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"The Merry Murderers"

The Farcical (Re)Figuration of the *Femme Fatale* in Maurine Dallas Watkins' *Chicago* (1927) and its various adaptations

PhD Dissertation

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"I used to be Snow White, but I drifted."
(Mae West)

1. Introduction

In this dissertation, my aim is to discuss how the representation of violent and aggressive women changed throughout the twentieth century in the United States in the field of cinema and theatre. The focus of my investigation lies in *Chicago*, a story which started its long-lasting existence in the early twentieth century and reached into the twenty-first century through its various revivals. My intention is to examine what ways are open for female criminals and murderers, who are generally personified by the figure of the *femme fatale* in literary and filmic representations (as well as in other branches of visual culture), to evade their customary tragic end. The story of *Chicago* is a perfect example of the rather unique appearance of the *farcical femme fatale*. I intend to prove that within (the various versions of) *Chicago* we can find the entire repertoire of the modes of letting a *femme fatale* figure walk free by the end of the story. The combination of this (originally) tragic figure and the comic results in a very specific occurrence: the comic-grotesque performance of femininity embedded in the events of the *carnival*. This unique figure, the *carnivalesque femme fatale*, can manage only the trespassing of all boundaries and limitations without having to pay the price. *Chicago*, in its numerous versions, presents us this unique occurrence in all her glory.

Hence, I propose that, in *Chicago*, we encounter *farcical femmes fatales* who are the minions of a modern(ized) version of the figure of the *Vice* of sixteenth century drama, and all their comic-grotesque performance and masquerade takes place in the heterotopic space of the *carnival*. Thus, the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* can walk free because they are the farcical refigurations of the tragic *lethal woman*, in addition ironically, they are not entirely the central figures of the story because they are governed and directed by a quasi-central male figure, the *Vice*, who in fact oversees everything, and all this happens in the unique, heterogenous and heterotopic space of a world turned upside-down and inside out, the *carnival*. The comic-grotesque performance of femininity occurs in the temporary revelry of the *carnival*, yet, this time is enough for these women to make use of the suspension of ordinary logic and rules and get away with their crimes and sins. Another possible way of salvation for the *femme fatale* figures is the sacrifice of another human being who will take the blame for them, this involves the logic of scapegoating that is also to be found in *Chicago*. Accordingly historically, this is

actually also part of the rituals of the *carnival*. Additionally, the mode in which this whole story is presented is comic. All of the versions of *Chicago* were made in a comic genre – generally in the realm of the lower comedic genres to serve as popular entertainment just as *carnival*s do –, and even the 1927 film adaptation that is a melodrama contains at least ironic parts. What is more, the spirit of the *carnival* that is originally defined by Bakhtin as people's entertainment involves positive energies and thus excludes the negative humor of satire – being a means of criticism –, still, *Chicago* manages to combine both.

Since the theme of the *femme fatale* is immensely vast, and its discussion and the various examples of the manifestation of this kind of a woman is almost inexhaustible, I would like to concentrate primarily on the different versions of *Chicago* (with additional examples to provide context), and thus trace the steps through the representational history of violent and aggressive women. When discussing such an issue it is inevitable to name and problematize the iconic, essential and eternal image of the *femme fatale* or *lethal woman* or *deadly woman*. Throughout my argumentation I intend to theorize and analyze this eternal feminine/female icon, and in effect, my intention is to reveal how the female murderers in the different versions of *Chicago* rework the imagery of the *femme fatale*. My proposition is that the whole question greatly lies in humor, the use of irony and that all of the versions belong to the categories of either/or satire, screwball comedy, musical vaudeville and their sister genres accordingly, thus bringing the element of the comic into the elaboration of the issue of the *femmes fatale*s. I do not intend to write my dissertation about the theorization and detailed discussion of the comic, irony, satire etc., however, I would like to devote attention to these subjects since in my opinion these all have a central role in how the thematization and handling of *deadly women* occur in the *Chicago*s. My primary object is to investigate the changes and history of the representation of the *lethal women* in American culture of the twentieth and early twenty-first century with the help of the story of *Chicago*.

The discussion of the comic is attached to this issue in an attempt to find why, if at all, *Chicago* differs from the other works dealing with the *femme fatale* imagery. My analysis and argumentation thus certainly will involve a historical aspect and overview, while primarily, in the forefront, cinema, theatre and gender studies will be found with a focus on cultural representations.

Hence, my dissertation aims to discuss the unconventional and uncommon modes of representation of *deadly women* in the different versions of *Chicago* through the elaboration of humor. Originally, traditionally and most commonly, the central element in the definition of the *femme fatale* is tragedy and the representational methods employed are strongly linked

with tragic desire thus combining death and femininity, in addition to female sexuality, within the figure of the *femme fatale*. This is the fundamental imagery of the *lethal woman*, although, in very rare instances it occurs that the *femme fatale* is presented in comic light or through the employment of humor but these are always exceptional cases and not of frequency.

The title of the dissertation also reflects on this comic aspect of the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* by this slightly paradoxical alliteration: the merry murderers. These words are explicitly taken from the "Cell Block Tango" part of the 2002 version (Marshall 21-29 min) – in the 1976 version, the word used is "murderesses" (Ebb, Fosse 17). Considering that both of these versions are musicals it might easily be an indirect reference and homage paid to a great musical of international acknowledgement: *The Merry Widow* by Ferenc Lehár – which is again a (traditionally) slightly paradoxical image similarly to a murderer. According to Denny Martin Flinn, *The Merry Widow* is considered to be the musical work that has had more productions than any other work of this kind (64). According to the marketing of the 2007 production of *Chicago* at the Ambassador Theater in New York City, *Chicago* has "the longest-running revival in Broadway history." (Appendix i/1)

Chicago is unique in its treatment of the *femme fatale* theme because while discussing and employing all of the clichés and constitutive elements of the conventional representational logic and tools it still subverts and challenges them through the use of humor, especially irony. Not all of the versions of the story make use of irony to the same level and all of the versions belong to different genres, however, they are all in connection with humor, and the comic aspects are paramount in all of the versions. My supposition is that one of the main reasons for the unconventional handling of the *deadly women* in *Chicago* is humor. For instance, they do not end their lives by violent means such as murder, suicide or through execution. The *lethal women* of *Chicago* get acquitted, and in fact, get away with murder instead of being punished through the death penalty that would be their 'due' sentence according to the law. Therefore, I will discuss several theories and aspects of humor to present its mechanism. The central theoretical concept I will deal with in detail is certainly Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the carnival, its specificities and implications. Since my proposition is that *Chicago* is a modern (day) *carnival* I will examine how its elements can be found in this work while I will also cite other secondary materials referring to or treating Bakhtin's idea.

It is undeniably evident that in the different versions of *Chicago* humor has a central role and it is supposedly the most decisive factor in the unique treatment of the *femme fatale* figures, however, there are other theories which also help in the understanding and interpretation of this special tackling, the most pervasive and considerable one is Elisabeth

Bronfen's idea about substituting the *femme fatale* with another Other as a sacrificial lamb that she unfolds in her study entitled "The Jew as Woman's Symptom: Kathlyn Bigelow's Conflictive Representation of Feminine Power." Additionally, I will discuss in detail the varions works written by Bronfen on *femmes fatales*. In the discussion of the role of human sacrifice and scapegoating, I will also rely on other sources, for example, J. G. Frazer or Bakhtin's own comment on this occurrence within the rituals of the *carnival*.

What also helps these women get acquitted is that they masquerade themselves as 'good women' and they perform ideal femininity. To prove this point I consulted and will cite Joan Riviere's article entitled "Womanliness as a Masquerade" and Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, in addition, several other sources that elaborate on these basic concepts, as an example, that of Stella Bruzzi.

In the discussion of the figure of the *Vice*, I will primarily use Ágnes Matuska's article entitled "Haphazardly Ambidextrous" which concentrates on the ambiguous and dual attributes of the *Vice* since this figure is not exclusively evil but also comic, this will also be backed by, for instance, M. H. Abrams. In this part, I will also elaborate on the idea of the humorous handling of the Romantic *homme fatale* figure that is theorized by Mario Praz.

Following the introduction, the second part will discuss the theories and concepts in relation to the *femme fatale*. Here, sub-chapters will concentrate on her different aspects or attributes such as her fatality or the connetion between death and femininity or her body and appearance. Additionally, there will be a short discussion of the historiographic, cultural and mythological roots of this dangerous female figure. In this part, the treatment of the issue of the *New Woman* and the *Flapper* will also to be found who both are strongly connected to the image of the *femme fatale* or its Americanized version, the *vamp* – that will also be deliberated – since the story historically takes place in this era and the female figures of *Chicago* are not only *farcical femmes fatales* but also *flapper femmes fatales*. The question of androgyny will be examined here, as well, as a result.

In the third part, the focus will be on the comic and the different ideas concerning the role and functioning of humor. The different (general) comic genres that surface in the case of the various versions of *Chicago* will also be presented as well as the relationship between gender and humor will be examined. The discussion of Bakhtin's *carnival* will take place in the succeeding, fourth, part. The treatment of the issue of scapegoating and human sacrifice will be found here as well as a part dealing with femininine images which will be followed immediately by the discussion of performativity and masquerade that reproduce and/or rework these images. The succeeding, fifth, part resulting from the previous ones will

concentrate on the formation and figure of the *farcical femme fatale* and those of the (comic) *Vice* or the *humorous homme fatale* explaining how these figures appear and function in *Chicago*. In the last part, divided into sub-chapters, the different versions of *Chicago* will be analyzed one by one starting from the original *Chicago Tribune* articles and ending in the 2002 film adaptation.

2. The *Femme Fatale*[i]

The *femme fatale* is that iconic female image which is connected to the figure of the female transgressor and criminal in literary and filmic works. The *femme fatale* is primarily linked to tragedy and tragic desire and 'her' fall is inevitable traditionally. A prototypical *femme fatale* is endowed with extremely attractive physicality as well as sharp intelligence. She is generally beautiful, pretty, (often srtikingly) clever and intelligent, very deceitful, manipulative, and greatly ambitious. She is usually willing to do anything to achieve her goals and entirely disregards everybody else's interests and feelings. An interesting fact about the *femme fatale* – and that this figure certainly has always existed in French literature and culture as well – is that, in spite of its name, the term was 'born' in England and the most complex and elaborate concept of the lethal woman was created here: "[i]t was not in France, however, but in England, that this type of Fatal Woman found its most complete form" (Praz, *Romantic Agony* 223). In addition, Praz suggests on the basis of the example of Swinburne – who is supposed to be the 'seminal father' of this 'birth' – that the men who usually create this type of woman only present "a mere projection of his [their] own turbid sensuality: they [these *femme fatale* figures] have a good deal of the idol about them […], the phantom of the mind rather than the real human being" (*Romantic Agony* 227). Although, I would add that with the passing of time more and more *femmes fatales* were created who benefited more from the workings of the reality principle, yet, even today, the majority of the *femmes fatales* are of the kind that Praz describes. However, Maurine Dallas Watkins' *femmes fatales* are not the sort generally created by (the majority of) men.

When it comes to the representation of violent women, one first thinks of the smoldering temptresses of the silver screen, the descending/ascending or gliding goddesses of the film industry, of the *femmes fatales* of the *film noir* or the *vamps* of early film history. However, the picture or rather the image is not that simple. Although there is a tendency (and

even sometimes an urge) in readers and viewers to presume that the representation of violent and evil women can be encompassed in a rather simplistic and one-sided specter of, for example the *film noir femmes fatales*, the representational realm of unruly women or of female 'offenders' of all sorts is quite complex. Undoubtedly, Theda Bara – as a *vamp* during the early years of film industry – or Barbara Stanwyck – as a *film noir femme fatale* in *Double Indemnity* (1944) – have a prominent share in the violent women's visual (and/or textual) representation. But one must not forget about the unique, and in contrast to the above mentioned examples, unconventional treatment of this imagery in several of the *Pre-Code* films, for example in *Journal of a Crime* (1934) or *Red-headed Woman* (1932). Even Hitchcock made us see some exceptional manifestations of these very types of women during the golden years of the *Production Code*. In addition, towards the end of the *Code* era came *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), not to mention the uncommon and less-known genre of the rape-revenge films like *Ms. 45* (1981) and later, *Thelma & Louise* (1991) made its mark in the representational history of violent women. We must not forget about all other films depicting this trend that opened up a new way in the representation of 'aggressive females' in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) or the *Alien* series – with the first part produced in 1979 – up to the 2002 version of *Chicago* and the *Kill Bill* series (2003, 2004) together with *Monster* (2003), just to name a few of the more recent ones. The change in the representation of 'unruly' women has certain connections with second wave feminism and with the professional investigation of female offenders and female criminality that flourished during the seventies as an aftermath of the women's movement and all kinds of civil rights movements of the sixties.

However, it must not be forgotten, that *femme fatale* figures have already been present since the beginnings of time, yet, the treatment of this immense issue is not possible within the scope of this dissertation, and even though, I mostly concentrate on the representation of the *femme fatale* in twentieth century American culture and its source in Victorianism, occasionally, there will be references to previous aggressive female figures and venomous women, as well. As Bram Dijkstra also opines that "[n]ot-so-ideal women, of course, had been around ever since that first Fall, and they had been very much in evidence in the annals of culture long before the industrialization of Europe had begun to gather momentum" (*Idols of Perversity* 5). He also adds that male animosity towards women gained its most explicit form during the Middle Ages to provide an earlier example of the negative representation of (not-so-ideal) women: "[s]ome of the *most vicious expressions* of male distrust of, and enimity toward, women can be found in the writings of the *medieval church fathers* […]"

[emphases mine] (ibid). Later scholars and thinkers eagerly quoted these church fathers likewise and "[t]hese tireless purveyors of culture were also forever delving into the large fund of *antifeminine lore* to be found in *classical mythology* and the *Bible*" [emphases mine] (ibid). Yet, I would make a minor amendment here that *classical mythology* and the *Bible* per se do not primarily and exclusively carry only negativistic examples of and profess hostile attitude toward women by all means, this all happened/happens mostly thourgh the interpretation of these texts and this all depends on who is in the intellectual power position to make the interpretation. The medieval church fathers' mistaken notions and distorted ideology is not so much rooted in the actual sacred texts, not the Bible, and the the teachings of Jesus Christ, but Aristotle's corrupted vision of women. He was convinced that women were "incomplete" and they were only "unfinished men" who only 'provided the soil for the male essence' as passive receivers (Gaarder 98). As Gaarder comments, "Aristotle's erroneous view of the sexes was doubly harmful because it was his – rather than Palto's – view that held sway throughout the Middle Ages. The church thus inherited a view of women that is entirely without foundation in the Bible" (ibid). According to Gaarder, it was, in fact, Saint Thomas Aquinas who made such a disservice to women that combined Aristotle's philosophy with Christianity since he was the one who "created the great synthesis between faith and knowledge" (151). This would not have been a problem in itself but he "also adopted Aristotle's view of women" and wholeheartedly embraced it by adding that this all is also supported by the Bible which states that Woman was created out of the Man's rib (155). Hence, Aristotle's personal impairment concerning relationships with women became an intellectual and ideological weapon throughout centuries. Robert L. Daniel is also of the opinion that it was concretely the Christian tradition (formed by the church fathers) that defined and prescribed precisely the male dominated family structure and female subordination in every fields of life, and that this all does not originate from Jesus Christ who treated women with respect and propriety (5).

As a result, as Dijkstra suggests, the ensuing hordes of ideologues carried on Aristotle's train of thoughts. The pseudo-scientific discourse of the *fin de siècle* – especially ideas expressed by scholars and doctors such as Dr. Edward H. Clarke, Dr Henry Maudsley and Karl Pearson that stressed the fact that mental and intellectual work had a debilitating effect on women and their reproductive capacity (Richardson 241, 244) – easily connected the figure of the *New Woman* to the image of the *femme fatale* (Klein 87-88) and had a considerable influence on the representation of women during the early twentieth century, especially in cinematic discourse. As Bram Dijkstra emphasizes, "[w]ithin this context the

movies' wholesale appropriation of the essential gender dichotomies characteristic of late-nineteenth-century art became a crucial factor in establishing the twentieth century's visual iconography of the 'battle of the sexes'" (*Evil Sisters* 313). Dijkstra claims that the representational logic and gender dichotomies of the nineteenth century prevailed in the twentieth century and stresses the fact that they still affect us through the visual conventions today:

> As a result, even today many of the visual conventions of nineteenth century art appropriated by the *silents* continue to shape our notions of sexual difference. The *movies* helped turn the metaphors of fin-de-siècle art and science into the *psychological realities* of the *twentieth-century* gender and race prejudice. [emphases mine] (*Evil Sisters* 316)

The psychological propaganda of D.W. Griffith and Cecil B. De Mille's films also build on this tradition with one of the main tenets of this propaganda being that marital love is the source of a nation's claim to global significance (*Evil Sisters* 316-317). This might be an explanation for the ways in which the story of *Chicago* 'was reformed' in the 1927 film adaptation, where the focus is very much on the couple's (lost) happiness that the husband strives to save by any means, while the woman as feminine evil destroys everything. Although Roxie gets away with the murder here, as well, yet, the familial bliss is over – which is not the central concern in any other versions of the story. Dijkstra writes that during the twenties "[t]wo themes were churned over and over again: man's fateful pollution by the temptations of the sexual vampire and his redemption by the self-effacing love of the female saint" (*Evil Sisters* 334). This is exactly what happens in the 1927 film version when after Roxie's 'elimination' the husband is 'saved' by the female saint of the film, Katie.

Only during the seventies some scholars opened up more views on the question concerning women's violence; they advocated the investigation of the topic under a different light. By doing so they revealed the fact that women were not different from men in cases of violent and/or aggressive behavior. Hence, theorists concluded, their representation should not be contrasted with the men's criminal attitudes. The seeds of thought were sewn and in the representational field it also started to be recognized that not all female offenders are evil incarnate in the form of the *femme fatale*, which was the 'visible' form, the palpable product and expression of male fears (but also of erotic fantasies). Also not all angelic ladies were so perfectly nice and innocent like the *ingénues* of early film history.

The film industry builds heavily on the feminine stereotypes prevailing in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This was the time when filmmaking started and thus the representation of gender was strongly connected to and influenced by the Victorian ideals of femininity and proper behavior, which had strong ties with religious dogmas. According to this view, the woman had to be the pure lady, the so-called *angel in the house* and if she was not what was expected of her she was labeled a *fallen woman*. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar discuss this duality, especially from the point of female authorship in the given period (3-104). In fact, this duality was also already present in the public consciousness and the artistic productions of the Romantic era (preceding the Victorian one) (Alexander 18-34, Mellor 17-39). As Mario Praz also claims concretely about the precedents of the *fallen woman* or the *femme fatale*, "[…] the Romantic and Decadent writers" could not detach themselves from the idea of the "indissoluble union of the beautiful and the sad, […] the supreme beauty of that beauty which is accursed" (*Romantic Agony* 31). These writers were so much obsessed with this concept that they elevated the tainted beauty to a pedestal from where she never came down even during Victorianism, and as such, the Romanitcs greatly contributed to the birth of the actual *femme fatale* during this latter period. "In fact, to such an extent were Beauty and Death looked upon as sisters by the Romantics that they became fused into a sort of two-faced herm, filled with corruption and melancholy and fatal beauty – a beauty of which, the more bitter the taste, the more abundant the enjoyment" (ibid). Praz mentions one of Baudelaire's evil female characters and she is described exactly how the *femme fatale* is described later, even for example during the *film noir* era: "[…] a demon without pity, […] a frigid idol, sterile and unfeeling […], a vampire who pierces the poet's heart like a dagger and invades his humiliated soul with the violence of a band of demons […], an inhuman Amazon" (*Romantic Agony* 152).

The precedents are too many to treat them in this paper, they date back for many centuries and bear the Judeo-Christian heritage with its "Cult of True Womanhood" in which the "Victorian Lady" has her ideological base (Daniel 4-5) together with her antagonistic counterpart, the fallen woman. Janey Place also opines that "[t]he dark lady, the spider woman, the evil seductress who tempts man and brings about his destruction is among the oldest themes of art, literature, mythology and religion in Western culture" (35). Clarice Feinman is also of the opinion that, in a large part, "mythology and Judeo-Christian theology" are responsible for relegating women into the categories of "madonna or whore," and since women seemed to possess "unique powers that made them both necessary and dangerous" by attempting to "come to terms with female sexuality," men created these two categories and

posited themselves as "protectors of the madonna and punishers of the whore" in accordance with their interests (3-4). In general, their primary ineterst is to secure – since *pater semper incertus est* – that the outcome of the sexual intercourse is their legitimate heir who rightfully inherits the money, status and position that they acquired (Kelly 254). It has to be noted here, that the love of the *femme fatale* is barren, and no heir is born out of the sexual intercourse with her which would be the central concern for the patriarchal system. She is always childless (Harvey 25 – although she states this about the *film noir femmes fatales*, it is still valid in other periods, as well) or loses her child and the marriages – if is she is married – are always sterile. Hers is a "sterile, cruel love" (Praz, *Romantic Agony* 389).

Mario Praz is also of the opinion that lethal women of all sorts have long populated the public imagination along with mythology and literature because these are (fictional) reflections on real life that has always had aggressive and violent women among its ranks. In addition, he also claims that every period had its *fatal women*, yet, they grew in number when the times were troubled.

> There have always existed Fatal Women both in mythology and in literature, since mythology and literature are imaginative reflections of the various aspects of real life, and real life has always provided more or less complete examples of arrogant and cruel female characters. […] Similar companies of Fatal Women are to be found in the literatures of every period, and are of course more numerous during times in which the springs of inspiration were troubled. (Praz, *Romantic Agony* 199-200)

He then adds, that certainly, for example, during Romanticism there were several lethal women, yet, they were not termed as such because there was not "an established type of Fatal Women" (*Romantic Agony* 201). He immediately explains and defines how a type is created: "it is essential that some particular figure should have made a profound impression on the popular mind" (ibid), although, it is slightly interesting and questionable that there was no such figure until the middle or the end of the nineteenth century. It might be because the "Byronic superman" (Praz, *Romantic Agony* 205) was still too strong an image and character before that time and with the rise of feminism and with the intensified debates of the Woman Question provided that lacking impetus for the creation of the Type of the Fatal Woman and it was not the result of missing prominent *femmes fatales* before.

Nevertheless, the *angel in the house*, who has another name typical in the United States: the *true woman*, was expected and believed to produce that/those legitimate heir/s and conform to the expectations of society. At the turn of the century in the U.S., women were

still subject to the role of the ideal woman that nourished the cult of *true womanhood*, which encompassed the characteristics relevant in the case of the "angel in the house:" piety, purity, submissiveness, being domestic and homebound (Daniel 7-8, Welter 48-71, Kitch 17-36). The "angel in the house" and the "true woman" both are linked to the "eternal feminine" image: submissive, modest, self-less, graceful, pure, delicate, civil, compliant, reticent, chaste, affable, polite (Gilbert, Gubar 23), "slim, pale, passive," snowy and immobile in a porcelain-like manner (25).

During the Victorian period the fallen woman gained a new coinage: she became the *femme fatale*, the deadly or lethal woman. "The femme fatale emerges as a central figure in the nineteenth century, […] [as] a clear indication of the extent of the fears and anxieties prompted by shifts in the understanding of sexual difference in the late nineteenth century" (Doane, *Femmes Fatales* 1-2). Doane also adds that "[h]er appearance marks the confluenece of modernity, urbanization, Freudian psychoanalysis and new technologies of production and reproduction (photography, the cinema) born of the Industrial Revolution" (*Femmes Fatales* 1). The *femme fatale*, as a result, is the product of modernity, urbanization and technological as well as economic progress, who personifies in herself all of the anxieties and fears that these involve. The sexualized figure of the *femme fatale*, thus, became the site for the "imbrication of knowledge and sexuality, of epistemophilia and scopophilia" to gain truth and knowledge (ibid). Since the truth claims about women heavily depend of visuality "the stability or instabilty" of vision (of the woman) became of central importance (ibid). "Although her origins are literary and pictorial, the femme fatale has a special relevance in cinematic representation, particularly that of Hollywood insofar as it appeals to the visible as the ground of its production of truth" (ibid). So, the *femmes fatales* of Hollywood as well as their literary and pictorial 'sisters' were/are meant to serve as visible signposts on the way of truth and knowledge (mostly as negative examples and as points of negation) (ibid) while all the fears and anxieties of the unknown and unknowable were projected onto her body.

The fallen woman's 'actual fall' traced her from grace and decency to immorality and sin, the latter being primarily connected with sexuality during the beginning of women's emancipation movements when the control of reproduction and material (re)sources was in central position in the patriarchal culture of the West. The "angel woman" is not represented in sexual terms; the fallen woman, however, is. With the threat of syphilis the fallen woman can easily become a lethal one: and the route is direct to label her the *femme fatale* (Richardson 240-262). In addition to the possible transmission of a disease, the *femme fatale* is barren, she cannot or does not produce children, hence, her sexuality is only for itself and

(possibly) for enjoyment, not for the mighty purpose of reproduction, which is decreed by Christianity as the sole vindication for copulation. This way, she loses the (allegedly) only purpose of a woman, and since she does not 'fulfil her destiny' she is not considered a proper woman. Thus, "the femme fatale is represented as the antithesis of the maternal – sterile or barren, she produces nothing in a society which fetishizes production" (Allen, *The Femme Fatale* 4 quoted in Doane, *Femmes Fatales* 2). In addition, an interesting feature is that the *femme fatale* figure – if she is married – usually has an older husban with whom she lives in an unhappy marriage, and generally, this marriage is sexually dysfunctional likewise (Bruzzi 139). Sylvia Harvey also opines that, for example, in the *film noir* tradition, there is an "absent family," and these films do not reproduce the conventional family structure, they are sterile while there is no sexual satisfaction within the marriage bond: "the expression of sexuality and the institution of marriage are at odds with one another" (22-34).

The duality of these feminine stereotypes and role models for women (with their biased and mistaken notions) intensified and sharpened towards the end of the nineteenth century with the emergence of the *New Woman*. The figure of the New Woman challenged these existing sharp dichotomies (with all stereotypes about women's role, nature, capacity, abilities, etc.). By doing so, this evidently caused inordinate upheavals, fierce debates after which many of the so-called New Women gained the labels of deviant, decadent, abnormal, deadly or even homicidal – this connected the image of the New Woman to that of the existing *femme fatale* (Ledger 9-34, 94-121; Pykett 137-157). There had been several women writers, among them Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen, who attempted to address the above-mentioned issues even before the New Woman debate started, but at the given time they could not gain too much publicity and enough attention, therefore they could not achieve real prominence, and as such, results in the rectification of the image of women. By the end of the nineteenth century, due to the existing economic boom (in the aftermath of the industrial revolution), together with the scientific progress and socio-cultural changes that occurred in society, it became possible for women to have access to financial resources through education and work. This resulted in the growth of their independence, which, in turn, altered their situation in the realm of sexual politics.

The New Woman made possible (and visible) many of the stories of change that we know today. Without the New Woman, there would not have been writers like Maurine Dallas Watkins – who had a say on how *femmes fatales*, fallen women, unruly women, or female offenders were represented; without voices like hers there would not have been factual changes in the more authentic representation of women. At the beginnings of film production,

the then-prevalent, dual feminine types were adapted to screen. These were the *ingénue* (the filmic *angel in the house* or *true woman*) and the *vamp* (the cinematic *fallen woman* or *femme fatale*). This latter expression, *vamp* (the shortened version for vampire), according to Reinhold Heller, came to existence when the *femme fatale* "reached" the United States, became integrated into the American slang use and was "renamed, reshaped" by Hollywood (Heller 11). Two of the earliest and most explicit exemplars of the *ingénue* image were Mary Pickford and Lillian Gish, while those of the *vamp* image were, for example, Theda Bara and Pola Negri. The young and early Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich also 'joined' this latter club but with the advent of the prolific and versatile Pre-Code era, they also started to impersonate more layered and complex (although still often 'deviant') characters.

