis is the consequence of an extensive breach in this protective shield, and what causes traumatic affect is not the violence of the shock itself but the 'fright and the threat to life' that the shock causes.[1] In his later work *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Freud states that the subject's spontaneous reaction to trauma is often the mobilization of a state of 'automatic anxiety', which is a product of 'mental helplessness', and which acts as a mechanism to protect the ego from further damage.[2]

[1] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, pp. 29-31.
[2] Sigmund Freud, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, in *The Standard Edition vol. XX*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1959; repr. 1986), p. 138.

Ferenczi, in his paper on trauma 'The Confusion of Tongues', expands Freud's idea in stating that, in the aftermath of trauma, the victim is 'paralyzed by enormous anxiety'. Her thinking becomes dissociated and fragmented, and she often carries herself in a 'dream-like state' that recalls that of a 'mechanical automaton'.[3] As I have already argued, whilst some wartime films certainly describe *events* that have the potential to be traumatic, in the postwar period British cinema becomes more willing to represent the traumatic *effects* of those events in explicit terms. In the way that *They Made Me a Fugitive* presents the figure of Mrs Fenshaw as murdering her husband whilst within a dream-like state of helplessness and mental paralysis, the film can be found to draw on the symptoms of traumatization that Freud and Ferenczi have described (Figure 5-6). The film therefore constructs the actions of Mrs Fenshaw not within a surrealist aesthetic but a realist one, and her as the traumatized perpetrator of an extremely transgressive crime that finds its motivation in the hellish world within which she is incarcerated. By its use of point of view shots, the film also anchors us securely within both Mrs Fenshaw's and Clem's subjectivity, and it encourages us to recognise the 'daemonic' nature and complexity of their different traumatic experiences.

Both the transgressive actions of Mr and Mrs Fenshaw during this scene, and her later willingness to frame Clem for her crime, sit comfortably with the pattern of the whole narrative segment that describes Clem's journey back to London. At the beginning of the segment, Clem is shot in the back by a farmer in spite of the fact that Clem poses no physical threat to him, and after only the scantest of warnings. Later in the segment, a lorry driver gives him a lift part of the way, observing that 'people have got terrible dishonest since the war, I don't know what the country's coming to', before

[3] Sándor Ferenczi, 'Confusion of Tongues Between Adults and the Child', in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 30 (1949), p. 228.

offering to sell Clem black market petrol coupons, and seeming to take pleasure in Clem's pain as his wounded back is slammed repeatedly against the hard cabin seat. The insidious moral disintegration that has, up until now, been limited in the film to those connected with Narcy's gang, is now observed to have permeated society as a whole.

Writing about *They Made Me a Fugitive*, Charles Drazin recounts that Cavalcanti had travelled, during the last days of the war, to a newly liberated Paris and then on to Germany, and that the trip had had a profound effect on him:

> His impression was of a country that had been dislodged from its foundations, of a people whose moral worth the Nazis had systematically undermined. The weeks he went on to spend in a defeated Germany served only to deepen his despair. He returned to England haunted by the ease with which evil could undo civilized values and reduce ordinary people to acts of depravity.[4]

In a short sequence after Clem has arrived back in London, Sally is seen reading the front page of a newspaper. Under a headline that says: 'Morgan now in London', and alongside articles entitled 'Street hold-up bandits foiled' and 'Mother and child die in flat', the article announces that: 'Carmen Mory, the "Black Angel" of Ravensbrück, four other women, and six men all former members of the staff of the concentration camp, were sentenced to death at the Hamburg war crimes court this afternoon.' This image is seen on the screen only for a few seconds, but its subliminal conflation of Carmen Mory and the horrors of the Holocaust with contemporary social anxieties chimes with Drazin's account of Cavalcanti's despair, and with Drazin's description of the film as being concerned ultimately with 'the barbarities that human beings are capable of.'[5]

[4] Charles Drazin, *The Finest Years: British Cinema of the 1940s* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 131.
[5] Drazin, p. 132.

An examination of the shooting script for *They Made Me a Fugitive* reveals that the ending of the film was originally intended to be much less bleak than it turned out. In this version, as Narcy lies dying on the pavement outside the Valhalla after his fall, he says to Inspector Rockliffe: 'Soapy killed that copper. I fixed it that way. Morgan's just a bad amateur. If you want me to sign anything, you'd better get cracking.' After this, Sally visits Mrs Fenshaw who admits the murder of her husband and says that she is prepared to make a statement to the police. The script ends with Sally visiting Clem in prison and telling him that Inspector Rockliffe is confident that Clem's sentence will be radically reduced at his retrial. Although the final version of the film provides some hope for Clem in Inspector Rockliffe's words: 'It's alright Miss Connor, we'll get all the facts before we're through', it ends with Clem being led back to prison, and Sally left alone.

Many British films of this period describe situations in which male subjectivity is called into question and female subjectivity is accentuated, and both of these departures from the norm are defined as contributing to the destabilization of the dominant social formation. By punishing their errant female figures, and redeeming their male figures, these films suggest the potential for a return to normative gender roles in their conclusions. Similarly, *They Made Me A Fugitive* proposes a postwar British cultural malaise in which both paternal and maternal function have atrophied. Society is fragmented, the rule of law, in the form of Inspector Rockliffe, is ineffectual at best, and compromised at worst, and both male and female characters are equally morally transgressive. The figures of Clem and Sally, although tainted by their relationships with Narcy, show signs by the end of the film of having the basis of a relationship not clouded by self-interest or economic advancement. However, while this, and Inspector Rockliffe's assurance to Sally, provide some shreds of hope for the

future, the viewer is certainly not provided with any certainty that justice will be served, and that the status quo of sexual difference will be restored.

5.5 Introduction to *Mine Own Executioner*

While British crime films such as *They Made Me a Fugitive* describe the marginalization of the returning serviceman as resulting from his being subsumed by an underworld made viable by the disassociation of postwar society, other British films of this period are concerned with the challenges faced by what Andrew Spicer has termed the 'damaged Everyman'. According to Spicer, these films are centred on 'ambivalent, sensitive, tortured and tormented male protagonists engaged in a moral struggle within their own natures, who are plunged into neurotic self-doubts and a crisis of sexual and social identity.'[6] In similar terms, Robert Murphy draws a line between the postwar British crime cycle and what he terms the 'doom-laden' series of 'morbid films' of this time that differentiate themselves through their 'particular interest in psychology and neurosis'.[7] Examples of these types of films include *Daybreak* (Compton Bennett, 1946), *The Upturned Glass* (Lawrence Huntington, 1946), *The October Man* (Roy Ward Baker, 1947), *Mine Own Executioner* (Anthony Kimmins, 1947), and *The Small Back Room* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, 1949). As I have already shown, psychoanalyst figures and the psychoanalytic setting have a presence in a number of British films of the immediate post-war period, but they are often placed on the periphery of the narrative and employed mainly as a means to provide opportunities for the objective investigation and subjective narration of the films' central characters. What sets *Mine Own Executioner* aside, and what makes it particularly worthy of scrutiny, is that it takes as its two main protagonists a

[6] Spicer, *Typical Men*, p. 163.
[7] Robert Murphy, 'Riff-raff: British cinema and the underworld', in *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London: BFI Publishing, 1986, repr. 1996), p. 304.

psychoanalyst and his patient, and it makes psychoanalytic investigation and remembrance integral to its narrative, and to its wider world-view.

