The Hollywood Political Thriller
During the Cold War, 1945 - 1962

Submitted by Deena Bowman

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates a corpus of films identifiable as Hollywood political thrillers during the Cold War spanning a period of seventeen years, between 1945 and 1962. It aims to dispel the assertion by critics and scholars that the political thriller originates with the release of *The Manchurian Candidate* (Frankenheimer, 1962). Moreover, it is my intent to engage an interdisciplinary approach given that the relationship between contemporary American cinema, ideology and propaganda has often been overlooked (see Shaw, 2007). Utilizing textual and contextual analysis, I shall argue that *The Manchurian Candidate* is a transitional film with respect to the political thriller. I shall also offer an explanation for the frequent mislabeling of Hollywood political thrillers as *film noir*, of which generic hybridity or overlap is a contributing factor. The first part of this thesis shall establish a political and historical context, which includes a discussion of Hollywood's early entry into the Cold War, U.S. strategies of containment and the threat women posed to U.S. national security vis à vis Ethel Rosenberg. Given that the political thriller emerged as a distinct subgenre during the Cold War, the first part of this thesis shall include a chapter on technology and innovation (e.g. lighting, format, film stock) as a means of supporting prime generic theme of authenticity. Five exemplary mini-case studies shall be presented to demonstrate the way in which the Hollywood political thriller delivered distinct narrative and visual style that both projected and reflected Cold War discourses. Philip Wylie's "momism" shall be considered within the context of the political thriller and Cold War discourses surrounding gender, U.S. national security and the atomic bomb. I shall expand upon current discussions of momism, approaching it through distinct representations evident within the political thriller. Given the pervasiveness of the nuclear threat during the Cold War, I shall discuss the thematic elements of fear and the unknowability of the atomic bomb in relation to the political thriller. In the second part of this thesis, I identify three distinct cycles of atomic political thrillers, in which issues of vulnerability of the physical locale, the nuclear family and the mind are addressed.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
AEC	Atomic Energy Commission
AFI	American Film Institute
BFI	British Film Institute
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DoP	Director of Photography
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FCDA	Federal Civil Defense Administration
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany)
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
GRU	*Glavnoye razvedyvatel'noye upravleniye* (Main Intelligence Directorate)
HUAC	House Un-Americans Activities Committee
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
KGB	*Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti* (Committee for State Security)
MHL	Margaret Herrick Library
MPAPAI	Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKVD	*Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del* (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs)
NSC	National Security Council
OCDM	Office of Civil Defense and Mobilization
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PCA	Production Code Administration
PX	Post Exchange
SANE	Committee for Sane Nuclear Policy
SS	*Schutzstaffel* (Protection Squadron)

UFO   Unidentified Flying Object

UCLA   University of California at Los Angeles

USC   University of Southern California

USIA   United States Information Agency

INTRODUCTION

When political scientists Terry Christensen and Peter J. Haas (2005), as well as the writer Steve Goldstein (2007) suggested that *The Manchurian Candidate* (Frankenheimer, 1962) should be considered as the first real American political thriller, it would seem that these writers had overlooked a swathe of some one-hundred film products of the postwar period through to the early 1960s that emerged, taking as their subject matter the climate of the Cold War.[1] Whilst the American film industry has a tradition of politically inspired narratives including the controversial silent film *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915) and *The President Vanishes* (Wellman, 1934), the political thriller has its origins within the post World War Two era; a period fraught with geopolitical crises and brinksmanship whilst socio-political discourses surrounding family, gender and the atomic bomb challenged the American psyche, raising fears over national security.

Contemporary historian Tony Shaw's research on the relationship between the American film industry and the development of a Cold War culture within the U.S. was a starting point for my thesis. Shaw opens *Hollywood's Cold War* (2007) with the assertion that cinema was one of the most powerful weapons in the 'battle for mass public opinion' during the Cold War.[2] Historians have paid less attention to the role of Hollywood film as an element of psychological and political warfare waged by three American presidents – Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy. Indeed, Shaw rightly points out, the prominence of national security tradition and American foreign policy within Cold War historical scholarship such as the impact of, for example, the U.S. Objectives and Programs for National Security (otherwise known as National Security Council 68), as a geopolitical framework for combating Communism.[3] Through case studies, Shaw delves into the production cinematic propaganda, selecting films from a range of popular Hollywood genres in order to illustrate how some productions were clearly meant to incite fear amongst audiences at home (in America)

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[1] Terry Christensen and Peter J. Haas, *Projecting Politics: Political Messages in American Films* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, Inc, 2005) and Steve Goldstein, 'Political Thrillers', *GreenCine* (30 Mar 2007) <http://www.greencine.com/static/primers/polithrillers1.jsp> [accessed 29 Sept 2014]
[2] Tony Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 1.
[3] Ibid., 3.

whereas others served as a vehicle to export American ideals abroad. What becomes apparent through Shaw's consideration of diverse images and narratives is the totality of the Cold War and the influence it would have on all Americans.   Whilst I adopt an interdisciplinary approach, one that is influenced by Cold War historiography, and in particular the scholarship of Shaw, John Lewis Gaddis and Walter LaFeber, this thesis emphasizes the emergence of the Hollywood political thriller during the Cold War between 1945 and 1962. Indeed, as I shall go on to explain, there is a prime theme of generic authenticity evident throughout the corpus of films I am considering within this thesis. Through this introduction I shall provide the framework for the political thriller as a distinct subgenre, and it is my intent to demonstrate the way in which Cold War discourses and rhetoric were projected and reflected by the political thriller. Secondly, I shall utilize a mini-case study to establish how *The Manchurian Candidate* may be seen both as an end point to a distinct cycle of political thrillers as well as a transitional film to a new kind of thriller. Moreover, I shall introduce atomic bomb, questions of gender and the nuclear family as distinct thematic elements of the Hollywood political thriller during this period.

Whereas the role of politics and political messages of Hollywood films intersects several disciplines including film studies, history and political science, there is a lack of consensus with regard to the political thriller. In *Here's Looking at You: Hollywood, Film and Politics*, politics and American studies scholar Ernest Giglio (2010) writes that the debate over whether a political film genre exists dates back to the early 1980s.[4] This point is similarly raised by Beverly Merrill Kelly (2004) in *Reelpolitik II: Political Ideologies in the '50s and '60s* as she contends that political films as a distinct genre remain unrecognized by a majority of critics.[5] According to Kelly, the sticking point has to do with the range of codes and conventions used to deliver political messages, and she goes on to write: 'the waters of political films in the broadest sense, are too muddy to separate into distinguishable streams'.[6] However, American Studies scholar Ian Scott (2011) takes a different approach. In his text

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[4] Ernest Giglio, *Here's Looking at You: Hollywood, Film and Politics* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010), 22 – 23.
[5] Beverly Merrill Kelly, *Reelpolitik II: Political Ideologies in the '50s and 60's* (Oxford: Roman & Littlefield Publishing, 2003), 6.
[6] Ibid., 6.

American Politics in Hollywood Film, Scott asserts that the political thriller is a distinct generic subtype, and that it is domestic extension of Cold War paranoia. Scott goes on to describe the political thriller as:

> historical staging posts in America's battle with freedom and individualism, . . . a society at once multifarious and tolerant that nevertheless looks to purge is undesirables of their dubious beliefs periodically and to re-assess the state of the nation's health.[7]

Whilst there is no definitive explanation for this lack of consensus, it is possible that slow recognition by trade publications has been a contributing factor.

A search of *Variety* digital archives from 1905 to 1915 reveals that the term political thriller was first used in a review of the Algerian-French film *Z* (1969) by Costa-Gavras. During the 1970s, *Variety* was typically associated the political thriller genre with foreign productions of which the publication included *Crossplot* (Rakoff, 1969), *The Assassination of Leon Trotsky* (Losey, 1971) and *State of Siege* (Costa-Gavras,1972). The first Hollywood production identified by *Variety* as a political thriller is the film *The Next Man* (Sarafian, 1976), a Sean Connery star vehicle for Allied Artists Pictures in which an Arab diplomat wants to make peace with Israel. Curiously, it is another three years before *Variety* identifies a Hollywood production, *The China Syndrome* (Bridges, 1979), as a political thriller. Indeed, *Variety* was slow in recognizing Hollywood films as political thrillers, with films such as *The Manchurian Candidate, The Parallax View* (Pakula, 1974) and *Three Days of the Condor* (Pollack, 1975) being associated with the genre retrospectively. A similar search of the *Sight and Sound* digital archives reveals sporadic use of the term political thriller, albeit substantially earlier, during the 1950s. Though more interesting is the early association of *The Manchurian Candidate* with the political thriller subgenre made by *Sight and Sound*. In a 1964 article, writer J.H. Fenwick describes how director John Frankenheimer's two political thrillers were exceptional. Fenwick goes on to write that Frankenheimer has embraced a new

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[7] Ian Scott, *American Politics in Hollywood Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: 2011), 119.

genre, what the author calls the political-science fiction thriller.[8] Likewise, a review by

frequent *Sight and Sound* contributor Penelope Houston also makes reference to two

Frankenheimer political thrillers without specifically naming them.[9] As more of the trade

publications deliver their archives in a searchable digital format it will be possible to pinpoint

when the political thriller as a generic subtype became more accepted amongst critics.

The political thriller as a generic subtype has also been overlooked amongst film

studies scholars, although this may be due, in part to the way genre functions. Film scholar

Barry Keith Grant writes that: 'generic phases do not fall into convenient chronological and

progressive periods, but often overlap significantly.'[10] Indeed, as Thomas Schatz explains

film genre is a system that is both static and dynamic, offering spectators a 'familiar formula of

interrelated narrative and cinematic components that serves to continually reexamine some

basic cultural conflict.'[11] Just as social, cultural and political attitudes shift and evolve, so too

does genre. Writing in *Genre and Hollywood* (2000), film scholar Steve Neale offers that

major genres exist, but the Hollywood film industry during the studio era had a propensity for

overlap and hybridity.[12] The mixing of generic components was (and still is) commonplace,

that even the most popular and widely recognized genres are 'rarely tidy and self

contained.'[13] Given the shifting nature of genre, it should not come as any surprise that the

films I consider in this thesis are frequently labeled as something other than political thriller

(most notably *film noir*). Indeed, Martin Rubin, a film scholar and author of one of the most

comprehensive discussions of the thriller genre, describes political narratives within the

context of an anti-Communist spy cycle or conspiracy thriller. Rubin defines the anti-

Communist cycle as:

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[8] J.H. Fenwick, "Black King Takes Two", *Sight and Sound,* 33.3 (Summer 1964), 114 – 17.
[9] Penelope Houston, "The Train", *Sight and Sound,* 34.1 (Winter 1964/65), 40.
[10] Barry Keith Grant, *Film Genre: From Iconography to Ideology* (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), 35.
[11] Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking and the Studio System* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1981), 16.
[12] Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London: Routledge, 2000), 51-52.
[13] Ibid., 84.

Movie Communists of the era were too limited and contrived to live up to their billing as major conspiratorial threats. Despite the political hysteria of the era and the rhetoric of the films themselves, Hollywood's version of the domestic Red Menace rarely added up to more than a few isolated groups of stereotyped goons from old gangster and anti-Nazi movies, sprinkled with some priggish intellectuals of the "stripped pants snob" variety vilified by Senator Joseph McCarthy and his supporters.[14]

Certainly there is evidence of recycled codes and conventions (notably 1930s gangster and anti-Nazi) between 1940s and 1950s, yet Rubin asserts that Cold War espionage was a relatively minor trope until the release of the fantastical narratives of superspy James Bond (and his imitators) or demythologized spies (what Rubin calls the "anti-Bond" film) of the 1960s.[15] This anti-Bond cycle is primarily comprised of British productions in which espionage is portrayed with a greater sense of realism, influenced in large part by the defection of double-agent Kim Philby.[16] Indeed, the model for the anti-Bond thriller is Martin Ritt's faithful film adaptation of John Le Carré's bestselling novel *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (Paramount British Pictures,1963).[17] Not only does Rubin place *The Manchurian Candidate* within the conspiracy rubric, he contends that it prefigures an anti-Bond cycle of narratives that anticipate disillusionment with government and corporate America in the post-Vietnam era. Whilst the relationship between current events, socio-political culture and entertainment is complex, it is not altogether surprising that narratives with elements of conspiracy would find a home within the political thriller. However, by avoiding major

[14] Martin Rubin, *Thrillers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 101.
[15] Interestingly, the release of *Dr. No* (Young, 1962), the first James Bond film based on Ian Fleming's 1958 novel of the same name premiered in London on 5 October 1962, only eleven days before the Cuban Missile Crisis. The U.S. release of *Dr. No* was not until May 1963.
[16] Harold Adrian Russell "Kim" Philby was a high-ranking member British intelligence until his defection to the Soviet Union in 1963. Philby was part of the spy ring known as the Cambridge Five, and it was believed that he was the most successful in delivering secrets to the Soviet Union. Philby, a close friend of novelist-screenwriter Graham Greene, was the model for the character of Harry Lime in the thriller *The Third Man* (Reed, 1949).
[17] Rubin, 133-34.

ideological and rhetorical underpinnings of the Cold War, Rubin offers a less nuanced reading of postwar era narratives.

Film scholar Charles Derry, author of *Suspense Thriller: Films in the Shadow of Alfred Hitchcock* (1988), adopts a taxonomic approach to the suspense thriller, whilst identifying the political thriller as a distinct subtype. Derry defines the political thriller as a dramatization of acts by 'assassins, conspirators, or criminal governments, as well as the oppositional acts of victim-societies, countercultures, or martyrs.'[18] Indeed, Derry contends there are several thematic elements that are integral to the generic structure of the political thriller, including: the corrupting nature of power, the need to question political and social institutions; the need to exhibit strength and integrity to serve "the people" rather than seeking individual gain; as well as individual heroism to bring about social or political change.[19] Whilst acknowledging that his analysis of the political thriller is *in medias res,* Derry does, nonetheless, locate the Hollywood political thriller more than a full decade before *The Manchurian Candidate*. Yet he also considers the Frankenheimer film to be significant given that it is 'one of the first to unite the theme of assassination with that of the basic conspiratorial nature of politics.'[20] Whereas the tone of the political thriller (and not specifically those produced and distributed by Hollywood studios) is arguably more insidious and paranoid after 1964 as exemplified by films such as *Seven Days in May* (Frankenheimer, 1964), *Z* (Costa-Gavras, 1969), *Executive Action* (Miller, 1973), *Day of the Jackal* (Zinnemann, 1973), *The Parallax View* (Pakula, 1974) and *All the President's Men* (Pakula, 1976), the narratives I am considering within this thesis clearly reflect a postwar political zeitgeist shaped by the persistent threat of nuclear annihilation. Fear of the atomic bomb compelled Americans to adopt civil defense strategies as a routine part of domestic life, including the building bomb shelters, yet this was a physical object that few people had ever seen. The American people were shocked that such a weapon of incredible and unimaginable power had been created.[21] Indeed, after President

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[18] Charles Derry, *Suspense Thriller: Films in the Shadow of Alfred Hitchcock* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 1988) 65.
[19] Ibid., 103-4.
[20] Ibid., 111.
[21] Robert A. Jacobs, *The Dragon's Tail: Americans Face the Atomic Age* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 7.

Truman announced the bombing of Hiroshima, American political journalist Norman Cousins would go write:

> The beginning of the Atomic Age has brought less hope than fear. It is a primitive fear, the fear of the unknown – the fear of forces man can neither channel nor comprehend. This fear is not new . . . It has burst out of the subconscious and into the conscious, filling the mind with primordial apprehension.[22]

The fear and unknowability of the atomic bomb was so profound that Hollywood responded with cycles of political thrillers centered on distinct nuclear themes. Thus, I intend to demonstrate the way in which Cold War discourses and rhetoric thereby contributed to the political thriller subgenre, but also to establish that *The Manchurian Candidate* may be seen both as an end point to a distinct cycle of political thrillers as well as a transitional film to a new kind of thriller.

Foundations of the Political Thriller

By the time the Hollywood political thriller becomes a defined category of film, World War Two ended, the atomic bomb had been dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and two nations, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, emerged as superpowers and promptly entered into the Cold War. Whilst the political thriller film encompasses a range of narrative themes, its literary lineage stems from tales of espionage. Authors John Cawelti and Bruce Rosenberg contend in *The Spy Story* (1987) that the spy genre actually dates back to Greek mythology, with spy-like activities of Odysseus included in Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey*. Within America, early fascination with espionage stories originates with the prolific nineteenth-century novelist, James Fenimore Cooper. In his second novel, *The Spy: A Tale of Neutral Ground* (1821), the American War of Independence serves as the backdrop where the protagonist, Mr. Harvey Birch, is working as an American agent attempting to buy secrets

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[22] Ibid., 8. Norman Cousins would go on to advocate for nuclear disarmament and in 1957 he co-founded The Committee for Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE).

for General George Washington. Prior to the publication of *The Spy,* it was commonly believed that espionage was an unsavory activity, but with Cooper presented it as a patriotic duty.[23] By the turn of the century, American audiences were routinely reading narratives with the central theme of international intrigue and conspiracy, with British novelists such as Erskine Childers with *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) and Joseph Conrad with *The Secret Agent* (1907) and *Under Western Eyes* (1911) as particular favorites. Spy fiction continued to gain popularity and it wasn't until the time of World War One when American audiences were introduced to this theme in cinematic form.

The modern thriller film emanated, by and large, from the European film industries, although it was a relatively marginal genre in comparison to horror films, with their Europeanized settings and villains, which seemingly catered more to America's isolationist sensibilities.[24] American productions were commonly referred as melodrama or more often "mellers" in trade publications and were distributed for the inception of the U.S. film industry. The meanings associated with the melodrama remained fairly consistent within the U.S. film industry from the 1930s to the 1960s. And as Neale explains the melodrama was generally synonymous with the "thriller" or "action-adventure", representing those films that are now commonly labeled as *noirs.*[25] Two turn of the century melodramas featuring the spy trope was the short *The Little Reb* (White, 1900) distributed by Edison Manufacturing Company and *Execution of a Spy* (Marvin, 1900) distributed by American Mutoscope and Biograph Company; however, a review of the American Film Institute online catalog would suggest that the spy theme in American film narratives became more popular after 1913. Even James Fenimore Cooper's spy novel was adapted for the screen. Simply known as *The Spy* (Turner, 1914), this was a four-reel film produced and distributed by Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

Of those productions released during the pre-Cold War era of the 1930s, there is a collection of politically motivated narratives that fall under the rubric of "social problem" films.

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[23] Brett F. Woods, 'James Fenimore Cooper,' in *Spies, Wiretaps, and Secret Operations: An Encyclopedia of American Espionage,* ed. by. Glenn P. Hastedt and Steven W. Guerrier (California: ABC – CLIO, 2011), 201.
[24] Rubin, 79.
[25] Neale, 179 – 81.

The social problem film dramatizes topical, sociological issues, such as the New Deal politics, juvenile delinquency, racism, and poverty; however, as film scholar Ian Scott contends, within the context of political thrillers, the films from the 1930s are merely embryonic and 'accentuated by their relation to legalistic and courtroom dramas.'[26] The injustices depicted in the social problem films of *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (LeRoy, 1932), *Our Daily Bread* (Vidor, 1934) and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (Capra, 1939) appealed to American audiences, although the spy trope was also experiencing an upsurge in popularity that coincided with mounting international tension. Many of the spy thriller productions were initially centered out of Great Britain, of which Alfred Hitchcock was a prominent contributor. Hitchcock's reputation was bolstered between 1934 and 1938 with the release of five major spy thrillers for the production company Gaumont-British Picture Corp.: *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), *The 39 Steps* (1935), *Secret Agent* (1936), *Sabotage* (1936) and *The Lady Vanishes* (1938). Upon relocating to United States, Hitchcock's first two films involving espionage were *Foreign Correspondent* (United Artists, 1940) and *Saboteur* (Universal Pictures, 1942). Whilst film scholar Ian Scott goes on to suggest that Hitchcock nearly 'single handedly invented the World War Two espionage thriller,' the first major American spy thriller of the World War Two era was actually *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (Litvak, 1939). A Warner Bros. production starring Edward G. Robinson, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* tells the story of FBI agent Ed Renard's investigation of pre-War espionage activities of the German-American Bund. Indeed, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* is an exemplary precursor with regard to the role of propaganda within Hollywood films during the Cold War. Upon its review of the first draft of the *Confessions* screenplay by Milton Krims and John Wexley, the Production Code Administration (PCA) concluded that whilst technically within the provisions of the Hays Code, the material was controversial and was likely to be rejected by many censor boards. Subsequent notes in the PCA file indicated that the production would be in violation of the Code given the depiction of Hitler as a 'screaming madman and a bloodthirsty persecutor.' According to PCA official Karl Lischka, this was an unfair representation of Hitler particularly given the leader's 'phenomenal public career and his unchallenged political and social

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[26] Ian Scott, *American Politics in Hollywood Film,* 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 121.

achievements.'[27]   The position of the PCA with regard to propaganda was well documented and in a 1938 annual report it had concluded:

> Entertainment is the commodity for which the public pays at the box office. Propaganda disguised as entertainment would be neither honest salesmanship nor honest showmanship.[28]

Isolationists mostly likely would have been in agreement with the PCA, but within the context potential loss of foreign market revenues prior to America's entry into the World War Two in 1941 rather than what constitutes honesty in showmanship and entertainment. Despite bans in Japan, Latin America, and several European nations (not surprisingly Italy, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany), *Confessions* had record-breaking performances world-wide that Warner Bros. opted to re-release the film in 1940 with a new ending. In the later version, new footage was introduced in order to show the effects of the Nazi occupation in the countries of Belgium, Holland and Norway.[29]

Thus, the demand for topical and semi-documentary narratives during the early part of the 1940s was satisfied by Hollywood, although the context would eventually shift in the postwar era. As discussed above, whilst the PCA prohibited propaganda, studios found ways to incorporate such elements into their narratives. However, it is at the conclusion of World War Two, when we begin to see the convergence of political discourses, ideology and often propaganda (but not always). These elements, particularly when considered in relation to the atomic bomb, were essential to the emergence of a political thriller in the U.S. during the Cold War era.

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[27] American Film Institute, 'Confessions of a Nazi Spy' in Catalog of Feature Films, <http://www.afi.com/members/catalog/DetailView.aspx?s=&Movie=908>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

[28] Colin Shindler, *Hollywood in Crisis: Cinema and American Society, 1929 – 1939* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 212.

[29] American Film Institute, 'Confessions of a Nazi Spy' in Catalog of Feature Films, <http://www.afi.com/members/catalog/DetailView.aspx?s=&Movie=908>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

Research Question

In this thesis, I contend that the political thriller emerged as a recognizable subgenre and that it is clearly located within the Cold War period between 1945 and 1962. Moreover, I shall argue that the political thriller has a discernible narrative and visual style that differentiates it from other thrillers from this period, and most notably from those productions that have been previously read as *film noir* or gangster. My research will address why this subgenre emerged at the point in history that it did, after 1945, and I shall demonstrate that *The Manchurian Candidate* is actually a transitional film, serving as an end point to a particular cycle rather than as a new generic type as asserted by authors Christensen and Haas, as well as Goldstein.

A goal of this thesis is to demonstrate the contributions of Hollywood political thriller (1945-62) to the creation and selling of an image of American global policy and containment strategies during the postwar years, which is one reason why it is important to examine this subgenre. There are clear propagandistic values embedded in these productions that are apparent through narrative and visual style, as I shall discuss in part one (Chapters One - Two) and part two (Chapters Three – Five) of this thesis. This was a period of significant socio-political change, thus, with regard to international relations, the American public was looking for reassurance to major questions like "are we safe" and "whom can we trust?" Almost immediately, nuclear fear finds an expression within popular culture, and indeed the atomic trope is identifiable in half of the films considered within this thesis, with the other fifty-percent being preoccupied with the Communist threat – frequently within an epidemiological context such or as the spread of an "alien" ideology (sloganeered as: "Reds under the bed"). Just as these narratives communicate ideological struggle, frequently echoing presidential rhetoric, they also tend to be more straightforward in approach to the Communist and atomic issues than other genres. This is particularly true when compared with the alien-Communist metaphors of Cold War science-fiction films. Yet despite the relative simplicity of political thriller narratives between 1945 and 1962, the propagandistic value stands out. So, for example, the narratives of some of the films considered in my corpus gloss over, or in some cases avoid ethical issues such as allowing former Nazi scientists to relocate to America at the conclusion of World War Two in order to continue their development of rocket technology.

Of course, there are a handful of exceptions to this norm, including the Warner Bros. production of *Above and Beyond* (Frank, 1953) and *On The Beach* (Kramer, 1959), which was released by United Artists. As we shall see, both these films are more pragmatic in their view of the atomic issue, and in the case of *On The Beach,* it is very forthcoming in its criticism. Finally, the inclusion of sexual politics and the crisis of masculinity (primarily during the 1950s) have influenced many film historians (e.g. Krutnik, Hirsch, Silver and Ursini, Naremore) to read much of my corpus as *film noir*.[30] Yet as I shall go to discuss, these narratives are less about urban modernity inhabited by a disaffected and alienated society (as explored through *noir*) than about the threat posed by intercontinental ballistic missiles armed with nuclear warheads and whether civil defense will be enough to protect the American dream.

Research Methodology and Organization of the Thesis

In *Hollywood's Cold War* (2007), contemporary historian Tony Shaw fused the study of film with political, social and cultural history in order to explore the Cold War from the bottom up rather than from the top down. Such an approach enabled Shaw to delve into the role of mass media, and more specifically Hollywood productions, on the development of American foreign policy and public opinion throughout the Cold War era. Whilst the Cold War was a test of wills between two superpowers, it was also a 'propaganda contest par excellence,' made possible through the cooperation (or in other cases, coercion) of the American film industry.[31] Curiously, despite the availability of materials documenting the relationship between filmmakers and the U.S. government, Cold War historians largely overlook the relationship in contemporary American cinema between ideology and propaganda. As Shaw goes on to write:

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[30] Frank Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 1991); Foster Hirsch, *The Dark Side of the Screen: Film Noir* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1981); Alain Silver and James Ursini, *The Film Noir Reader* (Pompton Plains: Limelight Editions, 1996); James Naremore, *More than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts,* 2nd edn (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008).
[31] Shaw, 2.

All administrations from Harry Truman's onward judged that the Cold War was a *total* conflict requiring contributions from all sectors of American life, and that the battle for the hearts and minds extended beyond the powers the of the government's information agencies. . . . propaganda transmitted a host of positive and negative images of the Cold War, and was deployed across an extraordinary range of genres, many of which appeared innocently apolitical to most cinema-goers.[32]

Whilst Shaw endeavors 'to map out Hollywood's treatment of the Cold War throughout the whole conflict' in *Hollywood's Cold War*, the scope of my thesis is more narrowly defined, with an emphasis on one generic subtype, the political thriller, and limited to Cold War period from 1945 to 1962.[33] Equally important is a rare study on the interface between political ideology and cinema entitled *Nuclear Fear: A History of Images* (1988) by Spencer Weart. As a trained physicist, Weart offers one of the earliest scholarly works on the symbolism attached to the atomic bomb and nuclear energy. *Nuclear Fear* is a comprehensive study in which the origins of nuclear imagery from medieval alchemy to its appearance in literature and film are traced. For the purposes of my thesis, however, his discussion on nuclear imagery in relation to public fear (of radiation and nuclear energy), foreign policy and political goals during the postwar era complements the research of others, including Shaw.

Admittedly my research is inspired by Cold War historiography, although I also consider film technology and style in relation to political thriller codes and conventions. Film historian Barry Salt's groundbreaking work in the early 1980s on style and technology provided a starting point for my analysis of political thriller style. Indeed, for Salt, evolving technology was integral to the development of film style and the framework proposed in *Film Style & Technology: History & Analysis* (1983) called for comparisons of individual films to establish the range of variation between directors and periods. And as Salt argues, simply using one or two films to establish stylistic convention is insufficient, and for this reason he selects (on a random basis) a large number of films – both good and bad – for analysis.

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[32] Ibid., 4-5.
[33] Ibid., 1.

Systematic analysis of films provides a way to discern meaning based on conscious decisions made during production. A cursory analysis of film style is possible based on average shot length, or what Salt defines as the length of time of a film (excluding front and end titles), divided by the number of shots. With this measure, it is also possible to discern the influence of specific production practices on generic codes and conventions, such as the long take as well as specific technologies including color, lighting and format. In the case of the political thriller, there are substantially fewer productions for consideration in comparison to other genres and subgenres released between 1945 and 1962. Thus, I opted for a more inclusive corpus with just over one hundred films released during a seventeen-year period. An analysis of average shot length reveals faster cutting as a characteristic of the political thriller. Whilst this was not entirely unexpected given the very essence of the genre (to thrill spectators), the trend of political thrillers during the 1940s and 1950s is to be cut even faster than the industry averages for those decades demonstrated by Salt. My departure (from Salt) is with the comprehensive detailed statistical analysis that includes extensive graphing of shot scale (e.g. extreme close-up, close-up, medium close, medium, medium-long and long) and camera movement (e.g. pan, tilt, track, zoom, etc.). Whilst analysis based upon complete shot characteristics (movement, scale and length) allows researchers to discern between generic codes and conventions and that of a director's unique style, I contend that technology was essential to the visual aesthetic of the political thriller. And more specifically, that innovation in camera, lighting, format and film stock transformed these productions into an apparatus of Cold War rhetoric, propaganda and psychological warfare.

The above gives a first indication of the kind of resources I shall be drawing upon in my methodology.   I propose engaging in methodological approach of close textual analysis to map the corpus of identified films to Cold War socio-political discourses and presidential rhetoric, but also with an emphasis on containment and the nuclear threat. Indeed, through textual and contextual analysis I will make a case for the political thriller, differentiating it from *film noir* (the label used to describe many of the films considered within this thesis). A further key factor in establishing this distinction is that of narrative and visual style. A general uneasiness over issues of national security is at the very core of the political thriller during this period thereby establishing permeability of borders as a key thematic element. Many of the

films within my corpus are representative of government agents or average citizens successfully protecting America, thereby contributing to the propagandist value of these productions. Likewise, the settings are diverse, ranging from small, isolated towns to major population centers (e.g. Los Angeles, New York, Washington D.C.), international destinations (e.g. Ottawa, Berlin, Moscow, Hong Kong, Tokyo). As a consequence all Americans must remain vigilant, and that sites with economic or military significance are not the only locations in danger of being infiltrated or destroyed by Communists.

As much as the vulnerability physical, geographic borders frightened the U.S., such a threat was at least more tangible and knowable than the susceptibility of the mind. The American public was first introduction to the concept of mind control and brainwashing by Edward Hunter, a freelance journalist and former propaganda specialist for the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Hunter coined the term brainwashing in 1950 to describe the techniques used by Communists to indoctrinate Chinese citizens and U.S. captives in the North Korean prison camps.[34] Indeed, there are a spate of political thrillers that prefigure *The Manchurian Candidate* where the brainwashing trope is featured, including *Guilty of Treason* (Feist, 1950), *Assignment-Paris* (Parrish, 1952), *Prisoner of War* (Marton, 1954), *Time Limit* (Malden, 1957) and *The Fearmakers* (Tourneur, 1958). In the early 1950s, agit-prop films that included *The Red Menace* (Springsteen, 1949)*, The Woman on Pier 13* (Stevenson, 1949), *I Was a Communist for the FBI* (Douglas, 1951), *Big Jim McLain* (Ludwig, 1952) and *My Son John* (McCarey, 1952) exemplify the vehement anti-Communism of U.S. institutions including the HUAC and the FBI, but I would also suggest that they are within the permeability of borders thematic (in this case the mind) given the explicit representation of recruitment and indoctrination tactics that specifically target disillusioned Americans.   Frequently these films are described as being part of a cycle of "Red Scare" or anti-Communist films (see Shaw, Rubin). However, within the context of my thesis, the Red Scare films are, nonetheless, part

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[34] Hunter would go on to testify before HUAC in 1958 that the democratic free world was in jeopardy and that the Communists had the upper hand. David Seed, *Brainwashing: The Fictions of Mind Control* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2004), 37-38. See also Michael Charney, 'U Nu, China and the Burmese Cold War' in *The Cold War in Asia: The Battle for Hearts and Minds,* ed. by Yangwen Zheng, Hong Liu, and Michael Szonyi (The Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 56.

of a Cold War construct of unease and unknowability (of the Communist enemy, or worse the atomic bomb). Hence the importance of researching aspects of technology that contributed to the codes thereby resulting in a film being associated with a particular generic convention or subtype. Thus, one aspect of my methodology will be to demonstrate how the political thriller predates *The Manchurian Candidate,* but also that the Frankenheimer film is as much an endpoint for the cycle of political thrillers I am considering, as it is transitional film for what would become the paranoid political thrillers of the mid-1960s and the 1970s.

The organization of this thesis is in two parts, with Part One consisting of Chapters One and, while Part Two includes Chapters Three, Four and Five. Within Chapter One, I establish the corpus of just over one hundred films whilst setting the terrain for the political thriller through a discussion of key thematic components. The application of a political-historical framework provides a structure that enables a more nuanced approach to the textual and contextual analysis of the political thriller. In addition, Chapter One includes a section on Cold War historiography, and in particular I focus on the role of U.S. State Department employee, George F. Kennan, and the Rosenberg espionage case to contextualize the period and the relationship to the Cold War political discourses, rhetoric and propaganda reflected within the corpus of films.

The focus of Chapter Two is on technology and style of the political thriller, with five exemplary films providing the context for this discussion. Whilst varying production values are evident amongst the global corpus of films, nevertheless, technological innovation in the postwar era enabled the political thriller to achieve a degree of authenticity. For example, greater portability of camera and lighting equipment eliminated some production challenges associated with shooting on location, thereby contributing to the documentary quality exhibited by many of these films considered in this thesis. As mini-case studies films will be discussed within Chapter Two: *Berlin Express* (Tourneur, 1948), *Big Jim McLain* (Ludwig, 1952), *Pickup on South Street* (Fuller, 1953), *Night People* (Johnson, 1954), and finally *The Manchurian Candidate* (Frankenheimer, 1962). Not only are these productions representative of technological innovation (particularly *Night People* which was shot in color and Cinemascope), each film is representative of the codes and conventions that establish these productions as political thrillers. Also included in this discussion will be the elements of

Cold War socio-political discourses, a thread that will be continued and expanded upon part two of the thesis (Chapters Three through Five).

In Part Two of my thesis I shall focus on the political thriller within the context of national security, presidential rhetoric and the atomic bomb. Indeed, given the number of narratives that include the atomic trope (nearly half of the global corpus), it will become possible to speak of an atomic political thriller within the context of specific cycles. Chapters Three (early cycle), Four (middle cycle) and Five (late cycle) shall be mapped to the nuclear timeline, with each chapter providing an overview of the socio-political climate prior to offering a contextual analysis of exemplary films as they reside within thematic clusters.

Chapter Three is devoted to the early cycle of atomic political thrillers released over a six-year period, between 1945 and 1951. Indeed, this period is the densest amongst the corpus of films (with over forty-one political thrillers), with nearly one-half of these narratives including the atomic trope. The early cycle is representative of a new uneasiness in the postwar era as it depicts the lengths the United States must go to in order to keep the atomic bomb out of the hands of its enemies. Moreover this cycle is representative of a time when the threat to national security, and ultimately the American way of life, vis-à-vis Communism is finally named. This chapter shall also introduce the propagandist nature of these films, a theme that will continue throughout the decade and into the 1960s. Here we shall explore through contextual analysis of key atomic political thrillers the message the that the United States government will protect America, but that it is also impossible for government agents to catch everyone, so all Americans must do their part to help keep the nation safe.

Chapter Four addresses the middle cycle of atomic political thrillers, a period that spans the years between 1952 and 1955 and coincides with events that include the election of Dwight David Eisenhower, the execution of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg and the end of the Korean War. Whilst this cycle spans a mere four-year period, the shortest of the three cycles discussed in part two of this thesis, nevertheless, it is inclusive of eighteen films and is also as dense as the early cycle of atomic political thrillers. In addition, there is a doubling of political discourses throughout this cycle. On the one hand, there is the persistent linking of Communism and homosexuality whilst on the other there is the presidential rhetoric known as

"Let's Clean House." It is this fear over the America's inability to distinguish the internal threat that is a significant narrative element of the cluster of films considered in Chapter Four.

With Chapter Five, I shall discuss the years and productions between 1956 and 1962, or what I refer to as the late cycle of atomic political thrillers. During this period, a small handful of productions are released. Indeed, with just six atomic political thrillers, this is the least dense of the three cycles. Moreover, the late cycle is also the most significant with respect to changing attitudes towards the atomic bomb. Development of the Hydrogen bomb and the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) along with the successful launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union now meant that a nuclear war (with a destructive capacity far beyond that of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) could be waged from vast distances. However, there was a growing concern that the chances for survival and the danger associated with radioactive fallout were contrary to what the United States government promoted in its various civil defense programs. Thus the late cycle as I shall demonstrate in Chapter Five marks a dramatic shift whereby the unknowability of the atomic bomb is replaced with an unprecedented representation of nuclear annihilation.

CHAPTER ONE
SETTING THE TERRAIN OF THE POLITICAL THRILLER
(1945-1962)

Introduction

As I explained in the Introduction the political thriller prior to 1962 is often overlooked by critics and historians, yet the films I am considering speak directly to the changing geopolitical and social conditions and discourses as America entered a postwar atomic era. Narratives within this subgenre typically parallel or anticipate key historical moments, but they also serve an important ideological function. As my thesis will demonstrate, the political thriller (both by its narrative and stylistic conventions) became a tool of presidential rhetoric, propaganda and psychological warfare during the Cold War. Moreover, just as the atomic bomb permeated all aspects of Cold War culture, its resonance is also evident within the political thriller, becoming a major narrative trope, as we shall see in the second half of this thesis. Thus, the historical contextualization offered in this chapter, or what I call setting the terrain, is important to an understanding of how and why the political thriller emerged as a distinct and relevant subgenre immediately following World War Two.

With the end of the World War Two, the U.S. and the Soviet Union emerged as the world's only superpowers and almost immediately these two nations entered into a dangerous nuclear arms race. There was also a fervent campaign in the late 1940s by House Un-American Acts Committee (HUAC) to expose Communists throughout all levels of society. With the 1950s there was a clear ebb and flow of tensions between the two superpowers, with the U.S. continuing its campaign to contain the Communist threat through political and psychological warfare, whilst preparing Americans for a nuclear World War Three. Certainly the U.S. faced numerous diplomatic challenges during the Eisenhower presidency, of which the U-2 spy plane incident marked a major turning point in the Cold War. In May 1960, a Soviet V-750 surface-to-air missile shot down the supposedly invulnerable U-2 plane piloted by Frances Gary Powers. The incident was to become the first in a series of diplomatic crises

that pushed the limits of U.S.-Soviet brinksmanship; with the others being the failed Bay of Pigs invasion (April 1961), the Berlin Crisis (June and November 1961) and finally, the Cuban Missile Crisis (October 1962) under the presidency of John F. Kennedy.

Concerns over an expanding Communist sphere manifested themselves quickly in the postwar era and the U.S. responded through policies of containment, a political concept architected by George F. Kennan, a State Department advisor on Soviet affairs. Although I shall offer more detail about Kennan's role in the Cold War in the section below, just to quickly summarize, there were three principle goals of containment: restoring the balance of power; reducing Soviet projected power established through external, subservient Communist governments; and, finally, modifying the Soviet concept of international relations. To achieve these goals, the U.S. relied heavily on providing foreign aid, trade negotiations and later, during the Eisenhower administration, psychological warfare through propaganda. The targets of the first two strategies of aide and trade were predominately the Western European countries, whereas psychological warfare was directed more towards Eastern-bloc. The U.S. turned towards China in 1949, having adopted a "wedge" strategy as a means to encourage the split between the newly formed Peoples Republic of China and the Soviet Union.[35] Indeed, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East would all at one point or another during the Cold War receive attention as the U.S. worked to promote and protect its interests at home and abroad. That many of the films considered in this thesis depict U.S. efforts to contain Communism, with over half (in one way or another) addressing issues of national security within the new atomic age, speaks to the weight of such issues on the American psyche, giving credence to my labeling these films as political thrillers.

Whilst officially ending in the late 1980s with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the unraveling of the Soviet bloc, the Cold War, nevertheless, is not considered as a singularly long epoch. Rather, historians (see LaFeber, Gaddis) typically delineate three major periods when discussing the Cold War, with the first being the years from 1945 and 1962 (the

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[35] The Truman administration initiated the wedge strategy, with its principle architect being Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Although Eisenhower and Dulles were initially critical of this approach, once Eisenhower assumed the presidency in 1952, the two men viewed this strategy more favorably.

timeframe for production and release of the films that form the focus of my thesis). The second major period of the Cold War is typically identified as the period between 1979 and 1989, whilst the years between (the first and second Cold War) from 1963 to 1978 are identified as Détente for the cooling of the tensions between the two superpowers. Mapping my corpus of films, both historically and politically as illustrated in *Figure 1.1* (shown below)*, allows us to reflect upon on the intricacies of the Cold War to American culture and identity.

PERIOD	KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS	FILMS
Onset (1945 – 1948)	- Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki - Kennan's *Long Telegram* - Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech - Operation Paperclip - Truman Doctrine - Marshall Plan - Berlin Blockade - Whittaker Chambers testifies before HUAC	*Betrayal from the East* (Berke, 1945) *Confidential Agent* (Shumlin, 1945) *First Yank into Tokyo* (Douglas, 1945) *The House on 92nd Street* (Hathaway, 1945) *Paris Underground* (Ratoff, 1945) *Cloak and Dagger* (Lang, 1946) *Flight to Nowhere* (Rowland, 1946) *Notorious* (Hitchcock, 1946) *O.S.S.* (Pichel, 1946) *Rendezvous 24* (Tinling, 1946) *The Stranger* (Welles, 1946) *13 Rue Madeleine* (Hathaway, 1947) *Golden Earrings* (Leisen, 1947) *The Beginning or the End* (Taurog, 1947) *Berlin Express* (Tourneur, 1948) *The Iron Curtain* (Wellman, 1948) *Walk A Crooked Mile* (Douglas, 1948) *Sofia* (Reinhardt, 1948) *Women in the Night* (Rowland, 1948)
Confrontation (1949 – 1952)	- Formation of NATO - Soviet A-Bomb - Conviction of Alger Hiss - Arrest and conviction of	*The Woman on Pier 13* (Stevenson, 1949) *The Red Danube* (Sidney, 1949) *The Red Menace* (Springsteen, 1949)

	Julius and Ethel Rosenberg • Chinese Communist Revolution • Korean War • McCarthyism	• *Rose of the Yukon* (Blair, 1949) • *State Department File 649* (Stewart, 1949) • *We Were Strangers* (Huston, 1949) • *Crisis* (Brooks, 1950) • *Counterspy Meets Scotland Yard* (Friedman, 1950) • *D.O.A.* (Maté, 1950) • *Spy Hunt* (Sherman, 1950) • *David Harding, Counterspy* (Nazarro, 1950) • *The Big Lift* (Seaton, 1950) • *Guilty of Treason* (Feist, 1950) • *Panic in the Streets* (Kazan, 1950) • *Radar Secret Service* (Newfield, 1950) • *Decision Before Dawn* (Litvak, 1951) • *I was an American Spy* (Selander, 1951) • *I was a Communist for the F.B.I.* (Douglas, 1951) • *Sealed Cargo* (Werker, 1951) • *Flame of Stamboul* (Nazarro, 1951) • *The Tall Target* (Mann, 1951) • *The Whip Hand* (Menzies, 1951) • *Peking Express* (Dieterle, 1951) • *Tokyo File 212* (McGowan, 1951) • *Arctic Flight* (Landers, 1952) • *Assignment – Paris* (Parrish, 1952) • *Atomic City* (Hopper, 1952) • *Big Jim McLain* (Ludwig, 1952) • *My Son John (*McCarey, 1952*)* • *Diplomatic Courier* (Hathaway, 1952) • *Five Fingers* (Mankiewicz, 1952) • *Operation Secret* (Seiler, 1952) • *Red Snow* (Petroff, 1952) • *The Thief* (Rouse, 1952)

		• *The Steel Fist* (Barry, 1952)
		• *Walk East on Beacon!* (Werker, 1952)
		• *Invasion U.S.A.* (Green, 1952)
Slight Thaw (1953 – 1954)	• Dwight D Eisenhower assumes office • Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" Speech • Censure of Senator McCarthy • Execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg • Death of Stalin • Khrushchev assumes power • Soviet H-Bomb • Oppenheimer looses credentials • Cuban Revolution begins	• *Above and Beyond* (Frank, 1953) • *Captain Scarface* (Guilfoyle, 1953) • *Guerrilla Girl* (Christian, 1953) • *Never Let Me Go* (Daves, 1953) • *Pickup on South Street* (Fuller, 1953) • *The 49th Man* (Sears, 1953) • *Split Second* (Powell, 1953) • *Tangier Incident* (Landers, 1953) • *Night People* (Johnson, 1954) • *Operation Manhunt* (Alexander, 1954) • *Prisoner of War* (Marton, 1954) • *World for Ransom* (Aldrich, 1954) • *Hell and High Water* (Fuller, 1954) • *Security Risk* (Schuster, 1954)
Heating Up (1955 – 1959)	• National Committee for Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) • Warsaw Pact • Sputnik I • Castro assumes control of Cuba	• *Kiss Me Deadly* (Aldrich, 1955) • *Suddenly* (Allen, 1955) • *Port of Hell* (Schuster, 1955) • *Shack Out on 101* (Dein, 1955) • *A Bullet for Joey* (Allen, 1955) • *Foreign Intrigue* (Reynolds, 1956) • *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (Hitchcock, 1956) • *Five Steps to Danger* (Kesler, 1957) • *Jungle Heat* (Koch, 1957) • *Time Limit* (Malden, 1957) • *Jet Pilot* (Von Sternberg, 1957)[36] • *Stopover Tokyo* (Breen, 1957) • *The Girl in the Kremlin* (Birdwell, 1957)

[36] The release date of *Jet Pilot* is 1957 due to Howard Hughes' decision to shelve the film. If we actually went by production date instead of release date, and with von Sternberg involvement with production until February 1950, the John Wayne star vehicle would fall within the period of confrontation.

		• *The Fearmakers* (Tourneur, 1958)
		• *Hong Kong Confidential* (Cahn, 1958)
		• *On the Beach* (Kramer, 1958)
		• *The Quiet American* (Mankiewicz, 1958)
		• *North by Northwest* (Hitchcock, 1959)
		• *City of Fear* (Lerner, 1959)
		• *The Journey* (Litvak, 1959)
		• *The FBI Story* (Le Roy, 1959)
Beginning of Re-Confrontation (1960 – 1962)	• U-2 Spy Plane Incident • JFK assumes office • Vienna Summit • Bay of Pigs • Berlin Crisis • Cuban Missile Crisis	• *Man on a String* (De Toth, 1960) • *Rocket Attack U.S.A.* (Mahon, 1961) • *Operation Eichmann* (Springsteen, 1961) • *The Secret Ways* (Karlson, 1961) • *Panic in Year Zero!* (Milland, 1962) • *This is not a Test* (Gadette, 1962) • *The Counterfeit Traitor* (Seaton, 1962) • *Advise and Consent* (Preminger, 1962) • *The Manchurian Candidate* (Frankenheimer, 1962)

Fig. 1.1: Political thrillers mapped to key historical events.

Indeed, *Figure 1.1* reveals that the Onset and Confrontation periods offer the greatest density of films, something that I shall discuss in more detail within this and subsequent chapters. In this chapter, I shall briefly discuss Hollywood's place within Cold War history, after which I shall move onto a discussion of the U.S. response to the Communist threat vis-à-vis its strategies of containment and the Ethel Rosenberg case and trial. Finally, I shall discuss my application of traditional Cold War periodization to these films and how they may be viewed within the context of cycles and dominant themes. Part of this discussion will also address the way in which the political thriller strives for authenticity (as part of its propagandistic practice).

Running Afoul of HUAC: Hollywood Enters the Cold War

The impact of the Cold War was felt within the film industry as much as within other major American industrial complexes. Thus, in the wake of HUAC and the growing influence of non-governmental, ideologically motivated organizations such as the Catholic Legion of Decency, complex relationships emerged within the state-private network. According to Tony Shaw, the state-private network 'acted more imaginatively and constructively,' with unprecedented government intervention during the postwar era.[37] Shaw goes on to write:

> . . . both Democratic and Republican governments also acted in more constructive ways . . . by openly sponsoring or lending assistance to films that supported the official Cold War consensus. These films might or might not have been seen as official propaganda, depending on the audience's alertness and the frankness of movie credits.[38]

U.S. governmental entities that included the State Department, Pentagon, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the United States Information Agency (USIA) willingly offered support, ranging from 'openly lending logistical and financial assistance to trustworthy filmmakers, secretly setting up a consortium of famous directors, producers and actors to project American democracy at home and overseas, and covertly sponsoring ostensibly foreign-made, anti-Soviet productions.'[39]

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[37] Tony Shaw, 'Ambassadors of the Screen: Film and the State-Private Network in Cold War America' in *The US Government, Citizen Groups and the Cold War: The State-Private Network,* ed. by Helen Laville and Hugh Wilford (New York: Routledge, 2006), 158.

[38] Ibid., 164.

[39] The USIA functioned as an independent foreign affairs agency within the U.S. executive branch since its inception in 1953. The organization's mission is to "understand, inform, and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions and their counterparts abroad." Notable activities include international broadcasting support via Voice of America and Radio Free Europe. <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/usiahome/oldoview.htm>; see Shaw, 'Ambassadors of the Screen: Film and the State-Private Network in Cold War America', 158.

Whilst many Hollywood studios and independent production companies professed the importance of producing anti-Communist films, the film industry's bringing these narratives to the big screen may have actually been motivated by fear. In *Running Time: Films of the Cold War* (1982), author Nora Sayre contends:

> [F]or certain film makers, being asked to work on an anti-Communist picture was like a loyalty test; if someone who was thought to be a Communist refused to participate in the project it was assumed that he must be a party member. So for some writers, directors, and actors, taking part in a film such as *I Married a Communist*, was rather like receiving clearance – it meant that they were politically clean.[40]

The consequences of being "politically clean" meant the studios could avoid the scrutiny of HUAC. Paradoxically, this meant a major shift with respect to those productions released by Hollywood when the U.S. finally entered the war in 1942. Indeed, every major studio responded to public demand for topical films that would bolster the war effort and this included pro-Soviet films. RKO, for example, distributed *The North Star* (Millstone, 1943) and *Days of Glory* (Tourneur, 1944), whereas Columbia went on to release *The Boy from Stalingrad* (Salkow, 1943) and *Counter-Attack* (Korda, 1945). MGM contributed *Three Russian Girls* (Kesler and Ostep, 1943) and the positively received *Song of Russia* (Ratoff, 1944). Whilst these productions portrayed America's then ally, the Soviet Union, sympathetically or heroically (as with *Days of Glory* which stared Gregory Peck as the protagonist Vladimir), ironically many of these films would later become subjects of inquiry by HUAC. Suddenly, once the Cold War was in full swing, Hollywood was closely scrutinized, with Warner Bros. and its film *Mission to Moscow* at the center of HUAC's inquiry.

Warner Bros. considered *Mission to Moscow* (Curtiz, 1943), staring Walter Huston and Ann Harding, to be just another production in its catalog of wartime propaganda films that also included two other Curtiz projects: *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942) and *This is the Army*

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[40] Nora Sayre, *Running Time: Films of the Cold War* (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 29.

(1943). Indeed, those working on *Mission to Moscow* believed it had the specific endorsement of President Roosevelt. Moreover, screenwriter Howard E. Koch, who was eventually blacklisted in 1951 for his leftist political views, relied on a variety of sources that included minutes of the League of Nations, the Moscow trials and the Joseph Davies autobiography by the same name.[41] As the American ambassador to the Soviet Union from January 1937 to June 1938, Davies was not overly knowledgeable about Russia, although he accurately predicted the *Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939,* and thereby gained favor within the Roosevelt administration.[42] Surprisingly, and perhaps due to his relationship with Roosevelt, the U.S. State Department allowed Davies to reveal confidential reports and excerpts from personal journals and records of private conversations with high-ranking officials. Whilst the American public was intrigued, making Ambassador Davies' memoirs an immediate bestseller, the cinematic version of *Mission to Moscow* was a financial failure, but there was also a bevy of criticism for its glorification of Stalin and mistruths.[43] By 1947, Koch had been fired and denounced as a Communist, and Jack Warner was forced to defend *Mission to Moscow* to HUAC. In his appearance before the committee, Warner claimed the film was 'made only to help a desperate effort and was not for posterity.'[44] Although he would go on to deny any involvement by the Roosevelt administration, nevertheless, Warner testified before HUAC:

> If making *Mission to Moscow* in 1942 was a subversive activity, then the
> American Liberty ships which carried food and guns to Russian allies and the

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[41] John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 43-44; Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 311-312; John Belton, 'From *American Cinema / American Culture*' in *Movies and American Society*, ed. Steven Ross (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 2002), 203.
[42] Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947,* 35.
[43] David Culbert ed., 'Introduction: The Feature Film as Propaganda' in *Mission to Moscow* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 34.
[44] Brian Nerve, *Film and Politics in American: A Social Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 108.

American naval vessels which conveyed them were likewise engaged in subversive activities.[45]

Whereas *Mission to Moscow* was less about the courageous sacrifice of the Soviet people than, as historian Reynold Humphries claims, a 'paean of praise to Stalin and a justification of his regime,' by 1947, this film had helped pave the way for Hollywood's response to the Communist threat (in that it would have to move in the opposite direction) and it's uneasy partnership with Washington D.C (in that state pressure would now be something the industry had to contend with).[46]

Kennan, Containment and the Atomic Question: Early Cold War Context for the Political Thriller

I would like to step back for a moment to establish the historical context of the Cold War given its importance to my methodological framework. In *Democracy in America* (1835), now considered a classic work of political science, social science and history, Alexis de Tocqueville, prophesized a Russian-American bipolarization of power that would come to describe Cold War conditions:

> There are now two great nations in the world, which starting from different points, seem to be advancing toward the same goal: the Russians and the Anglo-Americans . . . [E]ach seems called by some secret design of Providence one day to hold in its hands the destinies of half the world.[47]

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[45] Robert Mayhew, *Ayn Rand and Song of Russia: Communism and Anti-Communism in 1940s Hollywood* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005), 145.
[46] Reynold Humphries, *Hollywood's Blacklists: A Political and Cultural History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 92. See also Thom Anderson, 'Red Hollywood', *"Un-American" Hollywood: Politics and Film in the Blacklist Era,* ed. by Frank Krutnik, Steve Neale et al. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 244.
[47] Quoted by John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.

As historian John Baylis points out, this bipolar view is frequently adopted as an analytical framework, but is often overly narrow in scope, and thus fails to address the roles of other nations within Cold War historiography.[48] Certainly U.S. foreign policy, security and national identity were all profoundly influenced by globalization and the emerging economic, political and military systems across Europe, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, and not merely a reaction to the Kremlin. Although a more inclusive approach to Cold War historiography would be intriguing, nevertheless, the bipolar framework is appropriate within the context of this thesis given the emphasis of U.S.-Soviet relations within political thriller narratives between 1945 and 1962, and in particular for the films I call atomic political thrillers.

Indeed, U.S. distrust of Russia during the World War One, and then later the Soviet Union (after the 1917 October Revolution), was portrayed cinematically well before the start of the Cold War. Concerns over bolshevism, and most notably its influence on American labor unions, spurred anti-Soviet sentiments. One of the earliest films to include the subject of bolshevism is the now lost film *The Great Love* (1918) by director D. W. Griffith for Famous Players-Lasky. However, in 1919, the year immediately following World War One, seventeen films with the subject of Bolsheviks and bolshevism were released as now identified by the American Film Institute (AFI) Feature Film catalog available online.[49] Yet throughout the next decade, during the 1920s, an identical number of productions (seventeen) were released as cited by the AFI online catalog. Given that so few films featuring Bolsheviks were released between 1920 and 1929 (in comparison to the quantity released in 1919) suggests that even if the American public were suspicious of the Soviet influence, there wasn't enough interest to warrant many productions. Following World War One, President Woodrow Wilson asserted that change was needed, proposing that: 'a new role and a new responsibility have come to this great nation that we honor and which we would all wish to lift to yet higher levels of

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[48] John Baylis, *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism: Britain and the Formation of NATO, 1942-1949* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1993), 3.
[49] American Film Institute, 'Bolsheviks*'*, in *Catalog of Feature Films,* <http://www.afi.com/members/catalog/search.aspx?s=>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

service and achievement.'[50] Wilson was committed to the spread of democracy, yet the vast majority of Americans were unmoved by such sentiments. In addition, claims of wartime profiteering by isolationist stalwart and Republican Senator, Gerald P. Nye from North Dakota, contributed to the reticence felt amongst Americans for any future involvement in European affairs whilst the U.S. Congress declined to approve membership in the League of Nations despite vigorous encouragement of President Wilson. Though we may not point to any one cause as the motivation for withdrawing from the politics of Europe after World War One, what did become clear, by 1945, as the world entered the atomic age, was that isolationism was no longer a politics the U.S. could safely pursue and the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) clearly signifies this geopolitical shift.

Sometimes referred to as America's first Cold Warrior, President Truman set the tone for U.S. response to political, military and ideological challenges presented by the Soviet Union for the next two decades. The presidential address before a joint session of Congress (March 1947) was a reminder that the U.S. had entered the war to protect freedom and democracy:

> One of the primary objectives of foreign policy of the United States is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion. This was a fundamental issue in the war with Germany and Japan. Our victory was won over countries which sought to impose their will, and their way of life, upon other nations. . . . The people of a number of countries of the world have recently had totalitarian regimes forced upon them against their will. The Government of the United States has made frequent protests against coercion and intimidation, in violation of the Yalta

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[50] Woodrow Wilson, 'Address to Fellow-Countrymen' in *Supplement to the Messages and Papers of Presidents, Covering the Second Term of Woodrow Wilson, March 4, 1917 to March 4, 1921* (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1921), 8737.

agreement, in Poland, Rumania and Bulgaria. I must also state that in a

number of other countries there have been similar developments.[51]

The emphasis on America's obligation to become more involved, globally echoed the

presidential rhetoric of Woodrow Wilson, but substantial changes both in terms of political

climate and perceived risk meant the U.S. was more willing to adopt policies supporting: 'free

peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside

pressures;' a principle that was to become the foundation for the Truman Doctrine.

During this period American advisor George F. Kennan would distinguish himself as a

key figure in the Cold War, with writings and analysis that created a lasting roadmap for U.S.

Cold War containment strategies.[52] As the author of what is now known as the *Long

Telegram* (861.00/2 – 2246, 1946) and the "X Article" (formally known as "The Sources of

Soviet Conduct") published in 1946 by *Foreign Affairs*, Kennan concluded that Soviet

acquisitions and its spheres of influence would serve as a lasting source of insecurity and

instability, particularly as resistance to Moscow's control increased over time. The Soviet

Union, according to Kennan, presented an immediate threat, whereby 'Communism is like a

malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue';[53] such a bleak view illustrates a

prescience of the ideological threat posed by Communism to the American psyche. Many of

the political thrillers released between 1945 and 1955 introduce the way in which Communist

agents will, at the very least, undermine, but actually seek to destroy American institutions.

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[51] Harry S. Truman, Address of the President to Congress Recommending Assistance to Greece and Turkey, 12 Mar 1947, Harry S. Truman Administration, Elsey Papers', *Harry S. Truman Library and Museum,* <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/pdfs/5-9.pdf#zoom=100> [accessed 10 Sept 2014]

[52] The obituary for George Kennan published in 2005 by the *New York Times* described him as 'the American diplomat who did more than any other envoy of his generation to shape United States policy during the cold war.' Tim Weiner and Barbara Crossette, 'George F. Kennan Dies at 101; Leading Strategist of Cold War', *New York Times*, 18 March 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/18/politics/18kennan.html?_r=0&pagewanted=print&position=> , [accessed 1 Sept 2014].

[53] George F. Kennan, *861.00/2-2246: Telegram* (1946), <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm> , [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

Individuals having the misfortune of falling under the spell of Communism will turn their backs on everything that is good and righteous, including: turning against God as depicted by *The Red Menace* (Springsteen, 1949) and *My Son John* (McCarey 1952); turning against family as shown in *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* (Douglas, 1951) and *My Son John*; fueling racial hatred and antagonism depicted in *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* and *Big Jim McLain* (Ludwig, 1952); and finally, turning against country as seen in *Walk East on Beacon!* (Werker, 1952)*, The Thief* (Rouse, 1952), and *A Bullet for Joey* (Allen, 1955). Yet, by way of balance, it is true to say that the murkiness of U.S. foreign policy and geopolitical strategy, particularly during the early years of the Cold War, is also evident in films such as *Notorious* (Hitchcock, 1946), *Sofia* (Reinhardt, 1948), *Night People* (Johnson, 1954) and *Prisoner of War* (Marton, 1954).

Confident that the Soviet Union was technologically behind, it became necessary for the Truman administration to reassess the political implications of and the risk to national security following the detonation of the Communist super power's first atomic bomb in September 1949.[54] The National Security Council (NSC) Report 68 adopted in 1950 reinforces the need to contain Communism; it also identifies strategic rearmament as essential to U.S. national security. Accordingly, NSC-68 elevated the atomic bomb to a 'privileged position in the national arsenal, and at the chief executive's determination, could be used in time of war.'[55] NSC-68 also marks a turning point in the prevailing political discourses of the 1950s, codifying the nation's fears over the atomic bomb and the enemy within, as embodied by Ethel Rosenberg.

Much has been written in the sixty years following the arrest and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, although there is still a great deal of mystery and controversy surrounding the case that J. Edgar Hoover would call the "crime of the century." Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were prosecuted and convicted largely based on the testimony of several key witnesses, of which Ethel's younger brother, David Greenglass, a skilled machinist

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[54] David Allen Mayers, *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of US Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 305.
[55] Office of the Historian, 'Milestones: 1945-1952, NSC-68', <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/NSC68>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

working on the Manhattan Project and his wife, Ruth, who provided some of the most damming evidence. The U.S. government asserted that David had been asked by his brother-in-law to provide information on the atomic bomb, whilst Ethel Rosenberg (based on claims by Ruth Greenglass) was responsible for typing the notes that were subsequently sent to the Soviet Union as microfilm. Ruth Greenglass would go on to testify:

> I asked her [Ethel] if she had found David's notes hard to distinguish. She said no, she was used to his handwriting. . . . and David was helping her when she couldn't make out his handwriting and explained the technical terms and spelled them out for her, and Julius and I helped her with the phraseology when it got a little too lengthy, wordy.[56]

David corroborated his wife's testimony, claiming that the materials related to the atomic bomb were delivered to Julius in the presence of Ethel, and that his sister had been the one to transcribe the notes on a portable typewriter. David also claimed he delivered sketches of a high explosive lens mold along with a sketch of a nuclear 'implosion bomb' with approximately twelve pages of description, but when asked to reproduce the drawings for the prosecution they were crude and amateurish.[57]

Ethel was called before the grand jury within weeks of her husband's arrest, and though she appeared only twice, she invoked the Fifth Amendment both times. The FBI subsequently arrested her for conspiracy to commit espionage, although declassified documents indicate that Hoover intended to use Ethel as a 'lever' to compel Julius to confess to his role. Maintaining a stoic appearance throughout contributed to the press and the

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[56] Ruth Greenglass, 'Excerpts and Summaries from the Rosenberg Trial Transcript', *Rosenberg Trial Transcript* <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/rosenb/ROS_TRGR.HTM>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

[57] When the trial testimony of David Greenglass was declassified in 1966, his information was deemed worthless. Additionally, Professor Ulmay had in testified in 1946 that it would take eighty to ninety volumes to accurately describe the atomic bomb. See Elizabeth Schulte, 'The Trial of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg', *International Socialist Review,* 29 (May-June, 2003), <http://www.isreview.org/issues/29/rosenbergs.shtml>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

American public turning against Ethel. As a woman, she wasn't supposed to be interested in politics, and more importantly, as a wife and mother, Ethel was expected to be more emotional, demonstrating her commitment to family and children. Thus, in the eyes of the public, Ethel came to embody an evil far greater than her revolutionary, spy husband.[58] In a letter to his son John, President Eisenhower wrote that Ethel was a 'strong and recalcitrant character' and that she had 'obviously been the leader in everything they did in the spy ring.'[59] Thus, the perceived threat of women to America's national security at this time is telling when in the same letter Eisenhower offered 'if there would be any commuting of the woman's sentence without the man's then from here on the Soviets would simply recruit their spies from among women.'[60] As historian Kate Baldwin would write:

> While the public enactment of trials against suspected Communists such as the Hollywood Ten, Alger Hiss, W.E.B. Du Bois, and the Rosenbergs reinforced the sense of an internal threat, the trials were not simply public theater staged to purge the nation of undesirable elements. Rather, the domestic anxieties subtending and elicited by these trials correlated to anxieties about foreign policy, the U.S. rise to global power.[61]

As a result of this perceived threat, the concept of family and home changed in the postwar era. Americans were encouraged to embrace domesticity as a way of regaining control over everyday life whilst shutting out the uncertainty introduced by the atomic age (a point that will be developed in the second part of my thesis where I discuss in full the atomic political thriller). Historian Elaine Tyler May describes domesticity and family togetherness as an essential element of the postwar America:

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[58] Kathryn S. Olmsted, *Red Spy Queen: A Biography of Elizabeth Bentley* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 137.

[59] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953 – 1956* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), 225.

[60] Ibid., 225.

[61] Kate A. Baldwin, 'Between Mother and History: Jean Stafford, Marguerite Oswald, and U.S. Cold War Women's Citizenship', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 13:3 (2002), 86.

A home filled with children would create a feeling of warmth and security against the cold forces of disruption and alienation. Children would also be connection to the future and a means of replenishing a world depleted by war deaths. . . . In secure postwar homes with plenty of children, American women and men might be able to ward off their nightmares and live out their dreams.[62]

Yet a paradox emerges within this new atomic culture. Whilst women are both an essential component of the American dream, at the same time they are also perceived to be a risk to national security. Indeed, Philip Wylie's 1942 best seller, *Generation of Vipers,* and more specifically his chapter on "momism" is one of the first to link the female body to the nuclear. Wylie coined the term momism to describe how American mothers disempowered their husbands and smothered their children.[63] As an advisor to the Commission on Atomic Energy, Wylie strongly believed in using the atomic bomb to protect America, but he also asserted that a new breed of overprotective mothers would weaken the next generation of males to the point where they would be vulnerable to Communist threat. With respect to manhood during the period of the Cold War, it was believed, as cultural historian K. A. Cuordileone writes, that American males had:

. . . become the victims of smothering, overpowering, suspiciously collectivist mass society – a society that had smashed the once-autonomous male, elevated women to a position of power in the home, and doomed men to a slavish conformity not wholly unlike that experienced by men living under Communist rule.[64]

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[62] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 17.
[63] Michael Pressler, 'Atomic Warfare and the Nuclear Family: Domestic Resistance in Hollywood Films about the A-Bomb', *Film Criticism,* 27:3 (Spring 2003), 40.
[64] K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2004), 522-23.