After the silent film era's initial 'Victorian' *ingénue–vamp* duality, during the Pre-Code Hollywood era, we can indeed find some more authentic representations of women, be either angelic or fallen, they were simply without demonisation, mystification or distortion. (Lasalle 11-252) This exceptional period was followed by another one, in which the representational techniques of dangerous, murderous and fallen women again sunk into the unsophisticated and rather simplistic methodology of the angel-devil duality (e.g.: the *film noir*) due especially to the censorship of the Production Code Administration. "The Production Code Administration (PCA) consisted of an executive branch of censors that controlled a conglomerate of restrictive guidelines governing the production of American movies, with the aim to ban indecent and immoral films" (Cristian, Dragon 73). Some of the themes that were to be handled carefully or to be avoided totally were the following: illicit sex, adultery, nudity, seduction, vulgarity, obscenity etc.; everything had to be presented in a way that nobody should sympathize with crime or evil and the sanctity of law had to be preserved – just to name a few (Cristian, Dragon 74).

2.1. The *New Woman*-turned-*Flapper*

The *New Woman* had a major role in the changes occuring at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and contributed immensely to the improvement of women's situation. As a result of 'her' labouring, the figure of the *flapper* emerged during the 1920s. *Chicago* takes place at this time and the women in the story are the children of this era. We could call the inmates of the women's prison, such as Roxie or Velma, *flapper femmes fatales*.

The most common and widespread image of the New Woman is the *flapper* of *The Roaring Twenties*, the female skyscraper, the symbol of modernity. However, I do not agree

with that the flapper would be a later version of the New Woman because the flapper represented much different ideological stance from that of the New Woman and they cannot be placed on the same developmental continuum of the female subject. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that the flapper is the outcome of the work done by the New Woman, yet, this 'relationship' could be much rather described along the parable of the prodigal son since the flapper did not really contribute to the work done by the New Woman and only wasted away and squandered everything the New Woman achieved without gratitude or constructive contribution.

The history of the flapper dates far back into the nineteenth century, starting in about 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. The change of women's morality, and thus morality in general, had its roots in the antagonism between the Victorian feminine ideal and the coexisting prostitution: "[r]espectable femininity was womanhood in its normal, healthy and (many argued) asexual state of married motherhood. The prostitute, on the other hand, was deviant femininity, the negation of the womanly norm" (Pykett 63). The wives and mothers were considered to be healthy, asexual and less attractive than the mistresses while "[t]he women of the demi-monde were seen not only as being more sexually attractive than their respectable counterparts, but also as more lively and interesting, and hence more suitable companions for educated middle-class men" (Pykett 64). Due to the middle-class custom that marriage was delayed until the man could support his family in a proper, normative bourgeois manner, the institution of prostitution was paradoxically a threat but also the result of marriage and proper femininity of that age (ibid). Nevertheless, there were many who drew a parallel between marriage and prostitution, both being commercial transactions through which the exchange of sex for money or for financial security occurred (Pykett 65-66).

All the questions raised in relation to women's issues in the mid-nineteenth century prevailed and took form by 1890s in the figure of the *New Woman,* who can be best introduced and described by Lyn Pykett's words.

> First and foremost the New Woman was a representation. She was a construct, 'a condensed symbol of disorder and rebellion' (Smith-Rosenberg 247) who was actively produced and reproduced in the pages of the newspaper and periodical press, as well as in novels. The New Woman (and the moral panic which surrounded her) was yet another example of the way in which, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, femininity became a spectacle. (Pykett 137-138)

The New Woman turned the whole world upside-down and called forth rather opposing and harsh reactions. For example, as Pykett has described, "[t]he New Woman was the embodiment of a complex of social tendencies. The title named a beacon of progress or beast of regression, depending on who was doing the naming" (Pykett 139). She also represented the demand for women's inclusion in the political life, which was paired with the feminization and proletarianization of the public sphere (ibid). The New Woman refused being a mother, and with her *mannish* appearance, she threatened to dissolve the existing gender boundaries (Pykett 140).

> Paradoxically the New Woman was represented as simultaneously *non-female, unfeminine* and *ultra-feminine*. The New Woman's loss of female characteristics was evident in the bearded chin, the bass voice, flat chest and lean hips of a woman who has failed in her physical development. (ibid)

The lack of femininity was signaled by the refusal of motherhood and womanly roles, and the hyper-femininity was presented by her excessive susceptibility to feeling (ibid).

Around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, and especially at the beginning of the latter, great changes took place in which women played a central role. Women invaded all fields of life, stretched the boundaries and unhallowed conventions. They took part actively in arts and politics, and contributed immensely to social and political changes (Rudnick 69).

> New Women would achieve self-fulfillment through a combination of meaningful work, love and sexuality. Such personal goals were politically articulated by feminist, Freudian, socialist, and Bohemian movements centered in Greenwich Village. A more fulfilling sexual and personal life was part of their radical vision of a new society. (Trimberger 98)

A significant shift took place in the emotional culture, as well. While for Romantics and Victorians, sentiment and emotional intensity were highly valued, by the beginning of the twentieth century they lost their significance and physical appearance gained importance. This phenomenon was also signaled by the fact that femininity became a spectacle by this time, meaning that women's bodies were presented and 'reproduced' in journals and magazines. The most important feature was to have a thin, *mannish* and/but sexy appearance and having intense emotions was regarded as something suspicious (Spurlock, Magistro 2-4, 34). Women not only changed but they also left their previous sphere of life: the home. "The 'new woman,' 'the new freedom,' and the 'sexual revolution' all referred to cultural changes that

moved young women out of the Victorian home into the public realm that men had long claimed as their own" (Spurlock, Magistro 4). This also caused serious emotional problems for women because many of them were not able to handle the new situation or they could not match their private and public life in a new and changed world. It was primarily women who had wanted the change but it still took time for them to adjust to the new world, as well, and it happened quite often that they did not get what they expected or wanted. Eventually, this crisis reached its peak only in the 20s with the *Flapper Wife* principally (Kitch 121-135).

Carolyn Kitch by citing Ernst Gombrich claims about the representations of the New Woman that 'she' was not a single image but a series of images changing through time as a result of the varying factors surrounding them from which they could not be divorced.

> While she represented societal change, the image of the New Woman varied significantly from the 1890s to the 1920s, expressed through a series to 'types.' Because these images appeared at particular times and in particular order, they functioned not just as individual icons but rather as a symbolic system that visual theorists call 'iconology.' In this view, wrote Ernst Gombrich, an image 'cannot be divorced from its purpose and requirements of the society in which the given visual language gains currency' – in other words, from its social, economic, and historical context – nor can its meaning be divorced from other images in the surrounding culture. (Kitch 8)

The role and situation of women changed greatly during this period and got visual manifestation in the diverse representations. This passage also draws our attention to the fact that images do not exist on their own. If the images of women mostly depicted vamps, party girls, scheming beauties (Kitch 60) and flappers, then, society needed and created these female figures and stereotypes.

The American Woman first appeared on covers as a mature woman, a mother, a nurse, but already she was depicted outside her home quite many times. Then came *the Gibson Girl,* created by Charles Dana Gibson, who was tall, aristocratic, elegant, serious-looking and who represented "the lifestyle to which the 'rising' classes might aspire" (Kitch 13). Then followed *the Fisher Girl* by Harrison Fisher who was well-dressed and, – genteel, though, – she pursued sports and might even looked a bit coquettish (Kitch 44-48). *The Christy Girl* by Howard Chandler Christy followed her predecessors and also contemporaries with a healthy and sporty look; she was friendly and went to college (Kitch 48-51). James Montgomery Flagg drew vamps, young women with sex appeal who made use of men and ridiculed them. Then, during World War I, women were depicted as nurses, angels, Red-Cross workers, and certainly mothers who were proud to give their sons to Uncle Sam, and to bear new children

of /for the future (Kitch 101-120). With this, the *Roaring Twenties* arrive, the period when the flappers ruled. The major artist of this female figure was John Held, Jr. (Kitch 121). However, we must not forget about Neysa McMein's (as well as Jessie Willcox Smith's and Norman Rockwell's) *modern American wife and mother,* either, who was also the product of the 1920s with all her ambiguities (Kitch 136-159).

While Charles Dana Gibson and John Held, Jr. both drew only rich *white girls*, Nell Brinkley often depicted *working women*, and what is even more important, she portrayed women of *all race* equally represented as beautiful (Robbins 2-3, 42-43). Nell Brinkley depicted women of the 1920s as active, or in the midst of working, or as women who pursued sports, who had snowball fights, who dressed as Spartans, who read *Essays in Political Economy*, but she also represented them as silly shopping girls or party girls. She even made portraits of female murderers during trials. Last but not least, mothers with their children also got a place in her artwork (Robbins 79-112).

Thus, it can be seen that the New Woman went through a major, and not primarily positive and constructive, evolution and had several faces. Yet, what is central is that the flapper seems to be a figure who represented only a carefree hedonism, the purpose of which, eventually, was only to retreat into the bastions of marriage and nothing more resulted from 'her' actions, as the following quotation narrates:

> Imagery in 1920s mass media, which included movies as well as magazines, suggested that the New Woman had undergone a remarkable evolution – from a serious-minded college (or working) woman to a carefree, scantily clad "flapper" who existed to wear modern clothes, have fun, and, ultimately, catch a man who would support her. 'The flapper symbolized a solipsistic, hedonistic, and privatized femininity, a gay abandonment of social housekeeping, women's organizations, and dogged professionalism,' writes Mary P. Ryan. (Kitch 12)

One of the reasons behind this new and free behaviour was Freudianism. Freud's ideas spread quickly and brought about change in the social recognition of sexuality and sex roles. However, the problem was that, most people misinterpreted his concepts. It was typical of the Jazz Age to rely on popular misinterpretation(s) of the Freudian Theory (Fishbein 246). As Frederick J. Hoffmann, cited in Fishbein's study, articulates,

> [p]sychoanalysis had proved useful to the postwar generation as a means both of scoffing at Victorianism and searching for new bases of social behavior.

> However, Freudian doctrine was commonly misinterpreted to justify sexual license, to provide a scientific justification for sexual expression. (ibid)

All this became more extreme with the passing of time, since by the mid-twenties the sexual freedom of the flapper had turned into a social imperative (Fishbein 248). As Eleanor Rowland Wembridge noted, "a lack of sexual activity was viewed as abnormal" (Fishbein ibid). Most of the girls *fell into this trap*, so to speak, because they had nothing else besides sexuality for emotional expression. They did not have an urge to search for a personal identity or they did not have intellectual interests, and in the end they were lost in convulsive sexual behavior (Fishbein 248-249).

To this, it can be added that the modern home was not a hearth, a shrine or a sacred institution any more. It was just a place for shelter and food, a meeting and leaving place, and its practical advantages greatly *defeated* its social and spiritual ones (Fishbein 248). As the home had lost its sacrosanct nature, the idealized function of the mother within its bounds also lost its significance (Fishbein 247-248). Thus, the mature woman figure was replaced by a young, slim and *easy-going* kind of girl who was enabled by both the popular acknowledgement of female sexuality and a new birth control movement, so she could express her sexuality freely and safely (Kitch 8-9).

The spectacular transformation of women was signaled by various attributes. First, their skirt became quite short, about nine inches above the ground and constantly going higher. Dresses were thin, short-sleeved or sleeveless, and the stockings were rolled lower and lower. Women abandoned their corsets and wore more and more make-up. They drank alcohol, smoked cigarettes, swore, talked frankly and openly, danced *indecent dances* such as "grizzly bear, turkey trot, monkey dance, the horse trot, the bunny hug and the kangaroo dip" (Cullen, Hackman and McNeilly 404), spent time with men in cars, kissed, necked and did other things of the same sort. There were sex and confession magazines, and the movies also encouraged the *younger generation* to behave freely. There was a breakthrough in the use of fabrics, as well. Previously, cotton and wool were the most widely-used materials. Now these were used less and less, and instead silk, and a new invention, rayon, were mostly used. The new type of hat was the cloche, which fitted tightly the bobbed head, bobbed hair being one of the most outrageous changes. Shoes were low-heeled, and dresses were long-waisted and straight. Cocktail parties and petting parties became *social institutions* just like *with the help of the Prohibition Law*: the speakeasies. Women took part in everything equally, and these

egalitarian thoughts left their mark on their looks likewise, which were boyish, just like everything they did. (Allen, *Only Yesterday* 61-86)

2.2. Androgyny

The appearance of the *flapper* is noteworthy since this was the first time when the ideal female/feminine body was considered to be boyish. This idea evokes the androgyne which is considered to be the most perfect and unified concept or construction of sex, and as Praz claims "[t]he Androgyne is the artistic sex *par excellance*, realized in the creations of Leonardo" and adds that Mona Lisa is androgynous as well (*Romantic Agony* 334). Praz also suggests that the ideal of the androgyne became an obsession during the Decadent Movement (*Romantic Agony* 346) and "the charm of the Androgyne" was often the theme of works (*Romantic Agony* 388). Betsy Prioleau is also of the opinion that seductresses usually emphasized (their) androgyny and enhanced this potential to create more "erotic possibilities" and heighten the fascination (18). In addition, she claims that "[t]he lure of gender sythesis" have long attracted feminists, as well, who championed "for a more androgynous definition of womanhood" without the sexual and erotic connotations (ibid). I would add an example for this: *Herland* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, in this work Gilman creates an entirely female community who reproduce themselves through parthenogenesis and they are androgynous is appearance and behaviour – she calls this the perfect world of equality and equilibrium.

Plato theorizes that the most perfect human form is the androgyn because as the third sex it owns a double nature unifying both man and woman – hence being the moon as the unity of the sun and the earth –, and states that the double nature that is called androgynous is lascivious (15-17). 'It' is a wo/man who is actively pursued as well as pursues others sexually. Stella Bruzzi, when discussing androgyny, articulates that there is eroticism in androgyny and that it is connected to desire since it combines the two domains of gender and sexuality by representing both of them intrinsically and by bordering the two spheres of reference at the same time (the real and the imaginary) (175). She claims that "[t]he androgyne is a potent figure of fantasy because s/he […] pertains to both the real and the imaginary, and it is a coalescing of the two which generates the eroticism of the image" (Bruzzi 176). Bruzzi also states that androgyny is a fusion of genders and that the androgyne is often associated with the abstract: the pre-sexual Platonic ideal, universality, superiority, totality and perfection (ibid). A quite spectacular, lively (and comic) elaboration on the androgynous body and its representation as a flapper occurs in the film entitled *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (1967), in a

scene of which, the female protagonist and her male lover are walking side by side both dressed as women (flappers) and the sexual (sex/gender) difference is not so evident – the figure on the left is Jimmy and the one on the right is Millie (Hill 1h 54 min, Appendix i/2).

A great Androgyne of the early twentieth century is evidently Greta Garbo (for example in *Queen Christina* (1933) Appendix i/3-4). Lucy Fischer discusses Garbo as the embodiment of Art Deco (Fischer 83-110, 84, 85), which is again of an "androgenious type," a style and concept that was modernity to its core including (a wide range of) elements (but quite importantly) that implied androgyny since this was the "skyscraper style" (Fischer 86). The figure of the flapper is rather androgynous resembling a human skyscraper as opposed to the pervious (and numerous later) human ideals when femininity and female form was strongly distinct and distinguished from masculinity and the male form with its curvelinearity. So, Garbo was the concept, the symbol, the idea of this rather unisex human figure, the essence of adrogyny. Haskell also emphasizes that Garbo was really a great androgyne (Haskell 107) and adds that it is no wonder that her leading men became weak or invisible, to say the least, since "as a figure who combined elements of both sexes, and the essence of love itself, she usurped the whole screen" (Haskell 108).

Patricia White cites Roland Barthes' opinion that Garbo's face was "'almost sexually undefined, without however leaving one in doubt,' ultimately leaving sexual definition in doubt and implying that this constitutes her image" (243). This famous quotation of Barthes concretely mentions that the androgyne is the human Idea(l) and Essence, and stands for the Platonic Idea(l) of a human being: "Garbo offered to one's gaze a sort of Platonic Idea of the human creature, which explains why her face is almost sexually undefined, without however leaving one in doubt" (Barthes 628). Barthes adds that the snowy thickness of Garbo's face is like that of a mask that is not painted but set in plaster and that her extreme beauty is perfect and ephemeral (ibid). This also implies that the androgyne is beyond human perfection. Molly Haskell also connects Garbo to abstraction and to "the beyond" when saying that she was timeless and "enchained to the idea of absolute love" (Haskell 89).

Mae West is also often considered to be an androgynous person, and her sex-appeal that of an androgyne. (Appendix i/5-6) As it might be apparent I use the term androgyne in physiological as well as gender sense because these women play with their body as well as their embodiment as a female/feminine person at the same time. Haskell claims about West that "[i]n her size, her voice, her boisterous one-liners, and her swagger, there was something decidedly, if parodistically, masculine. But she was a woman, and she thus stretched the definition of her sex" (116). Joan Mellen is also of the opinion that Mae West in her

exaggerated femininity is much more a "transvestite" than a real woman, and she suggests that this is "a mockery of female sexuality by flaunting what are no more than ordinary female attributes" (243). Stella Bruzzi claims about "[t]he transvestite image" that actually it "is a fault line, a crack between sex and gender, a site of ambiguity and change" (157). Such a campy drag performance as a result puts "femininity into quotations marks" – according to Bruzzi (165). A vivid example for this is when, in *Goin' to Town* (1935), West is performing on stage Delilah and the way she is dressed is telling. She is the phallic mockery of the feminine/female form because her breasts and pubic area are highlighted with white stones and they sparkle; she has a voluptuous, curvecious body with a large bust, small waist, and wide hips – and all this is accompanied by a sea of blonde wavy long hair, yet, from her 'little gem between her legs' a long, phallic pattern is going down her dress like a couple of snakes. (Appendix ii/7-8) Here, she is really bordering the concept of the *farcical femme fatale* since, in this shot, it is actually her husband's corpse that we see at her feet (whom she concretely bought for money to acquire an aristocratic name), but it was not her who killed him, however, she is blamed for it (immediately). Although she is the victim of the irony of fate or cosmic irony, this fatal occurence is partly the outcome of her actions – even if unwittingly –, and eventually, the realities and facts of the murder come to light, which let her go free. In spite of the comic exaggeration, she really looks like a 'real woman' because, as the film of the same title say, *Real Women Have Curves* (2002). A rather realist representation of the female form is the statue that is entitled *Standing Woman* which stands in the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden on the campus of UCLA. (Appendix ii/9)

Nevertheless, the most perfect and complex platonic ideal is still the androgyne and both Beulah/Roxie as well as Belva/Velma are androgynous in reality, although this is mostly probably due to the fashion ideal of the flapper form as they are *flapper femmes fatales*. Yet, what is even more interesting is that the *femme fatale* figures in general are rather androgynous due to their masculine attributes – what they try to cover up with enhanced accessories of femininity – since physically they are not curvaceous – however usually it does not turn out that they would be hermaphrodites or intersexual –, still they give the impression that they are androgynous and their femininity (only) arises from their excessive masquerade and performance of feminine signs. Another masculine sign of these women is what has been mentioned in the case of West: their voice, which is deep – certainly, it is not a male voice but these androgynous bodies are also 'accompanied' by a relaitvely deep voice. Marlene Dietrich's voice is quite iconic with its 'female baritone' sound, but as a later example, Kathleen Turner also famously has a deep voice.

The uniqueness of androgyny from the point of view of its dual corporeal and social aspects surfaces in the corporeal performance of the femininity of *femmes fatales*. Androgyny is more complicated than 'simple' cross-dressing since the latter serves as an ostensible mask of the "sexuality and desire" of the cross-dresser, yet, "the androgyne is of 'blurred sex'" as well as "of blurred sexuality," hence "an agent of discovery and danger" (Bruzzi 175). Bruzzi while discussing "femininity as construction" concerning *femmes fatales* unites Riviere's masquerade, Butler's idea of performativity concerning "the dynamics of the body/social performance relationship" as well as Beauvoir's famous sentence: "[o]ne is not born a woman, rather becomes one" (166). Bruzzi cites Butler concerning how the corporeal performace provides a surface sign and that "incorporation" is only the effect of "corporeal signification" (ibid). Bruzzi also quotes Butler claiming that the result of corporeal performative enactments is only a construction: "[s]uch acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (Butler 136 quoted in Bruzzi 166-167). Then, she goes on to stress how the "body/appearance dynamic" is manipulated by clothing, highlights the fluidity of identities and how their construction exist – hence their ontology is connected to this enactment – only "at the moment of performance" (Bruzzi 167). She also points out the importance of clothes in the performative enactment of the body: "[c]lothes are always performative in that they function as signs or enactments on the body to give that body the illusion of integrity and substance" (ibid). In the case of *Chicago*, this is exactly what happens as Beulah/Roxie and Belva/Velma turn their androgyny into that kind performative enactment of femininity that is concretely required in the given situation: virgin, whore, tearful victim, covent girl, mother etc.

2.3. The *Vamp*

The term, *vamp*, was an American slang word created by Hollywood to signify the *femme fatale* (Heller 11), the creation of the *vamp* was the Americanization of the European *femme fatale* (Haskell 102). The word, *vamp* has its origins in the word, *vampire* since it is the latter's shortened version and this villainous female is a *femme fatale* figure who as a sexual vampire drains the life out of her male victims and leaves only the frame or the shell of this previously virile, independent, strong and powerful male lover (Csengery 85). "[T]he vamp exuded a desirable but destructive sexuality that proved fatal to her male victim" (Sova 85).

The appearance of the *vamp* could be described as dark and sultry (Haskell 46), while she is irresistibly beautiful, sexually alluring she is a deathly and tragic female figure. The *vamp*, the vampiric woman is typically the lethal seductress, the *femme fatale* of the *Pre-Code Era* films in Hollywood (and elsewhere likewise). The outstanding actresses who impersonated this female figure on screen were and still are iconic figures in film history such as Theda Bara, Pola Negri, Nita Naldi, Musidora, Myrna Loy, later Louise Brooks, Clara Bow, Mae West, the non-omissible Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich and so on and so forth.

In early American cinema, the *vamp* could be termed as a (negative) female stock character that was quite much simplified and one-sided. Garbo was one of the most outstading actresses who impersonated several *vamps* on the (American) screen. Garbo shared the fate of most European actresses who came after Pola Negri: they were cast as *vamp*s because of their exoticism (Pola Negri was Polish and became one of the first great *vamps* in US film history—and as a consequence, in film history in general—due to her exotic beauty (Sova 34-35; Haskell 82, 86, 88-89; Csengery 74). That the *vamp* or *femme fatale* figure is often considered exotic or is associated with exoticism is because she "promises a more free sexuality" (Brooks, *Body Work* 164). The question of exoticism is interesting because what is considered to be exotic depends on a given culture. Our cultural embeddedness determines what we consider exotic, because in Europe – meaning the Continent – noone would consider a Slavic woman exotic. However, Mario Praz is also of the opinion that the *femme fatale* figure was "placed more generally in Russia" by the end of the nineteenth century, and he emphasizes that "the Slav woman" became more and more central in the *femme fatale* imagery (*Romantic Agony* 207-210). In addition, the fame and success of the Dolly Sisters in the early twentieth century was mostly attributed to their "exotic beauty" and they were of Hungarian origin (non-Slavic but Central-Eastern European) (Cullen, Hackman and McNeilly 316-317, 404).[ii]

The *vamp* similarly to the *femme fatale* was a tragic female figure who made men suffer through her lethal sexuality and caused their fall, and as a result of this, her own fall and her often ensuing death likewise – as it was (and often still is) obligatory when writing a story that involved/s a *femme fatale* or *vamp* figure (Hansen 262) –, at the end of the story the *femme fatale* or *vamp* figure has to disappear together with her dark appearance and exotic look. (Hansen 275-276, Haskell 46) Mario Praz also adds that aestheticism (*Romantic Agony* 210) and exoticism were central in the formation of the *femme fatale* towards the end of the nineteenth century as "the exotic and the erotic ideals go hand in hand" and "that a love of the exotic is usually an imaginative projection of sexual desire" (*Romantic Agony* 207). In

addition, this exotic look also involves sickly whiteness because "[t]he typical Fatal Woman is always pale, just as the Byronic hero was pale" (Praz, *Romantic Agony* 231).

The *vamp* was a very popular type. Karen Swenson, a Garbo biographer, explains that people were waiting for the new Theda Bara, or the new Pola Negri (Bird, Brownlow 2005) – two quintessential *vamp* figures of early American cinema. (Sova 26; Haskell 43, 82) They wanted to find a new hit. The *vamp* was the popular image of women in film and in sexual terms, so Garbo became "the new film *vamp*" (Bird, Brownlow 2005). As an example for the *vamp* in early American film history: in *Flesh and the Devil* (1926), Garbo as Felicitas a ruthless and irresistible seductress. (Appendix ii/10) In this film, Garbo acts out the same type of lethal woman as in *Torrent* (1926) and in *The Temptress* (1926) – her three earliest films in the United States. She plays a woman who is irresistible and almost causes the ruin of two very close and loving friends. She is the typical *femme fatale* who does not care about anyone; what matters for her is solely her own happiness and reaching her aims. Her eroticism and wild sexuality consumes both of the men loving her, and she destroys the happiness of everybody around her. As a *femme fatale* figure, she is transgressive and destructive. She wants both men, and by this she disrupts their friendship and strong bond. They almost even kill each other, but finally, they get reconciled while Felicitas gets drowned in the icy water which she falls into when the ice breaks on the surface of the lake as she is hurrying to the men to prevent the duel on the sacred little island in the middle of this certain lake. Here, she as the treacherous woman reaches her 'due end:' she has to die – in accordance with the conventional resolution pattern and logic of the *femme fatale* stories.

The *vamp* symbolized all that is problematic or dangerous, yet, the *vamp* was alluring and her sexualized self was emphasized. With psychoanalysis, and with all the changes taking place at the turn of the century, the sexual habits, rules and customes took a great turn. Women's sexual needs and fantasies became acknowledged, (Fawcett 145-157) slowly women's right to have active sexual behavior became prevalent. This strange combination of sexual liberties and the still prevailing regulations of sexual license and all the other problems still lingering in the air resulted in the birth of this cinematic female figure, the *vamp*.

When cinema 'was born' at the end of the nineteenth century, and as it advanced slowly into the twentieth century it gained prominence and started to operate with its own specificities. The two basic female figures or stereotypes to be brought to screen around the birth of the cinema were the *ingénue* and the *vamp*. As cinema started to gain real popularity and after the *nickelodeon boom* and mainly after the emergence of the studio system, these cinematic female figures were highlighted and exploited. One of the greatest actresses in film

history is by all means, Mary Pickford (née Gladis Louise Smith), who appeared already at the beginning and lasted for a long time. Similarly to Lilian Gish she represented the *ingénue*, the perfect, angelic, fragile, ideal and beautiful girl-woman; the young, innocent and naïve girl.

As an 'antidote' and sexual counterpoint to this Victorian remnant of feminine ideals the *vamp* appeared. There was a sharp contrast between the two female types on screen and both 'branches' were cultivated and elaborated but the *vamp* was a powerful image and a true source for adoration and the manipulation of people. With the exploitation of her sexuality, her beauty and 'demonicity' she was attributed with an irresistible air and a long-lasting effect on people. With the fetishistic and voyeuristic desires men and women likewise became 'addicted' to these glamorous female figures they perceived on screen and in the public press which built around them a myth in cooperation with the studio system. With the arrival of the *flapper era*, almost every woman adopted a certain kind of *vampish* attitude and the *vamps* got manifested in flesh and blood young girls (and elder women, as well) of the *Roaring Twenties*. The flapper as the carefree, sensual and easy-going girl who mostly concentrated only on partying and leisure time often adopted the air of the *vamp* borrowed it from the cinematic female figures. One of the prominent actresses of this period was Clara Bow as being the *It girl* (Elinor Gyln's naming of Bow which gained wide currency) encompassing the *vampish flapperness* of the time.

Some of the most remarkable instances of the *vamp* of Pre-Code Hollywood appear in the films such as *Chicago* (1927), *Made on Broadway* (1933) and *Redheaded woman* (1932). These films are all concentrating on the cruelty, selfishness, insensitivity, inhumanity and soulless attitude of the 'devilish' *femmes fatales* while, for example, *Journal of a crime* (1934) and *Blonde Venus* (1932) reveal how an ordinary woman struggling with the problems of everyday life can 'really' become or rather is only viewed as a 'deviant' *fallen woman*. Phyllis Haver as Roxie, Sally Eilers as Mona and Jean Harlow as 'Lil'/'Red' present the way a ruthless woman is trying to or really achieves her goal via lying, cheating, manipulation, criminality or even committing murder. Ruth Chatterton as Francoise and Marlene Dietrich as Helen Faraday/Helen Jones all interpret the fallen woman or the 'could-be' *femme fatale* with a sense of reality that contributes to the presentation of the complexity of this persona. The previous three interpretations do not produce a simplified or degraded figure either. In these films, the *fallen woman* or the *vamp* is handled and put to the screen without producing a vulgar, primitive and trivialized creature; these women even in their wickedness and

punishment are able to keep their dignity and are depicted as humans with problems without demonization or mystification or witch-hunting.

