Notes

Introduction "No One Mourns the Wicked"

1. "But a reduction in the female image has taken place, for by definition the *femme fatale* is a stereotype designating the mysterious and unknowable power of women, whereas the role of prostitute represents a more defined sexual role, amenable to social control, and shorn of the earlier stereotype's fatality. . . . [Bree Daniel's] changeability is no longer part of the grand manner of the *femme fatale*, it is simply neurotic. Her changes in mood are not incomprehensible, but motivated by a consistent psychology explained as a response to the alienating demands of modern society" (Gledhill, 1978, 122).
2. I think here of Susan Knobloch's discussion of Sharon Stone's star text as violent woman: "The plots of her films . . . lean hard upon the contemporary notion that male violence toward women and women's families provokes and sometimes justifies female violence" (126).
3. While Kaplan suggests in her new edition of *Women in Film Noir* that there is no longer dispute concerning the idea that "meaning about woman is produced through the work of a film" (3) (she quotes Christine Gledhill's excellent point that "ideological myths about women are as much a part of the real world as any other construct"), I believe that there are still serious demands made on popular representation to portray women in terms of role modeling. I have written on this issue in connection with Todd Haynes's remarkable film *Safe*, a deeply feminist film about environmental illness that suggests, without at all "heroicizing" its female protagonist Carol White (Julianne Moore), a brutal relationship between female agency, female victimization, and social institutions. See Julie Grossman, "The Trouble with Carol: The Costs of Feeling Good in Todd Haynes's [*Safe*] and the American Cultural Landscape."
4. In her essay "Is the Gaze Male," E. Ann Kaplan quotes Karen Horney's 1932 article, "The Dread of Woman," which helps to explain (and resonates in the context of) the overdetermined anti-Hillary venom: "Men have never tired of fashioning expressions for the violent force by which man feels himself drawn to the woman, and side by side with his longing, the dread that through her he might die and be undone" (280). While many of the women writers musing on the meaning of Hillary Clinton in the anthology *Thirty Ways of Looking at Hillary* (2008) are sympathetic to Clinton, such a project itself institutionalizes the practice of appropriating Clinton's image and mythifying the woman at the cost of examining her public policies and whether or not she would be an effective president.
5. Susan Bordo comments on the absurd aftermath of the cookie incident, characterized by popular distress at Clinton's perceived contempt for domestic values:

> Rightly protesting this interpretation, Hillary Clinton tried to prove her womanhood by producing her favorite recipe for oatmeal chocolate chip cookies. Barbara Bush, apparently feeling that a gauntlet had been thrown

> down, responded in kind with a richer, less fibre-conscious recipe of her own. Newspapers across the country asked readers to prepare both and vote on which First Lady had the better cookie.
>
> (122)

6. I'd like to thank John Cant from the University of Essex for calling my attention to this image at the "Cinematicity" Conference in Essex in the spring of 2007.
7. Said Tomasky, "Once again, it's all about Hillary Clinton, who delivered the most abrasive, self-absorbed, selfish, delusional, emasculating and extortionate political speech I've heard in a long time. And I've left out some adjectives, just to be polite" (guardian.co.uk, June 5, 2008).
8. Hoyt reports that Dowd, along with another *New York Times* columnist, William Kristol, was inducted into the National Organization for Women's Media "Hall of Shame," initiated at the conclusion of Hillary Clinton's primary campaign for the presidency.

1 Film Noir's "Femmes Fatales": Moving Beyond Gender Fantasies

1. I am indebted to Phillip Novak for his insight concerning Cora's victimization and the particular oppressiveness of her environment that this scene reveals.
2. I therefore disagree with Foster Hirch's designation of the film as "deeply conservative": "Kelly must be punished. A deeply conservative 1950s morality underwrites Fuller's pulp poetry: to maintain a 'civilized environment,' the femme fatale cannot be redeemed and must be expelled alone into a moral wilderness" (*Detours and Lost Highways*, 194). As Fuller's comment above, as well as the logic of the narrative, suggests, the film expresses sympathy for Kelly's victimization by the hypocritical townspeople.
3. See Phillip Novak's elegant commentary on Jake's misreading in "The *Chinatown* Syndrome," which appeared in the Summer, 2007 issue of *Criticism*.
4. Leslie Fiedler comments on a similar dynamic in literary representation of women:

> There are not, in fact, two orders of women, good and bad, nor is there even one which seems for a little while bad, only to prove in the end utterly unravished and pure. There are only two sets of expectations and a single imperfect kind of woman caught between them: only actual incomplete females, looking in vain for a satisfactory definition of their role in a land of artists who insist on treating them as goddesses or bitches. The dream role and the nightmare role alike deny the humanity of women, who, baffled, switch from playing out one to acting out the other.
>
> (314)

5. Although Oliver and Trigo get the names wrong in their commentary on *Out of the Past*—Jim [Richard Webb] is not Jeff's deaf–mute assistant; he's the

upright Bridgeport petty tyrant in love with Ann—their comments on Ann are intriguing in the context of broadening our preconceived notions of the kinds of roles played by women in noir: "Ann Miller is a proto-'femme fatale,' displaying the same curiosity, the same desire, and the same willingness to travel to all the exotic places where the noir hero is headed or from where he has returned" (224).

6. The scene recalls earlier noir protagonists committing violence to protect a set of ideas about gender and innocence and to express pent-up frustration about failed masculinity. After stabbing Kitty March in *Scarlet Street* (1945), Chris Cross projects his anger onto Johnny, denying any responsibility for his own actions: "You [meaning Kitty] were innocent, you were pure! That's what he killed in you! He's the murderer!"
7. When I invoke here noir's "gray view of the world," I understand the interest shown by Thom Anderson and others in describing the polemics and pessimism of *film gris*. The category calls attention to the leftist politics of filmmakers such as Abraham Polonsky and Jules Dassin (both blacklisted by the HUAC), whose work speaks to the desire of filmmakers to subvert the mainstream ameliorative Hollywood formula. Such generic boundaries are, however, hard again to maintain. The gray view of the world is, I think, more systematically present in film noir than the classification of *film gris* implies. If *film gris* is, for example, defined as "Social critique [that] focuses on the critique of the law as a boundary dividing society into a good, legal world and a bad, illegal world" (Joshua Hirsch, 85), such critique is surely present, as many of my allusions to film noir throughout this book suggest, in many movies categorized more widely as film noir.
8. Mulvey (1989) reconsidered and revised her position here, notably in "Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in which she considered the power and pitfalls of the female spectator, the latter having to do with "the female spectator's fantasy of masculinisation at cross-purposes with itself" (37).
9. An example of the effects of genre conception on how we draw connections among films and texts can be seen in Maria DiBattista's analysis of the "fast-talking dame" in her book of the same title. DiBattista captures the strength and vitality of the smart verbal women in Hollywood comedies of the 1930s and 1940s. Female characters played by smart vibrant actresses such as Carole Lombard, Rosiland Russell, Katherine Hepburn, Claudette Colbert, and Barbara Stanwyck illustrate for viewers something very positive in the films in which they starred, in part because the generic demands of comedy make it possible for the women in these films to model something very positive for viewers: that smart ambitious women can find happiness in social and private worlds. These women are subversive, causing chaos, just as film noir's women often do, however, and DiBattista's description of the upheaval caused by fast-talking dames in the films of Preston Sturges might well describe the anxieties represented in film noir about female dissembling:

   > His comedies show us what transpires when men find themselves fallen into a world—or a love—that does not conform to their notions of physical and moral order. Men often enter this world without suitable

> guides, and often without sufficient guile. Guile is an intellectual vice conventionally ascribed to woman, the conniving Eve. Comedy, in its iconoclastic moods, interprets this vice as a virtue and the designing woman our beset, if unconventional, teacher.
>
> (306)

It is often noted that noir women have "guile," but the emphasis is much more on this than on the fact that, like DiBattista's fast-talking dames in Hollywood's comedies, film noir's modern women of the same period have something to teach us about the chaos that is perceived when gender roles shift within society. Such insight can be hindered by strict adherence to the premises of genre.