With the middle-class nuclear family at risk, the U.S. government attempted to lure women back into the home, whilst discourses surrounding national security treated Communism as a form of momism. There are two productions routinely cited within the context of momism, *My Son John* and *The Manchurian Candidate,* and by looking across the corpus of films considered within this thesis*,* it is possible to discern three distinct representations of Wylie's motherhood.   The first representation is the weak, irresponsible, coddling mother as exemplified by Lucille Jefferson (Helen Hayes) in *My Son John.* Surrounded by protective men -- husband Dan Jefferson (Dean Jagger), Father O'Dowd (Frank McHugh) and twin sons who are leaving for Korea – Lucille has been able to incessantly dote on and coddle her eldest son John (Robert Walker), even into adulthood. Dan Jefferson, John's father, is convinced that his son is a Communist, but Lucille has her son swear on the bible that he is not, nor ever has he ever been a member of the Communist Party. However, once Lucille realizes her son is indeed a Communist, clearly involved with a convicted female spy (an indirect link to Elizabeth Bentley who was known as the Red Spy Queen and Judith Coplon), she is forced to acknowledge her failings as a mother. Eventually Lucille will forsake her maternal bond for God and country, begging FBI agent Steadman (Van Heflin) to take her son away so that John may be punished for his transgression. This representation of momism is also evident in the film *Suddenly* (Allen, 1954) with the character of Ellen Benson (Nancy Gates)*.* A widow of three years, Ellen Benson and her young son Pidge Benson (Kim Charney) live with her father-in-law, retired U.S. Secret Service Agent Pop Benson (James Gleason). Whilst the elder Benson and Suddenly town Sherriff Todd Shaw (Sterling Hayden), a likeable and persistent man who is courting Ellen, both attempt to serve as normative masculine role models for Pidge, their efforts are met with fierce resistance. Desperate to protect her son from violence and death at all cost, Ellen refuses to allow Pidge to see war movies or play with toy guns despite the other boys in town calling him a "sissy". At one point, Sheriff Todd Shaw tells Ellen that she cannot wrap Pidge in plastic wrap to protect him, and later Pop Benson tells her to 'stop being a woman' out of frustration for her excessive coddling. After the Benson family and Sheriff Todd Shaw are taken hostage by armed gunmen intent on assassinating U.S. president, Ellen realizes that she has been irresponsible

by trying to shield Pidge and the only way to protect the nuclear family is by shooting the would be assassin.

Yet another representation of momism is evident in the film *North by Northwest* (Hitchcock, 1958). Unlike the two women described above, Clara Thornhill (Jessie Royce Landis) is not overly clinging and demanding of her son's attention; however, she does not dissuade her son's over dependence. Indeed, it is Roger Thornhill's (Cary Grant) over dependence on his mother, which leads to his kidnapping by Vandamm (James Mason) and subsequent involvement with Eve Kendall's (Eva Marie Saint) counterespionage activities. Film scholar Robert J. Corber makes some cogent points in his analysis, writing that*:*

> *North by Northwest* participated in the network of congruent discourses that in the 1950s linked Communism and homosexuality in the nation's political imaginary. Such discourses warned against the potentially pernicious effects of motherhood and point to a reaction against the emergence of the so-called feminine mystique of the 1950s.[65]

As women returned to the domestic sphere in the postwar era, they subsequently exchanged political and economic subordination for, as Corber asserts, a 'maternal power generated by domesticity.'[66]

The final representation of momism through Eleanor Iselin (Angela Lansbury) in *The Manchurian Candidate* projects ongoing anxiety over Cold War patriarchy as well as the risk of Communism destroying the nuclear family from within. In contrast to the doting mothers Lucille Jefferson (*My Son John*) and Ellen Benson (*Suddenly*), the character Eleanor Iselin is the opposite side of the coin. Raymond Shaw's (Lawrence Harvey) mother, controls every aspect of life for her politician husband and attempts to do the same for her son, for sole purpose of delivering the U.S. presidency to the Communists. Whereas the other

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[65] Robert J. Corber, *In the Name of National Security: Hitchcock, Homophobia and the Political Construction of Gender in Postwar America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 197.

[66] Ibid., 197.

representations of momism are essentially unwittingly destructive, Eleanor Iselin's political machinations put into motion the deadly plan that allows her only child and his platoon to be taken captive in Korea and brainwashed by Soviet and Chinese Communists, so that Raymond Shaw could later become an assassin. I shall go into more detail about this final representation of momism as part of the mini-case study of *The Manchurian Candidate* presented in Chapter Three,

In addition to momism, the political thriller projects concerns over national security in relation to femininity and masculinity. I shall expand upon the relationship between femininity and masculinity specifically within the context of atomic political thriller in the second part of this thesis, although it is worth briefly mentioning here the relationship between the narrative for *Walk East on Beacon!,* and in particular, that of Ethel Rosenberg. In this atomic political thriller, released in June 1952 and approximately one year before the Rosenberg execution, the character of Elaine Willborn (Louisa Horton) is a leading organizer of spy network with direct access to her Soviet counterpart.   Moreover, Elaine Willborn maintains a cool detached demeanor that echoes the portrayal of Ethel Rosenberg by the American media and the government. In addition, the source material for *Walk East on Beacon* is attributed to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover. Moreover, onscreen credits describe the film as "a drama of real life", thus reinforcing, as I shall assert in the section below and in subsequent chapters, the role of authenticity as part of the generic convention for the Cold War political thriller.

Periodization and Dominant Themes

Mapping the corpus of political thrillers across the periodization illustrated in *Figure 1.2* shown below*,* we clearly see two peaks, with the greatest number of films belonging to the period of Confrontation between 1949 and 1952. Indeed, this represents over thirty of the political thrillers included in my corpus, with the greatest number actually being released in 1952 (see *Figure 1.1*).

	ONSET (1945-48)	CONFRONTATION (1949-52)	SLIGHT THAW (1953-54)	HEATING UP (1955-59)	RECONFRONTATION (1960-62)
Number	19	38	14	22	9
Percentage	18.6%	37.3%	13.7%	21.6%	8.8%
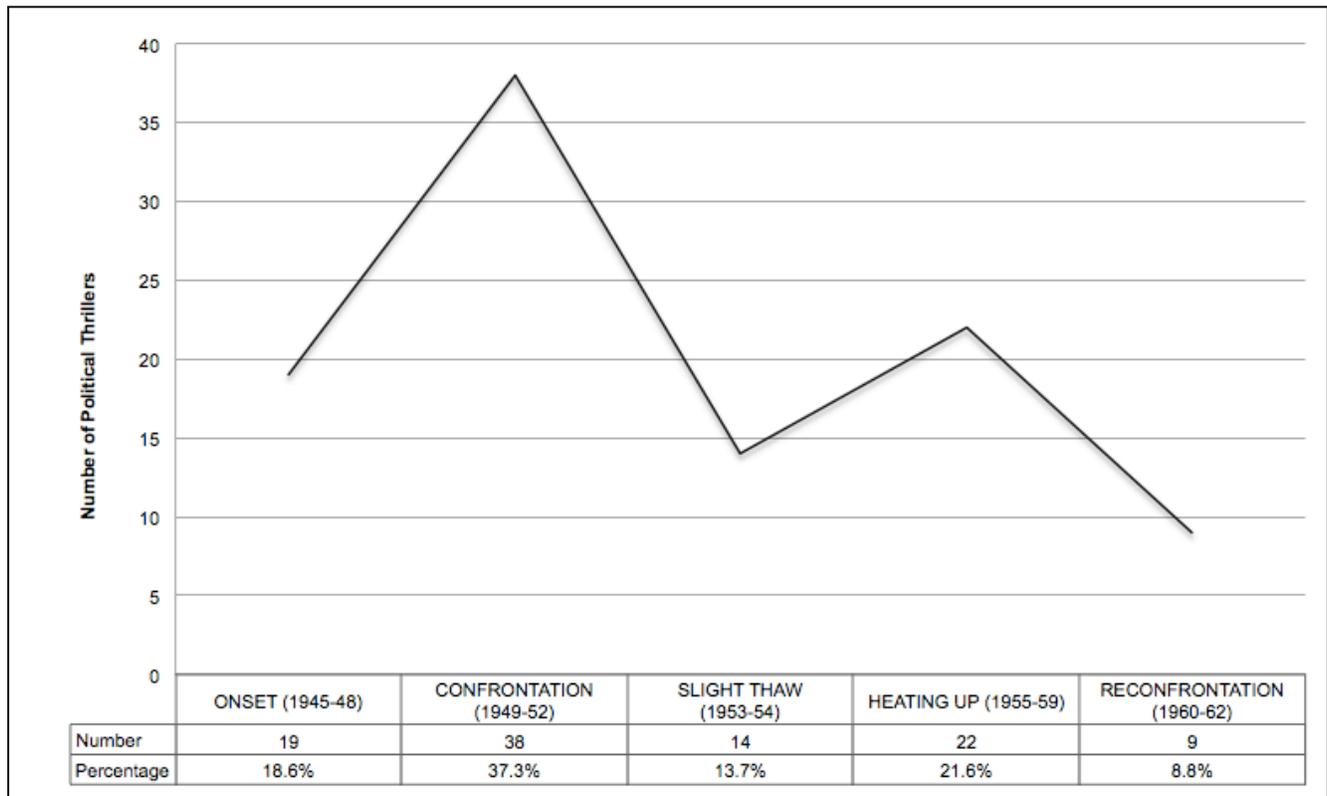
Fig. 1.2: Number of political thrillers to Cold War periodization.

What is noticeable from *Figure 1.2* is the striking decline in the number of political thrillers released during a period of Re-Confrontation between 1960-62, whilst the other four periods seemingly follow the ebbs and flows of the Cold War discourses and rhetoric. Thus, whilst the U.S.-Soviet relations were so tenuous that any diplomatic misstep could initiate another world war (this time fully nuclear), the decline in the political thriller is surprising until we consider that it may be more a matter of economics than politics. At this point, Hollywood was in competition with television. The impact of color TV was quickly realized upon its introduction to American audiences in 1950 by the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) network. Although programming was initially limited, the television broadcast networks expansion efforts forced Hollywood to fight back with epic stories filmed in color and Cinemascope (the first film in production was *The Robe* in 1953). The political thriller was,

however, typically a low- to mid-budget black-and-white product that was more readily marketable as a B-movie. Changing tastes necessitated a visual aesthetic that would appeal to audiences and reinvigorate the industry. Occasionally, therefore, where the political thriller is concerned and in order to attract audiences away from the color TV at home and offer a spectacle that would thrill them when going to the cinema, studios were prompted to deliver big budget star vehicles such as *Night People,* the remake of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *North By Northwest* using color film stock and Scope technology. I will analyze *Night People* in Chapter Two in some detail but the other color titles will also be discussed in conjunction with the mini-case studies.

Categorizing the Cold War in terms of five distinct periods (Onset, Confrontation, Slight Thaw, Heating Up and Re-Confrontation) enables the framing of the political thriller within a historical, political and social context. Moreover, our global corpus of films may also be broadly organized into several major themes, with the most common being: Communism, Espionage, the Atomic Bomb and Political Assassination. Brainwashing is also an established trope of the political thriller, but it is nearly always within the context of Communist indoctrination, hence my inclusion of it within the Communism thematic. Of course these categories are not mutually exclusive, and indeed, we frequently encounter an overlapping of themes within the narratives considered in this thesis, something that speaks to the overall psyche of the American people and the growing paranoia over the knowable and unknowable threats they faced.

A first over-riding point to be established, with regard to the textual and contextual analysis of the corpus of films, is that the dominating mood of the political thriller in this period of the Cold War is one of vulnerability; the underlying question becomes to what extent may a border (whether it is the mind or a physical locale, or the nuclear family) be penetrated, corrupted and, as necessary, destroyed by forces that may be political or atomic in nature? Interestingly, the theme of the vulnerability of the nuclear family receives limited attention, which is surprising given the insistence on family values in governmental rhetoric at the time (see above, p. 20). Nevertheless, Hollywood was bound by strict guidelines concerning the representation of family life, which serves to explain its virtual absence in the political thriller. Indeed, the nuclear family functions as a structuring absence at best. On the rare occasions

when it is represented, the nuclear family always faces grave danger, either from (external) political motivations as, for example, with *My Son John* (McCarey, 1952), *Suddenly* (Allen, 1954) and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (Hitchcock, 1956), or as a consequence of the atomic bomb exemplified by *The Iron Curtain* (Wellman, 1948), *The Atomic City* (Hopper, 1952), *Invasion U.S.A.* (Green, 1952), *Above and Beyond* (Frank, 1953), *On the Beach* (Kramer, 1959) and *Panic in Year Zero!* (Milland, 1962). What these political thrillers have in common is the message of preservation of the nuclear family. In *My Son John,* a film that actually prefigures *The Manchurian Candidate,* we witness the devastating and corrupting influences of Communism on the nuclear family. Because Communism is so insidious, the only way to excise the threat is the dissolution of the family through radical and violent means (most notably assassination or suicide).   By producing narratives emphasizing the bravery of a few serving the interests of national security, rather than the dangers faced by the nuclear family, Hollywood, whether wittingly or unwittingly, managed to create a product with its political thrillers that would come to complement the fear management strategies of the 1950s, an idea that I shall expand upon in within the context of civil defense in Chapters Four and Five.

Whilst Communism figures prominently, it is intriguing that approximately half of the global corpus is comprised of political thrillers that feature an atomic trope. Through textual and contextual analysis, it becomes apparent that these films, which I refer to as atomic political thrillers, are located within distinct epochs or cycles. The early and middle cycles, respectively from 1945-51 and 1952-56, are the most densely populated, providing the greatest number of atomic political thrillers. Indeed, the atomic political thriller until 1956 clearly expresses the political drive of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations to develop and justify its nuclear arsenal, consequently feeding the paranoia surrounding the atomic bomb, as well as articulating the lengths that U.S. would have to go to keep the technology out of the hands of the Soviet Union.   The pinnacle of film production of the atomic thriller, as it turns out, coincides with the middle cycle, or the three years between 1952 and 1955. During the middle cycle, a total of eighteen atomic political thrillers were released, an average of six films per year, in contrast to the nineteen films released during the early cycle, but occurring over a six year period for an average of three per year.

Although certainly not the most plentiful with regard to production of atomic political thrillers, the early cycle remains quite distinct, in narrative terms, from the other two cycles in that any fears of Communism are not actually overtly articulated but are seemingly displaced onto Nazi discourses. There appears to be two motivating reasons for this. First, Soviet Russia was, at least in the immediate postwar period, still perceived as an ally (however difficult this was for Western ideology to accept), and one that the West surely sought not to alienate as the complex partition of Germany (including Berlin) and the occupation of Austria was taking place. The second reason for this displacement was to deflect attention from the USA's recent use of nuclear warfare in Japan. As Mick Broderick writes in his critical analysis of feature-length nuclear films, 'it is not really surprising that Hollywood continued to evoke the horror of the Nazis in its postwar espionage films, as there was a preexisting and credible genre enemy who conveniently served to simultaneously disavow the actuality of Japan facing the direct consequences of the Allied nuclear search.'[67] The Nazi threat was visualized during the 1940s as spies operating both on U.S. soil and abroad, and continuing their work in the postwar era as part of an underground organization. The race to control and expand atomic technology was exploited by Hollywood with political thrillers initially depicting mysterious foreign powers seeking atomic secrets as, for example, with *Flight to Nowhere* (Rowland, 1946). Poverty Row double-bill films and serials tackled the atomic issue, which included titles such as *The Black Widow* (Bennet and Brannon, 1947)*, and *Government Agents vs. The Phantom Legion* (Brannon, 1951).[68]

Hollywood finally named the Soviet menace in 1948, occurring even before Americans learned of the shocking news about the Soviet atomic bomb testing. In the film *Sofia* (Reinhardt, 1948), an ex-OSS agent operating behind the "iron curtain" successfully escorts atomic scientists, including his former lover, to safety in the West with the assistance of a

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[67] Mick Broderick, *Nuclear Movies: A Critical Analysis and Filmography of International Feature Length Films Dealing with Experimentation, Aliens, Terrorism, Holocaust and Other Disaster Scenarios, 1914-1989* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 1991), 6.
[68] The Poverty Row studios typically produced films with the shortest runtime, averaging somewhere between 60 and 66 minutes. For example, *The Shadow of Terror* (1945) which was directed by Lew Landers and distributed through PRC was 64 minutes. Joel W. Finler, *The Hollywood Story* (New York: Crown, 1988), 26.

double agent. Released the same year, *Walk a Crooked Mile* (Douglas, 1948) uses the semi-documentary style introduced in *House on 92nd Street* (Hathaway, 1945) to portray the efforts of the FBI and Scotland Yard to subvert a Communist spy ring operating out of a nuclear atomic plant located in Southern California. This conjuncture has interesting parallels with what was actually occurring in the real political world. Joint Western Allied research and development efforts had specifically excluded the Soviet Union from its nuclear research program thus making the detonation of the Soviet atomic bomb in August 1949 both a political and technological embarrassment for the Truman administration, prompting claims of Soviet espionage, a claim that would eventually have full impact following the admission of Klaus Fuchs and the arrest of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1950.

During the middle cycle, from 1952 to 1956, we see nearly as many films about the atomic issue as in the early cycle (1945-51). Contrary to the first half of the early cycle, however, where there was a displacement of fears onto the Nazis, the middle cycle portrays a number of atomic issues specifically in relation to the Communist threat. Not only does this cycle offer a justification for the use of the atomic bomb as with the film *Above and Beyond* (1953), but it also projects concerns over the perceived threat that women, and more specifically mothers, pose to U.S. national security. There is, however, a clear distinction to be made between women who are ideologically unacceptable (à la Ethel Rosenberg) and those who unwittingly put the nation at risk. For example, the film *Above and Beyond,* presents a message that wives and mothers simply cannot be trusted because they are gossips and incapable of comprehending the enormity of the responsibility that comes with protecting the nation. With the film *Atomic City,* Martha Addison (Lydia Clarke) is an overprotective mother who clearly embodies the first type of momism (described in the section above). Martha Addison's son is abducted and ransomed for atomic secrets, and because she becomes so hysterical, her character essentially removed from the third act. I have already briefly mentioned the relationship between Ethel Rosenberg with the film *Walk East on Beacon!,* but a similar relationship exists with the character of Margo Wayne, played by the French actress Suzanne Dalbert, in *The 49th Man* and two minor characters, Molly Loomis (Lurene Tuttle) and Mabel Turner (Olive Carey), in *The Whip Hand* (Menzies, 1951) (these films will be discussed further in Chapter Four).

The late cycle, representing the years 1957 to 1962, is similar to the early cycle in that it also spans a six-year period, yet we see a marked decline in the number of atomic political thrillers despite mounting tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, there is a significant shift in tone during the late cycle, which I maintain is part and parcel to the evolving atomic anxiety within the U.S.. Despite the heating up of the Cold War, culminating with the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), the nuclear disarmament was gaining some traction in light of growing public awareness over the health risks posed by nuclear testing. As the nuclear threat became more frightening with increasingly powerful bombs and more effective delivery devices using long-range missile technology, its representation in film became reduced. In addition, Hollywood may have been reticent to produce many disaster films of this order, and there is (as I shall go on to explain in Chapter Five) some evidence that governmental pressure might have exerted its influence as well. Be that as it may, and although only seven atomic political thrillers are to be found in this late cycle, nonetheless, six deal directly with the effects of nuclear warfare; some even go so far as to the address the possibility of the annihilation of the human race (as we shall see with *On the Beach*). The seventh film, *The Fearmakers* (Tourneur, 1958), whilst it is relatively marginal in its relationship to nuclear warfare and disaster, belongs in this category because its story is one of suspicion towards the anti-nuclear movement as part of Communist front organizations. In this film, a traumatized former Korean War POW Captain Alan Eaton (Dana Andrews) meets a purported nuclear physicist, Dr. Gregory Jessop (Oliver Blake), whilst traveling back to Washington DC. Dr. Jessop tells the Alan Eaton that he is sorry to say the military and science are closer together then they ever have been before, because science has brought the world to the brink of extermination. Indeed, Dr. Jessop's organization, the Committee for the Abolition of Nuclear Warfare, is reminiscent of the nuclear disarmament organizations that were gaining strength in the late 1950s, and in particular that of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy.[69] Known simply as SANE, this committee was established in 1957 as a

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[69] The anti-nuclear movement actually emerged out of the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, founded by former Manhattan Project physicists after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The purpose of the *Bulletin* was to educate citizens, policy-makers, scientists and journalists on the issues relevant to nuclear weapons and global security.

reaction to the Eisenhower administration's dependence on and quest for greater numbers of nuclear weapons. The organizations founders were also inspired by a "Declaration of Conscience," in which Nobel laureate Albert Schweitzer described the dangers of radioactive fallout.[70] This prompted SANE to take out a full-page ad in the *New York Times*, which read: 'We are facing a danger unlike any danger that has ever existed.'

Within the atomic political thrillers, there are several thematic narratives frequently focusing on the following: spy rings and stolen secrets with women in central roles; nuclear attacks or bomb detonation; and kidnappings where either the wife or mother is rendered ineffectual or where women play a key role. The kidnapping and rescue of scientists, or as seen in *The Atomic City* (1952), the kidnapping of a child prompting his scientist father to steal secrets, as well as the theft of atomic secrets by scientists equally conveys an uneasiness about whom to trust. The concern for security leaks or stolen secrets is so great that this theme appears in non-atomic political thrillers, (e.g. *Arctic Flight,* Landers:1952; *Diplomatic Courier*, Hathaway:1952; *Jet Pilot,* Von Sternberg:1957) possibly suggesting a fear of powerful technologies being used against their country of origin. Also interesting is a limited resurgence of the Nazi/German theme in the early 1960s with the films *Operation Eichmann* (Springsteen, 1961) and *The Counterfeit Traitor* (Seaton, 1962). Most likely there would have been renewed interest in Germany given the construction beginning in August 1961 of the barrier that would later become the Berlin Wall. But there was also the widely publicized capture of Adolf Eichmann in Argentina by Israeli Intelligence (Mossad) in 1960. Eichmann, who was tried in Israel for war crimes was convicted and eventually executed in 1962.

Striving for Authenticity

As I have suggested in this chapter, the conjuncture of the political moment with the film industry in Hollywood made it possible for the Cold War political thriller to emerge as a distinct subgenre. Many of these productions have at their core real events or, at the very least, echo political concerns and presidential rhetoric of the Truman, Eisenhower and

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[70] Albert Schweitzer, 'A Declaration of Conscience', *Saturday Review* (1957) <http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/2004/04/19_schweitzer_declaration-conscience.htm>

Kennedy administrations.   Accordingly, the codes and conventions for this subgenre are grounded in the authentic, even when/if the narrative is entirely fictional. But often the narrative is based in actual events and as I shall also go on to demonstrate in later chapters, the pulse of the nation is realistically documented through embedded sociological truth. In other words, the political thriller stands as a kind of record of America's psyche during the Cold War, whether revealing of displaced concerns (as with the Nazi trope) or as a reflection of contemporary anxieties in the atomic age. It is the convergence of authenticity, narrative and style — in which an overlay or a blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction occurs (what I refer to as docufiction) — that makes for this subgenre's specificity. As we shall see this blurring of fact and fiction is almost always reinforced through the use of actual locations.

During the war years, the U.S. government imposed budgetary limits on set construction, contributing to the decision to film on location.[71] In the postwar years, filming on location became an aesthetic choice, but in doing so, also required considerable thought with regard to the modes of production. Portable cameras such as the Bell and Howell 35-mm Eyemo, first manufactured in 1926 for use by amateurs, were widely adopted by the U.S. military during the World War Two for documenting combat. The German made Arriflex, first introduced in 1937, is another example of a popular wartime camera that would later be adopted by fictional feature filmmakers in the postwar period. Like the Eyemo, the Arriflex was light, weighing just twelve pounds, and its detachable magazines were pre-threaded which made for quick loading of film. The Bell and Howell 16-mm Filmo was another popular camera during the war and a substantive amount of footage was recorded in this format. Indeed, as far as some films in our corpus are concerned, it was not uncommon for footage shot in 16-mm to be blown up for inclusion in a 35-mm feature film. For *House on 92nd Street*, Hathaway shot many of the film's exteriors and interiors on location, with the FBI supplying actual 16-mm surveillance footage for some of the scenes. The editing of this film also included the use of Intercutting and match cuts of actual wartime footage to evoke a sense of authenticity. A further example of the incorporation of documentary footage can be found in *I Was an American Spy* (Selander, 1951), a film chronicling the espionage activities of

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[71] Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History*, 2nd edn (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2003), 339.

American Claire Phillips (codename High Pockets) in the Japanese occupied Philippines between 1942 and 1944. Filmed entirely at Iverson Movie Ranch (located in Los Angeles county), Selander used match cuts with actual footage of Manila to create a documentary milieu.

A film that clearly illustrates this point about docufiction is the Warner Bros. production *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I* (Douglas, 1951). Based upon a series of stories written by real-life FBI informer Matt Cvetic, the film was carefully marketed by Warner Bros.. Indeed, as if to continue atoning for the sympathetic wartime production *Mission to Moscow*, Warner Bros. ran a two-page ad in an issue of *Daily Variety* (25 April1951) appearing between excerpts of friendly witness Marc Lawrence HUAC testimony.[72] Thus, not only does *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* overlay fact and fiction to justify America's postwar surveillance culture, like the earlier films of *House on 92nd Street* (Hathaway, 1945) and *13 Rue Madeline* (Hathaway, 1947), it offered reassurance that U.S. government institutions, most notably the FBI with its cadre of specially trained agents and state of the art technology, is entirely capable of keeping the nation safe. Ironically, *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* received a nomination for Best Documentary Feature by Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and indeed, trade publications such as *Variety* called the film '. . . a forceful and exciting true-to-life melodrama' whilst the *Hollywood Reporter* contends '. . . there is no doubt of the facts disclosed in the story – a true story in every inch of the film.'[73]

As the availability of more portable cameras helped to shape the aesthetic of the political thriller, equally important contributions were made through innovations in film stock, film processing and lighting. In the postwar era, this transition to faster film stock meant that lower light levels could be used. Whilst some styles of lighting in Hollywood productions are closely aligned to generic convention, it is important to note these practices are, nonetheless,

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[72] Reynold Humphries, 'Documenting Communist Subversion: The Case of *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* (1951)' in *Docufictions: Essays On The Intersection of Documentary and Fictional Filmmaking,* ed. by Gary D. Rhodes and John P. Springer, (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2005), 102.

[73] Variety Staff, 'Review: *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.'*, *Variety* (31 December 1950), <http://variety.com/1950/film/reviews/i-was-a-communist-for-the-f-b-i-1200416951/>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

fluid and not fixed. Tungsten source lighting had been popular in the 1930s because it created a noticeably soft-edged shadow compared to equivalent arc light source, but the introduction of the General Electric photoflood bulb, which also utilized a tungsten filament and reflecting surface, signaled a change in lighting style for the 1940s.[74] Not only did the photoflood produce an even distribution of lighting over a ninety-degree spread (as earlier floodlights had done before) this bulb operated at a higher voltage, allowing for more light to be produced and a greater feel of the authentic, therefore.

Despite the possibility of lighting and filming interiors on location, not all studios were fully committed to this change as is evidenced by the film *Pickup on South Street* (Fuller, 1953). I shall discuss *Pickup on South Street* in more detail in a mini case study in Chapter Two, but will just mention that the opening sequence on the subway was an elaborately constructed set. It is also worth noting that building sets to scale in the 1940s became increasingly common, lending a greater sense of realism; the downside was the added complication and production costs to maintain such large numbers of lights. Thus, the trend to simplify lighting in conjunction with the popularity of the portable photoflood (which consequently could be run from house current) gained popularity with the release of *The Naked City* (Dassin, 1947) and the political thriller *13 Rue Madeleine*.[75]

Innovations in lighting technology contributed to changes in production practices, but more importantly, it meant that ideological messages could be communicated through a greater sense of realism and authenticity.   And as if to underscore this need to assert an ideological correctness, many of the late-1940s and early 1950s political thrillers have the voice of an upstanding American, literally taking the form of a voice-over, to establish both tone and theme from the outset. In these instances, the 'not-yet-visualized' voice, or what Michel Chion (1999) identifies as the acousmêtre is quite often imbued with malevolent or tutelary power.[76] As Chion writes: 'An entire image, an entire story, an entire film can thus

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[74] Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis* (London: Starword, 1992), 229.
[75] Thompson and Bordwell, 339.
[76] Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 23.

hang on the epiphany of the acousmêtre.'[77] When the acousmêtre is visualized, there is, according to Chion, an unraveling of power that occurs with the vulnerability of the character becoming evident. Indeed this what we find with *Above and Beyond* (Frank, 1953), in which the character of Lucey Tibbits (Eleanor Parker), wife of Enola Gay pilot Colonel Paul Tibbits (Robert Taylor), is a visualized acousmêtre as well as being the only female narrator in all of the docufictions considered in this thesis. Thus, within the political thriller, the voice-over not only creates a milieu of authenticity, more often than not it serves an ideological and propagandistic function, namely, that the power to protect the nation rests with the normative male. Whilst this authoritative voice almost always originates off screen, *I was an American Spy* offers a departure from this convention by opening with U.S. Army General Mark W. Clark seated behind an office desk. As the story is introduced, a dolly shot reframes General Clark to emphasize a very specific portion of his monologue:

> . . . to preserve world freedom will require sacrifices and devotion to our cause on the part of every citizen. As we face the task that lies ahead we may all derive great inspiration from the story of the deeds of this fine American woman

Thus there is never any question that *I was an American Spy* will function as a docufiction, and having General Clark present a call to action reinforces an institutionalized patriotism promoted by presidential rhetoric, loyalty oaths and the emerging surveillance culture. However, not all docufictions considered in this rely on the authoritative narration. Rather some, such as *Women of the Night* (Rowland, 1948), a low budget feature filmed in Mexico, and the RKO production of *Sealed Cargo* (Werker, 1951) simply rely on the title sequence to inform spectators of the narrative authenticity. Likewise, the Deborah Kerr and Yul Brynner star vehicle, *The Journey* (Litvak, 1959) relies on a prologue to establish the film as docufiction whilst the title sequence includes the following information:

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[77] Ibid., 23.

The action of this story takes place between Budapest, the capital of Hungary, and the Austro-Hungarian border, where the film was actually photographed. The time is November, 1956, during the tragic days of the Hungarian uprising.[78]

Not all of the political thrillers can be categorized as docufiction, and as the second part of my thesis will demonstrate there are sociological elements embedded in every film I am considering. Thus, once again, we shall see a convergence of authenticity, narrative and style, and what emanates in this context, from the corpus of political thrillers are, by and large, discourses about atomic technology, espionage and the Communist threat as linked to womanhood, sexuality and the nuclear family (despite the infrequent presence of this later element, as I explained earlier). A review of the corpus of the political thriller by the three cycles described above in the periodization section (i.e. early, middle and late) and by type (i.e. docufiction or sociological) indicates that the docufiction is most pronounced during the early cycle as shown below in *Figure 1.3*.

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[78] *The Journey,* dir. by Anatole Litvak (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1959).

	Early Cycle (1945-51)	Middle Cycle (1952-56)	Late Cycle (1957-62)
Sociological	24	26	14
Docufiction	19	8	9
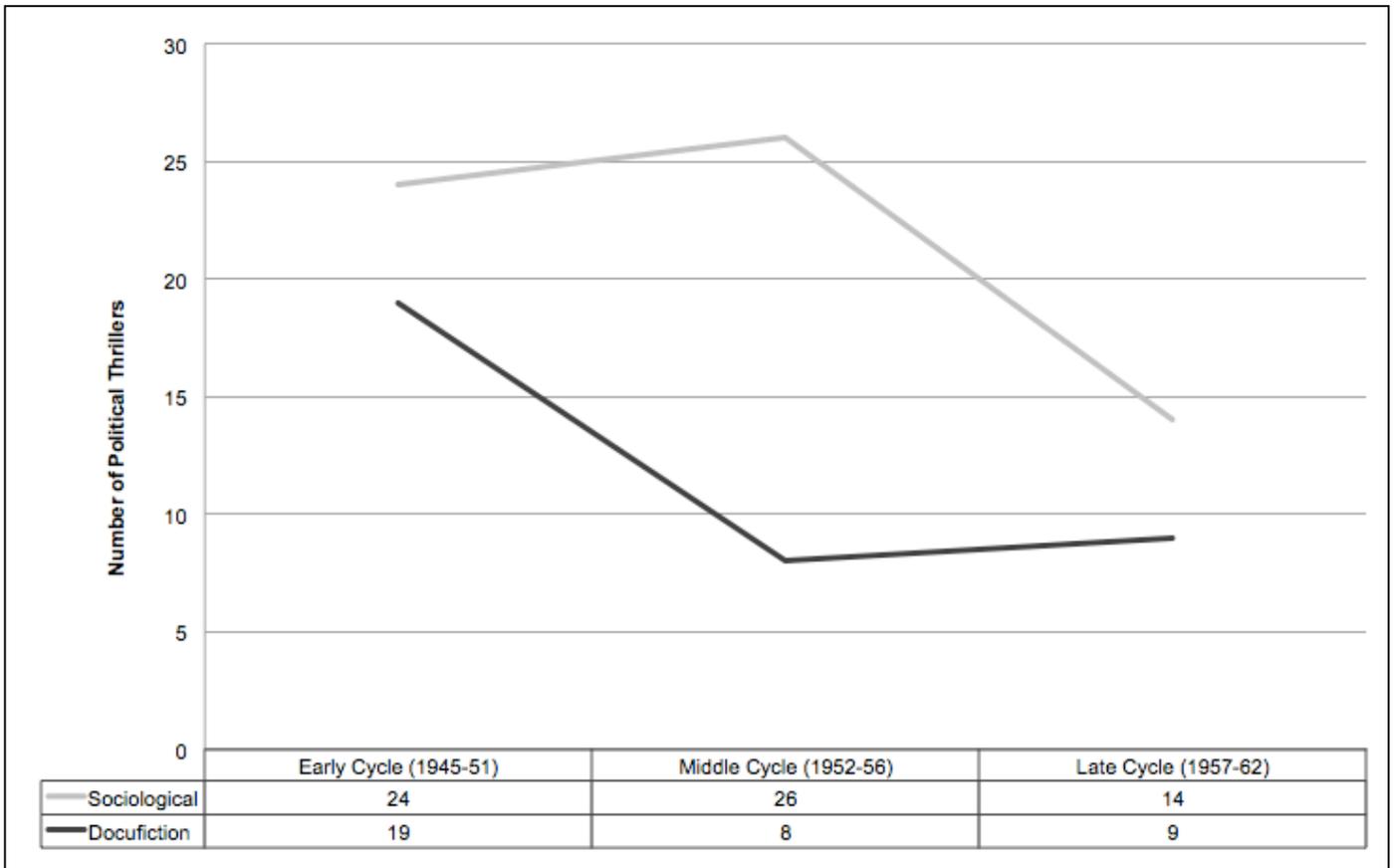
Fig. 1.3: Number of docufiction and sociological thrillers by cycle.

As the figure above illustrates, the early cycle offers the greatest number of docufictions, thereby reinforcing the growing anxiety over key issues of national security during the Onset and early Confrontation periods. However, the years 1951 and 1952 are, when considered together, the pinnacle of docufictions. During this period, there are a total of nine docufictions released, which is, however, not entirely surprising given the proximity to the Alger Hiss perjury trial and the arrest of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, both occurring in 1950. Whilst *Figure 1.3* clearly indicates a decline in docufictions after 1951, what is more interesting is the actual number of political thrillers that incorporate the atomic trope, something that I shall consider in greater detail within Part Two of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that by the time the Soviet Union had successfully tested an atomic bomb, ten political thrillers with the atomic trope had already been released.

As I have set forth in this chapter, the political thriller is, indeed, a new generic subtype that originates during the Cold War. There are aspects of technology such as camera and lighting that support the visual and narrative style lending authenticity to the story-line, as indeed does the frequent inclusion of documentary footage and use of an authoritative voice-over which serve also to give resonance to a very real and present danger. In Chapter Two, through mini-case studies of five exemplary films, I shall continue the discussion of technology and style as it relates to the political thriller. In the second half of this thesis, I shall focus on films where the atomic trope is central to the narrative, looking at these films in terms of the cycles I have already laid out in this chapter. Whilst there are key markers of authenticity such as the use of "voice-of-God" narration and location-shooting that have been adopted by the political thriller, also indicative of its hybridity, it is the relation to socio-political discourses and presidential rhetoric that is particularly meaningful and particularly evident in the atomic political thrillers, points I shall be elaborating on in Chapters Three through Five**.**

CHAPTER TWO
POLITICAL THRILLER MINI-CASE STUDIES

It is part of the general pattern of misguided policy that our county is now geared to an arms economy, which was bred in an artificially induced psychosis of war hysteria and nurtured upon an incessant propaganda of fear.

- General Douglas MacArthur (1951)

Introduction

Whilst the political thriller was more widely recognized as a generic type between the mid-1960s and the 1970s, to suggest that it did not pre-exist this politically charged period would, as I have already explained, overlook some one hundred political thrillers released over nearly two decades following the end of World War Two. Indeed, as this thesis argues, the genre as a prototype dates back to at least the beginning of the Cold War, but it has often been the case that these thrillers have been labeled as *film noir.* This is entirely understandable given that the political thriller of the period under consideration is something of a hybrid in that whilst it has a political dimension that is true only to its generic type, it also has many of the elements associated with the *film noir* of the low to mid-budget Hollywood film productions.[79] Low-key lighting, extreme camera angles and dark shadows, whilst characteristic of *noir* are frequently evident in the political thriller, as exemplified by *Berlin*

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[79] The Hollywood B-film represented a low budget, less-publicized feature and always the bottom half of a double billing (at least until the late 1950s). These productions frequently crossed generic conventions, although the B-film was more commonly associated with the Western and *film noir* between the 1930s and 1940s, and later with science fiction and horror genres in the 1950s. From an economic standpoint, the B-film allowed studios to maximize investments in equipment and personnel. The lower budget along with a flat rental fee virtually guaranteed profitability. The B-film was also characterized by a compressed shooting schedule and shorter run times whilst featuring lesser-known actors. Whilst it was possible to elevate a production to A-film status through distribution and exhibition practices, generally speaking, the B-film had limited selling potential. There were, however, departures, as exemplified with by the political thriller *Kiss Me Deadly* (Aldrich, 1955).

Express (Tourneur, 1948), *The Thief* (Rouse, 1952), *Pickup on South Street* (Fuller, 1953), and *Kiss Me Deadly* (Aldrich, 1955). Indeed, as film historian Martin Rubin contends, *noir* stylistic elements have: 'entered into the general vocabulary of thriller movies as a means of connoting menace, anxiety, and a general intensification of the ordinary world.'[80] Another staple of *film noir* is the way in which the investigation or investigator plays a role within the narrative. The investigation is nearly always fragmented and derailed, particularly and once the marginalized or dysfunctional investigator becomes involved with a dangerous woman. The relationship to the *femme fatale* has a castrating affect, forcing the male protagonist to eventually reassert his masculinity and restore normative patriarchy. Yet the sense of alienation and existential crisis experienced by the *noir* anti-hero (who has also been duped by a *femme fatale*) does not adequately convey the extent to which nuclear brinksmanship and growing paranoia weighed on the American psyche in the postwar era. Whilst the Cold War political thriller frequently introduces the dark moodiness of *noir,* what sets the two apart is the documentary value attached to the political thriller. The use of an off-screen authoritative narrator, location shooting, and spy or nuclear tropes (that were central to political discourse at the time) are just three of the elements that blur the boundaries of fact and fiction. Thus, as I proposed in Chapter One, the political thriller is strives for authenticity by instantiating knowable and unknowable threats that challenge the very existence of the American nuclear family and the nation. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the way film technology and style reinforce the pervasive socio-political discourses and national anxiety evident during the Cold War, even when, in some instances, the narrative is seemingly displaced (for example into Nazi tropes). I shall consider five exemplary films identified in the figure below (see *Figure 2.1*) following a mini-case study format.

Title	Date	Director	DoP	Studio	Runtime	Color
Berlin Express	1948	Tourneur	Ballard	RKO	87	B/W
Big Jim McLain	1952	Ludwig	Stout	Warner Bros.	90	B/W
Night People	1954	Johnson	Clarke	Twentieth	93	Color

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[80] Martin Rubin, *Thrillers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 96.

				Century-Fox		& Scope
Pickup on South Street	1953	Fuller	McDonald	Twentieth Century-Fox	80[81]	B/W
The Manchurian Candidate	1962	Frankenheimer	Lindon	MGM	126	B/W

Fig. 2.1: Five exemplary mini-case study films.

Key narrative and visual characteristics and their impact on the genre will be considered in this chapter, including a discussion of the role played by technological innovation and visual realism. Using the aforementioned films as case studies, I shall expand upon the categories of political thriller as docufiction or as sociological product. In addition, as part of our discussion on style, I shall address the impact value of the Director of Photography (DoP), and in particular that of Lucien Ballard (*Berlin Express*), George C. Clarke (*Night People*) and Joe McDonald (*Pickup on South Street*). Director Samuel Fuller, for example, acknowledged the contribution of his DoP in his memoirs and he would go on to collaborate with McDonald on two more productions, the atomic political thriller *Hell and High Water* (1954) and the crime thriller *The House of Bamboo* (1955). And even though it can be objected that *Big Jim McLain* (Ludwig, 1952) is the least interesting stylistically (amongst our mini-case study films), nevertheless, it merits investigation as an overtly propagandistic docufiction.

As I previously asserted in Chapter One, the Cold War political thriller existed as an expression of fear and anxiety over national security. Moreover, textual and contextual analysis reveals a dominant narrative thread: the vulnerability and permeability of borders as realized by this cultural product. Indeed, there is a kind of dependence between narrative and the perceived risk (to interior and exterior borders) that prompt anxiety: this period was a political cultural moment, therefore, that enabled the political thriller to thrive. This dependence relationship will serve as an organizing principle for the mini-case studies included in this chapter. It seems fitting to begin our discussion with an eye towards the international borders, and more specifically that of Berlin, a city whose geopolitical

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[81] Runtime on the DVD differs from the theatrical release.

significance is widely accepted amongst Cold War historians.[82] Following the war, Berlin was divided into occupied zones controlled by Allied forces (American, British, French and Soviet). The first two mini-case studies focus on the docufiction *Berlin Express* and the sociological political thriller *Night People,* both of which have Berlin at their center. Both films are shot almost entirely on location, but in different decades, which has, as I shall detail, a marked influence on narrative, both in terms of tone and the way Germany is visualized. Additionally, our Berlin-based films are representative of strikingly different technologies (black-and-white versus color and Cinemascope), contributing to the ideological and propagandistic function of each film.

Moving away from the international venue of Berlin, the next section focuses on national concerns as Communists work from within to undermine the American way of life. Despite obvious differences in production values, *Big Jim McLain* and *Pickup on South Street* are ideologically similar. Filmed on location in Hawaii, *Big Jim McLain* is yet another example of a docufiction, even dramatically portraying the members of HUAC and the way the committee works to protect the rights and freedoms of (deserving) Americans. The sociological political thriller *Pickup on South* Street is a combination of studio work and some location shooting around Los Angeles, and whilst director Samuel Fuller's visual style captures a grittiness that is reminiscent of 1930s gangster films (in contrast to lush tropical setting of Hawaii), the narrative conveys contemporary concerns. Despite stylistic differences, these two films are complementary, offering a powerful commentary on interior debates and Cold War discourses, and in particular with respect to the nuclear family and marriage.

Our last mini-case study of the chapter, *The Manchurian Candidate,* is an important transitional film, although not for the reasons normally put forward. Rather than marking the beginning of the political thriller as a distinct generic subtype (see Introduction), I shall assert

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[82] See John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); David Williamson, 'Berlin: The Flash-Point of the Cold War, 1948-1989', *History Review,* 47 (December 2003), <http://www.historytoday.com/david-williamson/berlin-flash-point-cold-war-1948-1989> [accessed 1 Sept 2014]; Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

that *The Manchurian Candidate* is both an end of a particular political thriller cycle and yet is also a turning point/fulcrum for a new breed of thriller where brainwashing and torture are prominent tropes (*The Defector,* Levy:1966; *The Ipcress File,* Furie:1965; and *The Odessa File,* Neame:1974*).* Moreover, within the context of the socio-political moment, *The Manchurian Candidate* foreshadows the interior, paranoid-laden political thrillers of the 1970s (*Executive Action,* Miller:1973; *The Parallax View,* Pakula:1974; *Three Days of the Condor,* Pollack:1975*;* and *All the President's Men,* Pakula:1976). Indeed, *The Manchurian Candidate,* is the culmination of a certain type of political thriller that has come before it in this first phase of the Cold War, whilst, nonetheless, clearly offering something new. Thus, arguably, this film represents the transitory nature of genre, where a generic type may morph into a new or substantially altered type.

Within the context of Chapter Two, we shall see where *The Manchurian Candidate* offers a somewhat different trajectory with regard to the borders trope that runs through the other case study films in that it actually takes place in the mind of an individual as opposed to the more external representation heretofore (with perhaps the exception of films such as *The Thief,* Rouse: 1952; or *Time Limit,* Malden: 1957). As with other political thrillers considered in this thesis, *The Manchurian Candidate* depicts the vulnerability of the American domestic sphere. However, this time it does so through the corruption of the mother who brings about the destruction of the nuclear family. In this regard, this film stands apart from earlier productions where the American family is represented within the context of normative domesticity (as with *The Atomic City,* Hopper:1952*;* and *My Son John,* McCarey:1952).

Berlin: A City Divided and Flashpoint of the Cold War - *Berlin Express* (1948) and *Night People* (1954)

At the conclusion of the World War Two, the question of Germany was approached with indecision, although it was grudgingly accepted that the country would be divided into zones of Allied occupation (American, British, French and Soviet), with each zone being administered by one of the victors. The fate of Berlin was similarly negotiated amongst the

Allies, but the mounting tension between the West and the Soviet Union would transform that city into a kind of visual metaphor or metonymy for the Cold War.

Berlin Express, our first mini-case study, encapsulates rather well the flux and tension that would dominate the immediate postwar era, including discussions surrounding the possible reunification of Germany — a central theme of the film — and the rapid deterioration of diplomatic relations which led to disagreement between the Allies. As historian David Williamson writes: 'a united Germany became a prize which neither the U.S.S.R. nor the Western Allies could concede to the other.'[83] Whilst the two superpowers similarly reasoned that a reunited Germany could very well align itself with a Cold War adversary, the U.S. had plans for a self-governing, financially independent West Germany. The 1948 Soviet blockade of Berlin not only would establish the city as a flashpoint in the Cold War, but it also anticipates the Berlin Crisis that would finally come to fruition in 1961.

Between 1947 and 1948, Stalin was dealt a series of blows that limited his ability to expand the Soviet empire, beginning with the economic integration of American and British zones and the announcement of Marshall Aid. The U.S. also let it be known that they were no longer willing to wait for an agreement over a united Germany, and they intended to move forward with a new West German state. The Russians, however, alluded to pressure they could exact on the Allied controlled section of Berlin by interfering with the inter-zonal traffic. When it became apparent to Stalin that the Western Allies intended to move forward, he reacted, ordering all rail, road and canal links to the west, along with power supplies from the eastern sectors to be severed; the goal of the blockade was to force the Western powers into accepting supplies from the Russian zone thereby giving the Soviet Union control over the entire city. The idea for supplying the civilian population by airlift was initially meant to buy time, although the U.S. quickly recognized that it would be possible to sustain West Berlin indefinitely through the use of B-29 bombers.[84] By May 1949, the blockade was lifted and the

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[83] Williamson,<http://www.historytoday.com/david-williamson/berlin-flash-point-cold-war-1948-1989>

[84] The U.S. let it be known that if the Soviet Union interfered in any way with the Berlin airlifts that BOILER protocol would be activated. This protocol offered a provision for attacking the Soviet Union with atomic airstrikes. The U.S. also had publically announced the deployment

end result was the creation of two separate German states, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG / West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR / East Germany), as well as a West and East Berlin. The Berlin blockade was subsequently chronicled in the Twentieth Century-Fox production *The Big Lift* (Seaton, 1950)*.* As with *Berlin Express,* this Montgomery Clift star vehicle was shot on location in 1949, offering audiences a view of reconstruction efforts, whilst intercutting with actual newsreel footage depicting airlift activity. Indeed, historian David Williamson goes on to describe postwar Berlin as a 'capitalist island in a Communist sea,' lending itself to becoming a center of espionage and counter-espionage activity in the early days of the Cold War.[85] During the early years of the Cold War, the lack of a fortified physical boundary between East and West Berlin (as illustrated in *The Big Lift)* enabled hundreds-of-thousands to flee from the newly formed East Germany, and conversely both Soviet and East German agents had access to West Berliners. Thus, politically motivated kidnappings, the subject of both *Berlin Express* and *Night People*, were a very common, frightening reality, and to some degree, the Soviets and their East German counterparts operated with impunity. Indeed, it wasn't until the end of the Cold War (in 1989), with the availability of declassified files from both American and former East German Ministry for State Security that it became apparent just how many individuals kidnapped by Soviet or East German agents were actually employed by U.S. intelligence agencies, not only confirming the importance of the covert operations to psychological warfare strategies, but the effectiveness of the U.S. propaganda machine to hide this reality from the American people.[86]

As if to solidify the importance of Berlin to the geopolitical situation, Nikita Khrushchev would crudely refer to the city as the 'testicles of the West because every time I want to make the West scream I squeeze on Berlin.'[87] Indeed, between 1958 and 1961, tension over Berlin contributed to the heating up of the Cold War, although President Eisenhower categorically

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of atomic capable bombers to Britain; Raymond P. Ojserkis, *Beginning of the Cold War Arms Race: The Truman Administration Build Up,* (Westport: Praeger*,* 2003), 22.

[85] Williamson, <http://www.historytoday.com/david-williamson/berlin-flash-point-cold-war-1948-1989>

[86] Arthur L. Smith, *Kidnap City: Cold War Berlin* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 9.

[87] Williamson, < http://www.historytoday.com/david-williamson/berlin-flash-point-cold-war-1948-1989>

refused to consider any demands made by Khrushchev for Western Allies to withdraw from West Berlin despite (exaggerated) claims regarding Soviet nuclear capabilities. Thus, over the next two years, Khrushchev would vacillate between Détente and belligerence, with the Berlin Crisis eventually coming to a head in the early days of the Kennedy administration. Growing unrest and collectivization fostered a mass exodus from the East Germany, and fearful that this would lead to the collapse of the state, GDR leader Walter Ulbricht convinced Khrushchev that the only alternative was to seal off the border. When the West failed to offer a countermeasure (of any significance) the barbed wire eventually gave way to a concrete wall, thereby establishing a physical demarcation that represented the distinct ideological struggles between West and the Soviet-bloc.

Although released six-years apart and of differing production values and whilst the narratives have politically motivated kidnappings as a central theme, nevertheless, *Berlin Express* and *Night People* serve as interesting comparators stylistically. As I have indicated, *Berlin Express* is widely regarded as a *film noir*, although, as I shall demonstrate this is due more to the aesthetics of Tourneur than *noir* narrative conventions that ordinarily include a treacherous *femme fatale* or a protagonist experiencing an existential crisis. In contrast, *Night People* is quite technologically modern having been shot in Cinemascope and color and*,* given its investigative element, is more likely to be associated with the crime thriller.[88] Yet what these films are, however, are political thrillers. A unifying element is the considerable evidence of an understanding of the intricacies and complexities of the contemporary postwar geopolitical climate, and for this reason they must be considered as political thrillers. With *Berlin Express,* we see a divided Germany, both physically and politically, and the way in which dirty postwar politics threaten to undermine a fragile nation; with *Night People*, we are witnessing a Germany that already shows signs of tangible

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[88] Nunnally Johnson was a versatile screenwriter, successfully working across a range of genres. Amongst his writing credits are the adaptations of the classic novels *The Grapes of Wrath* (Steinbeck, 1940) and *Tobacco Road* (Caldwell, 1941) as well screenplays for the western *The Gunfighter* (King, 1950), war films *The Desert Fox* (Hathaway, 1951) and *The Dirty Dozen* (Aldrich, 1967)*,* the comedy *How to Marry a Millionaire* (Negulesco, 1953) and thrillers that included *The Woman in the Window* (Lang, 1944), *The Dark Mirror* (Siodmak, 1946) and *Black Widow* (Johnson, 1954).

reconstruction as a result of Marshall Aid, but is now caught in the grip of Cold War deception where the former Nazi underground is now collaborating with the KGB to undermine the Americans. Thus, from a rhetorical standpoint both films accurately gauge the contemporary political pulse. Whereas *Berlin Express*, an obvious early political thriller, ends on a note of vague hope for some kind of mutual understanding between the two superpowers, as well as for a peaceful, unified Germany, *Night People* offers a considerably more pessimistic view. Even if the later production suggests that it is entirely possible to develop mutual respect for a Soviet counterpart, by and large, the tone of the film is one of resigned distrust and suspicion.

Berlin Express (1948)

Like so many other Cold War political thrillers, *Berlin Express* resonated with the public precisely because it offered a true to life view not only of the living conditions but also of the growing tension between the Allies concerning the question of who would control the destiny of Germany. The film, an RKO production, took as its primary source of inspiration a photo-essay published in *Life* magazine entitled 'Berlin Express: Brass hats, GIs and girls ride through Europe on new Army train.' The title of the film is derived from the U.S. response to the lack of reliable transportation which was considered as key to restoring order to Europe, and which led the U.S. Army Transportation Corps to begin operating the Berlin Duty Train, otherwise known as the "Berlin Express."[89] The essay describes how the Berlin Express train 'weaves and winds romantically between Paris and Berlin' as it transports 'brassy figures from the Allied military and political world to conferences.'[90] The essayist even mentions an encounter with a 'German professor returning from the Nüremberg trials, a French resistance

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[89] The Berlin Duty Train was the primary mode of transportation for soldiers, military dependents and U.S. Army civilians traveling in and out of Allied sectors of Berlin and West Germany. When the train traveled through Soviet occupied territory, the locomotive had to be East German. Therefore, when traveling from West Berlin to Frankfurt an engine change was typically made in Potsdam (from West German to East German) and once again in Helmstedt (from East German to West German). See 'Berlin Duty Train', *U.S. Army Transportation Museum,*
<http://www.transchool.lee.army.mil/museum/transportation%20museum/bertrain.htm>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]
[90] Staff, 'Brass Hats, GIs and Girls Ride Berlin Express', *Life Magazine* (15 April 1946), 95.

leader, an American rabbi and a Polish officer from the Warsaw government who would not speak with a London Pole.'[91] After reading the article, RKO Radio producer Bert Granet convinced production executive Dore Schary that the studio could be the first American company to make a feature film on location in postwar Germany. Granet's ideas were subsequently developed into a story by the science-fiction novelist and horror film scenarist Curt Siodmak, who had also been a refugee from Nazi Germany. By October 1946, Granet secured permission from both RKO and the U.S. Army to travel from France into Germany via the Berlin Express. Over a two-month period, the producer documented the devastation of World War Two through photo stills and sixteen-millimeter film footage. Granet witnessed survivors living and working amongst the rubble. Indeed, with so many houses destroyed, it was necessary to write names and new addresses on walls in order to be located (as illustrated in *Figure 2.2* below).

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Fig 2.2: Housing issues in Berlin, 1946.[92]

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[91] Ibid., 95.
[92] Photograph by Werner Bischoff (1946)

Similarly, bulletin boards became a common mode of communication in postwar Germany. Survivors would use these boards to post messages as they searched for lost relatives and friends, something that must have made a strong impression on Garnet given its use as a plot point within the narrative (see *Figure 2.3* below).

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Fig 2.3: Lucienne (Merle Oberon) reading a message board.

The same must have been true of the way in which the black market operated, as this was another true-to-life detail included in the film. Indeed *Berlin Express* explains through diegetic and non-diegetic means about the barter system and the extent cigarettes had become a major currency-commodity with which to buy goods and services, a point also emphasized in *Life* photo-essay with the inclusion of photos depicting a 'cigarette butt scrounger.'[93]   In the

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< https://www.magnumphotos.com/image/PAR133177.html> [accessed 1 Sept 2014]
[93] The term cigarette butt scrounger was referenced in the *Life Magazine* photo essay 'Brass Hats, GIs and Girls Ride Berlin Express'.

scene at the Frankfurt train station, the character Lindley played by Robert Ryan casually discards what appears to be a mostly intact cigarette.

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Fig. 2.4: Lindley is about to drop a cigarette.

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Fig. 2.5: Shot of the discarded cigarette.

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Fig. 2.6: Shot of the scramble to retrieve the cigarette.

Fig. 2.7: The new owner rubbing the cigarette clean.

The scramble to retrieve the cigarette at the Frankfurt train station illustrated four figures shown above (see *Figures 2.4 - 2.7*) echoes what actor Charles Korvin witnessed whilst working on location. The Hungarian born Korvin, who played the character Perrot, recalled in an interview:

> [E]veryone was looking around to find cigarette butts. We could not use German money or dollars. We had to have scrip [special occupation currency], which the army issued for us. We bought things most of the time with cigarettes which we got at the PX exchange.[94]

Indeed, it was common to pay German extras in American cigarettes. Other true to life moments foregrounded in *Berlin Express* include the film's narrator describing the Allied

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[94] The "Post Exchange" or "PX" is a store located on a US military base in which a variety of goods are sold to military personnel and authorized civilians. Ray Nielsen, 'An Interview with Charles Korvin: "Perrot" in "Berlin Express"', *Classic Images*, 254 (August 1996), 28.

attempts at precision bombing. Indeed the U.S. made a concerted effort to limit collateral damage through a campaign of targeted bombing, although weather over Europe and German anti-aircraft guns created difficult conditions. And once U.S. bombing missions were underway, American flight crews found they were unable to achieve the degree of accuracy experienced during training. Nevertheless, inclusion of this kind of detail, particularly through authoritative voice-over, contributes to the overall authenticity of *Berlin Express* whilst attempting to substantiate America's technological superiority.

Central to the narrative is the character Dr. Heinrich Bernhardt (Paul Lukas), a famous German statesman and former resistance leader traveling to Berlin in order to lead a commission attempting to unify Germany.[95] Prior to Bernhardt's departure via the "Berlin Express," the French authorities intercept a cryptic message regarding an event that will occur in Sulzbach. Accompanying the statesman, who is traveling as Otto Franzen to avoid being recognized, is Lucienne Mirbeau (Merle Oberon star vehicle of the film). Other passengers also destined for Berlin board the train, include a somber German named Hans Schmidt (Peter von Zerneck), an American agricultural expert, Robert Lindley (Robert Ryan), a French importer named Henri Perrot (Charles Korvin), a British reeducation teacher, James Sterling (Robert Coote), and a gullible Russian, Lieutenant Maxim Kiroshilov (Roman Toporow). Whereas Perrot, Lindley and Sterling are suspicious of the German passengers, Kiroshilov is suspicious of everyone. Arriving at the last minute is a mysterious German passenger with bodyguards. The trip is largely uneventful until they arrive in Sulzbach, at which time the train is brought to emergency stop. However the journey quickly resumes. Meanwhile the mysterious German makes it known that he is Dr. Bernhardt, although the man is actually an imposter. The imposter eager to engage the other passengers retrieves sandwiches for Lindley and Sterling from his compartment, but he is killed in an explosion.

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[95] Tourneur recounted that Bernhardt's character was based upon Thomas Mann, a German novelist and Nobel laureate. Mann denounced National Socialism and with the rise of Hitler he fled Germany 1933, living in Switzerland until 1939. When World War Two broke out Mann and his family emigrated to the United States. See Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg, 'Jacques Tourneur',*The Celluloid Muse: Hollywood Directors Speak* (London: Angus and Robertson Ltd., 1969), 220.

All the passengers traveling within the same carriage as the murdered man are transported to the U.S. Army headquarters in Frankfurt for questioning; however, none of the passengers are able to provide any insight into the murder. Encouraged to delay his trip, Bernhardt refuses, claiming that the geopolitical debate he witnessed between Lindley, Sterling, Perrot and Kiroshlov suggests that the Allied nations are still wholly incapable of uniting except in their dislike of Germans. Returning to the crowded Frankfurt train station to resume their journey to Berlin, the men notice that the other German, Hans Schmidt, is no longer with them. Everyone is also unaware that an old acquaintance, Professor Johann Walther (Reinhold Schünzel), has approached Dr. Bernhardt. The real purpose of this meeting is for Professor Walther to deliver Bernhardt to the Nazi underground in exchange for the return of his missing wife, Hilda. Once it is discovered that Bernhardt is missing, Lucienne begs the four men to help because the future of Germany hangs in the balance.

The group becomes discouraged, and pausing to reflect on the thousands of displaced persons in Germany Lucienne realizes they should find Professor Walther's flat. Unfortunately they arrive too late, discovering that the Professor has hanged himself (after the Nazi villains finally tell him that his wife has died). Collectively the men and Lucienne agree they may have more success by splitting up, searching the off-limits cabarets for anyone connected to the Nazi underground. At the last cabaret visited by Lucienne and Lindley, they spot a German woman sitting with an American soldier. Almost immediately Lucienne notices the oversized cigarette the woman is smoking, which actually belonged to Bernhardt. The woman flees the club before Lucienne and Lindley are able to question her and in the meantime they convince Sergeant Barnes (Michael Harvey) to lead them to her home. Unbeknownst to Lucienne and Lindley, the American solider is really a member of the Nazi underground, and he lures the couple to the abandoned brewery where Bernhardt is being held hostage. Bernhardt is about to be killed for his refusal to derail the peace conference, but the U.S. Army, along with Sterling, Perrot and Kiroshilov, foil the Nazi underground.   With little time to spare, the group hastily boards a train destined for Berlin, and once en route they agree to take turns guarding Bernhardt. Perrot offers to take the first watch, admitting he has done the least, but as he enters Berhardt's compartment, the French national speaks to the porter in perfect German. Lindley is suspicious, but unable to convince the others that

something is amiss, and just as the American is bidding Lucienne a good night, he sees the reflection of Perrot attempting to strangle Bernhardt. Lindley's quick action saves Bernhardt, whilst Perrot is killed as he attempts to escape. Once the passengers arrive in Berlin, they all congregate at the Brandenburg Gate before going their separate ways. However, it is as this moment that the unity they group shared begins to deteriorate, leaving Bernhardt and Lucienne to believe the peace process will fail. To everyone's surprise, however, Kiroshilov takes the first step towards solidifying their relationship, thus everyone will depart on friendly terms whilst Bernhardt and Lucienne have renewed hope for peace.

Jacques Tourneur, son of acclaimed French director Maurice Tourneur, was hand-picked by producer Bert Granet to direct *Berlin Express* because of his impressive work on the 1942 horror film *Cat People* made with Val Lewton for RKO. A mild-mannered director with experience in Hollywood and France, Tourneur brought an impressive style to *Berlin Express*. Richard Goldstone, a writer/producer who worked in the short films section of RKO remembered Tourneur as: "an excellent director, very sensitive, very acute cinematically, of course, he knew camera angles like the back of his hand."[96] In the July 1948 issue of *American Cinematographer,* Herb A. Lightman boldly stated: 'critics and audiences alike are sure to compare Tourneur's deft directorial style to that of Alfred Hitchcock at his best.'[97] Indeed, the director was still garnered admiration two decades later when Jean-Andre Fieschi wrote in *Cahiers du cinéma* (1969) that Tourneur's abilities were underestimated, and that he had been 'unjustly kept out of the limelight.'[98]

Tourneur did not offer any suggestions for script or casting, but perhaps this was in keeping with his quiet demeanor, as biographer Chris Fujiwara offers that he never fought to direct anything in particular with one notable exception, the western *Stars in My Crown* (1950) staring Joel McCrea. The selection of Merle Oberon as the lead was actually made by Dore

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[96] Quoted in Chris Fujiwara, *Jacques Tourneur: The Cinema of Nightfall* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 25-26.

[97] Herb A. Lightman, 'The Story of Filming *Berlin Express*', *American Cinematographer*, 29.7 (1948), 232.

[98] Jean-André Fieschi, 'Neo-neo-realism: *Bandits at Orgoslo'* in *Cahiers du cinéma 1960-1968: New Wave, New Cinema, Re-evaluating Hollywood*, ed. by Jim Hillier, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1985), 271.

Schary, although no explanation for her selection is given. Nevertheless, at the time *Berlin Express* was to go into production*,* Oberon was still considered A-list, but her career as a glamorous star was beginning to wane. Despite having just received a Best Supporting Actor nomination for *Crossfire,* Oberon received top billing over Robert Ryan. Moreover, the actress insisted that her husband, cinematographer Lucien Ballard, serve as the Director of Photography.[99] If Tourneur had any concerns with working with either Oberon or Ballard, it has not been made apparent from biographical material on the director. In his biography of Tourneur, author Chris Fujiwara indicates that it was actually Bert Granet who objected to the couple, concerned that they would create a situation of 'two against one.'[100] Yet there is nothing to suggest the producer's concerns ever came to fruition particularly given Tourneur's reputation for maintaining "genial and happy sets."[101]   Writing in the trade publication *American Cinematographer* (1948), Herb Lightman praises *Berlin Express,* writing that: 'the story provides a substantial framework for the forceful direction of Jacques Tourneur and the masterful camerawork of Lucien Ballard, A.S.C..'[102] Given how well the film (visually) translated to screen, one would assume that Ballard and Tourneur did not encounter too many difficulties working together despite the challenging conditions they faced. Indeed, Tourneur would later go on to acknowledge the importance of working with both the cameraman and the production designer in an interview with Patrick Brion and Jean-Louis Comolli for *Cahiers du cinéma* (1966).[103]

During the opening credit sequence, *Berlin Express* acknowledges the location shooting as illustrated in *Figure 2.8*, an element that contributes to the overall authenticity.

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[99] Ballard and Oberon met during the filming of *The Lodger* (John Brahm, 1944). Oberon was self-conscious of her severe facial scars, which were the result of an auto accident, so it was Ballard who invented the 'Obie,' a special light that effectively erased the actress' scars, even in close-ups.
[100] Fujiwara, 150.
[101] Ibid., 34.
[102] Lightman, 232.
[103] Fujiwara, 38.

Fig. 2.8: Title credits acknowledging location filming.

Visually, *Berlin Express* is remarkably consistent and gives the impression that filming occurred in the same location, which is due, in large part, to the careful matching of interiors and exteriors scenes. Only the interiors of the train sequences were shot in Hollywood, with everything else was shot on location. The American, British and Russian Occupying forces authorized filming in Frankfurt and Berlin, and in some scenes uniformed military personnel served as extras, once again adding to the authenticity of the film. Berlin was, however, considered to be the more impressive of the two cities depicted in *Berlin Express* given its architecture and monuments. The crew did, however, encounter Russian opposition. Suspicious, the Russian Occupied Forces initially refused to issue the necessary permits for the location filming, claiming that anywhere uniformed military personnel were located was automatically off-limits. Eventually they conceded, for, as Granet would go on to explain, filming in the Russian sector was essential 'since all the historical monuments and National Socialist landmarks are located in the heart of this sector.'[104] In his interview with Brion and

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[104] Bert Granet, 'Berlin Express Diary', *The Screen Writer,* 3.12, (1948), 27.