In *Made on Broadway* (1933), Mona does everything Roxie does except she does not marry. Jeff truly loves her and helps her in everything just like Amos in *Chicago* (1927). Mona is different from Roxie only in that sense that she is not married and due to this, she can have even more liberties with men. As an extra to Roxie, she even has intentions to blackmail people. Mona could be termed as a 'wilder version of Roxie.' The interesting fact about the two films is that they are extremely similar from the point of view of the leading female figure's character and how her case is solved and how she gets acquitted, the trial scenes are almost the same. 'Lil'/'Red' in *Redheaded woman* (1932) is also a woman without bad conscience and she is absolutely uninhibited. She does everything she pleases to achieve her goal. Since she is a poor girl, she means to get a rich husband, this could be termed as an ordinary case but she aims to get the son of her boss who is happily married. Despite everything, she ruins the marriage and gets the man, Bill, whom she shoots in the end when he tries to get free (but he does not die). In all these three stories, the unscrupulous heroines loose everything as a punishment and they are either left alone to start something with their life with the closing shots of the film or they are shown to get along somehow.

Francoise, in *Journal of a crime* (1934), is the wife of a rich man who is supposedly a successful writer and is cheating on his wife with the female star of the theater. The wife knows this very well but clings to her husband because she loves him and pretends not knowing anything and adores her husband. She tries everything to keep the husband but her prospects are not bright, that is why, she decides to shoot the lover to death, which she does. Noone suspects her because a bank robber happens to be there on the crime scene accidentally and he is charged with the murder and he is executed for it. The husband is the only man who suspects the truth and starts to torment the wife who is slowly getting mad (or just acts so) and gets ill. The husband tries to force her to confess, she never does. In the end she decides to go to make the confession but a car almost hits a little boy, she saves him by pushing him back to the pavement, and she is hit. She survives but she has amnesia and has to learn everything again. Being similar to a child the husband takes care of her and teaches her with much patience and love. She is 'purified by her sacrifice' and she is reborn after the accident – that is why, the husband forgives her. This way the story would appear ordinary, however, the last shot of the wife's face and of the film shows that she does not have any kind of a problem with her brain and she does not have amnesia, she is and she has only been acting throughout.

Helen in *Blonde Venus* (1932) is a woman who has a happy marriage with a nice little boy. However, she has to give up everything for her family and loved ones, first her career, then she has to become a prostitute, a kidnapper, a thief and so no and so forth. Apparently, she gets lower and lower, however, she always remains unchanged and pure. She is postulated as the evil incarnate by her husband while she is just a woman who does not want to loose her son since the husband is lost for her and does not understand her in spite of the fact that she tries to explain everything and declares that the only place where she is happy is by his side. Although she gets lower and lower, she never looses her dignity and her love keeps her pure. After overcoming all hardships she gets her family back (that she wanted by all means no matter what she did on the way). In this film, androgyny also plays an important role. (Appendix ii/11-12) In the latter two films, the heroines are women who do not mean to do any harm and who stay intact by vileness while they are categorized as *fallen women* or posited as *vamps*. In the previous three films, the heroines are truly wicked women who act as *vamps* making use of everything and everybody. They really are the *femme fatale* figures that the latter two heroines are actually not. Although, some of these women really commit crimes (of different sorts) they all are treated similarly within the films and they are presented and depicted similarly by the film creators, as well.

In "When the Woman Looks," Linda Williams claims that on screen there is an equal sign between the woman and the monster. Williams also adds that similarly to the monster, the *vamp* has to be punished in the end (561-577) as was/is the general rule in the case of 'unruly' women. The case is not different in connection with the *femme fatale* either: "the femme fatale is situated as evil and is frequently punished or killed" (Doane, *Femmes Fatales* 2). Janey Place's idea could be added here that the punishment and the destruction of the *femme fatale* figure at the end of the story is not a concept connected to some given periods but is always reused and has validity even today as the destruction of "male fears" and the restoration of order (54, Kaplan 3). Yet, she adds that whatever happens to *femme fatale*, what will be remembered is her powerful and strong figure with a "strong, dangerous, and above all, exciting sexuality" (36). However already in many Pre-Code films, the 'deviant' women were/are not always punished in the 'traditional' ways such as suicide, madness, murder, execution; or as another solution, being "returned to her proper place within patriarchy" and in stead of being punished she is "restored as a good object […] [within the realm of the] Symbolic Order" (Place 3-4).

Still, the Pre-Code years of Hollywood managed to produce such powerful, strong and sometimes even criminal women who were/are human and real, who did not have the

'compulsion' to 'slut-down' themselves or to show their guns and other weapons as eroticized objects of phallic power, they just used them as functional tools. Additionally, the filmmakers did not have the 'urge' to crush them by all means in the end, for example, at the end of *Red-headed Woman* (1932) Lil/Red stays with her lover while she is seducing a powerful man to get his money; or although, Mona in *Made on* Broadway (1933) looses the letters at the end of the film, which she could have used for blackmailing, she still stays alive, she is freed from prison, she does not become mad, she is not an outcast from society by any means, she does not become a 'good girl' and she does not marry the hero. The Pre-Code era did not produce only such types of films, yet at least, there were several of them and whatever happened within a film dealing with such unconventional or even (freed) criminal women, it was done with a sense of reality, skill, understanding and proficiency. The representation of this/these filmic persona/e during the Pre-Code years in Hollywood really aimed at showing how a person is struggling with the problems in his/her life without labeling one character as 'the evil' in the form of the *femme fatale* as the Victorians did or as it happened during the Production Code or as it even frequently occurs today by pointing fingers at her as the sole reason and cause of every misery and evil in the world and considering that via eliminating her, every problem will be solved.

2. 4. Theorizing Death, Femininity and the *Femme Fatale*

Mary Ann Doane is of the opinion that the *femme fatale* is actually a 'non-conscious wrong-doer,' (*Femmes Fatales* 2) which is debatable, and in accordance with Elisabeth Bronfen's standpoint, I refute this supposition since the *femme fatale* figure always knows what she wants and definitely knows how to reach her aims. It is another question whether she succeeds in reaching her aims and whether she can get away with it. Yet, Doane claims that the specific power of the *femme fatale* lies in her ambiguous vacillation between activity and passivity: "[h]er power is of a peculiar sort insofar as it is usually not subject to her conscious will, hence appearing to blur the opposition between passivity and activity" (ibid). In addition, Doane states that the *femme fatale* is actually only the "carrier" of power not its conscious user, not the "subject" who owns the power, she is only unconsciously powerful since "she has power *despite herself*: […] [s]he is an ambivalent figure because she is not the subject of power but its *carrier* (the connotations of disease are appropriate here)" (ibid). Doane also adds that "she is attributed with a body which is itself given agency independently of

consciousness" (ibid). This suggests as if the *femme fatale* only had a body and that was all, as if she was without brains: a mindless automaton, an empty-headed doll.

Firstly, the ambiguity of the *femme fatale* can be attributed to her non-knowability such as whether she is good or bad and not because of our uncertainty whether she does something (active) or does not do something (passive) as she is always a doer in the story, she does not just happen to be there, she always has a purpose. Secondly, since she is undoubtedly active she is evidently an agency and a subject who has power, who is entirely conscious of her abilities and this power, and who will not shy away from using them. As Elisabeth Bronfen claims in the case of the *film noir femmes fatales* as an example, by entering the nocturnal world, the *noir* hero transgresses the borders of rationality and violates laws while "the *femme fatale* follows a didactic project" ("Nocturnal World"). This very project is to make him realize that he was well-aware of what he might expect and actually it was him who "wanted to be betrayed by precisely the nocturnal dreams and ambitions she had embodied for him" (ibid). The typical *noir* voice-over is male which narrates the hero's fantasies and wishes that "for once, he might be lucky" and also comments on and explains why he "fell for the allure of a woman" (ibid). Hence, the heroine does not really have much word in "how their story comes to be told," yet, "these fatale seductresses dominate the fate in store for all those who embark upon nocturnal adventures" since these women might cause confusion and uncertainty, they might even betray the hero but they will also teach or warn him, or might even save him (ibid). By leading men down into the nocturnal world, the *film noir femme fatale* provides these men with such experiences that make them face "the fatalistic understanding of modern human existence" that she embodies while doing this (ibid). Bronfen brings Phyllis Dietrichson as an example for the (*film noir*) *femme fatale* who has "a subjectivity of her own," who never deludes herself, who never fancies herself innocent but consciously manipulates the events and Walter Neff, who is absolutely aware of her lover's true intentions and interest in the case, and who is "fully cognizant […] of the consequences of her actions," what is more, "[s]he is willing to pay any price for her freedom" (ibid). (Appendix iii/13-14)

Similarly, in connection with Lola Lola (and also Marlene Dietrch as an uncanny "icon of female seduction") in *The Blue Angel* (1930), Bronfen claims that the *lethal seductress* figure Sternberg created carried in itself uncannyness ("Seductive Departures" 119) and that Lola/Dietrich was well-aware of this: "poised and suavely in control of her seductive charms, she is aware of the dislocation that is the price of her celebrity, and fully embraces this uncannyness" (122). She turns towards her audience with uncanny charm, with

lethal seduction and with mixed vulnerability and empowerment: "she confronts it [the audience] defiantly with a gaze that seductively conbines the gesture of vulnerability with that of empowerment: the alternative to death […]" (ibid).

Ineterstingly then, Doane mentions the question of knowability and knowledgeabilty in connection with women and even writes that the mechanisms of masquerade and veiling-unveiling contribute to deception and a certain "anti-knowledge" that place women in a peculiar position of conveyor of (complex) truth (*Femmes Fatales* 3).

> The emphasis on procedures of masquerade and veiling is an attempt to analyze the extent to which these discourses ally women with deception, secretiveness, a kind of anti-knowledge or, on the other hand, situate them as priviledged conduits to a – necessarily complex and even devious – truth. (ibid)

This seems to suggest that women actually are agents and subjects of knowledge, power and truth; and they can control and manipulate how these are distributed, in addition to whom and by what means, they let have access to them. Another contradictory and problematic utterance is the following suggestion that

> [s]ince feminisms are forced to search out symbols from a lexicon that does not yet exist, their acceptance of the femme fatale as a sign of strength in an unwritten history must also and simultaneously involve an understanding and assessment of all the epistemological baggage she carries along with her (ibid).

First, feminisms are not 'forced' to do any such thing. Second, when searching for symbols the figure of the *femme fatale* is not hard to find (yet it is a question *how* she is discussed), and although, it is not specified what kind of a lexicon is mentioned above but *femmes fatales* exist and long have existed on the pages of scholarly, academic, scientific and literary works as well as on canvasses, screens and stages. Hence, it remains a question what kind of a non-existent lexicon we are supposedly in search of. Third, the *femme fatale* does have a written history (as mentioned above), although, it is a question *who* was writing that history. Fourth, the *femme fatale* is a sign of strength because even if she is usually (but not primarily and compulsorily) erased in the end she carries out acts during the story that would not be possible in the case of an 'ideal woman:' she thinks, she acts and she wants: she has thoughts, wishes, desires and intentions and acts upon them. She does not let things happen, she makes them happen and that is strength. What is more, it even occurs that she has a say in her own end, as

well. And finally, the epistemological baggage is already there and we are already involved in its interpretation, it is not something that will take place in the future 'after the supposed completion of the writing of the history and lexicon of the *femme fatale* or feminine symbols.' Nonetheless, I can absolutely agree on the point that the *femme fatale* has a unique position within cinema due to her "perceptual ambiguity" that greatly contributes to the discussion and unveiling of the relations between " the limits of vision" and "knowledge" (ibid).

To define and discuss the phenomenon of the *femme fatale* and to interpret these female figures in *Chicago* I would like to elaborate on the ideas expressed by Elisabeth Bronfen who wrote and is still writing extensively about *femmes fatales*. First and foremost, Bronfen claims that the representation of femininity and that of death are always misrepresentations since they repress what they intend to reveal while they articulate what they aim to conceal. She adds that both death and femininity are cultural constructs while culture, in general, connects them to "non-semiotic materiality and facticity." (Bronfen, *Over Her* xi) Thus, femininity and death are already related to the *carnival* in this sense and if they are combined into one through the figure of the *femme fatale* who is additionally comic, then, the the *carnivalesque* world is to be evoked where the suspension of (customary) semiosis takes place in the realm of crude materiality and non-sensical merriment. Femininity and death both pose a threat to order and stability and through their eradication order is recuperated and stability reinstated. "The threat that death and femininity pose is recuperated by representation, staging absence as a form of re-presence, or return, even if or rather precisely because this means appeasing the threat of real mortality, of sexual insufficiency, of lack of plenitude and wholeness" (Bronfen, *Over Her* xii). Hence, (the image of) a *farcical femme fatale* seems to be far beyond the limits of representation, and as such her representation(s) are rather deemed as mis-representation(s). Bronfen adds that the equation between death and femininity is partly due to "the fact that Woman as man's object of desire (*object a*) is on the side of death" since she is meant to repeat the lost primordial mother while also being, at the same time, "a non-reciprocal 'dead' figure of imaginary projection," a fantasy (Bronfen, *Over Her* 63).

At the core of every cultural theory, a fundamental duality is to be found that is based on the hierarchical opposition standing between masculinity and femininity. This lies at the basis of how fear of death may turn into fear of Woman since she is Freud's 'dark continent,' the horrifying void, the unknown and unknowable thus a constructed place of mystery. She is desirebale exactly because of the not-knowing, the not-being-there because she is distant or absent, she is a dream, a phantom and/or a phantasy. Both death and Woman are the

unrepresentable, the unknowable still paradoxically both are constantly omnipresent in various allegorical representations in the Western world. “Woman and death are considered to be the two ‘unrepresentable’ things and yet they are ubiquitously present ‘allegorically’ in western representations as precisely such a limit and excess.” (Bronfen, *Over Her* 205) Both Woman and death are ‘missing’ hence are beyond representation (Bronfen, *Over Her* 208). Death and femininity, the two chief enigmas of Western discourse are culturally-constructed and -positioned so to serve “as privileged tropes for the existence yet ineffability of truth” (Bronfen, *Over Her* 255).

By elaborating on the ideas expressed by Theresa de Lauretis who reflects on Jurij Lotman’s theory of plot typology it is stated that a text usually contains two characters, the mobile hero and an immobile obstacle that hinders his movement. This immobile obstacle or the representation of a function of this space is a “grave, cave, house” or a “woman” with their associations to “darkness, warmth [and] dampness.” (Bronfen, *Over Her* 50) According to this typology the hero must be masculine and the obstacle feminine (ibid). This is what is traditionally considered to be the case of the (*film noir*) *femme fatale*, who with her heated sexuality and dark intentions means to stop the masculine hero and cause his downfall. If the hero manages to overcome this obstacle by eradicating the *femme fatale*, her ‘femininity and death combo’ is also dismissed as she carries it away in her body, which two anyway are always already interrelated. In addition, the representation of death is a paradox in itself as it is always culturally constructed since it is “outside any speaking subject’s personal experience, outside and beyond the imaginary and symbolic registers” (Bronfen, *Over Her* 54).

Accroding to Bronfen, Woman is semantically encoded as good or evil, thus the feminine types derived are “the temptress Eve and the healing Virgin Mary” (Bronfen, *Over Her* 66). Eve serves as an “allegory of evil, sin, deception, destruction and negation” and all these are to be encountered in their superlative form in the dangerous sexuality of the witch (Bronfen, *Over Her* 67). As such the *femme fatale*, the Eve-Woman, is an allegory of the deterioration of the flesh and her beauty is only a mask for covering up decay; sexual action with her is rather a form of death than of conception. The conjunction of the womb and the tomb, as well as, that of the woman and death leads us back to the mother’s gift not only of life but also of death. The womb-tomb duality within the mother and the beloved reminds the man of his mortal state and human destiny. (ibid)

While Eve is the incarnation of destruction and woundedness, “the Virgin Mary, the Mater Dolorosa,” is the allegory of “the nourishing and healing mother” who is healing

consoling and promises wholeness; in addition, she functions as "a figure for the triumph over the 'bad' death of sin and decay, introduced by Eve […]" (ibid). The Virgin Mother is ethereal and timeless, her 'bodilesness' is a conquest over death while Eve, the evil temptress, is associated with death through her equation with the human (or sometimes even animal) body and sexuality. (Bronfen, *Over Her* 68) As a third variation on the woman-death and womb-tomb analogy or conjunction, next to the images of Mary without a tomb and Eve with a womb bearing death upon the world, is the myth of Medusa. The feminine diabolique arises from the Greek *diabollo* (to split, defame, deceive etc.) that further strengthens the associations between death and femininity. "Not only does the powerful sexuality of the femme fatale cause her lover to lose his head, and with it his social identity and his sense of safe ego boundaries," the female genitalia also represent another sense of danger with its deceptive split that raises the terror of castration (Bronfen, *Over Her* 69).

In spite of the strict duality between death and love (i.e.: life), there is also an analogy to be found between the violence of love and the aggression of death because violent love can also lead to transgressions and can evoke the dark nature that disintegrates and disturbs autonomy and rationality. By reaching the nineteenth century, love and death were both culturally constructed realms where the savage can intrude upon the civilized man at a time and historical moment when people believed that technology and rationalism had already subdued nature entirely. (Bronfen, *Over Her* 86) Since this ideology worked at the basis of the cultural construction of the *fin-de-siècle femme fatale*, who, then, entered the twentieth century and invaded the cultural consciousness that formed later cultural construction(s) of her persona, she became the impersonator of the entwined dangers of death and love.

In the 2002 version, Roxie's scene, in which she is looking at herself in various and multiplied mirrors, is the ultimate example and representation of the conjunction of love and death that is so central in the figure of the *femme fatale* since "representation of mirrors signify the conjunction of love and death with the image as a double of the self" (Bronfen, *Over Her* 92). It is because through vanitas which is a supreme form of self-reflection death leaves its signature as narcissistic self-love, the love of one's own image, involves the double which carries in itself the reservation of life and the threat of death at the same time. (ibid) (Appendix iii/15-16)

In this scene, the title of the song is "Roxie" and she is singing about how famous she will be, what a great life she will have and how much she will be adorned. Roxie's narcissism is evident in words and images likewise and her narcissism is not only doubled but multiplied

in the numerous mirrors surrounding her. As Freud theorized, narcissistic people has suffered certain disturbances in their libidinal development.

> We have discovered, especially clearly in people whose libidinal development has suffered some disturbance […] that in their later choice of love-objects they have taken as a model not their mother but their own selves. They are plainly seeking *themselves* as a love-object, and are exhibiting a type of object-choice which must be termed 'narcissistic'. In this observation we have the strongest of the reasons which have led us to adopt the hypothesis of narcissism. (Freud, "On Narcissism" 81)

Roxie clearly states in this scene that she was not loved in her childhood and now she wants compensation, she wants love from her admirers and she, certainly, admires herself while the admiration of others is still lacking.

The combination of narcissism and the double is also discussed by James Diedrick who claims on the basis of the work of Otto Rank that the double has connections

> with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, with guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and with the fear of death […] [F]or the "double" was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an "energetic denial of the power of death," as Rank says […]. Such ideas … have sprung from the soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissism which dominates the mind of the child and of primitive man. But when this stage has been surmounted, the "double" reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death… The "double" has become a thing of terror, just as, after the collapse of their religion the gods turned into demons. (Diedrick)

Polona Petek also joins in this argumenatation by stating that

> [T]he double is but one manifestation of the uncanny […]. However, whatever form it actually assumes, the uncanny, according to Freud, always signifies re-emergence of narcissism because of the failure of the castration complex, which should have, so to speak, transformed Narcissus into Oedipus. (Petek)

Otto Rank, in his study on the double, discusses the issue of the shadow-image and that of the mirror-image. (They signal more or less the same.) Both of these images play an important role in the ego formation and later, in the preservation of the ego and life. The ego is connected to its image, to its mirror image, its ideal; if this double dies, disappears, then, the ego will die, as

well (Rank 62-63). Rank also asserts that the double who personifies narcissistic self-love can become a rival in sexual love, and it might even appear as the messenger of death (Rank 86).

The duality of the double as object of love (Eros) and at the same time bringer of death (Thanatos) is always present. The double constitutes life and death in itself. The duality and the combination of both love (Eros) and death (Thanatos) is the quintessential attribute of the *femme fatale*. The *lethal woman* is the bearer of this dual image of Eros and Thanatos molded in one as she is desirable and admired while being deathly.

This mirror scene is also specific from the point of view of (games of) identification and assumtion of identites, masks and the process of masquerade. Sarolta Marinovich states while analyzing *Snow White* that the mirror is a frequent symbol of a woman's quest for identity in tales (86) – and by the twentieth century, it increasingly becomes the symbol of women's quest for their identity (82) – but she also adds that "[w]hat a woman reads in her mirror is the tales men tell about women: – about madonnas and whores, angels and witches, good little girls and wicked queens" (80). Marinovich argues that, in *Snow White*, the patriarchal voice of the mirror actually controls and manipulates the woman's quest for identity. Snow White has only two options represented by her two mothers: she either becomes the angel-woman or the monster-woman. However, in *Goblin Market*, the pure and the fallen women are not antagonistic poles, and as loving sisters they become one in a sisterly embrace. "The patriarchal dictates of the Queen's looking glass are questioned, the paradigm of socialization is not so simple any more" (Marinovich 80). While Christina Rossetti is desparately looking for her own face among the distorting mirrors, Mary Elizabeth Coleridge at first finds in the mirror only the "eternal lineaments fixed on her like a mask, a perfect image of herself" (Marinovich 80-81). Marinovich asks whether the woman sees a face or a mask in the mirror since there is a difference between the woman's face and the mask she is forced to wear (83). However, women slowly gain/ed the power to look behind the mirror and see that only dust and spiders in cobwebs are to be found there in stead of patriarchal dictators, and they finally could see themselves within the mirrors (Marinovich 87).

Roxie's case with the mirror in this scene is – similarly to the rest of story in its different versions – a carnivalesuqe, comic encounter. The games of identitication, the changing of masks and identities with the help of mirrors are all a carnivalesque performances carried out with a comic touch. Roxie is looking for herself in the mirror, and what she finds in it/them is pleasing her. It is her ego-ideal that she sees there, not her 'true' idenity. She is in quest of an identity but not her 'real one' but a constructed one to change it for her original one. She projects her fantasies onto the mirror and intends to identify with them. Her mirror(s)

– whathever it/they want/s to say to her – are only tools in her identification and she either does not hear the patriarchal message or does not care about it since she intentionally and deliberately projects the image of the fallen woman/*femme fatale* into that/those mirrors and identifies with that image while gets away with its consequences. Later, she identifies with the pure woman image when the trial demands this from her but only when she is forced to do so and only for a short period of time. She is also forced to wear the mask of the good woman but she always knows what her real face is and what the face is she would like to see either as her real face or as a mask. She is not a lost woman who is desparately searching for herself among the distorting mirrors. She has found herself and wants to change her identity and it does not matter to her if she has to change into other identities before she can finally assume her desired identity (as she does in all of the versions). Another comic-carnivalesque (and truly spectacular) feature of the scene is that there are several mirrors and not only one. There are multi-Roxies to be seen. Thus, Roxie is either a fragmented, post-modern identity or a serialized, multiple non-identity. All this is topped by the comic-carnivalesque turn in the scene when instead of the 'evil patriarchal dictator' many gigolo-like metrosexual men dance out from behind the mirrors and start to do everything Roxie wants. Hence, Roxie as a 'narcissistic Eros-Thanatos duplex' finds, re-finds, refines, redefines, reconstructs and multiplies herself in the mirrors of multiple identities (but ironically not without the help of a comic-carnivalesque patriarchal dictator, Billy Flynn).

2.5. The Fatality of the *Femme Fatale*

Bronfen states that *femmes fatales* are always linked with tragedy and tragic desire (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 103-116). They are deathly through their lethal sexuality. She argues on the basis of Stanley Cavell's ideas that at the core of the tragic theme repetition compulsion can be found, and through this process what is avoided is the recognition of the other's humanity because if through the tragic action the one recognizes the other (and consequently oneself) then s/he has to acknowledge one's humanity (together with the other's) thus one's fallibility, imperfection, and most of all, mortality (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 103). To avoid the recognition of one's mortal implenitude the one turns "the other into a figure whose function is to sustain an illusion of self-empowerment" (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 104). Yet, Cavell points out that in the case of tragedy not only the fatal consequences of misrecognition or the total lack of recognition are enacted, but at the same time, tragedy also becomes the place where the heroes and heroines together with the

audience have no way out since they "are not allowed to escape these consequences" (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 104).

When discussing the *film noir femmes fatales* Bronfen claims following Rita Felski's suggestion – that tragedy is not solely a dramatic genre but also sensibility, a structure of feeling and a mode – that the *film noir femme fatale* is, in fact, an exemplar of "tragic sensibility;" additionally, Bronfen suggests that the *femme fatale* while being a "screen for fantasies of omnipotence" is also an agent who by recognizing her own fatal and *noir* actions actually reveals the fragility of omnipotence and the meaning of being human (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 104-105).

> Indeed, if one follows Felski's suggestion that tragedy be thought of less as a genre than as an attitude which addresses the limits of modern dreams of perfectibility, then the *femme fatale* can be understood as a particularly resilient contemporary example of tragic sensibility. […] she functions both as the screen for fantasies of omnipotence and as the agent who, by ultimately facing the consequences of her *noir* actions, comes to reveal the fragility not only of any sense of omnipotence that transgression of the law affords, but, indeed, of what it means to be human. (ibid)

In *Double Indemnity* (1944), for example, as Bronfen argues the *femme fatale* is the one who performs the tragic acceptance in a way that this acceptance becomes the enactment of responsibility for one's actions, and this involves not only that of fate but this enactment also includes the responsibility for fate (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 105). She has a freedom of choice throughout the story, and at the end, she herself chooses death and destruction by accepting the inevitable as "she comes to discover her freedom precisely in her embrace of the inevitability of causation" (ibid). As Bronfen suggests, the "*femme fatale* is a two-fold engagement with the vexed interface between agency and fate" (ibid), she is a mixture of active agency making things happen as well as being at the mercy of fate.

According to the *noir* plot, the hero meets the *femme fatale* coincidentally, however, according to Mladen Dolar, this happens only seemingly accidentally and this meeting is actually "the realization of an innermost wish" (ibid). As soon as this meeting occurs, both the hero and the *femme fatale* become entangled in a sequence of events that has only one direction. "Both are tragically framed within a narrative of fate and can only come to accept the law of causation" (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 106). This encounter and the ensuing end result are – it seems – inevitable. This inevitability is (supposedly) tied with the masculine gaze (or rather look) and the alluring feminine body as spectacle, however, this feminine body

is not that passive. The *femme fatale* is not only the bearer of the hero's look but also the one who "manipulates the outcome of their fatal meeting" (ibid). It appears that it is only a mere coincidence that this specific man meets the *femme fatale*, but in fact, she has been expecting somebody similar as she is aware of being fated and she intends to turn this inevitability into a source of power. As Bronfen suggests, the *femme fatale*'s timeless popularity can be thanked not only to her sexually uninhibited behavior but also to her being independent, ambitious and that she combines her seductive charm with her intelligence to achieve her aims (ibid).

> Indeed, the classic *femme fatale* has enjoyed such popularity because she is not only sexually uninhibited, but also unabashedly independent and ruthlessly ambitious, using her seductive charms and her intelligence to liberate herself from the imprisonment of an unfulfilling marriage. (ibid)

The *femme fatale* manages to achieve her aims through her duplicitous nature as this is her most essential attribute since she is not only mercilessly manipulative in reaching her aims (money and freedom) and deluding everyone in the meantime but she will never reveal her true intentions either, especially not to the hero even if this results in not only his death but her own likewise (ibid).

The *femme fatale* truly becomes tragic when she realizes that her desire for freedom, independence and financial (gain)/security is only a delusion and the recognition of her own fallibility makes her acknowledge that the realization of her desire is only possible in death. While the *femme fatale* leads the *noir* hero into destruction via the use of her seductive powers "she also embodies the death drive, albeit in a highly ambivalent manner" (ibid). She is ambivalent because while articulating both male fascination with the sexually aggressive woman and his anxieties about feminine domination at the same time, she is more than "a symptom of the hero's erotic ambivalence" (ibid).

