MOVIES AND TONE

DOUGLAS PYE

Copyright

Acknowledgements

Contents

1. A Missing Concept

The first hunting sequence in *The Deerhunter* (Michael Cimino, 1979) follows Michael (Robert De Niro) and Nick (Christopher Walken) leaving a mountain cabin in the dawn light to hunt deer. We watch them as they climb and clamber over the rocky terrain. Quite early in the 25-shot sequence Michael moves well ahead of Nick (we do not see them together in the frame after shot 3) and we then largely follow Michael (there are only two shots of Nick between shot 4 and shot 25) in his single-minded focus on the hunt until he kills a stag with a single round, in accordance with the 'one shot' philosophy he has so emphatically expounded earlier in the film. What we are shown both illustrates Michael's skill and confirms the moral seriousness with which he imbues the act of hunting. The absence of the other members of the hunting party intensifies the focus on Michael's values. He is, it seems clear, The Deerhunter and the allusion to James Fenimore Cooper's *The Deerslayer*, together with Michael's insistence on the significance of the one-shot kill, evoke a long-standing tradition in American fiction, given potent initial form by Cooper's Leatherstocking novels, in which the experience of men with guns in the wilderness can take on transcendent value.

The images alone, in their context, would have carried meanings and associations of this kind. But Cimino accompanies the sequence with non-diegetic music. Beginning very softly as the men leave the cabin, choral singing builds in volume and intensity as the hunt develops, ceasing abruptly with Michael's shot which echoes unaccompanied across the landscape. This is the second use of religious choral music in the film, paralleling that of the earlier Russian Orthodox marriage ceremony (though here the choir seems entirely male) and therefore implicitly inviting linkage of the two sequences. The music is so assertive that it can seem to convey unambiguously the film's valuation of Michael's hunt as sacred ritual – music as direct editorial comment. This is certainly the way in which a number of the early accounts of the film understood it.

The hunting scenes are framed in Olympian terms – long-shots of snow-capped mountains in the background, the morning frost on the ground, the sound track bursting with religious choral music, and Michael seen in a meticulously edited pursuit of the deer. The whole sequence self-consciously strains for transcendence, and though its operatic quality […] is visually exciting, on an intellectual level it borders on the banal and laughable. (Auster and Quart 1979: 7)

When Michael climbs a mountain to hunt, it's a Holy Mountain, a mystical aerie straight out of Leni Riefenstahl's *The Blue Light*. Russian choral singing underscores his unhurried pursuit of a kingly stag, which he fells according to his code, with one clean shot. (Dempsey 1979: 16)

When Cimino sends his Pennsylvania steelworker out to hunt, he transports him to sublime mountain peaks which are emphatically not in Pennsylvania, and accompanies the action with an embarrassingly lush and obvious score. (Axeen 1979:18)

And what of the hunting of the deer? It is hard for me to take these sequences seriously, and not only because of the heavenly choirs with which Cimino accompanies the action. [...] The sequences are doubtless intended to establish the dignity of the hunter, and his pride in the exercise of his predatory skills […] I don't find this a dismal objective, but the point is bungled through grandiosity and vagueness. (Callenbach 1979: 21)

All these critics were responding to the challenge for criticism posed by what many saw as a difficult and enigmatic film. In wrenching the quotations from their contexts I don't wish to belittle their arguments but to establish interpretations of the hunt sequence that seemed widely shared among early commentators. It is easy to see why these views were held. The music is emphatically editorial but, unless it was read ironically (and the context made such a reading unlikely), there seemed little alternative but to take it as intending affirmation of the spiritual mystique of hunting. All the writers quoted believe the sequence to be reaching for this kind of significance but failing to achieve it. At the very least they experience a disparity between ends and means, a striving for effect and meaning

by means of a heightened rhetoric that risks seeming banal, embarrassing, grandiose, clichéd

In a somewhat later account, Robin Wood develops a different view of the sequence, within an intricate revaluation of the film.

> The mise-en-scène of the hunt – grandiose landscapes, choir, hero against the skyline – is clearly a critical crux: your response to the entire film will be coloured by how you read it. It seems to me further evidence of Cimino's audacity. On the one hand, it certainly cannot be taken ironically; on the other, the stylization, the break with realistic effect, is much too extreme and much too foregrounded for it simply to be read straight, the 'standard emblems of romantic uplift' (Britton) being clearly placed, as it were within quotation marks. The mode within which the sequence operates is, it seems to me, the mode of the archaic: the stylistic archaism at once embodies and places a concept of nobility and heroism that belongs to a past (perhaps a purely mythic one). (1986: 285)

Wood responds to the same elements as the earlier writers but, on the basis of a prior argument which identifies in the film's presentation of Clairton a breakdown of tradition, a community 'eroded beyond repair' (1986:284), trusts the film to be deploying the rhetoric of the hunt with self-conscious analytical intent. Wood's methodology is significant: he first establishes a context; he dismisses the idea of irony, then argues that the 'extreme' and 'foregrounded' nature of Cimino's decision making should be understood – in its difference from the prevailing style – as a sign that we are not to read the sequence 'straight'. The very fact that the rhetorical choices might be seen as 'standard devices' points for Wood not to an unsuccessful striving for effect but to the conscious evocation of a specific 'mode' of address ('the archaic') which can simultaneously evoke and critically place values which belong to the past. To crystalise his argument about the status of the sequence he uses a vivid analogy with the ways in which a speaker or writer can signal different levels of address in language: '"the standard emblems of romantic uplift" (Britton) being clearly placed, as it were within quotation marks'. It is as though, in this sequence, the film adopts a significantly different 'voice' from that used before.

Although the concept does not figure explicitly in these accounts of the sequence, what is at issue in the opposed interpretations can be seen as an understanding of tone. That is to say that the questions being probed by the critics are not simply about what is being signified in the dramatic material of the film but about the ways in which the film addresses its spectator and implicitly invites us to understand its attitude to its material and the stylistic register it employs. As Wood's analogy of 'quotation marks' suggests, we are familiar with the various means by which mode of address and attitude can be signaled in language – matters that we can think of, loosely, as to do with 'tone of voice'. As a critical concept, though, tone has been out of favour for many years.[1]

In fact, it is a concept which has had a very limited place in film theory and criticism. This is at one level surprising, given the crucial role tone plays in enabling us to orientate ourselves to any film. We seem, more often than not, to respond almost instinctively to the various elements in a film's opening that in combination signal its tone – part of the complex but seemingly automatic process which enables us to understand the kind of film we are watching and how it wants us to take it. When these habitual processes are disturbed, as they sometimes are when we watch films from a culture other than our own, or when a film makes it difficult immediately to say what kind of thing it is, it can be an uncomfortable or disorientating experience. And even movies that seem to establish their tone straightforwardly can hold all sorts of tonal surprises in store. In these respects, responding to or trying to make out the tone of a film has much in common with the even more habitual processes by which we try to gauge tone when we are involved in conversation. The obvious centrality of tone of voice for our response to film and theatre should not need stressing: dialogue and its performance are at the heart of our experiences of movies and plays. But they are also contained within frameworks of production which in turn add many potential dimensions to the manipulation of tone.

The very limited discussion of tone in film criticism and theory may well be linked to the history of the concept in twentieth century literary criticism from I.A. Richards onwards. In

this tradition it was central to the understanding of how the words of the poem or story addressed the reader, the tone of voice that could be adduced from the words on the page. This included not just tone in the narrow sense of implied emotion or attitude (angry, forceful, gentle, ironic, sarcastic, patronising) but wider issues of class location, educational level, implied intelligence, sensitivity, moral sense and so on. Tone here, as M. H. Abrams indicates, shades into 'voice' conceived as the whole ethos of the work, the 'sense of a distinctive authorial presence' (1971: 125). These considerations in turn mutate into concepts such as 'authorial voice' and 'implied author'. In the appropriation of narratology by film theory, questions about the appropriate ways of describing narrative levels such as 'narrator' and 'implied filmmaker' have been much debated but on the whole the questions about tone and voice that were so central in the literary tradition from Richards to Wayne C. Booth and beyond slipped out of sight or were abandoned in the pursuit of other registers of meaning and forms of analysis.

But in our experience of movies, as in our day-to-day lives, tone stubbornly refuses to go away, however much we choose to ignore or work around it. Like 'point of view', to which it is intimately linked, it is a term that does not comfortably fit the hybrid dramatic medium of film (it is rooted in 'voice' in the way that point of view is rooted in perspective representation). Yet as a concept it gestures towards some of the most crucial issues for film analysis: the relationships of a film to its material, its traditions and its spectator. Like point of view, of course, tone is not present in a film as, say, patterns of angle/reverse angle editing might be. In conversation tone is implicit in the speaker's manner, the effect of multiple variants such as timbre, linguistic register, volume, pace, cadence and rhythm, together with facial and bodily expression, and is subject to the interplay of intention, utterance and reception within a specific context. In a parallel way the tone of a film is implied by the various interrelated modes of the film's address and our response to them.

The centrality of tone to our experience of films is indisputable. The question I want to explore in this study is whether it can become a functional critical concept. As a means of focusing on the film's address to the spectator it feels as though it should be indispensable to film criticism. Indeed, the potential for tonal complexity is at the heart of film as a dramatic and narrative art and we ignore it at the risk of impoverishing our understanding of films. At the same time, because tone is implicit, not declared, it is inevitably slippery and subject to ambiguity and misunderstanding, which is also to imply that an understanding of tone can always be contested. Tone and interpretation are inseparable.

Nevertheless, significant problems are embedded in the history of the concept within literary criticism. For I.A. Richards, the concept was rooted in norms of social intercourse.[2] Understanding and deploying tone appropriately could be seen as dependent on discrimination born of the right education and social experience. With the challenges to such social hierarchies in the last century critical approaches that seemed based in old class assumptions were rightly suspect. Can tone become a useable concept, free of such assumptions? Certainly nothing in the concept itself implies discrimination inherently based on social class or background. But it is a fact of everyday social interaction that understanding any discourse depends on knowledge and experience: of language and its various registers; of manners and mores; of social situations; of people and professions, and so on. We learn how to employ tone as we develop our use of language and respond to the tone of others. So with novels or films: our understanding of their modes of address can deepen and expand as our experience grows and our discrimination develops.

The Deerhunter is a valuable case study in this context because it is characterised by an unusually non-discursive approach that makes a reading of tone especially challenging. This means that on the one hand its concerns are not spelt out in dialogue: the characters are unusually inarticulate or at least uncomfortable with expressing themselves in language. This is comically exemplified by Axel's (Chuck Aspegren) constant refrain of 'Fuckin' A' and more problematically by a number of Michael's enigmatic utterances, which puzzle his friends as much as they puzzle us ('This is this', as he holds up a bullet towards Stanley (John Cazale), is one such utterance). But more significant in this respect are two of the film's methods: on the one hand the creation of episodes or moments which take on an evidently metaphorical or even symbolic resonance; and on the other the juxtaposition of scenes with relatively little

concern for linear narrative or cause/effect logic. The film foregrounds its metaphorical rhetoric but we are left to make sense of what we see and hear with much less rhetorical help than is common in movies. These methods undoubtedly contributed to the controversy the film provoked and the divergent readings it generated.

The first hunt is, as Wood indicates, a key sequence in terms of how we understand the film, but it is one of many that pose similar problems for the viewer and critic. It is as though Cimino and his collaborators disclaim the possibility of a clear explanatory framework or an authoritative level of narration which would enable us to orientate our reading. We might compare *The Deerhunter* in these respects with strategies in other 1970s Vietnam movies: the words of the opening soundtrack song, including 'You're out of touch, my baby', over our first images of Bruce Dern's character in *Coming Home* (Hal Ashby, 1978); the vision of the war as absurd in the voice-over that opens *Who'll Stop the Rain* (Karel Reisz, 1978); or Willard's voice-over in the first sequence of *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979). Although the two uses of voice-over cited are carefully placed and their authority in some ways later qualified by the films, they provide a level of narration which gives us some bearings and a initial statement of themes. *The Deerhunter* provides no such help. As Wood's argument implies, we therefore have to orientate ourselves by gradually accumulating a sense of the kind of world presented, and intuiting, as sequence follows sequence, how the film's strategies of drama and narration are intended – how in fact the film is addressing us.

At the level of detailed realisation, too, the film sets in place networks of decision-making which accumulate meaning in the overall context of sequence and/or film. Three small-scale decisions within the first hunt sequence and its immediate aftermath can indicate one dimension of what is involved.

1) Michael is dressed in an orange weatherproof jacket and pinned very noticeably to its back is his hunting license. This is the garb of the modern hunter, not of the nineteenth century backwoodsman. It can remind us that here hunting is a regulated pastime, not a way of life. This is the mid-twentieth century and these are industrial workers on a recreational hunt, not frontiersman whose lives depend on their skills. We can note too the high-powered rifle with its telescopic sights.

In relation to the ennobling rhetoric of the music these are small but significant incongruities, decisions which were by no means inevitable but which create local disturbances to a wholly affirmative reading of the sequence.

2) The final shot of the hunt sequence. After Michael fires, we see the deer in medium long shot stagger and fall. There is a cut to a closer framing as it lies on the ground, and a zoom into close-up; the deer struggles to raise its head and its eye – open wide – rolls upwards. Michael's one shot will kill the animal but it has not dispatched it instantly: we are witness to its dying moments, although not to its death. Again, there is nothing inevitable about the presence of this shot and it provides another implicit qualification to the tone of the music (now silent at this point) and to the rhetoric of the clean, one-shot kill.

3) From the dying deer the film cuts directly, with an abrupt change of tone and register, to Michael's car speeding into Clairton and finally coming to a halt outside John's bar. The men tumble out and into the bar, singing discordantly. It is night and the shots are predominantly very dark but we can note (though it's not difficult to miss) the body of the deer

draped across the bonnet of the Cadillac. As the men enter the bar, the camera moves briefly down, looking across the car's bonnet, so that the stag's antlers can be seen clearly for an instant before the next cut. The ritual of the hunt, with the implicit dignity it accords the quarry, gives way to the deer's undignified treatment after death; an evocation of the mythic frontier reaching back to Cooper gives way to the emphatically modern image of the speeding, beat-up Cadillac and to the raucous pleasure of the male group.

What weight to give these details cannot be determined on the basis of the sequences alone. As Wood argues about the hunt, we need the full context of the film – or indeed, we might require the benefit of subsequent viewings. But the details exemplify one of the characteristics of the film's mode of address, the presence of potentially discordant or incongruous elements which we are invited to register and to hold in juxtaposition with other elements – the music, the energy of the speeding car, the camaraderie of the group – that can easily dominate our response and flatten out our sense of the film's tone.

I have noted that the hunt is 'rhymed' musically with one of the other key sequences of the first movement of the film, the Russian Orthodox marriage ceremony, one part of the extensive wedding celebration that dominates the first movements of the film. Again we can compare some early responses to Wood's somewhat later analysis. Like the hunt, the marriage scenes were often taken as pivotal images, in this case within the film's supposed celebration of Clairton as an apparently homogeneous ethnic community rooted in traditional values.

He has evoked a stunning image of a warm, working class community where the flow of communal energy and the texture of ritual transcends any of its private agonies and social limitations […]. The apotheosis of Cimino's homage to traditional working class life […] is the ethnic wedding sequence. In this lovingly detailed but overextended scene, we get a full view of the ornate, mosaic and saint-laden Russian Orthodox Church, and lengthy footage of the film's major characters singing, dancing and brawling. The sequence succeeds in evoking communal joy […]. (Auster and Quart 1979: 6)

David Axeen does not refer in detail to these sequences but comes to a similar conclusion:

The Russian-American steel town readying its boys for war has most of the virtues sentimentally attributed to organic, pre-modern communities. Its citizens are united by ethnic roots, orthodox religion, and unaffected love for each other. (1979: 17)

In developing his utterly opposed view of the film's presentation of and attitude to Clairton, Wood conducts his argument in critical dialogue with Andrew Britton's dismissive account of the film. Wood draws attention to a pattern of incidents and actions that in various ways threaten the characters' mood of celebration or undercut the idea of a positively presented organic traditional community. The wine dripping like spots of blood onto Angela's (Rutanya Alda) wedding dress and the incident with the Green Beret are among the moments Wood identifies as implying the 'hysteria into which the Clairton wedding celebration is imminently in danger of collapsing: in place of harmony, one finds incipient chaos, tension, disruption.' (1986: 282). Rather than a community unified by traditional values, he finds their breakdown, touching, for instance, on Angela's pregnancy by someone other than Steven (John Savage), Stephen's mother's (Shirley Stoler) attempt to find comfort and guidance from the priest who seems unable to offer either, the way that characters (he cites Nick and Linda (Meryl Streep) but it seems true of all the main characters apart

from John (George Dzundza), who is in the choir) seem ill at ease during the wedding ceremony.

In fact, there is an extensive network of detail to set against the rhetoric of tradition and community and which seems to imply not the continued vitality of traditional family and community life but its failure. Among the most forceful examples are the two scenes involving Stephen's mother (dragging Stephen from the bar and tearfully seeking solace from the priest) and Linda's drunken father muttering grotesquely about women ('fucking bitches, they're all fucking bitches') before violently assaulting Linda as she tries to bring him his meal. Violence against women erupts again in the wedding reception when Stanley punches and knocks out his girlfriend for allowing another man to fondle her bottom as they dance. No one seems outraged by the violence, least of all the woman involved.

Singled out and juxtaposed in this way these take on considerable interpretative power. Cimino's achievement is partly that in the film, while they are there to be observed, they are held in contrapuntal relationship with other aspects of the film which pull in different directions and may command more immediate attention: the establishment of the male group, the emotional power of the wedding sequences. Given appropriate weight, however, and set within the overall context that Cimino creates, the patterns of detail build a picture of a community in which the traditional structures and values of communal life – the nuclear family, relationships between parents and children, marriage as a Christian sacrament – are breaking down. The traditional frameworks and institutions are still in place and exerting a powerful influence on social forms, but their power to command belief and behaviour has diminished: their magnetic field has weakened.

It is this kind of approach to the film's network of decision making in its early scenes that enables Wood to claim that, 'The film establishes quite clearly the archaism of the ethnic rituals whose lingering trace continues, very tentatively, to hold the community together' (1986: 284). Wood's claim that these things are established 'quite clearly' is belied by the many critics who read the film very differently and I will turn later to questions about the contexts in which reading and response takes place. But I want for now to pursue Wood's claim about the film's presentation of its ethnic rituals as archaic and probe

the stages of argument it implies. As with his interpretation of the hunt, the fundamental issue is one of context – the ways in which everything that surrounds a scene can alter how we understand the way it wants to be taken.

This is how we might make the considerable conceptual leap from traditional church ritual to 'archaism', a shift not just in linguistic register but in the manner of understanding the film's relationship to its world, its spectator and the means with which it seeks to communicate. Taken in and for itself the marriage sequence might seem to balance, in an unusually elaborate but nonetheless familiar way, the solemnity of the ritual and the touching and sometimes humorous human detail given in shots of the characters as the service develops. We have seen numerous film weddings that work variations on these familiar conventions. The solemnity is heightened here by the soaring choral singing and the series of shots which roam across the rich and ornate iconic images that decorate almost every surface of the cathedral, but it is grounded, given a specific human context, by a series of shots of the main characters: the tentative and self-conscious ways in which Nick, Linda and Stephen play their unaccustomed and central roles; Stanley's act of crossing himself, which provokes Michael's expressions of amusement and apparent incredulity; John, up in the gallery as a member of the choir, smiling and then almost laughing as he looks down on his friends. What distinguishes this wedding sequence from others is the weight given to the ritual through the music and the extended visual treatment of the extraordinary setting, effects intensified for many of us by the unfamiliarity of the Orthodox liturgy and the traditions of Byzantine church decoration. Within the context of all that that precedes the wedding, however, rather than the liturgy casting

a glow of traditional values and faith over the community, we might see both the splendour of the cathedral and the grandeur of the music as incongruous, even anachronistic, in the Clairton we have previously been shown.

These interpretative manoeuvres depend, of course, on the significance and relative weight we wish to attach to the varied material the film presents within its world, and crucially they depend on what we intuit, as the film develops, about the film's intentions. The frameworks adopted by those critics who take the film to be celebrating the organic community and Wood's opposed understanding represent different ways of grasping what the film's makers want us to think and feel. In the first, we are to take the church ritual 'straight' while in the other we should take it as self-conscious deployment of a rhetoric designed to be both experienced and analytically placed within the wider patterns of the film. In the one, potentially discordant detail is overlooked or downplayed; in the other patterns of discord, disruption and change form the ground which highlights the strangeness of the wedding's heightened register and evocation of changeless tradition. Context and its interpretation are decisive.

To return to the parallel between the marriage ceremony and the first hunt, in the marriage the choral singing is diegetic, its origins firmly placed within the world of the film. We might wish to argue about the extent to which the film establishes or does not establish degrees of 'distance' from the belief system and spiritual aspiration the music embodies but its source in the fictional world allows for at least the possibility of such distance. Non-diegetic music tends to be different: we are used to it carrying, as it were, 'editorial' authority, not as comment necessarily (though it can have this function, as it does in the

example from *Coming Home* referred to above) but as setter of mood and dramatic register. Without the earlier wedding music, the use of non-diegetic choral singing in the hunt would lack the vital parallel that makes possible Wood's interpretation of the rhetoric of the hunt as in 'quotation marks'. With the parallel in place, understood within the texture of incident and image he traces across the first movements of the film, it is possible for Wood to hear in the hunt the self-conscious adoption of an idiom without an implicit assent by the film to that idiom's underlying value system, and to identify in both sequences a deployment for specific purposes of the 'archaic'.