The story of *Mine Own Executioner* traces the path of Felix Milne's analysis of Adam Lucien, a former Spitfire pilot who has been traumatized by his experiences as a prisoner of the Japanese, and the film also makes central the vicissitudes of Felix's own psychopathology, which it defines in relation to the regressive nature of his sexuality. The film draws comparisons between Adam's and Felix's respective mental disturbances, which find expression in the erratic nature of their behaviour and thought processes, and also in the dysfunctional quality of their marital relationships. The screenplay for the film was adapted by Nigel Balchin from his own novel of the same name, the third book of a hugely popular trilogy that had been published in Britain between 1942 and 1945.[8] Balchin was one of the best-known British writers of the Second World War, and his biographer Derek Collett proposes that the great success of his novel can be attributed in part to its concentration on the practice of psychoanalysis, 'regarded in the media as a new and exciting one, with public interest in it being stimulated and sustained by the movie industry.'[9] The film adaptation, released in Britain in November 1947, is similarly interested in the psychoanalytic processes, and it finds common ground with other British films of this time in making contemporary psychoanalytic discourses central to its narrative and formal structures.

I begin my assessment of *Mine Own Executioner* by examining how the film orientates itself around the causes and consequences of Adam Lucien's war trauma, and I investigate what is at stake in the film's unusual suggestion that his Oedipal fixation acts to motivate a predisposition towards his later trauma. I continue to assess

[8] Balchin's war trilogy is comprised of *Darkness Falls from the* Air (1942), *The Small Back Room* (1943), and *Mine Own Executioner* (1945).
[9] Derek Collett, *His Own Executioner: The Life of Nigel Balchin* (Bristol: SilverWood, 2015), p. 166.

the film's linkage of Adam's schizophrenia to Felix's various neuroses, with particular reference to the consequences that their respective psychical crises have for their ability to function within their marital relationships. Finally, I employ Siegfried Kracauer's contemporary work on Hollywood cinema in order to assess whether the vogue for psychoanalysis in Britain at this time can be attributed to a similar lack of adequate systems of social communication.

5.6 Synopsis

Felix Milne (Burgess Meredith) is a dedicated psychoanalyst who splits his professional life between the Emily Ward Psychiatric Clinic, where he gives his services for free, and his private practice at his home. Felix is disillusioned because he feels that his private practice is mostly composed of people who are not really ill, but instead are 'distressingly normal and want to be cured of it'. Felix also has domestic problems; his marriage to Pat (Dulcie Gray) is in trouble, and whilst he claims to love her 'more than most men love their wives', he is unresponsive to her sexual advances, and he constantly bullies her and calls her 'the rhino' because of what he perceives as her carelessness and clumsiness. He is also infatuated with Bab (Christine Norden), a glamorous and sophisticated childhood friend of Pat's, who is married to Peter. Felix is consulted by Molly Lucien (Barbara White), who asks him to see her husband, Adam (Kieron Moore), a traumatized former Spitfire pilot and prisoner of war in Burma, who has tried to murder her only the day before. Suspecting that Adam is schizophrenic, Felix tells Molly that he feels unqualified to treat him, and that she is taking a great risk living with him. He suggests to Molly that Adam should visit another specialist, but because of Adam's fanatical objection to doctors, he eventually accedes to Molly's request.

When they meet the following afternoon, Adam seems initially unwilling to work with Felix, but he eventually admits trying to strangle Molly, and agrees to attend weekly sessions. During one of these sessions Adam gives an account of his attack on Molly mainly in the third person. He says that this event took place after she had fallen asleep while he was preparing for bed, and, though he claims that he 'wasn't there', he admits that he 'saw a good deal of it', and he refers to Molly as 'it'. Felix discloses his attraction to Bab to a psychiatrist colleague, Dr James Garsten (John Laurie), and he admits that his marriage to Pat has been an unhappy one for a long time, and that he bullies her. However, Dr Garsten assures Felix that it is behaviours such as these that enable both of them to 'feel other people's troubles', and to therefore understand their patients' anxieties, depressions, and neuroses.

During one of the weekly sessions with Adam, Felix injects him with sodium pentothal in order to lay bare the repressed memories of Adam's experiences as a prisoner of war. Adam again recounts these experiences mainly in the third person, and from his perspective we witness the sequence of events that begins with the crash of his Spitfire in the jungle. Adam is captured by a Japanese patrol and, after being tortured for several days, he breaks and gives his captors all the information that they have demanded. His leg has been broken during his interrogation, but after some weeks of captivity he manages to kill one of his guards by cracking him on the head with a bamboo poll, and he makes good his escape.

After the session Adam professes to have made a full recovery, but the following morning Felix warns Molly that she is still in grave danger as he fears that another trauma exists within Adam at a much deeper level. Felix spends the evening with Bab and, after they have seemingly had sex, he receives a call from Pat to say that Adam has shot Molly, and that she has been taken to hospital. Felix arrives at the hospital to find that Molly is dying from her wounds, and when he later returns home

he finds a clearly deranged Adam waiting for him and holding Pat at gunpoint. When Felix attempts to disarm him, Adam strikes Felix and then flees the scene.

The following morning, Adam is discovered by the police standing on a ledge at the top of a tall building, and Felix, who is scared of heights, volunteers to climb a fireman's ladder and attempts to talk him down. After Felix has climbed to the ledge, Adam asks him whether Molly had suffered, and when Felix assures him that she had not, Adam shoots himself and then plunges to his death. Sometime later, Felix is compelled to appear at the inquest and the coroner, who is himself a doctor, raises questions about Felix's lack of a medical qualification and is initially censorious of his actions, however he exonerates Felix of any blame after Dr Garsten has intervened on his behalf.

On returning home with Pat, Felix is ready to abandon his work because he feels that the job 'needs a God to do it properly', but Pat persuades him to continue, although Felix states that it will be she who will pay the price for it, and that there will be no end to her suffering.

5.7 The nature of Adam's affliction, and the place of the Oedipus complex in *Mine Own Executioner*'s ordering of the aetiology of his trauma

When Molly Lucien visits Felix Milne's consulting room at his home, she describes the behaviour that her husband has displayed to her in the weeks preceding his attempt on her life. According to Molly's account, before his capture and imprisonment by the Japanese Adam had been 'more than alright', he had been decorated for his fine war record and their marriage had been a happy one. However, since being invalided out of the armed forces and returning to England, Adam has become very quiet, and sometimes when Molly has spoken to him she feels that 'it was as if he wasn't there'.

Later, when Adam arrives at his first meeting with Felix his state of dissociation is made obvious. As he walks along the pavement outside Felix's house he seems oblivious to the world around him, and in the consulting room, his demeanour alternates between a condition of detachment, and one of defensive rage and supressed violence. When Felix asks Adam to tell him something about his parents a close-up emphasises his complete lack of emotion as he says: 'My father was a barrister', yet when he continues: 'My mother was his wife' his expression is shown to change immediately to one of serene rapture. After Adam has left the consulting room at the end of the session, Felix writes in his psychiatric report that he believes Adam to be suffering from schizophrenia, and that a split personality is 'clearly indicated', as well as a 'conflict in early childhood'. What seems clear to Felix is that Adam's wartime experiences have been the precipitating factor in, but not the cause of, his mental disturbance, and in a later session Felix injects Adam with sodium pentothal in order to enable him to clearly recollect these events, and to narrate them on the analyst's couch (Figure 5-7).