10. Cowie explains:

> The connection between *film noir* and melodrama has been made by a number of writers, but usually in order to distinguish *film noir* as a form of male melodrama, in contrast to the woman's film and female melodrama. Maureen Turin, for example, points out that "*noir* and the woman's film are two sides of the same coin in Hollywood's forties symbolic circulation." Murray Smith suggests that the investigation of the woman in *film noir* is mirrored in the female gothic melodrama's investigation of the man. Frank Krutnik also argues in terms of parallel genres:
>
> The "tough" thrillers tend to treat the drama of their "dislocated" heroes seriously. . . . Just as the dramatic representation of the realm of women—issues of the family, home, romance, motherhood, female identity and desire—have been approached . . . in terms of the generic category of the "woman's picture melodrama," one could consider the "tough" thriller as representing a form of "masculine melodrama" (krutnik).
>
> (Cowie, 129–30)

Cowie is drawing here from Turin's "Flashbacks and the Psyche in Melodrama and Film Noir" (182), Murray Smith's "*Film Noir* and the Female Gothic and *Deception*" (64), and Krutnik's *In a Lonely Street* (164).

Many feminist readers of film noir have expressed the concern that critical emphasis should shift away from the male as the source of narrative and interest in noir. Such focus on male behavior (men's postwar anxiety, confusion, and post-traumatic shock—"the maladjusted males," says Thomas Schatz, "whose alienation and anxiety clearly invoked the general postwar climate" [4–5]) foregrounds sympathy for the motives and sufferings of these male characters, concealing female subjectivity as well as the offenses to women represented in these films. Susan Hayward, for example, worries about "male-centered" noir, concern expressed in her closing remarks at the "Cherchez la Femme" conference held at Exeter in September of 2005, organized by Helen Hanson and Catherine O'Rawe. Hayward's references to the co-opting of representations of female power by men echoes concerns Tania Modleski voiced in 1991 in *Feminism Without Women*, in which Modleski explored the extent to which feminism(s) has (have) been appropriated by men, deactivating the political force of feminism through the anodyne language of equality supported by gender studies.

2 "Well, aren't we ambitious": Desire, Domesticity, and the "Femme Fatale," or "You've made up your mind I'm guilty": The Long Reach of Misreadings of Woman as Wicked in American Film Noir

1. "*Gilda* argues that images of charismatic female sexuality generally provoke this kind of ambivalence in men, and goes on to suggest that in such cases heterosexual feeling is accompanied by feelings of impotence and inferiority which can only be made good by overpowering, degrading and—logically—destroying the woman" (Britton, 220).
2. In *Impact* (1949), sex and gender anxiety is again conflated with American business and capitalism, as Walt Williams (Brian Donlevy) is introduced to us as a master businessman whose first gesture in the film is to change the mind of the entire board of directors of his company about a major acquisition. Walter's masculinity is linked to his mastery and ownership, as is exemplified when he explains to his wife that he likes monograms because they reflect that things "belong to me." This exchange introduces the motif of threatened impotence, as Walt admits to his wife that he has "only one vulnerable spot," meaning her. She calls him "Softy," a name that takes on echoic resonance later, when Walt realizes that his wife has been cheating on him and planned to kill him with her lover Jim. In the first moments of Walt's realization, he hears "Softy" over and over in his mind, reminiscent for noir viewers of Kitty and Johnny's haunting of Chris Cross's fevered imagination at the end of *Scarlet Street*. In both films, a sexual, psychological, and social loss of power is figured in a male protagonist becoming emasculated by a woman and her lover. In both films, money and capital function as the dominant context for defining the desires of these duped men.
3. Examples, as I suggested in Chapter 1, abound in film noir: Scotty in discovering "Madeleine" is Judy in *Vertigo*; Johnny, in discovering that Joyce Harwood is married to Eddie in *The Blue Dahlia*; Travis Bickle, spurned by the initially "angelic" Betsy to finally insist that she'll "burn in hell like the rest of them" in *Taxi Driver*.

3 Psychological Disorders and "Wiretapping the Unconscious": Film Noir Listens to Women

1. Says Snyder, "[t]he Antisocial Personality Disorder is characterized by a disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others. Its traits include unlawful behavior, deceitfulness, impulsivity, irritability, aggressiveness, reckless disregard for the safety of self or others, irresponsibility, and lack of remorse. The Borderline Personality Disorder is defined by instability in interpersonal relationships, self-image, and affects as well as marked impulsivity. Identity disturbance, suicide attempts or self-mutilation, difficulty in modulating oftentimes intense, inappropriate anger, and chronic feelings of emptiness are frequent. A pattern of excessive emotionality and attention seeking is seen in the Histrionic Personality Disorder. Sexually provocative behavior, shallow expressions of emotion, self-dramatization and theatricality, suggestibility,