In such an argument these sequences offer themselves as set-pieces, each of which powerfully evokes traditional values and aspirations that are central in different ways to the characters and the film. But the sequences are, to use a version of Wood's analogy with language, more like quotations than declarations of faith, each representing beliefs that the wider context renders anachronistic. These belief systems retain their imaginative power but have no significant social force. The church seems to have very limited influence over the society the film presents. Michael holds to the mystique of hunting but he is a Leatherstocking clinging to outdated values in a context that renders them largely meaningless.

It will be clear from this discussion that my sympathy is very much with Wood's position on these matters: he seems to me to offer a framework of ideas and a way of seeing that confers significance on and draws into meaningful relationship far more of the early parts of the film than most other accounts. He 'makes sense' of many of the film's strategies that are otherwise difficult to account for and – an important matter – he gives the filmmakers credit for being in control of and meaning everything they do. Wood's account, and my extrapolations from it, can of course, be challenged by alternative interpretations of the evidence. Their efficacy can also be finally assessed only in the context of the whole film, the most controversial and divisive of aspects of which I haven't touched on.

At the same time, criticism is always written in particular circumstances and is subject to its moment in all sorts of ways. The early writing on *The Deerhunter* came out of a period in which the politics of the Vietnam War remained at the centre of much debate aroused by the first wave of Hollywood

Vietnam movies. Cimino's film, more than any other, aroused criticism for its apparent lack of concern with politics, the isolation of its characters from the controversies about American involvement in South East Asia and its misrepresentation of the war itself, leading some writers to regard it as irresponsible in its attitudes. Wood's account was published later (1986) and his ability to investigate the achievement of the film in very different terms may reflect a certain distance from the immediate circumstances of the film's reception. The main objective here, however, is to highlight a range of issues within the critical debates about *The Deerhunter* that can be seen to turn on the unacknowledged concept of tone. What I have called the non-discursive methods of the film link Cimino's film to a variety of movements within early twentieth century modernism which broke with earlier poetic, narrative and representational traditions by stressing the juxtaposition of images or voices without a bedrock level of narration, or which privileged in the novel 'showing' over 'telling' and abandoned the apparently authoritative narrative voices of the nineteenth century novel for more partial, limited and uncertain, or even untrustworthy, views of events.

M.H. Abrams writes about the terms 'Persona, Tone and Voice': 'These terms, increasingly frequent in criticism, reflect the recent tendency to think of a work of literature . . . as a mode of speech.' (1971: 123). He goes on: 'the way a person speaks subtly reveals his concept of the social level, intelligence and sensitivity of his auditor, his personal relation to him, and the stance he adopts towards him' (1971: 124). Correspondingly, for Richards, tone is defined as 'the perfect recognition of the writer's relation to the reader in view of what is being said and their joint feelings about it' (Russo 1989: 232). John Paul Russo explains: 'he in fact saw it as a concept able to denote both the author's attitude to the audience, the subject matter, himself, and the "speaker" or "voice" within the poem. At the same time, tone also denotes the speaker's attitude to the audience, the subject matter, and the speaker's self – and their mutual relations, making for a seven-headed Hydra' (ibid.).

Tone in this account designates the outcome of a complex dynamic, implicit in the literary work, in which three agencies are identified (author, 'speaker' or 'voice', and reader) plus the subject matter. Tone implicitly conveys 'attitude' in various dimensions. Thus:

The author's attitude to the author's self;
The author's attitude to the 'speaker' of the poem;
The author's attitude to the reader;
The author's attitude to the subject matter;

The 'speaker' of the poem's attitude to the reader;
The 'speaker' of the poem's attitude to the subject matter;
The 'speaker' of the poem's attitude to the speaker's self.

We might add two additional lines to each of these lists, relating to the conventions of language being used, and the 'utterance', the specific uses of language in the work:

The author's attitude to the conventions of language being used;
The author's attitude to the utterance;

The 'speaker' of the poem's attitude to the conventions of language being used;
The 'speaker' of the poem's attitude to the utterance.

These are dimensions of tone that emerge from thinking about literature, the medium of which is language, and some care is needed in transferring these ideas to narrative film, which uses language as only one of its multiple means of communication. In the novel the distinction between speaker or narrator and author (or more commonly in the post-Richards literature, 'implied author') is well established. In film a voice-over narrator may be critically placed or even shown to be unreliable but voice represents only one dimension of a film's narration. A parallel duality of narrative levels in images is normally possible only when certain passages of a film are ascribed specifically to a character or some other source in the film's world. In most narrative films, though, the images present a single level of narration. A pervasive distinction equivalent to that between 'speaker' and 'author' or 'implied author' therefore makes no sense in film. Some writers retain the concept of implied author or filmmaker to designate the sense we sometimes have of an

informing sensibility in a film but it may be less confusing to avoid even the carefully circumscribed idea of an implied individual in these discussions and to think of the qualities inherent in the film itself as an act of human agency.**3** This would mean setting to one side several of the dimensions in which 'attitude' can be expressed in the model of tone derived from Richards and thinking of the attitudes that *the film implies*. In using 'the film' here and in what follows I am conscious of George M. Wilson's warning that 'it is principally speakers who may imply things by what they say, and it is unclear that *films* can imply anything at all unless some responsible agent has had the relevant communicative intention' (1997: 224). Behind this usage stand the filmmakers, the individuals who took the material decisions that make up the film and are responsible for the attitudes the film dramatises and those with which it is imbued. But we will need to be cautious in mapping these attitudes directly onto the historical individuals who made the film, as if the film was a form of speech and the filmmakers were speaking directly to us. 'The film' is not an entity that can itself imply anything but the decisions that made it create for its viewers both a fictional world and implied ways of viewing it.

The remaining dimensions of tone derived from this initial model will therefore be the attitudes implied to:

the film's subject matter;
the film's audience;
the conventions the film employs or invokes;
the film as a film (the equivalent of 'utterance' in earlier discussion).

None of these terms is without difficulty. 'Attitude' in particular becomes a very slippery concept once we leave the comparative security of declarative prose ('My attitude to the government is …'; 'I hate, loathe, despise, and abominate money'; 'His attitude to romance was consistently cynical') for the dramatic arts. Attitude is also too broad a concept to use without qualification. It will be necessary to think about ways in which the concept can be opened up and a number of different axes of attitude identified. Tone in film is rarely a singular matter, any more than point of view is: these are unitary terms for complex narrative effects. In addition we will need to consider the affective dimensions of attitude that are so crucial to our experience of tone.

To return briefly to Robin Wood on *The Deerhunter*, when he turns his attention to the controversial final sequence in which the friends gather in John's bar after Nick's funeral Wood makes the concept of tone central to his argument.

> The tone has been widely misunderstood, a local failure that indicates a wider incapacity for dealing with art of any interesting degree of complexity. How one reads it is invariably presented as a simple choice between clear-cut attitudes: either the ending is affirmative or it is ironic. In fact it is neither. Its total effect depends on the organization or a number of elements that hint delicately at possibilities rather than add up to a single coherent attitude or statement (let alone 'message'). (1986: 287–8)

Of the characters singing 'God Bless America' he writes that it is:

> […] obviously the crux of the affirmation vs. irony question. The tone (and it colours the entire sequence) is in fact one of tentativeness. Dramatically, the singing develops out of John's collapse into tears as he tries to cook the omelettes; it is clear that he is weeping not just for the death of Nick, but from a much more generalized sense of loss. The song is his way of cheering himself up. It is then taken up by Linda and subsequently by the others, but the tone of the singing never becomes confident or affirmative. (1986: 289)

Wood's argument is subtle and detailed and readers are urged to read it in full. I quote these passages to reinforce the idea that fundamental matters of interpretation in narrative film can turn on how tone is understood. Of course, a film like *The Deerhunter* which aroused such controversy and provoked such different readings and responses could be considered a limit case, too unusual to base a wider argument on. But perhaps such a case brings to our attention matters that are too often taken for granted. It points, as Wood's analysis eloquently indicates, to the implications of whole dramatic contexts and the need to resist reducing meaning to simple alternatives (as

in 'affirmation' or 'irony'). It is very often the case that, as Wood puts it, 'a number of elements […] hint delicately at possibilities', and how we respond to the various elements, their grading and their interrelationship will determine how we understand the film.

The discussions in the rest of this study try to follow this lead. The process of writing was very much one of exploration, of looking at film in detail with tone in mind and of testing the concept against their material reality, rather than of applying a developed theory to film texts, and I have tried to preserve a sense of that process in the finished study.

2. Unpicking Tone

Even before we begin to watch a film we tend to prepare our-selves for the kind of experience we expect to have. One aspect of what is involved is described by Deborah Thomas:

> When I approach films (from a variety of genres) in which it is clear that the main characters will be dogged by an unfor-giving fate and that they will almost certainly be caught and punished in some way, I often have to steel myself to watch them. In contrast, my body relaxes when I'm about to look at films whose tone is very different. What's involved here is an extremely broad anticipation of the kinds of pleasure to be offered or withheld and the kinds of narrative world I'll be invited to inhabit, not in terms of precise settings and events, but in terms of the ways they are experienced by viewers and, to some extent, by the central characters: on the one hand, there are narrative worlds that feel repressive and full of danger and, on the other, those that feel benev-olent and safe. Settling down to watch a film is, crucially, a case of getting in the mood for the sort of film one is about to watch. (2000: 9)

These affective and bodily dimensions of our film-going experi-ence are particularly difficult to analyse but, as Thomas implies, they always accompany and perhaps even underpin our more cerebral responses. Movies are designed to engage us in a kind of extended dialogue with and between different dimensions of response – affective, evaluative, cognitive and so on – as the film develops. As her use of the word suggests, these matters bear directly on questions of tone – how it is established and how we respond to it. Thomas's discussion also alerts us to the role played in our response by our apprehension of the kind of film we are about to watch and our sense of the demands it will place on us. Such predispositions create conditions for the play of tone as we experience the film itself. They involve, as Thomas puts it, 'getting in the mood for the sort of film one is about to watch'. Film openings then orient the spectator to what is to follow, introducing the world of the film and simultaneously entering into implicit dialogue with the expectations the spec-tator brings to the viewing and the conventions and traditions that underpin them. Central to the process of orientation will be initial indications of how the film will address its audience and how the audience will be invited to respond.

Knowing (or thinking we know) the *kind* of experience we are going to have but hoping for the *frisson* of surprise and var-iation within the familiar framework is one of the pleasures of popular cinema-going in particular. My interest in this study is mainly in the interplay that Hollywood traditions make possi-ble between our anticipation of more or less predictable kinds of pleasure and the ways in which filmmakers work to engage us in their specific inflections of story and style. However, I want to take as the first of three openings discussed in this chapter and the next a film that, while engaging with popu-lar traditions, is also strikingly 'alternative' in its approach to narrative. It is not that alternative film-making provokes no predispositions but the dialogue with conventional forms and expectations that even the most rigorously experimental film implies can challenge expectations and highlight processes of response and interpretation that we often take for granted. These are experiences that can be discomfiting. Jim Hillier writes, 'I am constantly trying to persuade students that frus-tration of the "normal" expectations of pleasures associated with cinema can itself be a source of pleasure' (2005: 166). When I first saw *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* (Terence Davies, 1988) its formal methods puzzled and irritated rather than intrigued me; juxtaposing it in first year undergraduate teach-ing with more conventional narratives then gradually led to the pleasure through perplexity that Hillier evokes (2005: 156), via processes of engagement and interpretation in which tone came to play a central part.

The films discussed later in this study work within the broad and flexible conventions of popular American cinema and their makers could have a considerable degree of confidence in their audience's familiarity with the modes of storytelling and the stylistic vocabulary this tradition tends to imply. The relationships between style and the fictional worlds it reveals and shapes are different in each film but nothing in either

breaks the contract implicit in the conventions about the ways in which a fictional world, characters and action will be introduced and developed. It is conventional in such films that the fictional world will appear to exist as though independent of our view of it. Although at some level we know this to be a kind of illusion the world of the fiction will behave as if it is much like our own world. Characters will tend to act as though unaware of the camera. In their world, indeed, there is no camera.[4]

Distant Voices, *Still Lives* works very differently. It creates a fictional world that presents aspects of British social life in a particular period but the relationship between this world and the decisions of the filmmakers that give us access to it seems often to break with the familiar convention of the world's autonomy. The conventional relationships between image and sound are also destabilized in various ways.

The film opens with an austere title card, white words on black, accompanied by silence. The card announces, in a plain font, modestly proportioned in the frame: 'The British Film Institute in association with Film Four International presents'. The image fades to black and we hear a distant rumble of thunder. A second title card fades in with the words 'Distant Voices', also white on a black background. A male voice begins: 'Shipping forecast for today and tonight. Iceland, Faroes, Heligoland: fresh to strong south-west winds …'. The voice and distant thunder continue over a fade to black and the fade in of the film's first shot. The opening thus far is rhetorically restrained, the initial silence inviting attention and preparing for the opening's muted sound register. There is no opening music to signal genre or establish mood but the initial sound decisions, together with the white on black titles, establish a sober, reflective atmosphere. The first title informs us of the film's British origins and a British setting is strongly implied by the shipping forecast. This is such a radio institution in Britain as to produce immediate recognition in British audiences but it is a cultural phenomenon that does not travel far; the film seems immediately concerned to engage spectators who can bring such cultural reference points to bear. However, the broadcaster's voice, the sound quality and the form of the shipping forecast itself also place this particular broadcast in the past, perhaps in the mid-twentieth century. Sonically, the film reaches back to evoke a continuity of British experience but

the style of the accompanying titles seem contemporary with the film's production. The film roots itself in the present while beginning to invoke the past.

Although the shipping forecast is addressed to mariners and those connected with the sea, for most British radio listeners it conjures up domestic contexts, listening to the radio at home. The shipping forecast is broadcast on Radio 4, previously 'the Home Service', in the post-war period one of two major family channels on BBC radio. The first image of the film's world both presents a domestic setting and separates image and sound. We hear the radio as though we were in a room with it but we see the facade of a terraced house, framed to show

only the ground floor, from a position seemingly across the street, so that image and sound offer divergent spatial orientations. The camera is square on to the front of the house and remains static. Colour is very subdued and heavy rain is falling.

The temporal setting is therefore consistent with the subdued thunder on the soundtrack and geographically we seem to be in an urban environment of nineteenth century artisan housing characteristic of many British towns and cities, though in films most commonly associated with the midlands and north of England. The voice and thunder continue. The front door opens and a woman appears, kneels to pick up the milk bottles from the doorstep, looks up at the weather and turns back into the house, closing the door. We see her at some distance but we can make out that she is middle-aged and note that she is wearing a style of apron that is now associated with mid rather than late twentieth century.

In a few moments the film has begun to create an archetypal English setting with images and sounds that resonate from decades of British film and television: a working class area, probably in the midlands or north; familiar, dreary English weather; mum about to prepare breakfast, listening to the radio. The shorthand begins to conjure up – for a British audience – a whole world. It also conjures up a fictional mode, working class 'realism', that forms a significant tradition of British filmmaking and television drama. There are other modes in such settings, such as comedy, but the atmosphere of the opening suggests a serious rather than comedic approach to the nature and problems of this world. There are already hints that this film will not behave in quite the usual way of such dramas (the opening titles, the absence of non-diegetic music, the static camera in place of a more orthodox scene dissection, perhaps the spatial disjunction of image and sound) but the world being introduced is familiar.

V.F. Perkins has eloquently explored the implications of the ways in which films establish and we come to comprehend specific fictional worlds and their possibilities. He argues, in relation to Douglas Sirk's All I Desire (1953):

The movie works for an audience that knows the world always to be larger and larger again than the sector currently in view. This knowledge entails an awareness of selection, hence of concentrations and emphases that help to determine tone and viewpoint. *All I Desire* stays within the spectrum of domestic emotional turmoil. Within that spectrum the worst that will happen is heartbreak that may or may not be healed and the best is some occasionally pleasant, more or less tolerable negotiation of conflict (2005: 33).

From the traditions of representation on which the film immediately draws, we can infer that the world introduced in the first moments of *Distant Voices, Still Lives* is likely to share something of the characteristics of domestic drama Perkins outlines, although its cultural context and class location are very different. Our expectations of this world are likely to include familial and romantic conflict within a class framework constrained by economic circumstances and possibly other forms of social disadvantage. The period being suggested makes the film's world part of a wider British society in which class divisions were still entrenched.

So far, however, the film has denied itself the rhetorical heightening (notably through music with its direct appeal to the emotions) that characterizes melodrama in both the American and British inflections of that broad mode. Here the mood being established is quieter, observing and listening to the small daily rituals of this world. The sustained shot of the house front before the door is opened establishes proximity but also a spatial distance that is then maintained even when the first character is introduced. As we enter the fictional world the point of view defined sets us apart from its inhabitants rather than inviting us into immediate association with them.

In discussing point of view in an earlier article (Pye 2000) I identified five axes that together helped to shape a film's point of view: spatial, temporal, cognitive, evaluative and ideological. Rather evasively I also suggested that there are other issues of pressing relevance to consideration of point of view, and identified specifically 'genre, detailed matters of film form and the vexed question of tone'. Without developing these ideas I proposed that a film's relationship to conventions of genre or film style could be considered as questions of 'distance': *generic distance and formal or stylistic distance*. This still seems a plausible way of thinking about the kinds of implicit dialogue a film conducts with its conventions but perhaps the concept of 'self-consciousness' offers a way of refining at least some aspects of what may be involved.

David Bordwell proposes self-consciousness as one of three major principles of narration, following Meir Sternberg's categories of self-consciousness, knowledgeability and communicativeness (Bordwell, Staiger and Thomson 1985: 25). He uses self-consciousness to denote the degree to which a narration displays 'a recognition that it is addressing an audience' and outlines a number of varied examples from the multitude of forms this can take. For Bordwell the self-consciousness of 'classical cinema' tends to recede after a film's opening in which narration is often revealed 'quite boldly', whereas in art cinema and the avant-garde self-consciousness is generally more sustained. While the concept is valuable in discussions of narration, defining self-consciousness solely in terms of 'a *recognition* that it is addressing an audience' (my italics) creates problems, as we will see. Self-consciousness here will tend to be overtly signaled, as indeed it can be, rather than implied, as it often is. We need a way of using the concept that enables us to analyse critical relationships to convention which are internalized within whole dramatic contexts and which do not necessarily offer themselves as overt acknowledgements of the audience.[5] I also want particularly to think of self-consciousness as something that, in terms of a relationship to convention, is likely to be pervasive, whether or not it is overt or internalized, even though it may also be selective in its attention to aspects of convention.

In the passage on tone I wrote:

> It needs separate status even though some elements of tone (perhaps the dominant or systemic aspects as opposed to the more local and variable) tend to be intuited when we make initial apprehensions about a film's world and its genre, apprehensions which bring with them intuitions of how the film is to be viewed and responded to (think, for instance, of the different orientations and expectations that we bring to, say, *Rio Bravo, Schindler's List, Duck Soup, and Johann Mouse*). (2000: 12)

This recognizes two dimensions of tone (the 'dominant or systemic aspects as opposed to the more local and variable') when perhaps a firmer distinction was needed. As the discussion so far suggests, it might be tidier to propose that the dominant or systemic aspects should be referred to in the first instance in terms of 'mood', rather than tone, leaving tone as a term under which to analyse effects created by the film's shifting texture. Mood in this sense takes us from initial predispositions (Thomas's 'getting in the mood') to the film's ways of signaling the nature of its world and how it intends to treat both it and us. Such a use of the term can be found in some discussions of literature. For instance, *The Dictionary of Literary Terms* by Martin Gray defines mood as, 'A term used synonymously with atmosphere to indicate in a literary work the prevailing feeling or frame of mind, especially at the start of a play, poem or novel, creating a sense of expectation about what is to follow' (2004 (1984): 185). In his approach to the analysis of emotion and film Greg M. Smith uses the concept in a related way but one more directly linked to his concern with feeling. For Smith mood is a crucial initial apprehension that then 'provides a consistent framework for brief emotional experience' (Smith 1999: 113). Mood is 'a preparatory state in which one is seeking an opportunity to express a particular emotion or emotion set. Moods are expectancies that we are about to have a particular emotion, that we will encounter cues that will elicit particular emotions' (ibid.). The film will then, Smith suggests, 'encourage viewers to establish a consistent emotional orientation towards the text (a mood)' (1999: 117); the viewer 'progresses through the film, tending to pick up cues that are congruent with the established mood' (1999: 125). Conceived in this way mood provides a kind of guide track through the spectator's experience of the film. For Smith these orientations are essentially emotional, but this may too narrow a focus; since our responses to films encompass various processes of cognition and emotion it may be better to think of mood as having a number of dimensions. As a complex of pervasive orientations mood is intimately linked to apprehension of a fictional mode and/or genre; individual films work variations on the moods associated with modes and genres and simultaneously develop their specific tonal registers. What this suggests is that 'generic distance' and 'formal or stylistic distance' that I previously posited as distinct from tone are probably best thought of a dimensions of a film's point of view structure that can contribute significantly to mood and tone.

There is now a cut to inside the house and the woman we have just seen walks away from the static camera. We are in a

dimly lit, narrow hallway, looking towards the stairs and the corridor beyond. The shipping forecast is still audible but now seems more distant, as though its sound is coming from a room inside the house. Sound and image have been brought into more familiar spatial alignment. The woman stops at the foot of the stairs, calls, 'It's seven o'clock, you three', and then leaves the frame to go into a room on the right of the hall. A muted rattling of crockery can be heard. She returns to the hall and calls, 'Eileen, Tony, Maisy – better get your skates on', before leaving the frame again.