Slavoj Žižek's suggestion is that in the *noir* narratives the duplicity of the *femme fatale* also contributes to her being "a symptom of the *noir* hero's fatal enjoyment;" and by destroying her, "he hopes to purify himself of the desire she inspired and the guilt this entailed" (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 107). However, by doing this he does not recognize her as a separate entity on the one hand, while on the other, he also fails to decode "the encrypted message about the fragility of his existence that she embodies for him" (ibid). While the *noir* hero distances himself from the *femme fatale*, who totally assumes the death drive and by doing so acknowledges that "the pursuit of power and money is inevitably thwarted," what also happens is the acknowledgement of the fact that "we can never purify ourselves from the consequences of our actions by shifting guilt onto the other" (ibid). Žižek while analyzing the

figure of Carmen (in another work) reaches a similar conclusion stating that she actually becomes an "*ethical* figure" like Antigone when she "fully accepts her fate" (52). She is able to realize and accept that it was only an illusion that she "was pulling the strings" and welcomes her death (53). Žižek suggests that the *femme fatale* is "a series of inconsitent masks," which is somewhere in accordance with the feminist writers' assumptons that femininity already but the femininity of the *femme fatale* is surely masquerade and performance, yet, it is entirely discordant with their stance as he states that "[h]er power of fascination masks the void of her nonexistence" (54). Yet, interestingly he also acknowledges the validity of the stance of feminist writers. Then, he adds, what appears to be in agreement with Bronfen's idea about the full assumption of the death drive:

> What is so menacing in the femme fatale is not the boundless enjoyment overwhelming the man and making of him woman's plaything or slave. It is not Woman as the object of fascination causing us to lose our sense of judgment and moral attitude but, on the contrary, that which remains hidden beneath this fascinating mask, what appears when the mask falls off – the dimension of the pure subject fully assuming the fact of the death drive. (ibid)

Bronfen's point that the *femme fatale* both as a symptom within the realm of male fantasy and as a subject beyond it turns into/out to be "a figure of tragic sensibility:" "both in her function as a symptom within a male fantasy, as well as in her function as a subject beyond male fantasy, the *femme fatale* emerges as a figure of tragic sensibility" (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 107). By transferring death solely to the body of the *femme fatale* the hero avoids the acknowledgement of mortality and guilt. By accepting this death the *femme fatale* acknowledges it as a consequence of her actions, her radical pursuit of freedom; by doing so – as Felski suggests – she situates herself in opposition to American optimism "that sees individuals as masters of their own destiny, with a right to pursue happiness at all costs without paying the price" (ibid). Thus, for example, *Double Indemnity* is a considered to be a prototypical *film noir* in which the rhetorical duplicity is connected to the figure of the *femme fatale* who as both the symptom of the hero and also as a female subject functions both ways and by refusing to give way she "exceeds his narrative of the fatal consequences of their mutual transgression" (ibid).

The *femme fatale* embodying the tragic sensibility means that she intentionally and consciously includes the "lethal factor into the question of choice, and, in so doing, undertakes an ethical act that allows her to choose death as a way of choosing real freedom by turning the inevitability of her fate into her responsibility" (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 111).

Choosing death is her choice of freedom as in so many fictional and filmic works featuring aggressive/violent/transgressing/erring women. She finds her freedom that she has been pursuing so forcefully by assuming "the death drive in its purest form" without any avoidance (which is the aim of the hero throughout) (ibid). The *femme fatale* has an agency of her own and it is her sacrifice that allows the hero "to relieve himself of his desire for an erotically encoded death" while, in the case of *Double Indemnity*, at the same time he gives himself up "to a symbolically encoded death drive – the death penalty of the law" (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 112). For example, Phyllis Dietrichson is entirely a subject of tragic sensibility since she "directly accepts the death drive inscribed in the *noir* narrative" without any "moralizing excuses for her transgressions" and she "consciously accepts her own fallibility" (ibid).

As Bronfen cites Janey Place, *film noirs* are expressions of "male fantasy" and the *femme fatale* in these stories is typically "the mythic 'dark lady, the spider woman, the evil seductress who tempts man and brings about his destruction' and who has been haunting our image repertoire since Eve and Pandora" (Place 35 cited in Bronfen, "Negotiations" 113). According to Place, the presence of the *femme fatale* is contradictory since she is there with her seduction and desire for power having a chance to stand for what she aims to achieve, yet, she is destroyed. In Place's interpretation, this is due to the expression of repressed fears concerning female threat to male dominance: "the myth of the strong, sexually aggressive woman first allows sensuous expression of her dangerous power and its frightening results, and then destroys it, thus expressing repressed concerns of the female threat to male dominance" (Place 36 cited in Bronfen, "Negotiations" 113). The *femme fatale*, in the end, loses her power within the narrative on both the diegetic level (since she dies) and on the visual level (since she disappears), however her threatening power remains. In spite of the fact that she is punished at the end of the story what stays in our minds are "her transgressions against masculine authority" (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 113). As Sylvia Harvey claims the punishment simply cannot erase the vitality and force of the transgressive and subversive acts: "[d]espite the ritual punishment of acts of transgression, the vitality with which these acts are endowed produces an excess of meaning which cannot finally be contained. Narrative resolutions cannot recuperate their subversive significance" (Harvey 31 cited in Bronfen, "Negotiations" 113).

Bronfen claims – citing Mary Ann Doane – that the *femme fatale* is generally labeled as the "embodiment of evil" who is punished or killed "as a 'desperate reassertion of control on the part of the threatened male subject'" (Doane, *Femmes Fatales* 2-3 cited in Bronfen,

"Negotiations" 113). Doane draws the conclusion from all this that the *femme fatale* is not to be interpreted as a figure with an agency of her own and as a modern heroine but as a "symptom of male fears about feminism" (Doane, *Femmes Fatales* 2-3 cited in Bronfen, "Negotiations" 113). However, Bronfen states that the *femme fatale* kept her place in our image repertoire so forcefully and lastingly exactly because she is not fixed and she offers the possibility of decision whether she is an empowered modern subject or a simple expression of the death drive, whether she is an independent figure or only a projection of masculine anxiety (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 114). For Bronfen, the *femme fatale* is powerful because she cannot be reduced to a single image, a single aspect, a single impact and a single effect. She is functioning on multi-levels and eludes such a restrictive definition as provided by Doane. Bronfen declares if we read the *femme fatale* only as a stereotype of feminine evil or interpret her solely as a symptom of male anxiety etc. then we reduce her into a phantasmic emanation of others, who is static and passive, to whom things happen, who can simply be extinguished if needed; however, Bronfen suggests that we should read her as an agency who takes responsibility for her own decisions (ibid). Bronfen also warns us that even feminist critics tend to reduce the *femme fatale* into a symptom or a catchphrase either interpreting her as the embodiment of threat or as a textual enigma but even they fail to see her as a separate and independent agency. On the basis of the tragic sensibility that the *femme fatale* embodies Bronfen proposes that we should treat the *femme fatale* as a modern heroine as the subject of her own narrative instead of positioning and interpreting her as a fetish, a projection or a symptom. (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 114-115)

Bronfen offers us a new way in the interpretation of the *femme fatale*. She outlines clearly the possible trends that are accepted and she revises them. She states that we can choose the feminist interpretation that the *femme fatale* is a symptom of patriarchal anxiety or what Žižek suggests that she is the symptom of the *noir* hero's ambivalence and his retreat from the death drive, yet, we could also read her as the prototypical modern feminine subjectivity. (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 115)

> The decision is ours as to whether we want to follow Doane and other feminist critics in reading the *femme fatale* as a symptom of patriarchal anxiety about feminism, or whether we want to follow Žižek and read her as a symptom for the ambivalence in feeling on the part of the *noir* hero and his retreat from the death drive. Another option would be to treat her as a prototypical instance of modern feminine subjectivity. (ibid)

Bronfen claims that the *femme fatale* actually "becomes the figure *par excellence* for the recognition of human fallibility which, according to Cavell, tragedy teaches us" since she accepts the tragic consequences of her actions (ibid). By acknowledging her as a subject who takes responsibility for her actions we also recognize and accept that she is not simply a victim, and by consciously choosing death she presents us and makes us realize that "suffering, loss and fragility are inescapable" (ibid). If we see her as a subject of feminine desire and not as a symptom of masculine anxiety then the tragic message she embodies will not evade us. Bronfen concludes that by accepting the fate of death as her responsibility, the *femme fatale* recognizes that "to be hidden, silent, and not in the presence of the other is a question of choice," it is a way of salvation (Bronfen, "Negotiations" 115-116).

While repositioning the *femme fatale* as an independent agency and a modern subjectivity and this way adding a very important new aspect to the discussion of this cultural phenomenon, Bronfen still does this in the realm of tragedy by connecting the *femme fatale* to tragic sensibility. In most of the stories that include a *femme fatale* this is certainly absolutely valid, yet, *Chicago* is an exception. These female figures are absolutely independent agencies and fully responsible conscious subjects. However, they evade fate; they take responsibility for their actions in a different way. While they are aware of the responsibility for the fate of death, they manage to evade it and one of the reasons for it that they are situated within the realm of comedy and not of tragedy. The *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* find their salvation in fortune that is linked to comedy. While they are totally responsible and conscious agents of their own destiny also facing death and being aware of the consequences of their actions they manage to get away with murder. My suggestion is that one of the reasons for this is that tragedy is detached from the figure of the *femme fatale* in the various versions of *Chicago*. It also has to be noted here, however, that death and taking the responsibility for the fate of death is not absolutely evaded in *Chicago*. There is a character in the story, who takes upon herself the tragic mode of salvation that is the fate of the *femme fatale*. The ironic aspect in this is that she is the only one who is not a *femme fatale*, yet, she is the one who fulfills the fate of the *femme fatale* thus becoming a Savior or Redeemer figure who 'saves' the others, however, much more in the form of (a less dignified) scapegoat.

In another study, Elisabeth Bronfen goes on with the discussion of the relation between death and femininity or the connection between death and the female/feminine body. In her study about the role of repetition and duplication within the process of mourning she states that the process of mourning and that of representation function in a similar way because they both repeat a lost object, a lost love and through this process of repetition they

both deny this loss, while at the same time, they both acknowledge it. In this essay entitled *Risky Resemblances: On Repetition, Mourning, and Representation*, Bronfen while analyzing *Vertigo* (1958) and not talking primarily about *femmes fatales* still insists that the acceptance of death and fate is one of the modes for a female/feminine character to become a subject. The active act of choosing death or the conscious encounter with death is that turns into a moment of subjectivity. Within death or within her relation to death the woman finally manages to gain her subjectivity. Here, Bronfen cites Žižek again saying that what is menacing about the *femme fatale* is not first and foremost that she actually can be fatal for men but that she is a figure who represents a subject that fully assumed her fate. In *Vertigo*, what we encounter again is that a female character by embracing fatality perfectly performs the production of a feminine subject. (Bronfen, "Risky Resemblances" 126-127)

Thus, it is implied that the connection with fatality or even the acknowledgement and acceptance of this fatality can be a mode of creation of the feminine subject. This also implies that the *femme fatale* becomes a feminine subjectivity through her fatality. Via fate and death she becomes a full subject. The question only remains whose death we are talking about since in the cases Elisabeth Bronfen discusses we find women or concretely *femmes fatales* who become feminine subjects by embracing death themselves. However, in *Chicago* the *femmes fatales* do not embrace death or accept their fatality this way, still, they become whole feminine subjects. Bronfen claims that a woman might consciously resort to violence; she may deliberately break conventions and commit a crime the punishment for which is death (adultery, infanticide, murder) in order to liberate herself and express her subjectivity, to assume authorship and responsibility for her destiny. (Bronfen, *Over Her* 219)

Hence, I would continue Bronfen's theory by suggesting that the *femme fatale* is the exemplar of feminine subjectivity really due to her fatality but not because she herself dies but primarily because of her relation to death. Maybe, it is not the moment when she dies or chooses death for herself – although it can be – but when she inflicts death is when she assumes feminine subjectivity. For example, in the case of Roxie it is valid because when she kills Billy Flynn and she realizes this that is the moment when she recognizes herself as a full feminine subject who made an independent decision as a separate individual for herself as a reaction to an attack against her. It is to be noted here that quite typically, from the 1942 version, this scene is missing or at least it is just partly presented and it is uncertain whether it is really Roxie who committed the murder. In this version, it is rather the scene when she takes up the role of the murderer and agrees to play this role (either being innocent or not)

when she becomes a whole feminine subject. Yet again, it is the moment when she acknowledges her relation to death when this happens.

Thus in the case of the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago*, I might suggest on the basis of Elisabeth Bronfen's theory that their feminine subjectivity comes to existence through their encounter(s) with death. My minor revision is that in *Chicago*, since these *femmes fatales* evade fate themselves (partly due to the presence of the comic) they become feminine subjects through death they inflict.

Another important factor that is mentioned in Bronfen's 1993 essay is the presence of a *pharmakos* in the resolution of a conflict or a problem (Bronfen, "Risky Resemblances" 125). I will go into detail about this later when discussing Bronfen's *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* in which this idea is unfolded since apart from the comic factor this is another significant one in the resolution of the fate of the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago*.

However, before getting involved in this question another intriguing one is to be examined about the relatedness of death and the feminine in general. In her introductory essay to the volume entitled *Death and Representation*, Elisabeth Bronfen and Sarah Webster Goodwin talk about the relation between death and femininity claiming that primarily women, and concretely, the female/feminine body are always linked to death. The two limits of cultural representation are the two greatest enigmas of Western culture and these are death and the feminine body. In addition, the "woman" as mother is the giver of life while we return to Mother Earth at the end of it. (Bronfen, Goodwin, "Introduction" 13)

> Death, as the limit of cultural representation, has been associated with that other enigma, the multiply coded feminine body. As the mother, "woman" is the original prenatal dwelling place; as the beloved, she draws fantasies of desire and otherness; and as Mother Earth, she is the anticipated final resting place. (ibid)

The duality of life and death that meets in the feminine body is a still unresolved and intriguing paradox. If we say that all women are in this dual state of relatedness to life/death then the *femme fatale* as a woman is originally in this situation. Her fatality just gives a twist to her already existing connectedness to death and to her already existing relation to life – and thus implied sexuality – since we must not forget that apart from her deathliness the other major attribute of the *femme fatale* is her highlighted, enhanced sexuality. In this sense, the *femme fatale* encompasses in herself an enhanced life(sex/uality)/death duality. She is a hyper

woman, or even a meta-woman by multiplying within herself the life(sex/uality)/death and by also reflecting on this state by varying which attribute is laid more emphasis on in accordance with the requirements of a given situation.

Women are already defined through their sexuality, which (might) result(s) in life, and their relatedness to death. Bronfen suggests that due to the lack of boundaries between tomb and womb, home is thus traditionally entwined with "the analogy between earth and mother, and with it, that of death and birth, or death-conception and birth-resurrection" (Bronfen, *Over Her* 65). What Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest when analyzing *Frankenstein* and the case of Eve is that the two complementary opposites: sex and death are necessarily interdependent; and that the great secrets of human existence, of the human body are to be located in "the interlocked secrets of sex and death" (Gilbert, Gubar 232-233). It might be proposed then that the *femme fatale* is the one within whom we can find the great secrets of human existence (as Bronfen also partly inferred in connection with tragic sensibility) since she is the embodiment of the interlocked secrets of sex and death.

The *femme fatale* encompasses in herself sex(life)/death and she could be the key to the mysteries of human life but she is always marginalized, excluded and often destroyed. This is due to her otherness since Western culture always posits death and the feminine (the "two major tropes for the enigma") as others, as being opposed to the norm, to the living masculine subject; and they both are disruptive forces and they constitute difference within the stability and strong sense of self in a given cultural system thus they have to be eliminated or placed in a liminal position to secure the system's safety and survival (Bronfen, Goodwin, "Introduction" 13-14). Hence, the *femme fatale* who is an enhanced combination of the two major othernesses of Western culture evidently becomes the ultimate other herself. She becomes the ultimate enigma of cultural discourses and the ultimate blind spot in the representational systems as "[d]eath and femininity appear in cultural discourses as the point of impossibility, the blind spot the representational system seeks to refuse even as it constantly addresses it" (Bronfen, Goodwin, "Introduction" 14). She is difference, she is excess and "[b]oth difference and excess apply equally, as attributes, to our cultural understanding of death" (ibid).

Bronfen and Goodwin argue that as the "woman *is* the body, she is also the body's caretaker, the nurse, the layer-out of the corpse" (14). It also includes that death is a return to the woman's care thus she becomes contaminated by death and the mourning rituals first serve as enablers of her care and later as modes of her dissociation from the corpse. Both the mourning rituals and the representations of death are for stabilizing the body, for removing it

from the feminine and for taming death's power by tuning it into a monument. (Bronfen, Goodwin, "Introduction" 14) The *femme fatale* is obviously not dissociated as a woman from death. She does not go through dissociating rituals, that is why, she always remains liminal, unstable, disturbing, an ultimate other who is marginalized or even eliminated. The *femme fatale* goes against the purifying rituals of a cultural system thus she always remains contaminated; she is not pure sexuality and life as the touch of death is always looming around her. Yet, this aspect is which makes her a feminine subject in the modern sense: her awareness of this and her conscious choice of it.

The *femme fatale* was the most salient symptom of the aesthetic and discursive discussions concerning the cultural representations of sexuality around the 1900, however, contemporary debates about representation, identity and power shifted the focus from sexuality to violence (Bronfen, "The Jew as" 71). While sexuality is still a core feature of the *femme fatale*, violence had gained centrality by the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The violence of women is a great concern today and occupies a primary place among current issues. Hence nowadays, the question is what the connection between the desire and the violence of women is, and whether her conflictive desire can "be integrated into the symbolic order of Western culture" (ibid). Today, representations of violence abound in fiction and film but it is yet to be resolved why violence and desire are still in conjunction with questions of femininity. In fact, both violence and feminine desire are relegated to the realm of the drives and both threaten to disrupt symbolic structures. (Bronfen, "The Jew as" 71-72)

Elisabeth Bronfen, through the interpretation and analysis of *Blue Steel* (1989), presents and discusses the problem and conflict that emerges when women have access to power, how the woman's desire poses a threat within patriarchal culture and what kind of discursive violence it involves as a result. According to Bronfen, *Blue Steel* can be read as a tropic narrative in which the integration of the threat to masculine culture posed by woman's desire occurs. (Bronfen, "The Jew as" 72) In Bronfen's opinion, in this film, the sacrifice of violent drives has specific and important implications for the integration of feminine desire into the symbolic system of our culture as well as for the elimination of the violent drive of woman's desire. (Bronfen, "The Jew as" 73)

Bronfen opines that, in *Blue Steel*, Kathlyn Bigelow manages to combine the traditional feminine stereotype (that turns femininity into the limiting and simplistic category of the figure of threatening but also fascinating alterity) with the parallel stereotype within Western culture: the "internal Other" (term borrowed from Todorov), i.e.: the Jew. Hence,

with one gesture, Bigelow joins gender and anti-Semitism and through the violent sacrifice of the Jew the integration of Woman's violent desire takes place on the representational plane. (ibid) This very same logic functions in the case of *Chicago* as well where the Hungarian woman, Hunyak, (or the other 'Other figures') stands for the "internal Other" (ibid) whose sacrifice helps in the integration of the violence and desire of the *femmes fatales* of the story.

Bronfen argues that, in the cinematic representation, the reality of violence is displaced, and while the dangerous thing itself is (re)presented, it is also disawoved at the same time by the virtue of a substitution. In a similar vein, the aesthetic enactment of the violent death drive in/on another's body or at another site occurs in the case of art. The symptom articulates the repressed while attempts to maintain a balance. "A symptom hides the dangerous thing even as it points to it." (ibid) Symptoms and representations work similarly in a sense that both "articulate unconscious knowledge and desires in a displaced, recoded, and translated manner" (Bronfen, "The Jew as" 74). *Blue Steel* as well as *Chicago*, as cultural representations, treat the question(s) of desires and anxieties surrounding the access to power of threatening "internal Others" (ibid).

When a woman carries out a violent act it is viewed by the Laws of the symbolic system as an unauthorized and criminal act of an internal Other, yet, in retrospect, the violation of the symbolic limits of a community may be seen as a redefinition of the symbolic order. Margaret Whitford suggests that it is of great importance to find a way to articulate women's violence in a different way from what is customary within patriarchal culture and to create a mode of mediation of the death drive differently. It is paramount to "find representations for women's death drives by providing them with a symbolic identity" (Whitford qtd. in Bronfen, "The Jew as" 75).

2. 6. The Grotesque and the *Femme Fatale*

According to Mary Russo, the image of a female murderer or a *femme fatale* is grotesque, but in her realm of thinking it is not primarily the murderous aspect which makes these women (seem) grotesque but their female existence. Russo's basic concepts about the grotesque are mostly centred on the 'female as such' as grotesque. Thus, when thinking about a murderer as female being grotesque or not, first, one has to face that that person as a female is already considered to be grotesque. This is basically due to the meaning of the word itself since the word *grotesque* derives from "the cave – grotto-esque [which is something] [l]ow, hidden, earthly, dark, material, immanent [and] visceral. As bodily metaphor, the grotesque

cave tends to look like (and in the most gross metaphorical sense be identified with) the cavernous anatomical female body." (Russo 1)

When this term (grotesque) emerged, it was viewed "as a repository of unnatural, frivolous, and irrational connections between things which nature and classical art kept scrupulously apart" as opposed to the classical style which was linked with the natural order; to put it other way, it was defined solely in relation to the norms it exceeded (Russo 3). Hence, we are already given two basic and principal aspects of the grotesque that it is related to the female and also to the 'opposing, transgressing, in-between.' This might imply that the image of a female murderer, or a *femme fatale*, can be nothing but grotesque, also because "[…] often the grotesque has deepened into the criminal" (Russo 7). Here, criminal does not primarily refer to a murderous act but that aspect of crime is also included. With much probability, here criminal indicates all kinds of fallacies, erroneous actions, mistakes, blunders, sins and the like certainly including criminal acts in a juridical sense, as well. In a sense, though, all these kinds of crime spring from the same source, and thus, can be interconnected or often it is interwoven since something foolish or morally wrong can be (and frequently is) very close to an actual offence which is punished by the law (or it might be that one exactly).

Russo also points out "that the grotesque in each case is only recognizable in relation to a norm and that exceeding the norm involves serious risk" (Russo 10). In spite of this risk, the female murderers, the *femmes fatales*, in *Chicago* commit (almost) all kinds of exceeding or transgressions of norms and rules. Russo also adds later on that "[…] the grotesque, particularly as a bodily category, emerges as a deviation from the norm. […] It might follow that the expression 'female grotesque' threatens to become a tautology, since the female is always defined against the male norm." (11-12) Hence, the 'femaleness' of the grotesque is emphasized again not only because it is 'cavernous' but also because it is 'the Other.' Consequently, this involves double risk to transgress as 'an Other,' since transgressing is dangerous for everyone but if the transgressor is 'an Outsider' already, then, the crime is double. If the woman as a female and as 'an Other' dares exceed her limits that is already dangerous, but if she also exceeds her only possible roles as part of the society, it is even more outrageous. Since, the roles for a woman to take on and be an integrated part of society are the role(s) of the mother, the daughter, the sister, the wife or a nun. These are the sole 'legitimate' options. All of these roles presuppose a certain kind of innocence, purity, simplicity, obedience and so on and so forth, therefore, if a woman 'breaks the spell' and acts out of her role, for example, murders someone when she is supposed to be the giver of life,

then, she is considered to be even more guilty than a man acting the same way. That is why the female murderers, and their literary-cinematic representations the *femmes fatales*, are usually severely punished.

Russo also cites Žižek's very same ideas (cited by Bronfen) about the *femme fatale* asserting that the greatest danger of this female figure is that she wholeheartedly embraces the death drive and not primarily her irresistibility. Then, she cites the quotation mentioned on page 39 of this dissertation. This opinion fairly depicts an experience of/with the *femme fatale*. In my view, it is an excellent elaboration of the concept of the lethal woman. It clearly explains what is so captivating and interesting in the figure of the deadly woman. She is attractive, she is inviting, she promises abundant joy, and as someone is approaching, s/he has to realize that it was only the mask, the cover, the appearance which produced this effect; and actually what that person gets is not overwhelming joy at all; and the mask always falls down revealing the lurking truth under the nice cover, what, as it is mentioned, the person also feels or knows already unconsciously. In this excerpt, another important factor is mentioned which is quite much significant in the case of a *femme fatale* (and generally in the case of women): the mask – the mask which is hiding, which is concealing the truth. The mask is connected to masquerade, and masquerade to the carnival, the carnivalesque, and the carnivalesque to the grotesque.

In connection with the grotesque and the *femme fatale*, there is the issue of the *abject* to be discussed, as well. Kristeva, in her work on abjection, attempts to give explanation of crime and criminals, as well, in the realm of abject which is also related to the grotesque. When trying to define and explain abject, Kristeva makes examples also of the killers. She also mentions that abject is something from which we do not protect ourselves as from an object. (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 4) It is in accordance with the ideas expressed by Žižek about the *femme fatale*, as well, as she goes on defining abject as "[i]maginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (ibid). It is phrasing similar ideas to Zoltán Dragon when he is saying (rephrasing Mary Ann Doane) that there is a dual game of showing – hiding and inviting – threatening in the case of the *femme fatale* and that the lethal woman promises omniscience while ensures only "non-knowledge" in the form of death. (Dragon, "A nő eltűnése" 16)

Kristeva's term, *abject*, aptly depicts and presents what the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* are like:

> It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a savior …. Any crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law. Is abject, but premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge are even more so because they heighten the display of such fragility. (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 4)

Abject just like *femme fatales* disturb identity, system and order. They signal disturbance, they point to the fissures and gaps of the system. They raise awareness about its weaknesses as well as the fallibility of the rules and the order(s). They do so since they 'live and hide' in these fissures and gaps, out of which they come time to time and exhibit the inconsistencies and the fragility of the system. They cannot be grasped, they evade clear categories, they are the "in-between" (ibid) and this creates unease, uncertainty and incapability.

Kristeva claims in the excerpt that any crime is abject since it draws the attention to the fragility of the law, and the revenge even more does so. If we have a look at the murder cases in *Chicago* all resemble this and all of them are committed because of revenge or as revenge. All of these crimes remind us of the fallibility of the law, and the trial even more does so as it highlights all of its weaknesses and how it can be tricked, twisted and abused. It is actually the trial scene, which makes this fallacy and fallibility even more obvious, probably that is why this scene is presented as a circus evening, as a carnival. With this carnivalesque representation of the trial it is evident that the trial is grotesque and this also implies that the law and the whole system are grotesque likewise. What happens in the courtroom is exactly what Kristeva describes as follows:

> The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them. It kills in the name of life – a progressive despot; it lives at the behest of death. […] Corruption is its most common, most obvious appearance. That is the socialized appearance of the abject. (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 15-16)

In the courtroom, every kind of prohibition, rule or law is swept aside or if not, it occurs only to be able to turn them inside out under the 'aegis of corruption.' Corruption as the socialized form of the abject is prevalent in *Chicago* in all fields of life with the purpose to point out that everything is corrupt, abject and grotesque, not only the murderers, but also the system and the law. "Schneegans sees precisely in this fact the basic nature of the grotesque: it

exaggerates and caricatures the negative, the inappropriate" (Bakhtin 306). In Watkins' work, this can be traced. The (successive) author(s) of *Chicago* employed this style to be able to present and depict the awkwardness, the grotesqueness and the corruptness of the whole system, not only the specific persons, in this case the female murderers. Another outstanding aspect of the grotesque is the following: "[…] the extreme incongruity associated with the grotesque is itself ambivalent in that it is both comic and monstrous" (Thomson). It is also true in the case of *Chicago*, it is comic and monstrous at the same time.

Still considering the comic-grotesque style of presentation in *Chicago,* a really valid and apt citation is to be made that describes the grotesque as a mode of (re)presentation that, in fact, is a rather realistic and non-distorting mode of representation:

> Chesterton asserts, as Clayborough puts it, 'that the grotesque may be employed as a means of presenting the world in a new light without falsifying it', i.e. that it may be a function of the grotesque to make us see the (real) world anew, from fresh perspective which, though it be strange and disturbing one, is nevertheless valid and realistic. This is a notion which gains importance in the twentieth century and one which will bear examination when we come to the concept of alienation. (Thomson)

It is talking about a new and unusual way of depicting the 'real world.' Maybe, it is really the grotesque, which is able to grasp the truth and the real, and it is the only one which is able to present it/them us in its entirety. It might happen that this strange and disturbing mode of representation turns out to be the most capable of presenting the issues of the world in a valid and realistic way.