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Comolli, the director emphasized the importance of location filming. For Tourneur, an actor performs more effectively when appearing before a real pyramid than before a backcloth representing a pyramid or a transparency. Similarly working on a sound-stage, Tourneur believed that the set design must also be constructed accurately including a ceiling, otherwise the way in which the cameraman illuminates the scene will be unnatural, and a kind of forgery.

For the location work in Europe, RKO sent a cast and crew of twenty-seven for a period of seven weeks; although the total time spent in production was actually ninety-three days, which was to be one of Tourneur's longest shooting schedules. Interestingly, the director would later comment that his best films had very compressed schedules, with shooting from twelve to eighteen days, because as Tourneur offered, he liked to go on instinct. The crew also included Nate Levinson (who had worked on *Desperate*, Mann:1947; *Crossfire*, Dmytryk:1947) as assistant director and Bert Granet, a former scenic designer in the New York theater, worked as the production designer and contributed storyboards for several of the major scenes. Ballard also insisted on using cameraman Harry Perry (who had worked on *Wings*, Wellman:1927; *Hells Angels*, Hughes:1930) for the process shots. For the process work, Ballard would shoot the master scene and then Perry would set up in the same place afterwards to film the background using the same lighting. Indeed, Herb Lightman commented in his article for *American Cinematographer* that: 'the process shots in "Berlin Express" are so well-executed that it is difficult even for the experienced eye to identify them as such.'[105] Another innovative technique, adding to the effectiveness of the process work, was the scene in which Perrot attempts to strangle Dr. Bernhardt. Filmed conventionally, the image of the attack was reflected onto the windows of a passing miniature train. The miniature train was then re-photographed as an enlarged process background. The figure shown below (see *Figure 2.9*), illustrates the end result of this special effect.

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[105] Lightman, 233.

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Fig. 2.9: Process shot of Perrot's attack.

Thus the attack on Bernhardt as is a composite background that has been projected outside of the train window, whilst the two-shot of Lindley and Lucienne is filmed conventionally.

Whereas production staff was generally plentiful in France and Germany, equipment was not. Cameras, lenses, lighting, grips and one hundred thousand feet of film stock were shipped from Hollywood, but it was still necessary to borrow and rent equipment. There was also only one camera car available in France, which they were fortunate enough to be able to use for the entire seven weeks on location. In fact, equipment was so scarce that Billy Wilder had to wait until *Berlin Express* was finished prior to having enough equipment to begin shooting *A Foreign Affair* (1948).[106] Although much of the story takes place at night, it was nearly impossible to use night-for-night filming technique given the lack of lights available in Germany and France. Indeed, there is only one instance of a night-for-night exterior shot, which was located at the *Gare de L'Est* railroad station in Paris.

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[106] Ibid., 150.

Fig. 2.10: Night-for-night shot at the train station.

For this particular shot Ballard borrowed all the available studio lights and generators in Paris, although there was still not enough for proper illumination, consequently the scene is underlit (see *Figure 2.10*). Once in Germany, all of the exterior night work was actually filmed as day-for-night shots, and using a technique he had developed whilst working with Charles Starrett on westerns, Ballard combined red and green filters under the light of the sun and used reflectors for fill. Moreover, Ballard had to be inventive to photograph the ruins in Frankfurt given that the elements had reduced the rubble into colorless and nearly indistinguishable masses. According to Granet:

> Only proper cross lighting would pick up the terrifying devastation. Production
> schedules had to be revised to meet the requirements of the sun. This
> frequently took us from one end of the town to the other just to catch a portion of
> ruins under proper lighting. It would be impossible to duplicate the bomb

blasted city background or glass shots. They never could attain the same
unlimited depth and dimension that the actual scenes and people provided.[107]

Ballard's use of the cross lighting enabled the true magnitude of destruction to be captured on film. Buildings damaged by artillery bombardment were also more photogenic than those damaged by aerial bombing, the lighting conditions frequently transformed the black holes into features resembling darkened windows.

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Fig. 2.11: Frankfurt in ruins.

Tourneur was keenly aware of lighting and composition as is evident from his body of work, and indeed, the director would go to write:

> I never look in the camera – cameramen hate a director who is always looking
> in that thing – because I know pretty well what's on it. But I'm very adamant

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[107] Granet, 12.

and descriptive about the source of lighting and if he doesn't give it to me I can tell on the set and I say, 'Look, this won't do. There's no logical source.' Most directors from my observation take much too much time looking into the camera for framing and forget the essential part which is the lighting.[108]

Tourneur's careful attention to lighting and framing are striking in the scene at the abandoned brewery where Lindley and Lucienne find Dr. Bernhardt, in particular the sequence where Lindley and one of the Nazis fall into a vat during their struggle and continue their fight in the remaining beer. Tourneur uses quick cuts, alternating from long to medium-close shots at various angles, to build the tension. One of the Nazi cohorts is also watching the fight from the top of the vat, preparing to shoot Lindley at an opportune moment. The figure below also illustrates Tourneur's mastery of composition by depicting the third man framed by the jagged hole, exaggerating the dramatic nature of the scene through the extreme angle.

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Fig. 2.12: Fight sequence in the beer vat.

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[108] Jacques Tourneur, 'Taste without Cliches', *Films and Filming,* 12.2 (1965), 9.

The lab conditions within Europe were uncertain, raising concerns over the ability to maintain proper quality control. Thus negative processing in Europe was considered risky, so the studio decided to send all of the exposed footage back to the U.S. for processing. Whilst the production crew received periodic laboratory reports, there was no way for them to view the rushes and it wasn't until they returned to Hollywood that anyone saw the footage. Tourneur also did not have the right to supervise the editing despite having been an editor prior to becoming a director. In an interview with Higham and Greenberg, the director described his practice of taking notes when watching the rough cut, but he also commented that after he completed his editing: 'the studio can do what it likes, restore scenes I've cut, re-edit others, anything.'[109] Tourneur also explained that that he believes in instinct and improvisation in filmmaking:

> I believe that when I write something, or paint . . . it's subconsciously inspired: we're not doing it *consciously*. . . . I don't believe in doing everything in advance, as Hitchcock does. I began working in France, and there everything is without a schedule. I'd go on the set and say to the cameraman, 'Look, come on over here, and let's look at it from this point of view.' That's how we worked! . . . The director in America is slowly becoming a clerk. He does what he's told as fast as he's told – three days to do a half-hour show – and that's not the way a director should work: he should stamp a film with his own personality. Then you have an entertaining film. But outside of ten or twelve – Hitchcock, the big directors – that big army of the others is an army of clerks.[110]

Given that Tourneur was kept out of the editing room, it is impossible to know much of his improvisation was sacrificed. Yet what appears on the screen clearly belongs within his body of work. It was also common practice within Hollywood to use a second unit to film establishing shots where the stars where not actually needed, a method useful for keeping

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[109] Higham and Greenberg, 220.
[110] Ibid., 220-21.

production costs down. However, Tourneur, a one-time second unit director, made a point of not using a second unit during the filming of *Berlin Express.* Thus, the lack of a second unit meant that every foot of film shot during the production was under Tourneur's direction and in keeping with his overall vision advancing the narrative.

Whilst the reception of *Berlin Express* amongst film reviewers was mixed, visually the film contributed to the generic theme of authenticity and was generally praised. For example, the trade publication *Variety* opened its review with:

> Most striking feature of this production is its extraordinary background of war-ravaged Germany. With a documentary eye, this film etches a powerfully grim picture of life amidst the shambles. It makes awesome and exciting cinema.[111]

Likewise, *The New York Times* contended that *Berlin Express* delivered a gritty narrative supported by imagery that offered 'panoramic and close views of life amid the "new architecture" of Frankfurt and Berlin—"early Twentieth Century modern warfare" architecture—which gives the adventure the authentic impact of a documentary.'[112] Regardless of the narrative flaws described by critics, *Berlin Express*, nevertheless, echoed public opinion held by many Americans. As Gallup Poll editor William A. Lydgate contended in a 1947 publication, Americans wanted the United Nations to succeed but were generally concerned over its progress to ensure peace.[113] Indeed, the trade publication *Screenland* focused on the positives themes within the narrative, including acknowledging how the characters learn to appreciate one another, finding that they are 'all human beings and very

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[111] Staff Writer, 'Review: *Berlin Express*', *Variety* (31 Dec 1947), <http://variety.com/1947/film/reviews/berlin-express-1200415887/> [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

[112] A. W., '*Berlin Express* (1948)', *The New York Times* (21 May 1948), <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9804E0D6133CEF33A25752C2A9639C946993 D6CF> [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

[113] William A. Lydgate, 'My Country, Right or Left', *The Magazine of the Year,* 1.1 (Mar 1947), 50. < http://www.oldmagazinearticles.com/cold_war_opinion_poll#.VXyhU0Ln1US> [accessed June 16, 2015]

much alike, despite differences of nationalities and creeds.'[114]   Similarly, a review from *The New York Times* states*:*

> Surprisingly, also, for films of this genre, "Berlin Express" manages to convey a United Nations credo—message, if you will—which is neither patronizing nor a drag on the basic yarn being spun. And, the note of hope for a future brotherhood of nations, on which the film ends, is not cloying and theatrical but a warm and altogether natural observation.[115]

Thus, within the context of the Cold War, the narrative anticipated the tenuous state of diplomacy in the early postwar era. The execution by Tourneur and Ballard, and in particular the powerful imagery of war-torn Germany conveyed through master shots, establishes its authentic qualities.   Indeed, producing a fiction film with documentary qualities is something that Bert Granet seemingly intended. The producer's article "Berlin Express Diary" which was published in the 1948 edition of *The Screen Writer* (1948) offered the following:

> The current success of the documentary is the surest sign of the American movie audience's intellectual growth. I believe it is the transitional step showing the desire for more adult fare in screen entertainment. Until now it has mainly confined itself to melodrama, perhaps in a short time someone will find it is the ideal method to tell a human comedy.[116]

Whilst it is not known whether Tourneur shared Granet's views on *Berlin Express* as a kind of documentary, nevertheless, the director felt the film 'had some cogent points to make about the changes that were taking place at the time.'[117]   The scene that speaks to this very

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[114] Staff Writer, '*Berlin Express:* RKO', *Screenland* (July 1948), 15.
[115] A. W., '*Berlin Express* (1948)', *The New York Times* (21 May 1948)
[116] Granet, 27.
[117] Higham and Greenberg, 220.

thought is the exchange taking place at the Brandenburg Gate as illustrated in the figure below.

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Fig. 2.13: Lindley pleading with Kiroshilov at the Brandenburg Gate.

In this scene as the American makes an emotional appeal to Kiroshilov, stating:

> LINDLEY: I don't think any of us got off to a good start, but I give you my word I tried to catch up. I really tried to figure out what makes you tick Max, what makes all of you tick. We try to understand you, why don't you try to understand us.

Such hopeful sentiments expressed at the end of the narrative proved to be short-lived in reality. Indeed, Americans would intently follow the heating up of the Cold War, watching it unfold through Hollywood political thrillers.

To sum up this mini-case study, Tourneur clearly borrowed stylistic elements from *film noir* to build suspense and excitement, yet *Berlin Express* does not convey the same kind of melancholy and loss seen with, for example, *Out of the Past* (Tourneur, 1947)*,* a film that is frequently considered an archetypal *noir.*[118]   *Berlin Express* also exemplifies the Cold War political thriller by adopting key conventions of striving for authenticity (see Chapter One) those of dramatic location filming and 'voice-of-God' narration. Also important is the way in which the narrative is grounded in Cold War discourse albeit just prior to the nuclear arms race. Lindley's hopeful plea for understanding and desires for friendship, a kind of cautious optimism, eventually gave way distrust and paranoia. Indeed, Berlin was geopolitically significant, remaining at center for much of the Cold War as is evident with our next mini-case study, *Night People.*

Night People (1954)

The setting is once again postwar Berlin, albeit six years later.   By the time *Night People* was in production the city had undergone changes, which were not lost on DoP Charles Clarke, who had found 1950s Berlin to be quite different from what he had remembered. Clarke had been in Berlin in 1949, working as the DoP on George Seaton's film *The Big Lift* (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1950). In his memoirs, Clarke would go to write:

> *Night People* required some scenes in which the ruins of devastated Berlin were to be used as a background. Being an old hand in Berlin, I assured the company that I could show them all sorts of ruins, as I remembered them from 1949 while making *The Big Lift.* . . . Somehow, Berlin did not look the same . . . for I was positive that all that wreckage would have required years to clear up.[119]

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[118] Geoff Mayer and Brian McDonnell, *Encyclopedia of Film Noir* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007), 424.
[119] Charles G. Clarke, *Highlights and Shadows: The Memoirs of a Hollywood Cameraman* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 1989), 193-4.

The Big Lift, a docufiction staring Montgomery Clift, was shot less than a year after the 1948–49 airlifts and the Soviet blockade of Berlin was lifted. Whilst Seaton's film echoed the devastation visualized in *Berlin Express*, by the time *Night People* was in production, West Berlin had undergone significant changes. What had once been panoramic ruins were either rebuilt or at the very least rubble had been removed, exposing vacant lots. Clarke remembered *Kurfurstendam Strasse* as a 'lonely, shelled-out passageway,' but it had reemerged as a vibrant promenade with 'throngs of happy, well-dressed people' seated in sidewalk cafes or strolling along a shop lined streets 'ablaze with neon lights and an amazing array of fine merchandise.'[120] Clarke eventually settled for some locations near the Soviet sector.

Both of our Berlin-based films have a kidnapping at the center of their narrative, albeit of distinctive types and representative of the growing Cold War tension. The motivation behind the kidnapping Dr. Bernhardt in *Berlin Express* is more simplistic, a means to disrupt diplomacy and peace talks, embodying the Onset period described in Chapter One. However, *Night People* and the kidnapping that precipitated the exchange of political prisoners was profoundly unsettling. If you will, it served as a kind of instrument of psychological warfare that contributed to the heating up of the Cold War in the 1950s. Equally separating these two films are the technological facilities and production values. Whereas the *Berlin Express* production crew walked a tightrope, given the limited access to cameras, lighting equipment and film stock, yielding a gritty docufiction, the production of *Night People,* funded and distributed by Twentieth Century-Fox, is quite a contrast. Indeed, director Nunnally Johnson was afforded the luxury of the latest technology in the form of Technicolor and Cinemascope, and as we shall see, such innovative technology delivered considerable impact with respect to *mise-en-scène*.

Nunnally Johnson transitioned from journalism to screenwriting in the mid-1930s, and having been hired by Twentieth Century-Fox, he would go on to enjoy success as a writer in Hollywood, to include an Academy Award nomination in 1941 for the adaptation of John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* and again in 1944 for *Holy Matrimony* (Stahl, 1943),

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[120] Ibid.,194.

another adaptation. Johnson's work on set with actors fostered an interest in directing, so he approached Daryl F. Zannuck about *Night People*. Because the film was to be a star vehicle for Gregory Peck, the studio boss insisted that Johnson would only be given the opportunity to direct if the actor approved. According to Johnson biographer Tom Stempel, the actor expressed no objections. Rather, Gregory Peck commented: 'Well, you wouldn't be the first writer that turned director. It's all right with me.'[121] Stempel then goes on to describe an encounter Johnson had in London with director Henry Hathaway. With over twenty-years of experience behind the camera, Hathaway told Johnson that he wouldn't make a good director, purportedly stating:

> all the big directors, all of them bastards, John Ford, George Stevens, Fritz Lang, Willie Wyler. . . . You don't like a row. You won't make a fuss. You'll compromise.[122]

In the end, Hathaway's lack of confidence did not deter the writer-turned-director. From the beginning, Johnson intended to create a thriller, although critics like Pauline Kael would go on to assert that *Night People* was nothing more than propaganda. Writing in *Sight and Sound* (1954)*,* Kael concluded that *Night People* was simpleminded and only offered 'a superficial credibility by documentary-style shots of American soldiers, by glimpses of Berlin, and by the audience's knowledge that Americans in Europe have in fact been kidnapped.'[123] The anti-Communist thread was, according to Kael, window dressing; simply a means of giving the anti-Nazi films of World War Two a more modern look. In spite of her objections, Kael critique rightly offered that the marriage of Technicolor and Cinemascope gave the film a modern look. Indeed, the use of new technology, and in particular Scope, imbues *Night People* with tension and paranoia, thereby providing a platform for the Cold War rhetoric within Johnson's narrative.

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[121] Tom Stempel, *Screenwriter: The Life and Times of Nunnally Johnson* (San Diego: A S. Barnes & Co.,1980), 147.
[122] Ibid., 147.
[123] Pauline Kael, 'Morality Plays Right and Left', *Sight and Sound*, 24.2 (1954), 67.

At the time *Night People* went into production the Cold War had entered a brief respite given the ascent of Khrushchev and Eisenhower, as well as the end to the Korean War. However, kidnappings from West Berlin, the subject of this film, were a common occurrence during this period and widely reported by Western media outlets. After having said good night to his girlfriend, Kathy Gerhardt (Marianne Koch), U.S. Army Corporal John "Johnny" Leatherby (Ted Avery) begins his commute home, somewhat nervously walking the quiet, darkened streets of West Berlin. Aware that he is being followed, Johnny stops when the man asks him in German to light his cigarette. Johnny obliges, but two more men rush over and a brief struggle ensues, before the young American is forced into the back seat of a car. As the car speeds away, crossing into the Russian Sector and into East Berlin, it becomes clear that Corporal Leatherby is the victim of a kidnapping, but at this point, the motivation remains unclear.

Johnny's father, Mr. Charles Leatherby (Broderick Crawford) is a wealthy industrialist with significant political influence amongst members of the federal government and the U.S. military. Frustrated by the lack of progress made in the return of his son, Mr. Leatherby insists on flying to Berlin. Meanwhile, both the U.S. State Department and the Army have staff working the case, exploring all diplomatic avenues. One of the leading Army investigators in Berlin is Colonel Steve Van Dyke (Gregory Peck); however, both the colonel and Fredrick Hobart (Max Showalter) of the State Department have thus far been stymied. Even Colonel Van Dyke's Russian counterpart, a man whom he considers a friend, claims to have no knowledge of the abduction. With the lack of progress and growing political pressure, Van Dyke has little choice but to turn to a former German lover, Frau "Hoffy" Hoffmeier (Anita Bjork) for help, to the chagrin of current love interest, Ricky Cates (Rita Gam). Miss Cates makes it very clear that she neither likes nor trusts Hoffy, who now works as a spy for the West, claiming the German woman's addiction to absinthe, an anise-flavored (alcohol) spirit, is a significant liability. Colonel Van Dyke, to the contrary, reminds Miss Cates and his investigative assistant, Sergeant Eddie McColloch (Buddy Ebsen), that Hoffy had fought the Nazis for which she has a scar on her neck 'courtesy of Mr. Hitler's boys.'

As a man used to getting results, Mr. Leatherby believes that it will be possible to circumvent the bureaucratic stalemate merely by paying a ransom. However, State

Department employee, Sergei 'Petey' Petrochine, informs the businessman that he has personally been in contact the week before with Colonel Lodijensky, the Russian counterpart to Colonel Van Dyke. Petey explains to Mr. Leatherby that in Johnny's case, the captors are looking for something other than money. The following day, Leatherby meets Van Dyke for the first time, and the colonel has some harsh words for the father, but two men agree to meet for dinner later that evening. Meanwhile, Hoffy has uncovered the motivation for the kidnapping; the Russians are interested in knowing whether Colonel Van Dyke would be willing to make a trade – the return of Johnny for two Germans living in West Berlin.

That evening, as the two men dine at a local cabaret, it becomes clear why they are at that particular location. The piano player, an attractive older woman, and her blind husband are the couple the Russians want in exchange for the young American soldier. Mr. Leatherby, who assumes that the couple has done something wrong, voices that his only concern is for getting his son back (at any cost) from the Russians, which prompts Colonel Van Dyke authorizes the arrest of the couple despite their only known crime being that of living in West Berlin on forged papers. When Sergeant McColloch begins to interview the woman, she identifies herself a British national and demands to see someone from British Intelligence. Realizing the potential for an international crisis if the U.S. Army arrested a British citizen, Colonel Van Dyke learns that she is Rachel Cameron and that she is married a German officer, General Gerd von Kratzenow. When war broke out, however, Rachel Cameron chose to stay with her husband, but that they had been arrested after her husband was implicated in the plot to assassinate Hitler; it was actually Himmler's men who gouged out General von Kratzenow's eyes. The couple had been able to escape from prison during an American bombing raid, eventually relocating to West Berlin where they assumed a new identity. Whilst still at the hospital, Colonel Van Dyke finally learns what has become of his friend, Colonel Lodijensky (he and his family had disappeared earlier). Apparently, the Russian officer and his family were merely within days of defecting to the United States, but as Petey discovered, Colonel Lodijensky died of a brain hemorrhage. Upon seeing how upset Colonel Van Dyke is over the death, Mr. Leatherby comes to the realization that not all Russians are the same and develops deep misgivings about the exchanging the couple for his son.

Having returned to his office to meet with Stansways (John Horsley), a British intelligence officer, Colonel Van Dyke learns the shocking truth about Lodijensky's death; that someone had tipped off the Russians about the upcoming defection, so he killed his family and then himself to avoid being sent back to Russia. Stansways then shows him a photograph of a known double agent, a woman by the name of Stamm, it is none other than his former lover Hoffy, thereby prompting the Colonel to deduce that she was the one to tip off the Russians about Lodijensky's planned escape. After this meeting, Colonel Van Dyke rushes back to the hospital to make preparations for the exchange. He devises a plan to trick both Hoffy and the Russians into getting Johnny back without actually having to turn over the husband and wife. After knocking Hoffy out with a blow to the jaw, he pours a substantial amount of poisoned absinthe into her mouth and puts a large quantity of cash into her purse in order to make the Russians believe she was actually double-crossing them. With Hoffy tied down to a gurney and a sheet covering her face, the hospital staff are able to load her onto the ambulance, whilst Colonel Van Dyke distracts and intimidates the Russian soldiers, keeping them from checking the body. The following day at the Press Club, father and son, along with Johnny's girlfriend Kathy want to express their gratitude. In turn, Colonel Van Dyke acknowledges that Johnny's father has a big heart and wishes them all well. As the Kathy and the Leatherby's depart, Colonel Van Dyke look out from the Press Club balcony and a radio announcer reports that normal diplomatic channels were responsible for the return of the young American soldier.

Night People is one of only three Hollywood productions filmed in Berlin during the early part of the Cold War; the two others are *Berlin Express,* the first mini-case study of this chapter, and *The Big Lift* (Seaton, 1950). When considering narrative, these three films are fairly straightforward, with plot points taken from daily life adding to the sense of authenticity created by filming on location, although *Night People* stands apart for its use of color. As discussed in the introduction and Chapter One of this thesis, color film stock was barely present amongst political thrillers between 1945 and 1962, and indeed is primarily limited to a

small handful of star vehicles of the late 1950s.[124] With wide-screen technology and stereo sound, Cinemascope, offered a new and novel experience that captivated audiences audio-visually. Film historian John Belton offers that Scope's effect of wrapping exceedingly large images around filmgoers has changed the very nature of spectatorship, and by drawing spectators into the filmic space of Cinemascope, they cease to be passive viewers.[125]

Another important function of Scope is the less complex shooting pattern that it offers. Filming in Scope can be fluid and continuous, allowing for simplified sets where actors are able to deliver their parts on single takes rather than being subject to the repetitious nature of the shot counter-shot shooting traditionally used for dialogue. There are numerous examples of the single take in this film of a single studio space, and I will come to one of them below in more detail, but the effect is of a greater physicality, we feel the bodies in movement within and across the frame as the camera pans along with them. Yet, as to the actual writing of the script, as we can see with *Night People,* the narrative is quite conventional, so there is little to distinguish the content from other postwar political thrillers including *Berlin Express* and *The Big Lift.*

Visual style is an obvious notable difference between the two Berlin based mini-case films, however, although this is as much due to the Scope technology as it is to the relationship between the director and the cinematographer. As previously discussed Tourneur had no say in the selection of Lucien Ballard, yet the resulting film is clearly representative of the director's oeuvre, and from this we would surmise the relationship

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[124] Other exemplary color films include *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (Hitchcock, 1956), *North by Northwest* (Hitchcock, 1959) and *The Journey* (Litvak, 1959). Whilst *Night People* and both Hitchcock productions were filmed in Technicolor, only the Fox studio film included a four-track stereo. Since *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *North By Northwest* were for Paramount, Hitchcock adopted VistaVision. Although VistaVision was a variant of the widescreen format, it was, however, not the same anamorphic process used with Cinemascope hence the inability to support four-track stereo. The anamorphic process involves filming a widescreen picture on standard 35 mm film with a non-widescreen aspect ratio. The image is then "stretched" by an anamorphic projection lens to recreate the original aspect ratio. Twentieth Century-Fox acquired the rights to anamorphic widescreen, eventually marketing it as Cinemascope.

[125] John Belton, 'Glorious Technicolor, Breathtaking Cinemascope and Stereophonic Sound' in *The Classical Hollywood Reader,* ed. by Steve Neale (London: Routledge, 2012), 355-57.

between director and DoP was highly collaborative. There was a similar experience with *Night People,* as the selection of Charles G. Clarke as the DoP was made by Zannuck sans input from Johnson.   Indeed, the Fox studio boss frequently paired Clarke with writer-directors, and the cinematographer would go on to describe his experience with Johnson positively:

> He was wonderful. He said, 'I'm a writer. I don't know anything about camera technique. I'd appreciate your help.' So you try to help them. You don't tell them what to do. You don't set up a camera and say, 'I'm going to do it here.' You don't take that attitude at all. You suggest. You help keep all the mechanics in film making straight. You can suggest when we should move in for a closer shot, and the techniques of having to put a film together with the necessary cuts.[126]

Johnson similarly recounted a positive working relationship (with Clarke) in his interview with Tom Stempel, and the dependence the director had on his crew meant that he would: 'stage the sequence the way he thought best to convey what he had written in the script, and then he would ask the cameraman and cutter to look at the scene and figure out how many setups they would need to cover the scene.'[127]   The number of setups was certainly influenced by the use of Cinemascope, and it is also worth noting that the format would reduce certain production costs. Indeed, the ability to use more single setups meant that the DoP would only be required to light the set one time.   However, one aspect of Cinemascope that I would like to consider now is the way in which this format allowed for authentic interaction between characters, highlighting the dramatic tension within the narrative.

Filming in Scope was an obvious economic decision for the studio, but the format also offered an important aesthetic component. *Night People* reveals itself as a very "talkative" film, with copious amounts of dialogue, and in using Scope it was possible to establish the dynamic staging of the actors and greater physicality more naturalistically. Indeed, the format changes how spectators follow the interaction between characters particularly during some of

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126 Stempel 151.
127 Ibid., 150.

the most dramatic scenes, because they can be done in a single take without crosscutting or resorting to shot/counter-shot. To illustrate this point, I would now like to discuss the scene in which the characters played by Broderick Crawford and Gregory Peck meet for the first time. After being shown into office, there is a (rare) moment of silence between the two men as Mr. Leatherby observes Colonel Van Dyke at the sink (see *Figure 2.14*).

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Fig. 2.14: Charles Leatherby observing Colonel Van Dyke.

Having admitted that he is a man neither impressed by rank, it is apparent that Johnny's father not used to being ignored as revealed in the quick cut to a medium shot depicting his reaction to Colonel Van Dyke's silence. Here we may interpret his reaction, as one of incredulity, annoyance, or perhaps he is initially sizing up the man who is responsible for the safe return on his son (see *Figure 2.15*).

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Fig. 2.15: Charles Leatherby's reaction to being ignored.

Following this brief reaction shot, the scene is once again framed as a two-shot with Colonel Van Dyke moving silently past Johnny's father as illustrated in the figure below.

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Fig. 2.16: Van Dyke crossing the room in silence.

The setups for most of this sequence are filmed as medium shots, with the camera panning to maintain both men in the frame. After Colonel Van Dyke finally engages Mr. Leatherby in conversation, the exchange is emotionally charged, with the career officer demanding to know exactly how the businessman intends to get his son back. Not only is the growing tension between the two men evident through dialogue, it is also apparent visually. During the confrontation, as Van Dyke steps closer to Leatherby, the camera responds in kind with a dolly shot moving from a medium to a medium-close two-shot as illustrated in the two figures shown below (see *Figure 2.17* and *Figure 2.18*). The camera pulls back once the tension is diffused, although we have never lost sight of the actors in the frame. Thus, during this sequence the spectator is conscious, in an immediate way, of the ebb and flow of Van Dyke and Leatherby's interactive dynamic.

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Fig. 2.17: Medium shot of confrontation.

Fig. 2.18: Medium-close shot to build tension.

Indeed, the use of Scope as illustrated by the figures above changes our perception of the interaction between characters. In a traditionally shot film, it would be necessary to take and re-take each part, including filming dialogue sequences. Applying such a production technique would then entail filming the shot of Broderick Crawford speaking. The camera would then cut, moving behind Crawford to film Gregory Peck's response, and a counter-shot to depict Crawford's response. Whilst the shot/counter-shot is meant to convey a kind of rhythm in the delivery of dialogue, with the intent of 'naturalizing' the interaction, this is actually an illusion. To the contrary, the shot/counter-shot is actually false as it shifts from actor to actor, which is, essentially, disruptive to the flow. Given the space provided by Scope, it is possible to incorporate much more area within frame, allowing the spectator to follow characters movements. Not only is this kind of movement (such as the way Colonel Van Dyke passes Mr. Leatherby moving from sink to couch to desk) represented in a more realistic and natural manner, it also serves to position the spectator within the scene as a silent observer.

The scene in the cabaret where Frau and Herr Schindler are to be arrested once again illustrates the realist, more modern aesthetic established through the use of Cinemascope. Much of the staging and use of deep focus photography during this scene reinforces the

tension between the two men stemming from the confrontation in Colonel Van Dyke's office earlier that day.   Johnson biographer Tom Stempel goes on to write of this scene:

> The sequence where the elderly German couple is arrested in the restaurant is done in one take, beautifully composed with Peck and Broderick Crawford at both sides of the frame in the foreground and Buddy Ebsen and the couple in the background between them. This may well have been the kind of suggestion that Clarke, the cinematographer, made but Johnson the director had the option of staging the scene in that way or not, and Johnson is certainly the one responsible for the naturalness of the action.[128]

By filming from over Broderick Crawford's left shoulder as illustrated in the *Figure 2.19* (shown below), Leatherby and the spectator have no choice but to gaze upon the piano player and her blind husband, who are not only forced to consider the morality of having to choose (between his son and a woman and her husband who will most surely be tortured and executed) but it also speaks directly to the presidential rhetoric on Communism as immoral and Godless.

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[128] Ibid., 151.

Fig. 2.19: Leatherby observing the piano player in the cabaret.

Fig. 2.20 Discussing the Russians' proposition.

By cutting the film to the forward-facing medium-close two-shot similar to the earlier interaction, the spectator is, once again, drawn into the naturalistic representation of the tension that exists between the two men.

Whilst the challenges of filming in France and Germany during *Berlin Express* differed for the crew of *Night People,* nevertheless, they still encountered their share of issues shooting on location. DoP Clarke recalled in his memoirs some of the technical complications he encountered during production:

> Here everything was different: the lights, the sound equipment and much other apparatus which was more or less standard with us. I found that the lamps were not quite up to the color temperature to which our film was balanced, but it was not so far off as to be unusable. In fact, I thought this slight imbalance might help give the photography that "continental" look and might, therefore, add to the authenticity of the production. I was also swayed by the economics of this arrangement for it would have been terribly expensive to import all the lamp housings and globes from Hollywood.[129]

Clarke's comment on using the color imbalance to add authenticity to *Night People* is indicative of issues surrounding color, which was to become dialectical in its function with the advent of color television. Director Rouben Mamoulian would write in *American Cinematographer:* 'in color, we have not only a new dimension of realism, but also a tremendously powerful means of expressing dramatic emotions.'[130] However throughout the 1940s, color was predominately associated with the spectacle, and more specifically with respect to the female body (an essential component of the fantasy). Thus, it was with the marketing of color television programming in the 1950s, namely through documentary or news and current affairs, that contradictory discourses surrounding color emerged, ranging from spectacle/art to natural/realist. On the other hand, Scope had been primarily used for epics and to depict expansive landscapes, although there are very few exterior scenes within *Night People.* Indeed, the most dramatic moments of the narrative are located within interior settings, namely Colonel Van Dyke's office, the smoky cabaret or the Army hospital. The use

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[129] Clarke, 193.
[130] Rouben Mamoulian, 'Controlling Color for Dramatic Effect', *American Cinematographer,* 22.6 (1941), 262.

of Cinemascope actually feeds into an ambience of stifling paranoia and claustrophobia, which is further augmented by Colonel Van Dyke habitual closing of the windows in his office. In contrast, Tourneur's use of lighting and extreme camera angle foster the threatening ambiance of *Berlin Express*, thereby conveying both the physical threat (to Dr. Bernhardt) and political threat (to the peace talks). Thus the daytime exterior scene at the Brandenburg Gate at the end of *Berlin Express* seemingly neutralizes the threat presented, giving way to a cautious optimism for a better world and a unified Germany.

As I have discussed in this section, *Night People* is quite a modern film despite, yet the aesthetic achievements of this production promote propagandistic qualities noted by Pauline Kael and others. Whilst Johnson may not have intentionally set out to make a propaganda film, the production, nevertheless, echoes pervasive national discourses and presidential rhetoric from both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. Not only is the message that there is (potentially) a heavy price for national security, but it also reinforces what Americans have come to believe: that Russians truly are ruthless, or as Colonel Van Dyke put it they are "cannibals. . . head hunting, blood thirsty cannibals, who are out to eat us up."

Waving the Flag: The Cold War Comes to America - *Big Jim McLain* (1952) and *Pickup on South Street* (1954)

Paranoia over Soviet espionage grew exponentially after the adoption of the Atomic Energy Act of 1946 (McMahon Act) and with failure of the U.S. to anticipate the first atomic test by the Soviet Union in 1949. Indeed, *Venona*, a collection of intercepted intelligence cables decrypted by the U.S. during and immediately following World War Two revealed Soviet espionage activity was occurring when the two countries were still allies. There is an abundance of literature detailing espionage within the U.S., and in Chapter One, I discussed the Rosenberg case within the context of gender politics during the Cold War, and in particular the threat that women may pose to the national security. Within this section, I shall go on to discuss the films, *Big Jim McLain* and *Pickup on South Street,* although I would first like to establish historical context in relation to the espionage cases involving Alger Hiss and Judith Coplon.

Alger Hiss, a State Department employee, became the subject of inquiry by HUAC in 1948 when Whittaker Chambers, an admitted former member of the Communist Party U.S.A. (CPUSA), testified that the two men had been part of the same Communist cell. Eventually Chambers turned over sixty-five pages of typed documents (copies of State Department papers dating from 1938), along with four pages in Alger Hiss' own handwriting and undeveloped 35-mm film to bolster his claims that Hiss had worked as a Soviet spy. This evidence (dubbed the "Pumpkin Papers" when the roll of film was retrieved from a hollowed-out pumpkin located at Chambers' Maryland farm) played a decisive role in the conviction of Alger Hiss for perjury (he was never charged with espionage).[131] The Hiss-Chambers case received significant coverage whilst television cameras were granted unprecedented access to the congressional hearing. Other notable political thrillers that make reference to the Hiss-Chambers case include *North by Northwest* (Hitchcock, 1958) and *Advise and Consent* (Preminger, 1962) . For example, Alfred Hitchcock alludes to the Hiss-Chambers during the climactic scene at Mount Rushmore as Roger Thornhill (Carey Grant) slyly says to Eve Kendall (Eva Marie Saint), 'I see you've got the pumpkin,' when referring to the microfilm hidden in Vandamm's (James Mason) statute. Otto Preminger's adaptation of the Allen Drury's 1959 novel *Advise and Consent* offers a clear link as the narrative explores the U.S. Senate confirmation process as Secretary of State nominee Robert Leffingwell (Henry Fonda) is questioned about his former Communist affiliations.

Whilst the Hiss-Chambers case generated more media coverage and angry debate than any other of the early spy case, revelations over Judith Coplon espionage case was yet another example of the threat women posed to national security.[132] As a respected employee of the Foreign Agents Registration Office (within the U.S. Department of Justice) employee, Coplon became a subject of interest in 1948, following the deciphering of a

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[131] Whilst jurors for the first Hiss perjury trial deadlocked and were unable to render a verdict, they agreed that the Pumpkin Papers were key evidence
<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/hiss/pumpkinp.html>
[132] Ronald Garay, *Congressional Television: A Legislative History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), 36-37.

Venona cable.[133] The investigation into Coplon's activities included the illegal wiretapping of her telephone, her parents' telephone, as well as the "bugging" of her office. Coplon was eventually setup by the FBI to pass sensitive documents to her handler, although at the time of her arrest, she had not actually completed the transfer. Nevertheless, the evidence compiled by the FBI was extensive, yet U.S. federal prosecutors were nervous about presenting the case before a jury given concerns over national security. In addition, there was information obtained through the illegal wiretaps. During Coplon's two trials (one for espionage and the other for conspiracy), the FBI denied knowledge of this form of surveillance. Both juries returned guilty verdicts, however, the convictions unraveled upon appeal as a consequence of the illegal wiretaps, and as I shall discuss in the section below was not only a source of concern during the production of *Big Jim McLain,* but yet another means of establishing narrative authenticity..

<u>*Big Jim McLain* (1952)</u>

Of the five mini-case studies presented in this chapter, *Big Jim McLain* is perhaps the least interesting stylistically whilst it is the most ideologically driven. Director Edward Ludwig had a fairly extensive body of work, although little information is available about the Russian émigré. *New York Times* film critic Bosley Crowther lambasted the earlier collaboration between Ludwig and Wayne for its conspicuous fakery, the 1948 production for Republic, *Wake of the Red Witch*.[134] The director and actor did not fare much better with *Big Jim McLain.* Indeed, theater and film critic Otis Guernsey of the *New York Herald Tribune,* condemned *Big Jim McLain* as 'part travelogue, part documentary-type melodrama, and part

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[133] Coplon worked within a section of the U.S. Department of Justice that was responsible for preventing Communist front organizations from registering under the Foreign Agents Act. She also had full access to all counterespionage investigations conducted by the FBI, and thus was in a position to warn the KGB. Richard M. Nixon, subsequently used the Coplon arrest as yet another example of how espionage was rampant in government. See Marcia Mitchell and Thomas Mitchell, *The Spy Who Seduced America: Lies and Betrayal in the Heat of the Cold War: The Judith Coplon Story* (Montpelier: Invisible Cities Press, 2002).

[134] Bosley Crowther, '*Wake of the Red Witch* (1948)', *New York Times* (10 Jan 1949) <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9B06E7DC143AE33BBC4852DFB7668382659EDE> [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

love story, but pedestrian in all of these phases.'[135] The production is nonetheless interesting given the way narrative and Wayne's own politics seemingly converge, albeit in a way that overly simplifies contemporary sociopolitical discourses. What remains true, however, is that more than twenty years after the death of John Wayne, the actor remains an iconic, celebrated figure within American film. Wayne biographer Gary Wills acknowledged this sentiment:

> There is no better demonstration of the power of movies than Wayne's impact on American life. He was not like other actors, who simply hold political views . . . Wayne did not just have political opinions. He embodied politics: or his screen image did. It was a politics of large meaning, not of little policies – a politics of gender (masculine), ideology (patriotism), character (self-reliance, and responsibility).[136]

The actor's persona not only came to embody American patriotism (a star-image he cultivated), John Wayne was even considered to be the model solider amongst the American people, a sentiment even held by General Douglas MacArthur. Yet this view is somewhat ironic given the non-conformist position he adopted during World War Two. Unlike many of his contemporaries, including *Big Jim McLain* co-star James Arness, the actor chose not to enter military service, and instead continued to develop his star status.[137]

Wayne's personal politics were well known and exceptionally conservative; he objected to anything perceived to be a threat to or a criticism of key institutions including the

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[135] Otis Guernsey, "On the Screen", *The New York Herald Tribune* (15 Sept 1952); see Brenda Murphy, *Congressional Theater: Dramatizing McCarthyism on Stage, Film and Television* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 84.

[136] Garry Wills, *John Wayne's America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 29; Bonnie S. Jefferson, 'John Wayne: American Icon, Patriotic Zealot and Cold War Ideologue', in *War and Film in America: Historical and Critical Essays*, ed. by Marilyn J. Matelski and Nancy L. Street (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2003), 11.

[137] James Arness served in the Italian campaign during the war and was wounded at Anzio. Arness was subsequently awarded two meritorious medals from the U.S. Army, the Purple Heart (for being wounded) and the Bronze Star (for meritorious service in combat).

American government. Historians Roberts and Olsen's biography *John Wayne, American* (1995) described Wayne's outrage when he was offered the role of Willie Stark in *All the Kings Men* (Rossen, 1949), considering the script as unpatriotic.[138] Having assumed the patriotic hero archetype early in his career, the actor was very selective, avoiding any film that '[s]mears the machinery of government . . . [t]hat throws acid on the American way of Life.'[139] Wayne was equally vocal when it came to the film *High Noon* (Zinnemann, 1952), which starred his good friend Gary Cooper. Wayne would assert that *High Noon* was: '. . . the most un-American thing I've ever seen in my whole life. The last thing in the picture is old Coop putting the United States Marshall's badge under his foot and stepping on it.'[140] Ironically, when Gary Cooper won the Oscar for Best Actor for *High Noon*, he asked Wayne to accept the award for him.

The actor's views on Communism were consistent with postwar attitudes in America and his disdain for liberal and radical filmmakers in Hollywood continued to grow. By 1947, and coinciding with the HUAC investigation, Wayne became increasingly interested leveraging his position to promote an anti-Communism message, concluding that it was his duty as a citizen and patriot to use the medium of film to influence and educate Americans about the evils of Communism. Indeed, some of Hollywood's most influential conservatives were involved with the founding of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals (MPAPAI), an organization that pledged to 'fight, with every means of our organized command, any effort of any group or individual, to divert the loyalty of the screen from free America that gave it birth.'[141] It is not surprising that many of HUAC's "friendly" witnesses were founding members, and it was also during the 1947 hearings that Wayne decided to take a more active role in the Alliance. By March 1949, the actor had been elected president of the MPAPAI, and according to biographer Gary Wills he would: 'would swagger

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[138] Broderick Crawford went on to play the lead in *All the Kings Men,* a role that earned him an Academy Award for Best Actor in 1949. Wayne was also nominated that year for his role in *Sands of Iwo Jima* (Dwan, 1949)
[139] Jefferson, 26.
[140] Ibid., 26.
[141] Ibid., 28.

in his new role, taking credit for wounds he never dealt.'[142] In response to *High Noon* screenwriter Carl Foreman's blacklisting and eventual relocation to England, Wayne said: 'I'll never regret having helped run Foreman out of the country.'[143]

The stalemate in Korea coupled with Democrat President Harry Truman's waning popularity gave Republicans hope that they could once again regain control of the White House. Hollywood Republicans were, however, divided in their support of the two main presidential contenders, Ohio Senator Robert Taft and General Dwight D. Eisenhower. As a lifelong Republican, Wayne, along with Ward Bond and Cecil B. DeMille, threw their support behind Taft. However, Wayne was bitterly disappointed when Taft lost the nomination to Eisenhower. Biographers Roberts and Olson suggested that Wayne felt resolute in his role that if Taft was unable to deliver an effective message, he could. One such endeavor was through *Big Jim McLain*, a preachy propaganda film, the kind that Wayne claimed to hate, which called on all '"real Americans" to be vigilant against Communism.'[144] *Big Jim McLain* not only was to operate within the context of Cold War rhetoric, it would become part of a string of films that would openly reveal the actor's ideological position. Moreover, given his role as star and producer (in conjunction with Robert Fellows) the actor exercised significant influence over the political content.

As with *Berlin Express,* this film was loosely based an article that appeared in a widely popular magazine, *The Saturday Evening Post*; the article entitled 'We Almost Lost Hawaii to the Reds' written by Richard English and appearing in the February 1952 edition. English went on to describe the rise of top labor leader, Jack Kawano, a working class native Hawaiian of Japanese descent. Discontent amongst the laborers in the early 1940s made recruitment by Kawano and other Communist Party members possible, and by the end of World War Two, membership was approximately twenty-nine thousand (from the original one thousand five hundred). The May Day labor strike described in the article effectively shut down Hawaii in 1949. English surmised that the strike was an experiment in how the

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[142] Wills, 198.

[143] Ibid., 198.

[144] Randy Roberts and James S. Olson, *John Wayne: American* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 374.

Communists would capture the islands of Hawaii, locating Americans behind the Iron Curtain. To accomplish this, it was necessary for the Communists to close the waterfront, considered to be the 'lifeline of Hawaii's existence.'[145] At the conclusion of the strike in October 1949, the longshoremen union had secured a twenty-one-cent per hour raise for the stevedores. However, the cost of the strike, which had involved workers from the longshoremen association as well as sugar and pineapple industries, was in the neighborhood of one hundred million [U.S.] dollars. After the strike, Kawano eventually broke with the Communist Party, even going to Washington D.C. to testify before HUAC in a closed hearing. Robert English concludes the article with:

> Hawaii has now done a good job of putting its house in order, ousting the Communists wherever they may legally do so, particularly in politics. But Hawaii's chances of statehood, an issue that is almost as popular among local politicians as deep breathing and motherhood, has particularly suffered. . . . The first Americans to be subject to a Communist invasion are still stunned at finding it can happen here. And where in the past, Hawaii's boosters hopped that by minimizing Communism it would, like yesterday's tropical rain, just go away, they know better now.[146]

The Saturday Evening Post article became the basis for the screenplay written by James Edward Grant. Indeed there is a notable similarity between the actual International Union of Longshoremen and Warehouse Workers (IULW) leader Kawano and the film's fictional ex-Communist labor boss intent on cleaning up the union. A friend of Wayne and collaborator on various projects, Grant's screenplay was to be the first film produced by the Wayne-Fellows production company; it was also to be part of a multi-picture deal with Warner Bros. The film tells the story of two tenacious but frustrated HUAC investigators, Jim McLain (John Wayne) and Mal Baxter (James Arness). Both men are disgusted that Communist agents go

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[145] Robert English, 'We Almost Lost Hawaii to the Reds' in *The Saturday Evening Post,* 224.31 (1952), 54.
[146] Ibid., 52.

unpunished, pleading the Fifth Amendment. The men are sent to Hawaii to investigate a Communist cell operating out of Honolulu. They deliver subpoenas to some of the low level Party members, are unsuccessful in locating former party treasure, Willie Namaka.   Visiting office of Dr. Gelster (the psychiatrist treating Willie Namaka), Mclain meets Nancy Vallon (Nancy Olson). Somewhat skeptical of McLain, she nevertheless she provides Namaka's home address, but she also accepts his invitation for a date. Meanwhile, a leading party official, Sturak (Alan Napier) orders Dr. Gelster to 'take care of' Namaka because of his drinking and unreliable behavior, which puts the local Communist operation at risk.

McLain visits Namaka's boarding house, only to learn from the brazen landlady, Madge (Velda Ann Borg), that he had a nervous breakdown and was taken to a sanitarium at Dr. Gelster's request.   Just as McLain is about to leave the boarding house, two Communist Party thugs arrive to retrieve Nomaka's belongings. Working with Honolulu Police Chief Dan Liu, who is fully supportive of the HUAC investigation, the two Communist Party members transporting Namaka's trunk are detained for questioning, giving the police enough time to photograph the contents. After the two men are released from custody, they are followed to a nightclub that turns out to be the center of Stuark's operations. Once the photographs (of Namaka's trunk) are revealed, Baxter immediately recognizes the papers as being insurance forms, confirming that Namaka has been involved in insurance fraud. Still unable to locate Namaka, McLain visits the missing man's ex-wife, who is, by now, working as a nurse on Molokai (where a leper colony actually exists) as a kind of penance for her former Communist membership. Mrs. Namaka (Madame Soo Yong) admits to McLain that she had not been in contact with her former husband for years, but that recently he had left incoherent messages about 'fratricide' despite having no siblings and that he had returned to Shinto, the religion of his childhood. Following up on a lead from Chief Liu, Mal Baxter visits the Sanford Sanitarium but finds Namaka heavily drugged and in no condition to answer questions.

Staying busy during the week, McLain spends all of his free time courting Nancy, a widow. Having lost her husband during the attack on Pearl Harbor, Nancy has fallen in love with McLain and the two begin making plans for marriage. As the investigation continues, McLain and Baxter are introduced to a local union leader, Edwin White (Robert Keyes), a man claiming to be an Anti-Communist intent on ridding the union of this influence. However,

McLain then receives a tip from Mr. Lexiter (Paul Hurst) and his wife (Sara Padden) that the man calling himself Edwin White is actually their son, a devoted Communist Party member. Madge contacts McLain, claiming to have new information about Nomaka; however, before she will turn over the letter, she insists that McLain accompany her to several nightclubs. The letter reveals that Nomaka was involved in the sabotage of a U.S. Navy vessel, an act that led to the death of his childhood friend. Meanwhile, Mal Baxter is following up on another lead, but he is murdered. The autopsy reveals a junior investigator was given a lethal dose of truth serum, which aggravated an existing heart condition. McLain attempts to mislead the Communist members into thinking the investigation has been halted, but party boss Stuark doesn't fall for this trick, although he is unaware that his club has been 'bugged' by the police. At the emergency meeting of the local party leaders, Stuark, orders Dr. Gelster to confess to the police and implicate a few other members in order to allow the three remaining members to continue the plan to halt production whilst another member, a bacteriologist, initiates an epidemic on the island. McLain decides to disrupt the meeting and a brawl ensues.   Police Chief Liu and other members of the Honolulu police department arrive on scene, arresting the party leadership. Dr. Gelster and two other men are charged with the murder of Mal Baxter, whilst the other members of the Communist Party are must testify at a HUAC hearing being held in Hawaii. Once again, Jim McLain is disgusted by the Communist members going free after pleading 'the Fifth,' although now he has Nancy by his side to comfort him, giving him a reason to continue fighting for the American way of life.

Big Jim McLain adheres to generic conventions common to the corpus of films considered throughout this thesis, including location filming and voice-over narration. *Big Jim McLain* is a standout film in our corpus for its extreme propagandistic view, a constructed discourse that is accomplished, by and large, through the narration. However, there is also something quite curious about this film. Listening closely to the soundtrack, there are four discernable narrators; three of which are clearly identifiable as a third person (narrator).[147] Film theorist Sarah Kozloff, author of *Invisible Storytellers, Voice-over Narration in American Fiction Film* (1988), suggests that the third person voice-over narrator is less common in

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[147] The production notes for *Big Jim McLain* did not provide any explanation for this condition.

fiction film derived from novels containing a heterodiegetic narration, but exists within a category of films that:

> . . . purposely use narration to imitate documentaries or newsreels. War films and semi-documentaries rely on the voice not only for expository information but also for documentary authenticity and authority. [148]

Whilst many political thrillers released throughout the Cold War years considered in this thesis make use of the third person narrator (see *Berlin Express,* Tourneur:1948*; Walk East on Beacon!,* Werker:1952*; Hong Kong Confidential,* Cahn: 1958; *Man on a String,* de Toth:1960*; The Manchurian Candidate,* Frankenheimer:1962), it is the first person narration of title character Jim McLain that is most interesting since he embodies the ordinary American and his feelings about Communism, not unlike the sentiments expressed by Moe (Thelma Ritter) in the film *Pickup on South Street.* As mentioned earlier, there are three identifiable third person narrators providing a voice-over, with the first occurring at the end of the title credits. The narrator (Henry Morgan) recites the first paragraph of Stephen Vincent Benet's 1936 short story "The Devil and Daniel Webster":

> Yes, Dan'l Webster's dead – or, at least, they buried him. But every time there's a thunderstorm around Marshfield, they say you can hear his rolling voice in the hollows of the sky. And they say that if you go to his grave and speak loud and clear, 'Dan'l, Dan'l Webster!' the ground 'll begin to shiver and the trees begin to shake. And after a while you'll hear a deep voice saying, 'Neighbor, neighbor, how stands the Union?' Then you better answer, the Union stands as she

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[148] Because a heterodiegetic narrator does not take part in the action, and therefore is not considered a character within the narrative. As Kozloff explains, a heterodiegetic narrator is typically omniscient and possesses knowledge of the unfolding events, but this type of narrator also has insight into the thoughts and feelings of characters. Sarah Kozloff, *Invisible Storytellers, Voice-over Narration in American Fiction Films* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1989), 65.

stood, oak-bottomed and copper sheathed, one and indivisible, or he's liable to rear right out of the ground.[149]

Through this excerpt, the film's first narrator sets up the ideological and moral agenda of *Big Jim McLain*. Likewise, the image of a tree next to the gravesite of Daniel Webster echoes the powerfully spoken voice-over and non-diegetic patriotic melodies that includes *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. The tree as it is depicted is solid and unbendable; forced to withstand torrential rain and gusting wind becoming an allusion of American strength and resolve. And just as the off-screen narrator poses the question 'how stands the Union,' the scene begins a slow dissolve to reveal the iconic Capital dome in Washington D.C. (see *Figure 2.21*).

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Fig. 2.21: Daniel Webster's grave and dissolve to Washington D.C. Capital dome.

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[149] Third person narrators are not usually given credit, something which is true of *Big Jim McLain*. Nevertheless, Henry Morgan was a prolific actor, having appeared in film and on television prior to his role as narrator in *Big Jim McLain*. In addition, Morgan's voice was distinct and would most likely have been recognizable amongst audiences even without being noted in the title credits.

At the end of the excerpt, the camera holds on briefly on the Capital and then a quick pan reveals the building where the House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities offices are located (see *Figure 2.22*).

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Fig. 2.22: Close-up of HUAC office sign.

Henry Morgan's Dan'l Webster voice-over initiates the spectator, although it is actually the non-diegetic sound, an authoritative "voice-of God" narrator so readily associated with postwar era newsreels, documentaries and training films that sets the tone for the remainder of the film.   Indeed, the shots of depicting actual HUAC members at work as portrayed in *Figure 2.23* (see figure below) and the voice-over narration reinforces the spectator's perception that this is a film with documentary qualities.

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Fig. 2.23: Actual members of HUAC.

The long shot as shown in the above figure provides a realistic backdrop as the narrator goes on to describe the scene:

> This is the committee room of the House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities. We the citizens of the United States of America owe these, our elected representatives a great debt. Undaunted by the vicious campaign of slander launched against them as a whole and as individuals, they have staunchly continued their investigation pursuing their stated beliefs that anyone who continued to be a Communist after 1945 is guilty of high treason.[150]

The film then cuts to medium-close shots of various committee members including Republican Charles Potter of Michigan, Republican Bernard Kearney of New York, and

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[150] *Big Jim McLain,* dir. by Edward Ludwig (Warner Bros., 1942)

Republic Harold Velde of Illinois, who later assumed the role of HUAC chairman between 1953 and 1955.

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Fig. 2.24: Medium-close shot of Committee members.

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Fig. 2.25: Shot of Frank S. Tavener, Committee Counsel.

Prior to the release of *Big Jim McLain,* Americans would have had some knowledge of the way in which the committee functioned given its portrayal through newsreels and radio coverage. Film historian Thomas Doherty would go on to write of the Hollywood Ten hearings:

> HUAC had been widely derided as conducting a 'three ring circus' (the recurrent metaphor for the unruly impact of klieg lights and cameras on congressional inquiries) when newsreels showed witnesses shouting and being shouted down, ejections from the hearing room, and intemperance on all sides. The antics surrounding the Hollywood Ten sessions had been such a public relations fiasco that future HUAC hearings tended to be conducted well away from the eyes and ears of the newsreels, radio and television.[151]

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[151] Thomas Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 116.

Doherty goes on to describe the criticism that led HUAC members to initially ban camera and radio coverage from hearings in 1949, although when it came to being portrayed in a Hollywood production the members were quite supportive.[152] Indeed, the scene in which the committee is depicted in the beginning of the film, whilst staged, nevertheless blurs the boundary of fact and fiction. Thus, this scene gives spectators the impression that this could very well could be an actual hearing, particularly as committee counsel Frank S. Tavener, who is photographed in close-up, dramatically poses his question: 'Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?' The actor playing the role of a university economics professor responds with: 'I stand on my constitutional rights under the Fifth Amendment and refuse to answer the question on the grounds that I might incriminate myself.' The scene then returns to John S. Wood, a democrat from Georgia (see *Figure 2.26*) .

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Fig. 2.26: Committee Chairman John S. Wood posing a routine question.

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[152] Ibid., 117.

Wood, the actual committee chairman at the time of filming, then delivers his question, one that he would have known by heart and routinely asked during every hearing: 'In the event of armed hostility between this government and that of Soviet Russia, would you, if called upon, willingly bear arms on behalf of the government of the United States?' As the shots alternate between actual committee members and the actor a blurring the boundary between reality and fiction occurs, although I would argue that it is actually the diegetic and non-diegetic sound that most effectively conveys the rhetoric that would come to symbolize McCarthyism. Indeed, composer and film scholar Michel Chion suggested that American cinema is argumentative, and with a fondness for controversy, preaching and speechifying, a notion that is most applicable to *Big Jim McLain*. Chion goes on to write of American film's: 'technical perfectionism in the image, sound, special effects, and editing is all in the service of this oratorical focus that is so important to it.'[153] Indeed, the oratorical pervasiveness of *Big Jim McLain* is exemplified through first person narration from the title character.

The spectator is first introduced to a mute McLain character intently listening to the testimony of a university professor of economics. As he sits pensively, Jim McLain launches into a preachy voice-over:

> . . . Eleven frustrating months we rang doorbells and shuffled through a million feet of dull documents and proved to any intelligent person that these people were Communists, agents of the Kremlin, and they all walk out free. My fellow investigator, Mal Baxter, he hates these people. They had shot at him in Korea. The good doctor Carter will go right back to his well-paid chair as a full professor of economics at the university, to contaminate more kids.

Such is just the first of many voice-overs that belies the complex geopolitical issues faced during the first Cold War era. Whilst the function of the first person narration is to convey complex exposition, something that is clearly evident in *Big Jim McLain,* as film scholar Mary

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[153] Michel Chion, *Film, A Sound Art,* trans. by Claudia Gorbman and C. Jon Delogu (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 89.

Anne Doane goes on to suggest, the interior monologue offers the spectator with a simultaneous representation of voice and body whereby:

> The voice, far from being an extension of that body, manifests its inner lining. The voice displays what is inaccessible to the image, what exceeds the visible: the "inner life" of the character. The voice here is the privileged mark of interiority, turning the body "inside out."[154]

As a consequence, the first person narrator affects the viewer's experience of the filmic text, fostering greater identification with individual characters. And more specifically with respect to *Big Jim McLain,* the first person narration engenders identification with the star and his personal politics.

In many regards, *Big Jim McLain* adheres to the codes and conventions readily associated with the Western genre — a genre also clearly associated with John Wayne's star persona, thus it is no surprise that the narrative of this film maps so easily upon that of any standard western. Not only is Hawaii symbolic of a modern day western frontier, as we noted above, at the time of production it was still a U.S. territory. In this context, Hawaii becomes part of the 'unknown,' in need of being tamed and understood (basically, brought into line with American ideology). Indeed, the very theme of *Big Jim McLain,* the Communist infiltration of the trade unions, forced the delay in acceptance of Hawaii as a U.S. state, which did not occur until 1959. Several of the characters also seemingly embody western archetypes. The protagonist, Jim McLain, is for example, the stranger who is going to help the 'good sheriff' (actual Honolulu Police Chief Dan Liu) clean up the town. Yet McLain won't have to go about this alone as he has his sidekick, Mal Baxter, but also the love of a good woman in Nancy Vallon (all reminiscent of Western tropes).

Eventually the film comes full circle, ending much in the way it begins with McLain expressing his disgust for the Communists through his voice-over. Yet, like *Berlin Express, Night People* and (as we shall see) *Pickup on South Street,* there is still hope for America and

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[154] Mary Anne Doane, 'The Voice in Cinema' in *Film Theory and Criticism,* ed. by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 6th edn (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2004), 379.

Americans making the world safer and better for all. Thus, when an off-screen voice asks 'Neighbor, how stands the Union now?' Big Jim McLain's non-diegetic response is: 'There stands the Union Mr. Webster. There stands our Union sir,' with images of soldiers boarding a ship in order to defend freedom. Although *Big Jim McLain* does not call outright for the abolition of the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the narrative suggests in light of the Communist threat that this part of the Bill of Rights was doing more harm than good.[155] Whilst Wayne may not have been overly concerned with the political ramifications of *Big Jim McLain*, the same cannot be said for Warner Bros. studio. Carl Millikin, the studio's head of research, sent several memoranda to attorney Roy Obringer, pointing out issues that could expose the studio to any number of legal liabilities. Plans to incorporate newsreel footage of Alger Hiss being taken away were scrapped in part due to Millikin's statement: 'This man may have lost his civil rights, but some jurisdictions permit, I believe, such an individual to sue – especially if any of his rights are ultimately restored.'[156] Millikin was equally thoughtful over the investigative techniques depicted in the film. The researcher went on to write in one memo:

> The script shows the investigators as using illegal and criminal methods in obtaining their evidence. They are shown as "bugging" premises and as installing wire-tapping devices in a house. We show them as searching Communist Party headquarters apparently without benefit of a search warrant and after having gained entry through the expert use of a jimmie. In this last endeavor, we show the Honolulu police as assisting them on orders from the Chief of Police. **. . .** Whether or not such evidence is obtained in the ways shown, the Judith Copland conviction (which was thrown out by the Supreme Court because of this illegal sort of evidence) is probably a sore point with such

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[155] The Fifth Amendment is comprised of provisions focusing on the rights of the people against government abuse in criminal cases. Because the U.S. Constitution guarantees an individual's right against self-incrimination, the government cannot force a suspect to confess.
[156] Memo to Roy Obringer (28 Mar 1952), *Folder 1764 – Big Jim McLain,* Warner Bros. Archives, School of Cinema-Television, University of Southern California.

agencies. Neither the Committee nor the investigators will want – in all probability -- to have such activities detailed.[157]

Though more interesting was the length to which HUAC would cooperate in its production. In correspondence to Warner Bros. attorney (Obringer), *Big Jim McLain* producer Robert Fellows indicated that the Committee did not share Millikin's concern, as confirmed by the HUAC attorney located in Hawaii:

> With reference to your notes of April 11th . . . the business of BUGGING THE PREMISES and the ILLEGAL ENTRY – have been okayed by both the House Un-American Committee who have urged us not to eliminate it; and by CAPTAIN ED LAYTON, who is the Chief Naval Intelligence Officer in the Pacific.[158]

Whilst HUAC may not have been overly concerned with the production, such was not the case for the FBI. The *Honolulu Advisor*, a local newspaper, had erroneously reported the film was about FBI agents and the clipping was subsequently forwarded to Hoover.[159] Upon direction from Hoover, his agents interviewed both John Wayne and Honolulu Police Chief Dan Liu (set to play himself in the film). Upon receiving assurances that the film was actually about HUAC investigators and not the FBI, Hoover was satisfied and authorized the file on *Big Jim McLain* to be closed.

As *Big Jim McLain* lauds the patriotism of those who are forced to denounce members of their own family whenever they suspect them of being Communists, which certainly has resonances with the Rosenberg case where brother David Greenglass turned against his

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[157] Ibid., *Folder 1764 – Big Jim McLain*
[158] Ibid., *Folder 1764 – Big Jim McLain*
[159] The memo along with the copy of the clipping entitled "One-Take M'Queen Breezes Through First Scene in John Wayne Movie" (May 1952) is now publicly available from the FBI's electronic reading room on the Internet <http://foia.fbi.gov/wayne/wayne.pdf>

older sister, Ethel Rosenberg, Likewise, *Big Jim McLain* also appears to anticipate *My Son John* (1952)[160] and Kazan's *On the Waterfront* (1954), both of which have a similar message.

Whilst the main thread of *Big Jim McLain* is the infiltration of Communists within Hawaii, something that could have significantly damaged the ability to supply the American military fighting in Korea, the film also contributes to discourses on race. Indeed, there was some concern over the portrayal of Jews in the film, and in particular, with regard to the scene in which McLain is interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Lexiter In an untitled and undated memo in the Warner Bros. archives, it was stated:

> They can mention hardships in the old country and the blessings of living in America so that they are simply parents who are unhappy about their son's affiliation with the C.P. Don't like the Jewish identification with the C.P. [Communist Party], even thought the attitude of the parents is heroic.[161]

Whatever sensitivity Warner Bros. had about Jewish representations, such did not appear to be the case with the native working-class characters of Willie Namaka and his former wife. The narrative is somewhat sentimental in its treatment of these Communists, who are portrayed as having 'sick' minds. For example, not only has Willie Namaka been drugged by Dr. Gelster, he also has feelings of guilt over his past activities, contributing to a severe psychological break. To the contrary, Mrs. Namaka has been able to rehabilitate herself from the 'sickness' (of Communism). Not only did she confess, providing a full account of her Communist activities to the FBI, Mrs. Namaka banished herself to the island of Molokai where she will care for the babies of lepers. Indeed, the contagion metaphor used to describe the Communist threat in *Big Jim McLain* is also evident in films where educators are prominently featured, including *I Was a Communist for the FBI, My Son John,* and *Advise and Consent* (Preminger, 1962). The belief was so strong during this era that Communism could spread

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[160] In *My Son John*, when the mother, who is played by Helen Hayes, is unable to persuade her son John to confess to the FBI she shouts "take him away! He has to be punished!"
[161] Untitled/undated memo, Folder 1764 – *Big Jim McLain* at USC Warner Bros. Archives, School of Cinema-Television, University of Southern California.

like an epidemic, led FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover call it a 'malignant growth which is nurtured in darkness.'[162]

I would like to return for a moment to my earlier assertion that *Big Jim McLain* is one of the least interesting mini-case study films with respect to style. Whereas the overtly propagandistic anti-Communist productions of this period are overwhelmingly B-films and frequently the directors have adopted an expressionist style associated with *film noir* (see *The Red Menace,* Springsteen:1949; *The Woman on Pier 13*, Stevenson:1949; *D.O.A.,* Maté:1950; and *The Thief*, Rouse:1952 are commonly cited). Curiously, historian Andrew Spicer included *Big Jim McLain* in *The Historical Dictionary of Film Noir*, yet the production is aesthetically mundane and mostly lacking in the *noir* conventions seen in the aforementioned films. Adopting Barry Salt's approach to analyzing shot scale, *Big Jim McLain* is dominated by medium and medium long shots, whilst the extreme long shots (typically depicting Wayne and Olsen sightseeing) give the film a leisurely travelogue quality; this is in marked contrast the mini-case studies of *Berlin Express* and *Pickup on South Street* where quick cuts and close-up shot or extreme angles build tension within the narrative. Nevertheless, it is worth acknowledging the scene following the death of character Mal Baxter for the inconsistency in style. Notified by Police Chief Dan Liu over the telephone, McLain must go to the Honolulu city morgue to identify his partner's body. The low-key lighting and the long shot of McLain walking down a long, empty corridor (see *Figure 2.27*) is a rare moment of psychological crisis for the protagonist.

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[162] John Sbardellati, *J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies, the FBI and the Origins of Hollywood's Cold War* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2012), 171.