Sound and image may now be aligned but the use of the camera is unusual in relation to the predominant conventions of working class realist films, which tend to work variations on mainstream conventions of scene dissection and dramatic focus. Our view is being held in one position and sustained, so that visual access to the other space, which we can hear, is withheld. The film has the authority to enter the house but now adopts a spatial and epistemic position of considerable limitation, as though it cannot claim the seemingly unrestricted freedom of conventional film narration. If a mode (working class realism) has been evoked and a serious, contemplative approach implied, the film seems now to be initiating a play with the mode and its conventions and with any associated expectations the film audience might have. What happens next significantly extends that play.

The radio sound has now become inaudible but we hear footsteps apparently descending a flight of stairs. The sound is loud enough for the stairs in question to be those we can see but no one appears. We hear an exchange between a man and his mother (the voice is that of the woman we have previously seen and heard): 'Morning, Mum'; ' Tony, are those sisters of yours up?'; 'Yeah, they're just coming down'. We hear another set of footsteps descend and a second exchange, this time between 'Maisy' and Mum. Overlapping this are more footsteps, followed by a final exchange: 'Morning, Mum'; 'Morning, honey. Nervous, love?'

The sound quality places the action close to us (closer than the radio seemed when this shot began) but nothing happens in the image. We are likely to be involved in a process of rapid hypothesis formulation the first time we see the film. Another set of stairs in a house like this would be unusual. The mother has been tangibly present to us yet the children are not. Are we privy to the mother's memories even though the familiar ways of signaling subjectivity have not been employed? Have time dimensions somehow diverged in the film? If so, it has happened without any change to the image, which up to the first sound of footsteps seemed to give time and space their usual consistency. If our epistemic position was initially restricted in terms of access to the spaces within the house, now sound and image, still linked by location, seem to provide access to different dimensions of fictional reality. The presence of the camera in the house no longer guarantees access to a consistent fictional world, located in a specific time.

An unaccompanied female voice now starts singing a slow, doleful song: 'I get the blues when it's raining/ The blues I can't lose when it rains/ Now each little rain drop falls on my window pane/ Reminds me of the tears I shed/ The tears were all in vain'. The sound texture does not suggest a source in the house, although the vocal quality (it seems a performance by a non-professional singer) could imply that the singer is one of the characters. (The published script suggests that this is the mother's voice and has it starting before the footsteps are heard but in the finished film we cannot attribute the singing with confidence to any character). The soundtrack's relationship to the image has changed again, away from sound sourced, however puzzlingly, in the house to something with a less immediate connection to setting. The camera slowly tracks forward as the song begins and pivots right when it reaches the stairs, as if to look into the room that the mother entered.

But, with the song continuing, the camera maintains its slow movement until it has turned 180° and is facing the front door where it remains static until the song ends. The camera asserts its independence from any action in the film's world and seems at first as though it might be offering to open the house to our view. Instead its movement down the hall becomes less a spatial exploration than a way of anchoring the film within the house, a way of conveying, perhaps, as time and space, sound and image, diverge, that this place is our focus.

There is a dissolve to another view from the same camera set up. The front door is now open and outside we can see a narrow street and the sun shining on the house opposite. This is the first of several dissolves that link the next few shots. We remain in the house, anchored to the same view, but the dissolve has shifted us to a different time and season. Our epistemic position relative to the film's world continues to evolve according to a logic that is not immediately available to us, though it has something of the quality of a flow of association, one image or sound linking tonally to the next, one dramatised moment evoking another, separated in time. The first song introduced an atmosphere of romantic melancholy. Now a very different female voice begins another, even slower, song. This is an operatic rendering (the singer is Jessye Norman) of the African American spiritual 'There's a man going round taking names' and marks a further transition in the soundtrack away from sound that can be directly linked (however enigmatically) to the world of the film. A hearse drives slowly across the doorway, stopping so that we can see the coffin inside.

This performance of the song, intensely felt and dirge-like in tempo, is a fitting accompaniment to a funeral in terms of feeling but at the same time introduces a cultural disjunction we have no way of explaining at this stage. If the previous elements of the soundtrack can be variously located in the fictional world, this seems a direct intervention by the film, a kind of cultural intrusion, appropriate in feeling but signaling a controlling sensibility distinct from the world of the film, though responsive to it.

A dissolve takes us into a room, the camera perpendicular to a wall and facing four figures in a line, all looking towards the camera. The mother is sitting and three younger people, a man and two women (the son and daughters whose voices we heard earlier?), are standing. They are dressed mainly in black, possibly costumed for the funeral, and their manner and expression are somber. On the lines 'He has taken my father's name/And has left my heart in pain', the camera begins a slow

track in. As it does so, the mother stands and moves out of frame left; the others then also leave, one to the left, two to the right of the frame. The camera moves in to frame a sepia photograph on the wall behind where the family was standing, of a workingman in shirtsleeves, braces and open neck shirt, with a pony. The shot marks a further departure from conventional relationships between camera and action. The characters in this film can respond directly to the camera, acknowledging its presence, almost as though they were posing formally. Yet they do not acknowledge the person operating the camera, so that the camera itself remains a disembodied, rather uncanny force, able to command such groupings but not claiming a material presence in the space.

Another dissolve to the hall, the characters come into frame and walk slowly towards the door and the hearse. A further dissolve takes us out to look back at the door as the mother

walks forward, stops, and the son puts his hands protectively on her shoulder and arm. Dissolve to a view from the other side of the hearse; the family gets in and the hearse starts to move. Dissolve to the same set up as before, looking down the hall towards the front door, with the hearse moving left across the doorway. The song continues throughout, the association between 'taken my father's name' and the photograph suggesting that what we are seeing is the father's funeral, but reaches its extended peroration as the hearse drives off.

Dissolve to the same room. The family again faces the camera but this now seems like a group preparing to attend a wedding. One young woman has her arm linked with her brother's. He again wears a dark suit but now has a flower in his buttonhole. All the women are in light coloured dresses. The mother and the young woman to the right of the frame both smile slightly. As the song's final line is sung the camera slowly tracks in to frame the central pair, then stops with the photograph framed

between them. The woman seems to attempt a smile and after the end of the song she says: 'I wish me dad was here'. The camera pans right to frame the other young woman, her expression responding to what her sister has said, and we hear in voice-over, 'I don't. He was a bastard and I bleedin' well hated him'. Again the characters seem posed for the film camera without it becoming an object in their world.

Throughout this opening section the film sets questions that we are likely to be wrestling with even as we respond emotionally to the extremely slow tempo and increasingly somber action and music. There are puzzles about the relationship between what we see and hear (the voices of the children who we do not see, the songs that have no obvious source in the film's world but are not orthodox non-diegetic music) and about the relationship between the fictional world and the film itself (what, for instance, are we to make of the characters forming tableaux groupings as though aware of the film camera?). The initial suggestion of a fictional mode (working class realism) has been inflected towards something stylistically rather different from the norm, those modes of 'alternative' film practice in which film form often takes on a self-conscious independence from what is being represented. The film is involved in a shifting play with conventions of film narrative and with the spectator that in turn creates a tonal fabric in which the dominant funereal atmosphere is just one thread.

As we attempt to make sense of the opening, the title (or what we have seen of it so far) seems to offer a way of linking at least some aspects of what we have experienced. 'Distant voices' conjures up ideas of the past and, perhaps, of memory. An old version of the shipping forecast is one distant voice; the disembodied sounds of the three children might be others; the songs, perhaps, two more. Is the film looking for ways of dramatising the processes of memory, without falling back on the conventional forms for attaching subjectivity to a character in the fiction? Perhaps, too, 'Still Lives', the other half of the title that has not yet appeared on the screen, offers a second conceptual framework, complementing 'distant voices' with an emphasis on the visual. A still life is a genre of painting, devoted to static arrangements of objects, an idea that is resonant in relation to the family tableaux that in turn evoke photographs from the

past, but 'still lives' might also come to refer to the lives of characters within the film.

It is impossible to produce more than hypotheses at this stage. The film invites these kinds of interpretative manoeuvres but deliberately withholds a framework that could enable us to anchor the significance of what we see and hear, encouraging initial processes of association but no certainty. It holds us at a distance in various ways – spatially, temporally, cognitively, evaluatively – so that we are required to interrogate what the film is doing and ask what kind of thing it is even as we experience the intensity of feeling communicated by the songs and begin to understand something of the family and social context being evoked. Working outside mainstream narrative conventions, Davies can self-consciously employ forms of narration that remain emphatically present to us as we watch, refusing any illusion of direct access to the fictional world. Just as the filmmaker's choices remain present to us so does the act of being a spectator.

This account of the opening of *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* has left aside knowledge of context and director. It is well known that, in common with several of Davies's other films, it is based on his own family. He and others refer to it as autobiographical[vi], although it is an unusual form of autobiography in that it is based on the memories of members of his family rather than himself, so that the film represents Davies's memories of the memories of others. This kind of knowledge can affect our response to and interpretation of the film in a number of ways. Although Davies does not address us directly in the film, if it is a personal film in which the filmmaker attempts to come to terms with his past we might ascribe the features we have been looking at to Davies himself and to his shifting processes of memory and recall. This would tend to make Davies himself the subject of the film both in the sense that it represents his subjectivity and that he is what the film is really about. Thinking of it as autobiography can also have the effect of explaining the puzzling features of the film. For instance, Wendy Everett writes:

> By shifting the focus in this way, it is immediately clear that the various conflicts and contradictions identified above can be unproblematically accommodated as defining features of

autobiographical discourse itself: lack of linear chronology; blending of truth and fiction, of reality and imagination; unstable and shifting temporal and spatial viewpoints; complex combinations of narrow subjectivity and universal understanding; and the self-conscious foregrounding of processes of its own construction, for example, all coexist within the genre (2004: 64).

This is an attractive argument because it offers to provide an explanatory framework for a very puzzling experience. In effect, it offers us a genre in which to place the film and a generic history that can be consulted to offer comparative perspectives. Yet, as we have seen, the film does not attempt to replicate in any literal way the shifting and fragmentary qualities of subjectivity. In fact, Davies does not dramatise himself as controlling or narrating subject and the film's approach to memory is distinctly 'cool' formally. The conceptual framework of 'autobiography'[6] offers a way of accounting at a very general level for the film's methods but it is of little direct help with the specific material decisions that we have to negotiate as we watch the film. Indeed, if we allow the 'various conflicts and contradictions' to be 'unproblematically accommodated' to the concept of 'autobiography', there is a risk that the specific decisions will seem of limited consequence.

Perhaps we should understand the film's methods as simultaneously dramatising family memory and exploring ways in which the paradoxical processes of memory can be evoked. Even the most intense emotional charge from, say, the memory of a death in the past is inevitably and simultaneously bound into a network of perspectives that hold us apart from the event. The film seems committed to acknowledging and dramatising the emotional turmoil of family relationships while retaining perspectives that are analytical and measured. It also seems to want a spectator prepared to withhold judgement and to suspend conventional expectations.

Within the familiar frameworks of popular narrative film all sorts of tonal variations can be achieved on a bedrock of familiarity with the 'language' being used and our understanding of how, in broad terms, we are expected to respond. The more alternative the film form the more difficult it may be for us to grasp how it is that we are being addressed and therefore

to tune into a mood and a tonal register. Davies establishes familiar reference points both in the nature of the film's world and in the events portrayed but at the same time makes our relationship to these strange. It is a process in which he guides us through a series of moves, both visual and aural, that allow us time for reflection and speculation. The extreme slowness of the opening may indeed be in part a way of gradually inducting the spectator into the methods of the film.

Tone is gradually implied by the nature of the film's world, the choice and treatment of narrative events and the various ways these are 'framed' by the film's formal strategies and coloured by the mood initially established. One dimension of this framing can be evoked by suggesting that the human subject matter (daily life, funeral, wedding) is presented rather than represented. We can relate to the emotion of the family funeral but both the images and sound hold us at a distance, even the intensity of 'There's a man going round taking names' in Jessye Norman's performance having the quality of a quotation in this context, a musical commentary on the father's death that holds us apart from the family context. Yet these forms of detachment do not define the film's tone any more than the song does. The film begins with carefully modulated nostalgic invocation of the past via the voice of the shipping forecast announcer and the characters are created, even in this short passage, with warmth and empathy. Its methods also signal that film is being used to show us a reconstructed past, that there will be no pretence of being able to inhabit this world and yet sustained consciousness of the gulf between present and past will not result in the easy ironies that the privilege of hindsight can produce. The value of Davies's film in this context is that in prising apart the familiar conventions of film narrative and separating their elements it not only offers instruction into its own methods of narration but also insight into the multiple decisions and interrelationships that can affect our sense of tone.

There is a problem here that haunts our use of complex critical terms. Like point of view, tone seems intuitively to belong to the 'how' of any discourse, the manner in which a story is told or an experience related, yet in analysis it rapidly becomes evident that the distinction between 'how' and 'what' is unsustainable. The choice of subject matter and all

the specific decisions taken in creating every aspect of the fictional world, its characters and events, inevitably have effects on mood and tone. In order to register the consequences of particular decisions it is often helpful (it may even be indispensable to understanding) to posit alternative treatments, to imagine, for instance, different ways of taking us into the world and the events of Davies' film, as though they could exist independently of their presentation in the film. This corresponds to our awareness that a story is capable of being told or dramatised in many ways. But the separation of story and treatment that seems implied by this fundamental fact about storytelling can only be maintained as an analytical distinction. For the purposes of analysis such distinctions offer crucial tools but what can start by seeming sharply defined differences are rapidly blunted as we probe the material texture of sequences.

A version of this dilemma crops up in relation to tone as part of Wayne C. Booth's argument establishing the significance of 'the implied author' as a concept in narrative analysis. For Booth the implied author refers to the 'core of norms and choices' that pervades a novel and he discusses, in order to set them to one side, a number of other terms that have been used to name this core of a work, one of which is tone.

> Tone is […] used to refer to the implicit evaluation which the author manages to convey behind his explicit presentation, but it almost inevitably suggests […] something limited to the merely verbal; some aspects of the implied author may be inferred through tonal variations, but the major qualities will depend also on the hard facts of action and character in the tale that is told. (1961: 74).

The distinction between the 'merely verbal' and the 'hard facts of action and character' now seems strange, as though action and character had a status somehow more tangible ('hard facts') and significant than that of language ('merely verbal'), when it is language that gives us access to action and character. Tone belongs to a vocabulary of critical distinctions that Booth is keen to distance himself from in pursuit of greater precision but its rejection here is logically unstable. Tone is thoroughly compatible with the concept of the implied author (if one wants to make use of it) and the attempt to limit it to

one dimension of narration (the 'merely verbal') perpetuates a how/what distinction that is unsustainable.

The difficulty of holding to hard and fast how/what distinctions and indeed to narrow definitions of concepts such as narration, point of view and tone is one of the lessons derived from the practice of detailed criticism and it can lead to a healthy skepticism about the reification of analytical distinctions. At the same time, as long as analytical distinctions remain just that – distinctions made for the purposes of analysis – they are as essential to detailed criticism as to any other critical or theoretical approach to the arts. We need, at the very least, to take our bearings and a framework of concepts and distinctions, however provisional, can help to get us going. I ended Chapter 1 by posing four prospective axes of tone: attitudes implied to the film's subject matter; attitudes implied to the film's audience; attitudes implied to the conventions the film employs or invokes; attitudes implied to the film as a film. In this chapter I have also suggested a distinction between tone and mood. These ideas can now be looked at again in the light of the previous discussion.

Mood is first 'a preparatory state' of expectation as we engage with a work, a 'prevailing feeling or frame of mind', incorporating the apprehension of a mode or genre and of the kind of experience we are about to have. It will involve a sense of the film's overall orientation towards the fictional world and action (serious, comedic, satirical, ironic, and so on), towards its conventions (generic and stylistic 'distance') and the audience. It then carries forward as a pervasive orientation, involving different dimensions of understanding, with feeling and bodily response playing as large a part as more cerebral processes. In most cases mood continues to give a significant degree of stability to our relationship with the film, although as the film proceeds these orientations will be inflected (they may be challenged) and developed.

More specific tonal qualities are implied scene by scene and even moment by moment by the network of decisions that create the fictional world, its characters and events, and present them to the spectator. Close analysis makes clear that these networks of decisions and relationships challenge any attempt either to apply as a template the dimensions of tone I have identified or to treat 'attitude' in any literal way. A term like 'subject matter'

also becomes very difficult to define in the abstract: its application can seem extraordinarily elastic. The important thing is to treat it not as a kind of field boundary that demarcates a space and makes clear inside/outside distinctions possible, but to see it as the indispensable but inevitably imprecise concept that it is. Similarly, 'attitude' seems a blunt instrument, especially if we bear in mind Robin Wood's argument about the end of *The Deerhunter*, that 'a number of elements […] hint delicately at possibilities'. In any reasonably complex film, attitudes to events, characters and action in films will be implied in ways that draw on multiple and intermeshed strands of comprehension, response and assessment: aesthetic, intellectual, cultural, ideological, moral and, of course, emotional. (We may wish at times to invoke other categories). Different aspects of response and different axes of 'attitude' may be set at odds, refusing resolution and fostering ambivalence or uncertainty. Like the axes of point of view to which I have referred, 'attitude' and the different dimensions of tone are indicators of complex relationships implied by any film but they do not correspond to neatly divided aspects either of the film itself or of our experience

.

3. Tone and Style: the openings of *Desperately Seeking Susan* and *Strangers on a Train*

Desperately Seeking Susan (Susan Seidelman, 1985) and *Strangers on a Train* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1951) make contrasting use of the same symbolic narrative motif, that of 'the double', the pairing of two characters who come to represent in some way opposed sides of the human personality. In one of the founding examples in the modern period, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) they are literally two aspects of the same man. In cinema the motif evolved in ways that rarely followed the precise model of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* but on the whole dramatised the double through separate and contrasting characters. With the infiltration of Freud's account of the mind's duality (split between consciousness and the unconscious) into popular cinema many films came to employ doubled characters in ways that dramatised apparent extremes (as in hero and villain) not simply as opposition but as complementarity, two sides of one coin.

Desperately Seeking Susan opens by juxtaposing two sequences, markedly different in tone, that introduce two settings and the two central female characters, Roberta (Roseanna Arquette) and Susan (Madonna), as well as carrying the superimposed film credits, spread over the six-minute introductory segment. The soundtrack of each sequence is dominated by a pop number that has an informing effect in orientating us to the action, introducing the sequence and playing through much of what follows.

The opening number, 'One Fine Day' by The Chiffons, begins in the final seconds of the Orion logo, the upbeat, tinkling rhythms of its initial chords in themselves beginning to create a mood appropriate to a world – to use Deborah Thomas's words – more benevolent than repressive. The lyrics express a longing for a crush to be reciprocated, so that the song initiates a theme of unfulfilled desire that the film will

develop in various ways, but its opening statement is in a register of adolescent innocence and optimism: 'One fine day/You'll look at me/And you will know/Our love was meant to be'. The setting and action introduce an immediate contrast with the hope for spontaneous romantic recognition. The first seven shots make up a montage that introduces the various processes (leg waxing, pedicure, testing lip-gloss, hair-dressing) taking place in an up-market beauty salon. This is a world of older women and of more considered and constructed feminine allure than those implied by the song, although we will find that it is a world within which romantic fantasy can still produce startling effects.

The systems of decision-making, both visual and aural, in this initial sequence are neatly calculated to suggest something of the film's attitude to what is being shown. The colour register (pink features in the décor and the lighting is suffused with a gentle pink glow) conforms, with a hint of self-conscious over-emphasis, to stereotypical connotations of femininity. In the very first shot we are shown a pair of legs being waxed and we hear, as the first distinct sound effect, a rasp as the cloth is ripped from one leg. The sound is carefully graded in relation

to the music (clearly audible but not too emphatic), creating a momentary undercurrent of pain to the bouncy mood of the number. The film wants us to wince but also to smile. The leg being waxed does not flinch, so that discomfort is shown as being an accepted and familiar part of the beauty regime but in foregrounding the sound (the only diegetic sound we hear distinctly in these early shots) the film reaches to establish a

bond with its spectator, rooted in shared cultural knowledge and specifically female experience – a kind of 'ouch' of amused recognition.

The first four shots show only parts of each woman's body – legs, feet, hands, feet again. The images here initially show the clients of the beauty salon as anonymous body parts being subjected to beautification, a process which Seidelman's decisions create as akin to an assembly line: this is a kind of femininity factory.

That the women are passive recipients of treatment is clearly inherent in the experiences they are undergoing and both the editing and (later) the camera movement reinforce this sense by dissecting the space and directing our gaze independently of the characters. The women's passivity and the relationships of camera and editing to the action will take on further significance in contrast to the subsequent sequence. These interlocking decisions create a context for the introduction of the first major character. Shots 5 and 6 begin to individualise the women undergoing treatment by introducing head and shoulder shots, then shot 7 tracks along a row of women having their hair attended to, the song recedes, dialogue begins to be audible and we arrive at Roberta and her companion, Leslie (Laurie Metcalf). Roberta is one of the women being expensively processed into an image of conventional femininity, the constraints of her world imaged in the film's presentation of the beauty salon's operations.

In unpicking the network of decisions in these opening shots it is easy to overplay the critical attitudes inherent in the film's presentation of the beauty salon. In spelling out what the film implies we risk making its meanings seem too declarative, over assertive. When we watch the film we experience simultaneously the interaction of elements – colour, framing, action, sound, and so on – that analysis inevitably separates. The filmmakers' skill is in balancing its decisions to achieve a tone in which analytical perspectives suggested by the filmic treatment offer an implicitly quizzical undercurrent to the innocent bounciness of the number. Decisions that with greater emphasis or accompanied by alternative soundtracks might have conveyed an attitude of abrasive mockery are held within an overall context that suggests benign but clear-sighted good humour.