Wolfgang Kayser, in a sense, summarizes the essence of the grotesque in three sentences:

> Its nature could be summed up in a phrase that has repeatedly suggested itself to us: THE GROTESQUE IS THE ESTRANGED WOLRD (Kayser 184). The works we have studied clearly testify that THE GROTESQUE IS A PLAY WITH THE ABSURD (Kayser 187). And thus we arrive at a final interpretation of the grotesque: AN ATTEMPT TO INVOKE AND SUBDUE THE DEMONIC ASPECTS OF THE WORLD (Kayser 188).

These sentences really grasp the 'nature' of the grotesque, and all of these sentences find their realization in *Chicago*: it is about the estranged world and all its awkwardness; it is a play with the absurd because of its choice of subject (female murderers) and also because of its handling (comic-grotesque, carnivalesque treatment); and it is about the demonic aspect of the

world, as well, because this story really presents how demonic and grotesque events take place and how people behave in this world (of *Chicago*). Therefore, perhaps, it is not exclusively the female murderers or their image that is grotesque but the world itself, and these women are only part of this 'vast grotesqueness.' They are neither more nor less grotesque than anything or anybody else in the big estranged, grotesque world – proposes *Chicago*.

2. 7. The Appearance and the Body of the *Femme Fatale*

I have already touched upon the issue of the body of the *femme fatale* and there will still be words about it, yet, I would like to consecrate a little part to this topic. The body of the *femme fatale* is always beautiful and perfect as a rule. Her greatest weapon is her body because its beauty is hardly resistible if at all. The erotic body of the *femme fatale* is doubly coded as a both positive and negative force already as Peter Brooks suggests "since the erotic body both animates and disrupts the social order" (*Body Work* 6). Human sexuality is both foundational and disruptive to civilization and culture since the body inevitably indicates sexuality meaning not only genitality and sexual intercourse but the construction of human beings as desiring creatures and their abilities and/or willingness to regulate their sexuality and desires. (ibid)

(Sexual) desirability and beauty are interconnected and in the case of a *femme fatale* these always additionally involve the shadow of death. Elisabeth Bronfen discusses the relationship of beauty and death (by paraphrasing Sarah Kofman): "[p]leasure at the beauty of Woman resides in the uncanny *simultaneity* of recognizing and misrecognising it as a veil for death" (*Over Her* 63). Hence, the extreme beauty of the *femme fatale* that paralyzes the male hero is only a veil for death. Bronfen adds that the beauty of Woman is to secure the illusion of unity and intactness and to cover up lack and deficiency. Beauty is an impossible promise to the spectator which implies that death's threat towards the subject can be obliterated. Yet, beauty always already bears the inscription of death since the conversion of an imperfect, animate body into a perfect, inanimate image actually creates a "dead 'figure.'" (Bronfen, *Over Her* 64) Beauty arouses sexual desire while it also forbids it due to its intangible nature, its elusiveness and its illusory, non-real essence; yet, beauty is still created as it helps in escaping from the material world into "an illusion of eternity" (ibid).

In *Chicago*, however, in spite of the beautifully crafted and regulated perfect bodies of the *femmes fatales*, there is a grotesque realist image that surfaces. The smooth bourgeois

surface is disrupted again by a Bakhtinian figure. It is the ambivalent image of the pregnant death which gives birth. (Bakhtin 25) This is Roxie, who is on death row awating her trial for killing her lover that seems to end in execution while she claims herself to be pregnant. So, she becomes pregnant death. In the body and figure of Roxie we witness life in its twofold and contradictory process and state. (Bakhtin 26) The incomplete body that is in transition and which is a meeting point of the life and death belongs exactly to the grotesque concept of the body (ibid) and is not the prefect and ideal/ized body that is performed for the audience by Roxie. Although, it also has to be added that Roxie is not pregnant and her pretension and performance of pregnancy is again a new twist in the game of feminine images. She remains, throughout the story, a perfectly crafted and regulated body that seems to be closed, complete and perfect without orifices and protrusions. (Bakhtin 22, 26) "The popular-festive travesties of carnival, […] the images of the diableries, of the underworld" (Bakhtin 28) are all to be found in the performances, images and figures (also of the above-mentioned kind) in *Chicago*.

Prioleau states that seductresses usually dressed for parade wearing masks and look-at-me excess (9-10). This again is quite in common with the *femmes fatales* but in the case of *Chicago*'s *carnivalesque femmes fatales* by all means. Another significant feature of seductresses and *femmes fatales* is their scrupulous cleanliness and elaborate use of heavy maquillage and the various modes of cosmetic arts as well as clouding and covering themselves in 'magical' scents, incenses and unguents. (Prioleau 10-11) It is hard to resist recalling Walter Neff's words in *Double Indemnity* (1944): "[h]ow could I have known that murder can sometimes smell like honeysuckle?" (Wilder 12 min) – even if it is not concretely the fragrance worn by the *femme fatale* in the story. Yet, it is still a very evocative synaesthetic tool in invoking these strange and mixed feelings about a supposedly nice, sweet, warm, welcoming fragrance with (generally) positive associations and a negative event or a character involved in it such as the *femme fatale*.

2. 7. 1. Hair

The hair of the *femme fatale* is certainly of utmost importance in her schemes of seduction as well as destruction. Her power greatly lies in her long tresses. As Praz gives an example: "her hair was loose, and flowed wildly upon her shoulder" (*Romantic Agony* 203). The hair of the *femme fatale* is almost a living thing in itself and evidently evokes the Head of Medusa (the Gorgon Head) with its thousands of snakes (Kerényi 40; *Classical Mythology* 377). (Appendix iii/17) Praz, in two other examples, refers to this: "her hair, close and curled, seems ready to shudder in sunder and divide into snakes;" in the second example, such a power is attributed to the *femme fatale*'s hair that it induces electricity: "the electric hair,

which looks as though it would hiss and glitter with sparks if touched, is wound up to a tuft with serpentine plaits and involutions […]" (*Romantic Agony* 250). Dijkstra cites an example where a woman's "stream of gorgeous hair" rose up "in the convulsions of her orgasm" (*Idols of Perversity* 237-238). Joanna Pitman also opines that the combed, straight and neatly arranged hair (preferably parted in the middle) signified purity, virtue and represented "the virtuous governess or industrious wife and mother" while the "[t]angled, disorderly hair represented the sexually and emotionally volatile woman" during Victorian times as an example (138). She also adds that a lot of hair bore sexual connotations: "[t]he more abundant the hair, the more combed, fiddled with, fluffed and displayed, the more obvious and potent the sexual exhibition" (ibid). The dual interpretation of blondness during Victorianism is also mentioned and suggested that if a blonde woman was considered a "demon," then "her blonde hair" was immediately interpreted as "a sexual snare, invested with magical independent energy; enchanting, fascinating and ultimately devouring" (ibid). Nina Rattner Gelbart while analyzing the hair of Charlotte Corday and its depictions declares that Corday as a murderess and a violent woman was depicted with a hair that "became more abundant" as time passed and "it flowed in waves around her shoulders and down her back" (207). Gelbart emphasizes the stong sexual implications of such a hair: "[l]ong, cascading hair can have dangerous sexual allure" (ibid).

The special powers attributed to hair can be derived from the taboo of the head in many cultures since the hair grows out of the head hence becomes tabooed as well (Frazer 303). The story of Samson's hair that held his power is central to Judeo-Christian cultures (Judges 13-16). The head is often considered sacred and that can be explained by the conception that a certain spirit lives in it that contributes to its sanctity. "Many peoples regard the head as peculiarly sacred; the special sanctity attributed to it is sometimes explained by a belief that it contains a spirit which is very sensitive to injury or disrespect" (Frazer 303). In certain cultures, it is exactly the hair that contains the soul (Frazer 307). In addition, hair is often considered as the tool of communication with other spirits, souls and deities as well as a (possible) source or channel of sorcery and magic (Frazer 309, 892). What is more, in Europe, there was an old tradition transmitting the message that "the maleficient powers of witches and wizards resided in their hair, and that nothing could make any impression on these miscreants so long as they kept their hair on" (Frazer 891). Additionally, certainly there is a fertility attribute to it, as well, since in some cultures, women are required to sow the grains and to make the harvest bountiful they have to "let their hair hang loose down their back," this

evidently implies that fertile women have long hair (Frazer 36). Gelbart also opines that long and rich locks signify health and vigour (208).

However, this is only an illusion in the case of the *femme fatale* that her hair signfies fertility, health maybe, but not fertility since she (usually) is sterile, yet, the connotation of fruitful sexuality is in her hair. The magic of the witch or the sorceress is even more evidently involved in the representation of the *femme fatale*'s (generally and traditionally) long, thick, luxurious hair. Gelbart claims that this kind of hair "on women, […] often represents a […] threatening kind of power" (207). An explicit example for this is Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith*. In this painting, Lady Litlith is combing her long and abundant hair, and this mane is the focal point. (Appendix iii/18) During Victorianism, a dangerous woman was often "depicted [...] entwining her prey with the double enticements of her eyes and her hair, the latter serving as a symbolic lasso" (Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity* 229). The *femme fatale*'s powerful hair seems/ed to capture her victims and never let them go, her hair became a weapon with the help of which she subdued her prey: "[…] the woman's tresses" were considered "a particularly apt medium for the symbolic depiction of the dangers of the clinging vine" (ibid). Gelbart also suggests that long, abundant and strong hair can entrap the unsuspecting (supposedly) male: "[s]uch hair could be a snare, a trap for the unsuspecting, designed to entangle the unwary" (207). During the nineteenth century, the fetishization of women's hair actually reached the point of "cultural entrapment" (ibid). Dijkstra states that superfemininity was equal with a great mass of golden hair and cites Abba Goold Woolson discussing that being freed from this great glory of woman could be heaven:

> The mide-century cult of the superfeminine female had led to an ever greater emphasis on golden tresses, with the result that by the 1870s, Abba Goold Woolson pointed out, long hair having – by males – been "declared a glory to woman, she heaps upon her head such a mass of heavy, cumbersome braids, and skewers them on with such a weight of metal hair-pins, that, enslaved by this fasion, she can dream of Heaven only as a place where it will be permitted her to wear short hair" (Woolson 138-139 quoted in *Idols of Perversity* 229-230).

The heaven of short hair still took a few decades to arrive but it certainly did with the *flapper era* to which Beulah/Roxie and Belva/Velma belong, hence, their bobbed hair is clearly the expression of (a certain) freedom and independence – yet it is not their peculiarity because almost everybody wore bobbed hair during that period. Nevertheless, the importance of their (even if short) hair – and the powers attributed to them – still as *flapper femmes fatales* does

not descend into oblivion. Additionally, after the second wave of feminism and into the third, the majority of the *femmes fatales*, violent or aggressive women wear short hair, or at least, hair of half-length, and fewer and fewer have a 'mane of a lion,' for example: Catherine in *Basic Instinct* (1992), Bridget in *The Last Seduction* (1994), Marge in *Fargo* (1996) wear hair of half-length; Megan in *Blue Steel* (1989) has even a bit shorter hair, and as an example for the still long hair (although not very long): Matty in *Body Heat* (1981) or Meredith in *Disclosure* (1994). These dangerous dames still wear their hair loose, even if it is not that long, however, an interesting mode of 'rationalization' or 'masculinization,' or more ideally, 'andorgynization' of the violent woman character can be found in *Thelma and Louise* (1991) where the female protagonists shed, step by step, the attributes of femininity, and their hair become less and less tended to and becomes disheveled and partly, carelessly fastened – since it does not concern them any more whether any man likes them or not. (Appendix iv/19-26)

2. 7. 2. Smile

The smile of the *femme fatale* is also noteworthy since it is the Gioconda smile – the smile of the Mona Lisa –, it is a knowing smile, almost a cruel one, yet, a greatly enticing, curious and irresistible one, however not that benign, sweet smile that is expected of women. In the film entitled *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003), the character called Betty questions her mother while showing her a reproduction of *Mona Lisa*: "[l]ook at this, Mother, [the mother looks at the picture and ignores it only goes on with her talking] she is smiling. Is she happy? [the mother does not pay attention to her daughter and the picture while going on with her talking] She looks happy, so what does it matter." (Newell 1 h 40-41 min) This conversation aptly describes and presents the expectation toward women and their appearance(s) with which Betty is also struggling. The ideal appearance of the woman also involves a sweet smile (the smile of the Madonna), and noone considers it important that this smile really should reflect happiness; the woman just has to show that it covers happiness. Regina Barreca also states that a proper girl or woman never laughed actually, only smiled, maybe, giggled and this also was only in the service of acknowledging the man's intellect. "We always knew that we *had to smile* at his stories, giggle at his jokes. Nobody said we should giggle at his jokes only if we found them funny; we *had to giggle* at his jokes *even* when we thought they were *dull*, *insulting*, or *dumb*" [emphases mine] (Barreca, *They Used to Call Me* 5). As Barreca suggests, laughing and humor functions in the same way as "the sexual dilemma" since the girl or the woman has to be receptive of the man's humor and express it with a smile signalling that she understood it, yet, she is not allowed to laugh because, then, she is too active, dangerous,

uncontrolled, available and "cheap;" not to mention the possible connotations of producing humor … (*They Used to Call Me* 7).

The smile of the *femme fatale* is clearly that mysterious and enigmatic smile that Leonardo da Vinci tried to capture in his famous painting. (Appendix v/27) As Mario Praz also suggests: "[b]eauty of the Medusa, beloved by the Romantics, Beauty tainted with pain, corruption, and death – we shall find it again at the end of the century, and we shall see it then illuminated with the smile of the Gioconda" (*Romantic Agony* 45). Praz claims that in this smile there is always something ominous and menacing: "[i]t was Walter Pater who made the great discovery, who traced the history of the Fatal Woman in the already celebrated smile of the Gioconda, 'the unfathomable smile' always with a touch of something sinister in it […]" (*Romantic Agony* 253). Bram Dijkstra is also of the opinion that the *femme fatale* is endowed with a knowing smile (*Idols of Perversity* 361). The *homme fatale* (I will discuss this issue later) also has a specific smile, a slightly (self-)ironic, knowing and cruel smile without happiness in the heart: "[h]is rare smiles are as the smiles of Cassius [one of the murderers of Julius Caesar]" (Praz, *Romantic Agony* 62).

This curious and mysterious smile always serves to cover or suggest knowledge. The *femme fatale* is knowledgeable, and such knowledge is in her possession that is 'a forbidden fruit' (maybe for everybody but surely) for women in general, hence her knowing and mysterious smile. As Praz claims the lethal woman "has accumulated in herself all the experiences of the world" (*Romantic Agony* 254). This enigmatic smile is also characteristic of the Sphinx who is the guardian of all knowledge. For instance, Praz cites Oscar Wilde's poem entitled *The Sphinx* where a clear allusion is made to the smile of the Sphinx saying "[…] with your curved archaic smile you watched […]" (*Romantic Agony* 257). (Appendix v/28) With another example, a concrete connection of the two female figures of enigmatic smile and knowledge (Mona Lisa and the Sphinx) are made by also suggesting that this dark and sweet frozen smile is of the night while it covers terrible answers: "[s]he has, in fact, a 'sourire dérobé et noir de Joconde', 'ce sourir de sphinx, doux et glacé an même temps, dont elle couvait et masquait ses plus terribles résolutions'" (Praz, *Romantic Agony* 341). The Sphinx is guarding silently the secret of life, existence and reality; she is the mysterious and silent epitome of knowledege and wisdom that is inaccessible to others. She is a figure who reaches beyond the limits of permissible knowledge. According to Gilbert and Gubar, the Sphinx is the "most mythic of female monsters […] whose indecipherable message is the key to existence" (79). (Some other examples for this specific smile: Bridget (*The Last Seduction*), Helen Jones (*Blonde Venus*), Concha Perez (*The Devil Is a Woman* (1935)) and Catherine

Tramell (*Basic Instinct*): Appendix v/29-32; and from the 2002 version of *Chicago*: Appendix xix/135-136)

2. 7. 3. Clothing

The clothing of the *femme fatale* is always of great significance. It is always very elaborate and complex to convey complicated messages. What is more, the clothes of the *femme fatale* do not simply include material covering the body but different types of additional adorments are provided. Peter Brooks highlights the fact that whenever a person is described or presented in detail in a story, most of all if this person is of importance or is a desired being, will be discussed not in his/her nakedness but by way of the clothes s/he wears as well as the accessories both of which adorn and *mask* [emphasis mine] the body. He also adds that the attention is "arrested and transfixed by articles of clothing, accessories, bodily details, almost in the […] [manner] of a fetishist." (Brooks, *Body Work* 19) In the case of a *femme fatale* it is usually so but in the case of the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* it is even more emphasized in all of the versions, but most explicitly, in the original two versions produced by Watkins. It is described in great detail how and why Roxie is dressed for her 'performances' to convey the given message she needs to be expressed such as a rosary in the hand in the 2002 version together with the covent girl dress she wears etc.

Brooks adds that the metonymical objects belonging to a desired person are invested with the same fetishistic desire and pleasure as the very body of that person. These different pieces of clothing or accessories can be erotically signifying subsitutes. (Brooks, *Body Work* 44) A good example for this is shoes because they cover the feet and it is considered that "the erotic attraction" towards feet is a "form of fetishism [that] is closely connected with sadism" (Praz, *Romantic Agony* 290). Stella Bruzzi also emphasizes that high heels are central elements of the *femme fatale*'s appearance (150). It is because it is typical in *film noirs* to have the first look at the legs of the *femme fatale*, like in *Double Indemnity* (1944), it is Phyllis' "long legs [that] become the focal point of both the room as Neff sees it and the composition of the frame" (Harvey 29, Place 45) (Appendix vi/33). However, this remains so later on as well, for example, in *Basic Instinct* (1992), we similarly encounter the *femme fatale* figure, Roxy being mistaken for Catherine, for the first time as she is coming down the stairs and her legs are in focus. (Appendix vi/34) In addition who could forget the famous scene when Catherine is questioned at the police station (Appendix vi/35), and there, her legs are central again, what is more, it is also presented why the legs are so important: because they are considered to be the closest to the reproductive organs of the woman (Bruzzi 136) – and seen from the perspective of the feet and shoes the female gentials are in full view

(Brooks, *Body Work* 103) –, which she also presents to the policemen and investigators (Appendix v/32). Bruzzi also adds that "the *femme fatale*'s quitessential attribute, [is] her legs" (135), which are not only expressive due to their previously mentioned 'situatedness' but because this double body part is the one that enables movement and dynamism that was always hidden and bound before the *flapper* era symbolizing women's restricted and limited existence (135-136). (Two additional examples: Meredith (*Disclosure*) and Bridget (*The Last Seduction*): Appendix vi/36-37)

In the first two filmic versions of *Chicago*, it happens the same way that Roxie's legs are shown and emphasized as often as possible. In 1942 version, the first shot of her shows her legs and and high heels, and later, it is told to her concerning her legs when she starts kicking: "Take it easy! Take it easy! Will you, Honey, you do not want to damage your defense!" (11 min), and during the photographing, all of the men concentrate on her legs: "The knees Roxie, the knees!" (17 min) (Appendix vi/38-40) while during the trial she is seated to be able to show her legs and pull her skirt a bit upward when necessary (Appendix vii/41-42). Although, in the 1927 film version, it is not concretely her legs that are shown first but, in a metonymic way, one of her garters is in focus during the beginning of the film symbolizing her wantonness (although in a bit comic way since there are little bells on it that are tinkling) "a lacy garter with a cluster of little silver bells hanging at one side" (Urson Scene 6). In the 2002 version, although Roxie's first organ is her eyes that are seen but Velma appears first in a way that she steps out of a cab and we see only her legs and high heels. (Appendix vii/43-44) Actually, we see her for minutes as legs, waist, arms, hands etc., and she appears as a non-fragmented body only on the stage. "[T]he close-ups of their shoes and legs" are of central importance in the case of *femmes fatales* (Bruzzi 136). Similarly to Roxie' leg adorment in the 1927 version, Phyllis also has an anklet (Appendix iii/13 and vi/33) and Bruzzi states that "[…] there is a frequent over-identification of the *femme fatale* with accessories that adorn her legs, the accessories functioning as coded messages between her and the man who desires her" (ibid), this is the case with the 1927 filmic version of Roxie and her garter, as well. Hence, the legs of the *femme fatale* "represent two things: power and sexuality" (Bruzzi 137).

To this idea connects Bruzzi shoe fetishism which evokes (on the basis of Krafft-Ebing) sado-masohistic connotations since the *femme fatale* typically wears high heels, and later stilettos, which iconography is "almost always structured around the woman as the strong, dominating partner who is worshipped by the weaker man" (138). What is more, Bruzzi adds that, in *Single White Female* (1992), it even becomes the murder weapon (139).

Concenring the clothes, Bruzzi states that the *femme fatale* usually wears "boldly coloured, sexual clothes, heavy make-up and [smokes] cigarettes" while the "'good' counterpart" wears "minimal make-up and more casual, looser and paler clothes" (139-140). However, Bruzzi also adds that "the instability the *femme fatale*'s appearance" often occurs, and as another example, she mentions "the clichéd image of the *femme fatale*, in thight, black clothes that focus the attention on her long, lovely legs" (140-141). It is also a typical trait that the *femme fatale* makes use of her appearance by manipulating and exaggerating femininity and this results in "extreme artificiality" while the "onscreen counterpart" is represented by "excessive innocence" (Bruzzi 125). The clothing of the *femme fatale* often expresses her fluid identity and duplicitous nature through colouring "based on the contrast of light and dark […] frequent wardrobe changes […] and the insertion of distinctive, often anachronistic garments or accessories" (Bruzzi 126). Sometimes, the *femme fatale* concretely wears white clothes as a mode of "inverse symbolism" (ibid). Their clothing and appearance is always "a recurrent reminder of femininity's performative value" and these masquerades and looks are always sthigthly controlled by these women (129-130). The famous interrogation scene in *Basic Instinct* (1992) is an expressive example for this (Appendix vi/35). Bruzzi also adds that it also occurs that an "intrusive, significant detail such as the nun-like headwear [is] added to the already stylised costumes" (126-127). This nun-like headwear appears in the 1942 version when Roxie enters as a Madonna figure to meet the journalists while in the 2002 version Roxie is dressed in a nun-like (or covent girl) garment during the trial. In the 1927 version, Roxie is clad in all white, and in the 1942 version, when the verdict is revealed she closely resembles this appearance. (Appendix vii/45-48)

2. 7. 4. Fetishism

When discussing the bodies and appearances of *femmes fatales* it is inevitable to consider the issue of fetishism. The body and appearance of the *femme fatale* is fetishized in various ways. It is one of the *femme fatale*'s core features. According to Bronfen (paraphrasing Freud), "the duplicitous blindness" of the fetishist results from his/(her) hesitation to acknowledge the inadequacy of the body and/or the denial or disawowal of this "inadequacy" so as "to experience pleasure" (*Over Her* 96). Originally, it is/was the boy's fantasy of a phallic mother. The aim of the fetishist is to preserve something that has been lost (or maybe never existed) and the fetishist knows that it is lost and s/he should have given it up. This lost object is usually replaced by a fetish substitute. What the fetishist is denying is not only the lack of the "'impossible' feminine phallus," the recognition of the castrated

female body and the missing penis, "but much more generally the fact that this perfect body is and always was absent from any real experience." (Bronfen, *Over Her* 96-97)

The fetishist creates a token against the threat of castration/death as a safeguard and in his/(her) double attitude merges "denial and asseveration" to recognize the fact of castration/death while also deny it at the same time with the specific mixture of "debasement" and "reverence" in the form of the fetish (Bronfen, *Over Her* 97). Bronfen asserts that fetishism is primarily connected to sight and the fetish is the outcome of "the desire to deny that something is absent from sight" (ibid). This nonvisibile something, which is the central trope of "androgenic culture" concerning the threat of castration, is the absence to be found, the nothingness in the middle of the feminine/female genitalia (ibid). This nothing, the thing that is not to be seen is related to blindness thus revealing the association between castration and blindness. To triumph over anxiety is to make something visible, to present it to sight. (ibid) When something is unavailable or unattainable, for example the dead body of a beloved person, then, the erotic desire shifts to the plane of viewing and "[b]y implication the act of seeing means possession and pleasure" (Bronfen, *Over Her* 100). Thus the embalming or idealization of a beautiful woman is a possibility for obscuring decay and also a possibility of denying death (ibid).

What is even more important concerning the interrelationship between seeing, possession and pleasure is that seeing, the act of looking (or gazing) is a form of touching. Freud claimed about scopophilia that "seeing leads to physical appropriation; that it should be preparatory to the sexual activity of touching the other body" (Bronfen, *Over Her* 102). Hence, the look or the gaze foreclosures touch and the two become synonymous or displace each other through the transformation of the look (or the gaze) into touch (ibid). Peter Brooks is also of the opinion – based on Freud – that possession and seeing are interlinked but he even takes one step further suggesting that the drive for possession and that for knowledge are strongly connected and this latter often takes the form of the desire to see. Sight traditionally represents knowing and rationality through its related notions of light, uncovering or unveiling and fixation. (Brooks, *Body Work* 9) According to Luce Irigaray, scopophilia bears close ties with epistemophilia (*Speculum* 53 cited in Brooks, *Body Work* 9). Hence, seeing the *femme fatale* not only presupposes her possession by the male voyeur but also alludes to his knowledge and his (supposedly) rational and intellectual connaissance of her (mind and body). Eventually, this is the point exactly that the *femme fatale* takes advantage of since she makes the desiring male believe that he can possess and know her through her visuality and her offer of being an object of sight. The *femme fatale* promises knowledge and possession

via her sight while ensures only non-knowledge, dispossession and even death. The *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* make a double twist to all this by the use of the comic and their double masquerade as good women hence they 'glide' from one signifier to the next without actual signified attached to them that could be grasped by 'the audience.' They get lost among the performed sight(ing)s and do not even attempt to catch the 'real' meaning, and as such, the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* elude deifintion, knowldegeability, possession and fixation, and in the end even, they evade punishment that the *femmes fatales* generally cannot do when they are 'found out.'

The representation of the female body is always based on visual objectification. The body of the *femme fatale* is always already – as a woman's body – is a site of (visual) pleasure and an object of the (male) look. The woman as an image is a vision of beauty and her body is a locus of sexuality. These 'bodily' factors are always already at the base of social subject formation and at the source of the different forms of subjectivity. As Teresa de Lauretis states

> [t]he representation of woman as image (spectacle, object to be looked at, vision of beauty – and the concurrent representation of the female body as the *locus* of sexuality, site of visual pleasure, or lure of the gaze) is so pervasive in our culture, well before and beyond the institution of cinema, that it necessarily constitutes a starting point for any understanding of sexual difference an its ideological effects in the construction of social subjects, its presence in all forms of subjectivity. (de Lauretis 37-38)

Thus, the *femme fatale* as a woman is (pre-)determined by her body and her sexuality. What differentiates the *femme fatale* from an 'average' woman is that she makes use of this visual objectification and turns it into her advantage solely while giving nothing eventually. She offers herself as a visual object to be admired and through the image of a woman she promises (visual) pleasure and sexuality that she, in fact, often grants, however, the twist in her case materializes in the form of actual and imminent threat and the danger of death that follows this visual and bodily pleasure. The *femme fatale* only uses the image of the woman as a cover for her subject formation and the female body is only a tool in the concealement of her subjectivity that is formed and firmly held.