The sequence that follows describes Adam's drug-induced remembrance, repetition, and initial working-through of his traumatic wartime experiences, and it lays out in detail the shooting-down of his Spitfire over the jungle, his capture by a Japanese patrol, his subsequent torture, and finally his escape after he has killed a guard by cracking his skull. Adam narrates his story mostly in the first person, and the film adopts Adam's visual and aural perspective and as a result the spectator is firmly sutured into his subjectivity.[10]

This part of the film can be defined as a radical example of many sequences that occur in British films of this period in which the films' narrative and formal

[10] I use the term 'suture' to describe how the viewer is encouraged to identify with certain characters by means of the filmic discourse, see, for example, Jean-Pierre Oudart, 'Cinema and Suture', in *Screen* 18:4 (1977), pp. 35-47.

Figure 5-7

structures make visible fundamental elements of the troubled inner worlds of their characters.[11] On several occasions, Adam's narration switches to the third person, particularly when he recounts events of a traumatic nature, and these slippages connect this testimony to the peculiar nature of his previous account of his attempted murder of Molly, and they also emphasize the splitting of his psyche that his trauma has initiated.

When Adam returns to Felix's consulting room the following day, he seems to have been transformed by his experience, and when Felix asks him whether he feels better, he replies that he considers himself to be 'completely different' and 'completely normal now'. However, to Adam's profound disappointment, Felix states that he

[11] For an analysis of the relevant sequence in *The Seventh Veil*, as Francesca recounts her troubled past to Dr Larsen, see pages 143-147, above.

believes that their work together has instead only just started. Felix announces to Adam that:

> What I must do now is dig a bit deeper into your life […]. It may be that this thing inside you that is causing all the trouble is getting frightened, it can feel us moving the layers away from on top of it, and it is afraid that if we go on it will be found and kicked out.

Felix believes that what is at the root of Adam's schizophrenia is a fixation that has occurred in his early childhood, and the film has already made clear the Oedipal nature of this fixation through its close scrutiny of Adam's description of his early relationship with his parents. In his assessment of this aspect of the film psychoanalyst Ira Konigsberg demonstrates that Oedipal material is evident throughout the film, and he lists several sequences in which the film employs image and sound to reveal the Oedipal nature of Adam's dysfunction. For example, as he is seen sitting in the cockpit of his plane at the beginning of his drug-induced remembrance of his trauma, Adam can be heard whistling the tune of the nursery rhyme 'Rockabye Baby', and as he makes his way home just before he fatally wounds Molly the refrain occurs two more times, first within the diagesis being played by a boy on a mouth organ, and then on the film's score. Similarly, in this sequence we see Adam walking in a stupor and then lashing out at two boys with his walking stick after they have run into him, and he then proceeds to tear furiously at a poster for Nestlé's Milk, which shows the figure of a naked male baby holding a ball (Figure 5-8). Finally, after Adam has broken into Felix's house, and he is holding Pat at gunpoint, he seems to be referencing his Oedipal phantasy directly when he says to Felix: 'Look, I know about women. It's quite clear now, in some ways it's a pity that it wasn't clear before, but I was only a child at the

Figure 5-8

time', and when he tells Pat that she can leave the room he adds: 'But she'll ring up the police. They're all the same. No principles.'[12]

In its suggestion that it is Adam's Oedipal fixation that motivates his predisposition towards his later trauma, *Mine Own Executioner* is appropriating an historical psychoanalytic discourse that had come to circulate soon after the end of the First World War. In September 1918 a congress of psychoanalysts was convened in Budapest, attended by official representatives of the governments of Austria, Germany, and Hungary, and intended to engage with the increasing appreciation of the part played by war neuroses in military strategy.[13] Leading psychoanalysts of the time including Ferenczi, Karl Abraham, Ernst Simmel, and Ernest Jones presented

[12] Ira Konigsberg, 'Does it Work? *Mine Own Executioner* and psychoanalytic interpretation', in *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 46:2 (2010), pp. 194-195.
[13] Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life For Our Time* (London: Max Press, 2006), pp. 375-376.

papers at the conference, and these were published in a collected volume by the International Psycho-Analytic Press in 1921. In their papers the authors consistently draw parallels between the neuroses of peacetime and those that have been caused by those traumatic events experienced on the battlefield, and they claim that these neuroses can be traced back to unresolved infantile conflicts at one of the stages of libidinal evolution. For example, Simmel declares that:

> The fact that in the midst of [the occurrences of war] one soldier remains well while another becomes a neurotic may, so far as my experience goes, be very well connected with the psycho-sexual constellation of the particular person. The systematic investigation of the dream-life of the soldier, even after the removal of the war neurotic symptoms, has indeed made it possible to recognise quite frequently threads that lead down to the primordial network of infantile sexuality.[14]

As I have previously demonstrated, British films of the immediate postwar period generally take great pains to make it clear that the neuroses and psychoses of their central figures have their roots, not in Oedipal fixations that have established themselves in their early childhoods, but in real historical events that they have experienced in later life such as rape and physical abuse, parental loss, or abandonment.[15] By their removing Oedipal desire as the determining factor in trauma these films define the later psychopathological behaviour of their characters as being caused by exogenous events that lie outside the victim's control, and not by endogenous factors that have been motivated by their own psychical dysfunctions. I have argued that, within this model, these films suggest that the victim of trauma has no reason to look within for the underlying causes of traumatization, with all of the implications of sexual guilt that this implies. I have argued further that, in the

[14] Sándor Ferenczi, Ernst Simmel and others, *Psycho-Analysis and the War Neuroses* (London, New York, and Vienna: The International Psycho-Analytic Press, 1921), p. 31.
[15] See pages 145-148, above, for an assessment of how trauma is presented in *The Seventh Veil* as having its roots in real events and not fixation at one of the stages of sexual development. Similarly, see pages 164-166, above, for how this structure operates in *Madonna of the Seven Moons*.

aftermath of the Second World War, the general tendency for British cinema to adopt this model must have been liberating for its contemporary audiences, who had themselves often been exposed to trauma through their experiences of evacuation, the Blitz, and other factors. The key question is, therefore, why does the narrative of *Mine Own Executioner* run precisely counter to this general rule?

In his assessment of this aspect of the film, Tony Williams suggests that the film's proposition that the aetiology of Adam's psychopathology may be traced to 'violent Oedipal aggressive feelings against [his] mother who has betrayed his father' can be understood as a disavowal of 'the real causes which lead [him] to murder his wife'.[16] Williams is proposing that, because of the film's assertion that Adam's trauma has its origin in his Oedipal fixation, and not in his wartime experience, it finds itself unable to confront the idea that the horrors of war can form the root-cause of trauma. However, Williams goes on to concede that 'enough evidence remains in both novel and film to suggest that war trauma plays a major role here.'[17]

I would like to argue instead that *Mine Own Executioner* is unique in British cinema at this time in finding itself able to address the trauma of war in explicit terms, *and* in being able to position war trauma within a rigorous contemporary psychoanalytic framework. The other films that have been discussed in the thesis have been shown as being able to address traumatic experience only by engaging with the subject by displacing it onto other events and other cinematic modes of expression within the generic frameworks of the horror film, the romantic fantasy, the melodrama, or the crime film.