What follows extends and personalises the sense of social constraint lightly sketched in the opening shots. Roberta is absorbed in the personal ads in her newspaper, dreamily spelling out romantic undercurrents that her companion caustically rubbishes. Leslie wants Roberta to have a new hair-style as a birthday present; Roberta is uncertain but the hairdresser is

reassuring as she pushes Roberta's head forward to begin work: 'Don't worry, your husband will love it'. The final passage of dialogue revolves around the ad 'Desperately Seeking Susan', one of a series that enthralls Roberta, as 'Jim' apparently pursues Susan across the country. She muses on the wording:

> Roberta: 'Desperate' – that's so romantic.
> Leslie: [mockingly] Everyone I know is desperate, except you.
> Roberta: I'm Desperate.
> Leslie: [guffaw] You?
> Roberta: [quietly] Well, sort of.

This is potential material for melodrama (unfulfilled longing, domestic entrapment) but played in a mode that remains comedic. The film may be opening a drama of female entrapment and unfulfilled desire but the mood established and the tonal inflections of the sequence at this stage suggest we are being inducted into a film in which the characters will not come to serious harm.

The beauty salon sequence ends with a close up of Roberta drawing a circle with lipstick around the 'Desperately Seeking Susan' advert; diegetic sound recedes and, in an abrupt shift of tone, the second number, 'Urgent' by Foreigner, with Junior Walker, kicks in with its initial hard, driving drum beats. There is a cut to an exterior shot of the boardwalk of Atlantic City, over which the film's title appears. The image is still suffused by pink but the hue is deeper and duskier now, and colour generally more saturated than in the beauty salon sequence. Another cut takes us inside a room, the camera looking towards a window with closed curtains in front of which is a table top piled with the remnants of a meal, untidily heaped serving plates and an ice bucket containing an opened champagne bottle. The camera tilts down to show Susan, lying on her back on the carpet with arms outstretched, chewing gum and taking a photograph of herself with a Polaroid camera, plates and scattered playing cards surrounding her on the floor. She examines the photo, puts it in an inside pocket, blows a bubble with her gum, looks out of frame, then gets up on her knees, the camera following her as she moves, still on her knees, towards a bed on which someone is apparently asleep, partly covered by a sheet.

She climbs onto the bed, tickles an exposed foot and, getting no response, takes a photograph of the sleeping man, places it on his torso, and turns away. This is accompanied initially by the emphatic rhythms and raunchy saxophone introduction of 'Urgent', with the lyrics beginning as Susan looks out of frame.

The contrast with the previous sequence is marked at almost every level. Instead of the schoolgirl dreams of 'One Fine Day', 'Urgent' evokes an independent woman with strong sexual desires:

> You're not shy
> You get around
> You wanna fly
> Don't want your feet on the ground
> You stay up
> You won't come down
> You wanna live

You wanna move to the sound
You got fire
In your veins
Burnin' hot
But you don't feel the pain
Your desire
Is insane
You can't stop
Until you do it again.

In a context that suggests at best a short fling in a hotel, the stereotype of the woman sleeping on while the man leaves is reversed and developed. Here the man sleeps on while the woman is up and around. As opposed to the middle-class married woman we have just met, here is a woman apparently free of such social constraints. At the same time, in contrast to the women being beautified, Susan's use of the Polaroid camera neatly conveys a sense that she controls her own image and the making of images around her. The film makes full use here of Madonna's established pop persona in Susan's eclectic and idiosyncratic costume and her manner, both of which convey a rejection of conventional femininity. Equally, if Roberta and the other women are passive, Susan is emphatically active. This is reinforced by the visual treatment. Where the women in the beauty salon were anchored, with the visual narration predominantly independent of them and its strategies dominated by editing, here, once the camera locates Susan it follows her in an extended take, as though she controls the space and our access to it.

What could have become signifiers of an unsavoury sexual encounter are contained and challenged by the energy of the music and, crucially, by Madonna's persona and performance. The connotations of strength, independence and control suggested by the combination of song, gender role reversal and visual treatment are embodied in a performance which conveys someone sufficiently at ease with herself and her situation to be playful and gentle as well as sexual. She tickles her lover but doesn't persist when he fails to wake up. Her air of restlessness is softened by this sense of pleasure in moment by moment play, further developed in her interaction with the room service waiter who delivers tequila and the newspaper

in which she finds Jim's advert: taking the waiter's photo as he enters the room, pressing money into his pocket when he has delivered the trolley and telling him not to spend it all in one place. We then seem invited to enjoy the casually amoral way in which she bundles hotel cutlery into her case and goes through her lover's jacket, removing money and an ornate pair of large gold earrings. Her final line, addressed to the still sleeping man, 'Bye, Bruce, it was fun', actually sounds as though she means just that.

By this point the film has set in place the parallel and contrast between Roberta and Susan that is central to what follows. Extending the titles over both sequences and using contrasting pop numbers to accompany them emphasizes their formal links and informing status. Roberta's fascination with the advert intensifies what would anyway be a strong expectation aroused by this opening, that these women will meet. The paralleling and Roberta's romantic identification with Jim's pursuit of Susan offers the two women as potential 'doubles' and suggests the film's intention to explore the significance this doubling might have. What is being offered is also, of course, a variant on the dominant male-centred versions of the double. In line with tradition it is important that Susan can be understood as in some way summoned up by Roberta's only half-articulated discontent and that she should offer a radical alternative to the values of Roberta's middle class, suburban world. In line, too, with the film's use of a familiar trope, Susan, as the 'freer' side of the Roberta/Susan doubling, is associated with danger. It will be fundamental to the development of the plot that the affair with Bruce links Susan to criminality and therefore to forces that will also come to threaten Roberta. Here the large hotel room and the evidence of expensive room service provides a basis for later revelations that Susan's short-term lover was a mobster. These are themes and structures perhaps most familiar from crime and horror narratives and it seems part of the intention of *Desperately Seeking Susan* to evoke for the spectator this common narrative pattern while inflecting it in terms both of genre and of gender.

Creating an appropriate mood and developing it through tonal variations enables the film to touch on what is potentially disturbing about the motif while channeling expectations of an ultimately benign world and positive outcomes for the

characters. It is also what guides the film's address to its specta-tor and implies the kind of spectator it seeks to reach. I noted earlier the self-conscious deployment of pink in the opening sequence, part of a play with conventional signifiers of femi-ninity that develops the carefully mobilized contrasts we have looked at and that that enables conventions to be deployed, to use Robin Wood's analogy, 'in quotation marks' (1986: 225). Susan's playfulness is mirrored by the film's play with conventions and with its audience. Its good-humoured and sympathetic engagement with women's roles makes an appeal to what is conceived as a sympathetic audience. The choice of songs to provide soundtracks to the opening implies a level of pop-literacy in the viewer: the spectator is intended to respond pleasurably to the two songs, perhaps to recognize them and to understand something of their significance. The film holds out the pleasures of shared knowledge and experience and invites its audience to smile in recognition and wry acknowledgement. Part of this, as I have suggested, is that the film encourages us to feel more relaxed than tense, by remaining, in Thomas's terms, within a comedic register. Further aspects of its engaging self-consciousness are embedded in the bold juxtaposition of the two sequences with its strong nudge to the spectator to pick up the doubling motif. The filmmakers here seem to be enjoy-ing their skill and to be reaching out to involve the audience in a community of good-humoured mutual acknowledgement.

These orientations of the film to its world and to its audience encompass attitudes informed by the ideological perspectives of feminism on the social lives of women and a certain evalua-tive distance on what is presented. In dramatising these the film claims familiar forms of spatial and cognitive independence of its characters, providing the spectators with the juxtaposed scenes and significantly shaped sequences that enable them to begin the process of intuiting the film's point of view.

Strangers on a Train contains one of Hitchcock's most striking openings. Like *Desperately Seeking Susan* it juxta-poses the introduction of its two main characters (the basis for its elaborate treatment of the 'double' motif) but through an initial passage of sustained cross-cutting rather than in two consecutive sequences. Hitchcock's decision-making can be highlighted by comparing the film's opening with that of the work on which it was based. Patricia Highsmith's novel begins

on a train, and we are taken into the consciousness of a char-acter (Guy) already well embarked on his journey. The novel is written in the third person but we are given access to the character's thoughts and, via these, to aspects of his situation. After a couple of pages or so the character that will turn out to be Bruno (his surname in the novel but first name in the film) sits down immediately opposite Guy. Hitchcock and his collab-orators change all this: the film begins at the station entrance, the characters appear in taxis and we see them walking into the station building, across the concourse and towards the train; the character who will be revealed as Bruno (Robert Walker) is seen first; Guy (Farley Granger), the novel's protagonist and central consciousness, is introduced second.

The title sequence unfolds over a single static shot looking out towards the station entrance. We are waiting, already in position, for the story to begin. This is a minor but significant indication of what will be a pervasive aspect of the film's nar-ration, that it can anticipate events. In Hitchcock's films this tends to go beyond the widespread convention of what is often referred to as 'omniscient' narration, the kind of freedom taken for granted by many films, and becomes fundamental to the film's epistemic relationship to its material and to its audience. As it develops, it will have a role to play in the film's emerging tone as will its complement, the various kinds of restriction the film places on the spectator's knowledge. More imme-diately apparent, however, are the music and other signifiers of the kind of movie we are watching. Few audiences, from 1951 to the present, will have watched the film without some pre-knowledge of Hitchcock's reputation and the accompany-ing pleasurable anticipation of what is to come. The music helps to confirm and channel these expectations. Dimitri Tiomkin's overture, scored for orchestra, establishes a mood for serious drama. It contains brief phrases of a romantic theme for violin but these seem threatened – almost overwhelmed – by passages that evoke stormy, unpredictable emotion and foreboding.

These are initial indications of mode and mood that set a context for the articulation of tone. The kinds of pleasure we anticipate may include passages of suspenseful anxiety and experiences of shock and fright. The events of the story are likely to involve crime – probably including violence and death. Our previous experience as well as the presence of female as

well as male actors in the main credits will lead us also to expect heterosexual romance.

As the titles end a taxi appears in the distance and drives towards us. The camera, placed low to the ground, adjusts left as the car moves through the frame from left to right and pulls up at the curb so that our view is angled towards the rear of the taxi and restricted to the lower part of the rear door. The door is opened promptly from outside. We have a brief view of the cab interior as a porter reaches in to remove a suitcase and we see the legs and feet of the passenger who steps out. He pivots towards the front of the cab, as though he might be handing the driver the fare, then turns left and, with the porter following closely behind, walks away from the camera. The camera pans left to follow him, then, after he has taken five paces, stops and lets him walk out of frame.

The music changes to accompany this shot. With the brass taking the lead it anticipates the cab's arrival in rising flourishes, the music lighter in character than that of the title sequence and precisely timed to the arrival of the taxi and emergence of the first character. As he descends from the cab and turns, there is a kind of jazzy fanfare which feels almost like a wolf-whistle – an editorial musical touch that seems to respond to what we can see of the man's appearance. He wears well-cut and carefully creased pinstripe trousers and two-toned brogues, an ensemble that implies a certain level of disposable income and

the desire to indulge it showily. As he walks away we can see that he is wearing a suit. This seems someone who likes to make an impression, an extrovert perhaps, with emphatic if dubious tastes. His movements are also poised and stylish – the pointed toe as he descends from the taxi and his gait are almost dance-like in their self-assured elegance. Pizzicato pulses accompany the man's steps.

There is a cut to a second taxi (another 'Diamond Cab' with the same markings); a porter opens the door and removes luggage (this time a case and two tennis rackets) and another man, again framed from the waist down, steps out. The action is accompanied by music of almost identical structure and rhythm but with phrasing and instrumentation that work slight variations as the second man leaves the cab. For this man's arrival, however, we do not follow the taxi into the station: it slides into the static frame from the left and stops with the camera again low down and framing the rear door, but angled this time slightly towards the front of the taxi. The figure that emerges after a porter opens the door is dressed in sober, not very well pressed trousers, with plain, dark shoes, and as he walks away we see that rather than a suit he is wearing jacket and flannels. His appearance is more conventional than the first man's and although the tennis rackets that the porter pulls from the cab along with a suitcase imply that he might be an athlete, his movements are rather more plodding. He pauses, as

if paying the driver, the camera pans right with him as he walks away and, again, after five steps allows him to leave the frame.

There follows a series of four shots, inter-cutting the progress of the two characters across the concourse, maintaining the order in which they arrived at the station and continuing to show only their legs and feet. The camera tracks with each, keeping slightly in front of the characters but looking at them from opposite sides so that it moves left with the first man, who correspondingly walks in a right to left diagonal across the screen, and moving right with the second man whose movement is a left to right diagonal. In the fifth shot of this series in the concourse the camera is static, looking up from a low angle towards the ticket barrier and we can identify the two men among other people hurrying to join the train. We see them at full length as they move deeper into the shot but from the rear, so that their faces still remain hidden from us.

From the arrival of the first taxi to the meeting on the train the music is as insistently anticipatory as the editing, building

to the arrival of each taxi and greeting the men's appearances in closely paralleled style, then rhythmically matching their inter-cut progress towards the train in rising phrases that strongly reach towards but keep postponing a point of resolution.

What Hitchcock has done is to embed the obvious contrasts between the two men in images which are precisely paralleled but visually reversed: although the cabs draw up in left to right movements in order to maintain screen direction and sense of location, when they stop we look towards the rear of one and the front of the other; the two men walk in carefully matched but opposed screen directions; to follow the first man the camera pans left, and to follow the second man it pans right. The care of Hitchcock's patterning and the extent to which it mattered to him to achieve precise reversals is highlighted by a decision which we are only likely to notice after repeated viewings but which is crucial to the whole design, the use of taxis with doors that open in opposite directions. The overall effect, intensified in the shots that follow, is of mirroring, the second shot in each pair reflecting and therefore reversing its predecessor.

The very striking formal decisions have equally strong effects. The two men are simultaneously paralleled by the editing and contrasted by their costume and movement. The restricted framing limits our access and produces a strong enigma: who are these men? The cross-cutting with opposed screen direction creates a sense of their spatial convergence and the inevitability of their meeting, a sense enhanced by the use of music. Even at this abstract level of description and analysis some key aspects of Hitchcock's striking narration are clear: an insistence on the formal pattern that links two men who are, the film's title implies, 'strangers'; the strong privileging of the spec-tator's access and understanding provided by the cross-cutting; yet a correspondingly striking restriction of view, denying us the most important signifiers of identity and character. These are very emphatic patterns of narration, strikingly shaping the story material and the spectator's relationship to it.

All these decisions have a bearing on tone. The mood established during the credit sequence sets up expectations of a crime melodrama, Hitchcock variety, and is intended, in the conventional manner of studio period Hollywood movies, to prepare us for experiences of a particular kind. The music after the credits becomes immediately lighter, its structure playfully matched to the developing action. The editing pat-terns and framing are equally playful, the emphatic nature of the decisions balanced by the buoyant rhythms and sense of enjoyment in the bravura display of filmmaking prowess. Hitchcock is having fun conducting his own homage to Lev Kuleshov's experiments in artificial geography, creating mean-ings and effects that are the product of what Hitchcock called 'pure film' (Truffaut 1969: 349). This is a highly self-conscious deployment of film techniques that wants to declare itself as such, while carrying the spectator along in pleasurable antici-pation of narrative developments.

The sense of playfulness extends to other aspects of the spectator's relationship to the film. Hitchcock uses our spatial access to the film's world both to enable us to perceive the links he is so emphatically making and yet to limit our visual access to the men. His spatial decisions have cognitive effects, playing on what we are allowed to know and what we must wait to find out. To use David Bordwell's terms, the film displays its *knowl-edgeability* but limits its *communicativeness* (Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985:25); in fact it flaunts its ability to restrict what we see and know. Hitchcock teases us and makes it clear by the striking nature of his stylistic and narrative choices that that is what he is doing. The playful spatial and cognitive dynamics of the sequence – producing a brief but focused form of the anticipation that is central to suspense – are central to its tone.

Susan Smith, one of very few writers to engage in a sus-tained way with the concept of tone, identifies suspense and humour as the tonalities that seem most deeply embedded in Hitchcock's work (Smith, 2000: viii). Even in this small exam-ple it is clear how the two can intertwine. Suspense can exist in many different registers and here the small-scale build-up to the meeting of the two main characters is created within a con-text pervaded by playful good humour rather than the anxiety that characterizes anticipation in many cases of Hitchcockian suspense. However, like all suspense, the effect is dependent on the audience's subjection to directorial control – what we see, how we see it, when we know and how we come to know it, are out of our hands. Hitchcock makes this basic fact of narrative a blatant feature of this opening and over the course of the film works many variations on it. The lightheartedness which runs

through the opening encourages a willing – because pleasurable – participation, while creating conditions of spectatorship that makes us victims as much as collaborators. Part of what is wonderful about Hitchcock's work here as elsewhere is that there is no attempt to disguise this or to insinuate himself with us only to pull the rug from under our feet. This opening declares its director's power and control and requires our acknowledgement of this as part of the contract for our participation.

The next shot, dissolving from Guy's retreating body, further demonstrates that power by cutting to a view of the rails from the front of the engine as the train leaves the station. Simultaneously, it channels the energy of the men's movement towards inevitable meeting into the forward momentum of the train that now contains them both and creates an ironic metaphor that implicitly comments on the limited control of the characters over what is to follow. They are now on the train, their paths controlled by the predetermined trajectory of its journey, an idea that can easily take on connotations of fate or destiny. Hitchcock plays on that idea, showing a single set of tracks that quickly meets a set of points at which two tracks diverge. We bear off to the right, and cross more track intersections. The motif of 'criss-cross' which will play a major part in the film has been initiated by the cross-cutting, with its implication of inevitable meeting, and is given another early articulation here in the crossing of tracks, the image offering the visual representation of 'criss-cross' while at the same time a sense of inevitability is reinforced by the train's pre-determined progress. Even before they have met, the film implies, these characters are locked together. The forces that give meaning to this idea are yet to be defined and they will turn out to be quite other than destiny, but braided in this image of the rails and railway journey is surely also the implication that it is the filmmaker who has predetermined the narrative, just as he controls our access to it.

Via another dissolve we are on the train, the camera tracking Bruno's legs from right to left along the carriage's central aisle until he sits, facing across the carriage, stretches out his left leg and crosses the right over it. Cut to a matching tracking shot – left to right – of Guy's legs. He sits on the opposite side of the carriage. Cut to a shot along the aisle at floor level, with Bruno's legs sprawled across the frame from the right, and

Guy's to the left. Guy crosses his right leg over his left and in doing so kicks Bruno's foot.

Hitchcock's reworking of the novel's opening requires Bruno to enter first and to be consistently in front of Guy as they approach the train and find seats. Since Bruno is soon going to recognize Guy from having seen him play tennis and from newspaper coverage of his career and his life, Hitchcock, as Robin Wood writes, 'makes it clear that Bruno has not engineered the meeting' (Wood 1965, 1989: 86). The film's design requires that there must be no possibility that Bruno has followed Guy. Bruno sits first, Guy sits opposite him and it is Guy who, unintentionally, makes the first contact. In order to develop the meanings inherent in the initial patterns of narration – linking and contrasting the two men —Bruno needs to be unaware of Guy's presence on the train and to be already there when Guy sits down.

We are therefore presented with a meeting that is apparently the merest accident but which the narration makes, simultaneously and paradoxically, inevitable. Two principles of causality are made evident: what seems chance in the film's world is transmuted into necessity by the narration. The characters have been 'doubled' in ways beyond their consciousness but forcefully present to ours so that Bruno being 'already there', available to be kicked accidentally by Guy, can begin to take on a weight and significance beyond the literal – bordering,

indeed, on the uncanny. Although the analogy is too crude to do justice to the way Hitchcock develops his film, it is almost as if Bruno is the genie waiting to be summoned from the bottle or lamp, Guy's accidental kick being all that is required to make him emerge.

In *Desperately Seeking Susan* the double is called up in response to the explicit discontent of a character who chafes at the mundane reality of her life and desires something more exciting, more romantic. In *Strangers on a Train* Hitchcock's cross cutting, beginning with Bruno, prepares the ground not just for a meeting but for the implication that Bruno *is already there* because he is a part of Guy, available to be called up in response to a need that Guy cannot consciously acknowledge, for something to cut through the stalemate of his personal life and open his route to political advancement.

Spelling this out so baldly risks giving this dimension of the film's meaning undue prominence. The film's way of showing how chance and necessity can co-exist rather opens a channel of suggestiveness that invites us to consider more than literal significance in this pairing of contrasting characters. These ideas are initiated by emphatic narration but are developed by a variety of means – dialogue, action, performance, the various aspects of mise-en-scène – as the story gets going. The suggestions of uncanny links between Bruno and Guy also remain no more – or less – than that: they are overtones of the fully realized fictional world in which characters are not simply symbolic functions but are endowed with their own individual complexity and life. We now engage with the characters and action but Hitchcock encourages us, even as his patterns of narration become less emphatic, to remain alert to what his stylistic decisions in the opening imply.

Also implied by the reflections on causality in these two films are dimensions of their orientation towards their worlds that we could not have apprehended with certainty as we sat down to watch (though previous experience might have created expectations). In both films events respond to the desires of the characters, although in ways that the characters cannot perceive and which are not explicitly pointed out to us. These are familiar narrative mechanisms that can be inflected in many ways but they provide an important tonal dimension rooted in the knowingness of the act of storytelling and the manner in which this is embedded in the film's methods.

We can see how Hitchcock modifies the film's method (and simultaneously one aspect of its tone) in what now follows. Up to this point narration has been foregrounded, its rhetoric and the play with the audience it involves overtly self-conscious. A story is being introduced but the film wants us to be aware of the process of storytelling. As the characters meet and begin to talk, the manifest rhetoric diminishes and narration's overt self-consciousness recedes, although the patterns already

established remain (less obviously) present in the next phases of decision-making. This involves a further play on film convention and on audience attention. As we become involved in the interaction of the characters Hitchcock introduces angle/reverse angle editing with eye-line match as the dominant method of presenting the subsequent dialogue.