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Fig. 2.27: Long-shot of McLain at the morgue.

Before entering the medical examiners room, there is a two-shot of a local reporter asking McLain for details about Mal Baxter so that he may write the obituary (see *Figure 2.28*).

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Fig. 2.28: Two-shot of McLain and reporter.

Indeed, throughout most of the scene at the morgue McLain is silent whilst his first-person voice-over emphasizes a rare moment of internal crises. In the master shot, McLain sees the body of Mal Baxter stored in the cold chamber.

Fig. 2.29: Master shot of McLain and the coroner.

The interiority of the scene, and thus the protagonist's concern for America, is revealed in insert shots that quickly cut from a medium-close to a tight shot of McLain's face as illustrated in *Figure 2.30* and *Figure 2.31* appearing below.

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Fig. 2.30: Medium-close shot of McLain viewing the body.

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Fig. 2.31: Close-up of a deeply troubled McLain.

McLain subsequently launches into an angry voice-over, lauding the sacrifices of his Korean War veteran friend whilst being equally critical of the postwar recovery efforts in Europe. Indeed, this monologue matches in tone the shift in American discourse towards political conservatism that would result in Eisenhower assuming the presidency:

> McLAIN: Obituary. Name so-and-so, age such-and-such. Does this tell us about a young lawyer who went into the Marine Corps. Who lost eight feet of intestine in Korea, gut-shot by a grenade made in Czechoslovakia of scrap and by machines that had been made in the States and shipped somewhere in Western Europe, and then trans-shipped somewhere behind the iron curtain. Does this give you a picture of a guy who let his own teeth go 'cuz his kid needed bands on hers. Ok. Malcolm Baxter, thirty-four, married, two children, ex-Marine. There's your obituary.

As the HUAC investigator leaves the morgue, the medical examiner turns off the light. Not only is McLain in a dark place, but so too is America, a nation facing insidious Communist threat.

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Fig. 2.32: Full shot of McLain looking back one last time.

Though McLain rightly suspects the Communists for Mal's death, nevertheless, he remains in the dark. The tenacious HUAC investigator is committed to bringing those responsible to justice, yet as we see in the figure below (see *Figure 2.33*), a fog literally and figuratively envelops him.

Fig. 2.33: Searching for clues along the waterfront.

The *mise-en-scène* encountered in this scene conveys a sense of foreboding and despair that is reminiscent of *noir,* yet it is inconsistent with respect to the overall look of the film. The depiction of HUAC committee members and Honolulu Police Chief Dan Liu, as well as the extensive use of voice-over narration and location filming serves the heavy-handed, propagandistic narrative. Indeed, *Big Jim McLain* lack of style may have been precisely what producers Robert Fellows and John Wayne intended. Had Ludwig's aesthetic been more in keeping with some of his contemporaries, the message of socio-political conservatism in America may have been lost, or at least diluted.

Pickup on South Street (Fuller, 1954)

      If *Big Jim McLain* demonstrated the ease in which Communists are able to infiltrate a geographically isolated locale like Hawaii, then *Pickup on South Street* illustrates the vulnerability of all American cities to the vagaries of infiltration by almost any means, in this instance, by the criminal underworld inadvertently intruding into the world of atomic espionage. When Darryl Zanuck approached Samuel Fuller with *Blaze of Glory,* an original

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story by Dwight Taylor, the head of production for Twentieth Century-Fox was beginning to steer the studio towards 'big-picture entertainment rooted in action and sex rather than the social problem films . . . of the previous decade.'[163] Taylor's story was crafted as a courtroom melodrama in which a female lawyer falls in love with a man she is defending. Zannuck then turned the story over to Harry Brown, a poet-novelist with screenwriting credits that included *Sands of Iwo Jima* (Dwan, 1949) and *A Place in the Sun* (Stevens, 1951). Although Brown delivered a faithful adaptation of Taylor's story, Zannuck felt it was lacking in realism. During a story conference for *Blaze of Glory,* Zannuck noted:

> The basic story is excellent but is a very conventional treatment of the idea. This is a formula where it should have been an unorthodox treatment. Alan Ladd treatment vs. Humphrey Bogart treatment. Illustrated by relationship with girl – should have been hard-hitting Richard Widmark kind of thing – tough, dirty, full of authority. Are we going to take this idea and treat it with guts and realism.[164]

Wanting a more edgy narrative, the studio boss hired Samuel Fuller to rewrite and direct what would eventually become *Pickup on South Street.*

Fuller was convinced that the story penned by Taylor would take too long to play, so he conceived an idea harkening back to the gangster films of the 1930s. Fuller envisioned a story about three New York criminals (a man Skip and two women: Candy and Moe) who find themselves on the 'lowest rungs of the social ladder'.[165] When asked about his idea for *Pickup on South Street,* the director would later acknowledge that Klaus Fuchs, the German-born British theoretical physicist and atomic spy who smuggled microfilm secrets to the Soviets, served as inspiration, although he did not intend this to be the primary angle given

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[163] Lisa Dombrowski, *The Films of Samuel Fuller: If You Die, I'll Kill You!* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 53.
[164] Ibid., 69.
[165] Robert Porfirio, Alain Silver and James Ursini, eds.,'Samuel Fuller (1912 – 1997)', *Film Noir Reader 3* (New York: Limelight Editions, 2001), 39.

Zannuck's insistence on having a 'rough-and-tumble' protagonist and a 'shady love affair:'[166] Fuller instinctively understood what the studio boss wanted, and he delivered a violent, habitual criminal who:

> meets a girl oozing sex – the kind who lives to get love, cheap to get it. And for this girl the pickpocket violates the Baumes [three strike] law, is convicted of the fourth offense, and gets life.[167]

Whilst Fuller's script initial clearly met Zannuck's requirements, it was, nonetheless, deemed unacceptable by Joseph Breen, head of Production Code Administration, 'by reasons of excessive brutality and sadistic beatings, both of men and women.'[168] Breen found the scenes in which Joey beats Candy (clad only in a bathrobe) and the climatic violent altercation between Skip McCoy and Joey at the train station particularly objectionable.[169] After several revisions, the PCA approved the script for production, yet the physical brutality remained a point of contention with Breen; however, as I shall discuss later Fuller's use of violence reinforced the social-realist elements of *Pickup on South Street*.

   Pickup On South Street opens with Candy (Jean Peters), an attractive young woman, on a crowded New York subway train, who is being followed by two government agents, Zara (Willis B. Bouchey) and Enyart (Jerry O'Sullivan). The men witness a pickpocket, Skip McCoy (Richard Widmark), steal the unsuspecting woman's wallet, but they lose sight of him amongst the crowd. Candy continues on to her destination, but once there she realizes that she is the victim of a pickpocket, so she telephones ex-boyfriend Joey (Richard Kiely) for

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[166] Brown's original script also included a criminal named Skip who had stolen a wallet containing government secrets on microfilm. Skip decides to turn himself in when it become apparent that the women he loves will be erroneously implicated in the spy ring. See Dombrowski, 68.

[167] Ibid., 69.

[168] Ibid., 70.

[169] Fuller would go on to say that he liked the scene where Richard Widmark pulled Richard Kiely down the stairs by his ankles, with the 'heavy's chin hitting every step. Dat-dat-dat-dat-dat: it's musical.' See George Lipsitz, *Time Passages, Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 181.

instructions. Candy, a former prostitute, believes Joey is merely selling industrial secrets and has no knowledge that he is, in fact, working with the Communists. Meanwhile, Agent Zara contacts Police Captain Dan Tiger (Murvyn Vye), explaining how the FBI was on the verge of breaking up a Communist espionage ring until a pickpocket stole the microfilm. Based on the pickpocket's technique, Moe Williams (Thelma Ritter), a peddler of neckties and information, identifies the perpetrator as Skip McCoy. Having just been released from prison and now living in a dilapidated waterfront-fishing shack, McCoy is brought in for questioning, although he maintains his innocence. Both Captain Tiger and Agent Zara attempt to appeal to the grifter's sense of patriotism, but to no avail. In the meantime, Candy, who also paid Moe for information on Skip McCoy, is busy searching his shack for the microfilm. Finding an intruder, the pickpocket knocks Candy unconscious. After she is comes to, the couple begins to flirt and quarrel, with Skip eventually demanding cash for the microfilm from her 'Commie' associates. Shortly after Candy leaves the shack, Captain Tiger arrives to make one last plea for cooperation, offering to scrub the pickpocket's record, but Skip declines.

Candy delivers the message to Joey and his associates, but becomes fearful that something will happen to Skip, so she provides her ex-boyfriend with a false address. Candy then returns to Moe's apartment, wanting to warn the woman about Joey. Moe promises she will not provide any information and then the motherly grifter locates Skip to also warn him about Joey. Sitting in the diner, Moe chastises Skip for dealing with the Communists, but she also tells him that Candy loves him. When Moe returns home, a desperate Joey demands information, and when she refuses he shoots and kills her. Just as Skip is about to be arrested for Moe's murder, FBI agent Enyart, who has been watching the shack all night, informs them of his innocence. After taking care of Moe's funeral, Skip returns to the shack to find a distraught Candy. Although he assures Candy that she is not to blame for Moe's death, he still demands the money, so she knocks him unconscious and takes the microfilm. Wanting to clear Skip's name, Candy delivers the microfilm to the police but they doubt her explanation. Agent Zara nevertheless enlists Candy's help, wanting her to deliver the microfilm to Joey so that the FBI can arrest the spy ring. Joey, happy to have the microfilm, suddenly realizes a frame is missing, so he brutally attacks and shoots Candy. Joey then finds Skip's address in Candy's purse and is able to evade the police, making his way over to

the shack. Later, when Skip visits Candy in the hospital, she admits to double-crossing him because she would 'rather have a live pickpocket than a dead traitor.' The pickpocket finally realizes that he is in love with Candy, so goes home to wait. Joey and Fenton arrive at the shack but are unable to locate the missing frame. Fenton then directs Joey to go ahead with the delivery despite the missing frame. Skip follows Joey and witnesses the exchange. First, he beats the ringleader and then chases after Joey. The two men fight, Skip brutally beats up Joey. The story ends with Skip's release from police custody. Captain Tiger claims that the pickpocket will probably be arrested within thirty days, but the couple merely laughs as they leave the station.

One aspect of *Pickup on South Street* that is important to consider is the way in which Fuller's relies on the passing of government secrets as a catalyst for the unfolding story. Thus on a narrative level, *Pickup on South Street* was both topical and political in light of the widely publicized espionage cases involving Alger Hiss, Whitaker Chambers, Klaus Fuchs and Judith Coplon. On the flip side of the coin, however, *Pickup on South Street* also lashes out at the absurdity of the Cold War fears and hysteria that dominated the 1950s. As Fuller would go on to say about his characters in the film: 'They aren't criminals out of choice, because they always wanted to be; they do it because it's the only way they can make a living.'[170]   Indeed, the characters of Moe, Skip and Candy are, by and large, apolitical, seemingly removed from the Cold War paranoia that consumed many (perhaps mostly middle-class) Americans — nor are they aware in the first instance that they are involved in the passing of atomic secrets to the enemy. Yet Skip's response once he is in the know (that he will try and get money in exchange for the illicit microfilm) certainly chimes with J. Edgar Hoover's concerns about individuals being capable of acting in their own best interests above the interests of the nation. Fuller recounts a lunch meeting he had with Zannuck and Hoover in which the FBI boss expressed concerns over the script:

> Hoover was against the picture. "We don't have an FBI man there in the
> presence of an informer. We don't depend on the New York Police Department

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[170] Ibid., 41.

to depend on informers to get information. Not the Department of Justice!" And he didn't like for [Richard] Widmark to say, "Don't wave the flag at me!" [Hoover] said "I don't want anyone in this Cold War to say that to anyone, especially cops. The other thing I don't like is [that Widmark] went after [the Communists agent] because the man beat up the girl. He [should have gone] after the man for the United States."[171]

Hoover's sentiments are certainly consistent with the rhetoric in other pro-FBI films like *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* and *The Atomic City* (Hopper, 1952). Viewed in this light, the character of Moe, is particularly interesting since she is the only one who comes close to espousing Hoover's dictum: even though it is her job to sell information, she is a good patriot and refuses to cooperate with a Communist. Whilst this brings about her death, nevertheless, her sacrifice is for country. And, even more curiously, in sacrificing herself, she provides Candy and Skip with a chance to attain the American Dream given that they will be able to marry and (hopefully) settle into a more conventional (and certainly not criminal) life. Candy is another interesting character, serving as a redemptive catalyst (for Skip), yet Samuel Fuller's treatment eroticizes her in a way that is reminiscent of *film noir*.[172] Thus we can see how a generic ambiguity runs through the narrative resulting in turn in a paradoxical tone where the plot is concerned. Scholar Frank McConnell points out how the convoluted plot articulates the complexities and contradictions of this era, where the line between good and evil is nearly indistinct. As McConnell goes on to suggest, Fuller's genius rests with the director's understanding that McCarthyism and anti-Communist sentiments transformed an underlying uneasiness present within the Cold War culture into a hatred of an external enemy, a kind of 'fear of an alien political machine' that was actually a 'psychological

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[171] Richard Schickel, 'A Long Chat with Sam Fuller: Richard Schickel / 1982', *Samuel Fuller: Interviews*, ed. by Peary, Gerald, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 108.
[172] Fuller would later go on to state that he was unaware of *film noir* and that his interest was in portraying a world where people lived at the margins and were isolated. See Alain Silver, James Ursini and Robert Porfirio, *Film Noir Reader 3: Interviews with Filmmakers of the Classic Noir Period* (New York: Limelight Editions, 2004), 42.

projection of postwar fears of the economic machine.'[173]   Indeed, Moe clearly understands the power of the postwar economic machine when she tells Captain Tiger:

> MOE: What do you want from me Tiger? Do I personally raise the price on hamburgers, pork and beans, and frankfurters. Is it my fault the cost of living is going up? These are the prices as of this morning. When the cost of living goes up my prices go up, when the cost of living goes down my prices go down. In my book the price on the board for a cannon is fifty dollars.

Yet even when Joey offers her a substantial amount of money for information, she refuses to cooperate. Thus whilst Moe is perhaps more afraid of being in Potter's Field than an abstract notion of Communism, when she is actually confronted by the enemy she is willing to forgo her notion of the American dream, burial at an exclusive cemetery in Long Island, New York and a fancy funeral:

> MOE: What do I know about Commies? Nothing. I know one thing, I just don't like them. So I don't get to have the fancy funeral after all. Anyway I tried.

Such a commentary on the nature of postwar economics and the American dream add to the social realism of the narrative. Indeed, as hardboiled as the narrative may appear at times, there is a realism that comes from Fuller's biographic proximity to his characters, enabling him to identify with the challenges they face. The director was (and probably would have called himself) an outsider, driven to tackle tough and uncomfortable subjects, telling stories from the perspective of the marginalized and powerless, as indeed we witness in his later thrillers including *Crimson Kimono* (1959) and *Shock Corridor* (1963). *Pickup on South Street* is a raw and intense film about the business of crime, clearly intended to push the limits of the

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[173] Quoted by Lipsitz, 188-89.

Production Code Administration regulations over violence and criminal activity.[174] Film historian Lisa Dombrowski contends that *Pickup on South Street* emerged as 'one of the most shockingly violent films of the mid 1950s because of 'lax enforcement of the Production Code.'[175] Indeed, the hybridization of socio-realism with the codes and conventions of the political thriller informs the Fuller's visual style with *Pickup on South Street*, which I shall now discuss.

Prior to joining "The Big Red One" (the 16th Regiment 1st Infantry Division so named for the red numeral one patch worn on the shoulder) during World War Two, Fuller established himself as a crime reporter (widely associated with a style of reporting called yellow journalism), pulp novelist and screenwriter. The director's oeuvre is largely comprised of B-films and with so many representing city life with surprising violent realism that his films have often been compared to the 1940s era photography of Weegee (aka Arthur Fellig), a Hungarian-born American photojournalist known for stark black-and-white images.

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[174] Dombrowski suggests that negotiations allowed a surprising amount of content to remain in the film, possibly as a result of the staunch support of Zanuck and PCA administrator Joseph Breen's anti-Communist leanings.
[175] Ibid., 67.

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Fig. 2.34: Photograph by Weegee (1942).[176]

Indeed, looking at the works of both Weegee and Samuel Fuller, we might surmise that it is merely a question of medium setting the two apart. Such jarring images of urban life, crime and death present in both men's work were as much a matter of the creator's eye as it was apparatus and technology. Weegee, a self-taught photographer, used the Speed Graphic, a still camera and popular amongst the ranks of the press photographers during the1930s and 1940s. It was the synchronization with the flash, rather than the use of flash powder, that enabled the photographer to achieve his particular gritty visual style as illustrated above (see *Figure 2.34*). Lighting was equally important to Fuller's aesthetic, and with the assistance Joe MacDonald, a favorite cinematographer of directors that included Ford, Hathaway and Kazan, the director incorporated staging strategies and high-contrast lighting (generally associated with *noir*) to emphasize the grittiness and menacing attitude that we see for example in *Pickup on South Street*. Fuller would later say of DoP MacDonald:

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[176] 'Joy of Living'*,* Weegee (1942)
<http://museum.icp.org/museum/collections/special/weegee/weegee04.html>

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My cameraman, Joe MacDonald, innovated to get that shot just the way I wanted. To make other scenes look real, MacDonald took a helluva lot of risks for me. He shot sequences in one single camera movement, not knowing what the hell we had in the can until we'd look at the dailies. It was the first time in his career that MacDonald had worked like that and he loved it. [177]

Fuller's style also bears a striking resemblance to the imagery of well-known American photographer Berenice Abbott.[178] Rather than focusing on major landmarks, Abbott focused on the urban design of New York City as illustrated in the figure below (*Figure 2.35*).

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Fig. 2.35: Abbot photograph of Harlem, New York (1938).[179]

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[177] Samuel Fuller, *A Third Face: My Tale of Writing, Fighting and Filmmaking* (New York: Applause Theater & Cinema Books, 2002) 303.
[178] Lipsitz,186.
[179] 'Harlem Street: II. 422-424 Lenox Avenue, Manhattan', Berenice Abbott (1948), New York Public Library Digital Gallery

Indeed, much of Abbott's work during 1930s was part of a sociological study, which focused on visually capturing the interaction of inhabitants within the urban environment, as well as the juxtaposition of old and new. Quite frequently, however, there is a sense of neglect and anonymity in Abbott's work as illustrated by *Figure 2.26* (shown below). .

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Fig. 2.36: Abbott photograph of Manhattan, New York (1930s).[180]

What is interesting is the way in which Fuller appropriates the iconography of an earlier decade and yet delivers a film that pushes generic conventions. Returning to our current

<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchdetail.cfm?trg=1&strucID=104337&image ID=482597&total=344&num=280&parent_id=100160&s=&notword=&d=&c=&f=&k=1&sScope =&sLevel=&sLabel=&lword=&lfield=&sort=&imgs=20&pos=288&snum=&e=w>
[180] "El' Second and Third Avenue Lines, Looking Toward Doyers Street, Manhattan', Berenice Abbott (1935 – 1938) New York Public Library Digital Gallery, <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchdetail.cfm?trg=1&strucID=104474&image ID=482677&total=344&num=80&parent_id=100160&s=&notword=&d=&c=&f=&k=1&sScope= &sLevel=&sLabel=&lword=&lfield=&sort=&imgs=20&pos=90&snum=&e=w>

corpus, we can easily see how *Pickup on South Street* is clearly distinguishable from the John Wayne star vehicle, *Big Jim McLain.* Moreover, despite having more in common (visually, in its documentary feel) with *Berlin Express,* this film seemingly eschews the sentimentality delivered by Tourneur. It is not hard to imagine that Fuller's wartime experience may have also contributed to his somewhat tabloid exposé sensibilities. Having been involved in heavy fighting within Europe, Fuller also experienced first hand the cruelty of humanity as he recorded the liberation of Sokolov, a German concentration camp located in Czechoslovakia, on sixteen mm film. There is a kind of duality achieved as *Pickup on South Street* offers spectators a glimpse of the gritty underbelly of New York City, whilst the film was shot entirely in Los Angeles. The setting in and around slummy apartments, the subway and the waterfront transforms the city into something more than a scenic backdrop; it provides a source of tension, assuming the role of a supporting character much in the way Los Angeles is used by Billy Wilder in *Double Indemnity* (Paramount Pictures, 1944) or Robert Aldrich in *Kiss Me Deadly* (United Artists, 1955). Writing in his memoirs, Fuller recounts his concerns with filming the majority of *Pickup on South Street* on a Hollywood soundstage.[181] The director was enamored with the gritty visual style in the Italian neorealist classics *Rome, Open City* (Rossellini, 1946) and *The Bicycle Thief* (De Sica, 1948), so he worked closely with Academy Award winning art director Lyle Wheeler to make *Pickup on South Street* look as natural as possible. Indeed, Fuller's socio-realist approach exposes the dubious nature of the American dream for characters with little chance of escaping the confines of urban life, and assuredly no opportunity for the kind of leisurely lifestyle (with country club membership) as exemplified by the character Charles Leatherby from the political thriller *Night People.*

With his emphasis on ordinary people, Fuller protagonists and their enemies are quite frequently two sides of the same coin. Certainly this is evident when we consider that both Skip and Joey are willing to "sell out" America for personal gain. And it is this lack of distance or separation between protagonist and antagonist that earned the American director the praise of the French and *Cahiers du cinéma.*[182] Film critic and *Nouvelle Vague* filmmaker Luc Moullet was an early champion, contending that films like *Pickup on South Street*

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[181] Fuller, 298.
[182] Lipsitz, 183.

challenged the unrealistic glamour of Hollywood conventions by exploring life at edges of society by raising difficult issues and presenting unpleasant images.[183] One of Fuller's principle virtues according to Moullet was the director's feel for camera movement:

> . . . many ambitious film directors, movements of the camera are dependent on dramatic composition. Never so for Fuller, in whose work they are, fortunately, totally gratuitous: it is in terms of the emotive power of movement that the scene is organized.[184]

This emotive power of movement is a key aspect of Fuller's socio-realistic style. He uses the camera to depict the body within the frame in such a way as to promote physical realism. I would like to illustrate this point through two examples in which inserts into the master shot reveal relationships and power structures between the sexes.

In our first example, the spectator is introduced to Candy on the subway gazing absently, neither aware that she is being watched by the FBI nor that she is acting as a courier for the Communists (see *Figure 2.37*).

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[183] Luc Moullet, 'Sam Fuller in Marlowe's Footsteps', in *Cahiers du cinéma: The 1950s Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave,* ed. by Jim Hillier (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 145-57.
[184] Ibid., 148.

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Fig. 2.37: Close-up of Candy on the subway.

The above figure is an insert into the master shot of Candy on the subway (see *Figure 2.38*).
Here we note the tight framing and the slight high-angle of the camera looking down on her.
In a subsequent scene taking place in Joey's apartment, again Fuller uses tight framing (see
Figure 2.39).

Fig. 2.38: In Joey's apartment.

In the above two shot, the camera is once again poised in a slight high-angle, but this time with Joey leaning over Candy (see *Figure 2.38*). This scene clearly depicts gendered power structures, whilst referring the spectator visually back to the previous image of Candy on the train. Nevertheless, as we shall see Candy is not actually powerless. *Mise-en-scène* conveys Candy's determination to gain power through respectability, clearly wanting to leave her questionable past (and relationship with Joey) behind. Although at the moment Joey still has the upper hand as he reminds Candy that she is "smart girl" and has "knocked around a lot". It is, however, the scene with Lightning Louie (Victor Perry) that allows us to see a more powerful Candy. During this exchange, Joey's assertion is true, that Candy is indeed in the "know" about the criminal element whilst remaining unknowing about issues of national security or the danger she faces.

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Fig. 2.39: Medium-close shot of Candy paying for information.

In the above figure (see *Figure 2.39*), Fuller uses a tightly framed straight forward two-shot that depicts Candy leaning in towards Lightening Louie. In this scene we can't help but notice her confidence, thus reaffirming that Candy may never fully escape her past. In addition, Candy's ability to pay for information puts her on equal footing with the so-called downtown element. I would like to reflect for a moment on the power structure exemplified in this scene. Philosopher Michel Foucault challenges the notion that power is a sovereign act of domination or coercion. Instead, he contends that power is dispersed throughout society, existing within a constant state of flux and negotiation.[185] Whereas the power Joey wields (over Candy) is negative, repressive and coercive, the scene with Lightening Louie corroborates Foucault's assertion that power can be productive and positive.

With our second example, the power relations are more explicitly along sexual lines and the eroticized woman. Close-ups and eyeline matches build tension throughout the film,

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[185] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 93.

establishing *Pickup on South Street* as interrogative and eroticized spectacle. Candy becomes an object of desire, subjected to the gazes of Skip McCoy and the camera. In the next three figures shown below, we see Candy leaving the shack, having been thrown out by Skip. The spectator watches her enter the frame and move forward (see *Figure 2.40*).

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Fig. 2.40: Candy leaving Skip McCoy's shack.

The camera then holds briefly before a tracking shot pulls back to reveal Skip watching her through the window as illustrated in the figures below (see *Figure 2.41* and *Figure 2.42*).

Fig. 2.41: Camera holding on Candy.

Fig. 2.42: Camera pulls back to reveal Skip watching from the window.

Forced to walk across the rickety ramp that leads to the shack, the framing of the next image reveals Candy in a full shot. The camera is also fixed, focusing on her legs as a reminder of her former life as a prostitute (see *Figure 2.43*).

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Fig. 2.43: Candy walking across the rickety ramp.

Fuller recounted in his memoirs that Jean Peters slightly bowed legs were 'the kind of gams you get from streetwalking.'[186]   The director went on to state:

> To shoot those legs the way I wanted, I placed a camera below the rickety
> bridge to Skip's shack. Jean walked across it with a little sashay, her hips
> swinging, the bridge swinging, the whole set swinging.[187]

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[186] Fuller initially rejected Jean Peters because of her uninspiring role in Henry King's *Captain from Castile* (1947), but later changed his mind following a brief encounter in the studio commissary. See Fuller, 301.
[187] Ibid,. 303.

Just as the authentic marks the way in which Fuller portrayed his characters the same can be said for his depiction of brutality in the film. Despite claiming to hate violence, such sentiments never prevented Fuller from depicting it on screen. Critics such as *New York Times* reviewer Bosley Crowther regarded the film as excessively violent, writing that:

> . . . the climate is so brutish and the business so sadistic in this tale of pickpockets, demireps, informers, detectives and Communist spies that the whole thing becomes a trifle silly as it slashes and slambangs along . . .[188]

There is, however, a complexity and integrity to Fuller's world-view that has been overlooked by critics. Although film critic Pauline Kael would admit that the film isn't boring, she still describe it as 'fast, flashy, essentially empty-headed style . . . you come away with nothing.'[189] With its often lurid and melodramatic content, Fuller forced spectators to look at serious social issues within America, which is in keeping with a philosophy that every film should have some sort of message:

> Maybe I'm too didactic. If so, too bad. That's just the way I write. Even if people don't agree with me, I like to make them think a bit. I'd like them to learn something. I'm not what you would strictly call an educator, but all the same I think the cinema must be used in this way.[190]

Film historian Lisa Dombrowski writes that Fuller's films for Twentieth Century-Fox were keeping with classical narrative and stylistic norms, which smoothed out the director's rough edges.[191] Yet there was honesty in Fuller's filmmaking, and as the he would go on to write:

[188] Bosley Crowther, 'Pickup on South Street', *The New York Times* (18 June 1953), <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9F00EEDA143EE53BBC4052DFB0668388649EDE>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

[189] Pauline Kael, 'Pickup on South Street' in *5001 Nights at the Movies* (New York: Henry Hold & Co.,1991), 581.

[190] Lipsitz, 182.

[191] Dombrowski, 56.

How can you depict gangsters, cowboys, or soldiers motivated by anything other than their will to survive? You can't, unless you're John Wayne.[192]

It is precisely this belief in John Wayne pictures as fantasy with imaginary heroes that prompted Fuller not only to emphasize the gritty reality, but also the ambiguities in character, and in particular that of Skip McCoy. The director was pleased with Richard Widmark's portrayal of Skip McCoy because he embodied the anti-hero, someone 'you root for even though he doesn't do a damn thing to deserve it, except beat the crap out of my heavy in the climatic subway scene.'[193] Thus, Fuller's anti-hero embodies a realism that is as distinct from the super-heroes portrayed by John Wayne. Indeed, popularity of the anti-hero within Hollywood film grew during the 1930s and 1940s, as is evidenced by the Hays Code intervention whereby the anti-hero was prevented from triumphing in the end. With *Pickup on South Street,* however, the character Skip McCoy (the name is surely significant) as a triumphant anti-hero assumes a marker of authenticity both in terms of his provenance (his impoverished roots leading him to become a hoodlum pickpocket) and in terms of the socio-political complexities exposed within the narrative. Yet it is also possible to discern degrees of authenticity amongst the mini-case study films considered in this chapter. Whereas *Pickup on South Street* is truthful in its narrative and visual style precisely because of its willingness to portray complex political and social issues, the propagandistic and overly simplistic, *Big Jim McLain* can also lay claim to be truthful (as does *Walk East on Beacon!*) but only insofar as it is endorsed by its authoritative voice-over.

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[192] Fuller, 291.
[193] Ibid., 293; Ironically, *Pickup on South Street* was banded in France for several years, but not because of the violent tone. Rather the objection was over the way in which Communists were represented. The film was eventually screened in France in 1961, but under the title *Le Port de la drogue* ('Drug Port'). Curiously in the French release all references to Communists were replaced, and instead of espionage the narrative incorporated a drug smuggling trope. Curiously at the time of the American release, the PCA was particularly sensitive to drug dealing references, something that prompted Robert Aldrich to incorporate the atomic trope (for the drug dealing) in the film *Kiss Me Deadly.*

The Enemy Within: Political Thriller in Transition - *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962)

Critical analysis of *The Manchurian Candidate* is numerous and from an array of perspectives ranging from Cold War anxiety to brainwashing and political assassination. American studies scholars Mathew Frye Jacobson and Gaspar González approach the narrative from a cultural, sexual, historical, political and industrial context. Indeed, Jacobson and González contend there are five precursor films that establish a Cold War cinematic vocabulary that *The Manchurian Candidate* will 'borrow from and explode.'[194] The films they identify are: *Panic in the Streets* (Kazan, 1950), *My Son John* (McCarey, 1952)*, Suddenly* (Allen, 1955)*, Kiss Me Deadly* (Aldrich, 1955) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel, 1956)*.* Whilst director Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* conveys Cold War discourses on containment and (what I have termed) unknowability (see Chapter One), the narrative is representative of a horror-science fiction generic hybrid and thus outside the scope of my thesis. Nevertheless, the other four productions are useful particularly when considering the context of the corpus of films considered in this thesis. What is presented in the figure below (see *Figure 2.44*) is an expanded view of precursor films (albeit not exhaustive) meant to illustrate the extent to which the political thrillers identified in my corpus contain clear expression of Cold War discourses and rhetoric; the underlined the titles are those films originally cited by Jacobson and González as a precursor to *The Manchurian Candidate*.

Film	Thematic
Big Jim McLain *Panic in the Streets* *I Was a Communist for the FBI* *Man on String* *City of Fear*	Growing power of the state apparatus
Notorious *The Atomic City*	Anxiety surround the perceived influence of women, and in particular towards

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[194] Matthew Frye Jacobson and Gaspar González, *What Have They Built You To Do? The Manchurian Candidate and Cold War America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xi.

Walk East on Beacon! *My Son John* *The Man Who Knew Too Much* *North by Northwest* *On the Beach* *Panic in Year Zero!*	mothers
Panic in the Streets *The Iron Curtain* *The Atomic City* *Suddenly* *On the Beach* *Panic in Year Zero!*	Centrality of the nuclear family to Cold War ideology
Kiss Me Deadly *The Quiet American* *The Thief* *On the Beach*	Growing complexity of geopolitics in the atomic age
The Red Menace *I Was a Communist for the FBI* *Big Jim McLain* *Night People* *The Fearmakers* *Man on a String* *Jungle Heat*	Unreliable epistemology of the 'us' vs 'them

Fig. 2.44: Sampling of precursor films.

Whereas Jacobson and González contend that *Panic in the Streets* is not a political thriller despite participating in the 'narrative economy of the early Cold War,' such a reading may be challenged. [195]   Indeed, *Panic in the Streets* involves the growing power of the state apparatus just as the authors state, but it also reflects the importance of the nuclear family during the Cold War, whilst serving as a metaphor for containment of the (Communist) Other. Moreover, *Panic in the Street* is a film that may also be considered within the context of atomic political thrillers — a dominant narrative trope that I shall discuss in more detail (see Chapters Three through Five). Within the context of this mini-case study, the precursor films identified in *Figure 2.44* (shown above) actually position *The Manchurian Candidate* as a generically transitional film (as well as a punctum of a subgenre-type). After all, Richard Condon's widely popular tale of Communist agents surreptitiously working against America

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[195] Ibid., 55.

from within is not a new trope and it has been featured in numerous films (see *The Woman on Pier 13,* Stevenson:1949*; The Thief,* Rouse:1952; *Pickup on South Street,* Fuller:1954; *The Fearmakers,* Tourneur:1958*).* Yet *The Manchurian Candidate* offers a departure by portraying a vulnerability of the executive and legislative branches of government in a way never seen before, thus projecting a message contrary to what is depicted in films such as *Big Jim McLain* and *Walk East on Beacon!* where the U.S. government is seemingly impervious to such corrupting influences (thanks to the effective work of HUAC and the FBI respectively).

      The Manchurian Candidate also stands out as an expression of all that has gone wrong with motherhood in the age of the Cold War. In earlier political thrillers in which nuclear family is present, the narrative reinforces prevailing discourses surrounding mother's responsibility towards managing behavior whilst shaping the personalities of her children. Whilst this is similar within *The Manchurian Candidate,* albeit the shaping of Raymond Shaw's personality is through brainwashing, Eleanor Iselin is wholly different from the two other representations of mother described in Chapter One. In general, these other mothers project a kind of hysteria, frequently rendered incapacitated when she learns her child (always a son) has been abducted. Such is the case with the film *The Atomic City* (Hopper, 1952), in which the hysterical mother is essentially written out of the third act. Likewise *Night People* and the *Man Who Knew Too Much* (Hitchcock, 1956) both represent the films' mothers requiring sedation upon learning their respective sons have been abducted. Nevertheless, two films stand out as different in their representation of motherhood: *Notorious* (Hitchcock, 1946) and of course the subject of this mini-case study, *The Manchurian Candidate.* Much has been written about Hitchcock's treatment of mothers, women who are nearly always very powerful — as is the case for the character Madame Sebastian (Leopoldine Konstantin) from the 1946 political thriller *Notorious* (RKO, 1946) as illustrated in *Figure 2.45.*

Fig. 2.45: Mme. Sebastian plotting to poison Alicia Huberman.

Indeed, Madame Sebastian is one of the most ruthless of all Hitchcock's mothers, and when love-struck son Alexander Sebastian (Claude Rains) finally realizes he is married to an American spy, it is Mother (who never approved of the union) who devises the plan to slowly kill wife Alicia Huberman (Ingrid Bergman) using poison. But, as calculating as Mme. Sebastian is within *Notorious,* nevertheless, she does not wield the power characterized by Mrs. Eleanor Shaw Iselin (Angela Lansbury).

The mother of Korean War veteran and Congressional Medal winner Raymond Shaw (Laurence Harvey) and wife of Senator John "Johnny" Yerkes Iselin (James Gregory), Eleanor Iselin is in a position to alter the course of American politics, and more importantly the fate of the nation. It is with the claims of Communists within the Department of Defense

(using information fed by his wife) that Senator Iselin's political career is catapulted despite being ridiculed and thought of as a buffoon by many of his colleagues and the media.   Once Senator Iselin is in a position to make a bid for the Vice-Presidential nomination, Mrs. Iselin attempts to gain the support of longtime political rival Senator Thomas Jordon (John McGiver), through any means necessary. At the Iselin fancy dress party (held in honor of Senator Jordon's daughter, it becomes clear that Raymond's mother is, indeed, the Soviet operative. Senator Jordon makes it known that will go to any lengths to block the Iselin bid for the Vice-Presidency, including taking steps to have Johnny impeached. Raymond, who is an unwitting and unsuspecting pawn brainwashed when captured by the Communists in Korea, is then given the assignment by his mother to assassinate Senator Jordon, but he also shoots his new bride as a result of his conditioning to kill anyone who may be a witness. With Senator Jordon out of the way, Eleanor Iselin intends to have Raymond assassinate the Republican Presidential nominee Benjamin Arthur (Robert Riordan) at the National Convention so that her husband may accept the presidential nomination.   Meanwhile, a grief-stricken Raymond begins having nightmares, finally believing there is truth to the brainwashing claims. Although Raymond agrees to assist Major Marco, he regains control over his psychological trauma by shooting both Senator Iselin and his mother with the high-powered sniper rifle at the Republican National Convention. Just before taking his own life, Raymond tells Bennett Marco: 'You couldn't stop them, the Army couldn't stop them, so I had to.' It is also worth pointing to *The Thief*, another precursor political thriller that depicts deep psychological trauma. In the 1952 film, Ray Milland, the star vehicle, offers a complex representation of the psychological effects of treachery. As the narrative unfolds, the central character, Dr. Allan Fields, grows more fearful, his terror building each time the telephone rings. Dr. Fields also experiences a vivid, disturbing nightmare after the death of the FBI agent, which occurred during a violent struggle between the two men. As we note, terror and nightmares are similarly key narrative and visual elements in *The Manchurian Candidate*. Thus, the character of Dr. Fields from *The Thief* serves as a kind of bridge to *The Manchurian Candidate* and the character Major Bennett Marco (Frank Sinatra).

Returning to Philip Wylie's *Generation of Vipers,* it is almost as if he were writing specifically about Eleanor Iselin.   From the chapter entitled 'Common Women,' Wylie writes:

Mom is an American creation. . . . Mom is organization-minded. Organizations, she has happily discovered, are intimidating to all men, not just to mere men. They frighten politicians to sniveling servility and they terrify pastors; they bother bank presidents and they pulverize school boards. Mom has many such organizations, the real purpose of which is to compel an abject compliance of her environs to her personal desires. . . . With them she drives out of the town and the state, if possible, all young harlots and all proprietors of places where "questionable" young women (though why they are called that--being of all women the least in question) could possibly foregather, not because she competes with such creatures but because she contrasts so unfavorably with them. With her clubs (a solid term!) she causes bus lines to run where they are convenient for her rather than for workers, plants flowers in sordid spots that would do better with sanitation, snaps independent men out of office and replaces them with clammy castrates, . . .and builds clubhouses for the entertainment of soldiers where she succeeds in persuading thousands of them that they are momsick and would rather talk to her than take Betty into the shrubs. All this, of course, is considered social service, charity, care of the poor, civic reform, patriotism, and self-sacrifice.[196]

Just as Wylie describes, Eleanor Iselin's ruthless demeanor has a castrating effect on the men in her life. Having destroyed the romantic relationship between Raymond and Senator Jordan's daughter Jocelyn "Jocie" Jordon (Leslie Parrish) by coercing he son to sign a "vile" letter, Elenaor Iselin also has the power to reunite the young couple when it is politically expedient.[197]

Moreover, the link to the Ethel Rosenberg may also be read into the narrative of *The Manchurian Candidate*. As I have already described in Chapter One, the vilification of Ethel

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[196] Phillip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers* (Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 1996), 203.

[197] Raymond tells Ben Marco that he was forced to send a vile letter, ending his summer romance just before leaving for the Korean War. Within Condon's narrative, it is Eleanor Iselin who drafts the letter, stating that Raymond is a homosexual.

Rosenberg was relentless, including the incredulity that she could so willfully disregard her role as wife and mother. Relying on the psychological profile, FBI boss J. Edgar Hoover believed that 'Julius is the slave, and his wife, Ethel, the master' in their relationship.[198] Indeed, even civil liberties champion and co-founder of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Morris Ernst, suggested in the *Report on American Communists* (1952) that 'in Communist marriages, the wife is the more dominant partner'.[199] Female assertiveness during the Cold War era was deemed to be a Communist trait, and certainly the skewed power structure described by Ernst is evident in the character of Eleanor Shaw Iselin. For example, in one scene, Mrs. Iselin tells her husband: 'I keep telling you not to think! You're very, very good at a great many things, but thinking, hon, just simply isn't one of them.' In a sense, Mrs. Iselin becomes a castrating version of (the mediated image of) Ethel Rosenberg, but what makes the narrative so troubling is that the spectator is not really allowed to know the truth about her. It isn't until the third act that the spectator learns Raymond's mother is the Communist operative and even then the monologue offers little insight:

> I know you will never entirely comprehend this, Raymond, but you must believe I did not know it would be you. I served them. I fought for them. I'm on the point of winning for them the greatest foothold they would ever have in this country. And they paid me back by taking your soul away from you. I told them to build me an assassin. I wanted a killer from a world filled with killers and they chose you because they thought it would bind me closer to them. . . . But now, we have come to the end. One last step. And when I take power, they will be pulled down and ground into the dirt for what they did to you. And what they did in so contemptuously underestimating me.

The lack of a clear ideological foundation and the promise of retribution suggest a Communist allegiance that is more or less born out of Mrs. Iselin's insatiable quest for power. In addition,

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[198] Jacobson and González, 137.
[199] Kathryn S. Olmsted, *Red Spy Queen: A Biography of Elizabeth Bentley* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 136.

she has cultivated an image of patriotism (co-opting Abraham Lincoln), calling anyone standing in her way a Communist, in turn, setting-up what Jacobson and Gonźalez identify as an unreliable epistemology of the 'us' vs 'them'. However this dynamic is not unique to this film and is to be found in earlier films that include, for example, *The Woman on Pier 13* (Stevenson, 1949), *Big Jim McLain* (Ludwig, 1952), *Shack out on 101* (Dein, 1955)*, The Fearmakers* (Tourneur, 1958) and *Man on a String* (De Toth, 1960). Whilst *The Manchurian Candidate* was, and still is, a statement on McCarthyism, Richard Condon's narrative nevertheless illustrates that the perceived threat of women to America's national security still had resonance even in 1959 when the book was published. It is also worth noting that at the time when, in 1953, President Eisenhower was contemplating whether to grant a stay of execution (for Ethel Rosenberg) he would subsequently write 'if there would be any commuting of the woman's sentence without the man's then from here on the Soviets would simply recruit their spies from among women.'[200]

Thus far, our discussion has been within the context of *The Manchurian Candidate* as an end point to (pre-Watergate era) Cold War political thrillers, although it serves as a transition film that generically points towards a new type of thriller, the spy thriller where an individual is, literally, a 'sleeper' spy, brought into action as a result of brainwashing (an obvious metaphor for the dangers of Communism). However, there are other areas in which this film innovates, including a kind of cross-fertilization between the language of film and the language of television. Frankenheimer was part of a new generation of directors using television work as a springboard to feature filmmaking, and the director relied on five-years of experience in live television to execute the scene where Senator Iselin confronts the Secretary of Defense (Barry Kelly) with claims that the State Department employed Communists. In an interview with Gerald Pratley, the director would go on to acknowledge this experience:

> If I hadn't directed live television, I could not have directed that sequence. . . .
> Until then, scenes showing television sets faked the picture you saw on the

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[200] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change, 1953-1956* (New York: Doubleday, 1963), 225.

screen. They said you couldn't photograph pictures on a screen. They just didn't know how to do it. We had technicians in from CBS where I used to work and they showed them how to do it. Just had to pulse their movie camera so that it would pick up the TV images[201]

The television feed during this scene was live action and occurring in reel time as the film camera was operating; *Figure 2.46* illustrates how the television camera and the film camera have captured the Senator Iselin character, with his actions mirroring exactly on the television monitor. The positioning of Eleanor Iselin in the foreground closely watching the television not only reinforces her role as principle architect. In addition, the scene in the senate hearing room is a nod to the Army-McCarthy hearings held in 1954 over a two-month period.[202]

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Fig. 2.46: Live action television cameras at the hearing.

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[201] Gerald Pratley, *The Cinema of John Frankenheimer* (New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1969), 226-7.

[202] The Army-McCarthy hearings centered on the U.S. Army's claims that McCarthy and his staff attempted to gain special privileges for a friend of the senator. McCarthy, the Chairman of the Senate Government Operations Committee, countered that the Army was soft on Communism and consequently launched an investigation.

The normally quiet and stately Senate caucus room where the Army-McCarthy hearings were conducted was packed with reporters, tourists, politicians, U.S. military servicemen and political analysts. Growing more frustrated by Joseph M. Welch, a soft-spoken attorney representing the U.S. Army, McCarthy injected considerable drama as he grew more frustrated, eventually shouting out "point-of-order, point of order." Indeed, this term was to become a kind of catchphrase amongst Americans, and in the next scene within *The Manchurian Candidate* we hear Senator John Yerkes Iselin call out "point-of-order" during his speech from the senate floor as he announces that there are exactly fifty-seven card-carrying members of the Communist party within the State Department.

The Manchurian Candidate also contributed to an emerging cinematic rhetoric through its treatment of race, and in particular as it relates to black Americans. Indeed, Frankenheimer and Axelrod's introduction of racial elements into the narrative made *The Manchurian Candidate* a significant transitional cultural product. The vast majority of political thrillers between 1945 and 1962 are representative of a 'white' America. As film scholar Richard Dyer suggests, there is a universal normalization of "whiteness" within Hollywood productions as opposed to a virtual erasure of blackness that is so ingrained it goes without notice.[203] However, it would be well-nigh impossible to claim that people of color are actually excluded from this subgenre. Indeed, there are several political thrillers where the setting is Asia (see *Women in the Night,* Rowland:1948; *Peking Express* Dieterle:1951; *I Was an American Spy,* Selander:1951; *Tokyo File 212,* McGowan:1951; *World for Ransom,* Aldrich:1954; *Stopover Tokyo,* Breen:1957; *Hong Kong Confidential,* Cahn:1958), and with Chinese or (predominately) Japanese characters that are central to the plot. In *The Manchurian Candidate* the treatment of the most notable ethnic 'Other', the Chinese character Dr. Yen Lo (Khigh Dhiegh) is, however, still understood in terms of stereotypes which is intriguing given the impending U.S. military expansion in Vietnam. Major Bennett Marco (Frank Sinatra), who finally succeeds in convincing military intelligence that there is

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[203] Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1997), 3.

something phony about Raymond Shaw and his Medal of Honor, invokes a classic Hollywood representation by stating: 'I can see that Chinese cat standin' there smiling like Fu Manchu.'

Fig. 2.46: Dr. Yen Lo during the brainwashing demonstration.

Film scholar Karla Rae Fuller contends that it is not uncommon for Hollywood representation of Asians to be collapsed into a generalized typology with the Fu Manchu character becoming the archetypal 'Oriental' villain seeking world domination.[204] At the time *The Manchurian Candidate* was in production, actor Khigh Dhiegh would have been relatively recognizable by American audiences given his frequent casting as Asian villains both on television and in film; this would also include his portrayal as Colonel Kim, the brainwashing Korean commander in political thriller *Time Limit* (Malden, 1957). However this already is a misrepresentation of his ethnicity — thus adding an element of queering to his characterization as Dr. Yen Lo. As an American of mixed Anglo-Egyptian-Sudanese decent whose given name was Kenneth Dickerson, the casting of Dhiegh as the doctor from the Pavlov Institute, a non-Asian, just as

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[204] Karla Rae Fuller, 'Creatures of Good and Evil' in *Classic Hollywood, Classic Whiteness,* ed. by Daniel Bemardi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 284.

the casting of Puerto Rican Henry Silva as Chunjin, becomes a kind of masquerade in and of itself. But more significant is the queering going on in the brainwashing sequence, particularly in terms of the feminization of the physical space where the demonstration takes place and in the internal, subconscious space of memory (in the case of Major Marco and Corporal Melvin).

Literary theorist Edward Said, author of the widely read *Orientalism* (1979)*,* concluded that Western conceptions located the Orient within the irrational, weak, feminized Other.[205] The term brainwashing, derived from the Chinese term *xǐ nǎo* (a literal translation is wash brain), was used to describe a methodology of persuasion recognized under the Maoist regime. It was journalist and U.S. intelligence agent Edward Hunter who coined the term brainwashing in 1950 to explain why so many American soldiers were defecting following capture and internment as prisoners of war during the Korean War.[206] Returning now to the narrative, it is apparent that the brainwashing is under the direct supervision of the prominent Chinese scientist Dr. Yen Lo, and not that of a Soviet agent. Indeed, two years after the initial brainwashing of Raymond Shaw, it is Dr. Yen Lo who validates the linkages are still in place before turning the former Korean War veteran over to his American operative. During the three days of intensive brainwashing behind enemy lines (in Manchuria), the patrol has been hypnotized into believing they are attending a lecture on hydrangea care. Hosted by a ladies garden club, "Fun with Hydrangeas" is taking place in a small suburban hotel lobby in American whilst the patrol supposedly waits out a storm. The speaker is Dr. Yen Lo, but in the minds of the platoon he has been transformed into Mrs. Henry Whittaker, a mature mother-like figure who is sometimes white and sometimes black woman.   All of this instability of meaning (brought about by brainwashing) serves to reinforce the narrative's fragmented point of view, something that I shall be discussing later in this section. To illustrate this point,

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[205] Said described Orientalism as 'a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience.' Thus, the idea behind Western views of the Orient is socially constructed, based upon preconceived archetypes rather than fact or reality. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 1. Also see Jacobson and González, 102-5.

[206] David Seed, *Brainwashing: The Fictions of Mind Control* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2004), 27; Susan L. Carruthers, *Cold War Captives: Imprisonment, Escape and Brainwashing* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 227-28.

I have included the two views of Dr. Yen Lo as a mother figure as depicted below in *Figure 2.47* and *Figure 2.48*.

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Fig. 2.47: Dr. Yen Lo as the white Mrs. Henry Whittaker.

Fig. 2.48: Dr. Yen Lo as a black Mrs. Henry Whittaker.

Just as the brainwashing demonstration takes place within a female space (at least within the minds of the patrol), so too the men, including Major Marco, are responsive to the maternal voice, addressing Dr. Yen Lo as "ma'am."   Likewise, Raymond has also been made vulnerable to the voice of mother (m'Other), having been turned into an unwitting assassin whose trigger is that of the face card, the Queen of Diamonds. Thus, the queering of discursive Cold War rhetoric that occurs throughout the narrative should have warned us (the spectator) that Mrs. Iselin — the mother, embodied brainwashing — is not what she seems; that is, she is more than 'just' a domineering, politically ambitious mother, she is actually (like Dr. Yen Lo) a mutable signifier, and ultimately a Communist agent intent on gaining control of the White House and America as a whole.

But there is more still to be said on the feminizing impact to the narrative. Shortly after returning from Korea, Major (then Captain) Marco and Corporal Allen Melvin begin having nightmares about the brainwashing demonstration. Unlike the films *Prisoner of War* (Martin, 1954) and *Time Limit*, where the respective protagonists are completely cognizant (having acquiesced for different reasons), the revelation of the brainwashing within *The Manchurian*

Candidate occurs only within the domain of the unconscious — the zone of the feminine — and therefore metaphorically speaking points to a feminizing of both men. The Major's state of mental anguish has become so severe that he is placed on indefinite sick leave. We see a major instance of this mental instability in the scene when he meets Rosie (Janet Leigh) on the train: a medium-close shot shows him beading with perspiration and jerking with physical ticks. Major Marco is so shaken that he is unable to even light a cigarette. The scene that takes place next in the vestibule of the train is quite puzzling. After handing Marco a lit cigarette, Rosie launches makes a curious reference to the state of Maryland:

> ROSIE: Maryland is a beautiful state
>
> MARCO: This is Delaware
>
> ROSIE: I know, I was one of the original Chinese workmen who laid the track along this stretch, but nonetheless, Maryland is a beautiful state. So is Ohio for that matter.

With this dialogue, film critics such as Robert Ebert have contemplated the role Rosie is meant to play within *The Manchurian Candidate.* In one review, Ebert goes on to write:

> Soon she has broken off an engagement and taken up with Marco, leaving us to wonder what in the hell that dialogue was about. Was it in code? Was Marco hallucinating? It seems strange that the Chinese brainwashed the entire patrol, but needed only Raymond as an assassin. Why, then, spare the others with their nightmares and suspicions? Is Sinatra's Maj. Marco another Manchurian sleeper and is Rosie his controller?[207]

Another odd exchange between Rosie and Marco is after the two have left the precinct and she has already broken off her engagement. Rosie says 'if they were the tiniest bit puzzled

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[207] Roger Ebert, 'The Manchurian Candidate' *Reviews* (7 Dec 2003) <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-the-manchurian-candidate-1962>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

about you they could have asked me, oh yes indeed my darling Ben, they could have asked me.' Once again, the spectator is confronted with puzzling dialogue, giving us pause to wonder how Rosie could possibly be so knowing given the couple's awkward first meeting on the train. Such a reading does have significant implications, as we (the spectator) cannot be certain whether to trust Rosie. Following Ebert's train of thought, if Rosie is indeed speaking in code in order to unlock Major Marco's own brainwashing experience, then it is entirely possible that even after Senator and Mrs. Iselin are killed by Raymond (who also takes his own life) the Communist threat has not been eliminated. Instead, whatever plans the Communists may have had for the other members of the patrol will remain locked in the subconscious of Major Marco and perhaps Corporal Melvin until the right trigger is located.

Earlier in this section I referred to the sometimes white and sometimes black Dr. Yen Lo/Mrs. Henry Whittaker as being part of the narrative's fragmented point of view. I would now like to explore this issue, and in particular, the way in which black America is represented through the characters of Corporal Allen Melvin (James Edwards) and the consulting psychiatrist (Joe Adams) hired by the Army to first evaluate, and later assist Major Marco. Within the context of the political thriller, black actors have had limited representation, let alone being afforded a specific point of view. Such is the case with the Ronald Reagan star vehicle, *Storm Warning* (Heisler, 1951). A Warner Bros. production about American white supremacist group the Ku Klux Klan*, Storm Warning* spoke to the very real issues faced by black Americans in the early 1950s, even though the narrative essentially marginalized the black presence. Nevertheless, there is an important relationship between the Cold War cinematic rhetoric of *The Manchurian Candidate* and the social reform leading to desegregation.

The issue of racial discrimination within the U.S. received international media attention following the war, including the nation's closest ally, Britain. The Truman administration was fearful that the Soviet propaganda machine would use racism to demonize the U.S., thereby tarnishing the image of American democracy. Secretary of State Dean Acheson would go on to write:

… during the past six years, the damage to our foreign relations attributable to [race discrimination] has become progressively greater. The United States is under constant attack in the foreign press, over the foreign radio, and in international bodies as the United Nations because of various practices of discrimination against minority groups in this country. As might be expected, the Soviet spokesmen regularly exploit this situation in propaganda against the United States, both within the United Nations and through radio broadcasts and the press, which reaches all corners of the world. Some of these attacks against us are based on falsehood or distortion; but the undeniable existence of racial discrimination gives unfriendly governments the most effective kind of ammunition for their propaganda warfare.[208]

Despite claims made by segregationists that abandoning institutionalized racism was a Communist ploy, desegregation became an essential component of American Anti-Communist ideology. Despite black Americans having a history of serving in the military including as commissioned officers during the World War One, the U.S. armed forces remained racially segregated during the early years of the Cold War.[209]   Faced with racial violence at home, including the lynching of returning black American veterans, President Truman collaborated with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a civil rights organization founded in 1909, to bring integration to the U.S. armed forces. In issuing Executive Order 9981, Truman asserted that there should be 'equality of treatment and opportunity for all . . . without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.'[210] However, a fully integrated military was met with resistance and, as historian Michael Gardner contends, this was one more controversial decisions of the Truman

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[208] Quoted in Mary L. Dudziak, 'Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative', *Stanford Law Review*, 41.61 (November 1998), 111.
[209] The U.S. Army took its first step towards integration in 1942 when it adopted a policy of integration for soldiers attending Officer Candidate School.
[210] Harry S. Truman, 'Executive Order 9981'*, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum,* <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/9981a.htm>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

presidency.[211]   Later, U.S. leaders came to believe that failure to implement would cause black Americans to disobey the draft thereby hurting the nation's war effort against North Korea.[212]   Despite adopting segregation as a Cold War strategy Hollywood continued to play it safe with its representations of black Americans as exemplified by the political thriller *Storm Warning.*   Accordingly, *The Manchurian Candidate* stands apart from other political thrillers considered in this thesis by offering a black American's subjectivity.   This comes in the form of Corporal Melvin's (the only black solider in the patrol) recall of the brainwashing scene. Corporal Melvin's recurring nightmare is similar to that of Major Marco's with one major distinction: in Melvin's version, Dr. Yen Lo and the rest of the ladies' garden club assume the identity of black women (see *Figure 2.49*) – thus confirming the Corporal's subjectivity (that is, it is his subconscious at work here – as is made evident by his visualization of all the women as black).

> This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons.

Fig. 2.49: Corporal Melvin's view of the ladies garden club.

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[211] The four-star General Omar Bradley was adamantly opposed, even making a public statement that he refused to follow a presidential mandate; see Michael Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 112.

[212] Ibid.,158.

Richard Condon's novel did not specifically identify the race of either Corporal Melvin or the character of the consulting psychiatrist (Joe Adams). Indeed, the decision to cast these characters as Frankenheimer did (as black actors in non-specific black roles) was entirely unprecedented. In an interview, screenwriter George Axelrod would go on to say:

> The main trick of *Manchurian* was to make the brainwashing believable. What I did was dramatize the way the prisoners were brainwashed into believing they were attending a meeting of a ladies garden society. I had the further idea of making Corporal Melvin black and doing the whole second half of the dream with black ladies.[213]

Yet it is important to note that the point of view of the brainwashing demonstration belongs specifically to the man experiencing the nightmare. In other words, what either Major Marco or Corporal Melvin see is either reality (the Chinese Dr. Yen Lo and other top Soviet, Chinese and Korean officials) or the falsely constructed reality where the women are either white (Major Marco) or the women are black (Corporal Melvin). Although director Frankenheimer would later say this choice wasn't meant as commentary on the state of race relations in America, he also acknowledged being very involved in the American Civil Liberties Union, (ACLU) an organization who stood with the NAACP to challenge racial segregation in 1954 which led to the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that ended an era of 'separate but equal' policy. And as if somewhat tongue-in-cheek, Frankenheimer cast a white bellhop in Corporal Melvin's nightmare, but he goes largely unnoticed (visible in the upper left corner of *Figure 2.49*).

Although a relatively minor figure within the narrative, the psychiatrist is, nonetheless, revealing of evolving Cold War discourses around race towards the end of the Eisenhower presidency. As discussed earlier, the U.S. armed forces had been slow to integrate despite Executive Order 9981 (signed by Truman in 1948). Indeed, the last racially segregated unit in

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[213] Pat McGilligan, 'George Axelrod: Irony!', *Backstory 3: Interviews with Screenwriters of the 60s* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1997), 74.

the U.S. armed forces wasn't abolished until 1954. The novel and the film take place between 1952 and 1954 (two years after the patrol undergoes brainwashing) during a period in which the U.S. military was still struggling with integration and were, by and large, working in less skilled jobs and for substantially less pay. Illustrated in the two figures shown below (see *Figure 2.50* and *Figure 2.51*) is the well-dressed psychiatrist is seated at a conference table that includes several commanding officers from U.S. Army Intelligence.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons.

Fig. 2.50: Conference to review Major Marco's claims.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis/dissertation for copyright reasons.

Fig. 2.51: Consulting psychiatrist evaluating Major Marco.

In this scene, Major Marco is being told that Army Intelligence has yet to find any indication that the brainwashing occurred, and that he, according to the military, would be better suited to less strenuous and sensitive duties. What is important, however, is the way in which the psychiatrist is depicted. From his lighting to the camera angle used by Frankenheimer, there is nothing to suggest either visually or in the dialogue that the psychiatrist is anything less than an equal, offering a somewhat stark contrast to the period *The Manchurian Candidate* was meant to depict. To illustrate this point, we can look at Sidney Poitier's first feature film, *No Way Out* (Mankiewicz, 1950). In this thriller, Poitier's character, Dr. Luther Brooks, is a recently licensed physician, but he happens to be the first black doctor on staff at the urban county hospital where he also trained. Dr. Brooks is forced to endure a barrage of racial slurs, and it is also (erroneously) assumed by the hospital administrator that the new doctor is responsible for the death of a patient, who, along with his brother, was being treated for a gunshot wound received during a robbery. Despite the evidence to the contrary, Ray (Richard Widmark) insists that his brother would not have died had the attending physician been white. Towards the end of the film, Ray beats and shoots Dr. Brooks, but then

collapses whilst the wound he received during the robbery (with his brother) is bleeding profusely. Despite Ray being a racist and an attempted murderer, Dr. Brooks cannot bring himself to allow him to die, and just as the police are about to arrive, the doctor tells a hysterical man: 'Don't cry, white boy, you're gonna live.' Although I am not suggesting that *The Manchurian Candidate* entirely represents racial equality, nevertheless, the positive representation of the black doctor as an equal signifies shifting attitudes towards race and civil rights into the 1960s.

Just as *The Manchurian Candidate* uses a subjective camera to create a "space" for the Black experience, Frankenheimer also gives a "voice" to the Latino, further signaling shifting attitudes (within the 1960s) towards race and multiculturalism. Following the fight with Chunjin in Raymond Shaw's apartment, Major Marco is taken to the New York Police Department Twenty-Fourth Precinct.[214] As he waits for Rosie to arrive, Major Marco is deep in thought, obviously troubled. Indeed, the scene at the police precinct reiterates the fragmented narrative mentioned earlier, this time through the process of having people move into the frame as the camera recedes. Slowly as the frame fills, so too does it come to have greater meaning, bit by bit. For example, the medium-close shot of Major Marco shown below (see *Figure 2.52*) pulls back to a medium shot to reveal the arrival of Rosie (see *Figure 2.53)*; and then that of the Puerto-Rican detective (see *Figure 2.54*). A further effect of this fragmentation is, paradoxically, one of realism. Just, as above, a fragmented narrative is "truer to life", this slow reveal creates a kind of authenticity within our perceptual processes. But there is more to this effect. By introducing the detective in this naturalistic fashion, Frankenheimer also normalizes his presence — a normalization that is compounded when we hear the Puerto Rican police detective speaking in Spanish as he makes a telephone call.[215]

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[214] *The Manchurian Candidate* is one of the earliest examples of a martial arts fight sequence in a Hollywood production.

[215] In the audio commentary on the DVD version of *The Manchurian Candidate*, Frankenheimer states that he felt it was important to have the Spanish in the background, although the director did not elaborate on this point.

Fig. 2.52: A troubled Major Marco at the police station.

Fig. 2.54: Arrival of Rosie.

Fig. 2.55: Puerto Rican detective in the background.

With the scene at the police precinct, and indeed throughout the film, Frankenheimer uses *mise-en-scène* and deep focus to engender realism within a fragmented narrative. There are further examples, already mentioned such as the live television feed and dialogue reminiscent of the Army-McCarthy hearings, as well as the introduction of Spanish conversation into the diegesis, to say nothing of the climatic assassination that takes place at the Republican National Convention.[216] Thus, Frankenheimer employs naturalizing processes to balance the real with surreal, making this world he has created an uneasy one. Indeed, the racially aligned nightmares of Bennett Marco and Corporal Melvin portraying the brainwashing, as well as the embedded flashback where Raymond Shaw reminisces about a

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[216] Frankenheimer was concerned with achieving authenticity, but knew it would be too costly to fill a venue such as Madison Square Gardens in New York with extras. By filming Raymond Shaw's journey to the through the empty arena established provided spectators with a point of reference even though the Olympic Auditorium and a sound stage located in Los Angeles, California was the site of filming for the assassination scene. Frankenheimer also worked closely with production designer Richard Sylbert to design this scene, referring to still photographs and media footage of the 1960 Democratic National Convention when John F. Kennedy accepted the presidential nomination.

summer spent with Jocie and Senator Jordan disrupt the normative classic three-act structure, but these scenes also affirm the confused mental state of the main characters. Film scholar Maureen Turim writes that flashbacks 'gain a particularly rich dimension in the coding of the psychology of a character, and because their evidence is the past, they immediately imply a psychoanalytic dimension of personality.'[217]   Indeed, the psychoanalytical context of the mother-son relationship (whether understood as the Freudian Oedipal complex or C.G. Jung's patriarchal distortion of mother-son love which he identified as the negative mother complex) is the very foundation of Raymond Shaw's "un-loveable" being. Moreover, the use of flashbacks manipulates the temporality and creates disruptions within the narrative. Such disruption created by the embedded flashback aligned as it is with the normalized events clearly becomes a means to convey the increasingly invisible and unpredictable nature of the Communist threat.

Conclusion

As I offered at the beginning of this chapter, there are a number of films I considered in this thesis that are commonly identified as *film noir*. This identification is due, in large part, to the inclusion of *noir* elements in these political thrillers. The *noir* label has been consistently applied to films such as *Berlin Express* and *Pickup on South Street,* but these are just two amongst others considered in this thesis, including *D.O.A.*, *Kiss Me Deadly* and *The Thief* — all of which have determining elements that distinguish them as political thrillers rather than *noirs*. The expressionistic style of *noir* is quite effective in building tension and anxiety, hallmarks of the thriller, however, it is the underlying political and sociological context of the narrative that make these films more readily identifiable with the political thriller subgenre. Whilst this chapter has not presented a cluster of films with a single unifying theme, nevertheless, the five exemplary mini-case study films share several key characteristics. Each film, with the notable exception of *Big Jim McLain,* exemplifies an innovative approach to filmmaking to achieve a kind of narrative authenticity. Portable lighting and smaller, lightweight camera equipment, for example, enabled Jacques Tourneur and his DoP Lucien

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[217] Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film and Memory* (London: Routledge, 1989), 12.