Rather than being thought of as disavowing the 'real causes' of Adam's psychosis as Williams suggests, *Mine Own Executioner* should be considered instead

[16] Tony Williams, 'British *Film Noir*', in *Film Noir Reader 2*, ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight editions, 1999), p. 259.
[17] Williams, 'British *Film Noir*', in *Film Noir Reader 2*, p. 259.

as the first British film that is able *not to disavow* both the traumatic events themselves and the psychoanalytic belief that those events are rendered problematic because of the fissures that lie within the archaic network of the victim's own infantile sexuality. As I will show in the next section, the film also widens out these ideas of catastrophic primary phantasy and traumatic predisposition in how it describes Felix's dysfunction, and also the effects that Adam's and Felix's afflictions have for their ability to function within the system of dominant patriarchal beliefs.

5.8 The broadening of the scope of male affliction, and the consequences of the psychopathological impulse towards destruction and self-destruction

In the first half of this chapter I have described how, in *They Made Me A Fugitive*, the black market is employed as a metaphor that demonstrates how the transgressions of the gangster or spiv can have relevance to a wider society marked by its dissolution and social fragmentation. While in *Mine Own Executioner* the implications of Adam's wartime trauma occupy the central space of the narrative, I would like to argue that the film takes a similar route to *They Made Me A Fugitive* in broadening the relevance of Adam's affliction by making connections between Adam's distressed mental state and that of Felix. In this way, the film is able to make a wider point about the challenges faced by masculinity in the postwar period, one that defines neurotic self-doubts and crises of social and sexual identity as affecting a broader range of male victims than only the traumatised war veteran.

Early in *Mine Own Executioner*, Felix is in his home consulting room having just finished an analytic session with Lady Maresfield, one of his wealthy private patients whom he dismisses as being not really ill. He is tired and irritable, but he is informed by his nurse that his wife Pat has taken it upon herself to arrange for him to see one more patient. When he emerges angrily from his room, he meets Pat as she is

walking downstairs having accidently broken a glass tumbler. Felix confronts her, and she is immediately defensive, explaining to him that 'I couldn't help it, it did it on purpose', to which he replies with barely concealed venom: 'Look darling I don't mind you smashing tumblers, even rather nice ones, but don't do a baby-mine about it, there's a good girl.' In the following sequence, it becomes clear that, only the night before, Felix has threatened to walk out on Pat, putting her 'under notice', but now Felix attempts to make light of the matter by calling Pat his 'own personal rhinoceros' and assuring her that they will 'get it sorted out' when they 'have more time'. It seems that Felix finds Pat irritating, he finds himself unable to respond to her sexual advances, and he also constantly bullies her and calls her 'the rhino' because of what he perceives as her carelessness and clumsiness. Later that evening, Pat and Felix entertain two friends to dinner, Bab, a glamourous and sophisticated childhood friend of Pat's, and her husband, Peter.

During the dinner, Felix makes little attempt to conceal his sexual attraction to Bab, and, when Pat later confronts him about his infatuation, Felix seeks to excuse his behaviour by laying before her the conclusions of his self-analysis:

> You realise it hasn't anything to do with Bab *as* Bab. You see there's a bit of me that has never quite grown up, it stays at the mental age of about fourteen. Of course, most of me is very grown up indeed, if it wasn't I couldn't do this job. But outside the job I run up against this 'thing'. It takes all sorts of forms, teasing and bullying you for instance, you know some of them, don't you? This business about Bab, the bit of me that finds her attractive is all part of this 'thing', it is a deliberate childish wantonness.

Whilst Felix is shown to be incapable of controlling both his sadistic impulses towards Pat and the destructive aspects of his regressive sexuality, he does seem to recognise the extent of the detrimental effect that his behaviour is having on his marriage. Therefore, he seeks the advice of his psychiatrist colleague, Dr Garsten, who assures Felix that it is within his power to change his behaviour. However, Dr Garsten also warns him that this will involve eradicating the very neuroses that enable Felix to 'feel

other people's troubles' and to understand his patients' anxieties, depressions, and neuroses.

Felix is provided with the opportunity to pursue his infatuation with Bab by the inadvertent actions of her husband, Peter. Towards the end of the dinner party, Peter takes Felix aside and asks him to talk with Bab on a professional basis because he believes her to be 'a very queer girl, very queer in many ways', and he suggests to Felix that Bab may have 'a bit of a sex complex'. After a preliminary examination in his consulting room, Felix announces to Bab: 'I wouldn't take you on as a patient if it was all that stood between me and the workhouse' because he is 'a darned site too interested' in her, nevertheless, he later suggests that they meet when he is not acting in a professional capacity.

A few days afterwards, Felix takes Bab out on date, and, after drinks and dinner at a nightclub, they go back to Bab's house, Peter being away for a few days on business. In Bab's drawing room Felix lies on his back on her couch, Bab is leaning over him and they hold each other in an intimate embrace. Although they are clothed, a close-up has revealed that Bab is barefoot, and the atmosphere of the scene suggests a post-coital languor. Bab then gently suggests to Felix that he should speak his mind and tell her the truth as he is always making his patients do. She says to him: 'Close your eyes, talk, anything that comes into your head', and, although he is initially reluctant, he gradually begins to free associate (Figure 5-9). His words reveal his concern about Adam, but also his innate desire to forget Adam and indeed to forget everything, as well as his recognition of his own mortality. He says: 'Now he's forgotten, everything forgotten. Kissing and forgetting. Seconds are shorter than ever, hang on to this time.'

That this sequence positions Felix on Bab's couch in the place of the analysand echoes Felix's analysis of Adam, and it also suggests that they have similar needs, and

Figure 5-9

that common ground might exist within their respective psychopathologies. Similarly, as Ira Konigsberg has noted, the specific way that the film's editing pattern has connected this scene to the one before, has already insinuated the notion that the erratic natures of their lives have become fatally entwined.[18] Just before this sequence, we have seen Adam with Molly in their apartment dressing in preparation for a night on the town. It is made clear that Adam's schizophrenic psychosis now motivates a vision in which his visual impression of Molly is confused with a traumatic memory of the Japanese guard that he has killed during the war. Adam immediately fetches a gun from his bedroom and, pointing it directly at the camera, he shoots Molly five times, and the sound of the shots is accentuated on the soundtrack as the sparks fly from the

[18] Konigsberg, p. 191.

gun's muzzle. A jump-cut then takes us directly to a close-up of a log exploding in the fireplace of Bab's drawing room.