The *femme fatale* consciously and deliberately makes use of the image of the woman's body to achieve her aims that she does. She can do this because – as Bronfen draws our attention to the fact – although "[w]oman is the visual sign, she is not a straightforward signifier" (*Over Her* 121). What the *femme fatale* projects is not fixed and assured, it just appears to be so, and this results in the discrepancies and cracks where she can hide and

manipulate the meanings of her image. As Bronfen claims the image of the woman is doubly coded since "[t]he image of Woman as difference, lack, loss troubles and endangers, while the image of Woman as displaced self-portrait of man, as crystallization of his fantasies, satisfies and reassures" (ibid). The *femme fatale* makes use of this (image) duality and provides the satisfaction, feeds and nurtures the man's fantasies thus creating reassurance to conceal the real danger that she carries not simply as a woman as difference, lack or loss but doubly so as a deadly woman. Through the "[b]eautification and aesthetisation" of her body the lethal woman "mitigate[s] a direct threat by severing [her] image from its context or reference." (Bronfen, *Over Her* 122) Both "femininity and image […] assume the rhetoric of the fetish" recalling in the (image) of woman "the initial fetish of the maternal body" (Bronfen, *Over Her* 123). The image guarantees wholeness and "completeness" while making a "memory of lack" (ibid). Since "the sight of Woman is doubly coded – as object of desire and object of fear" the image (of woman) denies the existence of the thing it represents or refers to "by masquerading as entirely self-sufficient, as a non-referential sign, severed from materiality" it is because the double and not the concrete thing is the one that "can give the viewer a forbidden sight and shield from its dangers" (ibid). This works similarly to the reflection of Medusa (that saves Perseus) as well as the masquerading games of the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago*.

3. The Comic

The comic has a disrupting force in a way which is acceptable to people. It can critique issues by pointing out the problems and by subverting existing systems while evading punishment. Thus, its presence in *Chicago* is paramount in the development of the story and the presentation of the characters, and which enable them to avoid being punished. An interesting feature about the connection between vice and the comic is that it has roots in the morality plays where the character who was the allegorical representation of *Vice* was to be played "in a fashion both sinister and comic" and some literary historians regarded this figure "as a precursor both of the cynical, ironic villain and of some of the comic figures in Elizabethan drama […]" (Abrams 166). Thus, it is evident that there is a longstanding tradition behind the relation between vice and the comic, however, this has rarely been elaborated in the case of *femmes fatales*. This also raises another question concerning who is the real comic-ironic villain, who is the real *Vice* in *Chicago* and, also considering the above-

mentioned statements, it could be claimed that it is actually Billy Flynn (I will discuss it in detail later).

However, the comic itself is a very complex term since it stands for various modes of expression as John Parkin claims about "[…] the comic, be it through satire as humour which criticises and corrects, irony as humour which victimizes, parody as humour which inverts, glee as laughter which defies casuality and explanation, etc." (xii). He also adds that there is not much point in fixing a given example of the comic as a certain category of humor or "a specific theory of humour" because what is significant is the laughter itself and the possibility for various interpretations: "[…] for it is in the end more important to make people laugh than to tell them why they are being made to laugh, and it is perhaps more significant in theoretical terms to open up opportunities for interpretation than to claim conclusive status for one's own readings" (ibid). Yet, I try to elaborate, in this thesis, on the different modes and branches of humor and uses of humor to highlight the ideological functioning of these diverse approaches and modes of expression.

3. 1. Comedy

In the case of a comedy, such materials are selected which interest and amuse us. The characters and their problems primarily target our pleasurable attention rather than our deepest concern. We are assured that no serious or significant trouble will arise and that by the end of the story everything will turn out happily for all of the chief characters. "The term 'comedy' is customarily applied only to plays for the stage or to motion pictures […]." (Abrams 38) All of the versions of *Chicago* belong to the field of comedy displaying all of the above-mentioned qualities and features describing comedy.

Abrams differentiates between the various types of comedy among which it is satiric comedy the one that most explicitly applies to *Chicago* since "[s]atiric comedy ridicules political policies or philosophical doctrines, or else attacks deviations from the social order by making ridiculous the violators of its standards of morals or manners" (Abrams 39). In *Chicago*, what is ridiculed is how unjust the juridical system in the United States is, how manipulative and corrupt lawyers as well as the media are and how easily people can be fooled by all this 'razzle-dazzle' that is performed in front of them releasing criminals while condemning and executing innocent people. *Chicago* targets the issue that the world of justice is much more the world of injustice and presents the whole subject matter in a satiric comedy highlighting the problems and presenting with the case of Roxie Hart (and Velma Kelly) how deviation is celebrated. As Abrams states satire can also be called "corrective comedy" in

which the criminal or amoral or immoral or unethical (or their combinations) acts and actors are presented as being "grotesquely or repulsively ludicrous rather than lightly amusing" (Abrams 39). In *Chicago*, this is what happens in all of the versions.

Within the field of comedy, Abrams discusses farce, as well. As I have suggested in the title, in *Chicago*, what takes place is the farcical (re)figuration of the *femme fatale* while treating the above-considered issues. As originally the farce was only an exaggerated comic episode within a more complex form of comedy, in *Chicago*, we witness the same occurrence. Although, it is true that the different versions vary in this regard (I will go into detail about it when concretely examining the primary works) but one part is always a farce within the story in all versions and that is the trial scene or scenes or act. Farce is that type of comedy that provokes simple, hearty laughter by employing highly exaggerated and caricatured characters in improbable and ludicrous situations. Occasionally, the comic effect is not the result of broad humor or bustling action but of "the sustained brilliance and wit of the dialogue. Farce is also a frequent comic tactic in the theatre of the *absurd*." (Abrams 39-40) This is also characteristic of *Chicago*, mainly in the trial scene or act.

Wylie Sypher lays emphasis on the complexity of comedy and declares that the frequent failure of understaning it theoretically results from oversimplification: "[i]ndeed, most of the theories of laughter and comedy fail precisely because they oversimplify a situation and an art more complicated than the tragic situation and art" (206). What is more, he states that comedy is much more powerful, expressive and encompassing than tragedy; it tells much more about us, our life, the human condition and the world than tragedy: "[c]omedy seems to be a more pervasive human condition than tragedy" and "[t]he comic action touches experiences at more points than tragic action" (ibid). Even more importantly – from the point of view of our current subject of *Chicago* as a carnivalesque public entertainment, and concerning its various versions a repository of 'low comic genres,' – Sypher suggests that the lower the comedy, the more authentic it is: "[…] the lower the range, the more authentic the comedy may be" (207). To reach a great amount of people and make them understand and appreciate the message a "lowest common denominator" is needed that carries us to the depths of comedy: "[a]t this depth comedy unerringly finds the lowest common denominator of human response, the reducing-agent that send us reeling back from our proprieties to the realm of old Pan" (Sypher 207-208). He concludes this idea by a Rabelesian-Bakhtinian carnivalesque comment: "[t]he unquenchable vitality of man gushes up from the lower strata of Rabelais' comedy […]" (Sypher 208). Sypher returns to this idea at the end of his study and concludes that it is up to every person whether s/he chooses the

comic or the tragic "road to wisdom," yet, the comic way is always of better use because it is "more relevant to the human condition in all its normalcy and confusion, its many unreconciled directions," and "[c]omedy dares to seek truth" even "in the slums" and at the deepest recesses of human existence (254).

Sypher also notes that people cannot always be governed by reason and live under the constraints of the superego and it is comedy that provides the safeguarding function where "the superego 'takes a holiday'" (241) and as such reserves and (re)stores reason and rationality (in the long run). Comedy serves an invaluable function in society and human life and everybody is aware of that. "From its earliest days comedy is an essential pleasure mechanism valuable to the spectator and the society in which he lives" (ibid). Within its temporary and suspended period comedy provides people escape, discharge and resistance: "[c]omedy is a momentary and publicly useful resistance to authority and an escape from its pressures; and its mechanism is a free discharge of repressed psychic energy or resentment through laughter" (Sypher 241-242). The mechanism of comedy and laughter arms us with mastery over mistakes, problems and the evil; and by being capable of laughing at them we conquer them: "[t]o be able to laugh at evil and error means that we have surmounted them" (Sypher 246). Comedy is paramount for the human psyche because it is a source of compensation (ibid).

An interesting feature of comedy is that "[i]t is revolutionary and conservative" at the same time (Sypher 242). In comedy, we often encounter clashes of incompatible standards or competing ideals, yet, these tensions are relieved by laughter or are left unresolved (Sypher 244). Comic art can free us from problems by providing catharsis through laughter, and at its best, it will not destroy ideals while helps in mastering disillusionment: "[a]t its most triumphant moments comic art frees us from peril without destroying our ideals and without mustering the heavy artillery of the puritan. Comedy can be a means of mastering our disillusions when we are caught in a dishonest or stupid society" (Sypher 245).

The story of *Chicago* in all its versions is able to provide instances within the wide spectrum of comedy. While primarily being a satire *Chicago* assumes various and diverse forms of the comedy with the comic representation and (re)formation of the *femme fatale*. Yet, this is not an incongruity according to Sypher since "there is an undercurrent of satire in most comedy" (242).

3. 2. Musical comedy and Vaudeville

Musical comedy and vaudeville are also to be discussed briefly because the latest versions belong to these genres. Musical comedy is a type of theatrical entertainment that developed in the 19th century United States. "It combines song, music and spoken dialogue, and descends from light opera, ballad opera, and vaudeville." (Cuddon 523-524)

The term vaudeville originates from the French expression "*chanson de vau de Vire*" meaning "song of the vale of Vire" (Cuddon 962). Probably, it derives from Olivier Basselin's satirical songs from the 15th century, which were added to comedies. In the United States, it was adopted to signify a theatrical performance combining "comic, musical and acrobatic turns." (ibid) The vaudeville was "the equivalent of the British music hall," and "its greatest popularity" was c. 1890-1930 (ibid). Apart from the fact that the 1976 version is labeled by its creators as a 'musical vaudeville' and that the 2002 film adaptation is a musical, vaudeville as such has a central importance in *Chicago* since the story takes place in the 1920s Chicago when vaudeville was the prime (although dying) entertainment and whenever fame is discussed in connection with Roxie it is in terms of the world of vaudeville and interestingly not in connection with the rising film industry. Roxie craves fame and although in the earlier versions vaudeville is not highly emphasized, in the later versions, this becomes the target of her dreams when *Chicago* literally becomes a musical piece.

Chicago in its latest versions is a musical vaudeville but the 1942 version – although not being a musical – also includes singing-dancing parts. The use of music and dance is just as powerful as the use of humor and functions with similar effects to those of the comic. They tap deep into the human sensory system and even beyond that into the realm of human consciousness and emotions. "Music is depth charge weaponry; it goes straight for the pleasure center, the primeval inner cortext of the brain and source of the strongest emotions and urges" (Prioleau 11). It is worth reminding that, in *Chicago*, there are singing-dancing *femmes fatales* who trigger the reaction described above, and as such, have an enhanced effect both ways: calming "the savage beast" within the human as well as awakening savagery (Prioleau 12). It is not an insignificant fact eiher that strong sexuality is one of the chief attributes of a *femme fatale*. Through this the sexual aspect of these women is also intensified in a musical about them since "[m]usic and dance lie at the heart of sexuality" (Prioleau 11). The music and the dance actually increases and highlights the *femme fatale*'s sexuality in *Chicago*. The most erotically charged scenes are those when the *femme(s) fatale(s)* perform(s) a song or a dance or a combination of the two. In addition, music and dance with their intense impact on humans and human sexuality result in similar effects to the pleasure-inducing and relaxing functioning of the comic – which is also related to sexuality since "comedy is a

strong aphrodisiac" (Prioleau 16). Hence, it is no wonder that the *farcical femmes fatales* of *Chicago* armed with humor, music and dance can get away with murder and walk free.

3. 3. Irony

The term irony originates from a Greek character of comedy, *eiron*, who "was a dissembler, who characteristically spoke in understatement and deliberately pretended to be less intelligent than he was," in spite of this, he usually triumphed over the self-deceiving and less brilliant *alazon* (Abrams 135). The key aspect of irony is that it means to hide what the case is, yet, not with the intention of deceiving others but in order to create rhetorical or artistic effects: "[i]n most of the modern critical uses of the term 'irony,' there remains the root sense of dissembling or hiding what is actually the case; not, however, in order to deceive, but to achieve special rhetorical or artistic effects" (ibid). Cuddon also opines that irony is not about deception but about revelation and even states that irony "is often the witting or unwitting instrument of truth," and connecting it to satire as serving a significant function, it "is the most precious and efficient weapon of the satirist" (431). In the case of irony, there is a discrepancy between the explicit and the implicit (the clearly implied) meaning of what is expressed (Abrams 135). Cuddon also suggests that "most forms of irony involved the perception or awareness of a discrepancy or incongruity between words and their meaning, or between actions and their results, or between appearance and reality," and that an ironic situation or utterance might often include "an element of the absurd and the paradoxical" (430).

When verbal irony is employed a statement is produced "in which the meaning that a speaker implies differs sharply from the meaning that is ostensibly expressed" (Abrams 135). It is the overall speech-situation that indicates the intention of the speaker and highlights the different meaning that is suggested: "[t]he ironic statement usually involves the explicit expression of one attitude or evaluation, but with indications in the overall speech-situation that the speaker intends a very different, and often opposite, attitude or evaluation" (ibid). Cuddon adds that the other basic kind of irony, next to the verbal, is "the irony of situation" (430). When the author of a text intends to sustain a double meaning throughout the entire text s/he will usually use structural irony: "[s]ome literary works exhibit structural irony; that is, the author, instead of using an occasional verbal irony, introduces a structural feature that serves to sustain a duplex meaning and evaluation throughout the work" (Abrams 135).

By the use of irony the writer, the speaker etc., the author of an ironic utterance connects to the intellect of the reader, listener or viewer and compliments him/her for his/her intellectual ability and knowledge to decode the implicit meaning and invites him/her to be his/her accomplice in double knowledge/double meaning.

> [T]he clues to the ironic counter-meanings under the literal statement […] may be oblique and unobtrusive. That is why recourse to irony by an author tends to convey an implicit compliment to the intelligence of the readers, who are invited to associate themselves with the author and the knowing minority who are not taken in by the ostensible meaning. (ibid)

Abrams also cites Wayne Booth defining stable irony as something "in which the speaker or author makes available to the reader an assertion or position which, whether explicit or implied, serves as a firm ground for ironically qualifying or subverting the surface meaning" (136). In all of the versions of *Chicago*, even in the otherwise not so comic 1927 melodramatic interpretation of the story, the counter-meaning production is apparent and is, as a result, one of the sources of the (occasional) comic effect (although not the sort that a comedy would achieve in the form of pure comic relief).

Linda Hutcheon even suggests that irony is the offspring of Janus and often works as a "weapon" which points to "every direction," but what is more important is the claim that irony is "transideological" – a term that she borrows from H. White – and can serve any social, political or cultural positions and interests while undermining or attacking any other (*Irony's Edge* 9-10). Hence, it appears that irony is the most refined and perfect tool of the Devil. Hutcheon adds that "the transideological politics of irony" legitimates "an approach to irony" that does not render it merely "as a limited rhetorical trope or as an extended attitude to life, but as a discursive strategy operating at the level of language (verbal) or form (musical, visual, textual)" (10). The most complex elaboration of the use of irony occurs in the 2002 film adaptation, in which through editing, the verbal and visual discrepancies often produce ironic effect: both verbal and structural ironies at the same time, in addition, there are some occasional musical ironies as well; while the other versions of the story, which exist in textual form, also involve ironies on the textual level. If we interpret irony as "*discourse*" we take into consideration "the social and interactive dimensions" (ibid), hence the audience's reaction cannot be excluded from the considerations of irony and it always includes risk (Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge* 11). Watkins proved to be a professionsl ironist because she managed to operate her Janus-faced weapon with mastery, and her social-political-cultural-

moral counter-discourse touched a sympathetic and understanding cord in the hearts of her audience(s) that responded to it enthusiastically and positively. The same was mostly the case in the later versions, as well.

3. 4. Satire

According to Bakhtin, satire produces a laughter that does not laugh, satirical laughter is negative and satire lacks the positive regenerating power of the laughter. (Bakhtin 45) Abrams also suggests that satire is "the art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn or indignation" (275) as it happens in the various versions of *Chicago* in connection with the judiciary process-turned-farce through which the obviously guilty *deadly women* get away with murder and become saints and stars. Satire "uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt that exists outside the work itself" (ibid). This butt can be an individual, an institution, a nation, the entire human race etc. (ibid) as it can be traced in the works in question as suggested above.

"Satire has usually been justified by those who practice it as a corrective of human vice and folly […]" as Abrams claims, however, it is rather the failing and not the individual that is ridiculed (276). In addition, the corrigible faults are targeted and not those ones for which the individual is not responsible. "Satire occurs as an incidental element within many works whose overall mode is not satiric." (ibid) Yet, for some works, "the attempt to diminish a subject by ridicule is the primary organizing principle, and these works constitute the formal *genre* labelled 'satires'" (ibid).

According to J. A. Cuddon, satire derives from the Latin *satira*, which is a later form of *satura*, meaning 'medley' (780). Cuddon lists the opinion of a few outstanding persons about satire as such:

> In his *Dictionary* Johnson defined *satire* as a poem 'in which wickedness or folly is censured'. This, clearly, is limiting. Dryden claimed that the true end of satire was 'the amendment of vices'; and Defoe thought that is was 'reformation'. One of the most famous definitions is Swift's. 'Satire', he wrote, 'is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own, which the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it.' […] The satirist is thus a kind of self-appointed guardian of standards, ideals and truth; of moral as well as aesthetic values. He is a man (women satirists are *very* rare) who takes upon himself to correct, censure and ridicule the follies and vices of society and thus to bring contempt and derision upon aberrations from a desirable and civilized norm. Thus satire is a kind of protest, a sublimation and refinement

> of anger and indignation. As Ian Jack had put it very adroitly: 'Satire is born of the instinct to protest; it is protest become art.' (ibid)

According to M. H. Abrams, satire

> can be described as the literary art of diminishing or deteriorating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation. It differs from the *comic* in that comedy evokes laughter mainly as an end in itself, while satire "derides"; that is, it uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt that exists outside the work itself. […] Satire has usually been justified by those who practice it as a corrective of human vice and folly; […]. Its frequent claim (not always borne out in the practice) has been to ridicule the failing rather than the individual, and to limit its ridicule to corrigible faults, excluding those for which a person is not responsible. (187)

Chicago is a very unique story also because its 'seminal' or rather 'ovarinal' mother (if I may use such a term) is Maurine Dallas Watkins, a woman and according to J. A. Cuddon, "(women satirists are *very* rare)" (780). Although, it might be true that there are more male satirists than female ones but it can only be due to the fact that there are, in general, more male authors acknowledged and if we consider the female writers, among them, there are not only one or two who employ a satirical mode of writing. Although, it could not be denied that some of the greatest satirists were/are male (possibly similarly to the Greek satyrs – in fact, it is a mistaken notion that satire would have any kind of relation to them) like Dryden, Pope, Swift, Shakespeare etc., still the female satirists should not be slighted either and labelled as insignificant and rare since they exist. Additionally, Watkins' story was so unique and inspirational that it became readapted again and again, though, mostly by men but her original view and concept were generally not questioned and all of the versions kept the ironical stance and the staricial undertones.

Gérard Genette, although emphasizing that it is impossible to draw clearcut lines between the different forms and categories of "mood," produces a rather spectacular chart and places these moods in it according to their position in relation to each other. He also notes that the blurring of boundaries is inevitable, and that "[…] many works in fact straddle the boundary between the serious and the playful, a boundary impossible to illustrate here." (Genette 28-29) He also adds that these categories have several "point[s] of contact" with each other, although he claims that "each mood" has only contact with two others (Genette 29), however, at one point all of them reach each other according to the chart. He considers that some "more gradations" might help in the refinement of the relations (ibid) but it is not

quite likely as that would only complicate the diagram and not ease the understanding while in this form it clearly presents the concept he means to suggest. The chart looks like a circle and is divided into six slices, the greatest middle slice of the upper part is "playful," to its right in a smaller slice "humorous" is to be found, to its right (in slice of the same size) "serious" is placed – it is already in the lower part, then, the middle bigger slice contains "polemical," to its left (still in the lower part and in a smaller slice) "satiric" takes its place, and the last (still small) slice (in the upper part) right to it and left to "playful" is "ironic" (ibid). This is how Genette arranges them. Although, I do not entirely agree with the exact arrangement, for example why would ironic and satiric be separate categories even if bordering each other, what is more, why concretely these terms – meaning all of them – are listed – he cold have chosen other namings as well, for instance, where is parodic –, yet, it is spectacular and vivid how he tried to interpret the 'relations of moods.' In addition, he places satiric next to polemical (in the lower half suggesting negativity), for example, which is an accurate interpretation of the satiric mode of representation. However, what he also suggested, all these 'gradations of mood' might even be mixed within one work, as it happens in *Chicago*, as well.

3. 5. Burlesque

Burlesque, as it is defined by Abrams, is a form of satire; a term applied to burlesque is "an incongruous imitation" in which the butt of satiric ridicule may be a concrete work or a genre or a subject matter "to which the imitation is incongruously applied" or both (26). There can be high burlesque and low burlesque; in the former case, the style and the form are dignified and high while the subject matter is trivial and low; in the latter case, the manner of treatment and the style are low or undignified while the subject is of high status and dignity. (ibid) If we intend to name *Chicago* a burlesque then it is high burlesque but the question is still undecided. In the case of *Chicago* the question of burlesque concretely arises in connection with its first version, the original play, (but certainly the message is carried through the later versions likewise) because in this case George Jean Nathan was discussing whether the original play was a satire or a burlesque and he finally stated that the work was somewhere between the two. (Watkins viii) As Nathan claims

> [t]he perplexity over the labels "burlesque" and "satire" may be handily explained. The two are often not so far removed from each other as the professors would have us believe. Burlesque at its best is automatically

> satirical, and satire when it speaks above a whisper unmistakably shouts a friendly hello to burlesque. There never was a genuine satirist who didn't plainly have trouble keeping his slapstick hidden, nor has there ever been a first-rate writer of burlesque who wasn't, whether he knew it or not, something of a satirist. Satire is burlesque in a dress suit. Burlesque is satire with its shirt-tail hanging out. […] A satire must be played as seriously as drama, a burlesque as gaily as musical comedy. "Chicago," being neither burlesque nor satire, that is, being neither distinctly, must be played as it has been played, now in the serious, now in the spoofing, manner. (Watkins viii-ix)

3. 6. Humor and Laughter

Abrams, when defining wit and humor, links them to the comic as "both 'wit' and 'humor' designate species of the comic: any element in a work of literature, whether a character, event, or utterance, which is designed to amuse or to excite mirth in the reader or audience" (Abrams 329). He goes on defining humor as being "ascribed either to a comic utterance or to a comic appearance or mode of behavior" (Abrams 331). According to Abrams, humor in its general use is considered to be entirely comic which induces positive laughter or laughter itself is the chief aim of humor: "[i]n the normal use, the term 'humor' refers to what is purely comic: it evokes as it is sometimes said, sympathetic laughter, or else laughter which is an end in itself" (ibid). This interpretation of humor and its relation to laughter is in opposition to satire where "the laughter is derisive, with some elements of contempt or malice, and serves as a weapon against its subject." (ibid)

Möser highlights the connection between humor and the grotesque pointing out that the principle of humor is to be found in the grotesque and that laughter originates in people's need for joy and gaiety (Bakhtin 35). Later Bakhtin adds, citing Bonaventura, that the best and most potent mode of resisting all the mockeries of life, of fate and of the world is laughter. It is the liberating power of the laughter that is emphasized in the philosophical treatises. An interesting suggestion in Bonaventura's "The Night Watches" is that laughter was actually sent down to the Earth by the Devil and not God and laughter only wears the mask of joy while it has the face and look of angry satire. (Bakhtin 38) This latter suggestion can be relevant in the case of *Chicago* because most of the happenings are the result of the machinations of a devilish person, Billy Flynn, but here, we could mention again that the close connection between vice and the comic has a long history. In addition, the whole story is ambivalent concerning the nature of the laughter it carries since it obviously has a *danse macabre* aspect that all this merriment has a black, gothic, dark side which eventually brings

down everybody to the Devil. Additionally, there is also the issue of satire since *Chicago* is a satire while being carnivalesque likewise. Bakhtin differentiates strictly between the people's laughter and the "sophisticated, artistic, intellectual" laughter (in a rather class conscious way) and while considers the first to be regenerative and positive he absolutely condemns the second as negative or even harmful. (Bakhtin 37-38) With much probability, the two categories are not so exclusive as they seem since, in *Chicago*, they coexist, and what is probably still the most significant feature of laughter is that it has force and potency for liberation. Together with the liberating power another essential feature of laughter is fearlessness. (Bakhtin 39) "Fear is the extreme expression of narrow-minded and stupid seriousness, which is defeated by laughter" (Bakhtin 47). The carnival spirit together with the principle of laughter eradicates seriousness and even beyond that "all pretense of an extratemporal meaning and unconditional value of necessity" (Bakhtin 49). As it has been mentioned above there is not really a better mode of resisiting and defying the mockeries and the dangers of life and the world but to laugh at them. Laughter is powerful through its liberating capacity and its fearlessness. Laughter frees the human mind and consciousness and opens new ways for thought and imagination. Bakhtin declares that for the same reason great changes are usually preceded by some kind of carnival consciousness. (ibid) Northrop Frye is also suggesting that the function of laughter is liberation from problems and constraints: "[e]ven in laughter itself some kind of deliverance from the unpleasant, even the horrible, seems to be very important" (46). He adds to this – what is of importance in the case of *Chicago* as a drama as well as public entertainment and carnival – that "[w]e notice this particularly in all forms of art in which a large number of auditors are simultaneously present, as in drama, and, still more obviously, in games" (ibid).

Bakhtin discusses Jean Paul's ideas, which also focus on the universality of laughter and its possibly destructive aspects. He claims that "'[d]estructive humor' is not directed against isolated negative aspects of reality but against all reality, against the finite world as a whole. All that is finite is per se destroyed by humor." (Bakhtin 42) Jean Paul also points out the radicalism of humor. Through the use of humor the whole world turns upside down and we lose stability due to its dizzying effect. All moral and social stability is destructed via the universal and radical features of the humor in such occasions as the medieval comic rituals or spectacles. (ibid) In *Chicago*, this is apparent – most vividly when Billy Flynn (during his comic-devilish trial performance) sings that "[w]hat if your hinges all are rusting? / What if, in fact, you're just disgusting? / Razzle dazzle 'em / And they'll never catch wise! […] Give'em the old razzle-dazzle […] Daze and Dizzy 'em […] Stun and stagger'em […] Keep

'em way off balance" (Ebb, Fosse 75-76; Marshall 1h 16-21min). All he sings about is realized in *Chicago* through the comic-humorous dizziness presented in the story. We as readers and viewers are kept way off balance and in our daze do not catch wise (first).

John Parkin suggests about the the carnivalesque laughter that it was a possibility to laugh at the dominant and suppressing ideology and express hostility towards it in its upside-down realm. "[…] Bakhtin sees laughter as a means by which the oppressed elements in Medieval society maintained their cultural identity and expressed their hostility to the ideology imposed on them […]," and according to Parkin, this is "Bakhtin's advantage over Bergson" who only concetrates on the higher classes because Bakhtin is "far wider both theoretically and historically" (90-91). Parkin certainly starts his book with Bergson and his seminal work of humor theory, *Le Rire*, but concludes about him that he reduces the comic only to satire and his laughter is exclusively "the corrective type" (26). It is also added that satiric laughter is not gleeful and "infectious" and that it usually has a victim (23, 27). While in the case of the carnival laughter people laugh together, but I would emphasize again that, in *Chicago*, Watkins managed to combine these kinds of humor (and also a gendered aspect). Parkin then adds about Bergson that "[t]he trouble is that the laughter of relaxation has cut across the laughter of correction which dominates his theory […]" (32). Hence it turns out that the term "*élan vital*" Bergson considers central in the production of humor, art and most human activities (Parkin 6) really took over the negativistic criticism of satire he champions. From a gendered point of view, this *élan vital* of humor is that of sexuality, as well, and hence can Prioleau and Kérchy call the seductresses *femmes vitales*, yet, the *farcical femmes fatales* of *Chicago* are slightly more complicated (more about it later).

About Freud – another one of the first important theoreticians of humor – Parkin claims that his theory of humor suggests that it is a mode of expression of sexual and aggressive tendencies and a form of release of such tensions, and as such serves an important function (38). Jokes regulate hostility and prevent its uninhibited release (Parkin 41). What is interesting is that, according to Freud, jokes and humor function the same way as dreams do hence securing wish-fulfillment as "[b]oth relieve one from the demands of logic, they also fulfil wishes on the imaginative level, and the connexions between the zany logic of jokes and the zany experience of dreams are there for all to apprehend" (Parkin 40-41). Wylie Sypher also connects – on the basis of Freud – the workings of jokes and dreams and claim that these "incongruously distort the logic of our rational life" and they are "'interruptions' in the pattern of our consciousness" (200). This idea is valid in the case of the carnival as well as concerning the figure of the *Vice* as "jokes" and "humor in general" are "a means of laying

aside the demands of civilised and normal behaviour" and as such they are "rich in potential" (Parkin 48). "Jesters," thus, "have a catalyzing effect […] in a story or on stage" (Parkin 49) just as we will see the *Vice* does.