In fact, he works a set of variations on these familiar conventions over the next two sequences, in the carriage and in Bruno's compartment. The familiarity of the technique, the most common form of scene dissection in Hollywood dialogue sequences between two characters, enables Hitchcock to maintain cross-cutting and mirroring, both of which are central aspects of angle/reverse angle cutting, without continuing to flaunt them. The conventions of continuity editing seamlessly articulate the emerging drama and absorb without neutralizing the self-conscious patterning of narration.

This is also an example both of why self-consciousness cannot be defined solely in terms of an overt recognition of the spectator and of the way in which the status of formal decisions can never be determined solely on the basis of their presence in the text: the significance of their use (here as in *The Deerhunter*) is always a matter of context. Angle/reverse angle editing can be a more or less mechanical solution to the problems of filming dialogue but it can also be much more, its specific status and significance inherently bound up with the film's address to its spectator and therefore with its tone. Here the mirroring of Guy and Bruno in terms of scale of shot, placement in the frame and eye-line, sometimes very precise as in the first few shots and sometimes more flexibly deployed, extends the doubling motif of the opening but now as a less forceful accompaniment to the introduction of the characters and situation. The spatial and cognitive superiority demonstrated exuberantly by the opening is embodied here no less visibly but much less noticeably in the mirroring of the two men by Hitchcock's framing. Part of the tonal colour of these sequences derives from the ironic edge provided by the angle/reverse angle patterns: the film knows, but Guy and Bruno do not, that they are already linked.

Understanding the reverse field editing in this way has something in common with registering in conversation that someone is employing conventional phrases with a certain ironic distance. Perhaps knowing the speaker and/or

responding to the context, we understand that their use of a phrase carries implied 'quotation marks'. Sometimes of course we hear the quotation marks in their voice, but at other times, although there is no change of vocal manner, we intuit that the register is not being used 'straight'. The difference in the use of film conventions is that we do not hear a voice. We have to make a judgement about the film's relationship to its methods, based on our assessment of how particular decisions function in their context. In both these openings an interpretation of tone has developed from response to systematic stylistic choices that accumulate significance as the sequences go on. The sense of playfulness that I have identified in each is an extrapolation, governed in part by an apprehension of each film's mood, from the interaction of several areas of patterned decision-making.

4. Tone and Interpretation: *Some Came Running*

The previous chapters have indicated some of the many ways in which filmmakers may attempt to modulate tone, using the opportunities available across the range of material decisions any sequence will involve. As in orchestral music, different strands of decision-making may carry distinct but interwoven tonal qualities, some more dominant than others, held in significant relationship within the patterning of the whole. Because the process is often complex there is inherent instability in the relationship between film and spectator, with problems of communication and failures of understanding a constant risk. We can sometimes impose an overall tonal quality on stretches of a film which, looked at again, imply shifts of tone. In many cases we cannot hope to grasp at first viewing the full significance of how a film is attempting to address us. The dynamism of this situation provides opportunities and challenges for the filmmaker in establishing and developing a relationship with the spectator, and also for the spectator in responding to the interrelationship of elements in the film, all of which potentially contribute to the various axes and dimensions of tone.

In the great Hollywood melodramas of the 1940s and 1950s the protagonists are caught in conflicts of desire from which society offers no escape.[7] The intractable situations defined for the characters are paralleled by systems of point of view that allow the spectator no stable relationship to the characters and action. The melodramatic mode tends to be characterised by high stylisation and emotional extreme, and by pulling the spectator between simultaneous responses of sympathy and distance, recognition and repudiation. Audiences of TV soap opera, the most widespread contemporary version of these forms of melodrama, will be familiar with the intensity of emotional response the mode can generate and also the rapid oscillations of feeling and attitude a spectator can experience, from tears of fellow feeling to acute embarrassment,

from cries of sympathetic engagement to hoots of derision. It is not uncommon to find, in students beginning to think about Hollywood melodrama, that these strong and conflicting responses raise questions about the adequacy of performance and its control or about apparent obviousness of effect. This is to imply that melodrama is a genre that can pose acute questions about control and significance of tone, and particularly about how different dimensions of tone and axes of attitude are interwoven.

Traditionally the emotional terrain of family and personal relationships in the domestic and small town settings that characterise many of these films is associated more with women than men. Male centred Hollywood genres (the western is, as so often, the paradigm) tended to focus on worlds to which domesticity was tangential and in which men could express themselves and resolve conflict through external action. In the post-war period, however, the fantasies of male independence and potency negotiated in varying ways in action genres came under increasing pressure. In the western the divisions in the hero between the values of wilderness life and of settlement are inflected increasingly towards a psychic conflict that tears him apart. Caught between contradictory impulses and driven towards psychological and emotional instability, the hero becomes 'melodramatic'. In the period in which Anthony Mann pushed these tendencies to extremes in the Western, Hollywood also produced its cycle of male-centred melodramas that articulate parallel dilemmas within contemporary, often family centred, settings.[8] These are films that dramatise acute issues in the social definition of masculinity, presenting their central male characters not as strong, independent men of action (though such fantasies haunt the protagonists), but as struggling with conflicting desires within networks of responsibility and obligation.[9]

Some Came Running (1958) begins with an inflection of a familiar trope: the return of a long absent character to his home or hometown. In this respect it can be compared to two female-centred 1950s melodramas, *Clash By Night* (Fritz Lang 1952) and *All I Desire* (Douglas Sirk 1953), each of which begins with the return of the female protagonist to her hometown after many years of absence. Although their circumstances are rather different, the two women (both played

by Barbara Stanwyck) have failed to prosper in their years away and for both, as for Dave Hirsh (Frank Sinatra) in *Some Came Running*, the return is emotionally fraught (the line from *Clash By Night*, 'Home is where you go when you run out of places', could almost be an epigraph for all three films). As in other female centred melodramas, the women's emotional and ideological dilemmas are dramatised as a choice between two paths, one involving a life of safety, security and social conformity, and the other more unconventional, possibly more exciting but riskier.[10] Her dilemma is also dramatised in terms of two contrasting men, one conventional, sexually unexciting and dull to whom she is or was married, and the other unconventional and sexier, a threat to her marriage and the security it represents (this is an oversimplification but the tendencies are marked). The strong sense ('happy endings' notwithstanding) is that there is no route through to fulfillment – each path excludes vital needs. *Some Came Running* employs the same kind of structure, though with a man at the centre and the two paths represented by utterly opposed female character types, a structure also found in some westerns and *films noir*.

As we have seen, our grasp of tonal modulations depends on our apprehension of the pervasive orientations of mode and mood that a film seems to imply. This generally provides a significant degree of stability, anchoring our understanding of how the film wishes to be taken and guiding our responses. But the stability is always provisional: as a film unfolds we can come to understand that its address is in certain respects other than we intuited and that we have to adjust our understanding of mood and tone. This may involve, for instance, sharp contrasts of tone and dramatic register such as those in Renoir's *Partie de Campagne* (*A Day in the Country*, 1936), for example, which invite an unaccustomed and challenging synthesis. Some films that make use of suppressive narrative, such as *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* (Fritz Lang, 1956), *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958) and *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) build to moments of revelation that radically undermine our epistemic security and require us to reassess what we have previously been shown and the mode of address it implies. Sometimes, as in *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* and *Vertigo*, this changes our understanding of what kind of film we have been watching and, when we see the film again, permanently transforms our

understanding of its relationship to its conventions, its material and to us: our apprehension of the film's tone can never be the same again. These are extreme examples but many films work in less spectacular ways to develop our understanding of how we are being addressed as narrative and/or other structural patterns unfold. That is to say that our sense of a film's tone may shift significantly as we come to perceive broad narrative and symbolic structures that govern the unfolding action and that narrow or even define likely outcomes, as well as shaping fields of meaning.

In *Some Came Running* two structural features seem particularly significant. One is the way in which Dave's return is causally connected to the violence of the film's climax and I will return to this in discussion of the film's opening. The second informing feature is that the film's world is patterned, even more schematically than in *Clash By Night* and *All I Desire*, in ways that hyperbolically reflect conflicts within Dave. The world of *Some Came Running*, focusing on the small town of Parkman, is to a large extent structured by oppositions (though, as we will see, this dualism is inflected and complicated on both sides). In this respect it also evokes the western, with its conflicts between the claims of domesticity and male freedom. Joe McElaney (2003:5) in fact proposes that the film can be seen as 'a kind of Midwestern western', and there are enough allusions to the West and to the genre in *Some Came Running* to suggest that the filmmakers wanted to animate these associations. The name Parkman echoes Francis Parkman, author of *The Oregon Trail* (1857); the town's centennial celebrations are advertised using the imagery of the old West; and not least, as McElaney points out, there is the cowboy hat worn constantly by Bama (Dean Martin). Dave's two paths are also represented by generic archetypes familiar from the western, the bargirl and the schoolteacher. But in the mid-twentieth century world of small town America the unsettled West is no longer available to offer a fantasy of male escape from social restriction.

The main oppositions can be expressed in diagrammatic form:

```
                        Dave
        Ginny                   Gwen
        Bama                    Frank
        (Rosalie)               (Agnes)
        Raymond                 Professor French
        Smitty's                Country Club
        Bama's house            The French house
                                The Hirsh house
```

This gives us a cast of major supporting characters constructed in schematic opposition and representing extreme versions of gender roles. Raymond (Stephen Peck) and Bama embody the film's two versions of assertive machismo. In Raymond the need to assert control over the woman and the fear of diminishment if control is challenged is compulsive and finally psychotic. Bama, it transpires in the hospital scene after he has been stabbed, is literally killing himself with drink – a slow suicide caused by living out a fantasy male toughness. On the other side, Frank (Arthur Kennedy) and the Professor (Larry Gates) are embodiments of enfeebled, respectable masculinity, the price that seems to be paid by socialised men in Parkman. The Professor is amiable and apparently at ease with himself, even at times ruefully aware of how circumscribed his life is but apparently reconciled to it. He may be a widower; certainly he lives with his adult daughter who keeps house for him as well as following in his professional footsteps. He seems wholly desexualised. Frank and Agnes (Leora Dana), are the film's chilling example of an established married couple, a relationship in which they have become 'Mommy' and 'Daddy' to each other when other members of the family are present, while in private their mutual hostility is barely contained. Beneath the social veneer they both seem intensely unhappy in social roles that they have struggled to achieve yet which offer no fulfillment.

Agnes, defined wholly by her role as wife and mother, is the structural opposite of Rosalie (Carmen Phillips), Bama's girl, one of the women from the brassiere factory that Bama refers to as 'pigs' and whose essential role is to be at the beck and call of men. They are by implication sexually available and disposable, though it is a striking fact that there is hardly a hint of sex in what we are shown of the relationships between Bama and Rosalie and Dave and Ginny (Shirley MacLaine). In this part of the film's world it is as though what matters is not the satisfaction of sexual desire but the playing out of a given role, the woman a necessary presence to confirm male heterosexual identity but little more. Ginny and Gwen (Martha Hyer) are the more developed but equally extreme female archetypes, versions of the bar-girl and schoolteacher/respectable girl figures familiar from the western: Gwen intellectual, conventionally moral and sexually inhibited; Ginny uneducated, morally unconstrained and sexually uninhibited. At least, this would be the expected antithesis but the film inflects the pairing so that Ginny's childlikeness and vulnerability almost entirely cancel out the sexual connotations of the bar-girl archetype. What she retains from certain versions of the type is emotional warmth, the ability to love unconditionally.

These terms by no means define the film but they chart its ideological force field. It is also a world split largely on class lines and, apart from Dave who moves repeatedly across the divide, characters make very few forays away from their class territory. The world reflects Dave and Dave is defined by the possibilities the world allows, which exclude a fulfilling middle way or an alternative mode of life. Escape finally seems as illusory a possibility for Edith (Nancy Gates) and Dawn (Betty Lou Keim), the two young women who are poised to leave Parkman before the violence erupts, as it proved for Dave. Our developing awareness of this dualism and its consequences provides a framework that intensifies our distance from the characters and evokes a deepening mood of fatalism.

At the same time, some characters are contextualised in ways that hint at why they might have become what they are. Frank seemingly had to take over the family from his feckless, drunken father (the mother is not mentioned). As a result Dave was put in a home. Bama's attempt to live out his image of what it means to be a man is located (in a conversation with Dave) in the attempt not to be like his father, an unsuccessful farmer. Gwen has become, again in the absence of a mother, her father's housekeeper and has followed his professional path. In each

case family circumstances seem to have determined defining aspects of the characters' lives, a perspective that intensifies the sense of their entrapment but can also qualify detachment with understanding.

The first shots of the film are from inside a traveling bus, the driver's back visible to the right of the CinemaScope frame and the only other character in shot a man, apparently asleep, his head visible to the left. The same static framing is held for most of the credit sequence, through two or three barely noticeable dissolves, as the bus approaches a river and finally crosses a bridge. Although what we see is mundane and peaceful the accompanying music is urgent and dramatic with insistent, sombre bass chords. This is a score already seemingly powered by testosterone, asserting against the uneventful images an underlying energy and threat.

One effect is to establish a mood suitable for a narrative world, in Deborah Thomas's words, 'repressive and full of danger' (Thomas 2000: 9). Simultaneously the apparent discrepancy between image and sound sets up narrative expectations that at some point violence will erupt, and introduces a privileged informing viewpoint for the film as a whole by exposing the emotional turbulence concealed and apparently denied by appearances. The same music will recur at intervals through the film until its final extended treatment in the climactic sequence that culminates in the shooting of Dave and Ginny. While the images here are relatively bland and convey limited narrative information the music is highly rhetorical and informative. This is a familiar enough strategy in Hollywood movies but forms here a significant basis for later systems of point of view that bear strongly on tone.

As the credits end there is a cut to a slightly wider shot, and the camera moves slowly forward towards the driver, who then turns to call out 'Parkman'. A reverse field cut shows the sleeping man and, just visible in the seat behind, another figure, apparently a woman, also asleep. The man (this is Frank Sinatra, in army uniform) wakes up, apparently disorientated and hung-over. Dialogue reveals that he had told companions in Chicago that Parkman was his hometown and that they had

put him on the bus, charging the driver to get him there. The bus stops, the driver pulls a kitbag and a suitcase from the rack and both men get off. The sleeping young woman (Ginny) wakes up and pursues the Sinatra character (we will discover that his name is Dave Hirsh) off the bus.

In their unobtrusive way, Minnelli's initial decisions about how to get the story started also create an informing image cluster for the film as a whole, although we are likely to perceive its various levels of significance only in retrospect. *Some Came Running*'s take on the familiar motif of the return home is to make it the result of unconscious motivation rather than conscious choice, a mention of his hometown when he was drunk that led to a journey he would not have chosen to make had he been sober. In films that feature this motif, although the circumstances and motivations vary widely, to return is normally a decision consciously taken (as in *Clash By Night*, *All I Desire*, *Human Desire* (Fritz Lang, 1953) and *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956)). Here the film begins with a protagonist who does not even exert this degree of control over his actions and who is driven by unacknowledged but powerful wishes that surface when he is drunk. This brings into play a version of the pattern that we have already encountered in *Desperately Seeking Susan* and *Strangers on a Train*, in which desire that is in some

way blocked or repressed initiates the major action. We cannot yet know what underlies Dave's repressed wish to return, only that the need is strong enough to reveal itself when his guard is down. That he is asleep when he arrives and oblivious to what has brought him can also be taken as a metaphor for his state throughout the film. Like Jeff (James Stewart) in *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954), what follows his waking can be seen as acting out his anxieties and compulsions.

The other structural pattern referred to earlier (the link between Dave's return and the climactic violence) follows from this. Adhering to the familiar logic in Hollywood movies by which desires denied or repressed call up forces that prove difficult or impossible to control, Dave brings with him from Chicago the agents of disruption. This means on the one hand Ginny (who came at his drunken invitation and who is the unwitting agent of what follows as well as the victim) but also Raymond, uninvited and unwanted, who later follows Ginny to Parkman and will finally kill her as she attempts to save Dave. Dave and Raymond are as linked as, say, Ethan and Scar in *The Searchers* in which, as many commentators have argued, the apparent coincidence of the Comanche attack following

Ethan's return home can be understood as having a much darker significance in terms of the logic of Ethan's unconscious. Correspondingly, the forces underlying Dave's return explode in the film's action climax.[11]

We begin the film on the bus in spatial alignment with Dave and we will continue to follow him for most of the film. But even at this early stage Minnelli establishes the spatial and cognitive independence that will characterise the film's narration, the camera remaining on the bus as Ginny wakes rather than following Dave by immediately cutting to the exterior. When she gets out the camera frames them together, giving them equal weight in the composition. It is already implied that Dave has a limited grip on his life and the scene with Ginny (shot in a single take that remains static after an initial pull in) dramatises some of the consequences of this, the camera enabling us to observe and evaluate the exchange with minimal rhetorical emphasis from Minnelli's staging decisions.

Dave's response to the driver's account of the night before suggests that getting drunk is far from a new experience; after his initial disorientation there's a tired acceptance of what has happened and Sinatra's performance conveys an impression of

world weary and hard-bitten masculinity. This carries over into Dave's initially dismissive response to Ginny: he fails to recognise her and treats her as though she is trying to pick him up ('Baby, it's a little early for …'). When she remonstrates ('Well, I like that, you ask a person to come on a trip with you and …'), the intonation in his response ('*I asked you*?') eloquently implies the way he now sees her. The stereotype Dave sees is also manifested for the spectator in the way Ginny is created through costume, make-up and voice. Simultaneously, though – for us – Shirley MacLaine's performance animates and challenges the familiar type with a child-like impulsiveness and a guileless, vulnerable manner that makes her immediately a focus of sympathy. She also has a directness of emotional expression that will become one of the few positive forces of the film.

The scene is structured to provide initial evaluations of character. In the phases of dialogue as Dave resists or questions what Ginny says, her indignation ('What am I, a tramp?') is momentary and her equanimity and good humour reassert themselves. Even in the face of Dave's blankness about the night before she remains touchingly grateful to him for being 'real nice' to her. When he makes it clear that he doesn't want her she is hurt and disappointed but not deflated, accepting it without resistance or cynicism. Her initial response to his offer of money ('You don't have to do that') is neither dignity affronted nor a token move before acceptance. She unfolds the bill he presses on her and responds almost like a child receiving an unexpected present: 'Gee, $50'. It is a performance of considerable delicacy when the character, situation and dialogue make delicacy unexpected.

Dave is unexpected in a different way. He has no memory of what happened the night before; he resists both the idea that he wished to come to Parkman and that he invited Ginny to travel with him. In effect he tries to deny the desire or need that underlay both actions. In contrast to Ginny's transparency and generosity of feeling he is initially brusque and then, tempering his response, takes refuge in an appeal to her understanding of male drunken irresponsibility ('A guy gets loaded and … you know'). His tone modulates throughout the exchange as what has happened becomes clear. He feebly offers, 'This is no town for a girl like you', then in the face of Ginny's obvious hurt rapidly denies that he doesn't want her here and embarrassedly reaches for money while suggesting that she takes the next bus. Dave's embarrassment qualifies his initial hard-bitten persona but his evasiveness and evident eagerness to shake Ginny off remain. He leaves her with, 'You're a nice kid', 'I really like you'; and a muttered 'Take care'. Sinatra's performance of these lines does not make Dave obviously phony (indeed Dave seems to want to sound – and he might feel – sincere, even as he makes his escape) but we can also understand this as a ploy, an assertion of feeling to placate Ginny and avoid further unpleasantness. At the same time, Dave is imbued with the powerful connotations of Sinatra's star image so that the analytical perspectives Minnelli's treatment encourages us to develop are accompanied and to an extent challenged by the positive charge Sinatra's brand of charismatic, nonconformist masculinity brings.

A further element in the dialogue, and one that touches enigmatically on Dave's motivation for returning, is reference to his family. From what Ginny says, it seems that Dave has invited her to Parkman to meet them ('just about the highest compliment a fellow can pay his girl'). We will discover what Dave's remaining family is like but already a sense of his estrangement from 'home' is coming across. Sober, he tells Ginny, 'this is no town for a girl like you', but drunk he invited her along, as though unconsciously he was driven by a fantasy of homecoming and family welcome, or possibly by a desire to scandalise by presenting Ginny to his social climbing brother and sister-in-law, or indeed by both. The film includes these details, allowing us to speculate on what they might imply about Dave's actions, but (as with later episodes) remains reticent about how his motivation should be understood.

In his formative 1972 essay, 'Tales of Sound and Fury' Thomas Elsaesser uses the terms 'irony' and 'pathos' to focus his discussion of the different levels of awareness between characters themselves and between characters and spectator that contribute so intensely to structures of point of view in family melodrama.

Irony privileges the spectator, vis-à-vis the protagonists, for he registers the difference from a superior position. Pathos results from non-communication or silence made eloquent

– people talking at cross-purposes (Robert Stack and Lauren Bacall when she tells him she's pregnant in *Written on the Wind*), a mother watching her daughter's wedding from afar (Barbara Stanwyck in *Stella Dallas*) or a woman returning unnoticed to her family, watching them through the window (again Barbara Stanwyck in *All I Desire*) – where highly emotional situations are underplayed to present an ironic discontinuity of feeling or a qualitative difference in intensity, usually visualised in terms of spatial distance or separation […]. In the more sophisticated melodramas this pathos is most acutely produced through a 'liberal' *mise-en-scène* which balances different points of view, so that the spectator is in a position of seeing and evaluating contrasting attitudes within a given thematic framework – a framework which is the result of the total configuration and therefore inaccessible to protagonists themselves. (1987: 66 –7).

Irony is the product of the spectator's spatial and cognitive privilege, seeing and knowing more than the characters. Although such privilege is the common currency of narrative construction it is, as Elsaesser indicates, particularly central to the mood of melodrama.