The similarities between Adam's and Felix's afflictions are also reinforced by their respective use of language. After Adam has implied to Felix that Molly has rejected him by going to sleep as he was preparing for bed, Adam finds himself only able to describe her by use of the term 'it', a strategy that has the effect of depersonalizing her, and therefore rendering him able to bring his assault on her into language. In similar terms, Felix's referring to Pat as 'the rhino' can be read as a tactic by which he seeks to depersonalize her, and he is only able to admit the existence of his regressive sexuality to Pat by referring to it as 'the thing'. Through its use of these narrative, formal, and linguistic strategies *Mine Own Executioner* draws together Adam's schizophrenia, which has been found to have been precipitated by his wartime experience, and Felix's neurotic-sadistic impulses and his regressive sexuality, which have been defined as originating within the vicissitudes of everyday life.

The defining common ground that *Mine Own Executioner* proposes as existing between Adam and Felix is, however, the compulsively-repetitive and destructive behaviour that they display towards themselves and their marital relationships. That the novel and the film adaptation of *Mine Own Executioner* both begin with a quotation from John Donne's 'Meditation XII' has received little or no critical attention. The slightly shortened version of the quotation that appears in the film reads thus:

> There are too many Examples of men, that have been their own executioners, and that have made hard shrift to bee so; ….. some have beat out their braines at the wal of their prison, and some have eate the fire out of their chimneys; but I do nothing upon my selfe, and yet am mine owne Executioner.

As the literary critic Donald Ramsay Roberts has pointed out, the idea of a 'death wish' that is clearly conveyed in this quotation is a factor that persisted in one form or

another throughout Donne's published works. Roberts attributes this to the fact that an urge for self-destruction was a permanent and constant element in Donne's own life. He argues that Donne's essay is a clear anticipation of the concept of the 'death drive' that Freud would put forward in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in order to account for the aggressive and self-destructive tendencies that he believed had been revealed by the slaughter of the First World War.[19] The death drive, the urge to return the self to the inorganic state that precedes life, is tied securely by Freud to cases where the neurotic is 'daemonically' compelled to repeat over and over the very event that has motivated the initial problem, until the anxiety caused by traumatic tension is eventually reduced to the zero-point of oblivion.[20]

The inclusion of Donne's words at the beginning of *Mine Own Executioner* signals the importance of Donne's and Freud's concept of the death wish or death drive to an understanding of the particular way that the film has ordered the actions of Adam and Felix. The film defines their respective repetitive-compulsive and destructive tendencies as having their roots in their very different mental afflictions, but they have been shown as rising to the surface within the context of their similar inability to fulfil the role that is expected of them within their marriages. In the same way as it defines Peter as being compelled to project his particular sexual repression onto Bab by creating the phantasy of her 'sex complex' in an attempt to disavow his own apparent sexual inadequacy, the film defines both Adam and Felix as seeking to protect themselves from their sexually-motivated dilemmas by repetitively turning them outwards and re-directing them towards the destruction of their marital relationships. In its suggestion that there is common ground between Felix's

[19] Donald Ramsay Roberts, 'The Death Wish of John Donne', in *PMLA* 62.4 (1947), pp. 968-970.
[20] For a detailed account of Freud's trauma theory relating to the war neuroses, compulsive repetition, and the death drive see pages 78-81, above.

regressive sexuality and Adam's trauma-induced emergence of his Oedipal fixation, the film proposes that insufficiencies such as theirs may emerge just as easily within the vicissitudes of everyday postwar life, as within the traumatic experience of the war itself. That the film suggests their respective crises as emerging simultaneously within the context of their distressed marital relationships, points towards the existence of a more general inability of the male subject to come to terms with the position that he now occupies in postwar society. As I will show in the following section, *Mine Own Executioner* proposes that a factor that has accentuated this dilemma is a breakdown in satisfactory systems of social communication. However, it also suggests that a solution to this dilemma may be found within the inter-personal processes of psychoanalysis.

5.9 The post-war vogue for psychoanalysis: fears for the future, and hope for the re-instatement of cultural systems of communication

In a series of essays written during the quarter of a century that he spent in America after fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe, the film and cultural theorist Siegfried Kracauer evokes the social developments of the period, as well as affording insights into contemporary Hollywood cinema. In 'Psychiatry for Everything', published in 1948, Kracauer addresses the contemporary vogue for psychiatry, and particularly psychoanalysis, and he argues that, while before the Second World War this had been confined to the intellectual minority, after the war it found such traction within the popular consciousness that it came to achieve the status of a mass phenomenon.[21] What Kracauer finds particularly symptomatic of this vogue are the many

[21] Siegfried Kracauer, 'Psychiatry for Everything and Everybody: The Present Vogue – and What Is Behind It', in *Siegfried Kracauer's American Writings* ed. by Johannes von Moltke and Kristy Rawson (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2012), p. 62.

'psychological films' being produced in Hollywood at this time; a trend that had begun around 1944, and that, at the time, remained 'unparalleled in other countries, with the exception perhaps of England, where it [had] made only a hesitant beginning.'[22] The purpose of Kracauer's essay is to explain this popular fascination, and he points towards the proliferation of neurosis amongst people in all walks of life as being one of its motivating factors.

However, while Kracauer suggests that the natural impulse of the popular imagination is to turn from its neurotic symptoms towards measures that might provide some means of redress, such as the reform of society or environmental change, he observes that the spotlight remains turned inward:

> History teaches us that this shift of emphasis from outer to inner conditions is usually provoked by the impact of drastic social change and crisis. The vogue for psychiatry in my opinion owes its existence to two attitudes forced upon us by the present pressures of American civilization. One attitude amounts to an evasion. The other results from an attempt to compensate for the lack of what I would call emotional behaviour patterns.[23]

Kracauer describes how these two attitudes had arisen within the all-pervasive atmosphere of menace and danger that had emerged in the postwar period from developments such as the atomic bomb, social change, economic uncertainty, and the onset of the Cold War. He suggests the 'evasion' as occurring within the context of the 'spiritual crisis' that had come to pass; people feeling lost and therefore compelled to improvise day-to-day decisions, and, gripped by uncertainty about the system of values in which these decisions had been rooted, evading them by retreating from society towards the individual. Kracauer proposes the second impulse, the inability to compensate for the lack of emotional behaviour patterns, to be based on an absence of adequate systems of inter-personal communication able to provide outlets for these

[22] Kracauer, 'Psychiatry for Everything and Everybody', p. 63.
[23] Ibid., p. 64.

pressures. He concludes that, while the fascination for psychiatry has its roots in contemporary anxieties, elements of hope nevertheless present themselves in that people are becoming increasingly aware of the vacuum that exists around them. They are, therefore, drawn to the idea of psychiatry in the hope that it might provide an alternative means of communication.[24]

In the light of Kracauer's conclusion, the key question that presents itself is whether this can be found to have relevance to the particular way that psychoanalysis is configured in British cinema at this time. Or, put it more specifically, can psychoanalysis be found to operate in *Mine Own Executioner*, not only as a mode of expression that functions to describe and compare Adam's and Felix's particular dysfunctions, but also as a means of redress for the fears of society as a whole?