3. 7. Humor and Gender

Linda Hutcheon is of the opinion that women writers (especially the postmodern ones – although Maurine Watkins could only be a modern one) are keen on employing parodic startegies "to point to the history and historical power of those cultural representations, while ironically contextualizing both in such a way as to deconstruct them" (Hutcheon, *The Politics* qtd. in Bronfen, *Over Her* 406) Bronfen adds that a "parodic strategy" while facilitating "a rereading against the grain, may be complicitous with the values it inscribes even as it subverts them, the subversion does remain" (*Over Her* 406). Parodic strategies always involve a "double encoding" to create the simultaneous processes of contestation and complicity within the dominant culture, within which it operates (ibid). In addition, Bronfen asserts that in spite of the complicity and the inscription of the values that are subverted the subversion itself will remain as a 'signpost' (ibid). She highlights the fact that (post-)modern women writers often turn to the common heritage of "cultural image repertoire" in order "to repeat, invert, and re-invent" those images through the duplicitous processes of "miming and disclosing, […] complying and resisting" (Bronfen, *Over Her* 407). These women writers carry conventions to their limits, or even to excess with the help of comedy, and they often even "transform them into the macabre or the grotesque" (ibid). Yet, the tautological situation reveals that the excess and the hyperbolic overturning of a trope still makes the clichés true, and thus, unbearable through their obviousness, irrevocability and unavoidability (ibid).

The use of humor by a woman writer generally conveys her criticms towards the system and its ideologies that entrap her as a woman. While discussing Jane Austen's use of humor Heydt-Stevenson argues that Austen's witty and bawdy humor is "tendentious" "(Freud's term for humor's aggressive purposiveness)" in a way that it provides an outlet for her hostility toward ideologies that dominate women ("*Slipping into the Ha-Ha*" 337). In the case of Watkins the same can be stated since she employed humor in order to serve an aggressive purpose, to articulate a violent protest against the either unjustly positive or negative treatment of women. Regina Barreca is also of the opinion that women use humor to protest against the injustices of society: "[w]omen's humor emerges as a tool for survival in the social and professional jungles, and as a weapon against the absurdities of injustice"

(*Women's Humor* 2). Later she adds that a lot of pain can be relieved through the use of humor: "[w]omen's humor, however, is not only about telling jokes; it is about telling stories, and retelling stories that might once have been painful but can be redeemed through humor" (Barreca, *Women's Humor* 5). Eileen Gillooly opines that humor is both aggressive and defenseive in the case of both genders, although, those in the "culturally feminine position" are always more vulnerable: "[a]lthough humor comprises, for both genders, a complex set of defensive and aggressive strategies, its defensive function is peculiarly acute for those occupying a culturally feminine position" (22). She also adds that in spite of being defensive, however, aggression is not excluded even from this humor (Gillooly 23).

Still discussing Austen, Heydt-Stevenson claims that Austen's use of humour conveys messages that (can) contain (both) aggression and sexuality and that these instances are to be found in the text. These are not accidental or mistaken points in the texts but integrated and central elements in the process of expression and articulation. Regina Barreca and Eileen Gillooly also acknowledged that Austen's wit has subversive qualities ("*Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions*" 3), and her wit including funny double entendres reveals her "knowingness" ("*Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions*" 5). Again, all this can be applied to Watkins and her work(s), as well. Watkins is also subversive in her use of humor expressing aggression and sexuality while her double entendres clearly reveal her knowingness, not only of sexual matters but the corruption and manipulation of the media and the juridical system – as she experienced in during the court trials of her (real-life) 'heroines.'

John Parkin also states discussing Cixous' stance on humor that "the importance of laughter's subversive force has led some women to turn the male prejudice on its head" (230). He also adds that feminist theorists targeted the question that as the main theorists of humor were usually men they concentrated only men's humor and excluded "the female voice in all its rich abundance and its potential for subversion […]" (ibid). Most importantly, however, what Cixous is trying to do is to reveal that the use of humor is a mode of self-expression for women in patriarchal society: "Cixous strives not merely to think about laughter, but actually to affect its nature, and that by validating and advancing modes of female self-expression which patriarchal society has either inhibited or stifled" (Parkin 231). Parkin also states about Bakhtin's carnival that it is a possibility for and a mode of (self-)expression of counter-culture as it provides a mode of "expression of definably different groups" (91). Dale Bauer suggests the same about Bakhtin's carnival and the mechanisms of dialogism (671-684).

Nevertheless, Haskell mentions an important aspect of the woman humorist and that is if she practices the art of humor she will culturally desexualize and defeminize herself by

becoming more 'masculine' thus loosing her (possible) status as a proper and ideal woman: "[a] woman can display humor in the diluted forms of sarcasm or 'personality,' but if she indulges in either the athletics of the clown or the epigrams of the wit, she risks losing the all-important status of 'lady'" (Haskell 61-62). She adds that "[w]hile a male comedian can have sex appeal […] a female comedian […] automatically disqualifies herself as an object of desire," and while the comic man "often becomes a romantic figure in his quixotic destiny," a comic woman "is regarded more as a desecration to her sex than a holy fool" (Haskell 62). Even more expressively put, Haskell states about the female characterization in the 1920s and 1930s films – but I think this did not disappear entirely and is relevant even today – that although the sterotypes were not very strict and their hierarchies were not either, yet, there were two basic types of comic females: "good girls" (pretty but not so beautiful as the romantic heroine) and the "gargoyles" (physically disadvantaged or even appalling) (ibid).

However, Mae West – as a filmic icon, actress and author – is still a unique combination of wit, intellect and sexuality. Mae West was/is an exceptional case of a powerful woman whose humor was/is applauded, yet, it cannot be dismissed that she was generally considered to be "the queen of the bitches" (Hamilton 136), and it is quite certain that her sexual life did not suffer from her wisecracks. Yet, she was always an ambiguous figure who balanced masterfully on the rope of (the appearance of) virtue, and at least on the screen, she never fell down into the depths of sin; in addition her sexual promiscuity was not clearly proven, although, always alluded to. Hers was a great game, performance and masquerade of the fallen woman while she always remained 'the good woman' inside. As Haskell also opines: "[a] wholesome, daytime version of vampirism with both humor and honor, Mae West turned male lechery on its ear" (116), West proves that "'male' aggressiveness and 'female' romanticism and monogamy – can coexist" (117). Joan Mellen also states that although the image of Mae West was that of the "sex queen and manipulator of weak, drooling men" in Hollywood she projected "a uniquely free image of woman" who is "seeking mastery over her life" (229-230). In addition, she is not embarrassed by the labels of "the prostitute or the burlesque queen," (Mellen 230) she capitalizes on them and makes herself independent and free economically as a result without being tied to a man whom she should serve for financial security. Additonally, her open, frank and humorous treatment of these issues poses a challenge to society in the manner of the comic *Vice*. "Often her license, bawdy humor, sexual explicitness and bravado are invested with a challenge to those who disapprove" (ibid).

What is more, she "turns the tables" and becomes the "superior" person in her relationships with men and she is the one who commands, she "never surrenders freedom or control" (ibid). Her comic sexuality and *comic-campy vamp* image becomes a source of power, independence, agency and autonomy. "[…] West also transforms sexual allure on the part of women into an item of pride, power and autonomy" (ibid). West's sexuality is only a game and a comic play with her enhanced sexual moves and gestures – she is actually mocking the rituals of mating – and her appearance of an 'easy woman' is only a mask – she ironically plays the bad woman to cover her 'goodness' similarly to Gilda in a performative act – while tortures her men and plays with them as a cat does with a mouse. "She treats her adventures with bountiful humor and her exaggerated 'sexy' walk is at once a sexist ploy and a mockery of the sexual signals assumed to bind men to women. She is also ironic when men assume that her sexuality is an invitation to easy usage." (Mellen 239) West does not deny that she is a 'Black Widow' who might deavour the male after copulation. In *I'm No Angel*, she concretely wears a black dress that has a silvery, Rhinestone pattern of a big conweb that is sparkling and glittering all over her because this black veil is a large shawl reaching down to the ground, and a glittering spider brooch is climbing up her body (Ruggles 53 min) while the male 'victim' played by Cary Grant 'abandons himself' to her as if offering his body for dinner. This image and scene is the apotheosis of the *comic-campy vamp* (performance). (Appendix viii/49-52) Earlier in this film, she even sings that "I have the face of a saint […] but look at my eyes, I'm the Devil in disguise" (Ruggles 6 min). In the meantime, she suggestively dances and while she is leaving the stage she asks the ravished men "[a]m I making myself clear, boys?" then adds hardly audibly: "[s]uckers" (Ruggles 8 min). (Appendix viii/53-54) Mellen also concludes that "West was the *auteur* of films redolent with wit in which the punchline always went to the woman" (243).

4. The *Carnival* and the *Carnivalesque*

In my interpretation of the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* I greatly rely on Bathkin's theory of the *carnival*, the *carnivalesqu*e since this is the key to the story of *Chicago* and the fate of its *femmes fatales*. In a broader sense it is the comic which makes it possible for the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* to get away with murder and even become successful by the end of the story but it also has to be added that apart from the comic genres of the various versions

and the pervading irony it is this special *carnivalesque* atmosphere of all of the versions which immensenly contribute to the turn of events and make the acquittal of the violent women possible. This special and specific *carnivalesque* situation or world of *Chicago* is what contributes to the realization of these *farcical femmes fatales*, and it is mostly this specific *carnivalesque* setting that allows the acquittal of the obviously guilty women and their happy ending. Another factor that helps the acquittal and the happy end for the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* is *perfomativity* and *masquerade* which is again closely connected to this specific *carnival* taking place in *Chicago*.

Maurine Dallas Watkins already set the tone in her original articles covering the real murder cases on which *Chicago* is based with her witty-humorous deliverance of the events. Later in her play written in 1927, Watkins reworked all these happenings and her reflections on them and elaborated on her view of all this as court-turned-farce. Thus, the spirit of the marketplace with its *carnivalesque cavalcade* was set and delivered on and on in the ensuing reworkings of the story throughout the century and the next. Generally, in the theoretical discussion, I mostly concentrate on the 2002 version (and partly on the 1976 version on which it is most closely based) because this latest version is the most complex and compact one and encompasses, in certain ways, the previous versions as an outstading instance of the palimpsest – and as such, the ultimate carnival – or as it could rather be called borrowing Gérard Genette's terms, it is 'the "hypertext" *par excellance*' of all of the pervious versions, although, probably it will also become a "hypotext" soon just as the previous ones did (5).

In the understanding of the *farcical femmes fatales* of *Chicago* Bakhtin's concept of the *carnivalesque* is paramount, hence, they also could be termed *carnivalesque femmes fatales*.

> In *Rabelais and His World* (trans., 1984), Bakhtin proposed his widely cited concept of the **carnivalesque** in certain literary works. This literary mode parallels the flouting of authority and inversion of social hierarchies that, in many cultures, are permitted in a season of carnival. It does so by introducing a mingling of voices from diverse social levels that are free to mock and subvert authority, to flout social norms by ribaldry, and to exhibit various ways of profaning what is ordinarily regarded as sacrosanct. Bakhtin traces the occurrence of the carnivalesque in ancient, medieval, and Renaissance writers (especially in Rabelais); he also asserts that the mode recurs later, especially in the play of irreverent, parodic, and subversive voices in the novels of Dostoevsky, which are both dialogic and carnivalesque. (Abrams 63)

Cuddon adds to this that the *carnivalesque* is a typical characteristic element "of burlesque, parody and personal satire" (early literary examples being "Socartic dialogues" and "Menippean satire") (111). He also states that the *carnivalesque* through its subversive mechanisms serves a liberating function while "it disrupts authority and introduces alternatives" (ibid). In the case of the various versions of *Chicago*, these can be encountered. The story of *Chicago* is about a spectacular modern(-day) *carnival* in an urban setting displaying most of the features of the *carnival*s of ancient times and the Middle Ages. It is irreverent, parodic and subversive; it flouts social norms, profanes what is sacrosanct and subverts authority, order and the legal system. In the world of *Chicago* everything is turned upside-down and inside-out; all the rules, laws, norms and the customary order are disrupted just like during a *carnival*.

Similar to the *carnival* is the *circus* and the *cabaret* – all related to the world of *Chicago* – and as Elisabeth Bronfen claims, "[i]n the cabaret" all distinctions and boundaries "become uncannily blurred" ("Seductive Departures" 131). In an earlier version of the same article, Bronfen concretely connects these spheres by saying that all this blurring of boundaries occur "[i]n the carnivalesque space of the cabaret" ("Seductive Departures" 2003, 21). Anna Kérchy also suggests that these spaces or spheres are interconnected when she says about Angela Carter's novels that "the toyshop, the fairground, the circus, the masquerade or the theatre, can be regarded as spectacular, open spaces of a grotesque, carnivalesque topography," and adds about time and the body that "the suspension of space and time" also occurs here which "can be associated with the constant metamorphosis of the heterogenous, ambiguous grotesque body […]" ("Wings and Masks" 48). This quotation also has references to a later topic I am going to discuss, namely, that the space of the carnival is heterogenous and heterotopic in its suspension of time, and as a space being out of all spaces while being a counter space (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 231).

Accordingly, Billy Flynn joins the idea of the circus to this trio in the two latest versions as concrete examples (earlier there are references to the circus too): "[i]t's all a circus, Kid. A three-ring circus. These trials – the whole world – all show business. But kid, you are working with a star, the biggest!" (Ebb, Fosse 75). "It's all a circus. A three-ring circus. These trials, the whole world, it's all show business. But kid, you are working with a star." (Marshall 1h 15 min) Although what is implied here is not entirely that "[a]ll the world's a stage, [a]nd all the men and woman merely players […]" (Shakespeare, *As You Like It* 638) – yet it might be a *carnivalesque* rethinking of the idea and an un/witting reference to it – but rather that the world is a circus and not even a simple but a three-ring one, thus

evoking the *carnivalesque* and the world of the *carnival* to describe and present what is taking place in *Chicago* – the realization of *panem et circenses*. An interesting addition to *Chicago*'s stance that the world is a circus is that its creators, in one of their other major works, *Cabaret*, declare that "life is a cabaret" (Fosse 1h 52min); and in *All That Jazz*, another prominent work of theirs, they refer to the stage again: "on the great stage of life" (Fosse 1h 49 min). What is more, the makers of the 2002 version, in the "Audio Commentary," also make a suggestion that *Chicago* is a "concept musical" and everything is in the service of the basic concept that is the "metaphor [of] life is a vaudeville." (Marshall "Audio Commentary given by Rob Marshall and Bill Condon" 50 sec) (John Bush Jones opines that "fragmented musical" is a better term for the description of this type of musical the narrative of which is secondary to – if it has at all – the basic concept or leading idea around which the whole musical is built and it has more emphasis on visuality than intellectuality (269-271).)

Within the musical, the circus is mentioned concretely, however, the *circus*, the *carnival*, the *cabaret* and the *vaudevill*e can be considered a continuum. *Chicago*, in all its versions, is the storehouse of what could be termed as 'low entertainment,' and in fact, it is so on purpose. *Chicago* means to highlight how and why the American legal system can be interpreted as public entertainment. It aims to show that what happens in the name of justice in *Chicago* is *panem et circenses*, it is a gladiator fight, it is a circus, it is a carnival and not that rightful and justified process of truth. Here, the innocent is executed, the guilty is glorified and set free through the *carnivalesque cavalcade*.

Krystyna Pomorska claims in her foreword to Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* that "[h]is study is concerned with semiotic operation" (Bakhtin x). His work investigates and compares "verbal, pictorial, and gestural" sign systems and while Bakhtin's means to find the "general *code*" of these systems (and their signs) the dominant in all of them is laughter. Bakhtin's endeavours of semiotic interpretation carry him beyond the mere examination of "cultural products," and enable him to employ his semiotic findings in "sociological studies" – says Pomorska. (ibid)

Bakhtin traces the origins of carnival-like festivities back to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance primarily (but later also to antiquity (6)) and claims that they were closely conneceted to "folk humor" and "people's laughter." (Bakhtin 4) In *Chicago*, although we have an urban setting the carnival is still the people's entertainment, the laughter is people's laughter. The story basically targets the lower classes, the women of *Chicago* – including Roxie – come from the working class and the 'entertainment' they provide is also 'for the people.' Although, it is also a carnivalesque feature of *Chicago* that people of different classes

meet and interact on a familiar basis and they get mixed up or some people even exceed their class (for example, Roxie) within this *carnivalesque* world. (Bakhtin 10) The protocol and the rituals of the original carnivals were based on laughter and they were "consecrated by tradition" (Bakhtin 5). These carnivals were the double life, the double world of the people, actually legitimized by the existing sytem. (Bakhtin 5-6)

> They offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraeclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom, a world in which all mediaval people participated more or less, in which they lived during a given time of the year. (Bakhtin 6)

The carnival time was a special, suspended, unique period when everything worked and happened with a specific and out of the ordinary logic. People actively participated in this unique event. This is exactly what can be said about *Chicago*. Everything that happens within the story and to the people is the result of a unique carnivalesque situation, and that is why, the female murderers, the violent women can get away with what they had done. All the people actively participate in the events and willingly live this double life which facilitates the acquittal and success of the *femmes fatales* of the story. As the 1976 and the 2002 versions close, there is a mass entertainment as if a meta-performace of the whole story were enacted as the Master of Ceremonies announces:

> Ladies and gentlemen, the Vickers Theatre, Chicago's first home of family entertainment, is proud to announce a first. The first time, anywhere, there has been an act of this nature. Not only one little lady, but two! You've read about them in the papers and now here they are – a double header! Chicago's own killer dillers – those two scintillating sinners – Roxie Hart and Velma Kelly. (Ebb, Fosse 89)

Roxie and Velma shouts it to the audience:

> VELMA. (To the audience): Thank you. Roxie and I would just like to take this opportunity to thank you. Not only for the way you treated us tonight, but for before this – for your faith and belief in our innocence. / ROXIE. It was your letters, telegrams, and words of encouragement that helped see us through our terrible ordeal. Believe us, we could not have done it without you. (As ORCHESTRA plays the Battle Hymn of the Republic.) (Ebb, Fosse 91)

The 1976 version closes with the following ironic and self-reflexive words (they are so strong that from the 2002 version, which is closely based on the 1976 one, these final lines were omitted):

> VELMA. You know, a lot of people have lost faith in America. ROXIE. And for what America stands for. VELMA. But we are the living examples of what a wonderful country this is. (They hug and pose.) ROXIE. So we'd just like to say thank you and God Bless you. VELMA and ROXIE. God Bless you. Thank you and God Bless you. … God be with you. God walks with you always. God bless you. God bless you. (Ebb, Fosse 91)

The 2002 film closes with similarly thanking the people's active participation in this carnival that enabled Roxie and Velma's freedom and success as follows: "VELMA. Me and Roxie, we just would like to say thank you. / ROXIE. Thank you. Believe us, we could not have done it without you." (Marshall 1 h 40 min) This double aspect of the world, the coupling of the serious cults and myths with the comic and the abusive ones as equals and "equally 'official'" was made possible through the functioning of the carnival. (Bakhtin 6) It was the carnival time when everything that was valid in the 'serious world' – where the female murderers would have been given their 'due' end – got parodied and ridiculed in a legitimized way within the 'comic world' – where these *femme fatale* figures walk free and even become celebrities and successful people.

Another significant feature of the carnivalesque and comic rituals which originate from the Middle Ages is that these are not "religious rituals," they are free from "mysticism and piety" as well as all kinds of "religious and ecclesiastic dogmatism" or magic (Bakhtin 7). These rituals are severed from the Church and absolutely belong to a different sphere. In addition, there are some carnival forms that even parody the Church's cult. (ibid) This feature applies to *Chicago* because all kinds of religious values (as well as any kind of value) are desacralized and parodied in it to such an extent that in the 2002 version Roxie is placed into a circus ring and is elevated into the sky from where a white spotlight follows her ascension making her look like a saint with a glory strongly evoking associations of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. At the beginning of the trial scene (in the same version), Billy Flynn – while performing his "Razzle Dazzle" song and concretely singing "[w]hat if, in fact, you are just disgusting" (Marshall 1 h 16 min) – throws a rosary to Roxie who obviously does not know what it is but by the time she reaches the jury she is holding it eagerly close to her belly (supposedly she is pregnant). In the previous versions, the allusions to Roxie's saintliness and her 'connection' with the Virgin/Holy Mother are also evident but always with a great deal of

irony. What is happening in *Chicago* is absolutely of a different sphere, not that of the Church, yet, they are still manipulating people with the religious (Christian) images. It can happen because Christianity is still and has always been one of the basic tenets of American culture (Annus 109-120). Despite the Christian references *Chicago* is evidently of that different sphere.

"Because of their obvious sensuous character and their strong element of play, carnival images closely resemble certain artistic forms, namely the spectacle" (Bakhtin 7). *Chicago* in all its versions is saturated with sensuality, it is srongly playful and it is a vivid spectacle. Since, in *Chicago* we have the combination of *femmes fatales* and the comic, we have sensuality, eroticism and play all together which get manifested in a spectacle of a mocking 'whore-turned-holy virgin' sort. The carnival can be found on "the borderline between art and life;" it cannot be called pure art (ibid). "In reality, it is life itself, but shaped according to a certain pattern of play" (ibid). It is *Chicago* exactly. As Marty Richards, the producer of the 2002 film adaptation, said about the latest version of *Chicago*: "[i]t's everything that is happening now in the papers. That's what it's about; it's today's headlines, it's the six o'clock news…" (Marshall "Behind the Scenes" 22 min) *Chicago* is life itself with a certain pattern of play; it is the spectacle of everyday life.

This everyday aspect is what makes the carnival and *Chicago* – a modern(-day) carnival – people's spectacle. People's participation is crucial and inevitable because the carnival is about them. The people's participation in the acquittal of the female murderers of *Chicago* is also crucial and inevitable. The whole trial and the 'murder-as-entertainment show' take place with their active and willing participation. "Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it" (Bakhtin 7). There is no other life outside the carnival for the people taking part in the '*Chicago* spectacle' either. Everything that can happen in *Chicago* – which would be impossible otherwise – is due to this carnival spirit with its special laws and its own freedom. "During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part." (ibid) Although, it is true that this whole carnival experience is only temporaray (ibid) that period of time is enough for the female murderers of *Chicago* to get away with murder making use of the suspended time, laws, norms and prohibitions of ordinary life (Bakhtin 15). They have the chance to get their own revival and renewal within this special event with

its unique atmosphere. Revival and renewal are also central concepts within American Culture together with new starts and new beginnings (Campbell, Kean 20-43; Kroes 28-32).

Another significant feature of the carnival is the clown or the fool. In *Chicago*, this figure is Amos Hart, Roxie's husband. In all of the versions, Amos functions as the fool within this carnival world except the 1927 film version, where in fact, he turns out to be the hero in a melodramatic mode. (I will discuss this in detail later.) Clowns and fools have always been "accredited representatives of the carnival spirit in everyday life out of carnival season." (Bakhtin 8) The clown who is the clumsy laughingstock of this story is Amos Hart but unlike clowns in general who are merrymakers on purpose Amos is a rather tragic figure who is comic in spite of himself and all his efforts. He is laughed at and not laughed with. In the world of *Chicago*, tragic elements are turned comic and vice versa. In the 2002 version, when Amos performs his "Mister Cellophane" number, he appears on stage as a tragic and miserable fool dressed as a clown. In the carnival, clowns and fools "represented a certain from of life, which was real and ideal at the same time. They stood on the borderline between life and art, in a peculiar midzone as it were […]" (ibid). *Chicago* can also be found in a peculiar midzone between life and art together with its clown(s) and other peculiar characters.

The world of *Chicago* is a festive one that is based on laughter just like those of the carnivals in general. "[…] [C]arnival is the people's second life, organized on the basis of laughter. It is a festive life. Festivity is a peculiar quality of all comic rituals and spectacles of the Middle Ages." (ibid) *Chicago* presents a festive life that is organized around laughter, this laughter, however, is given a twist as well, since it laughs at people while it also invites them to laugh at themselves or laugh together with others. The comic element of carnivals has strong ties with ancient pagan festivities. (ibid) Feasts have always been primary elements of human culture which had to be sanctioned not simply by practical conditions but by the world of ideals – they were consecrated by spiritual and ideological content. (Bakhtin 8-9) The official feasts reinforced the existing order and asserted stability with seriousness and lack of laughter but the true nature of human festivity is the opposite (Bakhtin 9). People had to be provided with the possibility for genuine festive mode(s) of expression, so the popular sphere of the marketplace was opened for this function. The "[…] true festive character was indestructible; it had to be tolerated and even legalized outside the official sphere and had to be turned over to the popular sphere of the marketplace." (ibid) In *Chicago*, this popular sphere of entertainment is the vaudeville (theatre) as well as the different forms of the mass media such as newspapers, newsreels etc., open auctions (where

Roxie's personal belongings can be bought), the courtoom (where everybody can follow the trial) and so on. *Chicago* is people's entertainment involving them actively within the events and the spectacle to offer them a second life of a special order where they can be free from the customary world.

> As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed. (Bakhtin 10)

Although, the carnival time was only a temporary period, during this time all rules were suspended together with the prevailing order and truth. This temporary suspension of truth, order, norms and privileges is what makes the acquittal of the evidently guilty female murderers of *Chicago* conceivable. This is a very specific time with its own truth, norms, privileges and order in which the murderers walk free and the innocent people get executed. Only due to the suspension of all hierarchical order and rank can a lower class woman, like Roxie, become a higher class one. Roxie, who is the wife of a car mechanic and Velma who is a vaudeville entertainer both belong to the working class. Through this specific suspended period both women go through the process of upward mobility and they end as famous and acknowledged high class entertainers, and members of the higher classes. This happens in the 2002 version most spectacularly but allusions to this or open-ended possibilities can be found in most versions.

The treatment of the class question in American cinema is a problematic one as Carol M. Dole, also citing Benjamin DeMott, argues. Dole suggests that the adaptations of Jane Austen's novels hold up a mirror to American society by depicting a rather complex and inflexible social system that could much more resemble their own than they could acknowledge with ease (Dole, "Austen, Class" 58). It is inferred that films greatly contribute to the fostering of the myth of classlessness that is already deeply embedded in American culture (Dole, "Austen, Class" 59). Dole cites Benjamin DeMott's study about class in the United States saying that

> film participates in a myth of classlessness promulgated by American culture at large. […] films engage in the American habit of "talking class while denying explicitly or implicitly that class is meant" in an effort to cope with

> the national paradox "that they belong to a class society that is nevertheless highly gratified by its egalitarian ideals" (DeMott 26 cited in Dole 59).

This slight detour into the world of Austen adaptations was meant to serve as a tool in dicussing how and why the class issues and the disruption of hierarchy can be relevant in the case of *Chicago*. In spite of the fact that the world of *Chicago* belongs to twentieth century US and not Europe in the Middle Ages it is still relevant to discuss that during carnival people were/are on equal terms with each other and there was/is an uncustomary familiarity between them (Bakhtin 10), they use/d informal address forms or they may/might touch each other on the shoulder or even the belly (Bakhtin 16) just like in the case of Roxie when people get the same hairstyle as hers, buy her intimate clothes and objects of use, in addition to the dolls that are her miniature replicas, and she is called Roxie and not Mrs Hart in the newspapers and newsreels. During carnival time, the verbal as well as the physical etiquette and discipline became relaxed and much more permissive (ibid). Bakhtin claims that it was a significant particularity of the carnival that all hierarchical precedence was suspended and that communication and interaction between people was free and familiar even if those people customarily were barred from each other by age, property, caste or profession (10, 15). The relations formed during carnival were purely human. The carnival was a mixture of reality and utopian ideal in a particularly unique mode. (Bakhtin 10)

The carnival was filled with the merry relativity of truths and authorities. Within the carnival world, there was no absolute truth or authority, nothing was immortalized or complete. The carnival owned a characteristically inverse logic. (Bakhtin 10-11) It was "the peculiar logic of the 'inside out' (*à l'envers*), of the 'turnabout,' of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanantions, comic crownings and uncrownings" (Bakhtin 11). The world of *Chicago* is also a world of inside out which lacks the authority, truth, values or justice of the 'official world;' it in endowed with a peculiar inverse logic and a gay relativity of truths and authorities where parodies, travesties, humiliations, profanations abound with the 'comic crowning' of an ethically-morally-intellectually-challenged adulteress-murderess.