Ballard to realize the documentary qualities of *Berlin Express*. In the case of *Night People,* one of a handful of color productions, Technicolor film stock and deep focus photography provided for the rich visual texture of the smoky cabaret, something that would have been very different with respect to *mise-en-scène* had the production been filmed in black-and-white. Moreover, the use of Cinemascope, also a significant technological departure amongst political thrillers, allowed for a greater physicality and naturalness between the two central characters, Colonel Van Dyke and Charles Leatherby. Indeed, *Night People* director Nunnally Johnson and DoP Charles G. Clarke found a way to transform the expansive quality normally associated with Cinemascope into a claustrophobic and tense spectacle, without the use of extreme camera angles and rapid cuts. Even with the obvious differences in format between *Night People* and *The Manchurian Candidate* (i.e. Technicolor and Scope as opposed to black-and-white) there are some remarkable similarities with respect to *mise-en-scène.* Indeed, John Frankenheimer would go on to remark:

> Some people think that if there are no exaggerated camera angles then a film is not particularly imaginative or it has no style. Well, I think that's wrong.[218]

Whereas *Night People* relies heavily on Scope, Technicolor and even color temperature (see p. 55 for DoP Clarke's excerpt) to create a unique aesthetic, Frankenheimer equally achieves visual interest through deep focus photography and a dense, carefully crafted *mise-en-scène*. I focused on two exemplary scenes to illustrate key aesthetic components of *The Manchurian Candidate* – the nightmare sequence (which has captivated film historians and critics) and the confrontation in the Senate committee room. Yet when asked about his style, Frankenheimer admitted his preference to not be beholden to a particular style, instead changing in accordance with his subject matter; he would go on to state: 'I don't think that you can be married to a style and impose that style on everything you do because I think that limits your

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[218] Pratley, 204.

growth.'[219] At the time of production, Frankeheimer's experience had been exclusively in black-and-white, and it was is a much later interview that he commented how much better *The Manchurian Candidate* would have been in color, stating: 'What one could have done with the Queen of Diamonds is mind boggling.'[220]

The five mini-case study films presented in this chapter serve an ideological function, each one uses narrative and style to convey an authentic text, something that is part of the codes and conventions of the political thriller (previously discussed in Chapter One). Even an overtly ideological film as *Big Jim McLain* where the narrative serves as propaganda gives the perception of realism. I explained how differing levels of social or political realism are attained in these films, once again offering a relative cachet of authenticity. Furthermore, all of the mini-case study films utilize location shooting to some degree or another and draw, in narrative terms, from a Cold War consciousness (based either in the real, as in the case of HUAC and *Big Jim McLain*; or in the nation's collective fear of the Communist enemy). Finally, this chapter explored visual and stylistic elements which can be determined as generically apposite to the political thriller: for example, the documentary feel of many of the films; the realistic *mise-en-scène* which directly references actual events (such as the HUAC hearings, the FBI at work, etc); as well as representations of the city — whether it is Berlin or New York — as a space that is both lived-in and yet threatening.

Having set out an initial set of concepts as they pertain to the political thriller genre, I shall now turn my attention to a dominant type of Cold War political thriller, what I am calling the atomic political thriller. With just over half of the corpus having as its central preoccupation issues surrounding the nuclear question it is clear that the political thriller, its minority subgenre status notwithstanding, spoke to the nation's psyche. Over the next three chapters, I shall discuss the atomic political thriller within the context of cycles (e.g. early, middle and late) using the framework described in Chapter One.

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[219] Ralph Applebaum, "John Frankenheimer Speaks to Ralph Applebaum" in *John Frankenheimer: Interviews, Essays and Profiles,* ed. by Stephen B. Armstrong (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2013), 67.
[220] Ibid., 103.

CHAPTER THREE
EARLY CYCLE ATOMIC POLITICAL THRILLERS
(1945 – 1951)

If atomic bombs are to be added as new weapons to arsenals of a warring world, or to the arsenals of nations preparing for war, then the time will come when mankind will curse the names of Los Alamos and Hiroshima. The people must unite or they will perish.[221]

- J. Robert Oppenheimer (16 November 1945)

As the bomb fell over Hiroshima and exploded, we saw an entire city disappear. I wrote in the log the words: "My God, what have we done?"

- Robert Lewis, Enola Gay Co-Pilot (April 1947)

Introduction

In Chapter One, I provided a historical contextualization for the political thriller, including discussing U.S. political discourses and strategies of containment. I also mapped political thrillers to a periodization (i.e. Onset, Confrontation, Slight Thaw, Heating Up, and Beginning of Re-confrontation) that is frequently used by Cold War historians and I established the framework that I shall use in our discussion of atomic political thrillers over the next three chapters. The six years between 1945 and 1951 is what I shall refer to as early cycle, a period that marks the beginning of America's Cold War culture. Of the forty-one political thrillers released during the early cycle, nineteen included an atomic trope. Indeed, Hollywood studios seized upon the atomic trope, finding ways to add it into scripts already in production, or in the case of *House on 92ⁿᵈ Street* (Hathaway, 1945) produced by Twentieth Century-Fox, incorporating the theme during post-production. RKO introduced military

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[221] Judith Lathrop, 'The Oppenheimer Years 1943 – 1945', *Los Alamos Science,* 4:7 (1983), 25.

footage of the Hiroshima aftermath into the low-budget production *The First Yank in Tokyo* (Douglas, 1945), although in years to come the U.S. government would come to suppress such imagery and details. In the press materials for *The Beginning or the End* (Taurog, 1947), a docufiction highlighting the Manhattan Project and the subsequent bombing of Japan, MGM touted its production as 'the most timely production in film history.'[222] According to historians Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell, the inspiration for *The Beginning or the End* came from a chemist, Dr. Edward Tomkins, following a letter he had sent to a former student, the actress Donna Reed. Dr. Tomkins expressed surprise that Hollywood had not already produced a film about the 'birth of the atomic age.'[223] After reading the letter, Reed's husband, Hollywood agent Tony Owen, and MGM producer Sam Marx traveled to Oak Ridge (Tennessee) to discuss the project with Tomkins. According to Lifton and Mitchell, the chemist told the two men from Hollywood: 'We hope you can soon tell the world the meaning of this bomb because we are scared to death!'[224] Indeed, Dr. Leo Szilard, a Hungarian born physicist who drafted the Szilard Petition requesting President Truman forgo using the atomic bomb, would later comment in 1960 that a substantial number of scientists from Oak Ridge had serious misgivings about the atomic bomb. Tomkins, Owen and Marx subsequently met with the Federation of Atomic Scientists and the White House, gaining support for the MGM project. During one meeting, President Truman purportedly commented: 'Make your film, gentlemen, and put this message in your picture – tell the men and women of the world that they are at the beginning, or the end' to which Sam Marx replied: 'Mr. President, you have just chosen the title of our film.'[225] MGM also agreed to final script approval by White House and Army General Leslie Groves, who, at the time, was still responsible for the U.S. nuclear program.

Having entered into the postwar era, President Truman was fervently committed to nuclear superiority and he never deviated from his goal of maintaining a nuclear monopoly, a

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[222] Joyce A. Evans, *Celluloid Mushroom Clouds: Hollywood and the Atomic Bomb* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 24.
[223] Robert J. Lifton and Greg Mitchell, *Hiroshima in America: A Half Century of Denial* (New York: Avon Books, 1995), 73.
[224] Ibid., 73.
[225] Ibid., 73.

position that is clearly reflected throughout the early cycle of atomic political thrillers. Indeed, presidential rhetoric conjured up images of a gunslinger of the Wild West, where a nuclear-enabled U.S. would act as purveyors of world order, ensuring the safety of America and its allies, but only as long as it was able to kept the atomic bomb out the hands of other nations, namely, the Soviet Union.[226] The mapping of early cycle atomic political thrillers to the nuclear timeline illustrated in *Figure 3.1* (shown below) expands upon the historical contextualization offered in the first half of this thesis.

YEAR	HISTORICAL EVENT	FILM
1945	• "Trinity" is first atomic explosion successfully detonated at Alamagordo, New Mexico (July 16) • Szilard Petition to President Truman (July 17) • U.S. bombs Hiroshima (August 6) • U.S. bombs Nagasaki (August 9)	• *House on 92nd Street* • *First Yank into Tokyo* • *Shadow of Terror*
1946	• President Truman signs Atomic Energy Act (McMahon Act) and the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) is formed • Operation Crossroads - first subsurface detonation at Bikini Atoll • Federation of Atomic Scientists publishes "One World or None" report	• *Cloak and Dagger* • *Notorious* • *Rendezvous 24* • *Flight to Nowhere*
1947	• AEC assumes control of the U.S. nuclear program • Containment policy initiated HUAC	• *The Beginning or the End*

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[226] Shane J. Maddock, 'Ideology and U.S. Nuclear Nonproliferation Policy since 1945' in *The Atomic Bomb and American Society: New Perspectives,* ed. by Rosemary B. Mariner and Kurt G. Piehler (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2009), 125.

	hearings • United Kingdom authorizes development of nuclear weapons, builds its first nuclear reactor	
1948	• U.S. introduces long-range aircraft for intercontinental bombing • U.S. atomic tests at Eniwetok Atoll • Inauguration of Strategic Air Command	• *The Iron Curtain* • *Walk a Crooked Mile* • *Sofia* • *Women in the Night*
1949	• NATO established • China becomes Communist republic • Soviets detonate their first atomic bomb	
1950	• Truman instructs the AEC to produce the Hydrogen Bomb (H-bomb) • Klaus Fuchs confesses to giving secrets to the Soviets while working on the Manhattan Project • Korean War begins • Julius and Ethel Rosenberg go on trial	• *Counterspy Meets Scotland Yard* • *D.O.A.* • *Spy Hunt* • *David Harding Counterspy* • *Radar Secret Service* • *Experiment Alcatraz*
1951	• U.S. begins A-bomb tests in Nevada • NATO agrees to station U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe • First atomic-powered generator produces electricity • Second round of HUAC hearings • Rosenberg's convicted and sentenced to death	• *The Whip Hand*

Fig. 3.1: Early cycle atomic political thriller timeline.

The purpose of this Chapter is to analyze a cross section of early cycle of atomic political thrillers, thereby revealing the nexus between Hollywood film and political discourses and the concomitant rhetoric conveying postwar anxiety as it coincides with the heating up of the Cold War. Indeed, over the next three chapters I shall focus on the atomic theme, not only for its relationship to actual geopolitical concerns, but also for its substantial representation within the global corpus of Cold War political thrillers considered in this thesis.

Naming the Threat: Linking the Atomic Bomb, National Security and Communism

Hollywood's approach to the Communist threat was not particularly sophisticated. Indeed, geopolitical issues were frequently presented on the big screen in overly simplistic terms. The studios tended to portray Communists through recycled codes and conventions used for Nazi narratives evident in films such as *The Red Menace* (Springsteen, 1949) and *The Woman on Pier 13* (Stevenson, 1949), although as we shall see in later chapters, such depictions are not the exclusive domain of the early cycle. It is worth acknowledging the initiative to bring German scientists to America in order to prevent the Soviet Union from reaping the benefits of the Nazi research in the areas of atomic, chemical and biological warfare. Indeed, the Truman administration believed that it was in the nation's best interest to recruit former Nazis scientists as the U.S. prepared for total war with the Soviet Union. When the information about the initiative found its way into the media, the Truman administration set about putting the nation ease. Despite a vigorous propaganda campaign there was still a sense amongst average Americans that the Nazi scientists may pose a clear and present danger to their new host country, sentiments that were exacerbated by the vocal opposition of Eleanor Roosevelt and Albert Einstein. Nevertheless, the U.S. government deemed the initiative to be the lesser of two evils given that the Soviets had also managed to relocate a number of Nazi scientists behind the Iron Curtain.

Whilst the focus of several early cycle atomic political thrillers is the Nazi threat, nonetheless, the subtext (as we can determine from the context described above) is more

accurately to be read as a threat from America's real enemy, the Communists. Indeed, this kind of displacement of treachery is evident in the films *House on 92nd Street* (Hathaway, 1945)*, Rendezvous 24* (Tinling, 1946) and *Walk a Crooked Mile* (Douglas, 1948). This was, after all, a period in postwar history when, officially, the Soviet Union was still considered an ally, albeit a short-lived one. By 1948, the tenuous wartime relationship between the two superpowers returned to its earlier state of distrust, and it is at this time that the political thriller openly linked the Communist threat to national security and to the atomic narrative, something that would weigh heavily on the American psyche for years to come. In particular, it is the notion of the unseen and unknowable enemy, whether through the atomic bomb or Communist spy, that dominates this cycle. Likewise, the reliance on actual events (irrespective of the artistic license taken with the narrative), filming on location, along with visual style (frequently *noir* elements as discussed in Chapter Two) contributed to the authenticity and real sense of danger of this threat, and doubtless therefore to the relative popularity of the atomic political thriller genre. As a prima facie case of this interface of real events and the cinema that Hollywood produced in its wake, *The Iron Curtain* (Wellman, 1948) stands as a fearsome warning of the Communist threat.

Released by Twentieth Century-Fox, *The Iron Curtain* was an adaptation of Igor Gouzenko's 1948 autobiography, *This Was My Choice*. Gouzenko, a twenty-five year old cipher clerk, arrived in Ottawa in 1943 along with his wife to work within the Russian Embassy where he had access to top secret documents detailing Soviet spy operations within Canada. Gouzenko was responsible for encoding and deciphering various documents for the Soviet foreign military intelligence directorate. However, by 1944, Gouzenko began to entertain thoughts of defection, knowing that he and his wife would eventually be called back to the Soviet Union. Indeed, Moscow routinely recalled cipher clerks after being stationed abroad for one year, but in the case of Gouzenko the Soviet military attaché Colonel Nikolai Zabotin intervened on his behalf, arguing that the young cipher clerk's skills were essential to the work being conducted in Canada. Over the next two-years, the couple grew increasingly dissatisfied with the life and politics of their native country. In addition, the Gouzenko's had already welcomed their first-born child (born in Canada) and were now expecting a second child. The couple agreed they would not return to the Soviet Union, so when a second

telegram arrived in August 1945 calling for the immediate return of the Gouzenko family the plans to defect were set in motion. Gouzenko removed a codebook and numerous carefully selected top-secret memos and telegrams detailing espionage activities, subsequently turning the information over to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Many in the Truman administration and U.S. intelligence community were stunned to learn of the defection, but also that the young cipher clerk had information pertaining to spy rings operating within America. Gouzenko revealed to Canadian investigators that GRU officers were bragging that one of their sources was an assistant to the U.S. Secretary of State (later identified as Alger Hiss). Moreover, Gouzenko also provided information that would help the FBI to build cases against Edith and Julius Rosenberg, and former senior U.S. Treasury Department official Harry Dexter White. The nature and extent of the threat, however, would not come to light for the American public until 1948. Indeed, Canadian historian J. L. Granatstein asserts that the Gouzenko defection mattered, and that it also served as 'the beginning of the cold war for public opinion.'[227]

Whilst the Gouzenko defection confirmed the Soviets had spied extensively in the West against their allies throughout the war years, the film *The Iron Curtain* was a sign of what lay ahead for America. Although taking place in Canada, Wellman captured the insidious nature of Communism with the treatment of the narrative illustrating how the Soviet threat was indeed a more complex danger to America than that posed by treacherous Nazi scientists; more complex because the threat has an interior quality, that of an unidentifiable enemy who is invisible to the average American. The film *Walk a Crooked Mile* (Douglas, 1948)*,* also released the same year as *The Iron Curtain*, similarly conveys this theme of an unknowable threat whilst adopting docufiction conventions through location filming and the 'voice-of-God' narration. Almost as if in response to the fear that such an infiltration into the nation represents, many of the films from this early cycle are nostalgic in tone, with their indirect nod on the seemingly lost traditional notions of gender relations and national identity. As Sylvia Harvey notes:

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[227] J. L. Granatstein, 'Gouzenko to Gorbachev: Canada's Cold War', *Canadian Military Journal,* 12:1 (2011), 43; also see 'Soviet Defector Believed Beginner of Cold War', *The Toledo Blade* (25 Dec 1984), 16.

> All movies express social values, or the erosion of these values, through the ways in which they depict both institutions and relations between people. Certain institutions are more revealing of social values and beliefs than others, and the family is perhaps one of the most significant of these institutions. For it is through particular representations of the family in various movies that we are able to study the process whereby existing social relations are rendered acceptable and valid.[228]

Within the global corpus considered in this thesis, and in particular during this early cycle, women are frequently characterized as independent and unattached, yet not to the degree of hard-boiled *noir femme fatale*.[229] Embedded within the early cycle is the notion that despite the resolve of female protagonists, these women are still somewhat confined to traditional roles and in need of men's protection, something that I shall discuss in more detail in the next section. It is also worth noting that throughout the corpus of political thrillers, the nuclear family does not, however, have a strong presence. And that, when featured, the message is more frequently within the context either of the threat it represents to national security through an excessive mothering of children, or conversely (particularly in films of the later cycles), of the importance of the survival of the nuclear family in the wake of a nuclear apocalypse, a point of discussion that I shall return to in Chapters Four and Five.

America's obsession with the atomic bomb, along with the perceived threat of a Communist invasion and an unidentifiable enemy are undeniably part of the Cold War cultural production, but curiously, not all film historians read this as evidence of latent paranoia. Quart and Auster contend, in *American Film and Society Since 1945,* that the 1940s was essentially a period of 'optimism and consensus' despite growing concerns over the spread of

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[228] Sylvia Harvey, 'Woman's Place: The Absent Family of Film Noir' in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. by Ann E. Kaplan (London: BFI Publishing, 2008), 36.
[229] Helen Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines: Women in Film Noir and the Female Gothic Film* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 1-32; also see Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2000), 153.

Communism.[230] They go on to write: 'although they had a dark side touched with pessimism and self-doubt, the movies basically endorsed and reflected a feeling of national triumph.'[231] American feminist and social activist Barbara Deming suggests otherwise in *Running Away from Myself: A Dream Portrait of Americans Draw from Film of the Forties.* Deming asserts the postwar era essentially revealed a crisis in faith:

> Film after film can be seen to place its hero in what is, by analogy, the identical plight – the dream then moving forward carefully to extricate him. From such a series of instances one can deduce a plight more general, sensed by the public (and by the public-minded film makers) – a condition that transcends the literal situation dramatized in any single film.[232]

When Dorothy B. Jones, the former chief of film reviewing and analysis section of the U.S. Office of War Information during World War Two, completed a content analysis of postwar films, she found that 'social theme and psychological problem' narratives were in decline. Indeed, Jones' research revealed that industry output was down from twenty-eight percent in 1948 to less than ten percent by 1954, thereby confirming the composition of Hollywood films had dramatically changed after 1947.[233] More important, however, is the way in which Hollywood contributed to the Cold War. As contemporary historian Tony Shaw offers in *Hollywood's Cold War* (2007):

> All administrations from Harry Truman's onward judged that the Cold War was a *total* conflict requiring contributions from all sectors of American life, and that the

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[230] Leonard Quart and Albert Auster, *American Film and Society Since 1945*, third edition. (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 16.
[231] Ibid., 16.
[232] Barbara Deming, *Running Away from Myself: A Dream Portrait of Americans Draw from Film of the Forties* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1969), 6.
[233] Daniel Lead, '*The Iron Curtain* (1948): Hollywood's first Cold War Movie', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 8:2 (1988),154; see also Ernest Gigilo, *Here's Looking at You: Hollywood Film and Politics,* 3rd edn (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2010), 107.

battle for the hearts and minds extended beyond the powers of the government's information agencies.[234]

Cinema is a reflection of the nation's socio-political culture. More specifically, in the context of this study, the Hollywood political thriller taught Americans about the threat of Communism in the atomic age. The early cycle of atomic political thrillers, as I shall discuss in this chapter, contained and displaced the prevailing angst and fear of Communism onto women as unknowable and onto the atomic as an unseeable other.[235] The first cluster I consider in this chapter includes the films *House on 92nd Street, Cloak and Dagger* (Lang, 1946) and *The Iron Curtain*, which are exemplary prototypes, representative of what is to come with regard to the unknowable threat.

At this point I would like to acknowledge the conspiratorial elements that function within this subgenre, providing both the ideological and politico-social contexts to the political thriller. Writing in *Projecting Paranoia: Conspiratorial Visions in American Film* (2001), film scholar Ray Pratt suggests that the use of conspiracy is a response to oppressive political, cultural and psychological forces of conformity.[236] Moreover, the conspiracy serves as a reminder to the audience that the truth is ultimately unknowable. Both conspiracy and paranoia are frequently present in our corpus of films, but it is Frankenheimer's handling of these motifs in the popular 1960s thrillers *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) and *Seven Days in May* (1964) that are seemingly most remembered. Nevertheless, examples from this early period included *Shadow of Terror* (Landers, 1945) and *D.O.A.* (Maté, 1950). Pratt goes on to define paranoia as a 'crisis in interpretation, a desire to make sense of what does not make sense.'[237] Arguably, twentieth century America was shaped by political paranoia, the threat of foreign agents and domestic subversives thought to be lurking around every corner. Whilst anti-Communist sentiments pre-date my research period, the salience to political discourse and Cold War culture is far greater with the introduction of the atomic trope. Terrorism also

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[234] Tony Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 4.

[236] Ray Pratt, *Projecting Paranoia: Conspiratorial Visions in American Film* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001), 1-6.
[237] Ibid., 8.

has a destabilizing effect on the nation's psyche. Whereas the film *Saboteur* (Hitchcock, 1942), which depicts a fifth columnist sabotage of a California airplane plant during World War Two, was more of a vehicle to express wartime patriotism, in the postwar era, concerns over international terrorism and possible terrorist plots on American soil was essentially born out of the geopolitical conditions the U.S. helped to create. Latin America, Asia and the Middle East were all to become prominent proxies in a Cold War waged between the two superpowers. For example, two non-atomic political thrillers located within Latin America, *We Were Strangers* (Huston, 1949) and *Crisis* (Brooks, 1950), prefigure the tension that would emerge between U.S. and Cuba. Although as far as our corpus of political thrillers are concerned, it isn't until *The 49th Man* (Sears, 1953), part of the next cycle from 1952 to 1955, that the threat of atomic terrorism on U.S. soil is finally realized.

The complexities inherent in the way America dealt with the Communist threat are, nevertheless, exemplified by the Rosenberg espionage case (see Chapter One), which was just one of several very public trials that embraced a style of paranoid politics. The ability to name the enemy meant naming of the enemy embodies an evil that must be eliminated (or in the case of the Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, executed by electric chair). Yet the atomic threat is also like Pandora's Box, where the action of opening (the box) is seemingly small enough (in the case of Hiroshima as a means to end a war), but as it turns out it has far-reaching and severe consequences that must be mitigated and neutralized. Thus, the act of containment deemed necessary to prevent nuclear spies from leaking secrets to the enemy, but simultaneously this created an unprecedented politicization of American culture in order to achieve political containment abroad. As historian David Caute contends:

> In context of this disciplinary and demonizing feature of Cold War culture, the hyperbolic escalation of the Rosenbergs into evil "atom spies" --- condemned to death by Judge Irving Kaufman for "diabolical conspiracy to destroy a God-fearing nation" --- representing a definitive escalation of the local.[238]

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[238] Quoted in Oliver Harris, 'Cold War Correspondents: Ginsberg, Kerouac, Cassady, and the Political Economy of Beat Letters', *Twentieth Century Literature,* 6:2 (Summer 2000), 172.

The conviction and execution of Ethel Rosenberg reinforced anxieties over the changing role of women, as much as it was to become an example where conspiracy theory can take a nation, to the point of demonizing a woman and mother for all that it believed threatened America. This shift in blame and the absence of normal family relations in most Hollywood political thrillers can be traced back to Ethel Rosenberg, and her (perceived) choice to sacrifice her family for her political convictions. For the remainder of this chapter, I shall focus on the role of Cold War discourses of postwar propaganda and the "woman question" and its seeming concomitant issue, that of masculinity in crisis. Let us now investigate these clusters.

Postwar Propaganda and the "Woman Question": *House on 92nd Street* (1945), *Cloak and Dagger* (1946) and *The Iron Curtain* (1948)

Whilst *House on 92nd Street* and *The Iron Curtain* are fairly consistent with our view of Hollywood postwar propaganda, the inclusion of *Cloak and Dagger* in this cluster is revealing of the growing concerns over postwar nuclear proliferation. These films, along with *Notorious* (Hitchcock, 1946) and *Walk a Crooked Mile* (Douglas, 1948), exemplified the unsettled feelings over the atomic age and the role of women with regard to America's national security (see above). Taking its title from a book of the same name by Corey Ford and Alastair MacBain, the source material for *Cloak and Dagger* was nothing more than a series of unlinked vignettes describing the activities of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). On the surface, *Cloak and Dagger* appears to be another in a string of anti-Nazi films directed by Fritz Lang. However, neither the Nazis nor the Fascists characters depicted in the film are particularly well developed.[239] The atomic bomb received a similarly dim treatment, although, according to film historian Lottie Eisner, the director actually wanted a coda that served as a warning against the 'new-born terror of the spread of destructive capabilities of the atomic power.'[240] According to Eisner, the director had intended Jesper's final mission to involve locating and destroying the Nazis atomic bomb, with the *raison d'etre* to be Jesper's monologue:

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[239] Lang's other Nazi themed films include: *Man Hunt* (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1941), *Hangmen also Die* (United Artists, 1943) and *Ministry of Fear* (Paramount Pictures, 1944).
[240] Lotte Eisner, *Fritz Lang* (Cambridge: DaCapo Press, 1986), 267.

God have mercy on us if we ever thought we could really keep science a secret – or even wanted to. God have mercy on us if we think we can wage other wars without destroying ourselves. . . And God have mercy on us if we haven't the sense to keep the world peace.[241]

The sentiments of the main character are strikingly similar to those of the Manhattan Project lead scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer. Indeed, Oppenheimer was deeply conflicted over the use of the atomic bomb, and the physicist purportedly quoted the *Bhagavad Gita* following the successful testing of the A-bomb at Trinity, New Mexico on 16 July 1945:

If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst at once into the sky, that would be like the splendor of the mighty one. Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.[242]

Whilst the meaning behind Oppenheimer's quoting the *Gita* is open to interpretation, nevertheless, it gives us pause to consider his conflict over the use of the bomb. Despite his reservations, Oppenheimer blocked the circulation of a petition prepared by one of his colleagues, Dr. Leo Szilard. The Hungarian born scientist called for an outright rejection of the atomic bomb on moral grounds, recommending instead a technical demonstration rather than actual use against the enemy. Only a limited number of scientists actually signed the petition, and because it was forwarded through normal channels, up the chain of command, Truman did not actually see the document until after the Potsdam Conference, at which point when the president was already committed to using the bomb against Japan.[243]

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[241] Ibid., 272.
[242] James A. Hijiya, 'The Gita of J. Robert Oppenheimer', *American Philosophical Society Proceedings*, 144: 2 (2000) < http://www.amphilsoc.org/sites/default/files/Hijiya.pdf>. [accessed 1 Sept 2014]
[243] Dennis D. Wainstock, *The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb* (Westport: Praeger,1996), 46-47.

Returning now to *Cloak and Dagger,* the ending as intended by Lang was not only removed but destroyed by the production company prior to releasing the film.[244] Whilst the rationale behind this action is unknown, it begs the question of how much influence the U.S. government exerted during the production. Hitchcock's atomic political thriller *Notorious* (RKO, 1946) is another example where the U.S. government intervened. The U.S. State Department sent a letter to RKO film producer David O. Selznick stating that any film incorporating American agents had to be approved by the government before it could be exported, something that led Hitchcock to minimize the prominence his McGuffin, the atomic sand in the wine bottles.[245]   In the case of *Cloak and Dagger*, it was known that Lang and producer Milton Sperling quarreled over the ending, which ultimately was revised to portray the protagonist, Jesper, dramatically escaping with Italian physicist Dr. Giovanni Polda (Vladmir Sokoloff). Moreover, the director was concerned with delivering an authentic narrative, so in addition to Sperling, a former OSS agent, the production also included former OSS operative Michael Burke as a technical advisor. Burke had been a commissioned officer in the US Navy and during World War Two he operated behind enemy lines. Indeed, one of Burke's missions included smuggling the Italian Vice Admiral Eugenio Minisini out of Italy in 1943. The initial design for the U.S. Navy torpedo detonator was flawed, prompting the U.S. to orchestrate Vice Admiral Minisini's escape so that he could reengineer the special magnetic firing device. During the filming of *Cloak and Dagger*, Burke and another former OSS agent demonstrated to Lang the various methods for killing someone with bare hands. The director then transformed this information into a visually compelling fight sequence between Jesper and the Fascist Luigi (Marc Lawrence) during the Polda escape.

Cloak *and Dagger* and *House on 92ⁿᵈ Street* portrayed Nazi efforts (rather than Soviet) to acquire nuclear technology, which, as I contend, establish these films as transitional atomic political thrillers, and when considered in conjunction with *The Iron Curtain,* demonstrate (on

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[244] According to Eisner, there is no complete copy of the film as intended by Lang. see Eisner, 267.
[245] Wesley Britton, *Beyond Bond: Spies in Fiction and Film* (Westport: Praeger, 2005), 56.

a discursive level at least) just how far America must go to protect herself.[246] Indeed, *The Iron Curtain* grimly conveyed the seriousness of the Communist threat and the fact that Soviet spies were actively operating within North America. A 1948 article in *Life Magazine* reiterated these concerns, offering that the Dana Andrews-Gene Tierney star vehicle was the first take 'a strong stand against the current aggressive actions of the Soviet Union' and that not only was it believable because of its factualness, but that it would enthrall even the un-politically minded spectator.[247] The irony, however, was just a few years earlier Andrews had starred in a sympathetic role as a Russian partisan in *The North Star* (Milestone, 1943), a film distributed by RKO. Press materials and critic reviews emphasized the authenticity of *The Iron Curtain* and even the opening credits are presented as pages from a secret government file, with the audience being told the film is based upon the personal story of Igor Gouzenko, a former code clerk attached to the Soviet Embassy located in Ottawa, Canada. Twentieth Century-Fox acquired the rights to the Gouzenko story, although screenwriter Milton Krims was able to draw from various sources, including the Report of the Royal Commission (June 1946), as well as evidence presented in Canadian courts that lead to the conviction of ten secret agents of the Soviet government. Reverend William Howard Melish of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, a political movement first established in 1930 as an anti-Fascist alliance, fervently denounced *The Iron Curtain* as war propaganda. Melish claimed the film violated 'the U.N. resolution condemning warmongering,' consequently he demanded Twentieth Century-Fox refrain from releasing it, even attempting to enlist the support of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to have *Iron Curtain* suppressed.[248] Fox Studio President Spyrous Skouras, with the backing of Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) President Eric Johnston, countered that the film was based on documented fact.[249] Johnston was eager to contribute to the U.S. Cold War efforts, but he became concerned

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[246] *Notorious* also portrays the Nazi possession of the uranium sand thereby establishing this film as another transitional atomic political thriller.
[247] 'The Iron Curtain Creates a Furor', *Life* (17 May 1948), 59.
[248] 'Propaganda Campaign Denounces the Film,' *Life* (17 May 1948), 60.
[249] Susan L. Carruthers, *Cold War Captives: Imprisonment, Escape and Brainwashing* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 60.

when diplomatic issues surfaced with the overseas distribution *The Iron Curtain*.[250] Indeed, the film had been blocked in some locations thereby prompting Secretary of State Dean Acheson to coordinate directly with individual embassies prior to release given concerns that *The Iron Curtain* 'would stir up too much hostility towards the U.S.'[251]

Gender politics are also clearly at work in these three films, exploring what I have earlier referred to as the 'unknowable other' in interesting ways. Swedish actress Signe Hasso contributed to the wartime propaganda machine with films that included *The Story of Dr. Wassell* (DeMille, 1944) and *The Seventh Cross* (Zinnemann, 1944). Hasso's role in *The House on 92nd Street*, however, highlights the shift in Hollywood's narrative construction of female sexuality. Whereas the Nazi spy character Johanna Schmidt (Lydia St. Clair) portrays a more narrowly coded woman, as a lesbian, the leader of the spy ring, Elsa Gebhardt played by Hasso, offers a more complex view of femininity. Posing as a couturier, Elsa assumes the identity of a man, Mr. Christopher, in order to steal and deliver atomic secrets to the Nazis. When the FBI raids the house to save double agent Bill Dietrich (William Eythe), Elsa attempts to elude detection by donning her male disguise.[252] In so doing, an interesting twist occurs in relation to the function of the female masquerade. Feminist writer Valerie Steele contends:

> Fashion has often been thought of as a kind of mask, disguising the wearer's 'true' identity. Indeed, in the eighteenth century, both fashion and masquerade were frequently used as metaphors for deceit. (. . .) The connection between sexuality and masquerade apparently goes back to antiquity.[253]

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[250] Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 58.

[251] Ibid., 58.

[252] Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: Women's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indianapolis University Press, 1987), 40.

[253] Valerie Steele, 'Fashion, Fetish, Fantasy' in *Masquerade and Identities: Essays on Gender, Sexuality and Marginality,* ed. by Efrat Tseelon (London: Routledge, 2001), 73.

Indeed, the choice in clothing is a kind of comment on our identity, with women's fashion being as much about putting on a show as it is about cloaking/disguising the body/the female form in fabric. As a dressmaker, we can read Elsa's attempts to control this outer layer as a reversal of the female masquerade. In her cross-dressing, she disguises the female as male — this, as opposed to donning the masquerade of femininity (as seen with the *femme fatale* in *film noir*). By deliberately disguising her femininity and her femaleness, Elsa keeps what is behind the disguise as a mystery. Read this way, the world in which she operates also becomes a kind of masquerade, in turn presenting a doubling of unknowability and by virtue, a doubling of the danger. Such a woman is not easily neutralized nor contained because she is effective in hiding her sexuality, enabling her to operate as the leader of a Nazi atomic espionage ring. Thus, in this regard, Elsa differs in her sexuality from the typical *femme fatale* (who is either a vamp or singularly ambiguous) precisely because she is double-gendered, as a woman and as Mr. Christopher.

There are, of course, other films within this cycle that similarly portray the trope of masquerade. For example, the low-budget atomic political thriller, *Sofia* (Reinhardt, 1948), includes Magda Onescu (Patricia Morison) as the *femme fatale,* a beautiful, fashionable nightclub singer and part-time spy. In complete contrast to Magda is Madam Ana Sokolova (Luz Alba), the Soviet ringleader, a woman heavily coded as a lesbian (in a similar way to the Nazi spy Johanna Schmidt from *House on 92ⁿᵈ Street).* But, she also comes across as a 'man in drag,' a kind of conflicted or confused cross-dresser. Wearing an ill-fitting dark suit with a tie, the only part of Madam Sokolova's attire that would reinforce her gender is a shapeless, calf length skirt. Adding to this convoluted series of reversals in her sexual persona, we note that Madam Sokolova assumes a masculine role of aggressor, made evident through her admiration of Magda Onescu's beauty and voice following a performance at the nightclub.

In the film *Cloak and Dagger* this masquerade of sexuality continues with the character Gina (Lilli Palmer), a young courier working within the Italian resistance during the war. Her cross-dressing during the mission to bring Jesper into Italy, undetected, also renders her unreadable. Thus as a 'man,' Gina is capable of killing a Nazi soldier in quite a physical way (with a knife to the back), before leading Jesper and Pinkie (Robert Alda) to safety in the form

of the waiting truck. With the Italian partisans and Jesper hidden in the back of the truck, anxiously waiting whilst a cohort drives them to a safe house, Gina begins to strip away her masculine disguise, her femininity revealed which prompts both the camera and Jesper to gaze upon her. However, at this point Gina is merely adopting a mask of womanliness, asserting that she is an extremely effective and proud courier, capable of providing details of atomic physicists Giovanni Polda's daily routine and his house staff. It is only later, as Gina's transformation towards femininity continues, that she realizes she is falling in love with the Jesper (the man she has been tasked with hiding and protecting from discovery). This feminized Gina quickly becomes irrational and emotional (as observed by Jesper when she insists they must leave the rented apartment where they are in hiding). Thus, the burden to keep the couple safe shifts from Gina to Jesper, with the young woman acknowledging that she is 'going to pieces' a little more each day. In this context then it is almost as if clothing determines the gender and the levels of efficacy of the individual.

Polda is working against his will because his daughter is being held by the Fascists, and he makes it clear that he would never leave Italy without her. With the plan to reunite father and his daughter underway, Gina must once again return to her old self. Film scholar Rebecca Bell-Metereau writes that the interest in the masculine woman has been cyclical, with films from the 1940s frequently ending with the 'woman relinquishing her masculine role and settling down in happy subordination to a man.'[254] This type of domestic containment is not assured for Gina, given that she will stay behind (in Italy) to continue working as a courier for the resistance, presumably donning her masculine attire once again. Furthermore, although Jesper promises he will return for her, the effects of war may mean that both she and her man might die. Conversely, Elsa's masquerading as male in *House on 92nd Street*, because it is so total, means the only possible mode of containment is through death. Thus Elsa, in particular, becomes symbolic of the underlying fear and paranoia of the postwar era —the treacherous woman, one who would deceive to the point of totally dissimulating her gender, must be eliminated (as we recall the eventual fate of Ethel Rosenberg who, according to her trial, rejected her motherhood-ness). Elsa's violent death represents the only option to

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[254] Rebecca Bell-Metereau, *Hollywood Androgyny* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 71

cancel out the danger represented by the masculinized woman, preventing her from corrupting other women. Again, Bell-Metereau writes: 'Male imitation in a film may be used to support the status quo by depicting the masculine woman as a kind of freak who threatens the natural social order.'[255] But Elsa's masquerade also becomes a kind of abstract lesbianism, hinting at a threat to normative sexual identity. How different and infinitely more threatening is this woman who represents true danger to the nation as opposed to the *femme fatale* who is coded up front, and therefore is so much easier to contain.

   Cloak and Dagger offers an interesting contrast to *House on 92nd Street* and *The Iron Curtain* for its depiction of three types of women. In addition to Gina, the attractive, youthful courier with the Italian resistance whom we have discussed above, there is Mrs. Ann Dawson (Marjorie Hoshelle), an ex-pat American turned Gestapo informer, and finally, the atomic physicist and reluctant Nazi collaborator, Dr. Katerin Lodor (Helen Thimig). Whilst Gina functions as a good woman, the notion of femininity is in question as her initial masculinization (through cross-dressing) gives us pause for thought. For, she remains unfixed and uncontained, as apparent by the end of the film, when the man she loves has completed his mission and is escorting the Italian atomic physicist back to the U.S.. Essentially Gina becomes an 'unattainable vision of domesticity for the hero,' in that she will continue as a resistance fighter and no doubt will adopt her masculine attire once more.[256]

   In *Cloak and Dagger*, Dr. Lodor is similarly representative of a good woman despite being compromised given her (forced) collaboration with the Nazis. Her work on an atomic bomb for the Nazis has left her emotionally conflicted, aware that she is risking the lives of innocent people. Trying to escape, she crosses the Alps alone, something that has left her in a weakened, frail condition, both emotionally and physically. Indeed, Dr. Lodor's frailty signifies her feminine identity, a kind of metaphor for the tenuous struggle to control knowledge and atomic technology. For example, there are clear instances when Jesper attempts to reestablish or protect normative femininity with respect to Dr. Lodor. The first

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[255] Ibid.,68

[256] John J. Blaser and Stephanie L.M. Blaser, 'The Transformation of *Film Noir* Women', *Film Noir Studies* (2008), <http://www.filmnoirstudies.com/essays/no_place8.asp>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

example is when Jesper is being recruited for the OSS. Through this discussion, it is apparent that he admires Dr. Lodor, but then as if to neutralize the threat her intellectual prowess poses as well as her knowledge of the atomic, he refers to her as his 'pin-up' girl. Whilst the pin-up girl was more of a 'sex goddess' than that of domesticated femininity, nevertheless, in the case of Dr. Lodor this would reaffirm her identity as woman (first) and scientist (second). Similarly, when Jesper is visiting Dr. Lodor in the hospital, he convinces her to help the Allies so that the world would not only know she is a great scientist, but with particular emphasis on her being a great woman. Not uncommon in the atomic political thrillers is the way in which scientists often become pawns to be manipulated or exploited by the superpowers. Upon meeting with Jesper at the hospital in Switzerland, we see Dr. Lodor as passive and nurturing, but her work on the atomic bomb for the Nazis is contrary to the motherly, feminine qualities she embodies. To explain: barely surviving the crossing into Switzerland in an effort to escape the Nazis, Dr. Lodor faces the agonizing decision of refusing to collaborate or joining the Italian physicist Polda to complete her research, in order to prevent the death of concentration camp detainees, who are scheduled to be executed daily until her return. Yet such a decision highlights an interesting paradox given that the atomic bomb is a weapon of mass destruction, a destroyer of (all) life. Still in a weakened condition, Dr. Lodor is abducted from the hospital, once again being held captive by the Nazis. After learning of the location where she is being held, Jesper and his OSS cohorts are unsuccessful in their attempt to rescue Dr. Lodor, resulting her being killed. We can read Dr. Lodor's death at the hands of the Nazi nurse both as the elimination of a woman containing dangerous knowledge (i.e. not allowing it to get into "enemy" hands) as well as a kind of redemption for her transgression because she is no longer accessible to the German atomic program.

Representing the third type of female in *Cloak and Dagger* is the character of Mrs. Ann Dawson. Unlike Gina and Dr. Lodor, Mrs. Dawson embodies the typology of the *femme fatale*, although she also differs from the *noir* woman. Despite her sexual availability, a classic *noir femme* characteristic, she never actually has a hold on Jesper because he sees through her from the very beginning. Operating from overseas, beyond the borders of the U.S. and under the guise of searching for her husband, a U.S. Airman who has been shot

down, Mrs. Dawson poses a clear threat, precisely because she is an American and is therefore less likely to be discovered for what she is, a traitor. The threat she poses is represented in a similar vein to *Berlin Express* with the American soldier who is part of the neo-Nazi group holding Dr. Bernhardt, although this time betrayal is coded as feminine. As we shall go on to see this kind of character morphing into the unidentifiable enemy from within will become increasingly evident in the middle and late cycles.

The Iron Curtain is one of a small handful of political thrillers that portrays the family in relation to Cold War politics. The message of this film is that the Soviet government is not only suspicious of citizens working on its behalf, but is all too willing to sacrifice the family in pursuit of spreading Communism worldwide. Igor Gouzenko (Dana Andrews) a young code clerk arrives in Canada alone, his wife left back somewhere in the Soviet Union. After an evening out in Ottawa, the Soviet agent and fellow embassy staff member Nina Karanova (June Havoc) takes Igor back to her well-appointed apartment for drinks where she hopes to seduce him for information (as a kind of loyalty test). Nina, a Mata Hari/*femme fatale*, is like the Ann Dawson character from *Cloak and Dagger*, as she has adopted her masquerade in order to dupe rather than please. Once again, here is a woman who is immediately understood for what she is and is not. Initially unaware of her motivations, nonetheless, Igor does not fall under her spell and refuses to pass along the personal details she seeks. Sometime later, Igor's wife, Anna Gouzenko (Gene Tierney) joins her husband, having arrived with a very stern looking Captain Kulin (Helena Dare), the wife of Major Semyon Kulin (Eduard Franz) one of the members of the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa.

The Iron Curtain again (as with *Cloak and Dagger)* portrays three types of women through the characters of Nina, Anna and Captain Kulin, offering yet another set of insights into questions of Cold War sexual politics and identity. Captain Kulin is presented as the normative Russian woman, one who is large, lacking in warmth and nearly shapeless in appearance. Indeed, her reunion with husband, Major Kulin, is also totally devoid of emotion, and it is Captain Kulin who actually holds the door open for her husband as they depart the airport (contrary to Western perceptions of feminine gentility). Our other two characters of Anna Gouzenko and Nina are in obvious contrast to this stereotype of Russian femininity albeit in distinct ways. Nina, a devoted Russian Communist who has been allowed to work

abroad for several years, has adopted a feminine representation that differs from that of Captain Kulin and even that of Anna. Despite her attractiveness, there is a kind of ambiguity with respect to Nina's sexuality; she goes to some length to flaunt her femininity, wearing stylish and figure flattering attire, but is also quite aloof. When the genial Major Kulin asks her to dinner, Nina looks at him with disdain, pulling away from his grasp. Once she has left the room, Major Kulin responds to her stony rebuff, calling her a 'cold fish.' Instead, Nina will follow orders to seduce Igor, to see what information she can coax out of him as a means of testing his loyalty. Thus Nina, an apparatchik, signifies the lengths the Soviet Union will go to deceive its own citizens. The implication here is that such deceit could easily be used on unsuspecting North Americans. Whereas Nina's beauty is a façade, conversely, Anna's is genuine and wholesome. A Russian homemaker (highly unlikely under the Soviet system where everyone must be a worker), Anna is the opposite of her husband; where she comes across as warm, Igor is rigid and stiff. Indeed, Anna's openness to Western ideology is apparent given her friendship with Mrs. Foster (Edna Best), a kind and grandmotherly neighbor, despite the objections of her husband. Disturbed by this relationship, Igor reproaches his wife, reminding her that fraternization is prohibited.

When Igor arrives in Canada, his loyalty to Communist ideology is unquestioning and well-grounded; he proudly announces in his interview with Colonel Ilya Ranov (Stefan Schnabel), Chief of the NKVD in Ottawa, that he served in the Red Army and also is a member of the Young Communists League. However, Igor begins to reflect upon his fervent commitment following Major Kulin's criticism of the regime in Moscow (for which he is recalled to the Soviet Union) and later upon learning of Anna's pregnancy. Following the birth of their first child, the couple begins to contemplate the kind of life their children will lead once they return to the Soviet Union. And when asked what he would prefer, a boy or a girl, Igor answers a boy first because they have a better future and they grow up to be men (although, admittedly, it is a strange answer given that gender equality was part of Communist ideology). In Communist terms, Igor is representative of good consciousness, but this is true for only as long as he obeys an ideological concept that serves the proletariat. Conversely, Anna is representative of bad consciousness (in Communist terms) for her belief in the individual and the family. Over time the family will become the major catalyst in Igor's shift in political

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consciousness, something that will compel him to steal secret documents from the Soviet Embassy that detail atomic espionage activities in Canada. Indeed, as we are led to understand, the family was to be abolished under Communism having been deemed a hindrance, something that no longer served the nation as a whole.[257] Thus we may think of Anna (in her commitment to the family) as shifting, in Western terms this time, from bad to good consciousness. For the time being, however, Igor continues his work as a good Communist, encrypting messages about the atomic bomb, even as Anna goes into labor. Indeed, he doesn't learn that the birth has been completed because orders were given by his superiors at the Embassy to not interrupt his work, thereby confirming the notion that family is incompatible with Communist ideology, and will be sacrificed as needed in the interest of the Soviet Union. These are the elements that compel Igor to betray the party line and elect to put the nuclear family first despite, as the film suggests, this will likely result in the purge of the extended Gouzenko family back in the Soviet Union as retaliation for the stolen documents. In the presence of the Embassy officials, Igor hands over the stolen documents to the Canadian Royal Mounted Police, and he offers:

> Those are not only papers, they are a death warrant. When I gave them to you I sentenced myself, my family and my wife's family to execution. We must all die sooner or later, so it doesn't really matter. It's how we die and why we die that's important.

Immediately, the Gouzenko family is placed in protective custody and through the information gleaned, the Canadian government is able to arrest eighteen participants in the atomic espionage ring. In the closing scene, the Gouzenko's are shown going for a picnic in the Canadian countryside accompanied by a security detail. In voice-over the audience is told:

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[257] Richard Weikart, 'Marx, Engles and the Abolition of the Family' *European Ideas,* 18:5 (1994), 657-72; see also Alexandra Kollontai, 'Communism and the Family', *The Worker* (1920), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1920/communism-family.htm>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

Today Igor Gouzenko and his family live somewhere in Canada. By special act a grateful country has granted them all manners of liberties, franchises and privileges of our dominion of Canada and they use and enjoy same freely, quietly and peaceably as British subjects. But they cannot enjoy these rights. Their lives in danger, they live in hiding under the constant protection of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Yet they have not lost faith in the future.

The Iron Curtain then closes with the message that the family can only survive within a thriving democracy.

In general, the emphasis of this cluster has been the diversity of femininities on display, ranging from cross-dressing and lesbianism all the way to wife and mother. What is evident during the early cycle is an ambiguity surrounding women. Whilst they are still within the public sphere, some like Gina from *Cloak and Dagger* are heroic and meant to be admired, whereas others including Elsa Gebhardt from *House on 92nd Street* and Nina Karanova from *The Iron Curtain* are flawed; yet others are to be despised, Ann Dawson in *Cloak and Dagger*. There is also another kind of ambiguity explored in which there is a positing of masculine femininity against the more conventional (i.e. acceptable) femininity. This presence of explicit sexual diversity of lesbianism reinforces the sentiment that these women are clearly not to be trusted and that moreover their foreignness contributes to their treacherous nature. Gina is, however, an exception given that her cross-dressing is only a means to undermine the (displaced) tyranny of Nazism and Fascism. Only Anna Gouzenko, a wife and mother, will come to epitomize Western values, happily embracing the American dream despite living under constant threat. Indeed, audiences will be reminded of the dangers faced by the Gouzenko family in a low budget sequel, the docufiction *Operation Manhunt* (Alexander, 1954) released by United Artists.[258]

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[258] None of the original cast from *The Iron Curtain* appear in *Operation Manhunt* and the name of Anna Gouzenko was changed to Katya Gouzenko. Interestingly, the epilogue for *Operation Manhunt* portrays the real Igor Gouzenko, his identity obscured under a black hood.

Masculinity in Crisis: *Dead on Arrival* (1950) *and The Whip Hand* (1951)

The atomic political thrillers *Dead on Arrival (D.O.A.)* and *The Whip Hand* have a markedly different tone from the cluster of films considered in the previous section, which as we just discussed, are representative of postwar propaganda and discourses related to women. This particular cluster as I shall discuss, is a cultural expression of uncertainty and fear as it pertains to the unseeable nuclear and Communist threat. Moreover, these films are also representative of masculinity in crisis, a vulnerability that is embedded in the real.

Whilst film historian Ken Hillis suggests that *D.O.A* is representative of residual fears of Nazi atomic power, by 1950, the Cold War was well underway and it was a race between U.S. and Soviet Union to develop increasingly powerful weapons of mass destruction.[259] With a war by proxy underway in Korea, the U.S. faced real spies working quietly from within its own borders to recruit members and to obtain secrets for the Soviet Union. Cold War cultural historian Paul Boyer writes that 'fear of the Russians had driven fear of the bomb into the deeper recesses of consciousness,' a theme that I shall consider in more detail in Chapter Five as part of the late cycle of atomic political thrillers.[260] As I have explained in the Introduction and Chapter One of this thesis, the unknowability of this threat fed into the political hysteria that is central to the narrative of most of our corpus of political thrillers. Indeed, the portrayal of atomic technology in Hollywood political thrillers (or surrogate such as the rocket technology depicted in the *David Harding Counterspy*, Nazarro:1950) was one that for the most part assured Americans that the government was capable of protecting the nation, even if that threat was both unseeable and unknowable. This is what makes *D.O.A* a standout film, because here the threat has already materialized and a man is about to die in a manner reminiscent of radiation poisoning. Thus, *D.O.A.* is contributes to our discussion of atomic political thrillers precisely because it represents a first for this period of films in that a man is unfairly the victim of the nuclear. Moreover, the narrative also makes it clear that no

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[259] Ken Hillis, 'Film Noir and the American Dream: The Dark Side of Enlightenment', *The Velvet Light Trap,* 55 (Spring 2005), 12.
[260] Paul Boyer, *By The Bomb's Early Light* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1994), 339.

one is safe from this unseeable technology despite the U.S. government's attempts to secure the nation.

The protagonist of this film, Frank Bigelow (Edmond O'Brian), is an average American leading an ordinary life. Even the small desert town of Banning, California where he resides and the bar where he frequents is so unremarkable that he wants to experience the excitement of a cosmopolitan city like San Francisco. On his first evening in San Francisco, Frank is mysteriously contaminated by a kind of luminous poison. [261] Both the poison and the act serve as a metaphor for anxieties over human fallibility as well as the possibilities over falling victim to a technological and security apparatus that is shrouded in secrecy and deception. Ironically, it isn't until the lights are turned off in the doctor's office, something that ordinarily impairs vision, when it is possible to see the eerie glow of the luminous toxin.

In consideration of the question of femininity, *D.O.A.* offers a departure from our previous cluster in that women are forced into the narrative background. Bigelow's secretary-girlfriend, Paula Gibson (Pamela Britton), is left behind in Banning despite her pleas to go with him to San Francisco. Unlike our former cluster of films from the 1940s where the actions of women are essential to the narrative, Paula is positioned along the diegetic margins, signifying a kind of containment of a new postwar femininity. By the time she reunites with Bigelow in Los Angeles, it is too late. As a couple they are doomed, but unlike the failed romances in the *noir* tradition, this film forecloses on a future for the nuclear family by making the male fall victim to that which truly threatens the future of America. Thus this film introduces a new element in that it makes clear the incompatibility of the new atomic age and the nuclear family. The nuclear threat as much as the postwar social and economic conditions created an environment in which masculinity found itself in crisis.

The notion that the American male was coherent, stable and equivalent to the national character was challenged during this period, and as film scholar Steven Cohan contends: 'What seemed homogeneous about American men in the fifties, at least according to the discourses about masculinity in widespread circulation then, was actually specific to the normative social position of some men within the culture, namely, the white, heterosexual,

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[261] An intertitle reads 'the medical facts in this motion picture are authentic. Luminous toxin in a descriptive term for an actual poison.'

corporate, WASP, suburban breadwinner.'[262] *D.O.A.* is not unlike other postwar era films for its portrayal of masculinity in crisis, although this was neither unique to the 1950s nor for that matter unique to American culture. Writing in *Feminism Without Women* (1991), Tania Modleksi asserts: 'male power is actually consolidated through cycles of crisis and resolution, whereby men ultimately deal with the threat of female power by incorporating it.'[263] Whilst the representation of masculinity in crisis in cinema effectively feminizes men, this does not mean that traditional patriarchal structures are diminished. Certainly, Frank Bigelow embodies this new man of the 1950s, one whose fear of commitment to the concept of the nuclear family undermines his masculinity (as patriarch/procreator) thereby putting the security and stability of the nation state at risk. Indeed, the 1950s emerged as a period where bachelorhood was glamorized in popular culture, through film and magazines like *Playboy*. Despite such a seemingly drastic change in attitude, the average age of marriage for men during this period was still twenty-three, and as feminist author Barbara Ehrenreich pointed out 'if a man held out much longer, say even to twenty-seven, you had to wonder.'[264] This unwillingness to commit to his longtime girlfriend, Paula, along with the non-diegetic wolf whistles at the hotel suggests that Bigelow is merely masquerading as a heterosexual male. Within this context, the masquerade is an implicit feminization of the male, and Frank Bigelow's pursuing a sexual liaison with Jeanie (Virgina Lee), the 'jive crazy' blonde from the nightclub, allows him to blend in by donning a mask of heterosexual virility.[265] The inability to detect those who posed a threat to the nation was increasingly worrisome for the government, and in particular created a fear amongst the population over being labeled "pink," a term that alluded as much to insufficient masculinity as to Communist sympathies.[266] The panic over homosexuality in Washington during this decade led to purges of employees from the State Department as well

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[262] Steven Cohan, *Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), xi.

[263] Tania Modleski, *Feminism Without Women: Culture and Criticism in a "Postfeminist" Age* (London: Routledge, 1991), 7.

[264] Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and Flight from Commitment* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 14-15.

[265] Cohan, 25.

[266] Miriam Reumann, *American Sexual Character: Sex, Gender, and National Identity in the Kinsey Reports* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2005), 68.

as Federal job discrimination (see Chapter One), and reinforced the institution of marriage and the nuclear family as essential elements of Cold War ideology.[267] Thus it is possible to see Frank Bigelow's fear of commitment and avoidance of the normative nuclear family in *D.O.A.* as setting the tone for masculinity in crisis, clearly linking homosexuality to Communism, a theme that I discuss in more detail in relation to the middle cycle atomic political thriller *Kiss Me Deadly* (Aldrich, 1955).

The Whip Hand, whilst in the vein of several other postwar red-scare political thrillers, was an intentionally propagandistic, anti-Communist film. As with other narratives of this kind, this film shows just how easily an ordinary citizen can stumble onto an insidious plot. But unlike *D.O.A.,* where the dangers or threats are unspecified, in this film, threats to national security are inherently tied to the Communist pathological "other." *The Whip Hand* equally establishes the theme of masculinity in crisis, but, as it transpires, it is the men who allow themselves to fall under the spell of Communism who are actually the ones whose masculinity is threatened, especially, as I shall explain, with regard to Dr. Keller (Edgar Barrier). Whereas *D.O.A.* depicts the average American citizen embodied by Frank Bigelow as the one in crisis (and the one who dies), this film has the opposite outcome. In essence, the protagonist Matt Corbin's (Elliot Reid) extraordinary stumbling into the plot is reassuring to the American psyche that such attempts to undermine the nation, the nuclear family and thereby masculinity can be allayed. This notion is also reinforced by the fact that, whereas in *D.O.A.* we know that the more mature couple (Frank Bigelow and Paula) will never marry, this is exactly what we anticipate will (and does) occur with the young couple, Janet Keller (Carla Balenda) and Matt Corbin, at the conclusion of this film. Thus, *The Whip Hand*, in many respects, is the mirror image of *D.O.A.* and as such offers a sense of optimism for the American way of life.

The Whip Hand started out as a low-budget thriller, *The Man He Found,* written and produced by Stanley Rubin. However, it was only a matter of weeks after completion and its presentation to Howard Hughes that changes were requested, despite Rubin never having any direct contact with the elusive billionaire studio boss. Rubin recalled that Hughes thought

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[267] James Gilbert, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 18.

it was a 'nice little picture *except* . . . he didn't want to do an anti-Nazi picture, he wanted to do an anti-Communist picture.'[268] According to Rubin, the narrative was structured in such a way that it was possible to alter the villain by modifying the last five minutes of the film, 'because up to that point, you didn't know what the heavies were up to . . . until the last few minutes.'[269] Ultimately Hughes got what he wanted after Rubin walked away from the production, with the director offering the following:

> This was about 1951, and there was a lot of anti-Communist hysteria going on around the country and particularly in Hollywood at that time. The anti-Communist hysterics in Hollywood, as led by John Wayne, Ward Bond, Hedda Hopper, etc. were extreme. I didn't want to add to that hysteria. I had bought an Anti-Nazi story and that what I wanted to make. When I was asked to change this into an anti-Communist story, I did not want to do that. So I sent word that I would not make the changes that Mr. Hughes requested, and I also said I wanted my name removed as writer and producer of the film.[270]

A little background on Hughes is relevant in this context. Hughes acquired RKO in May 1948, close to the time when the studio released *Berlin Express*, a cautiously optimistic political thriller produced by Dore Scharey, an outspoken opponent of the HUAC Communist witch-hunt. Released only a few years later, *The Whip Hand* had a decidedly different tone from *Berlin Express*, but one that was equally reflective of the period. Unlike the John Wayne star vehicle, *Jet Pilot* (von Sternberg, 1957), which was in production during 1950 and shelved after completion, *The Whip Hand* reached theaters at the height of the Korean War. Indeed, Hughes was fully entrenched in the politics of the Cold War, but he also had a personal stake in the outcome given his role in the aeronautics industry.[271] Hughes' fear of Communist

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[268] Tom Weaver, *Earth vs. the Sci-Fi Filmmakers: 20 Interviews* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2005), 337.
[269] Ibid., 337.
[270] Ibid., 337.
[271] Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele, *Howard Hughes: His Life and Madness* (London: W.W. Norton, 1979), 170.

infiltrators was well known and almost immediately after assuming control of RKO he fired dozens of studio staff whilst placing others under investigation. The studio boss arranged for the names of suspected subversives to be removed from the credits of re-releases.[272] RKO's first agit-prop film under the direction of Hughes was *I Married a Communist* (renamed to *The Woman on Pier 13*), a movie selling sex, violence and subversion.

Under producer Lewis Rachmil the working title changed from *The Man He Found* to *The Enemy Within,* and eventually *to The Whip Hand* at insistence of Hughes. Why the title change was made is unknown, although it serves as an interesting choice, and is worth a pause to contemplate its meaning. Certainly, the new title was more attention-grabbing than either the original or even the revised working title. According to the Merriam-Webster internet dictionary, one definition of "whip hand" is: 'the hand that holds the whip.'[273] Within the context of this film, however, we understand the term to referencing an individual with an advantage or holding the dominating position. Thus *The Whip Hand* is, in essence, an exploration of the struggle for control, a common trope found in the western genre, as indeed the film title suggests. Another consideration, however, is how the title reinforces the hybridity of this film, because, whilst it contains some of the conventions of the western (stranger rides into town, struggles with the villains for power before finally succeeding), it is ultimately an atomic political thriller. The audience is tasked with figuring out which character is the "whip hand", whether it is Steve Loomis (Raymond Burr), Peterson (Lewis Martin), Dr. Wilhelm Bucholtz (Otto Wadis), or as it finally transpires, the journalist hero. In some respects we may also view the 'whip hand' not simply as an individual, but rather as an ominous and anonymous ideological force. Despite the odds being stacked against him, the protagonist, Matt Corbin is able to wrestle the whip away from the embodiments of Communist ideology.

Although the title may have served to disguise the actual nature of the genre, there was no doubt about the ideology of this film upon viewing the opening scene. As *The Whip Hand* begins, voice-over narration informs the audience that the Communists are busy

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[272] Daniel Leab, 'How Red Was My Valley: Hollywood, the Cold War Film, and I Married a Communist', *The Journal of Contemporary History*, 19:1 (1984), 66.
[273] Merriam-Webster, 'Whip Hand', <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/whip%20hand> , [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

scheming 'behind the heavily guarded walls of the Kremlin.' The spectator sees a Soviet officer addressing other government officials, directing their attention to large map of the U.S. on the wall. The officer begins to point out several major cities including New York, Washington D.C., Boston and Los Angeles, but the pointer firmly comes to rest on a small town in the heartland of American known as Winnoga; this particular scene was one of the few added by George Bricker and Frank Moss, who were the credited screenwriters brought into the production following Rubin's departure.[274]

Returning for a moment to the topic of genre and hybridity and the tropes commonly associated with the western genre.   Whilst Elliot Reed's portrayal may lack a toughness normally ascribed to cowboys, nevertheless, the Corbin character displays a youthful idealism and toughness of purpose rarely seen in Cold War political thrillers, but certainly seen in westerns. The narrative has Matt making his way back to town in search of medical attention after an injury sustained during a torrential rainstorm after a day of fishing. Although he is encouraged to resume his fishing vacation elsewhere, the young journalist is immediately intrigued by the very private Petersen, an alleged "eccentric" living at the lodge, and the story of the mysterious virus that killed all the fish in the lake. It doesn't take the young journalist long to figure out there is something amiss, so Matt decides to stay for a few days to investigate as well as to pursue his romantic interest in Janet, the sister of Dr. Keller whom he met whilst being treated for a cut to his forehead.

The arrival of Steve Loomis (Raymond Burr) and his cronies, who started acquiring properties after the lake was decimated, marks the transformation of the idyllic mid-western American town into a community ruled through fear, where veiled threats and eavesdropping are now a way of life. Only the aging and determined general store owner, Luther Adams (Frank Darien), remains; he refuses to despite knowing he is powerless against the villains. Luther Adams, a father figure, and Matt Corbin, the young idealist, consciously decide to stand together in search of the truth and to fight the evil represented by Peterson et al. Matt along with the audience begins to sense the bullish tactics of some of the new arrivals, and it

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[274] In Rubin's original narrative, the villainous leader was none other than a burned and crazed Adolf Hitler. Rubin also stated that the revised version retained approximately seventy-five to eighty-five percent of the original; see Weaver, 342.

doesn't take long to conceive of their evil and how they have brainwashed most of the remaining townsfolk. At this point we see the way in which an ideological system (in this case, Communism) infiltrates and does so successfully up to a point. Although Mabel Turner (Olive Carey), the old woman who drives Matt and Janet into a trap, is a real collaborator it is clear she has been brainwashed by Communist ideology.

The relationship between Janet and her brother, Dr. Keller, presents an interesting tug-of-war, one that represents the battle between the goodness of the American way of life and godless Communism. Unlike *D.O.A.* and other red-scare films where the protagonist is a clear embodiment of masculinity in crisis, we see a determined and resolute protagonist in Matt Corbin. If anything, in this film, it is Dr. Keller alone who represents masculinity in crisis; we believe him to be a victim of Communist propaganda, something which led him to abandon a successful medical practice in St. Louis, Missouri in order to collaborate with traitorous evil-doers intent on annihilating the U.S. through germ warfare (a stand-in for the atomic). The doctor remains a committed participant in the Communist plot, even administering the fatal dose of an unspecified drug, killing Luther. However, it is when ordered by Peterson to kill his sister because she has revealed too much information to Matt Corbin, that Dr. Keller becomes disillusioned. Just at the point when Janet finally realizes the complicity of her brother, Dr. Keller is faced with following Peterson's orders or saving his sister. In a split second, he chooses to protect her by shooting Peterson, but he is shot in return gunfire. In essence, saving Janet meant that Dr. Keller not only chose American values in the end, he also ensured the possibility of their continuation by protecting the nuclear family (Matt and Janet will marry, etc.), a theme that will carry forward in the middle cycle with *A Bullet for Joey* (Allen, 1955). In this regard this possibility of future procreation demarcates this film's narrative from the overarching absence of the nuclear family potential. As we saw, Frank Bigelow's death in *D.O.A.* is symbolic of the unknowable threats to America, and thereby to masculinity and ultimately the nuclear family.

This dyadic cluster of *D.O.A.* and *The Whip Hand* is a powerful metaphor for what ails the nation. The notion of disease or illness is symbolic of the growing fear not simply over the

external Soviet threat, but also from the enemy within.[275] Anyone deemed beyond the realm of normality, those who live on the margin or fringes are viewed with suspicion because they are a risk to the body politic – we note how a similar discourse prevails for the U.S.S.R. when the Soviet agents in *The Iron Curtain* address Igor Gouzenko as being ill (an unwell political body) when he has decided to deliver stolen documents to the Canadian officials, thereby turning his back on Communism and Mother Russia. With the film *The Whip Hand,* the notion of disease clearly plays into fear-mongering as propaganda. After all, according to the official line, the possibility of germ warfare being waged against the U.S. was quite real. In May 1946, the Associated Press (AP) intended to publish a sensational story about a germ weapon that was 'far more deadly than the atomic bomb' and 'capable of wiping out large cities and entire crops in a single blow,' but within hours the story had been withdrawn and instead the AP stated that no such weapon existed.[276] The following year, the U.S. had drafted a United Nations resolution that defined weapons of mass destruction as including: 'atomic explosives, radioactive material, lethal chemical and biological weapons, and any weapons developed in the future which have characteristics comparable in destructive effect to those of the atomic bomb or other weapons mentioned above.'[277] Concern over biological warfare reflected Cold War animosity, to the point that the United Nations explored how to control both biological and chemical warfare. There was, after all, truth in the media reports and accusations that the U.S. was developing such weapons of mass destruction, and as the Department of Defense expanded its program, this helped shape public perception regarding communicable disease and the conceptual link between contagion and Cold War politics.[278] Thus the propagandistic aspects continued to play on the public's fears:

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[275] The film *Panic in the Streets* (Kazan, 1950) is similarly read as a displaced atomic political thriller.

[276] S.K. Prasad, *Biological Warfare: Volume 1* (New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House, 2009), 22.

[277] Ibid., 22.

[278] Priscilla Wald, *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 165.

Unfortunately, the public has been given an exaggerated impression as to the potency and state of development of biological warfare. For example, it has been stated that a single plane with a small bomb filled with a biological agent would be capable of wiping out the population of an entire city with a single blow. Such a statement is not in accord with the facts as we know them today.[279]

These two films, then, constitute interesting responses to this propaganda in that *D.O.A.* exemplifies a nation fearful of nuclear contagion, whereas *The Whip Hand* says that we have the ability to stop it and assure America's future well-being. So whilst the threat is real, there are Americans like Matt Corbin who are good enough to stand up to Communism, presenting a model of American heroism for all to follow.