As I have already demonstrated, *Mine Own Executioner* defines its two main male figures in terms of their respective psychopathologies, and, by various means, it draws these together in order to reveal them as being symptomatic of the wider dilemmas that confront masculinity in postwar society. Other male figures are suggested by the film as suffering from similar psychical dysfunctions. For example Peter, who projects his repression onto Bab by creating her 'sex complex', and Dr Garsten who acknowledges the similarity between himself and Felix when he admits that they are both 'neurotics who know exactly what it feels like to make fools of themselves.' In this respect, *Mine Own Executioner* occupies similar territory to a number of Hollywood films made between 1944 and 1947 that Kaja Silverman has described as attesting 'with unusual candor to the castrations through which the male subject is constituted', and that attribute 'male insufficiency not only to the war, but

[24] Ibid., pp. 64-72.

to the collapse of traditional gender roles on the home front demanded by the war effort – a collapse for which it holds the female subject responsible.'[25]

However, whilst the main narrative thrust of the film employs psychoanalytic ideas to trace the path of these various male inadequacies, the film also develops the idea of there being common ground between the particular mode of communication that defines the psychoanalytic setting, and the systems of communication that exist in everyday life. As Charles Rycroft has observed, psychoanalytic theory conceives of mankind

> as a social animal, who, in addition to his drive to self-preservation and self-awareness, is also continuously concerned to maintain himself in a reciprocal, adaptive interrelationship with his objects and which sees psychodynamics as the study of the development of the capacity for interpersonal relations, and psychopathology as the study of the ways in which this capacity may break down.[26]

This concept of a linkage existing between psychoanalysis and day-to-day interpersonal communication is introduced in humorous terms near the beginning of *Mine Own Executioner*, when Felix and Pat are attending a cocktail party given by Bab and Peter. Bab introduces Felix to an advertising agent who describes himself as being in the 'same line of business' as Felix, and, after declaring advertising to be 'psychology, pure psychology', he proposes that Felix should work with him to find the psychological angle on selling cream cheese.

The idea that psychoanalysis can be found to have something to contribute to the way that people communicate in the course of everyday life comes to have increasing significance during the course of the film. It is announced at various times, in the words and actions of Felix's patient Lady Maresfield, in the course of Bab's

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[25] Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York and London, Routledge, 1992), pp. 52-53.
[26] Charles Rycroft, 'An enquiry into the function of words in the psycho-analytic situation', in *The British School of Psychoanalysis: The Independent Tradition* ed. by Gregorio Kohon (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 238.

relationship with Felix, and also, at the conclusion of the film, in Pat's pledge to support Felix's work as a psychoanalyst.

Early in the film, Felix makes clear his lack of sympathy for his list of fee-paying patients in a conversation at the Emily Ward Clinic with his psychiatrist colleague Dr Garsten. When Felix is asked whether he has a busy afternoon ahead he replies: 'Only the usual bunch of private patients, too much money, too little to do.' When Dr Garsten observes that these patients pay for Felix's time, Felix replies wryly: 'Listen to Harley Street, relieve their wallets and you'll relieve their minds.' In the following sequence, we find Felix in his home consulting room as his long-standing private patient Lady Maresfield is leaving at the end of their session. While Felix helps her on with her coat, he points out to her that she might be finding their meetings unproductive and that she is paying him fees 'just to talk'. Overcome with emotion, Lady Maresfield replies: 'I don't mind that at all, it's worth it. It's worth more than I can tell you for your sympathy and understanding.' Again, when Bab is leaning over Felix as he lies on her couch after they have seemingly had sex, she senses his despair, and invites him to speak his mind and tell her the truth as he is always making his patients do. Whilst Felix is initially hesitant to do this because 'the subconscious is notoriously unreliable in these matters', he proceeds to reveal to her his concern for Adam, and also his fear of his own mortality. Also, at the end of the film, Pat finds herself able to countenance a future with Felix in which there will be no end to her suffering, because the price of her *not* staying with him would be Felix's abandoning his work, and depriving patients like little Charlie Oaks of the inter-personal connection with Felix that provides hope for their return to normal life (Figure 5-10).

What Lady Maresfield seems to gain from her sessions with Felix, and what Bab offers to Felix in her invitation that he should reveal his innermost thoughts to her, is not psychoanalytic interpretation, but the functioning reciprocal object relationship

Figure 5-10

that Rycroft describes as being fundamental to the psychoanalytic setting *and* to normal interpersonal relationships. Rycroft states that the drive of the patient who enters analysis is the wish

> which has previously been frustrated in so far as he has been ill and therefore isolated, to have a relationship within which he can share experience. The analytic situation enables the patient to communicate, share, and bring into relation with an object, feelings, memories, and thoughts which have previously been either repressed and unconscious or split-off and only experienced in states of dissociation.[27]

Rycroft is suggesting that the purpose of psychoanalysis can be defined, in part, by its intention to increase the patient's capacity to build and maintain object-relationships that, in the healthy individual, *would have been established by normal and reciprocal communication*. By declaring that she needs Felix's sympathy and understanding, Lady Maresfield is describing the importance to her of just this sort of functioning

[27] Rycroft, p. 243.

reciprocal object relationship. In emphasizing the desperation of its characters to communicate with others, and to be supported by them, *Mine Own Executioner* suggests the same state of postwar crisis and isolation as existing within British society as Kracauer describes as existing in America. However, when it highlights in its conclusion Pat's willingness to sacrifice her own happiness for the greater goal of enabling Felix to continue helping patients such as little Charlie Oaks, *Mine Own Executioner* proposes there to be hope for the establishment of systems of communication that will enable society to at least begin the process of healing the wounds of the war and of its painful aftermath.

Concluding remarks

My examination of a number of films, chosen to be representative of the popular British cinema of the mid-1940s, demonstrates the central position that psychoanalysis had come to occupy within Britain's cultural episteme by the end of the Second World War. At no point in this thesis have any claims been made for or against the specific or universal truth of psychoanalysis, either as a form of psychological treatment or as a model for psychological functioning. Instead, by means of close textual analysis, psychoanalytic concepts and scenarios have been revealed to be influential on British culture generally at this time, and to be formative to the narratives and formal structures of these films specifically. Many of the historical Freudian, post-Freudian, and neo-Freudian psychoanalytic concepts that have been outlined in Chapter Two of this thesis have been found to have been appropriated by these films as either narrative, cultural, or ideological discourses. These discourses have been demonstrated to have been mobilized within the films in often complex combinations, and towards a variety of different ends.

The claim has been made in this thesis that psychoanalysis was central to the ambient culture in Britain in this period, and therefore key to a productive reading of these particular films. Psychoanalysis has thus been proposed as existing at this time not only as a form of a psychological treatment, but also as a complex constellation of discourses that were circulating within British culture. These psychoanalytic discourses are considered to have influenced British cinema by means of the psychoanalytic traces that existed culturally in both written and spoken form, and that influenced those who were responsible for how these films came into being. The films are argued, therefore, to have mostly reproduced those psychoanalytic discourses that were the most dominant in British culture at this time. The exception to this rule is

how these films, almost without exception, describe the traumas that mark their central characters as having their roots, not in infantile Oedipal phantasy, but in historical events such a physical abuse or parental loss that have occurred in their later childhoods. In this one way, the narratives of all these films – the exception is *Mine Own Executioner* – therefore run counter to contemporary psychoanalytic discourses that privileged Oedipal phantasy over real traumatic experience as the root-cause of neurosis. I have argued that, in doing this, the films were responding to the British population's own collective traumatic experience of the two world wars, one formed, to an extent, by the witnessing of real – and not imagined – traumatic events. So, in this unique case, the films have been found not to appropriate contemporary psychoanalytic discourses, but *other discourses of real traumatic experience* that were circulating in Britain at this time. In structuring themselves in this way, these films are responding to the atmosphere of trauma in which their audiences spent their day-to-day lives. At the same time, they are anticipating the paradigm shift in psychoanalytic trauma theory that would be provided a few years later by the publishing of Ferenczi's 'Confusion of Tongues' paper. These films thus mark a moment when cinema and psychoanalysis were responding to the emotional needs and experiences of their audiences at the same time and in the same way.