But as Elsaesser's emphasis on pathos indicates, structural and local irony can also be used to elicit emotional responses from the spectator and these complicate our overall orientation to the film's characters and events. In their reformulation of approaches to irony in Sirk, Bruce Babington and Peter Evans refer to this passage in Elsaesser's essay in support of their view that 'empathy and detachment exist in a mutually qualifying relationship' in audience responses to melodrama, and they coin the useful term 'critical pathos' to evoke 'empathy qualified but not destroyed by critical understanding' (1990: 50). In resisting a crude opposition between intellect and feeling, however, there is a danger, even in Babington and Evans' carefully nuanced argument, of converting the emotional side of 'critical pathos' too readily into 'empathy' How we respond emotionally depends on the total range of decisions that go into the creation of a particular moment within an evolving dramatic whole but one of the features of melodrama is that, while often offering us privileged access, it wants to pull us between

extremes of feeling. In these contexts emotion can provide a broad register of tonal colouring, from compassion and fellow feeling to intense emotional affinity, from pity and sorrow, through embarrassment to contempt. What the most complex melodramas often seem to work for is an uncomfortable mix of responses, simultaneously qualified, as Babington and Evans suggest, by other perspectives less tied to feeling.

This kind of dynamic is evident in the opening scenes of *Some Came Running*. The communicative dimension of narration represented by the opening music recedes and although the dialogue provides some exposition and explanation, a process of epistemic restriction begins that will characterise a good deal of the film, especially in relation to Dave's actions and motivation. Minnelli's staging for the camera also provides a sustained viewpoint that enables us to scrutinise the characters and their actions: there is no overt intervention to guide our response. This method of filming with long, relatively static takes and compositions that present the characters with considerable space around them in the CinemaScope frame characterises many sequences in the film. Both Joe McElaney (2003) and Dana Polan (2002) also contrast Minnelli's account of basing the colour palette of the film on the inside of a juke box ('garishly lit in primary colours') with the muted style of many sequences. Sustained observation of performance, unobtrusively sustained by long takes, is crucial to the tonal quality of much of the film (its orientation to its material, to the formal conventions of continuity film-making, and to its spectator), defining a way of seeing that presents without overt emphasis and requires the spectator's active interpretation. We are held at an observational distance and encouraged carefully to assess and evaluate what we are shown. McElhaney observes: 'It may be best to see Minnelli as a filmmaker who presupposes a spectator capable of looking at images that are rich, detailed and often theatrical in terms of composition and staging' (2003: 7).[12] Simultaneously, though, the scene makes Ginny the focus of pathos and presents Dave's limited self-knowledge and uneasy modulations of attitude in ways that make him an uncomfortable protagonist. It is symptomatic of the emotional balance of the scene that as Dave leaves the frame we stay with Ginny until the shot ends.

The next movements of the film introduce the major characters and locations within Parkman and the patterns that link them. In broad terms the first day is dominated by the 'respectable' settings and inhabitants but these scenes are interrupted by the initial, relatively brief, scene in Smitty's bar and followed by long night-time sequences there that conclude with Raymond's first attack on Dave as he leaves the bar with Ginny, and the arrest of all three of them. Smitty's embodies all the disorderly impulses and appetites that the respectable side of Parkman attempts to deny. It is a world of assertive traditional masculinity in which women are tolerated strictly on male terms, whereas in respectable Parkman masculinity is domesticated and disempowered. The dynamic of the narrative enacts the way in which Dave rebounds between the extremes: from his first encounter with his brother Frank he goes directly to Smitty's, where he meets Bama, Frank's structural pair (a surrogate 'brother' for Dave); from Gwen's first refusal of his advances he returns to Smitty's where Ginny re-enters the story and Raymond makes his first appearance. This is a particularly clear example of the structure Deborah Thomas sees as a defining feature of what she calls 'the melodramatic':

> Melodramatic films typically contrast a social space of some sort (a domestic setting, a small town, a community, or some other, more general representation of civilisation) with an alternative space (the city's criminal underworld, a battlefield, the wilderness, for example) where social values and expectations to some extent break down. Both sorts of space give rise to their own characteristic fantasies. Thus, inherent in the normal social space, where men and women settle down in marriage and domesticity, are corresponding male and female versions of fantasies which emphasise the struggles for dominance between men and women in what is a rigidly hierarchical world […]. In contrast, the space of adventure away from the everyday social world embodies a fantasy of masculine escape where male toughness replaces augmentation: that is, fantasies of violent self-assertion replace those which offer a mere appearance of domination […] within the marital and familial home. (2000: 14)

In *Some Came Running* the two spaces are both within the small town. The only spaces we see outside Parkman are the club and gambling rooms in neighbouring towns that function essentially as extensions of the world represented by Smitty's, and a bus depot in which Dave sets Dawn on the journey back home. Meaningful escape to a space elsewhere, even as a fantasy, seems closed off by the film. However, if Smitty's and the male fantasies with which it is associated can be described pretty accurately in Thomas's terms, Dave's relationship to the social space of family and home is less clear-cut. In *film noir* the protagonist is sometimes drawn to a 'nice girl' with whom a normative family future beckons, but the *femme fatale* draws him away. A melodrama that links the return of a soldier to his hometown and this *noir* inflection is Fritz Lang's *Human Desire*[13], a film in which the image of family carries at least some positive force and the 'nice' girl is the daughter of a contented married couple. *Some Came Running*, in contrast, contains a 'nice girl' but she is Dave's niece and the film offers, through Frank and Agnes, a view of married life that is wholly negative. If Dave is drawn back to Parkman by some deep-rooted desire for home, there seems little in his past that could directly feed such a desire and nothing in the present that could satisfy it. What animates Dave's fantasies may be his early trauma of banishment from the only home he knew but they express themselves as forms of neediness, especially in his relationships with women, that do not wholly conform to the binary structures of his world. This is to say that neither Ginny nor Gwen are defined straightforwardly by their contexts and as a result, at different moments in the film, they seem to hold out the fantasy that Dave can make a life in one half of the film's world.

Although to a large extent the film follows Dave, throughout the film we are given privileged access to scenes and views Dave cannot witness. So we see Frank covering up the fact that others know before he does that Dave is in town. When the bank manager calls Frank to tell him that Dave has deposited money in the 'wrong' bank, we cut between Frank and the manager. After Frank has invited Dave to dinner the film cuts between Frank and Agnes as they argue over the invitation and Agnes refuses to have Dave in the house. This separation from Dave offers a potential for ironic detachment produced

by our cognitive privilege but here, if anything, the film seems to encourage an evaluative closeness to Dave. Although there is a certain pathos in Frank's ignorance of Dave's arrival and Dave's deliberate provocation of putting money into the rival bank, this does not seem intended to elicit much sympathy. These scenes are designed and played in ways that present the world of the small town as repressive, stultified and hypocritical, dominated by a desperate need to keep up appearances. When Frank visits Dave in the hotel Dave deliberately refuses to indulge his brother's performance of welcome, reminding him (and informing us) that Frank had placed Dave in a home when he and Agnes married.

The implied attitudes here seem unambiguously critical of Frank and his world. Arthur Kennedy brilliantly creates Frank as someone whose aspirations to social standing are shadowed by anxiety (preparing us for the later exposure of the emptiness of Frank's life) but at this stage we are encouraged to see him much as Dave does. The film later complicates, though it certainly does not overturn, these implied judgements. But it opens something of a trap for us if we identify our view too readily with Dave's. He has good reason to despise his brother and the world of respectable small town society but the film creates Dave in ways that also suggest a childlike impulsiveness and an attitude of unearned superiority. The childlikeness is in part quite endearing – requesting the best room in the hotel because he promised himself that if he ever returned that is where he would stay (the best room, it turns out, is nothing to write home about). We are also encouraged to enjoy Frank's discomfiture when Dave puts money in a rival bank, though the pettiness of this gesture also registers. More significantly, although he appears relaxed, his action and his manner in the hotel scenes carry the sense of someone performing the role of returning prodigal, reaching for the telling gestures that will embody what he hopes to convey rather than acting out of a secure sense of self. This reading is partly informed by what we know already about his arrival but it seems confirmed by the gestures themselves – the early morning drinking that asserts his toughness, the disdain he exudes as he looks down from his hotel room, the cheque he has ready for Frank to repay the costs of his childhood care. The account in his conversation with Frank of how Dave was placed in a home allows us to

understand the experience of disempowerment and loss that underlies his fantasies of toughness and power, while Frank's very obvious performance of exaggerated brotherly affection can by contrast seem to construct Dave as straightforward and even authentic in his responses. But the trail Minnelli and Sinatra are laying depends on our being able to register that the brothers are to differing degrees acting out roles underlain by insecurity and self-doubt.

The specific way in which the dualistic world of Parkman is then developed hinges on the fact that Dave is a writer. This is revealed in the hotel room when he unpacks and takes out of his kitbag firstly several anthologies of twentieth century American male novelists, and then a battered manuscript. It is a moment that parallels Dave's links to Ginny and Raymond, a characteristically bold melodramatic statement in which the bulky volumes and typescript are literally part of his luggage but also the embodiment of a less literal 'baggage' that he carries around with him and that the film will later identify with his 'sensitive' side. The moment is underlined by actions that dramatise further aspects of Dave's confusion – throwing the manuscript into the bin in a gesture of repudiation, only to take

it out again and place it in a drawer. Throughout the scene, with the exception of three inserts – a close up of the books, a close up of the manuscript's title page, and a point of view shot out of the window of Frank's shop – the camera follows Dave round the room, inviting us to observe and to assess what we see.

I want to focus the rest of the discussion mainly on selected sequences involving Dave's relationships with Gwen and Ginny, parts of the film that raise some of the most acute issues about tone and point of view both in terms of the analytical

perspectives the film encourages and the often uncomfortable feelings it generates.

It is as a writer that Dave attracts Gwen French and her father. It becomes clear from Frank's surprise when Agnes says they are expected that they are not habitual guests in the Hirsh household – indeed they apparently rang Agnes after hearing that Dave was in town. They represent the cultured end of Parkman society (both teach in the local college) and a secure class position (the Frenches are 'an old family') that contrasts with Frank and Agnes's newly acquired social status based on success in business, but they are firmly aligned with Frank and Agnes in their association with the 'respectable' side of Parkman. They (and particularly Gwen) provide the necessary counterbalance to the attraction for Dave of all that is represented by Smitty's and their introduction completes the structural pattern that focuses Dave's ambivalence.

The major narrative incident of the scene in which they are introduced is the meeting of Dave and Gwen but this is embedded in the most complex sequence of the film so far in terms of the number of characters involved (Agnes, Frank, Dave, Dawn, Wally, Gwen and her father) and this sets their meeting within a number of different articulations of gender and of gender dynamics (Dave's drunken attraction to and later rejection of Ginny is already in play and available for contrast). It is also a scene which turns on different versions of social unease and embarrassment and so begins to animate a tonal register that is central to a number of episodes that follow. The sequence begins with the juxtaposition of Frank's and Agnes's performance of hearty hospitality and family unity and their bitter recriminations with each other as they retire to the next room to fix cocktails. That we see both the exaggerated social performance and the private recrimination creates one level of ironic awareness for the spectator, making the shifts Agnes and Frank have to negotiate painfully comic but deeply uncomfortable to watch. Privileged viewpoint here inflects pathos into embarrassment. Meanwhile, Dave has been introduced to his niece Dawn and they are left alone while Agnes and Frank leave the sitting room. Given her parents, Dawn seems remarkably mature and normal (a 'nice girl', in fact). Urged by her parents to kiss her uncle she offers her hand in a self-confident

assertion of being grown up. When she is alone with Dave she engages him in earnest conversation:

Dawn: I envy you, Dave.
Dave: You do, why?
Dawn: Well, you left home when you were my age. Lived your own life. Had experiences. A girl couldn't do that.

In retrospect it is striking how much Dawn's manner, turn of phrase and tone anticipate Gwen's. There is a slightly declamatory edge to the way in which she addresses Dave and a hint of self-consciousness in the diction, syntax and delivery as there is in the poise of her position – apparently casual, in fact carefully considered – legs tucked up, arm extended along the sofa) when she sits. It is an eloquent performance by Betty Lou Klein of a young woman who has been well trained in how to conduct herself socially and also educated to think and express herself independently. Dawn's words and the undercurrent of self-consciousness in her performance introduce what will become a major concern of the film, developed mainly though Gwen: the conditions under which a woman's independence can be expressed in this society.

Prefacing Gwen's entrance with Dawn's first appearance establishes the basis for a link between the two women which in turn implies that these are social, not merely individual dilemmas. It also provides a small scale but significant introduction to a style of performance and accompanying questions about how it should be read – questions essentially about control of tone – that will become central when Gwen appears. Her entrance changes the dynamics of the film. We do not know in advance the narrative role that Gwen will play as Ginny's

structural opposite but this rapidly becomes clear when Dave's vehemently expressed dislike of 'the literary crowd' in advance of Bob and Gwen's entrance gives way first to polite greeting and then to his evident attraction to Gwen. Bob French is unselfconsciously at ease in greeting and establishing a joking rapport with Dave. He then pulls back in order to introduce his daughter and Minnelli cuts from the wide framing that contains all the characters to a shot of Dave alone, looking out of frame at Gwen. There is a significant pause before he says 'Hello' and shakes her hand so that, as wider framings resume, Gwen has to negotiate the weight and significance of the pause and of his look, while maintaining the apparent ease of the social occasion and relaxed tone her father has struck. She does this almost immediately by sitting down, avoiding face-to-face contact. 'I'm an admirer of yours, Mr Hirsh', the line she delivers on sitting, takes the initiative by moving the conversation from the initial references to a shared past in school to a carefully phrased compliment that also inserts a note of formality ('Mr Hirsh'), as though to counter Dave's pointed look.

It is the line that most clearly echoes Dawn's, 'I envy you, Dave' in its manner of delivery, overtly bright in tone but slightly self-consciously so, the confident conversational gambit shadowed by a hint of stiltedness. When Dave rejects her reference to him as a writer ('I'm not a writer. I haven't been for years') Gwen counters with, 'I'm not sure I agree with you. Just because an author is inactive doesn't necessarily mean he isn't an author'. While Dave remains standing, looking down on her, Gwen avoids sustained eye contact, her manner outwardly poised and even mildly combative but her choice of words and delivery slightly pedantic, the generalisation ('Just because an author is inactive …') deflecting Dave's muted aggression by means of a teacherly abstraction that implicitly claims superior insight. When Dave presses her ('What exactly does it mean?') Gwen turns away from him towards her father, Frank and Agnes, and makes her reply into a joke to be shared by the company: 'I suppose it could mean he should get back to work'. However, Dave refuses the release offered by laughter and the joke against him that Gwen has contrived, cutting across the laughter with 'I'm told you teach creative writing', as he sits close to Gwen on the sofa, encroaching on her and denying her the disengagement her joke had aimed for. 'Will you teach
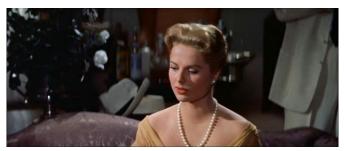
me?' brings uneasy laughter, mainly from Frank, and good-humoured encouragement from Bob whose line, 'She needs that – give her more', acknowledges the sparring that is taking place but looks to defuse the slight tension that Dave has produced. Gwen finally deflects the implied challenge of Dave's question by taking it literally: 'I'm afraid my classes are full this semester. Perhaps next year'.

Throughout, the predominant wide framing of the room has been intercut with closer shots of Dave and Gwen and the sequence ends with three such shots, the first and third frontal views of Gwen alone and the second of Dave staring down at Gwen, whose back is in the right of the frame. She drinks a little awkwardly in the first shot and in the last she is in obvious

embarrassment under Dave's gaze, looking down, then up towards him and down again, away from his eyes, as the image dissolves to the country club. These shots emphasise what has been at issue from Dave's first look at Gwen: her awareness of his directly sexual gaze, her attempt not to acknowledge it and her corresponding need to claim and even assert her autonomy and equality.

This is imply that we should read what can seem stiff and stilted in Martha Hyer's performance, the qualities that in later scenes provoke, in this viewer at least, responses of considerable emotional discomfort and even alienation, as strategies carefully managed by the film to dramatise in heightened melodramatic form the acute social and sexual dilemmas of the character. The film is consistently aware of the ways in which all the characters (Ginny is a partial exception) are held within various forms of social performance, their identities asserted through poses held and images aspired to. This is central to the ideological entrapment that preoccupies both the film and the genre.

In this initial exchange Dave's verbal responses to Gwen, from the point at which she expresses admiration for him as a writer, have an aggressive edge that has to be defused in laughter and finally by Frank's toast to 'the return of the conquering hero'. It is consistent with Dave's dislike of this social situation that he should refuse a performance more in accord with social propriety but it is also as though his immediate attraction to Gwen is accompanied by a need to negate the challenge she makes to his sense of himself, a need in effect to embarrass her into silence. The sexual aggression inherent in his look, his actions and dialogue in this scene is even more emphatic in the next, which opens with Dave's attempt – smiling but insistent – to pull Gwen into a close embrace as they dance, and her

embarrassed attempts to keep him at a distance. It is a moment which we might see as rhymed with the much later sequence in the night club in which Dave dances with Ginny and Bama with the catatonically drunk Rosalie, and where the distressing comedy turns on the reduction of Rosalie to little more than a marionette, her gestures and movements manipulated by Bama – the film's most extreme dramatisation of gender inequality. That Sinatra is playing Dave is of course crucial to how the character is developed. Here actions that could in other contexts be presented as simply unpleasant are more poised, allowing us to enjoy Sinatra's performance of Dave discomfiting the uptight Gwen by trying to smooch with her on the dance floor of the country club, while also perceiving the boorishness of Dave's behaviour and the control over Gwen it attempts to assert.

This tension in point of view is sustained when they go to the bar. Dave maintains the sexual pressure, giving Gwen no space and scrutinising her intently. Gwen tries to deflect Dave's sexual attention into discussion of his writing but he refuses to engage on her terms, making witty and cynical rejoinders as she tries to talk about his work. Again, his attempt seems to be to silence and reduce her to sexual compliance while Gwen resolutely continues to try to engage him in serious discussion

of his writing. She won't let him off the hook or conduct a dialogue on his terms, pointedly turning to him to reinforce her replies but at the same time revealing the pressure of the exchange by becoming increasingly pedantic ('It might have lacked something in craftsmanship but it was a really powerful study of rejection'; 'You underrate yourself. Your second novel was undoubtedly the best book of its kind I ever read'). Minnelli frames the scene in another long take, enabling us to observe and evaluate the characters' interaction, and therefore the performances, in real time.

Dave's behaviour is characteristically both assertive and contradictory. He is attracted to Gwen but his social unease at their first meeting and the challenge of meeting an articulate woman, determined to engage him in conversation, provoke him to discomfit her socially, behaviour hardly likely to win her over. His sexual advances here and in the next sequence become increasingly blatant and correspondingly less likely to succeed (from the invitation to his hotel room, to clichéd compliments on her hair and eyes, to a suggestion that they go and park somewhere), as though he was running through a repertoire of seduction manoeuvres he has never had cause to question or amend. If the attempt to smooch was a self-conscious provocation (Dave's exaggerated smirk of bliss as he pulls her close) his later moves carry no sense of irony: indeed, as they talk he shifts from humorous attempts to undercut her seriousness to tones clearly intended to communicate the sincerity of his feelings (the tone of voice that we heard first in the opening scene with Ginny and that becomes a major part of Dave's register). It is the performance of an unsophisticated adolescent with a crush on teacher and its consequence is that Gwen constructs herself increasingly in that way, in the car offering Dave analysis of his problems ('I have an idea you're running away from something'; 'I have a theory that writers compensate for some lack in their personal lives') as a way of holding him at bay. But at issue between them in these exchanges is not an age discrepancy but a class difference. Dave is out of his class and the film develops a strong sense here and in what follows that his desire for Gwen is intensified by pursuit of the unattainable, though in this matter as in others Dave has no significant insight into his own motives. What is at stake surfaces recurrently when

she rejects him and – in tones that begin with irony but end in bitterness – he calls her 'teacher'.

Much of the unease in these scenes arises from the contrast between seemingly relaxed and tense bodies. Sinatra's performance conveys a character, whatever his complexities and confusions, who is physically at ease. Martha Hyer's expresses someone socially adept in certain ways but deeply uncomfortable with her body and with herself as the focus of sexual feeling. While Dave moves fluidly and seems to act spontaneously (which is not to say 'authentically'), Gwen is physically stiff and inhibited. This contrast is intensified by the script which provides Dave with a good deal of colloquial dialogue but allocates Gwen formally structured sentences that sound stilted and unnatural as conversation. Gwen is being created as a character who in principle could become the focus of pathos and empathy but who seems calculated by the performance decisions to distance us emotionally. Dave's behaviour is boorish and sexually aggressive but he carries the powerful associations of Sinatra's sexual charisma and his embodiment of one kind of 1950's ideal male.[14] Martha Hyer's unselfish performance makes Gwen combative but humourless and emotionally withdrawn. That the emotional balance of these sequences, centering on the performances, seems weighted against Gwen, while the filmic presentation and overall context encourages a more nuanced understanding of the characters and situation, makes the tone distinctly uncomfortable. One way of putting this might be to say that emotional allegiance and both moral and intellectual awareness are set at odds.