Conclusion

This early cycle of atomic political thrillers, as set forth in this chapter, forefronts what I call the woman question. With the first cluster of films, which include *House on 92nd Street, Cloak and Dagger,* and *The Iron Curtain*, a variety of femininities are on display, and as we have seen, are either in a position to protect or destroy American ideals and values. However, with the exception of Anna Gouzenko (*The Iron Curtain*), the woman's potential for danger is perceived to be substantially greater precisely because these women have adopted a masquerade, allowing them to hide their true nature. Thus, for example, a woman such as Elsa Gebhart from *House on 92nd Street*, one who is coded as a lesbian, must be neutralized because she is both a threat to the nation's atomic secrets and a threat to the natural order. Ultimately the danger these women pose will come to epitomize the threat to the U.S. by Ethel Rosenberg, having been deemed to be the mastermind behind the espionage ring by many within the American press corps, as well as the Eisenhower administration.

The focus on women became less pronounced as evident from the second cluster of films considered in this chapter. The films *D.O.A.* and *The Whip Hand* offered an initial

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[279] James Forrestal, 'Secretary Forrestal's Statement on Biological Warfare', *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 5:4 (1949), 104.

glimpse into questions of masculinity and national security. I argued that although the theme of masculinity in crisis was prevalent in *film noir* to describe postwar alienation, but within the context of the political thriller that both *D.O.A.* and *Whip Hand* conveyed a threat to national security posed by homosexuality and Communism.

CHAPTER FOUR
MIDDLE CYCLE ATOMIC POLITICAL THRILLERS
(1952 - 1955)

Knowing that only a United States that is strong and immensely productive can help defend freedom in our world, we view our Nation's strength and security as a trust upon which rests the hope of free men everywhere. It is the firm duty of each of our free citizens and of every free citizen everywhere to place the cause of his country before the comfort, the convenience of himself.

- Dwight D. Eisenhower, Inaugural Address (20 January 1953)

When I was appointed First Secretary of the Central Committee and learned all the facts of nuclear power, I couldn't sleep for several days. . . . Then I became convinced that we could never possibly use these weapons, and when I realized that I was able to sleep again.

- Nikita Khrushchev (1953)

Introduction

In terms of the political culture of the period coinciding with this middle cycle of atomic political thrillers, most notably we must point to the election of the Republican presidential nominee, Dwight D. Eisenhower, the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, and the end of the Korean War. In addition, the world lived under the shadow of total war and mutual assured destruction as the two superpowers expanded their respective nuclear arsenals. Shown in the figure below is our corpus mapped, once again, to an atomic timeline to help establish the context of the atomic thrillers released during the middle cycle.

YEAR	HISTORICAL EVENT	FILM
1952	• U.S. establishes a second nuclear weapons laboratory in Livermore, California • Operation Ivy – first H-bomb test in Marshall Islands • Britain tests atomic weapon in Australia	• *The Atomic City* • *Red Snow* • *The Thief* • *Walk East on Beacon!* • *Invasion U.S.A.*
1953	• Soviets detonate layer cake design bomb in Siberia, but not true hydrogen bomb • Eisenhower calls for new program called "Atoms for Peace" • Julius and Ethel Rosenberg executed	• *Above and Beyond* • *Pickup on South Street* • *The 49th Man* • *Split Second* • *Captain Scarface*
1954	• "BRAVO" first H-bomb tested at Bikini Atoll • First atomic-powered submarine • Oppenheimer loses security clearance following hearings on loyalty • U.S. adopts policy of "massive retaliation"	• *Tangier Incident* * • *World for Ransom* • *Hell and High Water* • *Security Risk* *
1955	• Soviets deploy two intercontinental strategic bombers, start new atomic testing • United Kingdom announces plans to develop thermonuclear weapons • U.S. – British sign accord on peaceful uses of atomic power adopted	• *A Bullet for Joey* • *Kiss Me Deadly* • *Port of Hell* * • *Shack Out on 101*

* Films not available for viewing

Fig. 4.1: Middle cycle atomic political thriller timeline.

The politico-atomic timeline provided in the figure above establishes the tactical dimension of Cold War brinksmanship. From 1952 to 1953, the year both of Stalin's death and the end of the Korean War, the relationship between the former allies was tenuous. The later years of the middle cycle, specifically between 1954 and 1955, included an important shift in Soviet leadership with Stalin protégé, Nikita Khrushchev, assuming control in 1955. Indeed, the death of Stalin sparked a major power struggle between Khrushchev and designated Stalin successor, Georgi Malenkov. The ruling "troika" of Malenkov, Molotov and Beria quickly disintegrated as Khrushchev (with Molotov's support) using an uprising against the East German Communists regime to call for Beria's arrest and execution in June 1953.[280] In the meantime, political rhetoric from the Kremlin was beginning to soften with Malenkov calling for peaceful coexistence with the West:

> At the present time there is no disputed or unresolved question that cannot be resolved by peaceful means, on the basis of mutual agreement . . . States interested in preserving peace may be assured both now and in the future of the firm peaceful policy of the Soviet Union.[281]

Such a declaration of diplomacy and negotiation was unsettling for the U.S. as the Eisenhower administration became fearful that such a conciliatory tone would actually weaken Western resolve. Finally, in 1955, two years after Stalin's death, Malenkov was ousted after having come under fire for abuse of power, slow reforms and his close ties to Beria. The consolidation of power under Khrushchev once again raised the stakes in the

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[280] Beria allegedly commented that Socialism in Germany was 'a joke and that the attempt to instill it there should be discontinued. Khrushchev and others reasoned that Beria was willing to sacrifice the reunification of Germany in exchange for massive financial aide from the U.S. Given such views, Beria was characterized as a traitor, an agent of the West and a provocateur. See Christian F. Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany 1953: The Cold War, the German Question and the First Major Upheaval Behind the Iron Curtain* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2001), 15.

[281] Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 61.

Cold War, meaning that the thaw in East-West relations evident (under Malenkov) was to be short lived.

The middle cycle of atomic political thrillers is distinct from the previous cycle (1945–51). Whereas, before, women figured quite prominently, raising questions (as discussed in Chapter Three) as to the diversity of femininity in postwar America, within the middle cycle, it is now the masculine that takes precedence. Nevertheless, women don't disappear entirely, and alongside the more emergent question of the masculine, there is still a thread of strong women exemplified through *Hell and High Water* (Fuller, 1954)*, Kiss Me Deadly* (Aldrich, 1955) and *Shack Out on 101* (Dein, 1955). This collection of women tend to assume either the role of a foil to the male or something of a challenging femininity, if not queering sexuality, which I shall explore in greater detail in this chapter. There is, however, a clear ideological reason for this shift in emphasis to the masculine. A first point to be made is that this was a time when the nation's containment of the political "other" was embodied in the form of Ethel Rosenberg. This in turn (as an affect of demonizing and eradicating the 'monstrous' female) seemingly naturalized the containment of the sexual "other" (as in: women are treacherous, often inscrutable and thereby threatening to the nation state and must be contained). Generally speaking, this period was more conservative in its representation of women, particularly with regard to the narratives and imagery depicting women within the context of the American dream, fulfilling their destiny as wives and mothers. The emphasis on "controlling domesticity" as I discuss in Chapter One meant that women, who started to return to the confines of home shortly after the war, would, as cultural historian Kristin Ross suggested, be considered a national asset by virtue of their domestic containment.[282] The political thriller follows in this vein, and in so doing brought about the fore-fronting of masculinity rather than femininity as previously seen with the early cycle narratives.

Political discourse during this middle cycle was informed by several key concerns, that of national security, loyalty, fear of Communism, as well as homosexuality which was seen as

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[282] Although Ross was focusing on 1950s post-colonial France, her observations regarding political domesticity was remarkably similar to the U.S. experience. See Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 77-78.

a potential Achilles heel in America's drive to protect itself. The highly publicized testimony of the ex-Soviet spy and self-confessed homosexual, Whittaker Chambers (concerning former U.S. State Department employee Alger Hiss), only added to these concerns. Homophobia was deeply embedded within the nation's paranoia, at times even to the point of eclipsing anti-Communist sentiments. Thus the two issues of homosexuality and Communism became intertwined, a merging of dominant political discourses (mostly emanating from HUAC) into a singularly great and indistinguishable threat. As a consequence, loyalty throughout all levels of government is questioned during both the Truman and Eisenhower years, which was raised by Joseph McCarthy and his supporters.[283]   A junior Republican Senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy's legacy has been widely documented, although it is worth reviewing his contribution to the Cold War.**[284]** The Senator shocked the nation in 1950 when he proclaimed the U.S. State Department not only harboured over two hundred Communists, but that its staff were fully aware of this fact. A mere two weeks after this revelation, McCarthy dominated the Senate floor, speaking for six hours: 'in defense of his nation, then putting himself forward as the leader the nation deserved by did not have, challenging every agency of government and every citizen to stand in his light.'[285] These charges led to widespread investigations into the lives of actual and suspected homosexuals employed by the U.S. government, ultimately leading to the dismissal of nearly two hundred men and women deemed a risk to national security.

The Hiss-Chambers case, as I have discussed in Chapter Two, resonated amongst Americans. A respected editor for *Time Magazine* and, by 1948, an avowed anti-Communist, Chambers appeared before HUAC. As Alger Hiss and his defenders went on the offensive, characterizing Chambers as retaliatory and vengeful because he was a 'jilted homosexual

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[283] Fiona Paton, 'Sexual Politics and Gendered Poetics during the Cold War', *American Quarterly*, 57:1 (March 2005), 289; see also Thomas Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 222.
[284] Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate,* second edition (Amherst: University of Masachusetts Press, 1987); see also Richard Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
[285] Greil Marcus, *The Manchurian Candidate* (London: British Film Institute, 2002), 16.

cruiser.'[286] Indeed, Lloyd Paul Stryker's (defense counsel for Hiss) opening statement at the first perjury trial denounced Chambers as mentally unstable and as having an 'unnatural sexual attraction to Hiss.'[287] Thus the pairing of Communism and homosexuality became solidified, not only with the Hiss-Chambers case, but later with questions surfacing over McCarthy and FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's sexuality, all of which contributed to America's paranoid political discourse. Of the atomic political thrillers considered in this chapter, *The Thief* is notable with respect to the homosexuality-Communist dyadic. As mentioned in Chapter Two, some of the criticism levied against this film had to do with the lack of a backstory explaining the motivation for the film's protagonist engaging in espionage. Given that Dr. Fields (played by Milland) is unmarried, and as the narrative progresses is obviously in a state of crisis, one possible reading is he was blackmailed into providing secrets because he is a homosexual.

Despite asserting a tough position on Communism, the Democrats spent the next decade into the 1950s, on the defensive, trying to dispel Republican claims that they were 'soft' on Communism. As Cold War cultural historian K.A. Cuordileone writes:

> . . . the accusation of softness carried with it the insinuation that liberals lacked sufficient masculine toughness to rise to the occasion of the cold war, and were down right feminine in their New Deal political orientation.[288]

Cold War rhetoric was rooted in multiple anxieties and resentments that certainly contributed to the vilification of homosexuals, but New Deal liberalism was equally under fire. The fifth successive Democratic administration would shoulder the blame for Alger Hiss, the loss of China to Communism, the Soviet nuclear proliferation and the Korean War. The significance of these events put Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson at a particular political disadvantage during his presidential bid in 1951-52, and again in 1955-56. As a graduate of Princeton and

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[286] Doherty, 223.
[287] Edward Walter, *The Rise and Fall of Leftist Radicalism in America* (Westport: Praeger, 1992), 66.
[288] K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2005), 38.

Harvard, Stevenson was exceptionally articulate, and at times verbose, thus becoming the embodiment of American liberal intelligentsia. Stevenson was not the only notable figure to defend Alger Hiss, even testifying on his behalf at the first perjury first trial in May 1949. Yet the Democratic presidential candidate came to regret his support as Republicans seized upon Stevenson's relationship (to Hiss) during the 1952 campaign. Vice-Presidential nominee, Richard Nixon, retorted that 'Somebody had to testify for Hiss, but you don't have to elect him President of the U.S.,' whilst Republican Senator William Jenner asserted that 'if Adlai gets into the White House, Alger gets out of the jail house.'[289]

Despite his intense dislike of McCarthy, Eisenhower was not afraid to interject some of the junior Senator's rhetoric into his presidential campaign. The U.S. State Department scandal was one such example, with the 'Let's Clean House" slogan becoming a cornerstone slogan of the Eisenhower-Nixon campaign. Thus the fear of homosexuals as being indistinguishable from heterosexuals was extremely powerful and unsettling for America during this period. That and the constant pairing of Communism and homosexuality led many Americans to believe the threat was one and the same.

In this chapter I shall continue to explore the postwar atomic political thriller in relation to American anxieties over its boundaries, both real and imagined, sexual and racial, and, as we shall see in a somewhat related manner, to changes in gender politics (particularly with regard to women). However, I want to pause for moment to consider the Eisenhower rhetoric of "Let's Clean House" because in many ways it helps to establish the two dominant discourses in relation to national security as reflected throughout the middle cycle. These two discourses, the one initiated by McCarthy and HUAC which is essentially anti-Communist in its focus (and which raised questions surrounding masculinity through the exposure of homosexuals at levels of government), clearly overlaps with the second discourse, namely, that of the principle of the defense of America by any means necessary, whether in the form of nuclear weapons or psychological warfare, or indeed the promotion of economic well-being as a means of containment of the Soviet threat. After all, the Soviets were ahead of the game in the areas of space exploration (Sputnik) and rocket technology (ICBM). Thus it was

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[289] Richard Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 22.

essential that a sense of prosperity and domestic ease (thanks to technological goods) pervaded at home. This Cold War politicization of domesticity would eventually be exemplified through the famous "kitchen debate." In 1959, Vice President Richard M. Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev launched into a discussion on the virtues of their respective nations at the American National Exhibit in Moscow. This informal public exchange which was subsequently dubbed the "kitchen debate," was, at its core, an ideological struggle around narrowly defined gender roles which in American hegemony were constituted of a couple composed of a male breadwinner and a full-time female homemaker, and in the U.S.S.R. of men and women equally sharing the workplace.[290] Although the exchange between Nixon and Khrushchev would not take place until two years into our late cycle of atomic political thrillers, between 1957 and 1962, nevertheless, its foundation was foreshadowed in the discourses coinciding with middle cycle.

Particularly striking within this period, as I shall discuss, are the strategies of mirroring and narcissism that are at play in these films. This becomes even more intriguing when these films are considered against the various political discourses of the 1950s around masculinity. As we shall see, these films established a need to double the dose of the masculine, first through asserting the viable heterosexuality of the male character and, second, through the perfect mirroring effect of the female returning an image of strong masculinity (the ideal ego). This assertion was, however, not without its struggle as male and female characters failed to conform (sometimes leaving it too late, others not). The reason for this shift in focus to the male becomes somewhat clearer if we consider that in political cultural terms, discourses surrounding masculinity were homophobic in tenor. The close association of weak or effeminate men to homosexuality significantly contributed to perceived risks to national security. Such fears of homosexuality coupled with virulent anti-Communism transformed Hollywood political thrillers into cautionary tales whereby:

> Characters' present false beliefs with the oppositional class, racial, and sexual
> conflicts of the thirties that have led to subversion. These films suggest that

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[290] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 11.

'reds' could number among one's old friends and their ideas could be part of one's former identity; to purge the self and society of impurity will lead to a corporate order and a home life centred on heterosexuality and children.[291]

There are nine films from this middle cycle that exemplify the prevailing discourses on Communism and national security. In our first cluster, I shall consider how three films, *Kiss Me Deadly* (Aldrich, 1955), *Shack Out on 101* (Dein, 1955) and *A Bullet for Joey* (Allen, 1955), speak to masculinity in crisis and the Communist threat. Whereas our second cluster, comprised *Above and Beyond, Captain Scarface, The 49th Man, Hell and High Water,* and *Port of Hell*, are examples of prevailing Cold War discourses and presidential rhetoric on the way America and its interests (at home and abroad) shall be defended by any means necessary, including justification for the atomic bomb.

Masculinity in Crisis – McCarthyism, Commies, Queers, and the Atomic: *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), *Shack Out on 101* (1955) and *A Bullet for Joey* (1955)

The HUAC-inflected discourses and responses present in three of this cycle's films *Kiss Me Deadly*, *Shack Out on 101* and *Bullet for Joey* make them into a logical cluster. Historian Robert Corber wrote: 'to counteract the pioneering attempts of gay men and women to define themselves as a minority culture, the government appealed to medical evidence supposedly demonstrating that homosexuals and lesbians had no outward characteristics or physical traits that distinguished them from heterosexuals.'[292] Not only was this fear embedded into the political-cultural discourses relating to sexuality, it was also deployed in the construction of homosexuality as a national security risk, James Gilbert, another historian who focuses on masculinity during the 1950s, points out:

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[291] Lary May, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politcs of the American Way* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 221.

[292] Robert J. Corber, *In the Name of National Security: Hitchcock, Homophobia, and the Political Construction of Gender in Postwar America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 65.

> Given the huge government investment in a consumption-based domesticity
> that was situated physically in middle-class suburbs, and the equally significant
> psychological investment in marriage and a corporate economy with its
> bureaucratic work styles, homosexuality could plausibly seem to be a potent
> disruption to the stability of heterosexual marriage.[293]

By the period of this middle cycle, there had been a number of publications of varying quality on sexuality, but it was Alfred Kinsey's large-scale study that challenged the very nature of American's understanding or what they believed they knew about sexuality.[294] The 1948 publication of *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* changed both public and private discourses about sex, which up until this point had generally been within the context of an idealized normality. The Kinsey study, to the contrary, revealed that sex was anything but a fixed or stable pattern of behaviour, and it offered scientific evidence that straight and gay men were not significantly different, with forty percent of those interviewed having actually engaged in homosexual activities. Thus if homosexuality was not exclusive to any one age group, social level, or occupation, it meant that gay men, in particular, would be able to infiltrate cultural and political institutions, subverting them from within. In the end, as far as the 1950s were concerned, it would be Whittaker Chambers who came to symbolize the link between political subversion, Communism and homosexuality.[295]

Although McCarthy's campaign to rid the U.S. of this dangerous element received significant attention, in reality the Republicans had raised concerns over the loyalty and morality of State Department employees in 1947; the issue just didn't gain traction until it was publicly suggested that homosexuals were an actual risk to national security. But, by associating 'Communists and queers' in his speeches, McCarthy clearly fuelled moral panic, thereby contributing to a socio-political climate where the purging of men and women from

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[293] James Gilbert, *Men in the Middle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 30.
[294] Ibid., 81.
[295] David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 35.

federal government jobs became possible. But it would be misleading to suggest that McCarthy was solely responsible. A bipartisan congressional subcommittee chaired by the North Carolina Democrat, Senator Hoey, launched first full-scale inquiry into homosexuality in government.[296] The Hoey Report, as it would become known, concluded that homosexuals within the federal government endangered national security and that these employees should be fired (rather than allowed to resign) in order to prevent possible employment in another government agency. A common theme emerged from the Hoey investigation, whereby gay men and women were deemed vulnerable to blackmail, thus constituting a significant security risk to the nation. Central Intelligence Agency Director, Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter, warned the Hoey subcommittee that homosexuals presented a grave danger, that their corrosive influence would pollute a government agency, but more importantly that they would bring others into the fold. Hillenkoetter closed his testimony with the following statement:

> the moral pervert is a security risk of so serious a nature that he must be weeded out of government employment wherever he is found. The failure to do this can only result in placing a dagger in the hands of our enemies and their intelligence services and the point of that dagger would lie at the heart of our national security.[297]

Despite such assertions, Hillenkoetter admitted that the CIA occasionally offered protection to those who voluntarily cooperated, and at times even found it valuable to have known-homosexual field agents.[298] In response to this scrutiny and Republican claims, Secretary of

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[296] The actual name of the subcommittee was 'Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government.' The chairman of this subcommittee, Clyde Hoey, was a Democrat from North Carolina, and the last of the 19th century southern-statesmen. A biographer once called Hoey 'the Hollywood version of a senator,' so perhaps he was the inspiration for the character Senator Seabright Cooley in Allen Drury's novel *Advise and Consent* (1959). Preminger's 1962 adaptation was the first Hollywood film to openly address with homosexuality.

[297] Genny Beemyn, *A Queer Capital: A History of Gay Life in Washington, Part Three* (London: Routledge, 2014) 153.

[298] Johnson, 112.

State Dean Acheson characterized U.S. State Department employees as 'honourable, loyal and clean living American men and women.'[299] Frequently described through euphemisms, gays and lesbians were labelled as sexual deviants, misfits and perverts of weak moral character, although perhaps none was more compelling and damning than being identified as a security risk. Being declared a security risk could come down to a variety of transgressions including alcoholism, nonetheless, it was most closely associated with homosexuality. Thus the fear of Communism and homosexuality, what historian David K. Johnson describes as the lavender scare, enabled the U.S. to vastly expand a national security state.[300] It is also not without irony that Senator McCarthy's own sexuality was the subject of gossip and rumour particularly given his status as an unmarried middle-aged man.

The release of Harvard historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s extremely popular book *The Vital Center* (1949) was yet another artefact propelling concerns over homosexuality and Communism. Much in the way gay culture was forced underground, so too were Communists, with Schlesinger describing their ability to 'identify each other (and be identified by their enemies) on casual meetings by the use of certain phrases, the names of certain friends, by certain enthusiasms and certain silences.'[301]   Hollywood films depicting representations of homosexuality avoiding detection by assuming heterosexual identity are in evidence during the postwar period, perhaps at its most extreme with the treacherous cross-dressing Nazi ring leader, Else Gebhardt/Mr. Christopher, in *House on 92nd Street,* which we discussed in our last chapter in relation to masquerade. Film scholar Richard Dyer puts forth an 'iconography of gayness,' and, whilst his study associated the concept with American *film noir,* the framework may be applied to the atomic political thriller, precisely because this iconography emerged out of dominant national discourses and ideology located within the

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[299] Ibid., 7.
[300] Ibid., 10.
[301] Arthur Schlesinger, *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (New York: Transaction Publishers, 1997), 127.

Cold War.[302] This iconography existed as a means of expression of heterosexual perceptions of sexuality, and Dyer goes on to state:

> Gayness is used to define the parameters of normality . . . to perform various artistic-ideological functions that in the end assert the superiority of heterosexuality . . . How homosexuality is thought and felt by heterosexuals is part and parcel of the way culture teaches them . . . to think and feel about their heterosexuality. Anti-gayness is not a discrete ideological system, but part of the overall sexual ideology of our culture.[303]

Thus according to Dyer, masculinity is defined against sexual constructs of difference that are not just that of the female 'other' but also the queer, homosexual 'other'. It is not difficult to see how the sexual ideological discourse of this decade reinforced notions of masculinity in crisis, a running paranoid thread which, as we shall see, was manifest in the "queering" of the atomic political thrillers Kiss *Me Deadly, Shack out on 101* and *Bullet for Joey.*

Homosociality and Narcissism in *Kiss Me Deadly (1955)*

The film *Kiss Me Deadly* has received much attention since it's release in 1955 and continues to be a source of discussion amongst critics and film historians. Condemned by the Legion of Decency and never reviewed in *The New York Times*, the film was, nonetheless, celebrated by a new generation of French film critics writing for *Cahiers du cinéma.* Director Robert Aldrich was named 'the first director of the atomic age,' and in his review for *Cahiers*, Claude Chabrol wrote *Kiss Me Deadly*: [304]

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[302] Richard Dyer, 'Homosexuality and Film Noir', *Jump Cut,* 16 (1977), <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC16folder/HomosexFilmNoir.html> , [accessed 1 Sept 2014]
[303] Richard Dyer, 'Gays in Film', *Jump Cut,* 18 (August 1978), <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC18folder/GaysinFilmDyer.html>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]
[304] J. Hoberman, *The Magic Hour: Film at Fin de Siecle* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 23.

has chosen to create itself out of the worst material to be found, the most deplorable, the most nauseous product of a genre in a state of putrefaction: a Mickey Spillane story. . . . [Aldrich and Bezzerides] have taken this threadbare and lacklustre fabric and splendidly rewoven it into rich patterns of the most enigmatic arabesques.[305]

Such a passionate review on the part of Chabrol was bold given that Mickey Spillane had been one of the most successful American novelists during this period, having sold twenty-four million copies between 1947 and 1954. Indeed, by 1956, seven out of the ten bestselling titles in the history of American fiction were penned by Spillane.

Although Aldrich would later comment in interviews that far more has been read into the film than was intended, *Kiss Me Deadly* makes a statement with regard the paranoia in America as it had been fuelled by McCarthyism and fear of the atomic. The personal politics of the director were decidedly contrary to those of his extended family, which included the politically moderate Republican Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller and John Davison Rockefeller. Aldrich's personal and professional relationships should have been a red flag for HUAC, although, ironically, he was never called to testify before the committee, which may have been a result of familial connections. Aldrich was not alone in his impression of the Mike Hammer character was representative of brutal vigilantism. Author and frequent contributor to *The Saturday Review*, Christopher La Farge, wrote: 'Mike Hammer is the logical conclusion, almost a sort of brutal apotheosis, of McCarthyism: when things seem wrong, let one man cure the wrong by whatever means he, as a privileged saviour, chooses.'[306]   La Farge goes on to describe how Mike Hammer is the type of character to take the law into his own hands, using any means necessary to neutralize the threat (in this case killing Mafia members and Communists seeking the atomic bomb). As La Farge points out, Hammer is fiction, whereas McCarthy is fact and, nevertheless, there is convergence of the two. Thus,

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[305] quoted in J. Hoberman, *An Army of Phantoms: American Movies and the Making of the Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 298.
[306] Christopher La Farge, 'Mickey Spillane and His Bloody Hammer', *The Saturday Review* (6 November 1954), 12.

"McCarthyism" and "Hammerism" come together 'unhampered by normal and accepted restraint' and using any means necessary to 'expose Communists, including the derogation of all Public Servants, the telling of lies, the irreparable damaging of the innocent, the sensational and unfounded charge, are justified . . .Each, then, reflects the other.'[307] In a 1962 interview, Aldrich went as far as calling the Hammer character a 'cynical, fascistic private eye' whilst he considered Spillane to be an 'antidemocratic figure.'[308]   Never black or gray-listed, the director was, nonetheless, affected by McCarthyism and that his views are evident in the film *Kiss Me Deadly*.

Screenwriter A.I. Bezzerides along with director Aldrich made substantial changes to the original story of *Kiss Me Deadly*. The setting was changed from New York to Los Angeles, gone was the first person narrative, and there was also the downgrading of the protagonist, Mike Hammer (Ralph Meeker), from private eye (in tradition of Sam Spade or Phillip Marlow) to that of 'bedroom dick' and mercenary antihero. The narcotics trope that had been central to the literary narrative was replaced in the film adaptation, with atomic spies and the threat of nuclear apocalypse as the major theme.[309]   Production Code requirements were partially responsible for this major, ultimately, as I shall go on to argue, queering, shift. An early draft of the script included the original drug-dealing trope along with a never fully justified vigilante killing. PCA official Albert Van Schmus reaction was to the initial submission was in no way a surprise. In a memo dated 20 September 1954, Van Schumus wrote:

> the basic prop used as motivation for the overall murder melodrama was one of
> narcotics. This, of course, is in complete violation of present Code regulations

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[307] Ibid., 58.

[308] George Addison, 'Robert Aldrich' in *Robert Aldrich: Interviews*, ed. by Edwin T. Arnold and Eugene L. Miller (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 13.

[309] In a 1968 interview, Aldrich derided his literary source material, stating: 'The book had nothing. We just took the title and threw the rest away. The scriptwriter, A.I. Bezzerides, did a marvelous job, contributing a great deal of inventiveness to the picture. That devilish box, for example – an obvious atom bomb symbol – was mostly his idea' quoted by Joel Greenberg, 'Interview with Robert Aldrich' in *Robert Aldrich Interviews,* ed. by Edwin T. Arnold and Eugene L. Miller (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2004), 45.

and Mr. Aldrich was informed that we cold not approve any treatment whatsoever of the illegal drug traffic.[310]

After addressing the PCA's major concerns, and with a few minor alternations of the final picture, *Kiss Me Deadly* received was awarded a Seal. Yet within weeks of its release, Geoffrey Shurlock, who had succeeded Joseph Breen as the PCA director in 1954, found himself defending the film. For example, the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency (known as the Kefauver Commission named for its chairman Estes Kefauver) was extremely critical, suggesting that the way in which violence and sex were portrayed in the film was potentially harmful, contributing to juvenile delinquency. Despite the controversy, the exchanges between Aldrich and the PCA never suggested any discussions of withholding approval for the film.[311] Thus it is clear that censorship contributed to the decisions made by Aldrich and Bezzerides to replace the original drug related premise with the nuclear theme.

In terms of the visual, a very first instance of difference in approach relative to most films from classical Hollywood, and not specifically to thrillers, comes with the disorienting effect created by the opening sequence of the film. By and large films started with a title sequence, but Aldrich departed from this convention with *Kiss Me Deadly*.[312] First the title sequence is withheld for two minutes, and instead the spectator is confronted with a female character, Christina Bailey (Cloris Leachman), clearly in distress running along a desolate highway, clad only in an ill-fitting overcoat. The audience is immediately thrust into the action, without any establishing shots, thereby creating a sense of disorientation and instability. As Christina stands in the middle of the road, Hammer is forced to swerve off the road to avoid

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[310] Richard Maltby, 'The Problem of Interpretation: Authorial and Institutional Intentions in and Around *Kiss Me Deadly' Screening the Past* (30 June 2000), <http://tlweb.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr0600/rmfr10e.htm>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

[311] TCMDb Archive Materials, "Kiss Me Deadly Notes", *Turner Classic Movies,* <http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/17627/Kiss-Me-Deadly/notes.html>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

[312] Aldrich's earlier films, including the atomic politital thriller *World for Ransom* (1954), as well two westerns *Apache* (1954) and *Vera Cruz* (1954) follow convention and begin the film with a title sequence.

hitting the young woman. Just as the audience is disoriented by the action, so too is the investigator as a subjective camera shows him narrowly avoiding an accident.

The character Mike Hammer as written by Spillane was fervently anti-Communist, but he was also consistent with generic convention through a pronounced moral code. The Bezzerides-Aldrich treatment of Hammer and narrative was essentially to turn it on its head; the overt references to Communism were stripped away whilst the private investigator morphed into an essentially unsavoury character. Unlike the film *High Noon* (Zinnemann, 1952), an anti-McCarthy allegory released near the pinnacle of the Senator's reign, the production of *Kiss Me Deadly* was launched at a point when the influence of McCarthyism was beginning to wane in light of the highly publicized Army-McCarthy hearings in 1954. By the time of its release, *Kiss Me Deadly* was clearly read as anti-McCarthy, devoid of the overt anti-Communist sentiments and the morally justified protagonists of the films *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* (Douglas, 1951) and *Big Jim McLain* (Ludwig, 1952). To the contrary, *Kiss Me Deadly* portrays unspecified government agents resorting to extreme measures, including abduction. We learn early in the film that Christina, having been stripped of her clothing, is being held for interrogation at mental asylum. So in this regard, the use of anything goes tactics by government agents put them in the position of being no better than Mike Hammer, something that is evident in the scene when the private investigator immediately goes from hospital to police station for questioning. The interrogation room where Hammer is being questioned is tightly framed, filmed mostly in medium shot, and such a tight grouping of characters begins to build tension within the narrative. A cynical Mike Hammer is seated and appears in the foreground whilst being berated by the government agents. The private investigator's body is turned away with his gaze mostly straight-ahead and avoiding eye contact. This disdain for the law or government agents (by Mike Hammer) as seen in the interrogation is a theme that has been woven into the narrative. The exchange between Mike Hammer and Lt. Pat Murphy (Wesley Addy) at the police station following the interrogation aptly sums up this attitude:

> HAMMER: It will be a long time before those characters get a line on who killed her.

MURPHY: The law isn't fast enough, you could do it a lot better is that it? Now look Mike, who do you think you are?

HAMMER: What's the pitch Pat? An ordinary little girl gets killed and it rings bells all the way to Washington. There's got to be a pitch.

MURPHY: Give you a bit of advice, too many people like you have contempt for anything that has to do with the law. You'd like to take it into your own hands, but when you do that you might as well be living in a jungle.

Clearly Hammer is willing to take the law into his own hands, but the government is also inclined push the boundaries of individual civil liberties in the name of national security. Shortly after this exchange between Murphy and Hammer, we see government agents watching the private investigator's apartment from a parked car.

The narrative queering (through inverting the political tenor) of *Kiss Me Deadly* is further invoked through an explicit homosexual coding of characters and their relationships relative to one another. Film scholar Robert Lang writing in *Masculine Interests: Homoerotics in Hollywood Film* (2002), contends that *Kiss Me Deadly:* 'displaces fears about the Soviet Union and nuclear annihilation, and the threatening nature of mass society that was rising in the 1950s, into a sado-sexualized narrative about a search (for a box of radioactive material).[313] As Lang goes on to suggest, the anxiety over homosexuality was so pervasive in American culture that this film is as much a critique of sexual norms as it is a moral lesson. In other words, by following a proper - or within the context of Eisenhower's rhetoric a righteous - path all will end well and no one will get hurt; to do otherwise, will almost certainly result in psychosis and death.

The incorporation of a luxury milieu may be read as yet another signifier of latent homosexuality. Generic convention would have Mike Hammer clad in a cheap suit and perhaps wearing a rumpled overcoat; he is, to the contrary, fastidious in many aspects of life, having a taste for nice suits and nice things as Christina observed:

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[313] Robert Lang, *Masculine Interests: Homoerotics in Hollywood Films* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 124.

CHRISTINA: Sorry I nearly wrecked your pretty little car. I was just thinking how much you can tell about a person from such simple things. Your car, for instance.

HAMMER: What kind of a message does it send to you?

CHRISTINA: You have only one real, lasting love.

HAMMER: Now who could that be?

CHRISTINA: You. You're one of those self-indulgent males who thinks about nothing but his clothes, his car, himself . . . You're the kind of a person who never gives in a relationship, who only takes.

Indeed, Mike Hammer was in stark contrast to another atomic political thriller protagonist from this middle cycle, that of tough-guy pickpocket Skip McCoy (Richard Widmark) from the film *Pickup on South Street* (Fuller, 1953)*. The two men similarly drift through a violent, seedy side of society, operating beyond and having contempt for law. Both characters are presented as hypermasculine, imbued with sado-masochistic and misogynistic tendencies. Despite such similarities however, the two men are remarkably different in their representations of masculinity. Skip McCoy is a loner, literally and figuratively residing at the fringes of society in a primitive fishing shack along the waterfront, whereas Mike Hammer assumes characteristics that more readily fits into what film scholar Richard Dyer would call an 'iconography of gayness.'[314] Whilst Dyer was writing of Hollywood *film noir,* nevertheless, this notion of icons as cues for gayness is evident in *Kiss Me Deadly*. Not only is there a masculinization of the three main female characters, something that I will come back to later, but there is also the luxury milieu as exemplified by Mike Hammer's modern, if not overly decorated, apartment that includes a telephone answering machine (a rarity during this period) and a set of golf clubs in the corner. Latent queerness is further explored by means of sexual containment and displacement through the homosocial bond between private

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[314] Dyer, 'Homosexuality and Film Noir',
<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC16folder/HomosexFilmNoir.html>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

investigator and mechanic. Technology functions as a mitigating factor, which enables the relationship between Mike Hammer and Nick to be rendered safely heterosexual, because the intensity they share is ultimately displaced onto the car (spoken of by the two men as 'her'/female). It is also clear the car serves as a substitute for a normative male-female relationship.

Although his secretary, Velda Wickman (Maxine Cooper), is clearly in love with the detective, he is incapable of returning such feelings. Despite the fact that the ending depicts the couple in the surf, having escaped the house and the atomic blast, there is no sense there will ever be a normative domesticated union for the two of them. Time and again, Mike Hammer displays a complete indifference towards Velda and he has no qualms about using her as a sexual honey trap in order to gathering information in divorce cases:

> HAMMER: That tape I made of you and lover boy got lost.
>
> VELDA: There goes your case.
>
> HAMMER: Call him up and set up another session. Tell him your sorry. You want to make up for all the pain you gave him. Give him some of that sincerity.

In one scene, after discussing why Christina was being interrogated, Velda attempts to seduce Hammer, but to no avail:

> HAMMER: She told me if I dropped her off at the bus station, I could forget her. But if she didn't make it she said, "Remember me."
>
> VELDA: So remember her. She's dead. But I'm not dead. Hey. Remember me?
>
> HAMMER: Yeah. I remember you from somewhere. Weren't you supposed to call that fellow Mr. what's his name?
>
> VELDA: Friendly? That's my name for him. Mr. Friendly. He certainly was friendly.

HAMMER: Maybe he'll give you some of that nice dialogue again, that honey

            talk. That tape sure was nice.

As with Hammer, the literary incarnation of the Velda character differed significantly from that of the Bezzerides-Aldrich treatment. In the film, she was transformed from a chaste and adoring fiancée to that of seductress. Time and again, the audience is reminded of her sexual availability, whether it is to Mike Hammer or the men who are the subject of the investigator's cases. Despite fulfilling a role of sexual bait, Hammer's secretary-girlfriend is also unlike a conventional femme fatale (as are the other two main female characters of Christina and Lily Carver/Gabrielle). Indeed, with her sweaty athleticism and investigative prowess, Velda becomes a kind of double to Mike Hammer; her femininity is challenged as a result of her somewhat masculine allure. Likewise, there is a further queering of characters Christina Bailey and Lily Carver (Gaby Rodgers), whom the audience will eventually discover is Dr Sobrin's treacherous accomplice and lover, Gabrielle.   Both women are strangely incomprehensible which we shall now discuss.

The queering of Christina and Lily Carver/Gabrielle's femininity is evident as they are essentially a doubling of one another. Bearing a striking resemblance to one another both Christina and Lily Carver are being menaced by unknown persons and have subsequently turned to Hammer for help. Both are similarly nude under their respective outerwear, something that would ordinarily be perceived as sexually alluring by the spectator, and yet neither woman will realize normative femininity. For Christina, a clue to her resistance is suggested in her confrontation of Hammer's narcissism. After attacking his self-indulgence, she sarcastically retorts:

Ah woman. The incomplete sex. And what does she need to complete her?

Why, man of course. Wonderful man.

Christina's statement, whilst it echoes the prevailing discourses on domestic containment and heterosexuality (that somehow marriage and family mean fulfilment for women), is nonetheless intended ironically — and so undermines these discourses and as such adds to

this queering of Christina. And it is in this way, through this queering, that Christina remains emblematic of the sense of unknowability of woman (in general) and, by association, the atomic. Christina's secret remains unrevealed until her death, and even then, like her character, it is not completely comprehensible. The letter sent to Hammer, which he does not read until after her death, has the hand written message: "Remember me." And in doing so, the private investigator must turn to the sonnets of Rossetti, eventually working out that Christina Bailey, both literally and figuratively, held the key to the "Great Whatsit," although the true nature of the box was to remain unknowable until the end of the film.

The Lily/Gabrielle character was similarly unknowable, but offered a more complex reading, although her mirroring of Christina was evident as previously discussed. Indeed, Aldrich's interpretation of the characters Christina and Lily Carver was that they were more than just roommates, that they were also lovers.[315]   When Lily Carver is first introduced, she is seen seductively lounging on the bed reading a magazine in a seedy flophouse, her room a far cry from the apartment she shared with Christina. Wearing only a bathrobe, which is reminiscent of Christina's ill-fitting overcoat, she holds a gun on Hammer as he enters her room. The phallic gun, which appears to be pointed directly towards the private investigator's crotch, becomes a kind of visual emasculation, seemingly denying the two characters of their normative sexuality. There was also a dreamy, almost zombie-like quality about her, which was supposed, doubtless, to suggest Lily Carver is a drug addict; however, with the drug-dealing trope excised from the narrative, this portrayal actually contributes to the queering of character because Carver, as with Christina, is portrayed in a confusing manner, seemingly embodying a conflicted sexuality. [316] Aldrich had directed actress Gaby Rodgers to play Carver as a lesbian, but the limitations of the production code meant that the character's sexuality could not be explicitly communicated. Consequently, Rodgers opted to have her

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[315] The audio commentary on the Criterion Collection DVD by Alain Silver and James Ursini describes how Aldrich asked Gaby Rodgers to play the character of Gabrielle/Lily Carver as a lesbian, prompting the actress to adopted coded references such as the short hair and the tuxedo inspired suit at the she wears at the end of the film.
[316] The audio commentary by Silver and Ursini on the Criterion Collection DVD also confirmed that Rodgers had contacted Spillane to understand her character, but the novelist offered no assistance.

hair cut short (a mirroring of Christina's short blonde hair) and trades her somewhat ill-fitting and masculine looking bathrobe (another mirroring of the overcoat worn by Christina) for a strikingly modern, tuxedo inspired suit. As the narrative advances, Carver is transformed from that of helpless, drug-addicted waif into the calculating Gabrielle, a double-crossing thief who willingly kills in order to get what she wants, despite not understanding what it is she has got, nor its significance to humanity, making her even more dangerous.

Just as Aldrich succeeded in turning the narrative on its head, he was equally able to establish the three central female characters of Velda, Christina and Lily/Gabrielle as something quite different. They represented a 'deliberately deglamourized, "B-girl" quality.'[317] The film also established 'a complex layering of discourses, voices and sounds that arguably works to foreground a form of feminine enunciative authority.'[318] Thus the stripping of (the novel's/Spillane's original masculine voice, contributes to the queering of *Kiss Me Deadly,* as do the deviant femininities of Velda, Christina and Carver/Gabrielle. In Freudian terms, the three women assumed the role of mirror to masculinity, but because they are queered in relation to their own femininity, they are unable to act as an affirming reflection back to Mike Hammer, thereby failing to confirm his masculinity throughout the majority of the film. It is only at the end, as Hammer saves Velda and the two escape the beach house that the heterosexual imperative is seemingly reasserted, yet it remains problematic. That Hammer and Velda could actually survive such a blast was highly unlikely, and even more improbable is the notion that they could assume a normative relationship through marriage.

Even with its contemptuous attitude towards McCarthyism, *Kiss Me Deadly* was a cautionary tale with links into the contemporary political discourse and the "Let's Clean House" rhetoric. Executive Order 10450 — which was implemented as Eisenhower assumed office, and subsequently replaced the Truman loyalty system — emphasized the notion of individual suitability through good conduct and moral character. Mike Hammer, as we have discussed, not only repeatedly conveyed a "what's in it for me" attitude, but was gleefully

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[317] Rose Capp, "B-girls, dykes and doubles: *Kiss Me Deadly* and the legacy of "late *noir",* *Screening the Past* (2000)*,* <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr0600/rc1fr10m.htm>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]
[318] Ibid., <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr0600/rc1fr10m.htm>

sadistic as for example when he snaps in half the struggling opera singer's prized record or slams the desk drawer onto the hand of the greedy morgue attendant. Such behaviour coupled with his somewhat queered sexuality makes Hammer as much a threat to America's security within the context of clean house rhetoric as Dr Soberin and Carver/Gabrielle. Whilst hypermasculinity is certainly evident in this film, *Kiss Me Deadly* is equally centred on a relationship of masculinity (already itself queered) to that of queered, deviant femininities. It is, however, with the next two films within this cluster, *Shack out on 101* (Dein, 1954) and *A Bullet for Joey* (Allen, 1954), both of which are also queered texts, that the dysfunction of American ideology is exposed as lying within the context of hypermasculinity. Both *Shack out on 101* and *A Bullet for Joey*, as I will go on to argue, are representative of masculinity in crisis, but within a different order. Thus it is the hypermasculine and the relationship of other masculinities that places America in a position of risk, but once again links back to the political discourses of the clean house rhetoric as we shall now go on to discuss.

Hypermasculinity in *Shack Out on 101* (1954) and *A Bullet for Joey* (1954)

The next two films to be considered are the low budget productions *Shack Out on 101* and *A Bullet for Joey*. Essentially two sides of the same coin, *Shack Out on 101* and *A Bullet for Joey* represent issues of containment (of Communism and sexuality)_as well as a displacement of the fear of the atomic onto the masculine and the feminine that were part and parcel to the socio-political discourses during the Eisenhower era. One the one hand, there are representations of exaggerated masculinity (what I term the hypermasculine) and, on the other, disruptive women who act as agents to bring the men to their senses. During a 2007 video interview with Alan K. Rode of the *Film Noir Foundation*, actress Terry Moore described the political overtone *Shack Out on 101*:

> Everyone kinda felt that way and that was during the McCarthy hearings, and of course I was married to Howard Hughes at the time who was a big Communist hunter . . . I worked with [actor] Adolfe Menjou just before this [movie] called *A Man on A Tightrope*, which was also about Communism . . . Adolfe Menjou was one of the one's who turned in the unfriendly ten. . . . It was quite a time, you

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had to live through it . . . you live through it with this movie, that's kinda how it was.[319]

Lastly the title is also somewhat curious in its evolution particularly with respect to gender politics. The working title was actually *Shack Up on 101*, but Moore objected, considering it too suggestive. The original title with its sexual connotation through the term "shack up," was more true to the adult humour Edward and Mildred Dein interjected throughout the screenplay. Though the title was subsequently changed to *Shack Out on 101,* the character of Kotty, played by Moore, was still a sexy, well-endowed waitress whilst the jazzy leitmotif every time she appears on screen reinforces her sexuality diegetically. Hypermasculinity is also prominently expressed through the characters of Slob (Lee Marvin) the short order cook from *Shack Out on 101* and the title character and deported criminal Joey Victor (George Raft) from the film *A Bullet for Joey.* As we shall see, both men are responsible for putting America's security at risk: Slob by deceptively masquerading behind dim-witted hypermasculinity to disguise the fact that he is a major spy and ring leader; Joey being selfishly driven by his belief that he can have anything he wants no matter the cost to others — his butch masculinity is asserted at every possible moment.

Despite having a well-known cast comprised of Edward G. Robinson, George Raft and Audrey Totter, the film *A Bullet for Joey* was equally unremarkable in terms performance at the box office. Released mid-year 1955, this film, as with *Shack Out on 101,* failed to secure a place on *Variety*'s top box office returns list. Edward G. Robinson received top billing, but the careers for all three stars were in decline. Totter, who was thought to be a fine actress with a promising future, became well known for her alluring, 'tough-talking dames' in films such as *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946) and *Lady in the Lake* (1946). By the 1950s, the demand for strong female roles at MGM was in decline, and in particular after Dore Schary assumed control. However, this became the case for other studios where Totter worked, including Columbia Pictures and 20th Century Fox, after she was released from

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[319] Alan K. Rode video interview with Terry Moore for the *Film Noir Foundation,* <http://www.filmnoirfoundation.org/moore.html?iframe=true&width=720&height=480>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

contract with MGM. Despite this turn in her career, and increasingly poor quality film roles, Totter managed to maintain a screen presence by working within television whilst also enjoying life as a wife and mother. The same cannot be said for co-star George Raft, whose career was in shambles at the time *A Bullet for Joey* went into production, because of his ties to organized crime and on-going friendship with notorious gangster Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, the actor's life was further complicated by his persistent gambling and womanizing. Even before signing on to the project, Raft's career was on a downward slide, and in particular after he declined the starring roles in *The Maltese Falcon* (Huston, 1941) and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (Huston, 1948), two films that consequently solidified the Humphrey Bogart star power for Warner Bros. studios. Raft also reportedly declined the role of Walter Neff in the film *Double Indemnity* (Wilder, 1944), which had Fred McMurray playing opposite of Edward G. Robinson. Nearly broke by the 1950s, Raft was relegated to working as a greeter at the mob controlled *Capri Casino* located in Havana, Cuba, in which he was part owner. Robinson's own problems, to the contrary, largely stemmed from his scrutiny by HUAC and alleged affiliations with Communism. Robinson biographer Alan L. Gansberg describes the actor's multiple encounters with HUAC, which entailed being cleared by the committee, only to become suspect again after it was revealed that he had loaned $300 to HUAC chief investigator, Louis J. Russell.[320] As a gray-listed actor, *A Bullet for Joey* was meant to erase any doubts about his patriotism and contempt for Communism. Nevertheless, as biographer Gansberg asserts, nothing good can be said of *A Bullet for Joey,* although Robinson was to have top billing. This was not going to be an A feature, but the actor like the script, only to be disappointed when he learned that George Raft would be his co-star.[321] Robinson and Raft had worked together fourteen years earlier, but the relationship was acrimonious. Victor McLaglen was originally set to play the role Robinson would assume in the Raoul Walsh film *Manpower* (Warner Bros., 1941), which meant that Raft would be the top billed actor. Tension mounted with the subsequent casting of Robinson, which meant the two actors were to share leading man status, and eventually an off-screen fistfight erupted in front of Stage

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[320] Alan L. Gansberg, *Little Cesear: A Biography of Edward G. Robinson* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 202.
[321] Ibid., 208.

Eleven at the Warner Bros. studio.[322] By the time the two actors reunited for *A Bullet for Joey*, the stars had aged and there was no reported animosity. What may have also helped ease the tension was that neither man was in competition for top position within the studio as had been the case more than a decade earlier. Robinson continued acting until his death in 1973, but the quality of his roles were intermittent. When writer D. Overbey from *Take One* magazine commented on the surprising quality of some of Robinson's "B" films, the actor responded with: 'You aren't about to tell me you respect a picture like *A Bullet for Joey*, are you?'[323]

Regardless of the actual quality of *A Bullet for Joey*, it was, nonetheless, a vehicle to rehabilitate Robinson as well as screenwriter A.I. Bezzerides, who had been gray-listed in light of his associations with Jules Dassin, Robert Rossen and others.[324] This film is clearly a paranoid atomic political thriller with ties to the anti-Communist trope prevalent in the early cycle, a point that I shall return to below. First, however, I want to address the way in which dysfunctional masculinities are at work within *A Bullet for Joey*, although in some respects, the male characters are seemingly more safe, evoking a lesser dysfunctional masculinity when compared to *Shack out on 101*. Inspector Leduc (Robinson) and crime boss Joey Victor (Raft) each command respect amongst their network of men, but they differ in relation to the masculine and, as it turns out, to the queer. Beginning with Inspector Leduc, his relationship to those around him, and in particular to the junior police inspector working on the case, is more fatherly and nurturing. When Leduc arrives at the scene where a Constable has been murdered, he calmly takes charge of the investigation (as we would expect from a senior police inspector), but he also makes it known that the case is not just another case --- the slain man was also his friend. Whereas Leduc's is a quiet, silent masculinity that is aided by Robinson's diminutive size, the character of Joey Victor comes across as a noisy masculinity, a man who is brash and intimidating, the embodiment of hypermasculinity. Yet Joey Victor also differs in his masculinity from the other hypermasculine characters

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[322] Ibid., 176.

[323] Robert Beck, *The Edward G, Robinson Encyclopedia* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2002), 62.

[324] Yiorgos Anagnostou, *Contours of White Ethnicity: Popular Ethnography and the Making of Unstable Pasts in Greek America* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 256.

considered in this chapter (Mike Hammer and Slob/Mr. Gregrory). Indeed, the way in which Raft portrays Joey Victor is actually quite black-and-white, not unlike the gangster roles from the 1930s. Thus Raft's character is representative of a kind of uber-masculinity that is somewhat passé and certainly of a different order from *Kiss Me Deadly* (with its latent homosexuality and homosociality), and also that of the brash but secretive Slob from *Shack Out on 101.* Indeed, the characterization of Slob is particularly confusing, making him difficult to read (unlike both Hammer and Joey). With the opening scene, Slob forces himself onto Kotty (Terry Moore), the Shack's attractive waitress. After fighting him off, Kotty is pushed (down) into the surf and then in an act of retaliation, Slob ruins her "petticoat" hanging on an outside wash line. Another example of the cook's aggressive and violent personality is the scene in which he and Perch, the fishmonger and co-conspirator, brawl in the kitchen just for sport. It is this excessive masculinity adopted by Slob that allows him to go undetected (especially as a major spy-agent) by the others at the shack. At one point Sam tells Kotty that the cook was nothing more than 'an eight cylinder body and two cylinder mind.' Even when his traitorous collaboration with undercover counter-agent Sam Bastion is exposed, the Professor believes, at least initially, that Slob is merely a "go-between," delivering secrets to the ringleader Mr. Gregory (instead of which Slob is the actual Mr. Gregory, the brains behind the plot).

Whilst Joey Victor similarly exhibits hypermasculinity, he is, nonetheless, almost a kind of inverted mirror to Slob, as we shall now discuss. Unlike Slob, there is never any doubt about Joey's role in the scheme to abduct the French –Canadian atomic scientist, Dr. Carl Macklin (George Dolenz). Not only does he insist that his former lover, Joyce Geary (Audrey Totter), participate in the plot by seducing Macklin, but he also recruits another one of his crime associates, Jack Allen (William Bryant) from Los Angeles, to seduce Macklin's homely secretary, Yvonne Temblay (Toni Gerry), in the hopes that she will provide information about the scientist's work. After it is discovered the young secretary has been killed, a seemingly unconcerned Joey gives the order to have Allen (who has fled Montreal) assassinated by an unidentified gunman during a card game-taking place back in the Los Angeles. As the narrative unfolds it becomes apparent that the crime boss's hypermasculinity is neither a disguise nor a masquerade; rather this is his true persona, something that actually contributes

to his readability. Joey lacks any kind of ideological conviction and his only goal is to return to the U.S. so that he may re-establish his crime syndicate. Thus the job of delivering the atomic scientist, Dr. Macklin, is simply that, a job and completely devoid of ideological rationale. There is, however, another way in which Joey Victor contrasts with Slob from *Shack out on 101*. If throughout the narrative, Joey's actions have been self-serving, nonetheless the crime boss has a redemptive moment (something that Slob never encounters). At the end of the film Joey Victor saves the life of Inspector Leduc by killing the Communist Hartman (Peter Van Eyck) — a brief gesture of patriotism that costs him his life. The character Slob from *Shack out on 101* is, to the contrary, ideologically motivated, but he is also more difficult to read because he is not what he seems. Indeed, even when confronted by George, Kotty and Sam, he does not give a clear reason for his treason, only that he is a Communist. In particular, Slob's rejection of a masculine identity that is safe and acceptable links his hypermasculinity to the atomic and issues of security much in the way that women are represented as a threat to the nation.

In considering masculinities on display in *Shack out on 101,* I would first like to discuss the décor and the way in which the diner becomes a 'queered' space. Isolated, and with few patrons, owner George (Keenan Wynn) operates the diner with the help of two employees, both of whom live on the premises. Kotty (Terry Moore), the only female in the film, is the sexy waitress. All the men at the diner vie for Kotty's attention, but she is romantically involved with Sam/Professor (Frank Lovejoy), a well-known nuclear physicist and professor at an unnamed university (possibly University of California at Berkeley). All of the film's central male characters, with the exception of Sam, are representative of masculinities in crisis. Both Eddie, now working as a travelling salesman, and George were veterans of the war, their friendship having formulated at that time. At one point Eddie actually saved George's life, but the war experience was traumatic and years later the travelling salesman has become a timid man. Although both men are portrayed as heterosexual, each seemingly attracted to Kotty, their respective relationship with the waitress is entirely platonic and rather juvenile. Consequently, neither man has been able to adopt normative domesticity, which would have been the expected course of action now that the war was over. In lieu of a romantic bond with Kotty, the two men have one another. Indeed, George and Eddie have

planned to take a spear-fishing trip together in Acapulco (at the behest of the Professor) as a way of helping Eddie overcome his fears and finally reassert his masculinity. Although not timid like his best friend, George has also given up all hope for having a relationship with a woman, so he uses bodybuilding and weight lifting to reassert his masculinity. Although not shy about demonstrating proper technique and proudly showing off his physique, George is only comfortable doing so in the company of other men. At one point, once George and Slob are aware of Kotty's presence, the two men scramble to put their shirts back on in a fit of modesty (or perhaps embarrassment). This act illustrates a kind of immaturity, one that prevents George (as well as his friend Eddie) to enter the Oedipal trajectory (arguably because of the effect of war upon their psyches). Indeed, the men in *Shack out on 101* point to the weaknesses that put American security at great risk. Beginning with George and Eddie, we see two men who are unable to reconcile and move past their experiences during World War Two; the bond that has been formed is so strong that it prevents them from asserting a heterosexual masculinity. Pepe (Donald Murphy) and Artie (Jess Barker) are also an odd pairing as they snoop around the diner, watching the patrons and staff. Over time, it becomes apparent (as it does with Slob) that these two characters are not as they appear. Although Kotty instinctively knows there is something not quite right about Pepe and Artie – even commenting on the soft hands of one of the men despite the appearance that they are working as truck drivers – she has yet to figure out the truth, that they are really with the FBI and part of the investigation to arrest Mr. Gregory.

As if to underscore this masculinity in crisis, the diner is both a privileged space of male bonding and dysfunctional bodies, and it is the film's *mise-en-scene* that reveals the queering of this text. The shack is to all intents and purposes the sole location of the film. As such there is a feeling of claustrophobia in that we never seem to exit the four walls of the shack. The shack itself is odd in its construction and operates as a paradox because in the film it becomes a place of un-American activity despite it being, in cultural terms, an intrinsically American space. This film space seems to defy the iconic nature of the American diner. There are relatively few stools and a few tables, with a fairly large open space; the diner is neither warm nor cosy as we have come to associate with such a location. The queering of the diner space works to two effects. It tells us that even the most American of

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spaces can harbour treachery; and that brotherly bonding (Eddie-George) when it takes the form of men standing together can act as a bulwark against the nation's porous borders. However in the film it is also made clear that the two men can't just go it alone. A woman's courage is equally an essential part of this fight against treachery, and Kotty clearly represents all that is good in America. She is a hard working, attractive all-American girl who wants to have a respectable career in government and presumably a family. Eventually Kotty comes to believe that her lover, Professor Sam Bastion, is actually a traitor working with Slob. Towards the end of the film, Kotty decides that she must act, but is unable to complete her phone call to the police; she then confronts Slob after reading in the newspaper that one of the patrons, a nuclear physicist who works with the Professor, has been found murdered. It is at this moment that Kotty realizes that Slob is actually a Communist, calling him a 'bear who walks like a man.'[325] Although she does not completely understand the situation, nevertheless Kotty is not afraid to stand up for America even when it means turning against the man she loves.

Whilst hypermasculinity is clearly foregrounded in the three films of this cluster, nonetheless, the characters of Kotty, Joyce Geary and Velda are central to their respective narratives. Kotty assumes the role of principle investigator (as far as the audience is aware), and though she has made herself sexually available to Sam Bastion and works within a less desirable profession (as a "hash-slinger"), her femininity is still the most stable in comparison to her female counterparts in *A Bullet for Joey* and *Kiss Me Deadly.* After all, Kotty has made it known her desire to marry and hold down a respectable job as a government employee, one where Sam Bastion can be proud of her accomplishments. Joyce similarly wants to settle into respectable role but her past relationship with Joey Victor makes her vulnerable to his exploitation. It is because of her love for Dr. Macklin that Joyce stands-up for what is right, although Joey discovers her note to Inspector Leduc. Velda is equally strong, but she can be mapped onto Kotty and Joyce. Not only does Velda exhibit an investigative prowess not seen in Kotty (or for that matter her boss), but her love for Mike Hammer also makes her

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[325] The bear has been a symbol of Russia since the early seventeenth-century, but Westerners have used it throughout the Twentieth Century to symbolize the clumsy and brutal nature of Russia.

vulnerable to his exploitation in a way that is reminiscent of Joyce.   Finally, what these three narratives have in common is the need for a cleansing in order for America to be safe, which can only occur through the death of Slob/Mr. Gregory, Joey Victor and Lily Carver/Gabrielle.

Before moving on to our next cluster, I would like to come back to *The Thief* (Rouse, 1952)*,* a film that I discussed briefly in Chapter Two in relation to *The Manchurian Candidate. The Thief* is simultaneously innovative and curious, speaking directly to socio-political discourses within Cold War America. Stylistically, the film is on par with *Pickup on South Street* (Fuller, 1953) and *Kiss Me Deadly.* Indeed, writer-director Russell Rouse adopted an audio-visual style that escalates tension within the narrative, but achieves this in a realistic fashion that is also aided by extensive location shooting. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, *The Thief* is devoid of dialogue, thus the narrative relies exclusively on image and diegetic and non-diegetic sound to establish the plot. Over the course of the narrative, the ringing telephone alerts the central character, Dr. Fields (played by Ray Milland), that it is time to meet his Communist handler. Over time, the psychological impact of the telephone calls becomes so profound that the terror experienced by Dr. Fields with each ring is apparent to the spectator.

The Thief is also a continuation of the 'atomic scientist as spy' trope, in which the scientist is either a willing or unwilling collaborator (see Chapter One for major political thriller thematics)*. Mise-en-scène* reveals that Dr. Fields is a respected, accomplished scientist within the field of atomic energy, and as an employee of Atomic Energy Commission in Washington D.C., he has access to top secret information. At some point, however, Dr. Fields (the so called thief referenced by the film's title) was targeted for recruitment by an unnamed enemy (presumably the Soviet Union) for whom he photographs and passes along microfilm containing atomic secrets, in a way that harkens back to the Rosenberg case. The espionage ring is quite elaborate and seemingly operates with impunity until the local police discover a canister containing microfilm on the body of the courier who is killed in a in a freak traffic accident in New York. Once it becomes apparent to Dr. Fields that he is under surveillance, he flees to New York City to await further instructions. Eventually, he is directed to make contact at the Empire State Building Observatory Tower, but has been followed by an FBI agent. Eventually the two men begin to struggle and the FBI agent falls to his death.

Having to pass the agent's body, a shaken Dr. Fields begins to sob upon returning to his room and then later has such a vivid nightmare that he is jolted awake. Meanwhile, Dr. Fields' cohorts have made arrangements for him to leave the country by cargo ship, traveling to Cairo, Egypt and then presumably on to the Soviet Union. However, unable to live with the guilt, the scientist turns himself into the FBI.

The Thief captured the attention of film critics in the U.S. and abroad, performing reasonably well at the box office. Nevertheless, we may only speculate on how the audience would have received the narrative at the time of release in 1952. Most likely there would have been some resonance given its proximity to the Rosenberg espionage case, but perhaps more specifically with respect to Harry Gold. Indeed, Gold, a laboratory chemist was identified as a courier for the Soviets, active at the time of the Manhattan Project; he was also linked to Klaus Fuchs. What is, however, troubling about the narrative is the inability to decipher any kind of motivation for betraying America. Certainly the fact that Dr. Fields has such profound and crippling remorse that he is unable to leave the country suggests that he was not involved in the espionage ring for strong ideological convictions. In addition, the absence of the nuclear family along with an apparent timidity where women are concerned (only able to gaze at the overtly sexualized young woman at the rooming house in New York) does not go unnoticed. One reading is that our lead character is, in fact, homosexual and the victim of Communist blackmail. Thus it is entirely possible that Dr. Fields represents the very individual the U.S. government sought to identify and purge from federal employment. In this regard, on a narrative level at least, *The Thief* acts as a bridge between the two dominant themes under investigation in this chapter: that of masculinity in crisis and that of protecting the nation at any cost.

Protecting America at All Costs: *Above and Beyond* (1953), *The 49th Man* (1953), *Captain Scarface* (1953), *Hell and High Water* (1954), and *Port of Hell* (1954)

Within this second cluster of films the theme of the unknowability of the atomic is continued, but the overriding discourse is one that conveys America's intent to use any

means necessary to protect itself from internal and external threats. Whilst the threat of enemy infiltration is depicted prior to the middle cycle, and in particular within the non-atomic Red Scare films, the narratives were more straightforward and ideologically simplistic. Frequently, what was involved was the disruption of capitalism and the American way of life either through Communist Party recruitment as exemplified by *The Woman on Pier 13* (Stevenson, 1949), *The Red Menace* (Springsteen, 1949) and *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.* (Douglas, 1951) or the passing secrets to the Soviet Union as depicted in *Rendezvous 24* (Tingling, 1946), *The Iron Curtain* (Wellman, 1948) and *Counterspy Meets Scotland Yard* (Friedman, 1950). In this cluster, however, the tone has altered, having grown more forceful in that the external threat must be uncovered, exposed and neutralized at all costs. Collectively these films render visible the very tangible fear of permeable borders and the ease in which a nation could be destroyed, further signifying American justification for using the atomic bomb (as with Eisenhower's discourse on total protection) whilst preventing other (dangerous) countries from obtaining the technology.

In relation to the Cold War periodization discussed in Chapter One, this particular cluster of films, listed above, fall within a period of a slight thaw in U.S.-Soviet relations (thanks in part to the impact of the death of Stalin and initially the more conciliatory tone of Malenkov and Khrushchev). General Eisenhower is also now President Eisenhower whilst the Korean War has ended (through an armistice agreement). Yet, paradoxically, the cluster of films to be discussed in this section - *Above and Beyond* (Frank, 1953), *The 49th Man* (Sears, 1953), *Captain Scarface* (Guilfoyle, 1953), *Hell and High Water* (Fuller, 1954) and *Port of Hell* (Schuster, 1954) – actually are more representative of the Cold War discourses that dominated during the heating up period (between 1955 and 1957), and so, as the films stand, they are in some ways representative of the Cold War to come. For, these films convey a need to respond vigorously to the Communist threat by nuclear force (if necessary) and by subterfuge including psychological warfare and espionage. It is true, however, that this cluster also refers to the strong rhetoric conveyed by Eisenhower during his 1952 presidential bid, adopting a hawkish tone to differentiate himself from Democratic opponent Adelai Stevenson. In the "I Shall Go to Korea" speech given in October 1952, the former NATO Supreme Commander offered that blocking of Soviet hegemony in defense of Europe

was of the utmost concern. Indeed, when tensions arose in Asia between 1949 and 1950, most Americans were caught by surprise because they believed the Cold War to be Eurocentric. Even the architect of the containment strategy, George F. Kennan (see Chapter One), had never considered China to be a focal point of Cold War diplomacy given the performance of the Chinese Nationalist military during World War Two. The Chinese Nationalists proved so ineffective that the U.S. reluctantly turned to Stalin for assistance in the Pacific. Nevertheless, by the Soviet forces were committed to action (in Pacific), it was a matter of "too little, too late" given that it was merely days before Japan surrendered. The occupation of Japan was unilateral, which was in contrast to the European theatre. General Douglas McArthur was subsequently tasked with the administration of the defeated nation and simply ignored an offer from Molotov, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, to share the burden with a Soviet counterpart. At the end of World War Two, China was viewed as geopolitically peripheral during this period. Indeed, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union believed that power in China would be solidly restored to the Nationalist government under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek. Curiously, however, Mao Zedong was instructed by Stalin to cooperate with Chiang Kai-shek, something that Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis suggests was related to the Soviet leader's desire to avert a conflict with the U.S. in East Asia. Gaddis muses this may have been because U.S. military capabilities had been more impressive in the East during the war:

> He [Stalin] saw the Nationalists as in a better position than the Communists to deliver the territorial concessions Roosevelt had promised at Yalta. He [Stalin] may even have anticipated the possibility of using a cooperative Nationalist China as a buffer against an American power base centred in Japan.[326]

The U.S. and the Soviet Union both encouraged the Chinese Communists to cooperate with Chiang, so they were equally unprepared when Mao succeeded in driving the Nationalist

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[326] John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 60.

government from mainland China in 1949.[327] Moreover, what took the U.S. State Department strategists (including Kennan, Davies and Acheson) by surprise was Mao's decision to align with Moscow despite demonstrating that he was capable of managing without Stalin.