and superficial interpersonal relationships are core features. Grandiosity, a need for admiration, and a lack of empathy distinguish the Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Individuals with this disorder believe they are 'special,' have a sense of entitlement, exploit others, and manifest envy, arrogance, and haughtiness. These four personality disorders comprise what the DSM-IV refers to as 'Cluster B' personality disorders" (157).
2. Then, too, Peter William Evans has argued that even Phyllis, quintessential "femme fatale," can be seen as the victim of patriarchal oppression, as her husband is an alcoholic brute and Neff infantalizes her, calling her "baby" and assuming control of their murder plan.
3. See Gluck: "By 1944, when war production was beginning to wind down, and especially in 1945, when the end of the war was in sight, the attitudes toward women workers underwent an about-face. Where earlier the working mother with her child-care problems had been the object of commiseration, she became now the object of blame for the rising rate of juvenile delinquency. Where the young factory worker had been portrayed as directly contributing to the war effort through her labor, she came to be treated primarily as a decorative object that would inspire fighting men to greater and better feats. The *Lockheed Star*, for example, had regularly run stories about their women production workers. In mid-1944, these were supplanted by cheesecake photo contests. Furthermore, there were fewer and fewer photos of women factory workers and more and more of office workers. Clearly, women production workers were being phased out—if not in actuality, then certainly in the public consciousness. Preparations were being made for the postwar world" (15).
4. It would be interesting to wonder about *Scarlet Street*'s Kitty March in the context of pathology and invalidation. Kitty's masochistic and desperate drive to be with the brutal Johnny "Prince" can be read as a perverse attempt to elicit validation. She says about Chris Cross (versus Johnny), "[i]f he were mean or vicious or if he'd bawl me out or something, I'd like him better." That her masochism in the film, submitting to Johnny's exploitation of her as a tool to extract money from Chris Cross, is linked to invalidation may be supported by the narrative interest in Kitty's becoming validated and recognized as a talented artist by the art critic Janeway.

4 Looking Back—*Victorinoir*: Modern Women and the Fatal(e) Progeny of Victorian Representations

1. In Coventry Patmore's "The Angel in the House" (Ricks, 321–2), the speaker's "sadness [is] banish'd far" by the workings of the domestic female angel. This poem became increasingly popular after its initial publication in 1854. Martha Vicinus has noted the high stakes of maintaining the angel's prominent role: "Rigid social rules ensured the safety of the bourgeois family; within the home, women were assigned a special position as caretakers of morality and religion, for their unique sensibility made them alone capable of child care and domestic responsibilities" (2).
2. The virtue of compromise (and accommodation) is hailed throughout Victorian fiction. In the face of the hard rigors of "the real," Pip eventually compromises his "great expectations"; Rochester, in the end a "caged eagle" (439), sacrifices

his "will" and passion to live "happily" in an isolated forest dwelling with Jane. In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Bathsheba progresses from her rash and undisciplined romance with Troy to settle with the sturdy Gabriel Oak. Isabel Archer accepts the limits of her desires in mature recognition of the failure of her marriage to Gilbert; Hareton and Cathy Linton take up "normal" domestic life, shorn of the passion and chaotic desire that characterized the relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine; and finally, in a wistful but bracing allusion to past models of heroic action (past venues, I should add, defined by myths of force and mastery), George Eliot says the following: "the medium in which their ardent deeds took shape is for ever gone" (*Middlemarch*, 766).

3. In "From 'Passionate Attachments' to Dis-Identification," Žižek attempts to recover the contemporary (postmodern) "femme fatale" because of the way she "brutally [destroys] the spectral aura of 'feminine mystery,' by acting as a cold manipulating subject interested only in raw sex." Žižek interestingly contends that the new "femme fatale"'s "strategy is the one of deceiving the male protagonist by openly telling the truth. The male partner is unable to accept this, and so, he desperately clings to the conviction that, behind the cold manipulative surface, there must be a heart of gold to be saved, a person of warm human feeling" (para 10). As my reading of Kathy Moffett and women in noir generally suggests, this pattern is already present in original-cycle film noir. Something similar is happening, as I suggested in Chapter 1, in Travis Bickle's obsession with Iris's "heart of gold" in *Taxi Driver*.
4. In her intriguing essay about Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), Tamar Heller writes about the female vampire's expression of nineteenth-century cultural anxiety about female desire. Heller discusses how female desire is interpreted by medical discourse as hysterical, as in the theories of Weir Mitchell I alluded to in Chapter 3 (that figured so prominently in Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"). The "appetite" of Le Fanu's vampire is particularly transgressive insofar as Carmilla is linked sexually to Laura:

   > [S]ince female homoeroticism excludes men and eludes control, to figure female sexuality as lesbianism underscores the threat that women's desire poses to male authority—a threat that would become increasingly pronounced in the decades to follow Le Fanu's story, as feminist agitation further politicized bonds between women.
   >
   > (79)

5. The idea of scapegoating unconventional women to maintain purity and clearly demarcated gender boundaries has cultural resonance in contemporary popular culture, in, for example, the broad success of the novel and stage musical *Wicked*. The novel by Gregory Maguire, *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, reimagines the iconic moral poles of *The Wizard of Oz*, as does the book *Wicked* by Winnie Holzman, brought to life on stage first in 2003 with music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz. *Wicked* (which became a touchstone for "Ugly Betty" in the television series of the same name) addresses the cultural habit of scapegoating to unify the population—"something bad is happening in Oz."
6. "Carmilla's execution suggests a feminized version of castration; moreover, the stake driven through the body of the lesbian vampire whose biting had mimicked

the act of penetration is a raw assertion of phallic power. Yet, in the light of the tale's thematics of female knowledge, it is also telling that Carmilla is decapitated, and that her head, site of knowledge and of voice, is struck off" (Heller, 90).

7. Recall Dave Bannion at the auto yard in *The Big Heat* and Guy Haines talking (in *Strangers on a Train*) from behind the grate, symbolically taking on Bruno's criminality after Bruno tells him he has killed Guy's wife.

5 Looking Forward: Deconstructing The "Femme Fatale"

1. See Tom Gunning's superb analysis in *The Films of Fritz Lang: Allegories of Vision and Modernity* (2000) of Lang's "master criminals" and the many men in his films obsessed with having or maintaining control. Mabuse (like Mr. Roque, as Chion notes) "stands as the archetypal Langian figure who attempts to maintain control of the film's narrative action and the processes of the Destiny-machine by becoming the master criminal organizer, the energy at the center of the technological web" (Gunning, 100).
2. The female detective figure, the setting of Hollywood as a dream factory, and the noir generic trappings were recently combined in the film adaptation of *Nancy Drew: The Mystery in Hollywood Hills*, with young Emma Roberts as the earnest young detective and also featuring *Mulholland Drive*'s Laura Harring. The appropriation of Nancy Drew by film noir exemplifies a strange acculturation into the values of binary opposition, for example, by way of a Level-2 "Easy to Read" book, *Nancy Drew: Hello, Hollywood* by Fern Alexander, made available in 2007 by Simon and Shuster's Children's Publishing Division, to five to seven-year-old girls: "Nancy could not believe her eyes when they arrived in Los Angeles. The city was so busy and noisy! It was a big change from River Heights" (5), then a few pages later, "At lunch, [Nancy] sat next to Trish in the cafeteria. Trish laughed when Nancy laid out her napkin with chicken-salad sandwiches, carrot sticks, apple slices, a cupcake, and hot cocoa. Nancy was definitely not from LA!" (11). The book demonstrates schematically not only the city/country dichotomy (again the "River" in the hometown name denoting naturalness vs. the artificiality and danger of the big city), but also constructs a severe break between innocent good girls ("With her cardigan, handbag, and spiral-bound notebook, Nancy looked really out of place!" [9]) and experienced bad girls; the Hollywood High "mean girls" have irony and play tricks on Nancy. These oppositions are presented without analysis, change, or insight and are, in the end, affirmed: "Hollywood had been an adventure. . . . But [Nancy] really looked forward to returning to her friends—especially Ned!" (32).
3. Hudson understands Rita's "not having a fixed sense" in relation to Kristeva's "chora," the "sujet en process (subject in process)" that represents a "blurring of conceptual borders" (23) and that "[disrupts] the process of signification" (19). Hudson's application of post-structuralist psychoanalysis catches much of the spirit of the film but stops short, with its investment in Lynch's aesthetics, of registering the full significance of the "fluidity and promise that comes from not having a fixed self" (20).

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