The crux for these matters is the extended sequence in which Dave first visits the French house, bringing his manuscript, and which culminates in the lovemaking in the garden cabin where Gwen reads Dave's story. He had offered the night before to take Gwen to his hotel room to read the story but she had refused the obvious sexual invitation and told him to bring his story to the house if he wants her to read it, as though she took that to be a refusal of sexual intimacy. He now brings it to her after a night that ended with his arrest. What seems implied is the pendulum swing of desire and repudiation mentioned earlier but we are given no insight into Dave's more specific motives in bringing the story to Gwen at this point. Does her attitude and her social position challenge his ego and intensify

his desire? Has her interest in his writing flattered him? Is bringing the story to her a ruse to feed the only interest in him she has expressed and to weaken her sexual resistance? Refusing to allow Dave to articulate or betray motive leaves us in the dark about what is in his mind and may indeed suggest that Dave is no clearer about why he acts than we are. This reading would be consistent with what is implied by the opening sequences, that Dave acts on impulses he does little to understand or control.

The staging of the sequence in the French house again preserves spatial and temporal continuity while maintaining physical distance. Almost the whole of the scene between Dave and Gwen, once Bob has excused himself with what may be an engagement invented to leave them alone, is shot in a single take of over three minutes, the camera following as they move around the room and adjusting its distance without ever framing them tightly, so that we have every opportunity once again to observe their extended interaction. What Minnelli creates is a scene of painful unease, masked at first by Gwen's social manoeuvres. She tells Dave 'We're glad you're here', avoiding a first person welcome and then invites him into the kitchen, 'our nicest room', in a tone self-consciously bright, covering the unexpectedness of Dave's arrival (we see her initial surprise in

a shot of her alone when Bob calls out, 'It's Dave Hirsh') with a performance of social assurance.

It is certainly an extraordinary room – a combination of sitting room, study and kitchen, much of it lined with bookshelves. Gwen explains its eccentricity in terms of her father's impracticality ('Dad insists on keeping books in here. I keep telling him the grease from the cooking will ruin them but he's an obstinate man'). Dave's response – 'It's beautiful' – could be a spontaneous exclamation of pleasure and approval but Sinatra conveys a sense of Dave reaching for an unaccustomed register and an appropriately respectful tone. Dave is out of uniform for the first time, his sweater, open neck shirt and slacks conveying a sense of casual smartness that enhances the bodily ease of Sinatra's performance. But whereas Dave's behaviour with Gwen the previous night had been crudely direct and socially inept, he is now more 'civilised'. Minnelli's treatment of the scene and Sinatra's performance make no suggestion that Dave is cynically performing a role but, for all the apparent ease of his manner, he is treading carefully.

This underlying tension emerges in this scene and the next in notes of falsity in Dave's dialogue, a sense of emotion and thought willed into expression but not convincingly expressed.

It is at its most explicit here in his declarations of love, the second of which provokes Gwen into a direct response to his delivery: 'You said that with the ease of a man who's said it rather often and to a variety of women'. What Gwen thinks she detects is insincerity, a move by a practised womaniser; what Sinatra conveys is something less obvious and more confused – Dave thinks he means what he says. His discomfort – social, physical, emotional – is captured eloquently in the awkwardness of his words and actions after Gwen's attempted disengagement: 'I'd much rather discuss your story – what's it about?' Dave has turned away towards the window just beyond Gwen. The gaucheness of his reply, 'It's about love – and I think I've learned a great deal more about it now', is heightened by the clumsiness of his attempt, as he negotiates the inelegant final clause, to perch on the narrow arm of Gwen's desk chair and pull her face towards him.

Martha Hyer communicates a more evident feeling of unease beneath the overtly confident manner and verbal dexterity, maintaining the physical stiffness and formality of speech that characterised Gwen in her previous scenes. Gwen works to maintain literal and emotional distance between her and Dave, using the coffee tray and the desk as physical barriers, refusing to be shocked by the news of his brawl and arrest, and attempting to treat him almost as though he was a talented but wayward student. The timbre of her voice and the slightly stilted rising inflections enact personal interest but deny emotional engagement. The anxiety that underlies Gwen's treatment of Dave surfaces in two moments that acknowledge in different ways the strain of maintaining her poise. In the first, after Dave has quizzically tried on her glasses that were lying on the desk and then polished them with his handkerchief, she hurriedly puts them away when his back is turned. In the second, though she has earlier calmly deflected his suggestion that she might be shocked, her less than sanguine attitude to Dave's sexual history breaks through her studied calm in the sharp and emotionally charged, 'Shall we read your press notices?'

The scene that follows is perhaps the most tonally problematic of the whole film. It intensifies the tonal complexity that Minnelli has so skilfully developed around Gwen and Dave but pushes a number of elements – of action, dialogue, performance and mise-en-scène – to extremes. As they leave the

house to walk in the grounds, a new musical theme, for piano and orchestra, is introduced, in contrast to the assertive jazzy accompaniment to the title sequence. Its more 'classical' form picks up on the civilised bourgeois setting of the house and grounds and its tone is redolent of romance. There is a dissolve. Dave is alone in the grounds and we see Gwen reading inside a cabin-cum-summerhouse. In the build up to Gwen's reaction to Dave's story and the love scene that follows Minnelli introduces a strange interlude involving two rabbits. Dave leans on a fence, takes out a cigarette, and looks out of frame. There is a cut to a rabbit that then hops away. Dave's business with the cigarette continues and he looks out of frame again. Cut to another rabbit. Dave looks towards it and says 'Your girl went that way'. The second rabbit hops off. Dave's anthropomorphism is a joke (though it speaks of what is on his mind) but how should we take the film's tone here? It invokes a register of imagery and feeling so at odds with the film up to this point that it can feel like an extraordinary lapse into sentimental romanticism, as though nature might be in tune with Dave falling in love.

What follows Gwen calling Dave into the summerhouse is tonally even more difficult. We have been led to expect a romantic encounter and indeed this is as close as the film gets to a conventional love scene. But the film has to find ways of

producing, from the tensions between Dave and Gwen, an expression of mutual passion. One option might have been to use Gwen's reading of the story to ease tension and to suggest the emergence of reciprocal authentic feeling. If we take it that this is the effect aimed for then the scene fails spectacularly – many of the decisions taken tending to distance and detach us (this is a scene that often produces laughter in spectators) rather than encourage sympathetic involvement. Most strikingly the scene ends with an extraordinary manipulation of lighting – unique in the film – so that a brightly lit room is plunged into darkness as Gwen and Dave move closer to the camera and kiss. Dave unpinning Gwen's hair as they first embrace is also in this context a strikingly literal image to associate with the release of repressed passion.

The dialogue and performances leading up to this moment intensify rather than minimise the awkwardness we have been identifying in the characters. Both are given lines that hinder rather than help convincing expressions of feeling. Gwen's opening line ('Dave, you have a very exciting talent') is horribly prim but some of Dave's match it in maintaining deeply uneasy registers of language ('So help me, I didn't know there were women like you'; 'Gwen, I truly love you, don't you know

that?') and a tone of exaggerated humility and sincerity that seems to strive for conviction. Minnelli's editing further heightens the rhetoric of the scene. He cuts from the long take in which the scene is mainly filmed, first into a medium close up of Gwen as she breaks from Dave, showing at close range her conflicting feelings and the breakdown of her inhibition, and then to a matching reverse shot of Dave, before returning to the wider framing as Gwen kisses Dave. Holding the wider framing would have been a plausible option here, especially since the axis of the characters' movement towards the camera had been established and the scene ends with the original framing. The editing engages a familiar convention of inter-cut close ups in love scenes but here the break with the continuity of the long take feels rhythmically and emotionally clumsy. Closer framing also makes considerable demands of Martha Hyer, requiring her to enact intense feelings in close up. Both these effects are jarring in the context.

How should we understand this section of the film? Our answer will turn on how we read the tone and the underlying attitudes it carries: do we take the film to be embracing the whimsy of the rabbits and trying for a convincing and involving love scene, or is it possible to suggest alternative

explanations that can account for the decisions taken and the disturbing emotional dynamics of the episodes? What if the film intends a play on, rather than an adoption of, romantic convention? For instance, the business with the rabbits can be connected to dialogue in the previous scene. When Dave tells Gwen, 'I'm glad you're not a teacher of biology', she replies, 'If I was, I wouldn't confuse biology and love', a comment on what she takes to be Dave's confusion. Dave's anthropomorphic joke makes the rabbits into girlfriend and boyfriend – turning, one might say, biology into love. In that reading, consistent with the film's perspectives on Dave up to this point, the rabbits comment on the human action not cosily but critically. If this is a plausible connection then the break in tone that might seem to signal an unprepared shift into whimsy can be thought of as deliberately grating – not a miscalculated invitation to think 'how sweet' but a jolt of dissonance in preparation for a love scene that will be far from 'romantic'. What follows might then be read not as an unconvincing dramatisation of authentic reciprocal passion but as a sexual encounter that is intended to feel very uncomfortable, with the emotions of both characters strongly determined by the contexts of their meeting and the immediate circumstances of the moment. Dave's unpinning of Gwen's hair picks up on their dialogue of the previous evening when Dave complimented her on her hair only for Gwen to rebuff him with 'I wear my hair this way to please the school board'. Unpinning it can be taken for a cliché but it can also be understood as Dave's self-conscious response to what Gwen said the night before and his attempt to dismantle her teacherly persona.

The lighting change is particularly striking and strange. Whether we think of it as an aesthetic miscalculation, a considered distancing device, or take some intermediate position, the jolt of its obvious artifice pulls us away. In a treatment more integrated into the lighting design of the space a movement into darkness could both provide an appropriately discrete exit from the love scene and intensify the atmosphere of romantic passion. The sudden darkness here has the force of a comment on the deathliness of this coupling. What underlies this may be that both characters are dominated by fantasies of the other, Gwen seduced by her vision of Dave as the great writer who can be saved, Dave by a view of Gwen ('So help me, I didn't

know there were women like you') that all but describes her as fantastical. Her class location and profession seem to dissociate her from Frank's tawdry materialism, though she belongs emphatically to the respectable world. She is sexually attractive, admires his work and unlocks the secret of the unfinished story. Dave can convince himself that he is in love with this impossible figure and that marriage would offer a plausible future.

As a matter of critical practice it seems to be best (though it is not always easy) to give films the benefit of any doubt and to look for ways of making sense of decisions within the overall patterns and approaches of the film. The most powerful critical readings are invariably those that account persuasively for many or most of the major choices the filmmakers have made. In these terms I prefer the analytical reading of this section that looks for ways of linking the decisions to the film's broader patterns of decision-making to a view that it represents a failure of control. Part of me wants to celebrate what Minnelli is doing here as an extremely bold solution to an acute problem of how to manage point of view in this episode. In these terms his decisions can be thought of as producing critical distance or even 'distanciation'. But it would be unwise to seek for entirely analytical perspectives or to fall into a version of the 'affirmation vs. irony' opposition challenged by Robin Wood's reading the *The Deerhunter*'s final sequence. A focus on tone brings with it a need to wrestle with the various dimensions of 'attitude' – affective as well as, say, moral and intellectual – and to allow for complexities that resist articulation in neat binary terms. Each time I return to arguments about this sequence, uncertainties return. Analysis of pattern and possibility is persuasive up to a point but the circle never closes – my experience of the tonal dynamics will not entirely synthesise with my preferred analytical account.

On the other hand, there seems no doubt that here, as elsewhere in the film, sequences and characters are patterned to echo, contrast with and implicitly to comment on each other. So we move from Dave and Gwen's kiss to a scene in which Frank tries to tempt the totally resistant Agnes into going upstairs to 'relax'. Her refusal ('Don't be silly Frank, I've got a headache') leads Frank to ease his restlessness by going into town and this in turn leads him to Edith. The parallel with Dave's movements from Gwen's rejection of him to Ginny is unforced but telling.

Less immediately, we can see in retrospect that the sequence of Gwen reading the story and what follows is paired with the much later sequence in which Dave reads it to Ginny. In each case reading the story leads, though very differently, to a short-lived union of the couple, but if there is a suggestion of deathliness in the darkness that enfolds Gwen and Dave, Dave's offer of marriage to Ginny has deadlier consequences.

The relationship between Ginny and Dave is played out in the terms established in the film's opening scenes, that Dave is 'real nice' to Ginny when he has been drinking and treats her badly in various ways when sober (the crucial, and ultimately disastrous, exception to this being his proposal of marriage). This is one aspect of the unmanageable contradiction between 'worlds' and aspects of the self that the film dramatises in Dave and that animates the structural pattern of Dave's repeated movement from rejection by Gwen to another encounter with Ginny. The first example of this is when Gwen drops Dave outside Smitty's and he immediately encounters Ginny in the bar and encourages her to hang around. When Gwen tells him at their next meeting that she 'doesn't want this kind of relationship' and rejects his proposal with 'I'm not one of your bar-room tarts', he returns to Bama's and agrees to take Ginny and Rosalie on their gambling trip. Finally, after the scene in Gwen's bedroom in which, following her meeting with Ginny, she retreats from Dave again ('I don't like your life, I don't like the people you like'), we have the scenes with Ginny that lead up to Dave's proposal.

However, this sense of the women as, at one level, equivalent but opposed terms in a generic equation is inflected by contrasting ways in which they are presented and by correspondingly different tonal registers. The film's emotional detachment from Gwen is paralleled by its emotional engagement with Ginny, a contrast that is crystalised in Ginny's visit to Gwen's school room, the only scene in which the women meet. As Ginny approaches the school we see Gwen in class, responding to a question from Wally about whether Zola was 'immoral' and whether different standards apply to literary men. She denies this but her answer, that they have 'greater appetite for life' and that though she might disapprove of their conduct she would try to understand it, comes over as pat and abstract, an intellectual acceptance of such appetites that is in sharp contrast

to her inability to deal with the more personal and emotional challenge represented by Dave. It is symptomatic in this respect that in a scene slightly earlier in the film her declaration to him that 'I've missed you … and I'm not confused anymore', the only unequivocal statement of commitment she utters, is made not in person but on the telephone.

The scene between the two women is tonally very rich but painful to watch. Embarrassment, pathos, pity, emotional engagement and critical detachment, mingle with extraordinary intensity. The sequence can be linked with scenes in other melodramas, such as Stella (Barbara Stanwyck) at the hotel resort in *Stella Dallas* (King Vidor, 1937) or Annie (Juanita Moore) in the schoolroom in *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959), where her daughter is attempting to pass for white. These episodes depend for their effects on a dual response in which we squirm with embarrassment but simultaneously want to repudiate the basis of the emotion. In these two cases our feelings are engaged at least partly on behalf of Stella and Annie but their actions are simultaneously the cause of the negative emotion. In the schoolroom scene in *Some Came Running* part of the effect comes from what we know of the two women and from the cognitive and evaluative perspectives we bring from the preceding action: it is impossible to anticipate

anything but a deeply difficult and embarrassing meeting. The film also encourages closeness to Ginny in a way denied to Gwen: Ginny's emotional openness and trust are consistently more sympathetic than Gwen's primness and mistrust of feeling. Gwen, too, is on home ground and Ginny is taking all the risk (of rebuff, of humiliation) in coming to the school. We are also placed with Ginny on her approach to Gwen's room, even seeing and hearing the final part of Gwen's homily from outside the classroom, with Ginny in the foreground. So the meeting is prepared in ways that ensure that our anxieties will be more on Ginny's behalf than Gwen's. And yet the film does not encourage our greater engagement with Ginny to elide into a corresponding commitment to Dave and Ginny as a couple; as we have been seeing, a central part of its strategy is to deny the possibility of a choice for Dave that could point to 'happy ending'. Our awareness of the hopelessness of Ginny's cause contributes significantly to the pathos of the sequence.

Minnelli shoots the scene largely in an angle/reverse angle pattern that is relatively unusual in the film. He initially cuts between two-shots in which the women face each other and we are placed behind each in turn. He then cuts between close ups of varying scales after Ginny sits, so that, unlike the long take sequences that hold us at a distance, observing characters within the single space of the frame, here the editing separates the women and makes our view pivot between them. The scene is also staged to intensify the differences in status. Gwen makes no attempt to move towards Ginny – she stays behind her desk, in the authoritative position it provides. Ginny sits in a student chair, her physical placing and the deference she shows to Gwen constructing her as child to Gwen's grown-up. Gwen remains largely composed but defensive. She is unable or unwilling to engage with Ginny and, although she is mainly polite, Ginny's expressions of feeling and her attempt to elicit how Gwen feels clearly make her very uncomfortable, so much so that she finally asserts that 'there is nothing between Mr Hirsh and myself', a denial of her own feelings which seems driven by a need to dissociate herself completely from the imputation that she might have anything in common with Ginny (' … consequently, I'm not your rival'). Ginny, on the other hand, makes herself vulnerable and open to potential humiliation by expressing her love for Dave so nakedly to Gwen. The intensity of feeling with which Shirley MacLaine imbues Ginny here is very moving, as is the remarkable unselfishness of her appeal – 'I want him to have what he wants, even if it's you instead of me'. If there is a certain pathos in Gwen's inability to deal with strong emotion, there is much more in Ginny's confession of how scared she had been to come to the school, and her acute sense of inferiority: 'I know you could take him away from me if you want. I'm not smart like you. I ain't got nothing. Not even a reputation'. Coming at this moment in particular, Gwen's momentary breakdown in politeness, the barbed comment, 'I'm sure you have a reputation, Miss Moorhead', feels especially unpleasant.

Ginny is certainly the most likeable of the film's characters, her generosity of feeling, openness and lack of guile contrasting in one way or another with everyone else in the movie. Shirley MacLaine gives her a life and a subtlety of feeling that challenges both the traditional stereotype her character relates to and the attitudes towards her of other characters in the film, including Dave. When he is sober Dave seems to see Ginny largely as a type. When he is drunk and 'real nice', what is implied is not that he finds her sexually attractive (the lack of an overtly sexual dimension to the relationship is surprising and significant – the only kiss is entirely one way, when Ginny kisses Dave as she leaves Bama's house to prepare for the wedding) but that he responds to other qualities, or that they speak to needs in him. What these qualities are is associated with Ginny's construction as like a child. The film follows convention in linking the lower classes with the free play of impulse and desire, an absence of restraint and direct expression of feeling that carries positive connotations in comparison to the much more buttoned-up and inhibited middle classes. Retaining a certain child-like spontaneity in these contexts is often to be more open to life and to be able to live more fully and authentically than the socially wary and controlled bourgeoisie. Aspects of this coding are present in *Some Came Running* but the free play of impulse in Bama and Raymond is presented as respectively self-destructive and psychotic, while in Ginny the positive associations of child-likeness are present but she is created less as a character who has retained in adulthood the spontaneity of childhood and more as someone who is in many respects still a child, almost a case of arrested development.

Dave's ambivalence is central to almost all their scenes together. When he gives up on Gwen after the country club evening and asks to be dropped off the car stops under the red neon of the 'Smitty's' sign. Ginny is sitting at the bar with Raymond (his first appearance in the film) and we witness the deeply unpleasant harassment to which he subjects her. Raymond's violently assertive claim to Ginny is one extreme in the film's presentation of male/female relationships but we are encouraged to see a continuum of behaviour linking Raymond, Bama and Dave. Bama is a much more appealing character than Raymond but his repeated reference to the women he meets in bars as 'pigs' is disturbingly misogynistic. Dave seems in comparison much less objectionable, his attitude to Ginny often indulgent and at times even caring. But his oscillation between being 'nice' to and rejecting Ginny represents a negotiation and not a repudiation of the attitudes to women in Bama's world. He holds himself apart from Bama's

overt misogyny but not from Bama; he treats Ginny well compared to Raymond, although his offer to her to 'stick around' while he plays poker gives her the status of appendage rather than companion. That Dave attaches himself to Ginny immediately after leaving Gwen (even though he had told her to go back to Chicago only that morning) suggests a need to confirm his sense of himself following Gwen's rebuff. His neediness here amplifies our sense of the need implied by his drunken invitation to Ginny to travel with him to Parkman. Minnelli's framing places Dave and Raymond on each side of Ginny at the beginning of the scene, constructing them as rivals but implying parallels as well contrasts in their conduct.

It is in the bar later that night, after the poker game, that Ginny observes with some feeling, 'the only time you talk

nice to me is when you're loaded'. This comes after Dave had responded to her declaration that she could fall for him with, 'Me? A cute looking kid like you? With such class. Such a fine mind? You're pulling my leg'. He later punctures Ginny's description of her previous job as a hostess with further sarcasm: 'I bet that's a fine, intelligent and interesting job'. Dave's bantering tone slightly softens the unkindness of the words but the attack on the defenceless Ginny and the impulse to hurt her remain distasteful. It is as though, sober, Dave has to distance himself from any serious engagement with Ginny. Some of the words he uses – 'class', 'fine mind', 'intelligent' – are also eloquent of an underlying comparison with Gwen and of a distinctly snobbish tendency that it takes a good deal of alcohol to anaesthetize.

Dave's most prolonged and intense attack on Ginny, a sequence in which what he says is not softened in any way, is when he finds her waiting for him on Bama's porch after the

final break up with Gwen. Ginny is basking in the reflected glory of Dave's new story. She has bought up all the copies of the magazine in town and has been signing them as presents for her friends and colleagues. Dave takes out on Ginny, in deeply unpleasant terms, all the bitterness of his parting from Gwen: 'Can't you get it through your thick skull …'; 'You haven't got the brains or the will power to sit down and read the story'; 'You haven't got enough sense to come in out of the rain unless somebody leads you by the hand – and that's only because you'll go anywhere with anybody'. The scene is shot in another of the film's long takes, the frame holding us outside the porch and creating a sustained and stable viewpoint on the action. Dave's anger and hostility and Ginny's pain and confusion are simultaneously present to us throughout, but the

stylistic restraint, as so often in the film, creates a spatial disengagement even as we respond to the intense feelings generated by the characters. The violence of Dave's attack is all the more shocking for being so disproportionate and misdirected; Ginny becomes the hapless target of a rage generated elsewhere.