Equally residing within the periphery of Cold War geopolitics was Korea, and once again, the U.S. was taken by surprise when fighting erupted in 1950. Whilst postwar Korea resembled Germany with its bilateral administration, neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union was prepared for an immediate withdrawal for fear of the gains to be made by the other.[328] In part, the motivation for deployment of U.S. troops to Korea and the subsequent escalation into war had been out of strategic interest, one that would prevent the Red Army from taking control of the Korean peninsula once it became clear that Soviet assistance was not needed to end the war with Japan. Establishing the Thirty-Eighth Parallel as a demarcation line between South Korea and the Communist North Korea was actually a fairly straightforward action, albeit hastily accomplished and with protest from Stalin.[329] In the end, the consequences of such an arbitrary division proved to be significant not only with respect to Korean socio-political development but later with the armed conflict.   For the U.S., the Korean War (25 June 1950 – 27 July 1953) contributed greatly to Cold War discourse and rhetoric, and proved to be a means to several ends. The conflict in Korea was essentially a war by proxy, although it had the potential to escalate into a nuclear World War Three from the very beginning (even before Chinese intervention).[330] Clearly there was intent to convince the Soviets that they should not threaten to make any further aggressive moves, but it was understood that U.S. response was being closely scrutinized, so there was a desire to uphold the prestige of America globally. President Truman was also compelled to reiterate

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[327] Stalin would later acknowledge his misjudgment of Mao and the Chinese Communists ability to take control.

[328] The military occupation of Korea after World War Two had been decided in the spring of 1944, but this was actually to be a liberated nation not defeated enemy as in the case of Germany and Japan.

[329] The U.S. State Department had requested the military identify a line that would divide the Korean peninsula as far north as possible (in Korea) making it possible to receive surrendering Japanese troops. Jonsuk Chay, *Unequal Partners in Peace and War: The Republic of Korea and the United States* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), 32.

[330] Elizabeth A. Stanley, *Paths to Peace: Domestic Coalition Shifts, War Termination and the Korean War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 172.

the political reasons for the Korean campaign to General MacArthur, stating that a response was necessary in order to 'demonstrate to the world that the friendship of the U.S. is of inestimable value in time of adversity.'[331] Lastly, there were the internal politics to contend with, and President Truman was growing weary of the Republican criticism. Republican Senator Robert Taft was openly critical of Truman's failure to obtain a resolution from Congress for the use of U.S. troops in Korea. Taft would go on to say from the Senate floor of Truman:

> [he] has brought war about without consulting Congress and without congressional approval. . . . [This] seems to me . . . a complete usurpation by the President of authority to use the Armed Forces of this country.[332]

Indeed, the criticism levied against Truman for the protracted conflict in Korea contributed to the president's decision to not run for a second term in 1952. Republicans were equally critical of the Truman foreign policy with China, and in particular, the deteriorating support of exiled Chiang Kai-shek (who had settled in Formosa after Mao assumed control). To these key points one must also add, that there was a desire to have the United Nations demonstrate that it was capable of halting aggression (not merely denouncing it), thereby bolstering a Western system of collective security.[333] Towards the end of the Truman presidency, however, most Americans embraced the attitude that the U.S. was locked into a battle with an archenemy, and that the U.S.S.R. was intent on destroying their country's very existence.

In 1952, then, the question of Asia became part of the Dwight D. Eisenhower's presidential campaign platform. With the Communists threatening to take over the whole of Korea, the time had come for Eisenhower to extend the rhetoric of the defense of Western

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[331] Richard H. Rovere, *General MacArthur and President Truman: The Struggle for Control of American Foreign Policy* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 104.
[332] Meena Bose, 'Leading through Multilateralism' in *The National Security Legacy of Harry S. Truman,* ed. by Robert P. Watson, et al (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2005), 154-155.
[333] Ibid., 119–20.

values to the East. The "I Shall Go to Korea" campaign speech had a decisive effect on the presidential election and, indeed, scholars contend that this speech was 'one of the most effective campaign speeches of modern times.'[334] In many ways the rhetoric of the Korea speech foreshadows President Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" speech and his desire for "candor" at home and abroad regarding the dangers of the rapidly developing nuclear arms race. In the Korea speech, the Republican nominee asserted that he would provide the public with the 'unvarnished truth' about critical issues of foreign policy, namely that of the Korean War:

> I am not going to give you elaborate generalizations – but hard, tough facts.. . . The Korean War – more perhaps than any other war in history – simply and swiftly followed the collapse of our political defenses. . . . The first task of a new Administration will be to review and re-examine every course of action open to us with one goal in view: To bring the Korean War to an early and honourable end. . . . any faltering in America's leadership is a capital offense against freedom. . . . A soldier all my life, I have enlisted in the greatest cause of my life – the cause of peace. . . . We are united and devoted to a just cause of the purest meaning to all humankind. . . . We know that – for all the might of our effort – victory can come only with the gift of God's help.[335]

As Eisenhower suggested throughout his campaign (and later as president), the Cold War was a global struggle in defense of freedom and Christian civilization, a message that he conveyed often. The same could be said for the moralistic rhetoric presented by Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. Speaking before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1953, Dulles asserted that the 'present tie between China and Moscow is an unholy arrangement which is contrary to the traditions, the hopes, the

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[334] Martin J. Medhurst, "Text and Context in the 1952 Presidential Campaign: Eisenhower's 'I Shall Go to Korea' Speech", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 30:3 (2000), 464.
[335] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "I Shall Go to Korea" (25 October 1952), <http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/education/bsa/citizenship_merit_badge/speeches_natio nal_historical_importance/i_shall_go_to_korea.pdf>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

aspirations of the Chinese people.'[336] Ironically, U.S. concerns (including those of the Truman administration after 1949) were less about thwarting Mao's Communist rule in China than severing Peking's (now Beijing) relationship with Moscow.

For the American public, geopolitical concerns over Asia (notably China and Korea) were played out in political thrillers that included the Ronald Reagan star vehicle, *Prisoner of War* (Marton, 1954), along with *Hell and High Water* and *World for Ransom* (Aldrich, 1954). Robert Aldrich's low budget atomic political thriller, *World for Ransom,* stars Dan Duryea as an American war veteran and adventurer turned investigator, and is set in current day Singapore, which was still under British control. The narrative involves the kidnapping and ransoming of a prominent atomic scientist, O'Connor (Arthur Shields), who happens to be one of just three people in the world knowledgeable enough to detonate a hydrogen bomb. The kidnappers intend to sell Dr. O'Connor to the highest bidder, either the West or to the Communists. As with other films considered in this thesis, *World for Ransom* is indicative of the times. During this cycle and as illustrated in the timeline at the beginning of the chapter (see *figure 4.1*), both the U.S. and the Soviet Union were in the early days of developing the hydrogen bomb, with successful detonations by each of the superpowers in November 1952 and August 1953 respectively. Finally, whilst not an atomic political thriller, the film *Prisoner of War* (Marton, 1954) warrants mentioning because it is an early example of the Korean War brainwashing trope. In this film, an American army officer (played by Ronald Reagan) volunteers to be captured so that he may investigate claims of collaboration and brainwashing of Americans within North Korean prisoner of war camps. MGM released *Prisoner of War* within months of the first Korean POWs returning to America. Whilst the film was widely panned, it nevertheless was realistic in its depiction of torture even to the point where some critics called these scenes documentary and others questioned whether depicting prison camp atrocities was suitable material.[337] *Prisoner of War*, followed by the *Bamboo Prison* (Seiler, 1954), were the first in a series of films that would depict the Korean War

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[336] John O'Loughlin, *Dictionary of Geopolitics* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 68.
[337] *Prisoner of War,* dir. by Andrew Marton (Allied Artists, 1954), *American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films,*
<http://www.afi.com/members/catalog/DetailView.aspx?s=&Movie=51309>

brainwashing trope (see also *The Rack*, Lavan:1956; *Time Limit*, Malden:1957; and *The Fearmakers*, Tourneur:1958), all of which are precursors to *The Manchurian Candidate* which was released in 1962*.* Of course, *The Manchurian Candidate* is a standout amongst the aforementioned cluster not only because of its production values, but also because it is far more sympathetic (than the other films of this nature) towards the soldiers who were abducted and forced to undergo the brainwashing in Manchuria. Indeed, the Major Marco character played by Frank Sinatra closes the film with a monologue, a revised version of the medal of honour citation, that would assert that Raymond Shaw (and essentially all other Korean War POWs) was not responsible for his actions because of the atrocities he (and others like him) were forced to endure (see Chapter Two for a detailed analysis of *The Manchurian Candidate*).

Geopolitical fears also accrued over the expanding Soviet sphere of influence in Latin America which was perceived as challenging American hegemony within the western hemisphere. The liberalism and agrarian reform in socialist-governed Guatemala was of particular concern, with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) concluding that it posed a significant threat to U.S. economic interest. Whilst the CIA had planned a *coup d'état* in 1952, Eisenhower as the incoming president was unable to offer a viable excuse to sanction the attack. However, since the U.S. linked the Guatemalan Labour Party to the international Communist conspiracy, Eisenhower believed clandestine operations to be a viable solution, offering an inexpensive alternative to military intervention.[338] Like Truman before him, Eisenhower was worried that Guatemalan President Jocobo Arbenz would eventually bow to pressure from Moscow. Whilst Communism had gained traction amongst the rural poor in Guatemala, only four of the fifty-six members Congress were Communists.[339] The U.S. was, nonetheless, not convinced that Latin American countries would enter into the Cold War on the side of their neighbour to the north. Consequently there was a persistent and pervasive propaganda campaign to inform Latin Americans of the dangers posed by 'Soviet imperialism

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[338] Nick Cullather, *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952 – 1954* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 36.
[339] Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 546.

and Communist and other anti-U.S. subversion.'[340]   Eisenhower subsequently approved the use of covert operations and counterinsurgency measures, in essence, giving the CIA the authority to take any measures to destabilize Communism abroad whilst still promoting American values and economic interests. Eventually, in June 1954, President Arbenz stepped-down from office, turning the presidency over to the CIA backed military junta.

Whilst political thrillers with an Asian setting greatly outnumber those where Latin America is central to the narrative (see *Tokyo File 212,* McGowan:1951; *Peking Express,* Dieterle:1951; *World for Ransom*, Aldrich:1954; *Stopover Tokyo*, Breen:1957), one in particular, *Captain Scarface,* nevertheless would have resonated at the time of its release in 1953. I shall go on to address *Captain Scarface* in the section below, but would like to preface this discussion by stating that the narrowly averted nuclear attack that is the basis for the narrative would have been meaningful during the early 1950s as any attack on the Panama Canal would have been akin to an actual attack on U.S. soil because the Canal Zone was under American sovereignty, which had been granted through the 1903 treaty with a newly independent Panama. Pennsylvania Democrat Daniel Flood was fervently anti-Communist and in his opinion, any relaxation of American control over the Canal Zone would not merely infringe upon the nation's rights, but could very well jeopardize world peace.[341]

Eisenhower publically voiced his intention to craft a psychological warfare program, and in the closing days of his campaign, the Republican nominee attempted to persuade Americans that this tactic was nothing to be afraid of, that it is merely 'a five dollar, five syllable word' describing the struggle for the heart and minds of men.[342] Indeed, psychological warfare was rapidly becoming a part of international relations, with both democratic and authoritarian nations vigorously pursuing a 'form of mass politics that relied on formalized ideologies as well as coercion for the maintenance of political power.'[343] Propaganda, a term that is used interchangeably with psychological warfare and political warfare, was considered to be the 'fourth weapon' of American foreign policy, augmenting political, economic and military strategies.[344] Likening propaganda to information was consistent with

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[340] Stephen Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 33.

[341] Michael Hogan, *The Panama Canal in American Politics: Domestic Advocacy and the Evolution of Policy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 73.

[342] Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped and Enduring Cold War Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 77.

[343] Osgood, 3-4.

[344] Ibid., 4.

views held by American strategists that they were merely offering an explanation or educating the public, providing much needed information about geopolitical realities. Historian David Welch defines propaganda as something that is meant to persuade an audience to believe a particular viewpoint in order to 'serve the interest of the propagandists and their political master either directly or indirectly.'[345] Thus Eisenhower believed that it was possible to break the will of the enemy through psychological warfare whilst gaining (or strengthening) the support of its allies without having to resort to arms to win World War Three. A notable example of Eisenhower's psychological warfare strategy was the April 1953 'Chance for Peace' speech. Given just twelve weeks after being sworn into office, the speech was lauded as a 'serious bid for peace,' although more importantly was the role it would play as a weapon of psychological warfare.[346] The image of peace had to be presented in such a way that adversaries would believe negotiation was possible, though in reality, the U.S. had no intention of making any substantive compromises or concessions. As Eisenhower historian and religious scholar Ira Chernus writes:

> The Soviet Union was the geopolitical manifestation of selfishness. Like the selfish impulse in human nature, it had to be accepted as a permanent fact of life. But any change on the 'free world' side of the Iron Curtain not under U.S. control would still be defined as aggression and hence a first step toward a war that could well destroy the 'American way of life'[347]

As the foundation for psychological warfare was being laid, Eisenhower concluded that Stalin's death in March 1953 provided an opportunity to engage in this new strategy. The fact that the cluster of five films we are presently considering was released at the beginning of the Eisenhower presidency is certainly noteworthy. The propagandistic value is evident as each film portrays the defense of freedom and the American way of life. Moreover, the films *Above and Beyond, Port of Hell* and *Hell and High Water* are particularly aligned with personal politics of Eisenhower. Indeed, the basic message is one of vigilance, protection, heroism and sacrifice, something that we may link to Eisenhower's discourse on being a soldier.

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[345] David Welch, 'Powers of Persuasion', *History Today* 49:8 (1999), <http://www.historytoday.com/david-welch/powers-persuasion>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]
[346] Ira Chernus, *Apocalypse Management: Eisenhower and the Discourse of National Insecurity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 42.
[347] Ibid., 46-47.

Political Scientist and Distinguished Professor of Rhetoric and Communications, Martin J. Medhurst writes:

> To Eisenhower, the very reason for being an American military officer was to preserve, protect and defend the constitutional republic and the values that it embodied. The defense of country and its values, founded upon Judeo-Christian presuppositions, was to Eisenhower a mission of a sacred, almost religious, nature.[348]

The atomic political thriller that most closely resonates with this notion of self-sacrifice in order to defend the American family and freedom is that of *Above and Beyond.* Based on the story of *Enola Gay* pilot Colonel Paul Tibbets, this film attempts to depict both physical and mental challenges associated with dropping the first atomic bomb. What makes this film more unusual, however (given our earlier experience of narrative voiceovers), is the way in which the maternal other is represented. The narrative begins with a voiceover, but it is not that of an authoritative 'voice of God' narrator. Rather we hear the voice of Lucey Tibbets (Eleanor Parker), the wife of Colonel Paul Tibbets, as she provides details of her husband's experience during the war and their married life. The introduction of Lucey Tibbet's point of view through voice over establishes a formidable female presence, although femininity is, nevertheless, less central to the narrative. In particular, as we have seen, the female has often been represented as either a threat to masculinity (through a strong, even slightly 'queer' sexuality of her own) or to national security. One aspect of *Above and Beyond* that is intriguing, however, is that it appears, at first, to be employing the other trope of the female — that of the maternal nurturer (rarely glimpsed in the political or atomic thriller) — as a means of emphasizing the security necessary to protect the Manhattan Project. However, once Lucey Tibbets questions the morality of his actions, commenting 'somewhere at this very moment bombs are being dropped and children are being killed,' her reasoning, is challenged by Paul Tibbets, exposing her to the accusations of immorality (un-Americanism) herself. Here is what Paul Tibbets says:

> Look, let's clear one little piece of morality right now. It's not bombs alone that are horrible, but war. War is what is wrong, not weapons. Sure innocent people are being killed, but to lose this war to the gang we're fighting would be one of the most immoral things we could do to those kids in there.[349]

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[348] Martin J. Medhurst, *Dwight D. Eisenhower: Strategic Communicator* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 12.

[349] *Above and Beyond,* dir. by Melvin Frank and Norman Panama (MGM, 1953)

The notion of morality is, however, within the context of what would become of all American families in the event Colonel Tibbets failed, and not simply his own. To this end, a small number of families (namely of those men who will eventually drop the bomb) may have to be sacrificed for the sake of the entire country, thereby reinforcing the theme of defense by any means necessary. Bitter that her husband's secrecy and long hours is tearing the family apart, Lucey becomes determined to find out the true nature of her husband's work. Eventually the Colonel's wife is deemed a security risk, and she and the children are forced to leave the military training base so that he can continue his mission without distraction. In the final analysis, *Above and Beyond* contributes to discourses on women as a threat to national security (Lucey's rhetoric of resistance), but at the same time we see this film as propaganda support for Eisenhower's nuclear policy. Cold War historian Michael Gordon Jackson writes:

> Though nuclear weapons were at the core of his New Look national security program, it has been said that his horror about such a war made him . . . a supremely cautious and prudent decision maker . . . nuclear war fighting would have . . . been forced upon him by the most extreme political and military events.[350]

The development of tactical atomic warheads for use on the battlefield was also part of the nuclear deterrence strategy, but there are conflicting views on Eisenhower's commitment to the use of nuclear weapons. The president wrote to Dulles that the U.S. needed to be 'constantly ready, on an instantaneous basis, to inflict greater loss upon the enemy than he could reasonably inflict on us.'[351] Discussions on the use of the atomic bomb in Korea may have been serious and forceful, although Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis writes: 'what is clear is that the President was more eager to talk about the possibility of using nuclear

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[350] Michael G. Jackson, 'Beyond Brinksmanship: Eisenhower, Nuclear War Fighting, and Korea, 1953 – 1968', *Presidential Studies Quarterly,* 35:1 (2005), <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=5011113930>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]
[351] Timothy Botti, *Ace in the Hole: Why the United States did not use Nuclear Weapons in the Cold War, 1945 to 1965* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 50.

weapons there [Korea] than he was actually to do so.'[352]   U.S. security policies after 1953 emphasized the potential utility of nuclear weapons, and as scholar Ira Chernus goes on to suggest: 'the bomb was the most potent symbol of the apocalyptic shadow that spread across American political discourse in the 1950s.'[353]   Thus the strategy to deter aggression through atomic weapons spurred a greater sense of unease, something that I shall consider in Chapter Five.

As we have discussed with the first cluster of the middle cycle, which included the films *Shack Out on 101, Kiss Me Deadly* and *A Bullet for Joey*, the message was clearly about the threat posed by the enemy from within. What follows here is a brief discussion of the second and final cluster of this middle cycle where the enemy continues to be unknowable but now also stands as a threat from without (in the form of Asia and Latin America).   The second cluster within the this cycle, almost as if in response to this presumed threat to the nation, exemplifies the notion that America is justified in its use of the atomic bomb both for its own protection and as a means to end global conflict (as we saw in *Above and Beyond* and will again in *Hell and High Water*). Moreover, it becomes clear that the nation also has a duty to prevent other dangerous countries (like the Soviet Union) from securing or building upon this technology (as we witness in *Atomic City*, *The Thief* and *Walk East on Beacon!*).   In keeping with *Shack Out on 101* and *A Bullet for Joey,* the second cluster reinforces the notion that institutions such as the CIA and the FBI will stop at nothing to protect the nation, although both clusters make clear that this alone is not a sufficient deterrent; in other words, the individual man or woman, that is the American citizen, also has a vital part to play in national security even if this means facing grave personal danger or accepting death as the ultimate personal sacrifice.

But before moving on it is useful to look at the atomic thriller film *The 49th Man* (Sears, 1953) because it actually serves as a kind of bridge between the two clusters. Whereas *The 49th Man* continues the trope of the enemy within, there is now an added element that significant external threats could lead to the annihilation of America. In earlier films that threat

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[352] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 128.
[353] Chernus, 3.

was more simplistic, more along the lines of an unknown enemy (presumably Communist) finding ways to disrupt capitalism and the American way of life, either through recruitment or passing secrets on to the Soviet Union. *The 49th Man* reinforces that a definite external atomic threat exists and that it must be uncovered, exposed and neutralized; in this instance the threat takes the form of individuals who are secretly bringing parts of an atomic bomb into America to later assemble and explode. In essence, this film is an early example of terrorism in a political thriller in which the narrative works as a metaphor for how easily the nation could be destroyed: just as the parts of the bomb can be gradually brought into the country and assembled in one place, so too might sleeper Communist agents be brought into the nation and subsequently assembled to perform major acts of espionage. Thus this film not only speaks to the permeability of the borders, but it also shows how it is that individual unknown enemies within the nation, once they are united as a force (like the bomb), will do untold damage to the nation state.

Continuing with the second cluster, I shall now consider the films *Captain Scarface* (Guilfoyle, 1953), *Hell and High Water* (Fuller, 1954), and *Port of Hell* (Schuster, 1954). In keeping with *The 49th Man*, these films reiterate America's need to protect its territory in a similar way to *Above and Beyond*. The tone for this cluster is established with *Above and Beyond* given that this film reinforces America's justification for the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, an act that effectively put an end to the war in the Pacific.[354] Thus this cluster illustrates a willingness to act off shore, as needed, serving as a reminder that America is not only a superpower, but that it will also use its position as such to curb any attempts to spread Communism beyond the current spheres of influence.

Of the remaining films within this cluster, *Port of Hell* has not been accessible for viewing, although a synopsis of the film is available from the American Film Institute online database.[355] As it transpires, it runs along similar lines to *The 49th Man* whereby an atomic

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[354] Several military commanders including Generals Douglas MacArthur and Curtis LeMay and Admirals King and Leahy believed the collapse of Japan was inevitable and neither an invasion of the country nor dropping the atomic bomb was necessary.

[355] *Port of Hell,* dir. by Harold Schuster (Allied Artists, 1954), *American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films,* <http://www.afi.com/members/catalog/DetailView.aspx?s=&Movie=51305> [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

bomb has been brought into American territory and must be removed and destroyed. In *Port of Hell,* local Harbourmaster Gibson "Gib" Pardee (Dane Clark) is a stickler for rules and upholding institutional values to the detriment of his relationships with the local fishermen and tugboat captain Stanley Povich (Wayne Morris). When Gib learns the entire crew of the cargo freighter the *Benava* are foreigners, including Synder (Otto Waldis) the ship's captain, he invokes a 24-hour quarantine, but in the meantime the timer for the atomic bomb has already been set. In a panic, Snyder warns Gib that a Communist ship is located somewhere off the coast and it will remotely detonate the atomic bomb aboard the *Benava* in twelve hours. Given the setting of Los Angeles, a west coast boom city and a centre of industry and finance in the postwar era, it is possible this film would have conjured memories of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour (7 December 1941), playing into concern for a nuclear third world war. Whereas the attack on Pearl Harbour was strategic, designed to prevent the U.S. Pacific Fleet from interfering with Japan's plans for military action in Southeast Asia (against the overseas territories of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the U.S.), an attack on Los Angeles, a major port city and not simply a U.S. territory like Hawaii, would, within the context of this film, have been a significant blow to American superpower status in the eyes of the world and of course the psyche of the people. Thus it would be imperative, within the film's narrative, that the bomb be destroyed. After Gib learns of the plan, he realizes there is not enough time to get support from outside agencies, so he decides he must tow the ship out to sea and away from the harbour. Enlisting the help of Stan, a small crew is assembled and able to move the ship to a safe distance. Within minutes of leaving the area the bomb explodes, and following the incident, the headlines in a local newspaper reports that a test was conducted to alert coastal cities to potential dangers.

Port of Hell's propagandistic function becomes even more intriguing when we consider the final episode. For the ending is quite revealing of the prevailing attitudes of the government with regard to the secrecy surrounding of the atomic bomb. After 1948, America began to develop a culture of secrecy that was greatly expanded by the Eisenhower administration. But this very secrecy was also something that exacerbated America's fears. Details about test results, accidents and the extent of radiation hazards created controversy and uncertainty, with Adlai Stevenson pointing out the risk during his second presidential

campaign against Eisenhower in 1956. For example, in 1954 when the U.S. detonated it's first H-Bomb at the Bikini atoll (code-named BRAVO), the explosion unexpectedly produced a deadly radioactive cloud. The U.S. reacted by evacuating the residents of nearby islands, but a trolling vessel, the *Lucky Dragon,* had been within eight miles of ground zero. Within hours of the explosion, the members of the crew were covered in a fine dust and by the time they returned to Japan, they were all suffering from radiation poisoning. Several weeks following the test, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) Chairman Lewis Strauss was invited to brief reporters at a weekly presidential press conference. With Eisenhower in attendance, the AEC Chairman minimized the problems of the fall-out experienced during the test, but then admitted that the hydrogen bomb could destroy a city, startling all who were in attendance. President Eisenhower responded by cutting short the press conference, and as he departed reportedly told Strauss: 'Lewis, I wouldn't have answered that way.'[356] Not only does *Port of Hell* project feelings of vulnerability, it is also on point with presidential rhetoric, that vigilance is necessary to keep America safe. Yet, paradoxically the film highlights the administration's need to cover up the real truth. By calling the climactic scene a test rather than admitting to the truth, that it was a narrowly averted attack, it counters the idea of truthfulness that Eisenhower promised to bring with his presidency. Whilst the President believed citizens should be knowledgeable, but as with all previous administrations (and as we shall also see with Kennedy), being "in the know" was still to be fairly restricted. American presidents have always asserted their right to keep certain information secret, and Eisenhower was no exception. Indeed, the Eisenhower administration greatly expanded the use of executive privilege, having refused to provide Congress with information forty-four times, which Constitutional Policy scholar John Denvir offers is more than the 'entire first century of American government.'[357] The U.S. military similarly engaged in tactics to supress information in the postwar era, all in the name of protecting national security. Whilst journalists were generally cooperative, censoring military information, the practice created

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[356] Robert A. Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 115.
[357] John Denvir, *Freeing Speech: The Constitutional War Over National Security* (New York: NYU Press, 2010), 18.

something that *New York Times* correspondent Hanson W. Baldwin would call a 'velvet curtain.' According to Baldwin, the curtain was representative of the restrictions that prevented reporters from publishing information, even when already known by the American public.[358]

As with other atomic political thrillers considered within this thesis, *Port of Hell* reinforces the notion of unknowability of the nuclear/atomic energy. The point is, that whilst inoperative, nuclear/atomic energy is invisible and as a psychologically fearsome threat it is unknowable. When detonated, the energy of the atomic bomb becomes visible through the mushroom cloud, yet most often we still have no sense of the effects of its power on the human race; therefore, the energy remains shrouded in secrecy. The invisibility and unknowability of the atomic bomb remains politically expedient for the government, and accordingly it is a force that only a select few properly understand precisely because it is such a deadly weapon. A film from the previous cluster that readily illustrates this concept of the unknowable and secrecy is *Kiss Me Deadly*. This film hints at the effects exposure has on the skin when Mike Hammer is burned after brief contact with the box. He doesn't understand what he has just experienced, however he knows enough to be aware that it is "forbidden fruit" because he immediately slams the box shut. It is only when Gabrielle opens the box at the end that we experience its fearsome nature. During this scene a blinding white light represents the explosion, but the audience doesn't see any effects of the blast on Gabrielle (or anyone else for that matter). Certainly she is killed by the blast, but the audience merely experiences the awesome power that lies within this "Pandora's box." Whilst the public would have known from newsreels the nature of such a blast, the effects would have been censored leaving the outcome to the audiences' imagination. Indeed, the original version concluded with the blast, but Aldrich was required to change the ending to show Mike Hammer and Velda on the beach, surviving the explosion.

Turning now to the other two films of this final cluster, we see where *Captain Scarface* and *Hell and High Water* have similarities in narrative. Both are set abroad, in Latin America and Southeast Asia respectively, with each film reinforcing the idea that American territory

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[358] David R. Davies, *The Postwar Decline of the American Newspaper, 1945 – 1965* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 33-34.

and interests whether at home or abroad must be protected at all cost, and any action to the contrary is unpatriotic. Beginning with *Captain Scarface*, the film opens with the wreckage of the *S.S. Banos* and a lone survivor being shot by an unseen assassin. Later, a ship that appears to be the *Banos* is docked at (the fictional) port city of San Brejo and is being loaded with supplies and cargo. Meanwhile, American ex-pat Sam Wilton (Leif Erickson) also arrives in San Brejo in hopes of securing passage on a ship. Sam has been working in South America on a plantation, but he now intends to return to the U.S. following an altercation over an affair with his employer's wife. Because Sam is without a passport, having narrowly escaped the plantation, he arrives at the hotel of a friend, Manuel (Martin Garralaga), in the hopes of securing a forged passport. Sam meets American tourists, Fred Ditts (Howard Wendell) and his wife, Kate (Isabel Randolph), as well as an attractive woman by the name of Elsa Yeager (Virigina Grey). Elsa has arrived in San Brejo to be reunited with her father, Dr. Yeager (Rudolph Anders), an atomic scientist. Dr. Yeager and his daughter were separated following the war when he was taken captive and forced to help develop the atomic bomb for the U.S.S.R.. The reunion, however, is actually part of a Communist plot orchestrated by a Russian named Kroll (John Mylong).   That evening, Kroll is confronted by Clegg (Paul Brinegar), a member of the original *S.S. Banos* crew, and is demanding money, revealing that he knows the Russian man is plotting with Captain Tregnor (Barton MacLane) to blow up the Panama Canal. When Kroll refuses, Clegg shoots him and steals the case full of money, but the sound of gunfire brings Manuel and Sam. Just as Clegg attempts to flee, the hotel proprietor shoots and kills him. Sam then decides to assume the Russian man's identity, boarding the ship as Kroll the following day along with Mr. and Mrs. Ditts. Almost immediately the American tourists are suspicious because the *Banos* is not as they remembered from their first voyage, and the entire crew, including the ship's captain whom Clegg had nicknamed Captain Scarface, is different. As the voyage is underway, Captain Tregnor takes Dr. Yeager down below deck to show him the atomic bomb; the scientist is told he will assist with the plan to detonate the bomb or his daughter will be harmed. Meanwhile, Elsa goes to Kroll's cabin only to find Sam posing as the Russian agent, although he is able to convince her that he is not dangerous. Dr. Yeager is quite distressed over the Tregnor's plan, so Elsa convinces him to confide in Sam. Upon learning that Tregnor is a Communist and that he

plans to blow up the Panama Canal, Sam confides in Mr. Ditts and Everett Crofton (Don Dillaway), another passenger travelling on the *Banos,* and the men decide they must act. The following morning, a snake that had been hiding in the cargo fatally bites Mrs. Ditts. After he identifies and kills the snake with a machete, it is apparent to the ship's first mate that Sam is not Russian Kroll. With the death of his wife, an inconsolable Mr. Ditts attacks Tregnor for the captain's refusal to get her medical attention. This distraction enables Sam to escape, whilst Mr. Ditts throws himself overboard, prompting the crew to shoot the grieving husband, mistaking him for Sam. That evening, Sam captures Tregnor, demanding the Communist take him to Yeager, who is locked in a secret room with the atomic bomb. Just as Yeager is freed, Tregnor attacks Sam, but the Communist is killed with a machete. Sam and Crofton are then able to overpower the ship's radio operator, allowing Crofton to signal an American Navy destroyer, which takes over the *Banos* and arrests the remaining crew. With the plan foiled and the destruction of the canal averted, Sam, Dr. Yeager and Elsa along with Crofton go ashore to visit Panama City.

In historical terms, during this period, Eisenhower held strong views regarding the need for U.S. support in Latin America, likening it to Communist China in the 1930s. Despite the President's desire to provide military aid and weapons, nonetheless, resources were not immediately available for Latin America. Rather French Indochina was given priority by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other defense officials, suggesting the perceived potential for Soviet aggression in Latin America was overstated.[359] In some ways, then, *Captain Scarface* and the subject of a Communist attack on the Panama Canal is curious because it plays to the American psyche and fear of an attack so close to home. There is also little in the literature to suggest a nuclear attack (of the Panama Canal) was a viable threat, although articles were published in various U.S. newspapers between 1952 and 1953 describing the state of readiness of the Canal Zone for an atomic bomb.[360] So in this way, *Captain Scarface* echoes a sense of potential disaster that already existed within the public domain.[361]

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[359] Rabe, 35.

[360] The *New York Times* (8 May 1952) reported that a 'A realistic exercise in disaster control followed the simulated explosion of an atomic bomb aboard a tuna boat in Miraflores Locks near the Pacific terminal of the Panama Canal.' The *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* (9 May 1952)

Whilst *Captain Scarface* would have resonance given the proximity of Panama to the U.S. as well as the reliance on the Canal for international shipping, the big budget atomic political thriller, *Hell and High Water* embodied contemporary geopolitical concerns within Southeast Asia. The narrative begins in 1953 with several leading scientists, including the renowned Professor Montel (Victor Francen), disappearing behind Iron Curtain in order to work for the Communists. Meanwhile former U.S. Navy Submarine Captain Adam Jones (Richard Widmark) travels to Tokyo, Japan after receiving a mysterious package containing a large sum of money. Upon arrival, Jones is immediately taken to a location outside of the city where the consortium of presumed missing scientists, business men and government officials are holding a meeting; this is where he learns that the Communists are suspected of building a location where an atomic bomb may be launched somewhere between Japan and the Artic Circle. By working as private citizens an investigation can be undertaken without any political interference. Captain Jones makes it clear that he only cares about the money he was promised and immediately begins to oversee the repairs to an old Japanese submarine. As they are ready to set sail, Professor Montel and his assistant, a beautiful, multilingual Professor named Denise Gerard (Bella Darvi) board. The crew initially protests having a woman aboard the submarine believing that it is bad luck, but her beauty and charm wins them over. The journey involves following a Chinese freighter to the enemy's military base where the atomic bomb is being housed. The trip is initially uneventful, but then Jones realizes they are being tracked by another submarine. After contact is made, the Chinese crew from the other sub is not satisfied with the explanation that Jones and his crew are merely on a scientific expedition. Consequently the Chinese sub fires, forcing Jones to give the order to dive, but Professor Montel's hand becomes caught in the hatch and his thumb must be amputated. Both subs go to the bottom of the ocean, but as oxygen is depleted and

also published that four-thousand U.S. troops and civilians participated in a test to determine what steps would be necessary in the event of an atomic bomb is detonated at the Panama Canal.

[361] U.S. concern over protecting the Panama Canal precedes the Cold War. The U.S. was actually granted sovereignty under the 1903 treaty, during Theodore Roosevelt's administration. Not only was the Panama Canal deemed to be of vital economic interest to the U.S., later, during the 1950s, it also served a strategic purpose as most of supplies destined for the Korean War passed through canal.

deadly gasses accumulate, the crew becomes sluggish whilst Professor Montel grows weak from blood loss and shock. Refusing to return to Tokyo for fear of losing his fee, Jones decides surface. The Chinese sub follows, and because the Japanese sub is defenseless and without torpedoes, Jones gives the order to ram the enemy, crippling it before they escape. Having caught up with the Chinese freighter, Professor Montel is beginning to recuperate and Captain Jones falls in love with Denise, a brilliant scientist in her own right. The submarine tracks the ship to an island, so Jones and Montel lead a patrol ashore where the scientist discovers lower levels of radioactivity than expected. The men happen upon a large number of soldiers along with a fuel depot, and during a gun battle the patrol captures a Chinese soldier. Jones, who is only concerned with getting his money, is determined to return to Tokyo, but Montel overrules him, insisting they travel to Kevloc, another island where the atomic bomb is believed to be located. During this part of the journey, they encounter a severe storm that causes Montel to fall and sustain a head injury. When the submarine arrives, Montel is in no condition to go ashore to gather data, so Jones must take Denise and they find high levels of radioactivity indicative of storage of an atomic bomb. Jones also discovers an American B-52 bomber on the island's airstrip, so when the couple returns to submarine, the captain sends crew member Chin Lee (Wong Artarne) dressed as a prisoner to question the captured man. The captured Chinese solider reveals that the Communists intend to drop the atomic bomb on Korea or Manchuria and then blame the U.S. for an act of aggression. Montel believes they should now return to Tokyo with this information, although Captain Jones decides that he cannot allow the Communists to 'pin the rap' on the U.S.. The captain decides he will go ashore and signal the submarine to shoot the plane down just after it takes off. However, the following morning, Jones discovers that Montel has gone in his place and that Denise is the scientist's daughter. Just as the plane takes off, Montel gives the signal, allowing the submarine to shoot it down. The plane crashes into the island, blowing it up and thereby averting World War Three. *Hell and High Water* ends with Denise proudly watching and Jones remembering Montel's remarks that 'each man has his own reason for living and his own price for dying.' Indeed, Montel's heroic individualism is the crux of Eisenhower's rhetoric. Recalling Eisenhower's first inaugural address, the newly elected president went on to state:

> We must be ready to dare all for our country. For history does not entrust the
> care of freedom to the weak or the timid. We must acquire proficiency in
> defense and display stamina in purpose. We must be willing, individually and as
> a Nation, to accept whatever sacrifices may be required of us.[362]

Thus it is a matter of duty that mercenary men like the characters of Sam Wilton and Captain Jones come around to do the right thing. And equally important, that they will come to embody the best of America once they marry and start a family.

Conclusion

Clearly propaganda and psychological warfare were firmly embedded within the presidential rhetoric, figuring prominently both in Cold War culture and Hollywood productions. Indeed, as communications scholar Shawn Parry-Giles states:

> Truman and Eisenhower were the first two presidents to introduce and mobilize
> propaganda as a *peacetime* institution. In a 'war of words,' propaganda acted
> as an integral component of the government's foreign policy operation.[363]

Hollywood's participation went beyond studio cooperation to export and distribute content overseas at the behest of agencies like the CIA and USIA. Messages of vigilance at home are in evidence throughout this middle cycle of films, but also we encounter narratives that reinforce the U.S. commitment to use any means necessary to protect the American way of life (see for example *Above and Beyond, Hell and High Water* and *The 49ᵗʰ Man*). A clear shift towards conservatism is also evident in our middle cycle of atomic political thrillers, a

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[362] Dwight D. Eisenhower, 'Inaugural Address', (20 Jan 1953), *Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum and Boyhood Home* (24 Aug 2011), <http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all_about_ike/speeches/1953_inaugural_address.pdf>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

[363] Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda and the Cold War, 1945-1955* (London: Praeger, 2001), xvii.

marked contrast to early cycle described in Chapter Three. However, this is perhaps less surprising given that the period coincides with the election of a Republican presidential candidate, Dwight D. Eisenhower, after two decades of Democratic presidencies (from 1933-53). In addition, there is a crackdown on Communists operating within American, prompting greater fear and paranoia over national security. Indeed, the execution of Ethel Rosenberg in 1953, the embodiment of the treacherous female and failed matriarch, reinforces the need to contain both the political and sexual "other."

   We also witness a discursive framework in which the prevailing message of conformity to the dominant ideology is evident in the narratives of the middle cycle. By this I mean that these narratives assert Western, capitalist ideals that require the presence of a powerful patriarchy to ensure that the foundations for a strong nation exist by way of the nuclear family. Whilst masculinity in crisis is certainly emphasized, neither will women be entirely neglected. An essential element of this 1950s 'ideology of conformity' is the relationship of the traditional, Christian home (comprised of the male breadwinner and the dutiful, nurturing wife/mother) to that of national security. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover publicly spoke of the role of women and Christianity, stating 'there are no careers so important as those of homemaker and mother' and that 'so long as the American home is nurtured by the spirit of our Father in Heaven and is a centre of learning and living, America will remain secure.'[364] Thus what we see in this cycle are women who will, by and large, accept (possibly even prefer) domestic containment. When a non-conformist woman is encountered, it is the degree of treachery that distinguishes her from her male counterpart. Indeed, and essentially offering a nod to Ethel Rosenberg, it is the ideologically motivated characters of Elaine Wilben (*Walk East on Beacon!*) and Joan Cochoran (*Security Risk,* Schuster:1954 – this film is not available for viewing) that make them far more dangerous to national security. The villainous Lily Carver/Gabrielle from *Kiss Me Deadly* equally stands out as a threat, but this time through the intertwining of homosexuality and Communism. Coded as a lesbian, Lily Carver is essentially an unknowable body, and with her hidden sexuality comes uncertainty, and as such acts as a metaphor for the uncertainty of the new atomic age.

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[364] John Sbardellati, *J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 186.

A sense of (heroic) individualism figured prominently in the early cycle, and whilst not entirely absent in the middle cycle, it is most often portrayed as being inscribed, ultimately, within a global ethos of conformity. Thus, when it is expressly in service to the nation, individualism is imbued with heroic connotations. Occasionally, however, individualism is represented as self-serving, although more often it represents courageous leadership; only in this latter instance does good citizenship emerge, whereby the individual good (sometimes even heroic) deeds shall benefit the nuclear family and the nation. There are instances, however, when selfish motivations of an individual, one who avoids involvement unless personal gain may be realized, put both family and nation at risk. Indeed, Mike Hammer from *Kiss Me Deadly* is the most extreme example of a non-conformist individualistic persona. Not only does the private investigator's selfishness puts himself in harm's way, only just narrowly escaping death, there is no sense that he will ever change his ways, nor marry and thereby preserve the concept of family. Thus, Mike Hammer actually puts the nation at risk. More common, however, is the non-conformist who experiences a moment of consciousness, occurring precisely at a time when a heroic act will save the nation (or national interest in the case of the Panama Canal in *Captain Scarface*). Yet equally important, these individuals (presumably) will assert normative masculinity through marriage as exemplified by Captain Jones of *Hell and High Water* and Sam Wilton of *Captain Scarface*.   Finally, another type of non-conformist emerges during the middle cycle, and that is the case of an individual who eventually 'falls on his sword,' attempting to make things right or mitigating the damage he has caused. The title character from *A Bullet for Joey* is one such a man. Joey Victor's participation in the plot is entirely for personal gain, but in a rare moment of consciousness he sacrifices himself to save his country.

Two of the middle cycle films, *The Thief* and *The 49th Man*, function as a bridge between the clusters considered in this chapter. Both films convey an escalation of paranoia, namely the unknowable enemy from within. In particular, *The 49th Man* is the first production to develop a complex narrative around the threat of annihilation through nuclear terrorism once it has both reached the shores of and infiltrated America. Thus *The 49th Man* operates as a metaphor for the permeability of borders and the ease with which a nation could be destroyed. Our other bridge film, *The Thief*, and more specifically its central character, Dr.

Allan Fields, is an ambiguous text, yet it exists within the political moment. Indeed, the scientist turned spy behaves in such a way that his actions are not easily anticipated, though he offers an interesting reading in relation to national security and the lavender scare. Because motivation for his actions are never established, Dr. Fields is even more dangerous to the nation, one explanation (as a sign of the times) could be that he was blackmailed due to his sexual orientation. Likewise, when Dr. Fields is overcome with remorse for his actions and subsequently turns himself in to the FBI, we may liken him to Joey Victor, finally acting heroically especially since he would know that an act of treason would be punishable by execution (as it was for Ethel and Julius Rosenberg). If we are to characterize the middle cycle as protecting the nation and the American way of life by any means necessary – whether through acts of individual heroism or redemptive self-sacrifice (as demanded by Eisenhower in his inaugural address), then certainly after 1957 and the Soviet launch of *Sputnik I*, the late cycle will embody survival by any means necessary. As I shall go on to discuss in Chapter Five the late cycle coincides with a resurgence of geopolitical tensions that marking the transition from the political conservatism of Eisenhower to the democratic Kennedy presidency. Indeed, the atomic political thriller in the late cycle signifies a dramatic shift in tone, one that offers a greater emphasis on humanity, but also survival.

CHAPTER FIVE
LATE CYCLE ATOMIC POLITICAL THRILLERS
(1956 – 1962)

I do not fully share your conclusion that an end to nuclear war will come about because of realization on both sides that by using this weapon an unconscionable degree of death and destruction would result. I do think it might tend to reduce very materially the possibility of any war; but I think it would be unsafe to predict that . . . both sides would still have sense enough not to use this horrible instrument.[365]

> *- Dwight D. Eisenhower letter to Sir Winston Churchill (27 April 1956)*

I remember President Kennedy once stated... that the United States had the nuclear missile capacity to wipe out the Soviet Union two times over, while the Soviet Union had enough atomic weapons to wipe out the United States only once... When journalists asked me to comment... I said jokingly, "Yes, I know what Kennedy claims, and he's quite right. But I'm not complaining... We're satisfied to be able to finish off the United States first time round. Once is quite enough. What good does it do to annihilate a country twice? We're not a bloodthirsty people."[366]

> *- Nikita Khrushchev (1974)*

Introduction

Within the context of the Cold War historical periodization I discussed in Chapter One, the late cycle of atomic political thrillers overlaps two periods. Within this first period, between

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[365] Judith Lathrop, 'The Oppenheimer Years 1943 – 1945', *Los Alamos Science,* 4:7 (Winter/Spring 1983), 25.
[366] Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament* (New York: Little Brown & Company, 1974), 530.

1955 and 1959, not only did Nikita Khrushchev succeed in wrestling control away from Malenkov, he denounced Stalin and initiated policies of reform. The early Khrushchev years gave rise to a degree of openness, with the Soviet leader travelling abroad, attending international peace conferences, and even making a trip to America where he would visit with Eisenhower at Camp David. Despite calls for peaceful co-existence, the Soviet Union (as did the U.S.) continued to build its nuclear program, but it also leapt ahead in the space race, successfully launching the *Sputnik I* satellite in 1957. The second period, from 1959 to 1962, marked a decline in U.S.-Soviet diplomatic relations. Indeed, a series of events, including the Francis Gary Powers U-2 Spy Plane incident in May 1960, would bring the two superpowers dangerously close to nuclear confrontation. In light of this "hotting up" of the Cold War, it is notable that only six productions during the late cycle (1956-62) included the atomic trope. As I discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the atomic narratives represented America's paranoia over the nuclear threat, including the theft of atomic secrets (e.g. *The Thief*, *Walk East on Beacon!*), the possibility of nuclear terrorism on U.S. soil (e.g. *The 49th Man*) and the targeting of American interests abroad (e.g. *Captain Scarface*). The late cycle of atomic political thrillers, however, signal a significant shift in tone and narrative, with three of the narratives depicting a world in which the nuclear holocaust has finally been realized. As the mapping of films to the nuclear timeline in the figure shown below (*Figure 5.1*) we can see this increasing fear of nuclear annihilation was not unfounded.

YEAR	HISTORICAL EVENT	FILM
1956	• U.S. launches new H-bomb tests in Pacific • Fallout blows across Australia • AEC authorizes private atomic energy plants	
1957	• Soviets deploy first ICBM • *Sputnik I* launched • Committee for SANE Nuclear Policy is	• *Five Steps to Danger*

	created	
	• U.S. conducts first underground nuclear test in Nevada	
1958	• U.S. deploys ICBMs and launches space satellite • SANE airs commercial to halt nuclear testing • First meeting of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament • Beginning of the Berlin Crisis	
1959	• International concern over increase in fallout – 300% increase in atmospheric radioactivity in eastern U.S. • Two nuclear accidents in U.S.	• *City of Fear* • *On the Beach*
1960	• U.S. deploys the USS George Washington, the first nuclear-powered submarine • Partial test-ban treaty • France conducts first nuclear test in the Sahara Desert • U-2 Spy Plane Incident	
1961	• Soviet's detonate world's largest nuclear bomb, with yield of 58 megatons • U.S. launches ICBM, the *Minuteman I* • Bay of Pigs Invasion occurs and fails • Construction of the Berlin Wall begins	• *Rocket Attack U.S.A.*
1962	• The Cuban Missile crisis occurs • U.S. resumes nuclear testing following a	• *Panic in Year Zero!* • *This is Not a Test*

	3 year moratorium	
	• Electromagnetic pulse from high-altitude nuclear tests turn off street lights in Oahu, Hawaii	
	• U-2 Pilot Francis Gary Powers released	

Fig. 5.1: Late cycle atomic political thriller timeline.

The development of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM) and the effects of radioactive fallout contributed to the U.S. presidential rhetoric emphasizing the growing technology gap between the two superpowers and the need for civil defense.[367] Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the number of atomic political thrillers is nowhere near as dense as with the previous two cycles (with nineteen and eighteen films respectively). Indeed, prior to 1957, the atomic narratives were pervasive, accounting for approximately one-half of the political thrillers released during both the early and middle cycles. As film historian Mick Broderick offered in his comprehensive study of nuclear movies, the motif of the Communist as atomic spy had largely disappeared from the silver screen in the late 1950s.[368] The filmography compiled by Broderick also reveals that the atomic narratives during this period are predominately science fiction. Indeed, between 1957 and 1959, Hollywood studios released thirty-eight atomic sci-fi films in contrast to just three atomic political thrillers (*Five Steps to Danger*, Kesler:1957; *City of Fear*, Lerner:1959; and *On the Beach,* Kramer:1959). Certainly this disparity is curious, possibly suggesting a shift in the American psyche with regard to a nuclear apocalypse, and a desire to place it in a futuristic elsewhere. Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, for example, wrote of the increasing stockpile of weapons of mass destruction and how

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[367] The U.S. transitioned to underground testing in the late 1950s, whereas the Soviet Union continued with atmospheric testing until 1962. In addition, both countries would allow for Peaceful Nuclear Explosions (PNE), whereby nuclear explosives would be used for peaceful means such as to assist in large scale construction projects. The consequence of PNE was, however, radioactivity and fallout from debris, as well as blighted land and contaminated water. A limited test ban treaty was eventually signed by the U.S. and the Soviet Union and was implemented October 1963.

[368] Mick Broderick, *Nuclear Movies* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 1991), 13.

this contributed to the growing fear of the 'unconscious dangers affecting politics in a nuclear world.'[369] Jung was quite fascinated with the public's interest in aliens and UFOs during this period, and as the psychiatrist would explain in *Flying Saucers* (1959)*:*

> In the threatening situation of the world today, when people are beginning to see that everything is at stake, the projection-creating fantasy soars beyond the realm of earthly organizations and powers into the heavens, into interstellar space, where the rulers of human fate, the gods, once had their abode in the planets. . . .The recent atomic explosions on the earth, it was conjectured, had aroused the attention of these so very much more advanced dwellers on Mars or Venus, who were worried about possible chain-reactions and the consequent destruction of our planet. Since such a possibility would constitute a catastrophic threat to our neighbouring planets, their inhabitants felt compelled to observe how things were developing on earth, fully aware of the tremendous cataclysm our clumsy nuclear experiments might unleash.[370]

Amid the growing number of UFO sightings between the late 1950s and early 1960s, it would seem that the sci-fi films with an atomic trope presented a fantastical, escapist narrative that serves as a kind of metaphor for the power of the fear of the nuclear on the unconscious mind. In other words, science fiction provided an outlet for nuclear fear, whereas the atomic political thriller with its ties to historical events would be too close to the everyday realities faced by Americans. In short, the atomic political thriller would have been unsettling and therefore a less likely source of escapist entertainment. Thus the apocalyptic narratives of *On the Beach* and *Panic in Year Zero!* signify an important shift in the atomic political thriller, as I shall go on to discuss later in this chapter. However, it is also interesting to note that after 1956 there is a resurgence of the Nazi trope with *Foreign Intrigue* (Reynolds, 1956), *Operation Eichmann* (Springsteen, 1961) and *The Counterfeit Traitor* (Seaton, 1962)*.* These

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[369] Nicholas Lewin, *Jung on War, Politics and Nazi Germany: Exploring the Theory of Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (London: Karnac Books, Ltd., 2009), 333.
[370] Carl Jung, *Flying Saucers,* (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2002), 8-9.

latter two films, in conjunction with the star-laden courtroom drama *Judgment at Nuremburg* (Kramer, 1961) were particularly topical given the capture of Adolf Eichmann, a leading architect of the Holocaust, by the Israeli Mossad. Another political thriller, *The FBI Story* (LeRoy, 1959), which was within the top twenty of box-office rentals during 1959, also offered an interesting contrast during the late cycle. A star vehicle for James Stewart, *The FBI Story* is in the vein of the early cycle docufictions released between the late 1940s and the early 1950s and is reminiscent of *The House on 92nd Street* (Hathaway, 1945) and *Walk East on Beacon!* (Werker, 1952). This narrative chronicles the thirty-year career of Chip Hardesty through a series of series of vignettes in which the veteran FBI agent brings Nazis, Communists and terrorists to justice.[371]   Whilst the Communist trope is largely absent from the atomic political thrillers, this is not the case for other political thrillers after 1957. Indeed, on going geopolitical concerns in South East Asia are exemplified by the films *Stopover Tokyo* (Breen, 1957)*, Hong Kong Confidential* (Cahn, 1958)*, The Quiet American* (Mankiewicz, 1958) and, of course, *The Manchurian Candidate* (Frankenheimer, 1962). Despite the scant number of atomic political thrillers from the late cycle, nevertheless, there are two main themes: the first pointing to the missile gap (between the U.S. and U.S.S.R.) and civil defense as illustrated by *Five Steps to Danger* (Kesler, 1957)*, City of Fear* (Learner, 1959) and *Rocket Attack U.S.A.* (Mahon, 1961), and the other being an exploration of humanity in the wake of nuclear annihilation with the films *On the Beach, Panic in Year Zero!* (Milland, 1962) and *This is Not a Test* (Gadette, 1962).

No Rest for America: The Missile Gap and Civil Defense in *Five Steps to Danger* (1957), *City of Fear* (1959) and *Rocket Attack U.S.A.* (1961)

The first cluster to be considered is a curious collection of B films: *Five Steps to Danger, City of Fear* and *Rocket Attack U.S.A.*; each one of these films are of a differing production value and none were particularly successful, having failed to secure a spot on

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[371] Once again the FBI exerted significant influence over the production of *The FBI Story,* with J Edgar Hoover reportedly forcing director LeRoy to re-shoot several scenes. Additionally, Hoover was very involved with the casting of the film and the FBI director required two special agents to maintain watch over LeRoy.

Variety's list of top-grossing films. Indeed, the late cycle appears to be somewhat of a paradox given the declining numbers of atomic political thrillers between 1957 and 1962 despite growing geopolitical tension and the race to acquire, and perfect, long-range missile technology. Precisely what sets this cluster of films we are about to consider apart from our second cluster of three atomic political thrillers is a question of tone; more specifically that *Five Steps to Danger, City of Fear* and *Rocket Attack U.S.A.* do not reflect the atomic holocaust nihilism present in *On the Beach* (Kramer, 1959)*, This is Not a Test* (Gadette, 1962) and *Panic in Year Zero!* (Milland, 1962)*.* Instead, this first cluster is representative of themes that involve a displacement of Cold War fears onto the atomic and the need for containment of the woman (tropes with which we are already familiar in earlier atomic political thrillers). However, where these three films break new ground is through the inclusion of elements that are closely aligned to political discourses surrounding the space race and anxiety over the growing technology gap between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Thus, whilst the atomic theme is present in *Five Steps to Danger, City of Fear* and *Rocket Attack U.S.A.*, nevertheless, the tone is not of same qualitative degree as it is in *On the Beach, This is Not a Test* and *Panic in Year Zero!*.

As with *Kiss Me Deadly* (Aldrich, 1955)*,* the security of America once again hangs in the balance because of a female protagonist in the film *Five Steps to Danger*. Mrs. Ann Nicholson (Ruth Roman) holds vital information regarding ICBM technology that is sought by both Russian spies and the U.S. government, although neither side are aware of the exact nature of these secrets. As an American citizen originally from Germany but now living in Los Angeles, Ann has familial connections to renowned physicist and V-2 rocket designer, Reinhardt Kissel (Kurt Lindt). Dr. Kissell had fled the Russians in East Germany, but he left transcripts of his research in the care of Ann's brother, Kurt, who is still behind the Iron Curtain. Having gone back to Germany in search of her brother, Ann receives a transcript of Dr. Kissel's research, which has been etched onto a special steel mirror that resembles 'ordinary equipment for a lady's handbag.' The messenger, a friend of Kurt, directs Ann to deliver the secrets to renowned scientist before he is murdered. Upon her return to the U.S., Ann searches for Dr. Kissel but to no avail. Eventually the stress and danger becomes too much, and she suffers a nervous breakdown. Now under the care of Dr. Simmons (Werner

Klemperer), a psychiatrist, Ann still hasn't given up on locating Dr. Kissel. However, she is unaware that Dr. Simmons is actually collaborating with a Russian spy ring bent on retrieving the secrets that were given to her whilst she was in Germany. Thus, Ann poses a threat, not only because of the knowledge she has in her possession, but also because she is a woman (and therefore weak and hysterical), very much like the character Christina Bailey from the film *Kiss Me Deadly*.[372]

With the film *City of Fear,* the setting is once again Los Angeles, although rather than issues of national security and grittiness of the locale as seen in *Kiss Me Deadly*, this film promotes the role of civil defense in protecting Americans. Whereas the original narcotics plot point in *Kiss Me Deadly* was eliminated in favour of the atomic trope, changes in the Production Code made it possible for the atomic threat to subvert the drug dealing aspect of *City of Fear*. The main character of this film, Vince Ryker (Vince Edwards), is a vicious drug dealer who is currently serving an eight-year prison sentence in San Quentin Federal Penitentiary. Believing that the prison is conducting experimental drug tests using heroin, Ryker steals a canister with the intent to process and distribute in Los Angeles after a brutal and daring escape. However, unbeknownst to Ryker, the canister actually contains Cobalt-60, a radioactive material that is extremely dangerous in its present granular form. Indeed, the quantity stolen could completely devastate Los Angeles, contaminating the environment and the three million residents of the city. Even indirect exposure to Cobalt-60 over a several days will lead to radioactive poisoning and eventually death if untreated. In this regard, Ryker is reminiscent of the character Frank Bigelow (Edmond O'Brien) from the early cycle atomic political thriller *D.O.A.* (Maté, 1950). The main difference of course, is that, in this earlier film, Frank Bigelow is clearly the victim of an unjust crime. Ryker also stands apart from Bigelow given his desire to marry his girlfriend June Marlow (Patricia Blair) and to be a part of the American dream. Having successfully evaded detection, Ryker arrives in Los Angeles to work with his former partner, Eddie Crown (Joseph Mell). In a race against time, the Los Angeles Police Department initiates a massive manhunt with the assistance of Dr. John Wallace (Steven Ritch) and his specialized unit capable of detecting all levels of radioactivity**.**

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[372] The film *David Harding, Counterspy* (Nazarro, 1950) also has a female character who is unknowingly passing secrets under hypnosis to her psychiatrist, a Communist spy.

Police Chief Jensen (Lyle Talbot) and his trusted Lieutenant Mark Richards (John Archer) debate whether the public should be informed of the danger. Chief Jensen is adamant that the public has a right to know, despite Lieutenant Richards and Dr. Wallace arguing that the information will lead to mass panic. Indeed, the U.S. Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) had the daunting task of developing and marketing a civil defense campaign that emphasized national security, patriotism and managing the effects of the nuclear bomb.[373] Civil defense strategists intended to channel public fear through training, believing this would minimize the panic that would invariably follow a nuclear strike. Americans were routinely told that survival was possible, but only through planning, training and moral discipline. Nevertheless, the FCDA and its successor, the Office of Civil Defense and Mobilization, avoided publicly discussing the probable fate of industrial centres and large cities. Such locations would be prime targets during a nuclear attack, and as *City of Fear* suggests, evacuating millions of residents (even those who are calm) would be impossible. Historian Andrew Grossman suggests that the explicit marketing of civil defense propaganda to suburban dwellers was calculated to sustain a Cold War political consensus.[374]

Physical containment of the nuclear is a central theme in *City of Fear,* but so to is the need for the government to contain information through censorship. Whilst the public is aware that a dangerous man is at large, only the Police Chief, his assistant and the members of the radiological detection unit are aware of the true danger. A radio news report presented through diegetic sound illustrates how the media, at times, colluded with the government, particularly when the report down-played the significance of the 'men with strange equipment' processing the vehicle where the body of Pete Hallon (Sherwood Price) was found. Indeed, as historian Guy Oakes writes the FCDA 'exploited the press's enthusiasm for informal self-censorship as well as government oversight, using the media as marketing instruments to distribute its own version of nuclear reality under the guise of impartial reportage.'[375] Likewise, the film conveys the need for the U.S. government to occasional subvert American

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[373] Andrew Grossman, *Neither Dead nor Red: Civilian Defense and American Political Development during the Early Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 63.
[374] Ibid., 77.
[375] Guy Oaks, *The Imaginary War: Civil Defense and American Cold War Culture,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 41.

civil liberties, insisting that it does not take such actions lightly and that is necessary to ensure the security of the nation; this theme was similarly echoed in the displaced early cycle thriller *Panic in the Streets* (Kazan, 1950) in which a doctor with the U.S. Public Health Service (Richard Widmark) and a local Police captain (Paul Douglas) contemplate closing off the city of New Orleans in order to prevent an epidemic of pneumonic plague.

As previously discussed in Chapter Two, the Cold War political thriller subgenre is dominated by inexpensively made black-and-white productions that are also frequently read as *film noir*. Shot in just seven days, *City of Fear*, a low budget production, featured the cinematography of Lucien Ballard.[376] Whilst *noir* conventions are evident in some scenes, Ballard's location shooting contrasts the grittiness frequently depicted in *film noir.* Indeed, the film depicts middle-class suburban neighbourhoods rather than the slums of Los Angeles that grew out of rapid migration of the poor and working class during the 1930s and 1940s, something that Robert Aldrich captures in the middle cycle atomic political thriller *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955) discussed in Chapter Four. One such example is the scene involving the discovery of Pete Hallon's body in an abandoned car. Rather than being found in the inner city as we would expect for a long-time criminal, the car is parked on street lined by shading trees and single-family homes. Thus *City of Fear* contributes to the discourses surrounding nuclear family's inability to escape atomic age. The location filming also reinforces director Irving Learner's emphasis of *mise-en-scène* (rather than the "voice-of-God" narration as exemplified by other productions) to add authenticity to the narrative. Both master and inset shots depict the Geiger counter, but it is through diegetic sound, and more specifically the highly recognizable crackling sound of radiation detection, that affirms the importance of technology in national security. Thus, *City of Fear* identifies with another early cycle atomic thriller, *Radar Secret Service* (Newfield, 1950), in which a specialized team of government agents use radar technology to locate and neutralize the atomic threat, as well as the criminal element.

Of the three films considered in this cluster, *Rocket Attack U.S.A.,* with its extremely poor production values and clumsy acting, is one of the most bizarre films within the global

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[376] Vienna International Film Festival, <http://www.viennale.at/en/films/city-fear>

corpus of political thrillers. Released four years after the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik I*, the film was an overtly propagandistic parable in the vein of the middle cycle atomic political thriller *Invasion U.S.A.* (Green, 1952); this film clearly exploited American fears over a nuclear attack, particularly as the Cold War was again heating up. As the film opens, a voice-over narration and iconic newsreel footage of the Soviet Union, informs audiences:

NARRATOR: In the month of October 1957 the Soviet Union was successful in placing an earth satellite into orbit. In so doing, they changed the entire concept of modern warfare. The story you are about to see will be inevitable should the wrong people gain control of that government.

Indeed, the narrative suggests that a Soviet satellite was being used to gather intelligence about the United States so that the Soviet Union might actually launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike; the irony being, of course, the timing of this production coincides with the actual U-2 spy plane incident in 1960 in which U.S. pilot Frances Gary Powers was shot down whilst flying a reconnaissance mission over Soviet Union airspace. The film incorporates a *Mata Hari* trope whereby the female protagonist, Tayna (Monica Davis), a Russian who believes in American ideals, becomes the mistress of the Soviet Minister of Defense in order to provide much needed information to American CIA agent John Manston (John McKay). As with the film *Invasion U.S.A.,* the protagonist is unable to prevent the attack, thereby resulting in the launch of a Soviet ICBM armed with a nuclear warhead pointed at the United States. Whilst the narrative suggests that America has implemented a sophisticated missile defense system, ultimately it fails to stop the attack. Thus *Rocket Attack U.S.A.* invokes powerful discourses surrounding the vulnerability of America's civil defense. During the 1950s, Americans typically believed that the country could stave off total destruction, yet perception regarding individual survivability was often doubted. This paradox of perceived survivability was tied to nuclear imagery as a means of inoculating the public from the horrors of a nuclear attack. Both the FCDA and the Office of Civil Defense and Mobilization (OCDM) created a catalogue of public service films that were shown in movie theatres and on television in order to prepare

Americans for the dangers of fallout. Such a mass media campaign was deemed essential, with the FCDA concluding in 1955 that: 'each picture will be seen by a minimum of 20,000,000 persons, giving an anticipated aggregate audience of more than a half a billion for the civil defense film' of that particular year.[377] Though just as important was what wasn't shown. As historian Melvin Matthews goes on to write in his study on civil defense imagery:

> Of great significance was the fact that the dissemination of atomic imagery depended on the concurrent censoring of images from the American atomic attacks on Japan in 1945. While they provided footage of these assaults, American authorities held back both detailed information concerning the bomb's effect on the human body and some first-hand accounts of the aftermath.[378]

Whilst the belief was that the Americans would somehow be more prepared to handle the devastation and minimize the potential for hysteria and civil unrest, but the less the public knew about the real effects of the better. This certainly recalls the handling the *Lucky Dragon #5* incident (see Chapter One), which I will also consider within the context of *On the Beach* in the section below. Thus nuclear imagery in Hollywood film was an important propaganda measure, and clearly a way of bolstering support for civil defense programs and volunteerism particularly as the Eisenhower administration implemented strategies geared towards scaling back federal spending that had been deemed out of control during the Truman presidency. Achieving a balanced budget was a cornerstone issue with Eisenhower asserting that national security and a balanced budget went hand-in-glove.[379] Indeed, Eisenhower was steadfast in his plans to reduce military spending, and as historian Walter LaFerber writes:

> If Eisenhower hoped to carry out Truman's policies without Truman's budget, his only solution was to rely on the CIA and nuclear weapons that were cheaper

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[377] Melvin Matthews, *Duck and Cover, Civil Defense Images in Film and Television from the Cold War to 9/11* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2012), 7.
[378] Ibid., 7.
[379] Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped and Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 104.

than maintaining soldiers in a conventional force. In two years Eisenhower reduced Truman's military budget by nearly one-third to about $34 billion. His reliance on nuclear armaments to accomplish this reduction soon became evident as he allowed the development of the B-41 bomb of over 20 megatons, or the equivalent of 400 Hiroshima-type bombs.[380]

Critics claimed that the U.S. was in danger of falling behind the Soviet Union in missile production, something the Eisenhower administration disputed even under the shadow of *Sputnik I*. The film *Rocket Attack U.S.A.* functions within this context, contributing to the discourses on military defense spending, and at one point in the narrative a scientist laments: 'if only money spent supporting cheese prices could have been spent on missile research.' Indeed, the Gaither Report (so named after President Eisenhower's Science Advisory Committee chairman H. Rowan Gaither) offered an evaluation of the U.S. fallout shelter program. Completed in 1957, the report concluded that shelters could protect the public from a nuclear blast and fallout. However, Eisenhower was disappointed to learn the committee members had also proposed an increase in defense spending by fifty-percent in order to countermand the massive Soviet arms build-up.[381]

Rocket Attack U.S.A. is a cautionary tale in a similar vein to *Invasion U.S.A.* (1952), an early cycle atomic political thriller. The narrative echoes political rhetoric that the consequences of seemingly skewed priorities are grave and could very well result in the destruction of major population centres. Inter-cutting of actual newsreel footage of a nuclear blast with the fictional imagery of a devastated New York city (although the death toll and injuries are not revealed) recalls the docufiction conventions described in the first part of this thesis, whilst advocating the rhetoric of protecting America at all costs, a belief originating in Truman authorizing the actual bombing of Japan and Eisenhower contemplating its use in

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[380] Walter LaFerber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945 – 2006,* tenth edition (New York: McGraw Hills Company, Inc., 2008), 159.
[381] Ibid., 202; see also Kenneth D. Rose, *One Nation Underground: The Fallout Shelter in American Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 29.