At several points in the thesis, I have made the statement that, while psychoanalysis operates in these films as a normative ideological force, it is often countered by a subversive discursive force that seems to be *immanent* to the films themselves. This statement draws on a concept of immanence that is derived from the work of Foucault. As Foucault argues, it must not be assumed that the sovereignty of the state is the only form that power takes at any given moment. Instead, power must be understood as emerging from 'the multiplicity of force relations immanent to the

sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization.'[1] In other words, for Foucault, power emanates not only from hierarchic structures of coercion, but also from within, in ways that often run precisely counter to those structures. Subversive discursive forces can be thought of as immanent to these films in that they operate sometimes in ways that are in opposition to their stated ideological aims. The existence of these forces can be most easily discovered in the ambivalent nature of many of these films' scenarios and conclusions. This immanence is obvious, for example, in the conclusion of *The Seventh Veil*, where Francesca seems to have been 'redeemed' and therefore enabled to return to the dominant patriarchal configuration. However, at the same time, the viewer is left with a sense of doubt that Nicholas is capable of fulfilling the role that is laid out for him within that configuration, and therefore qualified to enable it to function in a meaningful way. As has been demonstrated, the films' engagements with psychoanalysis are therefore complex, and the messages that they convey to their audiences often run counter to one another.

Narrative psychoanalytic discourses – psychoanalysis appearing *in* a text by means of its presentation of psychopathology, psychoanalyst figures, or the psychoanalytic setting – have been shown to operate in all the films. This wide-ranging presence can be explained, in part, by the undoubted popularity that psychoanalysis had come to enjoy with the general public at this time, a situation that, as I have shown, filmmakers were keen to exploit. However, the appropriation of psychoanalysis as a narrative discourse also opens the door for these films to make the most of the unique possibilities that it offers as a narrative device. This has been found to take shape in three distinct formats. First, that many of the films' central characters are defined as psychopathological enables an interrogation of the various factors that have motivated their 'abnormality'. Second, as has been seen in *The Seventh Veil* and *Mine Own*

[1] Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality*, p. 92.

Executioner, the use of the internal monologues and spoken narratives that take place in the analytic setting allow the films' central characters to reveal to the analyst, and to us, aspects of their characters that would have remained inaccessible within the limitations of traditional story-telling. Thus, in *The Seventh Veil*, Francesca is able to provide an account of her childhood trauma, and the consequences that this has had for her ability to form loving relationships in later life. Similarly, in *Mine Own Executioner*, Adam is able to admit his breaking under torture while a prisoner of war, and also his later attempted murder of his wife, Molly. Third, both in these films and in other British and American productions of the period, the recounting of past traumatic events in the analysis is often made visible to the viewer by means of flashbacks. These have the effect of exposing the distressed internal worlds of the films' central characters, and also of suturing the viewer firmly into the characters' subjectivities. These, in turn, promote audience identification with the characters, and make it possible for the films to broaden-out their themes, and render them relevant to the experiences of the wider population.

When psychoanalyst *figures* make an appearance in the texts as narrative discourses – as they do in all the films in the corpus with the exception of *They Made Me a Fugitive* – they have been found to operate in three specific ways. First, to enable an articulation of contemporary preoccupations with specific psychoanalytic concepts and with psychopathology in general. Thus, in *Dead of Night*, Dr Van Straaten defines Joan Cortland's sharing of Peter's traumatic visions as 'a case of crypto-amnesia', and Dr Ackroyd in *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, and Felix in *Mine Own Executioner*, introduce the idea of Maddalena/Rosanna's and Adam's early childhood traumas, and the consequences that these have had in motivating their later schizophrenic psychopathologies. Second, by virtue of the comparatively one-dimensional and undeveloped nature of their character constructions, the psychoanalyst figures serve

to emphasize the stratified complexity of those of the central figures. This is certainly the case in *Dead of Night*, *The Seventh Veil*, and *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, but not in *Mine Own Executioner*, where the character of the psychoanalyst is as developed as that of the patient. Lastly, the psychoanalyst figure is employed to mobilize a debate between positions of 'reason' or 'common sense' that are based on psychoanalytic knowledge, and the irrational or transgressive positions that are adopted by some of the central characters. Thus, in *Dead of Night*, the measured views of Dr Van Straaten supply a 'rational' contrast to the 'irrational' points of view expressed by the other figures within the accounts of their supernatural experiences. Similarly, in *The Seventh Veil* and *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, Dr Larsen's and Dr Ackroyd's self-control and reasonableness provides a stark contradistinction to Francesca's and Maddalena/Rosanna's spontaneity and sexual promiscuity.

Cultural psychoanalytic discourses – those that are formed when historical psychoanalytic *concepts* such as the compulsion to repeat or the Oedipus complex are appropriated within these films structurally – have been found to operate extensively in all five of the films, both formally and narratively.

Cultural psychoanalytic discourses figure formally, for example, in *Dead of Night*'s use of Henry Moore's drawing of the traumatized shelterer as a background for its credit sequence. The foregrounding of this stark image enables the film to engage with trauma in non-literal terms by displacing it onto an alternative representation that is less-threatening, and that is compatible with the film's elision of the war in general. Similarly, these formal cultural discourses have been observed to operate in all the films' extensive use of point-of-view shots in order to accentuate the fragmented interiority of their central characters. Think, for example, of how *They Made Me a Fugitive* reveals the traumatized internal world of Sally as she is being beaten by Narcy, of how *Mine Own Executioner* presents Adam's reliving of his

torture, and of how Walter Craig's psychotic state is displayed in the radical discontinuity of the conclusion of *Dead of Night*.

Cultural psychoanalytic discourses are fundamental narratively in of all five films, however the three that were made at the end of the war, *Dead of Night*, *The Seventh Veil*, and *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, have been found to engage with these discourses in ways different to the later ones. In the earlier films, in spite of them being set in the present or the recent past, the war is elided from the narrative, and the traumatic events of the war are displaced onto other events that reference the war metaphorically. Similarly, the neurotic or psychotic effects of trauma come, in these films, to be displaced onto other symptoms that are recognisable within classical generic paradigms. Thus, in *Dead of Night*, the trauma that afflicts Grainger is a racing car accident, and, in *The Seventh Veil*, Nicholas' traumatic experience is defined in terms of his having been abandoned by his mother when he was twelve. However, the manner in which the psychical and somatic symptoms of these events are presented in narrative terms, renders both Grainger and Nicholas clearly recognizable as metaphorical representations of traumatized war veterans. In contrast to this, the films made two years after the end of the war, *They Made Me a Fugitive* and *Mine Own Executioner*, are able to countenance the existence of the war as an historical event, and they provide accounts of Clem's and Adam's traumatic wartime experiences in literal terms, and without recourse to metaphor.