The implication of the scene with Bama that follows is that in giving up drink in order to prove to Gwen that he is capable of change Dave has cut himself off from the safety valve and the respite from control that drunkenness provides. But Dave drunk and Dave sober are not completely antithetical. We saw in the opening scene that he softened his rejection of Ginny with apologies and tones of regret when he saw her hurt, and a similar pattern is followed here. When Bama goes upstairs, Dave takes a drink of whiskey, mutters, 'Dames!' and calls Ginny in. There is considerable pathos in Ginny's attempt to remonstrate with Dave ('You got no right to talk to me like that – I'm a human being with the same rights and feeling as anybody else') and acute engagement with her pain in what follows. At first Dave is impatient with Ginny's attempts to remonstrate and to assert her dignity; he walks away from her, into the right foreground of the frame, and sits down with his back to her. He does not look at her again until she runs forward, throws herself onto him and cries in despair, 'Dave, be in love with me. I love you so much. I've never met anyone like you before in my whole life'. She then compels a response by pulling his arm around her and now he holds her tightly and apologises, although his lines ('I'm sorry if I hurt you. Forgive me. I didn't mean it. I'm terribly sorry') are delivered with no hint of genuine feeling, almost as though by rote.

Emotionally, the weight of these scenes seems very much with Ginny but it is an engagement with someone who is more child than adult. She has no resources except her feelings with

which to counter Dave's assault and, although his attack on her is inexcusable, the actions Dave reacts to are so naïve and unworldly as to seem almost dim-witted. Our response is given particular intensity by the discrepancy in power and understanding between the two characters, but although Ginny's simplicity and emotional honesty can in itself seem a rebuke to Dave's confusions and aggression, the film does not allow us to forget that hers is a response to the world bordering on the simple-minded.

These perspectives are further played out in the following scene, which we enter as Dave finishes reading his story to Ginny. The film gives us no sense of how this came about – whether Dave offered or Ginny asked – but it comes over initially as another stage in making peace between them, a gesture by Dave to offer Ginny the link with him and the story that he had so emphatically refused her before. But here she is constructed even more obviously than in Gwen's classroom as a child – sitting on the floor listening, with a look of intent but perplexed concentration, to an adult reading to her.

Again, Dave attacks her, this time for a lack of understanding which, in the context of a scene that parallels the earlier reading of Dave's story in the summerhouse, means for not being Gwen. He bullies her with questions as she tries to articulate her responses to the story, like an overbearing teacher losing patience with a dim but willing student. Minnelli begins with a wide shot that establishes Dave and Ginny at opposite sides of the frame, the viewpoint slightly elevated and looking down on them. Unlike the scene on the porch, however, he then cuts into angle/reverse angle, a method that parallels Ginny's meeting with Gwen, the editing emphasising the characters' separation as Dave badgers Ginny, until he cuts back to the original framing for the climax of their exchange:

> *Dave*: You don't understand the story at all.
> *Ginny*: No, I don't, but that don't mean I don't like it. I don't understand you either but that don't mean I don't like you. I love you. But I don't understand you. What's the matter with that?

We cut back to the frontal view of Dave, then to Ginny, and back to Dave who eventually gets up and is followed in a panning

shot across the intervening space to Ginny, where he proposes to her. The emotional dynamics of the scene are mirrored here in the editing, framing and camera movement, the significance of Dave' movement to Ginny underlined by the camera which follows him from his space to hers. But Minnelli also retains the more detached view that places the characters in space and defines for us the adult/child axis of the scene.

Why does Dave propose? Nothing in the film so far has indicated that, drunk or sober, he thinks of Ginny as a possible wife. In the scene that immediately follows Bama puts the objections brutally: 'All due respect to Ginny, you ain't going to marry this broad'; even Ginny knows she's a 'pig'; she is a 'dumb pushover'. Bama's misogyny is at its starkest here but these are attitudes very similar to those Dave himself had articulated on the porch not that long before. Bama is also clear-sighted enough to recognise that behind this must be 'what went on between you and that schoolteacher'. What seems to happen here is the collapse of Dave's ambivalence, previously defined by his drunk/sober oscillations of attitude to Ginny, in the face of her declaration of love unconditioned and unconstrained by understanding. The film's attitudes are carefully shaded. Any romantic satisfaction we could be tempted to feel is cut off by Bama's entrance and his caustic response to the news. At the same time, the construction of Dave and Ginny as adult and child remains strongly in play from the previous action. Even in the proposal and Ginny's response the film makes no attempt to create the image of a plausible romantic couple.

Dave explains himself to Bama after Ginny leaves in terms that feel almost despairing: 'I'm just tired of being lonely, that's all. And the way she feels about me, well nobody ever felt that way about me before. Besides, maybe I can help her. I sure can't help myself'. Dave's confession that he can't help himself is one of his few moments of self-awareness in the film, but here it involves a capitulation to self-pity rather than implying clear-sightedness about his situation. Bizarrely, he becomes as child-like as Ginny, looking for something like the unconditional love of a mother for her child from the most helpless character in the film.

After the stylistic restraint and muted colour of most of the film, what follows feels, in style and tone, almost like a sequence from another film. The centre of Parkman has been turned into a fairground, with some rides and sideshows already in action while others are still being constructed as excited crowds pack the space. Parkman has become a night-town, 'garishly lit in primary colours' (Minnelli 1974: 325) and the brash energy of the fair is intensified by editing which accelerates as the sequence goes on, cutting both between different views and between strands of narrative with a rapidity unlike any other section of the film. Literally, this is the celebration of the town's Centennial that has been promised throughout the film, although the stylised lighting and choreography create a sequence that exceeds any plausible representation of a small town fair. Less literally, it is the explosion of energy (and eventually of violence) that is threatened in the combination of uneventful images and turbulent music associated at the beginning of the film with Dave's return and, correspondingly, as the action builds towards its climax the driving chords of that music return. It feels, in Dana Polan's words, as though,

'everything this culture seeks to repress comes bubbling to the surface […] ' (Polan 2002: 2). More specifically, though, there is a strong poetic logic in the conjunction of the fair and the wedding. The first images of the fair immediately precede and introduce the marriage scene and Dave and Ginny emerge onto the street into the excited activity and raucous noise of the fairground. It is as if these pent-up forces have been finally released by the marriage itself.

The film has allowed us to forget Raymond since his arrest with Dave and Ginny. His reappearance is prefaced here when Bama, drinking in Smitty's, receives a message that Raymond has heard of the wedding and is on the loose with a gun, looking for Dave. But he returns in an extraordinary image, bursting into the frame as a silhouetted figure swigging from

a bottle against a wall vividly lit in red. The extreme stylisation of this image and of a number of similarly lit shots that trace Raymond's frenetic pursuit of Dave give Raymond's return an overtly symbolic force, as though he is a creature released from the underworld. The change of register and the corresponding assertiveness in the film's tone now point up the significance of Dave having unwittingly brought Raymond with him from Chicago when he invited Ginny. In terms of narrative causality, Raymond is Ginny's obsessive suitor, enraged by the marriage; in terms of the film's poetic logic, he is Dave's double, 'called up' by what the marriage represents, Dave's attempt to resolve his contradictions by finally accepting the need in him that his attachment to Ginny implies but that he has previously been unable to acknowledge.

The morality play dimensions of melodrama come very close to the surface here. According to this logic, Raymond's murderous attack in which Ginny is killed and Dave wounded represents Dave's revenge on himself for his capitulation to feminised weakness (the admission of loneliness and the craving for unconditional love), and also on Ginny who is the embodiment of that weakness. In fact, in a way that parallels the intensely violent struggles between the hero and his double in some of Anthony Mann's Westerns, there is something suicidal about the violence here: Ginny is a distinct character in the fiction but also, like Raymond, a part of Dave, something he brings with him because he has no alternative. As in Mann's greatest films, the question that the end of the film poses about the hero is 'what's left?'

The final sequence, of Ginny's funeral, offers no positive answer. The tone is solemn but the action enigmatic. I find it difficult to perceive even the qualified hope (Dave and Bama as 'men who grow and seem to learn') that Dana Polan identifies (2002: 2). After the first shot of the clergyman intoning the funeral service, the film cuts to Gwen and her father driving up, getting out of the car and standing at some distance, looking towards the gathering round the grave. A close up isolates Gwen, her expression set in concern.

Does the film allow here for the potential of reconciliation with Dave? Or does it imply that, with Ginny's death, Gwen might now feel that all she hated about Dave's life has been exorcised? We cannot be certain, but Gwen is not shown again

and the whole weight of the film seems set against her. The final shot pans from Bama, alone, past the few other mourners, including Rosalie, to Dave, also standing alone, his arm in a sling, then back to Bama who slowly removes his hat as the camera moves past him to frame the distant view of the river, beyond the cemetery.

The acknowledgement Bama's gesture represents is moving but is too little, too late, while the telling last image of Dave is of a figure injured, motionless and apparently drained.

5. Afterword

This study began from a feeling that tone, for all its problems as a term, deserved to be rehabilitated. After all, it pointed towards significant aspects of our movie going experience and yet it was largely absent from debates about point of view and narrative meaning in film. In our experience of the dramatic arts we often need to speak not just of the story, the characters, or what a work signifies, but about the attitudes, feelings and values with which it is imbued. Part of the problem for criticism is that such things are difficult to pin down. What we are trying to describe or evoke can feel almost intangible, more like a gravitational field the work generates than an aspect of the work itself. Language tends to reflect this difficulty: the words we use most commonly to evoke these phenomena (atmosphere, mood, tone itself) in themselves suggest how elusive they seem. Correspondingly, responses to tone can feel subjective, as though its intangibility left us floundering in personal response in comparison to discussion of other, somehow more substantive, dimensions of meaning. Yet experiences of tone, in film as in language, are real enough to shape our understanding profoundly, while the inherently social nature of language and of movies means that, however difficult we may find it to articulate them, these are not experiences that confine us in our own subjectivity: more often than not our grasp of tone is shared to a significant extent by others.

In retrospect, perhaps, the question posed in Chapter 1 – whether tone could become a *functional critical concept* – gave a misleading impression. As a concept it remains inherently baggy and indeterminate. I defined it at the outset (following I.A. Richards) as a way of designating various dimensions of 'attitude' implied by a work but we have seen that in practice 'attitude' itself becomes a tricky term, almost dissolving into its many potential axes. We have seen, too, that the expression of attitude in movies, as in language, invariably has a pervasive affective dimension. Susan Smith, in fact, initially defines 'issues of tone' as 'the kinds of attitudes and feelings we deem

to be embodied in a film's stance towards its narrative subject matter' (2000: vii), treating 'feeling' and 'attitude' as separate dimensions of response. For Deborah Thomas, too, feeling is one half of a binary: tone is, 'the emotional and moral colouring of the experience that the film offers us' (2005: 167). These differences of emphasis provide opportunities for enjoyable debate but, whether we see attitude as incorporating feeling or feeling as somehow a distinct realm of response, tone remains an unwieldy concept.

The extended analyses in this study took a different direction – less concerned with the concept as a concept than with how what might count as tonal qualities could be identified in specific cases. Critical controversy over *The Deerhunter* provided an initial context in which consideration of tone seemed inescapable, although the term itself cropped up infrequently in the critical writing on the film. At the heart of the debates were often assumptions – rarely argued at length – about the film's attitudes to its material and its audience. In some of the early writing these assumptions were inherent in readings of particular sequences that took the film's attitudes to be signalled by dominant signifiers such as the choral music in the first hunt. The importance of Robin Wood's analysis of *The Deerhunter* for my purposes was twofold: he made clear that debates about the film's achievements needed to focus explicitly on its orientation to its material, traditions and spectator; he also showed that such matters could not be asserted or assumed but had to be argued by reference to relationships within and between patterns of detailed decision-making in the context of the movie as a whole.

In following something like that process I wanted to explore the extent to which the attitudes and relationships signalled by the term 'tone' could provide a consistent focus in detailed analysis, and how far a discussion of such matters could escape the vagueness of evocation by grounding itself in the choices that made up the film. While the analysis was guided by the preliminary framework provided by the dimensions of implied attitude I outlined early on, I wanted as far as possible to work 'bottom up', allowing the detail of the sequences under discussion to shape the course of discussion. The detailed analysis confirmed what I had felt at the outset, that mood and tone (a duality that became essential without ever becoming entirely

clear cut) were as much part of the total 'meaning' of a film as matters that could be more readily formulated. Working through the specific detail of films also suggested that, although it was intuitive to think of tone as intangible, the relationships (for example to subject matter, conventions, spectator) implied by the term were embedded in the material fabric of the film. As George M. Wilson argues, 'meaning' in film is rarely a matter of decoding an underlying semantic schema; it is more often a question of finding a pattern of explanatory connections' (1999: 229–230). Explanatory connections (as in the two forms of causality identified in *Strangers on a Train*) are to that extent *articulated*, not in the sense of being expressed by the film in language but in the sense that the links between different parts of the film imply and can support such ways of accounting for and understanding them. Tone and mood need to be thought of in similar ways – as rooted in decisions that can be specified and the consequences of which can be argued.

At the beginning of chapter four I suggested that, like orchestral music, different strands of decision-making in films can imply distinct but interwoven tonal qualities, held in significant tension, and this analogy suggests both the skillful patterning that can underpin our experience of tone and that tone and mood are pervasive, potentially affected by every aspect of decision making. That it is impossible to predict in any detail how choices and interrelationships will contribute to mood and tone also indicates why they can never be an exclusive focus of analysis: the attitudes and relationships they designate are key dimensions of response and interpretation but are inseparable from our wider understandings of the film.

I have written elsewhere in almost exactly the same terms about point of view and something more needs to be said about the relationship between point of view and tone. I still tend to think that point of view is a concept most effectively used to designate the total network of a 'film's relationships to its material and its attempts to position the spectator' (Pye 2000: 8) and that tone should be thought of as part of this broad field, although perfectly cogent arguments could be mounted both for narrower approaches to point of view and for maintaining its conceptual distance from tone. I am not sure, however, that such differences matter hugely, provided that we recognise this totality of relationships and attitudes as crucial aspects of our engagement with any film. Thinking about point of view directs our attention to how multi-dimensional our relationships to narrative film invariably are. As a vital dimension of point of view, tone alerts us more specifically to the pervasive evaluative and affective orientations implied by the film. It reminds us that, at every level of their design, film narratives are inherently and often complexly value laden, and that they address us in ways that require correspondingly multi-faceted response and understanding.

Bibliography

Abrams, M. H. (1971) *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (third edition). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Auster, Arnold and Leonard Quart, (1979) 'Hollywood and Vietnam: the triumph of the will'. *Cinéaste*, ix, 3, 4 – 9.

Axeen, David (1979) 'Four Shots at the Deerhunter', *Film Quarterly*, xxxii, 4, 10 – 22

Babington, Bruce and Peter Evans (1990) 'All that Heaven Allowed: another look at Sirkian irony'. *Movie* 34/35, 48 – 58

Booth, Wayne. C. (1961) *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Bordwell, David (1985) *Narration in the Fiction Film*. London: Methuen.

Bordwell, David, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson (1985) *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*. London:Routledge.

Callenbach, Ernest (1979) 'Four Shots at the Deerhunter', *Film Quarterly*, xxxii, 4, 10 – 22.

Davies, Terence (1992) *A Modest Pageant*. London: Faber and Faber.

Dempsey, Michael (1979) 'Four Shots at the Deerhunter', *Film Quarterly*, xxxii: 4, 10–22.

Elsaesser, Thomas (1972) 'Tales of Sound and Fury: observation on the family melodrama', *Monogram 4*, 1972, 2–15; reprinted, with revisions, in Christine Gledhill (ed.) (1987), *Home is Where the Heart Is*, London: BFI Publishing, 43–69

Everett, Wendy (2004) *Terence Davies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Garwood, Ian (2006) *The Pop Song in Film*, in John Gibbs and Douglas Pye (eds.) Close-Up 01. London: Wallflower Press.

Gray, Martin (2004) *The Dictionary of Literary Terms*. London: Longman/York Press.

Hillier, Jim 'Swimming and Sinking: form and meaning in an avant-garde film', in John Gibbs and Douglas Pye (eds.) (2005) *Style and Meaning: studies in the detailed analysis of film*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 155 – 166.

Kinder, Marsha. (1979) 'Four Shots at the Deerhunter', *Film Quarterly*, Vol. xxxii, No. 4, 10–22.

Lang, Robert (1989) *American film melodrama: Griffith, Vidor, Minnelli*. Cambridge, MA: Princeton University Press.

McElaney, Joe (2003) 'Medium Shot Gestures: Vincente Minnelli and *Some Came Running*', http://www.16-9.dk/2003-06/side11_minnelli.htm

Minnelli, Vincente (1974) *I Remember It Well*. New York: Doubleday.

Perez, Gilberto (1998) *The Material Ghost*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Perkins, V.F. (2005) 'Where is the World: the horizon of events in movie fiction', in John Gibbs and Douglas Pye (eds.) (2005) *Style and Meaning: studies in the detailed analysis of film*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 16 – 41.

Polan, Dana. (2002)'*Some Came Running*', http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/cteq/01/19/som_came.html

Pye, Douglas (1989) 'Bordwell and Hollywood'. *Movie* 33, 46–52.

Pye, Douglas (2000) 'Movies and Point of View'. *Movie* 36, 2–34.

Richards, I.A. (1924/1961) *Principles of Literary Criticism*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Russo, John Paul (1989) *I.A. Richards, his life and work*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Smith, Greg M. (1999) 'Local Emotions, Global Moods and Film Structure' in Plantinga, C. and Smith, G. M. (1999) *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition and Emotion*, ed. Carl, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 103–126.

Smith, Susan (2000) Hitchcock: *Suspense, Humour and Tone*. London: BFI Publishing.

Thomas, Deborah (2000) *Beyond Genre*, Moffat: Cameron and Hollis.

Thomas, Deborah (2005) ' "Knowing one's place": frame-breaking, embarrassment and irony in *La Cérémonie* (Claude Chabrol, 1955)', in John Gibbs and Douglas Pye (eds.) *Style and Meaning: studies in the detailed analysis of film*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 167 – 178.

Truffaut, Francois (1969) *Hitchcock by Francois Truffaut*. London: Panther Books.

Walker, Michael (1982) 'Melodrama and the American Cinema'. *Movie* 29/30, 2–38.

Wilson, George M. (1985) *Narration in Light*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Wilson George M. (1997) 'On Film Narrative and Narrative Meaning', in Richard Allen and Murray Smith (eds.) *Film Theory and Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 221 – 238.

Wood, Robin (1986) 'Two films by Michael Cimino', in *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, New York: Columbia University Press, 270 – 317.

Wood, Robin (1989) *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*. London: Faber and Faber.

Woolf, Virginia (1938) *The Common Reader*. London: Pelican Books.

Notes

1 In film criticism there are some welcome signs of a revival of interest: Susan Smith and Deborah Thomas, for instance, have both made significant use of the concept (see Smith 2000 and Thomas 2005)

2 John Paul Russo, the author of *I. A. Richards, his life and work*, writes:

Richards took the word *tone* from Edwardian etiquette, as when one speaks of raising the tone of a conversation. Manners imply adjustment and control of social relationships across the social spectrum: the French word *moeurs* includes manners and morals and better indicates Richards' intentions. (Russo 1989: 232)

3 For a fuller discussion of narrative agencies see Pye (2000).

4 See Perkins (2005) for one of the most developed accounts of the 'worldhood' of fictional worlds and its implications.

5 I take issue with aspects of Bordwell's account of 'classical Hollywood' in 'Bordwell and Hollywood' (Pye 1989)

6 See, for instance, the introduction to Terence Davies, *A Modest Pageant* (Davies 1992), the collected scripts of Davies's early films.

7 The term 'melodrama' has been at the centre of much debate since the early 1970s. The main focus has been on films that Michael Walker has called 'melodramas of passion' (Walker 1982:16) to distinguish them from the 'action melodrama' (broadly the predominantly male-centred action genres) and I follow current usage in using 'melodrama' to designate the former grouping.

8 It is a striking fact that central to the achievements of Hollywood melodrama in the 1940s and 1950s is the work of several directors (Ophuls, Ray, Sirk, Minnelli, Preminger) celebrated by authorship criticism in the 1950s and 1960s for the detailed significance of their visual styles. Ray, Sirk and Minnelli are all, in varying degrees, directors of melodrama and notable contributors to the cycle of male-centred movies. There is a strong case to be made for also associating Hitchcock, whose generic base is outwardly very different but whose concerns are equally with masculinity and its discontents, with this group.

9 Michael Walker's four generic groups within the melodrama of passion are: i) melodramas in which the narrative focus is on a woman; ii) romantic melodramas; iii) family and/or small town melodramas; iv) melodramas in the Gothic horror tradition. The third category could be used to contain a number of what I have called male centred melodramas but I think there is a case for singling out films in which the main narrative focus is a man.

10 See, for example, *Ruby Gentry* (King Vidor 1952) and *All That Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk 1956).

11 There is a further link with *The Searchers* in that Dave returns, three years after the war, in army uniform. *Some Came Running* makes much less of the recent World War than Ford's film does of the Civil War but the implication may be that, like Ethan, the uniform represents an escape from a troubled peacetime identity. In both cases the uniform is shed during the film and the psychic divisions in the characters become increasingly extreme. In these respects the 1948 setting is relevant, though in other ways, as Michael Walker has pointed out to me, the film feels as though it should be set in the 1950s (teenagers, for instance, figure significantly).

12 Dana Polan makes a similar point about the effect of Minnelli's CinemaScope staging: ' . . . the learning process is extended . . . by the Cinemascope composition to we the spectators who have to discover how to read the frame and learn to modify what we think we're seeing' (Polan 2002: 2).

13 I am indebted to Michael Walker for this observation.

14 See Ian Garwood (2006) 'The Pop Song in Film' for a discussion of these qualities in *Pal Joey*.