Korea.[382]   Thus *Rocket Attack U.S.A.* exploits the growing anxiety over the missile gap, an issue that made its way into Kennedy presidential campaign.

The idea that the American public would become victims of complacency was a concern, that a casual attitude towards the nuclear threat would lead to a failure to follow appropriate civil defense measures. As cautionary tales, the civil defense narratives frequently used imagery to portray those who fail to conform (consequently those who ignore civil defense will perish) as opposed to the patriotic Americans who behave heroically. As we have seen, most of the narratives within the global corpus are driven more by individualism than any sense of community, and the three films considered within this cluster are no exception. With the film *Rocket Attack U.S.A.,* by and large, the fate of America rests with Central Intelligence agent John Manston, although ultimately he is unsuccessful in preventing the launch of the Soviet ICBM. This is similarly true for the character of Ann Nicholson from the film *Five Steps to Danger.* Although it takes time to convince John Emmett that her story is credible and therefore that helping her means protecting the nation from the Communists. Only Ann knows with certainty that the Dr. Kissel she they meet at the New Mexico research laboratory is actually a fraud. Thus these films continue the concept of individual acts of heroism as conveyed in the middle cycle. Indeed, even one of the few ensemble atomic political thrillers, *Shack Out on 101* (see Chapter Four), nonetheless, is in keeping with this sense of individualism, with each character having a specific role to play and, in the end, having a specific leader emerge from the group. Indeed, the actions of the main characters from *Five Steps to Danger, City of Fear* and *Rocket Attack U.S.A.* whilst having a (potentially) profound impact on the unravelling of the narrative, do so in an individualistic fashion, seemingly ignoring a sense of community. Such is not the case, however, with the other three atomic political thrillers of this late cycle: *Panic in Year Zero!, This is Not a Test* and *On the Beach.* Rather these films, which I shall now discuss in a comparative way, offered a surprising shift in narrative. Indeed, what sets them apart from other atomic political thrillers

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[382] In an interview, Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis contended that explicit public statements from the Eisenhower administration were made about the possible use of nuclear weapons if a ceasefire could not be reached. This was followed up by even more explicit statements that nuclear weapons may be used if the ceasefire was violated < http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/bomb/filmmore/reference/interview/gaddis7.html>

is the strikingly powerful way in which they stand as a witness to the political culture in relation to the atomic as well as to the social impact of atomic holocaust on a community.

After the Bomb: An Exploration in Humanity in *Panic in Year Zero!* (1962)*, This is Not a Test* (1962) and *On the Beach* (1959)

The film *On the Beach* has been read as both a drama and science fiction film, but in this section I shall argue that it is a stand out amongst the late cycle atomic political thrillers, particularly when considered in a cluster with two other nuclear apocalyptic films, *Panic in Year Zero!* (Milland, 1962) and *This is not a Test* (Gadette, 1962). Indeed, the films *Panic in Year Zero!* and *This is not a Test,* with a soft narrative outcome, conveyed a hope for survival, a very different message from *On the Beach.* Whilst the post-nuclear war trope was common to the science-fiction genre (the film *Five* [Oboler, 1951] was an early example), such devastating and apocalyptic consequences was not uncommon in material produced for television, but remained largely unexplored amongst feature- length political thrillers until the late cycle. As discussed in previous chapters, the context and justification surrounding atomic explosions was, by and large, related to the concept of 'any means necessary' to protect America. Yet, with the films I am now considering, the theme of a full-scale atomic apocalypse was new terrain within the political thriller narrative. Indeed, the films of this cluster not only stand apart from the discussion above on *Five Steps to Danger, City of Fear* and *Rocket Attack U.S.A.*, but also within the context of the global corpus of films under consideration.

Collectively *Panic in Year Zero!, This is Not a Test* and *On the Beach* convey a substantially different tone from other atomic political thrillers, breaking new terrain in the representation of America as either about to be or having been "nuked". The latter two films adopt a theme that has frequently been woven into science-fiction narratives and is something that film historian Joyce Evans calls the myth of the heroic survivors. Evans explains how this myth functions to reassure citizens that despite the apparent destruction of civilization, it would still be possible to arise from the ruins and rebuild a vastly improved society. Evans goes on to write:

The post disaster landscape served as a convenient testing ground for the old virtues of self-reliance and simple living, proving that American institutions and values were eternal and natural to humankind. Although the use of nuclear power had not exactly provided the predicted "atomic utopia," at least it had worked to clear the slate so that a new and improved America could begin afresh.[383]

Much along these lines, what distinguishes *Panic in Year Zero!* and *This is Not a Test* from *On the Beach is* the notion of survival — in the first two the myth is asserted, in the latter, completely laid asunder. Additionally, the former two films similarly portray personal selfishness in the wake of a nuclear disaster, but that somehow mankind will survive and rebuild civilization.

The differing production values are evident within this cluster, with *Panic in Year Zero!* and *This is Not a Test* clearly belonging to the exploitation market. Over a decade earlier, in 1946, *Variety* described the exploitation film, as one that contained 'timely or currently controversial subject which can be exploited and capitalized on, in publicity and advertising.'[384] However, by the mid-1950s, exploitation films were synonymous with quickly conceived, low-budget productions that were often bizarre and controversial, but also timely. In the case of *Panic in Year Zero!,* the film was produced and distributed by American International Pictures (AIP), a company mostly identified as producers of exploitation films. Ray Milland, an accomplished actor who, at one time, was considered one of Paramount's most bankable stars, had by this time started to direct, but also accept roles in low-budget exploitation films, including *Panic in Year Zero!*. *Boxoffice* would go on to report of the Milland film that it was 'well produced on a modest budget,' as well as being 'timely and suspenseful.'[385] Indeed, the July release was a mere three months before the Cuban Missile Crisis (October, 1962). It was also standard for *Boxoffice* magazine to compile reviews from

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[383] Evans, 136–37.
[384] Ibid., 83.
[385] Boxoffice, 'Panic in Year Zero!!', *The Vault,* 81:11 (1962), 73.

other industry trade publications that included *Film Daily, Variety* and *Hollywood Reporter*, and overall reviews were positive.   As for *This is not a Text,* Frederic Gadette who wrote, produced and directed the film, he started his career in community theatre before moving on to direct television. However, little information about Gadette or the production is available. Moreover, this was the only film released by GPA Productions and there were no references to *This is not a Test* by *Boxoffice,* seemingly as if the film was destined for obscurity.

Nevertheless, as we shall see, *Panic in Year Zero!* and *This is not a Test* coincide with the rhetoric of the Eisenhower administration, despite being released in 1962 (during the Kennedy administration). Moreover, many of the strategies represented in both films are modelled after the early civil defense program implemented by the National Security Resource Board in 1950. The similarities to two novellas by Ward Moore, entitled *Lot* (1953) and *Lot's Daughter* (1954), are also evident in *Panic in Year Zero!,* thereby prompting some film source materials to acknowledge screenplay by writers Jay Simms and John Morton.[386] However, Moore never received an original story credit for *Panic in Year Zero!;* the story was subsequently attributed to Jay Simms.[387] There is also a notable similarity between *Panic in Year Zero!* and the 1954 novel *Tomorrow!* by Philip Wylie, a prolific novelist and noted cultural critic (see Chapter One and Two for my discussion of Wylie and momism). During the 1950s, Wylie was an outspoken proponent of civil defense, and his novel offers opposing views of two neighboring fictional cities. One city actively pursues civil defense, whereas the other rejects it, claiming that such expenditures are wasteful.   At the time the nuclear war occurs in Wylie's narrative, those who chose to disregard civil defense have either been killed or severely injured. The author then goes on to describe a phoenix-like rebirth for the city of civil defense practitioners: "those [cities] that had been bombed provided people with a surge of exhilaration, for the bombing proved an ultimate blessing furnishing a brand-new chance to

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[386] IMDB 'Panic in Year Zero!',
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0056331/fullcredits?ref_=tt_ov_wr#writers>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]
[387] Both *Lot* and *Lot's Daughter* described a nuclear holocaust and its consequences, including the motorized exodus from Los Angeles.

build a world brand-new – and infinitely better."[388] Indeed, the tenor of both *Panic in Year Zero!* and *This is not a Test* have some direct correspondence to President Kennedy's assertion that civil defense strategies could still be viable. In a radio and television broadcast on the night of 25 July 1961, the American people were alerted to the Berlin crisis and the imminent threat of nuclear war with the Soviet Union, with President Kennedy stating:

> In the event of an attack, the lives of families which are not hit in a nuclear blast and fire can still be saved-if they can be warned to take shelter and if that shelter is available. We owe that kind of insurance to our families – and to our country.[389]

Indeed, the construction of a home fallout shelter was less about promoting survivability and security, as it was an illusion of security. The U.S. government wanted citizens to feel as though they were contributing to their own safety, and in doing so, the sentiments that the government had abandoned or neglected them would be minimized. To this end, civil defense was less about survival as it was a means of managing anxiety amongst the public.

Whilst the films *Panic in Year Zero!* and *This is not a Test* emphasize protecting the family at all costs, with both narratives portraying anti-social behaviour and brutal self-interest as a primary means of survival. This kind of anti-humanitarian survival narrative was certainly contradictory to contemporary civil defense messages in which survivors of a nuclear attack had a moral obligation to help society recover and rebuild good citizenship; it was this perceived relationship between self and nation that was deemed the only way to assure victory**.** Thus, in a sense, these two films may have served a propagandistic purpose, encouraging Americans to reject the images of self-interest (as projected in these two films

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[388] Wylie's 1963 novel *Triumph* is far more graphic in its portrayal of nuclear war, and ironically, he reverses his views on civil defense. Instead his later novel points out the problems of actually getting into a shelter. See also Rose, 47.

[389] Steven R. Goldzwig and George N. Dionisopoulos, *In a Perilous Hour: The Public Address of John F. Kennedy* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), 167; see also Robert A. Jacobs, 'There are no Civilians; We are All at War: Nuclear War Shelters and Survival Narratives during the Early Cold War', *The Journal of American Culture,* 30:4 (2007), 401.

until their near end) and to realize the virtues of behaving in a manner beneficial both to community and to nation. By the time of the late cycle, issues surrounding survival and the interest of the family were part of the public discourse, including **t**he ethics of killing (one another) in order to survive following a nuclear attack.

The film *Panic in Year Zero!* depicts how an average middle-class American family would respond to a nuclear holocaust, and the extreme measures taken by Harry Baldwin (Ray Milland) to ensure the survival of his wife and children   Film historian Jack G. Shaheen writes of the 'trite philosophical handwringing about civilization, love and survival.'[390] Shaheen then goes on to write how *Panic in Year Zero!* is interesting 'for its philosophical naiveté, and as a window back to those years when *Life* magazine was printing instructions on how to build bomb shelters in backyards.'[391] Harry Baldwin and his family, which includes wife Ann (Jean Hagen) and teenage children Rick (Frankie Avalon) and Karen (Mary Mitchell), are forced to react when they witnesses the flashes of hydrogen bombs over Los Angeles; it is at this moment that Harry Baldwin's only thought, having decided that civil unrest and looting poses the greatest threat and not radioactive fallout, is of survival — which as we have discussed was integral to actual civil defense discourses. Very quickly Harry Baldwin is transformed from complacent and reluctant citizen to a selfish and ruthless individual espousing a philosophy of "every-man-for-himself."   Becoming increasingly violent and cynical, Harry Baldwin hopes to take advantage of the lack of information in order to acquire as many supplies as necessary to ensure his family's survival in the hills of California, even when it means taking it by force. Rick quickly picks up on this change and follows his father's lead by holding a shotgun on the hardware store owner; he even tells his mother 'We are on our own Ma. No rules, regulations or laws.' Wife Ann, however, is unable to accept this breakdown in civility and social order, which leads her husband to forcefully and unsurprisingly assert his position as sole leader of the family unit, thus embodying, incidentally, prevailing contemporary attitudes on patriarchy (communicated for example

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[390] Jack G. Shaheen ed., 'Panic in Year Zero', in *Nuclear War Films* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 46.
[391] Ibid., 46.

through women's magazines such as *Ladies Home Journal*).[392] Harry's attitude and subsequent treatment of Ann throughout much of the narrative was that as his wife, she should remain silent and obedient; such an attitude is evident in other films within the global corpus, including the *Atomic City* (Hopper, 1952)*, My Son John* (McCarey, 1952)*,* and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (Hitchcock, 1956). Despite the isolating circumstances, therefore, the Baldwin family maintain what at the time were considered normative gender roles, with the men responsible for security and hunting whilst the women continue with the routine domestic tasks of cooking and laundry.

As the narrative unfolds, *Panic in Year Zero!* depicts several events that are responsible for altering the philosophical trajectory of the two parents. First, there is the rape of daughter Karen, prompting a sudden reversal in Ann, who, until the attack, firmly held on to her belief in and hope for humanity. Then there is the rescue of Marilyn (Joan Freeman), a young woman held captive by Karen's rapists. Although his father is initially reluctant to help the young woman**,** Rick coerces him into action and in helping to rescue Marilyn, he is eventually able to feel regret for his previous actions. The final restoration of humanity will only be realized when the Baldwin family and Marilyn leave the camp in order to get Rick medical attention after he is shot (by Marilyn's last captor). The family is fortunate enough to find a compassionate doctor, someone who remained behind at great personal risk and is willing to provide Rick with life saving medical attention. Thus the film offers a powerful message that survival of civilization, and more importantly the nuclear family, can only occur by embracing humanism over individualism.

Selfish individualism is similarly depicted in *This is not a Test*, but is eventually it is supplanted by humanism as a means of survival. Nevertheless, attitudes towards civil defense are in marked contrast to *Panic in Year Zero!*. As I have discussed, Americans generally accepted the premise of civil defense after the Soviet Union tested their first atomic bomb in 1949. However, when *This is not a Test* was released in 1962, attitude**s** towards civil defense were changing despite on-going efforts by the U.S. government and research

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[392] Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was first published in 1963, and although attitudes were beginning to change, the film *Panic in Year Zero! (*released in 1962) still embodied 1950s values with regard to the family unit and the role of wife and mother.

institutes such as the Rand Corporation to promote the approach as a viable means for reducing the number of casualties during a nuclear war.[393] Additionally, tensions that eventually culminated in the Berlin Crisis in 1962 prompted President Kennedy to pen an open letter to the American people on the value of civil defense preparedness, which was published in a 1961 special edition of *Life Magazine*.[394] Whilst *This is not a Test* echo real concerns of the Office of Civil Defense, namely how to ensure public cooperation for orderly evacuation from major population centres, it also questions the value of the "expedience" bomb shelter in the age of the hydrogen bomb. It also reveals how poorly civil defense propaganda prepared the average American citizen; no one seems to have a clue what he or she should do to preserve life (perhaps with the exception of the grandfather who sends the young couple off into a cave for shelter). Indeed, the character of Deputy Sheriff Dan Colter (Seamon Glass) as a brutish and seemingly ill-informed enforcer of antiquated civil defense tactics serves as a strong critique of those who too rigid, and continue to hold onto strategies that were better suited to 1945.

In *This is not a Test,* a lone patrol man, Deputy Colter, receives an early morning directive to establish a roadblock along a rural mountain highway located somewhere in central California. After detaining several vehicles, the motorists and the patrolman learn of the impending attack. There is also a directive for local law enforcement to use any means necessary to keep the peace, which includes shooting any looters along with controlling vehicle congestion as residents attempt to evacuate population centres. Consequently, Deputy Colter takes a strong-arm approach to keeping the peace amongst initially irritated, and later frightened motorists. After he is notified by radio dispatch of the high alert condition, Deputy Colter gruffly begins stopping motorists without offering any explanation. The first vehicle is that of local resident Jacob Saunders (Thayer Roberts) who happens to be travelling with his granddaughter Juney (Aubrey Martin). "Gramps," as called by Juney, is a kindly law-abiding man, and as the narrative unfolds, it is apparent that Jacob Saunders

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[393] John C. Polanyi, 'Armaments Policies for the Sixties', *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists,* 17:10 (December 1961), 403.

[394] This issue of *Life Magazine* also included a photographic essay with plans for constructing a bomb shelter. See John F. Kennedy, 'A Message to You from the President', *Life Magazine,* 51:11 (15 September 1961), 95.

embodies a sense of humanism that is in many ways reminiscent of Ann Baldwin from *Panic in Year Zero!*.   Yet Gramps is also like Harry Baldwin, as he represents a kind of patriarchal force intent on protecting his granddaughter. Ultimately it is through Juney and Peter (Don Spruance), the last of the motorists to arrive at the roadblock, that Gramps is able to hold onto hope for the future of civilization. Indeed, Jacob Saunders not only devises the survival plan for the young couple, but he has decided to remain behind, intent on watching the events unfold from a ridge which will result in certain death.

The next three sets of motorists detained by Deputy Colter (a hip upstart couple, a truck driver and murderous lunatic hitchhiker, and the childless middle-class couple) are also important to the narrative in that they offer a series of distinctly different responses to the impending nuclear disaster as well as a commentary on social and economic conditions within America. The obviously intoxicated hip couple, Cheryl Hudson (Mary Morlas) and boyfriend Joe Baragi (Mike Green), are openly rebellious, to the extent where Joe repeatedly addresses Deputy Colter as "pops." Despite having adopted some of the counterculture traits that would help shape the 1960s, both Cheryl and Joe desperately want to achieve the American dream. Joe believes the sudden windfall from gambling will bring them the kind of happiness they associate with middle-class life, but the childless couple, the hapless Sam Barnes (Norman Winston) and his wife Karen Barnes (Carol Kent), actually embody the emptiness of such a dream   Given their affluence, Mr. and Mrs. Barnes characterize the American dream, yet they are clearly unhappy in their marriage, whilst a small lap dog serves as a surrogate child. As for the two singletons, Al Weston the truck driver and his murderous lunatic passenger Clint Delaney, these two characters act as ciphers that trigger compassion. Seeing Karen Barnes' unhappiness, Al Weston (Alan Austin) is solicitous, thereby allowing her to realize a brief moment of happiness, although presumably the punishment for this sexual transgression (with Al) is her abduction by the looters from the nearby city. Juney is similarly compassionate and is not afraid to engage in a conversation with Clint Delaney (Ron Starr), prompting the troubled young man to admit that she is the only one who has been kind to him and for that reason she is the only one he will allow to live. Indeed this thread of humanism embodied by the grandfather, the granddaughter, and the truck driver is reminiscent of *On the Beach,* with the three characters also serving as a counterpoint to

ineffective and rigid Deputy Colter, the self-serving hipster couple, and the hysterical Sam Barnes.   On the one hand, then, the current state of civil defense is questioned, and, on the other, selfishness is punished: those who put their individual needs above the group Colter, the hipster couple and Sam Barnes all perish.

On the Beach, as I have already indicated, was released in 1959 thereby placing the production two years earlier than *Panic in Year Zero!* and *This is not a Test* — and within the Eisenhower administration era.   Unlike our other two films within this cluster, all of the characters are treated with sensitivity as was intended by Nevil Shute. The literary source is quite specific, with the characters facing imminent doom as a deadly radiation cloud is set to arrive in Australia, yet the characters also become the face of compassion. Set a mere five years in the future, *On the Beach* would have resonated with audiences given growing global concerns over atmospheric testing and radioactive fallout. Producer-director, Kramer also (correctly) believed that audiences would not ignore his latest star vehicle with *On the Beach* enjoyed respectable returns despite conflicting reactions to the subject matter amongst the industry trade papers. For example, *Variety* (1959) described the film as: 'a leaden shroud . . . The spectator is left with a sick feeling that he's had a preview of Armageddon, in which the contestants lost,' yet such sentiments were not enough to keep audiences away.[395] Not only did the film rise to number eight on *Variety's* box office rental figures, *On the Beach* was critically acclaimed, receiving multiple award nominations from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) and the Academy Awards.[396] *New York Times* film critic Bosley Crowther described *On the Beach* as a deeply moving picture, with death and annihilation 'specified at the beginning in the most candid and awesome terms.'[397] From the opening scenes of the film, the audience is made aware of the apocalyptic narrative through the diegetic sound of a radio broadcast:

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[395] Joyce A. Evans, *Celluloid Mushroom Cloud: Hollywood and the Atomic Bomb* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 148.

[396] The top five films on the domestic box office returns included *Ben-Hur* (Wyler, 1959)*, Sleeping Beauty* (Geronimi, 1959)*, Some Like It Hot* (Wilder, 1959)*, North by Northwest* (Hitchcock, 1959) and *Rio Bravo* (Hawks, 1959).

[397] Bosley Crowther, 'On the Beach (1959)', *The New York Times,* (18 December 1959), <http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9F01E3D8103CE63BBC4052DFB4678382649EDE>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

ANNOUNCER: . . scientists disagree as to when radiation will reach Australia. The atomic war has ended but the Prime Minister reports no proof of survival of human life anywhere but here.

Thus *On the Beach* presented an inescapable hopelessness, which director Kramer and screenwriter John Paxton made painfully clear through several relationships and characterizations that function to mirror each other, thus deepening the sense of despair, but, as I shall go on to show later, also strengthening the message of collective humanity at its most decent. At the core of the narrative are two nuclear families: the very physically present Royal Australian Navy Lieutenant Peter Holmes (Anthony Perkins), his wife Mary (Donna Anderson) and infant daughter Jennifer; and the structurally absent nuclear family of U.S. Navy Commander Dwight Towers (Gregory Peck), whose wife and two children perished in the nuclear attack, so all that remains is a photograph of the family. The other key mirroring is of two individuals who are outsiders, Julian Osborne (Fred Astaire) and Moira Davidson (Ava Gardner). Although they are alcoholics, both Julian and Moira demonstrate great clarity when it comes to understanding the meaning and folly of the devastation wreaked by nuclear technology and the race for arms, although I shall return to this mirroring function later in this chapter.

The notion that there can be a rebirth (of civilization) through young couples such as Marilyn and Rick Baldwin from *Panic in Year Zero!* and Juney and Peter in *This is Not A Test,* can never be experienced in the film *On the Beach*. Spectators observe how the last known survivors of a full-scale nuclear war carry out the rituals of daily life as they prepare for the end. Indeed, this is a reality that is particularly troubling for Peter and Mary Holmes, whose daughter Jennifer will never even reach her first birthday. Australia, which serves as the backdrop, was still seen as a kind of new frontier (akin to American west from a previous century) despite the film being set a mere five years in the future, in the early 1960s. Although seemingly untouched by bombs, the Australians are well aware death is imminent, but first they will endure radiation sickness as the fallout is dispersed by the wind, much in the

way real-life crew of the Japanese fishing boat, the *Lucky Dragon #5,* were exposed following the Bravo test in 1954 (as discussed in Chapter Four). Moreover, it is as though the film *On the Beach* anticipated the pessimism that would lace Kennedy's presidential rhetoric. In an address before the General Assembly of the United Nations, President Kennedy stated:

> Today, every inhabitant of this planet must contemplate the day when this planet may no longer be habitable. Every man, woman and child lives under a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident or miscalculation or by madness. The weapons of war must be abolished before they abolish us. [398]

Whilst the gravity of nuclear proliferation was not lost during the 1950s, Eisenhower also approached the issue in a way meant to establish balance between fears over on going nuclear armament and the potential for peaceful uses of atomic energy. In the 1953 *Atoms for Peace* speech, which was presented to the *407th Plenary Meeting* of the United Nations General Assembly, Eisenhower offered:

> My country wants to be constructive, not destructive. It wants agreements, not wars, among nations. . . . So my country's purpose is to help us move out of this dark chamber of horrors into the light, to find a way by which the minds of men, the hopes of men, the souls of men everywhere, can move forward toward peace and happiness and well being.[399]

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[398] John F. Kennedy, 'JFK Address at U.N. General Assembly' (25 September 1961), <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/DOPIN64xJUGRKgdHJ9NfgQ.aspx>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]
[399] Dwight D. Eisenhower, 'Atoms for Peace (8 Dec 1953)', *Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum and Boyhood Home* (24 Aug 2011), <http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/education/bsa/citizenship_merit_badge/speeches_natio nal_historical_importance/atoms_for_peace.pdf> [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

The language chosen by Eisenhower, though cautious at times, maintained an overall the tone that was actually quite hopeful in contrast to Kennedy's address eight years later.[400] Once again, it is possible to see that the paradox of nuclear cultural discourse existed with both men, and that Kennedy, as did his predecessor, had similarly adopted the doctrine of mutual assured destruction. Americans were keenly aware of the possibilities, which fostered a growing anxiety. Such sentiments were even felt by director Stanley Kramer, and he would later say of the period:

> The tension between the United Sates and the Soviet Union was so constant and ominous, that many people expected nuclear war to begin at any moment and end within a half and hour with everyone dead or dying.[401]

Advanced copies of Nevil Shute's novel *On the Beach* had been sent to a variety of American politicians, including then U.S. senator John F. Kennedy, as well as senior military personnel. By 1957, *On the Beach* had been serialized by more than forty American newspapers, with Kramer quickly acquiring the film rights.[402]

As an independent producer and later director, Stanley Kramer worked within as well as against the Hollywood studio system. Having been labelled "Red" and "Red baiter," Kramer universally became known for liberal message films; he was also once called 'the boy wonder of Hollywood,' but eventually came to think of himself as a 'discarded liberal.'[403] Despite being accused of being a 'tidy moralizer,' Kramer was nevertheless brave enough to make films about unpopular and important socio-political issues. In the article 'Rethinking Stanley Kramer,' Saul Austerlitz contends that the producer turned director was 'responsible for some of the most socially responsible dramas of the late 1950s and early 1960s.' Yet

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[400] Peter Lavoy, 'The Enduring Effects of Atoms for Peace', *Arms Control Today* (December 2003), <http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2003_12/Lavoy>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]
[401] Stanley Kramer, *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World – a Life in Hollywood* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1997), 156–57.
[402] Gideon Haigh, 'Shute the Messenger: How the End of the World Came to Melbourne', *The Monthly* (June 2007), < http://www.themonthly.com.au/monthly-essays-gideon-haigh-shute-messenger-how-end-world-came-melbourne-533>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]
[403] Donald Spoto, *Stanley Kramer. Filmmaker* (New York: Samuel French, 1990), 12.

influential critics Andrew Sarris and Pauline Kael considered Kramer a kind of anathema whereas Daniel Spoto writes:

> . . . you have the sense of a man driven mostly by his own feelings, and although this frequently gets him into trouble (because of certain lack of humourlessness and lack of creative reflection), it has also given him a record of considerable fearlessness in dealing with timely issues.[404]

And the adaptation of *On the Beach*, a contemporary novel by noted scientist and British ex-pat Nevil Shute, certainly reflects this thought. Kramer went on to write in his autobiography:

> Why should I be so insane as to make a film about the hideous aftermath of atomic war? At the time there were a lot of people in Hollywood asking that question, not because they didn't know my answer but because they were sure the picture would lose a lot of money. . . I thought war was bound to happen eventually unless the nations of the world reassessed the dangers of atomic weapons and got it under control. I agreed with Nevil Shute's story that the entire world was doomed to desolation unless we reached international agreement about the use of this unprecedented power.[405]

Initially, United Artists, the financier and distributer of *On the Beach*, strenuously objected to the project, believing that audiences would pan a film in which all the characters are wiped out. Whatever reservations UA executives may have had, eventually, the studio agreed to fund the film, which Kramer attributed to loyalty. Kramer recounts in his autobiography:

> I thought they were wrong. In my self-confidence, I could see the picture causing a worldwide stir because it would be so disturbing and controversial. . . . it challenged the essential values of people everywhere. Its subject was as

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[404] Ibid., 23.
[405] Kramer, 156-57.

serious and compelling as any every attempted in a motion picture --- the very destruction of mankind and the entire planet. That's why I cast it so heavily with big, popular stars.[406]

Kramer rightly surmised that the public would not ignore a film comprised not only of a well known, but likeable cast. Indeed, this was not lost on Nevil Shute, and in a letter to Kramer, the author wrote:

> The dramatic impact of this story depends upon the fact that perfect, inoffensive characters have a disaster descend upon then which they have done nothing to merit or create. This thing can happen to very good, serious, pleasant people. To create this dramatic impact, I created a set of characters who were better, pleasanter, and more meritorious than they would be in real life.[407]

Indeed, the sense of humanity and community in the face of certain doom is achieved through a mirroring of characters within the narrative. Unlike the film *This is Not a Test,* the characters are not simply "thrown together" through unfortunate circumstances. The respective arcs of the major characters portrayed in *On the Beach* are shaped through the relationships they have established with another. One prominent mirroring is that of the mature Commander Dwight Towers, a married man with two school age children, and his young Australian counter-part, Lieutenant Peter Holmes. Dwight Towers was away at sea (safely under water in a nuclear submarine) throughout the war, which meant that his wife Sharon and their two children were back in America to face the nuclear disaster alone. Sometime after the war had concluded, the nuclear submarine *Sawfish* was able to resurface, but Towers and his crew discovered dangerously highly radiation levels still existed, thereby forcing the submarine to submerge once again and continue onward towards Australia in the hopes of finding safer conditions. That he was away from his family at the time of the disaster

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[406] Kramer, 158.
[407] Phillip Davey, 'When Hollywood Came to Melbourne: Fallout from *On the Beach* – 50 Years On', <http://www.acmi.net.au/on_the_beach_essay.htm>, [accessed 1 Sept 2014]

has been a heavy burden, and now it is something that Peter Holmes must also face.   Peter, as a young career Naval officer, presumably has not spent much time away from his wife. And now, most certainly, never has been away from his infant daughter. Having been given orders to serve as a liaison officer aboard the *Sawfish* during a reconnaissance mission back to North America, Peter is naturally quite anxious about the trip. He is not afraid of the trip itself, but rather whether he will return in time to care for Mary and Jennifer once the deadly radiation cloud arrives. In essence, Mary and Jennifer will endure a similar fate as the Commander Towers' family, but whilst the anxiety each man faces is similar, one is tempered with regret whilst the other with fear. For Dwight Towers, there is the sorrow for not having been with his family in a time of crisis, not knowing the suffering they may have endured, whereas Peter Holmes, is fully aware of what Mary and Jennifer will face, but is fearful he will not be home in time to take care of his family.

Shortly after arriving in Australia, Commander Towers enters into an amorous relationship with Moira Davidson, but he is clearly unable to let go of his identity as father and husband; at one point he even mistakenly calls Moira by his wife's name, Sharon. This is a barrier in their relationship and before leaving on the reconnaissance mission, Dwight Towers tells Moira:

> TOWERS: You see, in the Navy, during the war, I got used to the idea that something might happen to me, I might not make it. I also got used to the idea of my wife and children safe at home. They'd be all right no matter what. What I didn't reckon with was that in this, this kind of monstrous war, something might happen top them and not to me. Well it did, and I can't, I can't cope with it.

Although as discussed above, Commander Towers is primarily a mirror of Peter Holmes, his sensitivity and desire for the future of his family also mirrors that of Mary Holmes. Most of the main characters, including her husband Peter, are resigned to their fate, but Mary, as a new and young mother, refuses to accept the end is near.   Indeed, she claims that there 'has to be hope,' and to this end, Mary cannot bring herself to listen to Peter when he attempt to

describe how to use the suicide pills in in the event the *Sawfish* does not return from the reconnaissance mission in time:

> MARY: You're not trying to tell me you want me to kill Jennifer?

> PETER: Mary, don't be an idiot.   Suppose you get it first? What are going to do? Struggle by yourself until you drop? Jenny might live for days and be helpless in her crib with you dead on the floor? Don't you see that? Don't you see it? Darling, I'm sorry. I can't believe it myself half the time.

> MARY: Lets not discuss it any more right now Peter. Anyway, Mrs. Hildreth's husband was talking to someone the other day who said it isn't coming here after all. He says it's slowing.

> PETER: For God's sake, Hildreth's a dam fool.

Commander Towers, like Mary Holmes, believes so much in the nuclear family that he had never considered anything other than growing old with his wife Sharon, and as such that he would ever fall in love again. But there is also a stoic pragmatism that aligns Commander Towers to Peter. The young lieutenant has no choice but to accept the painful reality that death is mere months away and that there is no future other than contemplating when it would be the appropriate time to administer the government issued suicide pills. As a career Naval officer, Peter obeys orders to go on the reconnaissance mission, but it is also love and devotion to family that prompts him to acquire the suicide pills (so his family can be spared the painful death by radiation) even before the government begins issuing them to the public.

As painful as the loss of family is in the narrative, so too is the sense of being alone as exemplified in the other major mirroring of the two single outsiders, Moira Davidson, played by Gardner, and that of Julian Osborne, played by Astaire. Indeed, several of the most poignant moments in *On the Beach* are scenes that revolve around Julian or Moira. Clearly

members of a tight knit social circle (that includes Peter and Mary Holmes and more recently Dwight Towers), nonetheless, Julian and Moira are still outsiders and turn to alcohol to cope. At one point Moira unabashedly admits to Commander Towers that she and Julian are the "town drunks." Independent and with an admitted history of promiscuity, Moira embodies the vulnerability of a woman who has neither realized love nor the happiness of family life, something which clearly sets her apart from Mary Holmes. As the evening reception for Commander Towers winds down (at the home of Peter and Mary Holmes), an extremely intoxicated Moira pointedly asks the guest of honour about the radiation:

> MOIRA: Why is it taking so long? Can you explain it to me? Nobody can explain it to me. And don't tell me about those damn winds again . . . All I want to know is if everybody was so smart, why didn't they know what would happen? . . . I - - I can't take it. I – [sighs] oh, yes, I can take it. But it's unfair. Its unfair because I didn't do anything and nobody I know did anything.

The frustration expressed by Moira not only represents the anxiety over nuclear proliferation and testing, but it also highlights the morality whereby U.S. policy allows innocent lives to be put at risk.[408] By the time *On the Beach* was released, concern over radiation and fallout, which had previously been in the domain of government agents and scientists, was part of popular discourse. In addition, the reticence on the part of the U.S. government to disclose certain information (collected from scientific studies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) also contributed the growing public concern over the feasibility of nuclear deterrence and civil defense.

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[408] Indeed, such a compliant about limited information had a basis in fact when the *Daigo Fukuryu Maru* (aka *Lucky Dragon #5*) tuna fishing boat was exposed to radioactive fallout for three hours when the United States conducted the Castle Bravo nuclear test at Bikini Atoll in March 1954.Not only did the US Government refused to disclose the composition of the ash, claiming that it was a matter of national security, the Eisenhower administration denied the extent of contamination To add insult to injury, the US Federal Department of Agriculture imposed strict restrictions on the import of tuna.

The character of Julian is an outspoken nuclear scientist, clearly the embodiment of those scientists who promoted the pacifist, anti-nuclear movement.[409] Julian passionately lambasts the insanity of warmongering in a way that would echo the ethical concerns expressed by J. Robert Oppenheimer over the development of the H-bomb in the late 1940s and into the 1950s.[410] There are two particularly powerful scenes, the first relatively early in the film and the second as he is aboard the *Sawfish* assisting with the reconnaissance mission. In a drunken exchange Julian tells another partygoer that whilst the war wasn't an accident, it was a mistake:

> JULIAN: . . . it was carefully planned down to the tiniest mechanical and emotional detail . . . In the end, somehow granted the time for examination, we shall find that our so called civilization was gloriously destroyed by a handful of vacuum tubes and transistors . . . maybe we were the blind mechanics of disaster, but you don't pin the guilt on the scientists that easily. You might as well pin it on, motherhood. . . . the scientist signed petition after petition, but nobody listened.   There was a choice, it was to build the bombs and use them or risk the United States, the Soviet Union and the rest of us . . . we fought. We expunged them. We didn't do such a bad job on ourselves. . . . We're all doomed, you know. The whole silly, drunken, pathetic lot of us. Doomed by the air we're about to breathe. We haven't got a chance.

This first speech by Julian was a clear nod towards the *National Committee for Sane Nuclear Policy*. Known simply as SANE, this grassroots organization was comprised of pacifist and

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[409] Ironically there is nothing to suggest that Fred Astaire or any of the other leading cast members of *On the Beach* were involved with Hollywood for SANE.
[410] Although Oppenheimer had originally favored the development of the hydrogen bomb whilst working on the Manhattan Project, over time he developed ethical concerns, naming that such a weapon could be strategically used against a civilian population, killing millions.

anti-nuclear activists who became vocal proponents of disarmament.[411] Though Eisenhower had repeatedly expressed concern over the issue of nuclear proliferation, the fact remained that US stockpiles of nuclear warheads went from just over 1,400 in his first year (1953) in office to over 24,000 in his last year (1962).   Within this context, Julian's sentiments not only reinforced the underlying sense of anxiety felt amongst a cross section of Americans, but embraced the position adopted by SANE. Even John Foster Dulles, the hawkish Secretary of State during the Eisenhower administration, vacillated between anxiety over the capacity of nuclear weapons to destroy humanity and the threat of the atomic bomb as a kind of diplomatic strong-arm strategy.

Julian's launches into another tirade against the nuclear aboard the *Sawfish*, a nuclear submarine now engaged in a reconnaissance mission meant to verify the levels of radioactivity along with determining the origins of cryptic coded message that had been picked up by the Australian Navy. Now sober, Julian goes on to explain why he believes the war actually started:

> JULIAN: Who would ever have believed that human beings would be stupid enough to blow themselves off the face of the earth? I don't believe it even now. . . . The war started when people accepted the idiotic principle that peace could be maintained by arranging to defend themselves with weapons they couldn't possibly use without committing suicide. Everybody had an atomic bomb and counter-bombs and counter-counter bombs. The devices outgrew us. We couldn't control them. . . . Somewhere some poor bloke probably looked at a radar screen and thought he saw something. He knew that if he hesitated one thousandth of a second his own

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[411]SANE attracted a number of influential members including Eleanor Roosevelt, notable pediatrician Dr. Benjamin Spock, and civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King. A Hollywood chapter of SANE was formed in 1959 comprised of: Marlon Brando, Henry Fonda, Marilyn Monroe, Arthur Miller, Harry Belafonte and Ossie Davis.

country would be wiped off the map, so – so he pushed a button and the world went crazy.

Indeed, Julian's monologue perfectly encapsulates the paradox of mutually assured destruction. As previously discussed in Chapter Two, this doctrine was a cornerstone of the Eisenhower national security strategy, and it assumed that an immediate and irreversible escalation of hostilities would result in total annihilation of both sides thereby creating a condition in which no one would act. However, in both the novel and the film the dangers of nuclear brinksmanship are finally realized.

Coming back to the major narrative thread of humanity within the film *On the Beach,* it is apparent from the outset that this theme was essential to the narrative and the development of key characters. Indeed, Moira's character arc is perhaps the most meaningful amongst the ensemble. There is the scene in which she turns to her former lover, Julian, for comfort following Commander Tower's rejection. When asked about their relationship, a distraught Moira tearfully acknowledges that he (Towers) is still married to a girl named Sharon and has two kids, and that she, Moira, is no longer willing to use any means necessary to win his heart. Her selfless act of releasing Towers from any sense of obligation means that he is finally be able to come to terms with the loss of his family, acknowledge that he does, in fact, love Moira. However, it is not until the end of the film that the extent of Moira's humanity is fully realized. Comforted in knowing she has finally found true love, Moira accepts that Dwight Towers will leave Australia, taking the *Sawfish* back to America so his men can die in their own country; she races to the coast for one last glimpse as the *Sawfish* submerges. Likewise, Dwight Towers has to choose between staying with the woman he has grown to love and leading his crew on what will surely be their final mission. Thus, providing comfort the men Towers leads, knowing that they are heading home, comes at great personal sacrifice.

Despite certain deviations in the narrative, namely in the relationship between Dwight Towers and Moira Davidson, the aura of hopelessness in Shute's 1957 best selling novel was effectively translated to the big screen by Stanley Kramer.   *New York Times* film critic Bosley Crowther proclaimed *On the Beach* to be one of the top films of 1959, having written: 'the

shock and shame of the possible annihilation of many by fallout from a nuclear war are brought home with strong and personal feeling in this graphic drama about the last people on earth.' So bleak was the message, which proved to resonate amongst Americans, that the Eisenhower administration's felt damage control was necessary. Not only did the U.S. Information Agency create a special file entitled *Possible Question and Suggested Answers on the Film On the Beach*, the agency also collaborated with the U.S. State Department to provide guidelines for handling any kind of backlash that might prompted upon release of the film in foreign countries.[412] By assuming this position, including a proclamation that such an event was not possible, the Eisenhower administration succeeded in overlooking the film's important message of humanity. And what was to become a message of extraordinary courage had its basis in Shute's personal experience in Britain during the war. Indeed, Shute's 1939 novel *What Happened to the Corbetts* (aka *Ordeal)* foretold the bombing that England would endure during World War Two including describing the isolation and hardship suffered during a major disaster.

Thus as a cluster, the films *On the Beach*, *Panic in Year Zero!* and *This is not a Test* offered a critique of the tenuous nature of mutually assured destruction, although only Kramer's production garnered any kind of governmental reaction. Writing about the role of the fallout shelter in American culture, Kenneth Rose contends:

> While it is difficult to quantify such things, it is possible that a more modest claim can be made for the nuclear apocalyptic. This genre may not have affected overall nuclear policy, but in the many depictions of the uselessness of civil defense in general and shelters in particular, and the grim descriptions of life after nuclear war, the nuclear apocalyptic may have helped turn public opinion against a national shelter system.[413]

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[412] Rose, 43; see also Lawrence S. Wittner, *Confronting the Bomb: A Short History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 104.
[413] Rose, 77.

Whilst Rose's assessment is speculative, there is no denying that the Eisenhower administration attempted to redirect the public's attention away from reality of nuclear apocalypse towards civil defense as a strategy for emotion management. Nevertheless, the debate over radiation and the effectiveness of fallout shelters permeated American mainstream media. Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), cites how women's magazines tried to 'bring the bomb down to a feminine level.' [414] As Friedan would caustically surmise that 'women, in their mysterious femininity, might be interested in the concrete biological details of having a baby in a bomb shelter, but never in the abstract idea of the bomb's power to destroy the human race.'[415] Women's magazines only really started to devote print to nuclear war and fallout in the 1950s and early 1960s, with articles being far more accusatory that information was being withheld from the public. For example, *Redbook*, a magazine targeting the busy young mother, published a particularly sobering article in 1962 in which author Walter Goodman attacked the notion that 'happy domesticity' within the fallout shelter was possible during a nuclear emergency.[416] Goodman goes on to write:

> The happy image of father, mother and all the children sitting snugly together in their new convertible game room shelter, first aid kit ready but unused, is based on several assumptions that may be grossly inaccurate . . . The hard truth is that no one can assure any family that it would be saved in a nuclear attack, no matter how substantial its shelter.[417]

Indeed, *On the Beach* was prophetic in light of the prevailing discourses that would emerge in the popular press in the 1960s.

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[414] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013), 44.
[415] Ibid., 44.
[416] Rose, 146.
[417] Ibid., 146.

Conclusion

As we have discussed, the late cycle of atomic political thrillers signify a shift in tone from the early and middle cycles. Whilst the late cycle is comprised of fewer films, most of which did not perform well enough to be included in *Variety's* top rentals, nevertheless, these productions still point to relevancy of the atomic threat and the aftermath of atomic war to the American psyche. The launch of *Sputnik I* in 1957 by the Soviet Union reinforced the race to acquire more effective technologies, thereby contributing to the growing tension between the two superpowers. The first cluster of films considered in this chapter, consisting of *Five Steps to Danger, City of Fear* and *Rocket Attack U.S.A.,* are representative of growing concern over the missile gap and civil defense. In particular, the films *Five Steps to Danger* and *Rocket Attack U.S.A.* speak directly to the threat of nuclear warfare conducted from afar. Although U.S. Cold War culture was intertwined with civil defense since the early 1950s, it was after 1957 when Americans were increasingly questioning the effectiveness of such programs. Indeed, *City of Fear* raises the very concerns of mass panic and hysteria that civil defense was meant to address. At the same time, *City of Fear* touches this notion of the public's right to know and the question of censorship. With a growing crisis of confidence amongst the American people, it was necessary to engage in a strategy of fear management, which entailed carefully crafted messages for the public.

The theme of civil defense is again considered within the second cluster, although in the case of the films of *Panic in Year Zero!* and *This is not a Test,* we see the breakdown in society and the effects of brutal self-interest, or as the character Harry Baldwin would claim its "every man for himself". Indeed, these two films portrayed the very behaviours civil defense was meant to address.   Nevertheless, the films conclude with a glimmer of hope for civilization, but it is only for those who are willing to put humanity first. Within this cluster, *On the Beach* stands in stark contrast. Whilst there is anguish and a hopeless realization that life on Earth is coming to an end, nevertheless, the camera captures a kind of tenderness and compassion for humanity that the other two films of the cluster cannot possibly attain.

CONCLUSION

Recognition of the political thriller as a generic subtype has been slow, with both scholarly works and trade publications indicating a lack of consensus or, at times, a clear definition. Indeed, *The Manchurian Candidate* (Frankenheimer, 1962), now considered a hallmark film, was not even identified as a political thriller by *Variety* until the 1980s. Instead films that are readable as political thrillers, a subgenre that emerged during the Cold War era, are most often relegated to *film noir,* and to a lesser extent to the crime or gangster thriller. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach, it was possible to establish the origin of the political thriller given its relationship to Cold War discourses, rhetoric and foreign policy. By considering narrative and visual style and mapping the corpus of films considered within this thesis to the Cold War socio-political condition, it is apparent that there are clear differences amongst postwar thrillers. In this thesis, I do not specifically engage in the debate over *film noir* as genre or style, however, I do acknowledge that political meaning is encoded within *film noir.* The difference, however, between *film noir* and the political thriller that emerged after 1945, is the malaise associated with alienation and existential crisis. Within *film noir,* the relationship to the *femme fatale* is castrating, thereby forcing male protagonists restore normative patriarchy by reassert his masculinity. Thus, the crises faced by characters such as Joe Gillis (William Holden) in *Sunset Boulevard* (Wilder, 1950) or Detective Dave Bannon (Glenn Ford) in *The Big Heat* (Lang, 1953) are not representative of the nuclear brinksmanship and growing paranoia over Communism that weighed on the American psyche. Whilst many of the films within the corpus considered within this thesis introduce the dark moodiness of *noir,* it is the pervasive threat of an unknowable enemy and nuclear annihilation that are key thematics of the political thriller between 1945 and 1962.

As I already discussed, I adopted an interdisciplinary approach for my research into the political thriller. With Chapter One, I established the historical context of this investigation. Mapping the corpus of films to political and historical events provided a framework for discussing the relationship of the political thriller to Cold War culture and anxiety within America. In addition, the periodization and contextualization offered in this chapter was the basis of discussion of dominant themes and cycles of atomic political thrillers described in the

second part of this thesis. Hollywood's early entry into the Cold War through fervently anti-Communist productions provided a means of avoiding HUAC scrutiny, and as film scholar Thomas Doherty contend, such films were a 'rough barometer of the political climate,' with productions like *Big Jim McLain* (Ludwig, 1942) being 'shamelessly sycophantic' towards HUAC.[418]

Next I went on to discuss, the U.S. strategy of containment as architected by George F. Kennan. The U.S. had hoped to alter the balance of power through strategies of containment. I argued that Kennan showed tremendous prescience of the ideological threat posed by Communism to the American psyche, although he would go on to write: 'I seemed to have aroused a strain of emotional and self-righteous anti-Sovietism that in later years I wish I had not aroused.'[419] In the final analysis, the U.S. felt that its only assurance for peace was through the threat of nuclear retaliation (against the Soviet Union), and in turn, this manifested into a pervasive fear of the atomic bomb, and more specifically, a fear of the enemy within that would later be embodied by Ethel Rosenberg. In relation to Ethel Rosenberg, I touched upon the film *Walk East on Beacon!* (Wearker, 1952) given the film depiction of the character Elaine Willborn (Louisa Horton), an organizer of a sophisticated espionage ring operating within America, as cool and detached; essentially this is the same demeanor the American media and the U.S. government attributed to Ethel Rosenberg.

In the last part of Chapter One, I argued that the pulse of the nation was realistically conveyed through an embedded sociological truth. I introduced the concept of the docufiction, a cinematic representation known for the blurring of fact and fiction. For some political thrillers, subject matter was enough to establish a narrative as docufiction (an example being *The Tall Target* (Mann, 1951) which offered an account of a thwarted assassination attempt of then presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln), although more often these productions relied on location filming, documentary footage and "voice-of-God" narration to convey narrative authenticity required for a docufiction. I also introduced the role

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[418] Thomas Doherty, 'Hollywood Agit-Prop: The Anti-Communist Cycle, 1948-1952', Journal of Film and Video, 40.4 (1988), 15-24.

[419] George F. Kennan, *At a Century's Ending: Reflections, 1982 -1995* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 38.

of technology and innovation, such as with lighting, film format and camera portability, in creating a visual and narrative style that conveyed the sense of real and present danger during the Cold War era.

In Chapter Two, I established the importance of technology and style to the major narrative thread of vulnerability and permeability of (physical or mental) borders depicted in Hollywood political thrillers between 1945 and 1962. I described why so many political thrillers are frequently identified *film noir*, explaining how generic hybridity and the use of certain codes and conventions along with production values contributed to this mislabeling. I approached issues of technology and style through mini-case studies of five exemplary films: *Berlin Express* (Tourneur, 1946)*, Night People* (Johnson, 1954)*, Big Jim McLain* (Ludwig, 1952)*, Pickup on South Street* (Fuller, 1953) and *The Manchurian Candidate.*

In the first part of this chapter, I focused on the international aspects of U.S. vulnerability through the mini-case studies of *Berlin Express* and *Night People*. These two films were selected given the geopolitical significance of Berlin, a city that has often been called the birthplace of the Cold War. Despite obvious differences in format (standard versus widescreen), film stock (black-and-white versus color) and date of the production (1946 versus 1954), I described how innovation in technology and filming on location depicted the changes in Cold War discourses. I demonstrated how director Jacques Tourneur and DoP Lucien Ballard captured postwar tension in *Berlin Express* through *noir* conventions, but that the narrative was representative the early onset of Cold War when there was still some sense of optimism. I then went on to discuss *Night People*, a film that was just one of a handful of political thrillers filmed in color. Whilst the tension between U.S. and Soviet Union had eased somewhat after the death of Stalin in 1952, I demonstrated that director Nunnally Johnson and DoP Charles G. Clarke used innovative technology to capture the unfolding brinksmanship between the two superpowers. I explained how color, which had been associated with epic and fantasy, conveyed realism following its adoption by the U.S. television networks for news and documentary-based programming. I also demonstrated how the filmmakers used Cinemascope to introduce realism by allowing the interaction between characters in a single take, whilst still conveying a climate of paranoia and claustrophobia within the widescreen format.

Whilst International intrigue was a well represented trope with political thrillers set all around the globe, including Europe (see *Berlin Express*; *Night People; Diplomatic Courier,* Hathaway:1952; *Foreign Intrigue*, Reynolds: 1956), Latin America (see *Notorious,* Hitchcock:1946; *We Were Strangers,* Huston:1949; *Crisis*, Brooks:1950; *Captain Scarface,* Guilfoyle :1953), Asia (see *Tokyo File 212*, McGowan:1951; *Prisoner of War,* Marton:1954; *Stopover Tokyo*, Breen:1957; *Hong Kong Confidential,* Cahn:1958) and the Middle East (see *Sofia,* Reinhardt:1948; *The Flame of Stamboul,*Nazzaro:1951; *The Tangier Incident,* Landers:1953*;The Man Who Knew Too Much*, Hitchcock: 1956), the narratives situated closer to home, within North America demonstrated that an ideological war was underway. Of the two mini-case study films considered in this section, *Big Jim McLain* was fervently propagandistic and the embodiment of vigilance and devotion to the American ideals of faith in God, loyalty to country and love of family. Whilst *Big Jim McLain* was the least innovative with respect to technology and style, nevertheless, the film warranted inclusion as a mini-case study for its application of specific generic codes and conventions, and its claims of authenticity and truth through filming on location, casting of actual HUAC members and Honolulu Chief of Police Dan Liu, and extensive use of authoritative voice-over narration. I described the role of first person narration with the title character Jim McLain, and its significance to the propagandistic function whilst engendering identification with John Wayne as a patriotic, conservative American.

The next mini-case study I considered was *Pickup on South Street,* a film that offered a combination of studio work and some location filming around the city of Los Angeles (California). The grittiness of visual and narrative style was reminiscent of a 1930s gangster film, although it succeeded in presenting contemporary concerns, taking into consideration the Klaus Fuchs espionage case. More important, however, *Pickup on South Street* was a vehicle to confront the absurdity of the Cold War fears and hysteria clearly represented in *Big Jim McLain*. I argued that *Pickup on South Street* conveyed an authenticity not evident in *Big Jim McLain* precisely because of the way director Samuel Fuller used visual and narrative style to confront spectators with complex socio-political issues within postwar America. I suggested that the character of Skip McCoy, an anti-hero, embodied a realism that was distinct from the character of Jim McLain portrayed by John Wayne. I suggested that the

critics who lambasted the film for its violence overlooked the embedded sociological truth. I also used a close reading of key scenes to delineate gendered power structures. Indeed, Fuller's *mise-en-scène* allowed Candy to fight for and retain a kind of power not experienced the character of Nancy Vallon (*Big Jim McLain*), a woman who will more readily settle into her domestic containment.

The final mini-case study considered in Chapter Two was *The Manchurian Candidate,* a film that I have identified as transitional, I opened this mini-case study with a discussion of precursor films that had been mapped to key thematics introduced by film scholars Jacobson and González. However, I also indicated that the list of films identified by Jacobson and González – *Panic in the Streets* (Kazan, 1950), *My Son John* (McCarey, 1952)*, Suddenly* (Allen, 1955)*, Kiss Me Deadly* (Aldrich, 1955) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel, 1956) – was incomplete. Whilst I agreed with Jacobson and González that *The Manchurian Candidate* was drawing from discourses and rhetoric presented within earlier films, nevertheless, that Frankeheimer and Axelrod still offered something generically new. I discussed *The Manchurian Candidate* alongside earlier films of *My Son John* (McCarey, 1952*, The Atomic City* (Hopper, 1952) and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* given Cold War discourses on motherhood, and more specifically the threat posed by momism. I went on to argue that Raymond's domineering and politically ambitious mother, the character Eleanor Iselin, was actually a mediated image of Ethel Rosenberg.

Whilst the vast majority of political thrillers between 1945 and 1962 were representative of "white" America, I suggested that Frankenheimer and Axelrod's treatment of race established *The Manchurian Candidate* as a transitional cultural product. Frankenheimer relied on a subjective camera during the innovative brainwashing sequence, and transformed the character of Dr. Yen Lo into the mature, sometime black and sometimes white mother figure, Mrs. Henry Whittaker. I described how the brainwashing scenes resulted in a queering of the narrative, and in particular that the flashbacks reinforced the feminization of the physical space where the demonstration takes place and in the internal, subconscious space of memory.   I also discussed how the flashbacks represented by the brainwashing sequence as well as Raymond's memory of his summer love affair with Jocie disrupted and manipulated the temporality of the narrative. To this end, *The Manchurian Candidate,* just as

the other mini-case study films served an ideological function, although the interiority and unpredictability of the Communist threat (to the mind) posed an even greater risk than what was conveyed in the films of *Berlin Express, Big Jim McLain, Night People* and *Pickup on South Street.*

In the second part of the thesis, I presented three chapters that focused specifically on cycles of atomic political thrillers. Chapter Three was devoted to the early cycle (1945-51). Chapter Four described the middle cycle (1952-55), whilst Chapter Five addressed the late cycle (1956-62). Each chapter also included a timeline of films to historical events to provide the necessary contextualization for the various thematic clusters within each cycle of atomic political thrillers. Beginning with Chapter Three, the early cycle spanned a six-year period between 1945 and 1951 and with the release of nineteen films. I opened the chapter with a discussion of Hollywood's introduction of the atomic trope and I went on to describe how Communists tended to be portrayed through recycled codes and conventions. I offered historical contextualization for why several of the early cycle atomic political thrillers presented the Nazi threat. I argued that the threat was actually displaced and that we can more accurately read the treat as a representation of Communist treachery. I then went on to discuss the early cycle of atomic political thrillers through two thematic clusters.

The central theme of the first cluster of films considered (*House on 92nd Street,* Hathaway:1945; *Cloak and Dagger,* Lang:1946*;* and *The Iron Curtain,* Wyler:1948) was what I called the "woman question". Within the first cluster there are variety of femininities displayed that may either protect or destroy American ideals and values. I described how many of the women in this cluster (with the exception of Anna Gouzenko from *The Iron Curtain*) adopted a masquerade that allowed them to hide their true nature. I argued how, in particular, the character Elsa Gebhardt from *House on 92nd Street,* a coded lesbian, threatened the nation's atomic secrets and to the natural order. I also described how Gina from *Cloak and Dagger* adopted cross-dressing to enable her work as an Italian freedom fighter, but that she was, essentially, committed to the ideals of marriage and family thereby making her a "good woman".   I also contended that the danger posed by women like Elsa Gebhardt came to epitomize the threat to the U.S. by Ethel Rosenberg given the assertion by

American mass media and President Eisenhower that she was the mastermind behind the espionage ring that provided atomic secrets to the Soviet Union.

The second cluster of films within the early cycle focused on early questions of masculinity and national security. Through the films of *D.O.A.* (Maté, 1950) and *The Whip Hand* (Menzies, 1950), I demonstrated how the focus on woman became less pronounced. Whilst this notion of masculinity in crisis is frequently associated with *film noir* and the theme of postwar alienation, within the context of this cluster, I contended that both *D.O.A.* and *The Whip Hand* were metaphors for what ailed the nation. I discussed how the characters Frank Bigelow from *D.O.A.* and Matt Corbin from *The Whip Hand* differed in their representations of masculinity. I discussed how Frank Bigelow came to appreciate American values of marriage and nuclear family only after he was unfairly targeted; because his realization was too late, he had to pay with his life. In contrast, Matt Corbin embraced these ideals and he went on to marry. I described how the notion of disease was symbolic of the fear posed by homosexuality and Communism to the U.S., and in this regard disease played into fear mongering as propaganda. Thus, I argued that *D.O.A.* exemplified a fear of the contagion whereas *The Whip Hand* indicated that the threat could be stopped, but only when good Americans like Matt Corbin are willing to standup to Communism.

In Chapter Four, the middle cycle of atomic political thrillers, I focused on the four-year period between 1951 and 1954. During this cycle, eighteen atomic political thrillers were released although the number the timeline revealed a relatively even distribution suggesting ongoing resonance throughout the entire cycle. I opened the discussion on the middle cycle of atomic political thrillers with the role of propaganda and psychological warfare and Hollywood's participation at the behest of government agencies. I described how changing political leadership within the Soviet Union following the death of Stalin in 1953 and calls for peaceful coexistence proved to be unsettling for the U.S. I then went on to discuss how the middle cycle was distinct from the early cycle (1945-51) as masculinity took precedence, although I also provided examples where strong women were still represented. I argued that there was a clear ideological shift towards the masculine given that the containment of the political "other" as embodied by Ethel Rosenberg. I suggested there was an emphasis on "controlling domesticity", accomplished through the demonization and eradication of

"monstrous" female. I also discussed how homosexuality and Communism were intertwined into a singularly great and indistinguishable threat, but how postwar Hollywood films frequently represented homosexuals avoiding detection by assuming a heterosexual identity.

With the first cluster of middle cycle atomic political thrillers, I considered the films *Kiss Me Deadly* (Aldrich, 1955), *Shack Out on 101* (Dein, 1955) and *A Bullet for Joey* (Allen, 1955). I argued that these films spoke directly to masculinity in crisis and the Communist threat, and in particular, how self-serving Individualism and non-conformity represented in *Kiss Me Deadly* and *A Bullet for Joey* was a threat to the nuclear family. I described the extent of hypermasculinity displayed through *Kiss Me Deadly* as equally centred on a relationship of masculinity (already itself queered) to that of queered, deviant femininities of Velda, Christina and Lily Carver/Gabrielle. I then went on to discuss *Shack out on 101* and *A Bullet for Joey* as two films that are similarly queered texts (to *Kiss Me Deadly*) but of a different order. The hypermasculine relationship of other masculinities in *Shack out on 101* and *A Bullet for Joey* similarly placed America at risk. However, I illustrated how the characters of Eddie (from *Shack out on 101)* and Joey Victor *(*from *A Bullet for Joey*) made it possible to correct a wrong that had been committed in the name of self-interest, restoring thereby reasserting their normative masculinity in the process. Whereas this first cluster focused on the enemy within, I suggested that the second cluster of middle cycle atomic political thrillers reiterated a message of the unknowable enemy, but that external pressures required the U.S. to use any means necessary (including the atomic bomb) to protect the nation. Thus the narrative thread that linked the two clusters within the middle cycle was the notion that the average American citizen will play a role in national security even in the face of grave personal danger.

With the second cluster of films in Chapter Four was comprised of *Above and Beyond* (Frank 1953), *The 49th Man* (Sears, 1953), *Captain Scarface* (Guilfoyle, 1953), *Hell and High Water* (Fuller, 1954), and *Port of Hell* (Schuster, 1954). I described how these films represented prevailing Cold War discourses and presidential rhetoric related to American interests at home and abroad, as well as the justification for using the atomic bomb. I described how the non-conformist persona evident in *Captain Scarface* and *Hell and High Water* have a moment of consciousness that occurs precisely at a time when a heroic act will

save the nation (or national interest) and in the process reassert normative masculinity. I also contended how the two middle cycle films, *The Thief* and *The 49th Man*, functioned as a bridge between the clusters. I described how both films represented an escalation of paranoia that focused on the unknowable enemy from within. I contended that *The Thief* was particularly unsettling because the motivations for treason were never established, and offered that blackmail due to sexual orientation could have been a plausible explanation given the purging of homosexuals from U.S. government employment during the 1950s. In addition, I argued how *Port of Hell* (like *Kiss Me Deadly*) reinforced the unknowability of the nuclear/atomic energy, making the point that prior to its use nuclear energy is invisible and thus unknowable. Accordingly, the very unknowability of the atomic bomb was a psychologically fearsome threat, but when detonated, the energy whilst visible through the mushroom cloud, still offered no real sense of its power on the human race because of information intentionally kept from the public. Thus energy of the atomic bomb was shrouded in secrecy, and remained a force that few properly understand precisely because of its deadly nature.

In Chapter Five, I discussed the late cycle of atomic political thrillers, a period that spanned a six-year period between 1957 and 1962. I also indicated that this cycle was the least dense with only six productions. As with the previous two chapters, I offered a historical contextualization, but in this chapter the emphasis was on U.S. concerns over the missile gap and strategies of civil defense. I described how Hollywood studios released a substantial number of science-fiction films in contrast to political thrillers, and suggested that the disparity may have been a desire to escape the unconscious fear that manifested with growing stockpiles of nuclear weapons. Thus, I contended that science fiction genre became a kind of outlet for the pervasive nuclear fear within the U.S. I then went on to explain that whilst the late cycle of atomic political thrillers emphasized concerns over the missile gap (between the U.S. and the Soviet Union) and strategies of civil defense, a significant shift in tone was evident during this cycle.

With the first cluster of late cycle films, I focused on *Five Steps to Danger* (Kesler, 1957)*, City of Fear* (Learner, 1959) and *Rocket Attack U.S.A.* (Mahon, 1961). The films *Five Steps to Danger* and *Rocket Attack U.S.A.* directly referenced the threat of a nuclear warfare

from afar. Whilst the fate of America rested with upon individual acts of heroism (a continuation of the middle cycle theme), the threat of an ICBM equipped with a nuclear warhead spoke directly to perceived missile gap. I also contended that the nuclear imagery during this period continued to serve a propagandistic function with respect to civil defense. I described how the U.S. government was concerned that the American public would either fall victim to complacency, but how that could lead to rampant fear during an actual attack. Thus *Rocket Attack U.S.A.* invoked the discourses of civil defense. Likewise, I described how *City of Fear* touched on issues of civil defense, and in particular the public's right to know, although the narrative was more focused on the difficulties the government faced in keeping the city calm. In addition, *City of Fear* reiterated the importance of technology to national security through the diegetic sound representing the crackling sound of radiation detection.

The final cluster of late cycle films I considered included *Panic in Year Zero!* (Milland, 1962)*, This is Not a Test* (Gadette, 1962) and *On the Beach* (Kramer, 1959)*.* With these three films, I argued that there was a significant narrative shift, given an emphasis on political culture in relation to the atomic, and the social impact of atomic holocaust on a community. As with other films within the corpus, civil defense is a major theme within *Panic in Year Zero!* and *This is not a Test*, however, as I described the departure was related to an actual breakdown in society. I illustrated how the effects of brutal self-interest through the character Harry Baldwin from *Panic in Year Zero!,* yet despite the year it was released (in 1962), the film echoed early 1950s rhetoric that it was possible to survive a nuclear attack.   Conversely, *On the Beach* was a stark contrast to the other two films. My reading of *On the Beach* was actually one of compassion and tenderness. I argued that even though the film depicted the anguish and hopelessness, there was a kind of humanity that the other two films of the cluster cannot possibly attain. Thus as a cluster, concluded that *On the Beach*, *Panic in Year Zero!* and *This is not a Test* offered a critique of the tenuous nature of mutually assured destruction.

Certainly one question that could and should be posed is whether the political thriller has evolved or matured. Scholars such as Thomas Schatz (1981), Steve Neale (2000), and Barry Keith Grant (2007) have described how genre may change over time, frequently offering some kind of overlap or hybridity. Certainly *The Manchurian Candidate* as a transitional film, paved the way for more violent and paranoid political thrillers of the late

1960s and early 1970s. Yet it is also important to acknowledge the atomic political thriller *On the Beach* (Kramer, 1958). When considering both of these Cold War political thrillers, it is apparent that *The Manchurian Candidate* and *On the Beach* (Kramer, 1958) are not merely platforms projecting socio-political discourses, but that they are representative of the American publics' need to question. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the U.S. government was still engaged in what the Eisenhower administration would call fear management. As a consequence many of the films presented in this thesis both projected and reflected this message, yet Kramer with *On the Beach* and Frankenheimer with *The Manchurian Candidate* go against the grain by challenging the status quo. Thus, these two films pave the way for the paranoid political thrillers represented by *The Parallax View* (Pakula, 1972), *Three Days of the Condor* (Pollack, 1975), *All the Presidents Men* (Pakula, 1976), *The China Syndrome* (Bridges, 1979) and *Silkwood* (Nichols, 1983). Like other generic types, the political thriller has not been totally static. There have been clear narrative shifts surrounding issues of globalization and the U.S. involvement in corporate corruption or even unlawful detainment. Whilst there is a clear tradition of the political thriller dating back to the Cold War, more research is required if we are to fully understand its cycles and the way it functions at different times. However, one thing that remains consistent is the political thrillers prime generic theme of authenticity.

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