Cultural psychoanalytic discourses have also been found to be key to how these films shape their story-telling around certain psychoanalytic ideas. For example, the concept of the traumatic compulsion to repeat and the consequent emergence of the death drive is employed as a narrative trope in all five of the films. This concept motivates the circular and elliptical narrative of *Dead of Night*, and it also informs Francesca's series of failed romantic relationships and self-destructiveness in *The*

Seventh Veil. In *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, the compulsion to repeat is found in Maddalena/Rosanna's repetitively being drawn away from her marriage to Giuseppe, and towards her adulterous relationship with the gypsy robber, Nino. In similar terms, in *They Made Me a Fugitive* and *Mine Own Executioner*, it shapes not only Clem's and Adam's speech and physical mannerisms, but also their self-destructiveness and their destructive attitudes towards their marriages.

Ideological psychoanalytic discourses – those that serve to express the films' various positions, opinions, and world-views – have been found to operate extensively in all five of the films. These take various different forms, but there are two key areas in which they circulate with a degree of consistency. First, in the interactions that take place in the films between their psychoanalyst figures and their central characters, and second, in the sense of ambivalence and irresolution that is inherent in the films' conclusions.

In the four films in which psychoanalyst figures appear as narrative ideological discourses – *Dead of Night*, *The Seventh Veil*, *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, and *Mine Own Executioner* – their purpose is always to return the transgressive central characters to a state of 'normality', and to provide the possibility of their re-admission to the dominant social order. In the case of the female characters, their transgressive natures are described in terms of their unusual agency, their hypersexuality, and their refusal to live within the bounds of patriarchy. In contrast, the male characters' transgressions are defined with reference to their listlessness, their dissociative behaviour, and their sexual insufficiency. The general assumption of all these narratives is, therefore, that the traumatic experience of the war and its painful aftermath have caused traditional gender roles to have been in some ways reversed, and both maternal and paternal functions to have consequently ceased to function adequately.

However, the psychoanalyst figures have varying levels of success in restoring matters to the pre-war status quo. In *Dead of Night* for example, Dr Van Straaten concurs with Dr Albury's view that Grainger's racing car crash is a 'psychological crisis' that can be, and is, satisfactorily reconstructed, worked-through, and consigned to the past. Grainger is thus permitted to join Joyce in the Linking Narrative. In *The Seventh Veil* and *Madonna of the Seven Moons* it is the objective of Dr Larsen and Dr Ackroyd to return the errant Francesca and Maddalena/Rosanna to their appointed positions within the pre-war parameters of sexual difference. In *The Seventh Veil*, Dr Larsen's categorization of Francesca's sexuality as psychopathological, and his exposing of her unconscious sexual desires within the context of the Salome narrative, have the effect of diminishing Francesca's transgressive powers, and thus affording her the opportunity of returning to the dominant order by choosing Nicholas as her partner. In contrast, in *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, whilst Maddalena/Rosanna's sexual transgressions are defined as psychopathological by Dr Ackroyd, he is unable to suggest a 'cure' for the overabundance of her libido. Similarly, in *Mine Own Executioner*, although Felix is able to help Adam work-through his war trauma, he fails completely in his attempt to enable Adam's return to a position of male sufficiency within his marriage.

Just as psychoanalysis has been found within the films' narrative discourses to be often ineffective in returning the transgressive central characters to a position of 'normality', the films' narrative conclusions are often united by their states of ambivalence. In *Dead of Night* this is just as much true in the individual stories as it is in the film's conclusion. Thus, by smashing the mirror and so refusing her subordination to Peter's vision at the end of the 'Haunted Mirror' story, Joan rejects any rational or irrational male control over her world, and Peter simply disappears from the film's narrative. Similarly, at the end of *Dead of Night*, Dr Van Straaten's

'ingenious theories' – as Walter Craig terms them as the beginning of the film – are found to be ineffectual in providing an explanation for his recurring trauma dream, and it merely begins all over again.

In *The Seventh Veil*, Francesca is returned to health and 'redeemed' in ideological terms by her choice to marry Nicholas, but the probity of this choice is itself called into question by the fact that Nicholas has shown himself, throughout the narrative, to be capable of extreme cruelty towards her. In similar terms, *Madonna of the Seven Moons* casts doubt on the possibility that Angela and Evelyn will be any more able to function as a couple than Maddalena/Rosanna and Giuseppe have been.

They Made Me a Fugitive proposes a British social malaise in which both maternal and paternal functions have similarly atrophied. At the end of the film, although Clem and Sally show signs of having a relationship that is not clouded by self-interest, both have been tainted by their previous relationships with Narcy, and the viewer is provided with no certainty that justice will be done, and their future assured. The conclusion of *Mine Own Executioner*, while being the most upbeat of the five films, in that it provides some hope that the systems of social communication may be re-established, also makes it clear that the profound unhappiness of Pat's and Felix's marriage will be the price that has to be paid for this.

In consistently presenting solutions to their characters' various dilemmas that are immediately called into question by their own narrative conclusions, these films display a high level of ambivalence as to whether a return to the pre-war status quo is desirable or even possible. It seems, therefore, as though the traumatic aftermath of the war that is their historical context renders these films incapable of describing how the future could potentially be free from the traumatic effect of the past. In this respect, these films seem to orientate themselves around the psychoanalytic concepts of automatic anxiety and signal anxiety. It will be remembered that the former term refers

to the response of the individual to a previous traumatic situation, while the latter refers to an alerting mechanism that forewarns the individual of impending danger. In all these films, the automatic anxiety that they describe as having been triggered as a response to the experience of the war is met by a signal anxiety that is motivated by the impending danger that is posed by the onset of peacetime and all that it entails. The indelible impression that is left by viewing these films today is that they describe a society fixed in the postwar period at the point of crisis, one defined both by its immediate traumatic past and also by its inability to countenance a future that it could define in any rational way.

An understanding of the ambivalence and irresolution of these films lays bare in very clear terms the concurrent workings of the hierarchical and discursive elements of their ideological discourses. Psychoanalysis is certainly the mode of expression that is most often used by these films' authors to enunciate the trauma of the war and the consequent breakdown of the dominant social formations. Psychoanalysis is also the instrument that is deployed by these films with the intention of proposing solutions designed to restore the dominant beliefs and practices of the ruling ideology and the status quo of sexual difference. However, in the final analysis, this restoration is rarely achieved in a way that is convincing. Whilst psychoanalysis as a normative ideological force is certainly imposed consciously onto the films' characters and scenarios from above by the films' authors, this coercive force is countered by a transgressive discursive force that seems to be immanent to the films themselves. Thus, both in the pronouncements of the films' psychoanalyst figures and in the films' fragmented and ambivalent scenarios and conclusions, the reproduction of the dominant order is consistently undermined by the hesitancy with which these films lay out the means of that reproduction. In this respect, the films reveal much about the historical context within which they were made. But more than this, they also make profound statements

about the intractability of trauma itself, and the amount of time and working-through that is required to consign traumatic experience to the past, in order that society can be able to look forwards to a future that might provide hope for the next generation.

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