A very specific aspect of the carnival laughter is its immense complexity since it is not an isolated reaction of an individual to a single event but it belongs to all the people; it is also universal as the carnival laughter is directed at all of the participants, the entire world is seen through these special lens; and most of all, it is an ambivalent laughter because "it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding" (Bakhtin 11-12). In *Chicago*,

everybody is deeply immersed in the carnival happenings; people laugh together at the events of which they are active participants and they also laugh at themselves; everything is presented through the special, 'distorted' carnivalesque lens; and the laughter inside/outside/around *Chicago* is ambivalent because in spite of its gaiety and the triumph of the female murderers it still mocks and derides all that happens, the people who willingly contribute to this and also invites these people (as well as us – readers, viewers, audience – as participants) to laugh at all this including ourselves – and they (we) do.

This wholeness is a particular feature of the carnival. The carnival laughter is the expression of the opinion of the whole world because "he who is laughing also belongs to it" (Bakhtin 12). Although, here it has to be added that the laughter of *Chicago* is not purely carnival laughter since the voice of the satirist surfaces from time to time in all of the versions. Bakhtin states that the satirist's laughter is a negative one and that the satirist places her/himself above her/his mocked object while expressing clear objections to it. (Bakhtin 12) Although, Bakhtin's point is apparent and conceivable, still, in the case of *Chicago*, the combination of these two types of laughter are skillfully managed with variable expertise and success in the different versions, because for example, while the voice of the satirist indirectly condemns how easily people can be manipulated by the media s/he still invites people to acknowledge that this is so and laugh at their own folly and they do. They realize that these women are probably murderers and that their (the public's) eager participation was the crucial contribution to the female murderers' acquittal, yet, these people just laugh at it as if it was a joke, then, shrug their shoulders and go for the next 'blood-stained show.'

The carnival spirit makes people see the world in a comic aspect that is why it is irresistible. People willingly accept what the carnival has to offer because it is relaxing and recreational. People do not resist the influence of the carnival spirit since it frees them from the official or 'real' world and allows them to see their world in its laughing aspect. The carnival spirit with its laughter penetrates the official ideology, order, rules, rituals, values and shows all these in a droll aspect, too. (Bakhtin 13) No one intends to resist this relaxing and recreational experience that views the world in a way that is not permissible for them in their everday lives in *Chicago* either. "Laughter penetrates the highest forms of religious cult and thought" (ibid). Even the highest forms of Christian religious cult and thought are penetrated by the laughter functioning in *Chicago*. During the Middle Ages, even the miracle, mystery and morality plays were infiltrated by laughter and became carnivalesque. "Laughter penetrated the mystery plays; the diableries which are part of these performances

have an obvious carnivalesque character […].” (Bakhtin 15) *Chicago* seems to share the carnivalesque diableries with these mystery plays.

The use of a free, open and unrestrained language is also characteristic of the carnival. This specific, ideal, while real kind of, communication was not premissibe or conceivable in usual life. The carnival language use was typically informal, rather abusive and often mocking. Indecent, abusive and insulting words and expressions were frequently employed but they were ambivalent being mortifying or humiliating while also reviving and renewing at the same time, later, they gained intrinsic and universal meaning and depth. This specific carnival language also greatly contributed to the freedom experienced within the atmosphere of the carnival. (Bakhtin 16-17) In *Chicago*, this specific language use is similarly to be encountered. It immensely varies to what extent it is applied but it is present in all versions. The most extreme example is the 1976 version where abusive words abound and this special affectionate or mocking aspect is to be witnessed likewise. It also has to be added here that in *Chicago* it is a significant source of humour how the familiar language of the marketplace, the billingsgate speech and the more sophisticated and elevated verbal expressions and communication are combined.

The carnival, this all-popular festivity is closely linked with grotesque realism and “[t]he essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity” (Bakhtin 19-20). This lowering and degradation of everything ideal, high or valuable are central in *Chicago* – with a comic twist. All versions treat this issue and most of them were produced in comic genres of the ‘lower order’ such as vaudeville, musical, screwball comedy or satire bordering on the burlesque. Certainly, grotesque realism is a feature likewise. In *Chicago*, another important source of humor is how grotesque realism sheds light on the artfulness and artificiality of the performances of the prefect ideals. In *Chicago*, everything is ruthlessly on the material level, is down-to-earth, and in a grotesque-realist way, is dragged down into the mud where step-dance takes place. During the Middle Ages, it was the function of the clown to bring down to earth, to transfert to the material level the high ceremonial rituals and gestures (Bakhtin 20). It was the comic element, so to speak, that created the connection between the higher and lower levels and was capable of bringing down the higher circles to the lower one to connect it to the people, to make it accessible. This is what happens in *Chicago*, too.

“Laughter degrades and materializes,” it turns its subject into flesh (ibid). The laughter in *Chicago* also functions in a way to show all the abstract ideals – and pretension

that creates their illusion in the story – in their true colours materialized and in their 'real' degraded form. Another significant aspect of degradation – which is caused by laughter – is that it means coming down to earth, to have a contact with earth that simultaneously can swallow up and give birth. While degradation – with its contact with 'Earth Mother' – kills and buries it also sows at the same time and brings forth something better or something more. Through degradation a bodily grave is dug but a new birth rises out of it. The fruitful earth and womb are always conceiving and producing new life. (Bakhtin 21)

In *Chicago*, this aspect is also present and while laughter has the degrading an materializing function causing derision, the death-life cyclical connection (Bakhtin 25) is of importance, too, because it is actually the grave of Hunyak out of which climbs the new life for Roxie and Velma. It is via Hunyak's sacrifice in a great part that the female murderers of *Chicago* can gain a new life. One of the reasons for their acquittal is the comic aspect (as well as their (comic) masquerade) but another significant factor is Hunyak as sacrificial lamb whose death produces the other's new life, and all this in the midst of laughter. Although it also has to be added here what John Parkin states, based on Henri Bergson, that the scapegoat is actually a comic figure (3). In addition, Northrop Frye even states about ironic comedies that human sacrifice in a played form is of significance in them: "[…] the element of *play* is the barrier that separates art from savagery, and playing at human sacrifice seems to be an important theme of ironic comedy" (46). Wylie Sypher also adds that comedy is essentially a victory over death and a mode of regeneration: "[c]omedy is essentially a Carrying Away of Death, a triumph over mortality by some absurd faith in rebirth, restoration, and salvation" in spite of the fact that the original rites of the carnival were drenched with sacrificial human blood, yet, the carnival served to unite "the incompatibilities of death and life" (220). In addition, Sypher claims that comedy uses the scapegoat to do away with the evil: "[i]n its boisterous moods comedy annihilates the power of evil in the person of the scapegoat" (245). Nevertheless, it is generally the popular corrective laughter that is apllied to the amendment of vices and pretense (Bakhtin 22) in *Chicago*. What we find in this story is really the "regenerating and laughing death" (ibid).

About the complexity of Renaissance realism Bakhtin stated that the folk culture of humor and the bourgeois concepts are mixed up and thus "[t]he ever-growing, inexhaustible, ever-laughing principle with uncrowns and renews is combined with its opposite: the petty, inert 'metarial principle' of class society" (Bakhtin 24). In *Chicago*, the same can be experienced since we are obviously in urban, bourgeois society, community, surroundings and the female murderers are measured up to the bourgeois values and rules, still, the

uncrowning and renewing, everlaughing principle sets a foot in the whole process, get mixed up with the bourgeois ideals and disrupts them. In *Chicago*, these two contardictory orders or trends are molded into a unique whole.

With the passing of time, the freedom of the carnival was curtailed and the privileges of the marketplace became restricted. The carnival slowly transformed into a sheer holiday mood form the people's second life that had been a possibility for their renewal. (Bakhtin 33) Yet, it never died out and the carnival spirit still lives on fertilizing people's life and culture and resurfaces in different, new modes and forms just like in the case of *Chicago*. As Bakhtin suggests "the popular-festive carnival principle is indestructible. Though narrowed and weakened, it still continues to fertilize various areas of life and culture." (Bakhtin 33-34) The formalization of the carnivalesque-grotesque images took place which facilitated their use in various areas, for different purposes and in several ways, not solely in their original sense. The message of the carnivalesque-grotesque form was carried throughout the various works (often different genres), tendencies and centuries actually unchanged because its function is still to liberate, to offer freedom, to show alternatives, to highlight that there are other points of view, that conventions, truths and clishés are all relative and can be modified, altered and that something that is universally accepted should not necessarily be so. (Bakhtin 34) *Chicago* operates this way likewise to open people's eyes and minds to see and understand what other modes and possibilities there are to the conventional and customary world view. *Chicago* by applying the carnivalesque-grotesque form aims

> to consecrate inventive freedom, to permit the combination of a variety of different elements and their rapprochement, to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clishés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted. (ibid)

Chicago by adopting the carnival spirit means to provide a new outlook, to make people realize the relativity of existing things and to offer a passage into an entirely new order of things (ibid). *Chicago* by adapting the spirit of the carnival manages to work the same way as the medieval and Renaissance grotesque, i.e.: it "liberates the world from all that is dark and terrifying; it takes away all the fears and is therefore completely gay and bright" (Bakhtin 47). In the same vein, *Chicago* turns the frightening or terrifying features, figures and events of ordinary life "into amusing or ludicrous monstrosities" (ibid).

Whithin the world of the carnival, the "folk theater" plays an important role, "especially the puppet show" and the various performances that are to be witnessed at fairs

(Bakhtin 37). In *Chicago*, these 'institutions' also have a central role; the entire story (in all its versions) is similar to a performance given at a fair, but certain parts specifically belong to the sphere of the "'low' spectacle of the marketplace" (Bakhtin 35) with Hunyak's execution as an example or, in the 1976 and the 2002 versions, there is a concrete puppet show performed as a reflection on the manipulation of the media how the journalists (and everybody succeedingly) is moving as a puppet in the hands of Billy Flynn and repeating what he says (Ebb, Fosse 38-43; Marshall 44-48 min). (Appendix ix/55-56) Möser claims that the grotesque-comic spectacles have their own legitimate order and the world of the grotesque-comic is not subject to the aesthetics of the sublime and the beautiful – thus arose the question whether the grotesque-comic can be considered art. However, Möser defends the comic-grotesque form and stresses that at the core of this the humorous principle is working which is to meet the human need of merriment, gaiety and joy. (Bakhtin 35-36)

The question whether the comic-grotesque can be considered art due to its disobedience to the sublime and the beautiful, to natural proportions and order brings into focus another similar controversy in the case of *Chicago*, concretely, De Quincey's essay entitled "On Murder Considred as One of the Fine Arts" since in this story we have comic-grotesque female murderers who 'elevate' their murderous actions and their consquences to the level of (popular) art. Roxie even sings in the 1976 and 2002 versions: "[w]ho says that murder's not an art?" (Ebb, Fosse 45; Marshall 52 min) – as it is murder and its comic-grotesque treatment that makes her an 'artist,' a star. What De Quincey states (about murder) seems to be in accordance with what Bakhtin suggests (about the comic-grotesque world of the carnival) – and is obviously relevant in the case of *Chicago* – that the imperfection can be a merit if it is carried to 'perfection' within its unique world with its own rules and being a whole in itself. As De Quincey proposes – and which turns out to be true in *Chicago* –

> […] the truth is that, however objectionable per se, […] both a thief and an ulcer may have infinite degrees of merit. They are both imperfections, it is true; but, to be imperfect being their essence, the very greatness of their imperfection becomes their perfection. (De Quincey)

An 'exemplary' female murderer of *Chicago*, such as Roxie, turns her imperfection into perfection and although almost everything she does is objectionable she becomes a successful, rich, well-known, celebrated star and an artist of imperfection. She is an objectionable, imperfect murderer-artist who becomes accepted, celebrated and even applauded in the unusual, uncustomary and uncommom comic-grotesque world of the

carnival. Roxie is not a faultless moss-rose but just as perfect in her essence as the defective rose of the carnival. (De Quincey)

In *Chicago*, the media, especially journalism is harshly criticized and ridiculed. The media manipulation and the manipulation of the media are central concerns. That is why, De Quincey claims about the newspapers and their readers are relevant here, as well, since they seem to suggest the same from about a hundred years apart. De Quincey himself refers to the media and the 'blood-thirsty' readers and/or audience rather negatively and in a relatively judgemental tone when he says "[a]s to old women, and the mob of newspaper readers, they are pleased with anything, provided it is bloody enough" (De Quincey). When Billy Flynn and Roxie are fighting about who is 'the boss' Flynn warns Roxie that the public does not care much about her and that the media and the people would love her a lot better if she was hanged because that sells more paper (Ebb, Fosse 71; Marshall 1h 12min).

Carnival and the grotesque direct our attention to the death-life cycle, as well. Death-birth or birth-death are indispensable and codependent within the world of the (grotesque) carnival. "Death is included in life, and together with birth determines its eternal movement" (Bakhtin 50). The idea of the death-birth duality interlocked and enclosed within the body and sexuality of women is not a new one. The tremendous secrets of life and human existence are those of the interlocked secrets of sex and death which originally met in the body and figure of Eve, the fallen woman (Gilbert, Gubar 232-233). If we consider that the death-life cycle is already strongly connected to (the body of) women in general, what a highlighted effect can be experienced in the case of a *femme fatale*, even when this is doubled by her pregnant state as it happens with Roxie (although her pregnancy is only faked). Thus a duplicated death-birth is encompassed in the body of a pregnant *femme fatale*, which could be termed as a grotesque-monstrous pregnancy that is a feature of the comic-grotesque. This image resembles the pregnant hag figurines in the famous Kerch terracotta collection. These figures are ambivalent just like the *femme fatale* (even without pregnancy). "It is pregnant death, a death that gives birth." (Bakhtin 25) In these figures, just like in the figure and body of the *femme fatale* (with or without a foetus) "[l]ife is shown in its twofold contradictory process" (Bakhtin 26) since the *femme fatale* offers the promise of sexuality, i.e.: birth and thus life while she actually realizes death, hence, death and life are doubly encompassed in her ambivalence.

To this death-life ambivalence of the *femme(s) fatale(s)*, in *Chicago*, music and dance are also added. Thus, a singing-dancing death-life ambivalence is presented in the figures of the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago*. Theirs is a truly comic-grotesque *danse macabre*. According

to Bakhtin, within the medieval and Renaissance grotesque the image of death – just as in Holbein's or Dürer's paintings the "dance of death" – "is a more or less funny monstrosity" (Bakhtin 51). Bakhtin claims that during the ages that followed these ones it was entirely forgotten that the macabre images usually included the principle of laughter. Within the comic-grotesque world of the carnival death as renewal, the combination of death and life/birth and pictures of gay death are prevalent themes and images (just as in Rabelais' novel). (ibid) In *Chicago*, we witness how the dancing and jolly death sings and dances herself merrily out of her own fate. The merry murderers get away with their actions in their comic-grotesque carnivalesque world and performance within.

4. 1. Scapegoating and (Human) Sacrifice

Scapegoating is of central importance in the acquittal of the guilty women in *Chicago*. In order to let the *femmes fatales* walk free somebody has to put on and take away the blame and this is the scapegoat, i.e.: Hunyak. She is the character who takes the blame, it differs in the various versions to how much extent she does this, but in the latest ones she even gets executed (as the only one and as the only innocent one). In this story, the 'non-ideal American' is the one who becomes the scapegoat; a person, who does not manifest the prescribed American identity: the poor, the minority, the immigrant etc., for example, in the original drama there are two women who are the unlucky ones: "hunyak" (Moonshine Maggie) and an eyetalian woman (named Lucia) – eyetalian is a US slang term meaning Italian (Dalzell 347) – she is obviously an immigrant who is non-American and who is financially challenged, so just to be able to prove that the judicial system functions well in spite of the fact that probably she is innocent and "hunyak" is quite evidently innocent (but this appear to be nobody's concern) they are those who are sacrificed on the altar of the *American Dream*, they don not get help in being acquitted (Watkins). The innocence of the executed person is doubly important because it heightens the injustice of the system. Actually, it can be found in the literary tradition that, in a story, we find "[…] a couple of young women, one of whom is vicious and leads a life of pleasure, while the other, virtuous, suffers a long series of afflictions" (Praz, *The Hero in Eclipse* 200).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a fear of immigrants originating from the late nineteenth century. Americans were afraid as they presumed that because of the numerous immigrants there would be miscegenation and the nation would 'degenerate' (Richardson 242). This scare generated by the eugenic enthusiasm was carried to such an

extent that in 1882 the Congress acted to restrict immigration. Despite this, the number of immigrants was rising and most people arrived from Eastern and Southern Europe ("Austria-Hungary," Italy, Poland etc.) and they were considered to be inferior to the northern Europeans (Richardson 246). The so-called "new immigration" from Southern and Eastern Europe reached the United States after the Civil War, which meant about 27 million people (Italians, Poles, Hungarians, Czech, Slovaks, Russians, Jews) and they constituted a great threat to the American Creed with their strange new ways of dressing, behavior, languages, religions etc. (Schlesinger 10). Later, during the twenties, there were again several "immigration restriction laws" introduced which were based on "national origin" (Annus 134), for example, the Immigration Act of 1924 which was destined to freeze the ethnic composition of the United States and to put a stop to the influx of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe (Schlesinger 13-14). So, in the original drama of 1927, the Eyetalian woman named Lucia symbolizes this fear openly and Moonshine Maggie called "hunyak" who cannot speak English properly and she is asking for Uncle Sam all the time who will help her evidently signifying she is not American. She might be Hungarian on the basis of her name (yet she is much rather German due to the other allusions in the text). These women are molded into one, the figure of Hunyak, in the 1976 and the 2002 versions. In both of these versions, she speaks only Hungarian and she is the only one who is executed in spite of being innocent.

In the 1927 film version, Hunyak is not mentioned but the other female characters are also rather insignificant; except for Katie (who is not to be found in any of the other versions). In the 1942 adaptation, there is not a word about Hunyak either, similarly to the other minor female characters. This version strictly concentrates on Roxie. In the 1976 version, Hunyak returns and in *The Cell Block Tango* scene she talks about her case in Hungarian. The same happens in the 2002 adaptation. In the different versions of *Chicago*, only the innocent one is executed. Her Hungarian nationality is probably meant to signal that she is an immigrant and cannot explain her actions, thus cannot defend herself due to her lingual incapability (as one of her major shortcomings). "[…] It is also obvious that AARON is impatient with his client's stubbornness and her inability to speak "American." (Ebb, Fosse 72). In the 1976 and the 2002 versions, it is stated that Hunyak (re)presents "the famous Hungarian disappearing act" (Marshall 1 h 13-14 min): "[a]nd now, ladies and gentlemen, for your pleasure and your entertainment – we proudly present…the one…the only Katalin Hunyak and her famous Hungarian rope trick. (*Hunyak disappears off stage.*)" (Ebb, Fosse 73) and thus she gets executed. This way, actually, Hunyak becomes the perfect martyr and

personifies, as Dijkstra articulates the vision of the perfect female: the "paean of female sacrificial submission" (*Idols of Perversity* 34). Certainly, all this happens in a true carnivalesque manner: with the crowd cheering and applauding in awe – as if they were participating in a medieval public execution. (Appendix ix/57-60)

In films with a *femme fatale* walking free at the end of the story, it is frequently utilized as a 'vindicating strategy' that an(O)ther person is sacrificed in order to let the *femme fatale* character go. In films where the *femme fatale* figure is free and unpunished at the end of the story the solution (to make it viable) is often that a scapegoat is used to take away her sins, ills and crimes. The death of the scapegoat figure secures the life of the *femme fatale*. This character is generally an innocent female figure, who most typically is an alter-ego kind of person who bears strong resemblance to the *femme fatale* character, for example, in *Body Heat* (1981) or *Basic Instinct* (1992). This resemblance, however, is rather problematic in the case of several women who differ from each other, thus, in *Chicago*, the Other, the scapegoat is only one person/one body who is sacrificed for all the other female murderers, and she is a non-American. Apart from this feature of hers (specifically in *Chicago*), she holds other characteristics too which are typical of the persons chosen for the scapegoat role in general.

Scapegoating has its roots in the ancient custom and tradition of transferring the accumulated misfortunes and sins of a given community to a dying god or to some other being. This other being is supposed to bear away all the sufferings and guilt in order to leave the people innocent and happy. The transference of evil can occur to a person, an animal (goat, lamb, camel etc.) or an inanimate object (tree, bush etc. – although it is an interesting presumption that plants are inanimate), who or which will suffer all the pains and sorrows through this shift of burden instead of a given person or people. (Frazer 706-709, 715) It might seem that it is only the custom of barbarous and savage peoples but there is evidence that similar shifts of the burden of sins, diseases and misfortune were also common among the civilized European nations in ancient as well as in modern times (Frazer 712). Thus, it might be inferred that not even modern civilizations – such as the United States – are exempt from these rituals.

Two separate ways are open to a given community to expel its ills and evils: one of them treats these evils as immaterial and invisible, the other one tackles them as embodied in a material vehicle or a scapegoat. The first mode is named as "the direct or immediate expulsion of evils; the latter the indirect or mediate expulsion, or explusion by scapegoat" (Frazer 717). People usually resort to these methods to rid themselves of all the evils and to make a new start (Frazer 722). This is what happens in *Chicago* since Roxie (and Velma) can

have a new start in life after the sacrifice of Hunyak. This new start is central as some of the basic ideals which constitute the American identity and are considered to be American values and ideals are *youthfulness*, *beginnings*, *new beginnings*, *restart*, *renewal* (Campbell, Kean 20-43; Kroes 28-32), *freedom* and everybody's right to the *pursuit of happiness* – as we can find it in *The Declaration of Independence* (1776): "[w]e hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with CERTAIN [*inherent and*] inalienable Rights; that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness; […]" (Peterson 235).

Irén Annus claimed that the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution* were both fundamental in the shaping of the future of American society and that everything that these documents granted to the American people were rooted in the notions of Enlightenment and all this was and still is essential to their American identity and sense of Americanness (Annus104-108). A few of the concepts still prevalent concerning American identity springing from the conceptual framework of Enlightenment are "[d]eism and rationalism […] individual freedom of thought, speech and worship;" the belief that men are benevolent and there is human perfectability, progress and "social improvement" (Annus 105). What is also paramount in the realization of "the American Dream" apart from the ideals of "material success" and "social progress" is the ideal and the belief in "moral regeneration" (Annus 106). Besides all of the notions mentioned above, this latter one is of central importance in *Chicago* as this latest idea, the possibility of moral regeneration, is one factor that greatly contributes to Roxie's acquittal, this is one of the most significant points in her defense as Billy Flynn also states in the 2002 version: people cannot resist a reformed sinner (Marshall 40 min). Eventually, this is Roxie who is really granted the Lockean concept (adopted by Jefferson) of man's "unalienable natural rights" of "equality, rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (Annus 106). The strong Christian tradition as it is described by Annus when discussing the Puritan heritage (102-104), the centrality of "civil religion" and the Judeo-Christian tradition (109-20) is also exploited in the various versions of *Chicago* since Roxie is posited as a the daughter of God who is expecting a child and in whose life religion is of great importance, this being another crucial factor in her acquittal. Actually, these anti-heroines are glorified and celebrated as the quintessential realizations of the ideal of the American identity. In fact, they manage to realize everything, to manifest their American ideal destiny. Roxie Hart while awaiting death penalty for her deeds and crimes is acquitted and she is endowed with her *Unalienable Rights: Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness*.

Instead of imprisonment, punishment and death, she gets *Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness* just like everybody else in the story except for the scapegoat: Hunyak.

As it has been mentioned, the mediate or indirect mode of expulsion of evils is to use a vehicle which can be a scapegoat (an animal or a person). (Frazer 717, 740-741, 745-748) Apart from the fact that using a scapegoat or a sacrificial lamb is a rather frequent mode of excusing a *femme fatale* in films where this venomous woman is freed, the presence of the scapegoat in *Chicago* also represents a constitutive element of the carnival. As Frazer claims, the public "expulsion of devils is commonly preceded or followed by a period of general license, during which the ordinary restraints of society are thrown aside, and all offences, short of the gravest, are allowed to pass unpunished" (Frazer 754). This is clearly a carnival that is described, and later on, Frazer openly discusses the connection between the ritual of the scapegoat and the carnival world. In ancient Greece and Rome, after having several versions of the scapegoat rituals (similar to the carnival) the darker forms of the ritual also appeared which included the death of the scapegoat. The public purification of the people hence involved that a "scapegoat" or a "vicarious sacrifice" would give his/her life for the others and bear all their sins. (Frazer 756-758) The Roman Saturnalias (predated carnivals as Bakhtin also implied) gave way to all kind of license and merriment without constraints (10). The Roman Saturnalia is

> an annual period of license, when the customary restraints of law and morality are thrown aside, when the whole population give themselves up to extravagant mirth and jollity, and when the darker passions find a vent which would never be allowed them in the more staid and sober course of ordinary life (Frazer 763).

The darker passions that found a vent during the Saturnalia also included the killing of the mock king impersonating Saturn who was sacrificed as a scapegoat at the end of the unbridled carnivalesque period. (Frazer 765-768) Frazer obviously suggests that the ancient Saturnalia and the modern Carnival of Italy do not merely bear strong resemblance to each other but these might be termed as identical by all means, and the public execution of a burlesque-grotesque figure in the midst of "feigned grief or genuine delight of the populace" is to be found in both (Frazer 768) – as it is also to be found in *Chicago*, a modern(-day) Saturnalia, a modern(-day) Carnival.

The sacrifice of Hunyak can also be interpreted as a site for discussion and debate over cultural norms since feminine death (can) serve(s) as such a site as Elisabeth Bronfen

suggests. In addition, the death of a beautiful woman (can) emerge(s) as a mode of assurance of cultural norms and values. As Bronfen argues, "the death of a beautiful woman emerges as the requirement for a preservation of existing cultural norms and values or their regenerative modification." (*Over Her* 181) Thus, Hunyak's sacrifice as a beautiful (and innocent) woman is a requirement for the preservation of order and the prevailing cultural norms and values.

Stereotypes work to secure our sense of difference and to grant the boundary between the self and the non-self, i.e.: the Other. The body of the Other is the site where anxiety, fear or even adoration can be projected and safely placed outside the self. "Both femininity and death inspire the fear of an ultimate loss of control, of a disruption of boundaries between self and Other, of a dissolution of an ordered and hierarchical world." (Bronfen, *Over Her* 181-182) In the feminine sacrifice both femininity and death coalesce and Otherness is enhanced by duplication (Bronfen, *Over Her* 182). While in the case of the *femme fatale* death and femininity also get united – which is a disruptive kind of feminine-death because it is outward, threatening and harming – it is the feminine sacrifice that can reinstate the order and the norm, in most cases, through the death of the *femme fatale* herself. In most of the cases, the *femme fatale* is eliminated via a feminine death to restore order, norms and values. In *Chicago*, however, it is not the guilty person who pays the price. It is a prue feminine death in the form of a feminine sacrifice that restores (pseudo-)order and sets the *femmes fatales* free.

"[R]itualized aggression" is a mode of "symbol formation" and stereotypization in order to dissolve anxiety, destroy fear and set the boundaries to alterity. Symbolization that is one of the major ways of creating a relation to reality and the outside world is based on violence. The violent and sadistic impulses generate fantasies of appropriation and destruction which are externalized through symbol formation. According to Freud, death drive is to be found at the heart of desire as well as "in the subject's relation to cultural norms and laws." (Bronfen, *Over Her* 192) The negotiations of as well as struggles concerning internal-external violence occur over/on the dead body of the woman. The sacrificed feminine body becomes the site for these negotiations and "the feminine corpse serves as the figure at which personal fantasies and collective symbols revolving around a submission to the norm can be enacted." (Bronfen, *Over Her* 193) This ritualized violence, this sacrifice of woman and the production of a feminine corpse is only literally performed in the earlier versions while concretely in the two latest ones. In the previous ones this all remains on a symbolic and abstract level. Still, the sacrifice of the pure feminine body is the one on which the submission to the norm is enacted. The significance of Hunyak's innocence within the

trajectory of the story can be explained by "the topos of martyrdom" since "the death of the innocent, virtuous woman […] appears inculpatory as well as edifying and soothing to the spectators" (Bronfen, *Over Her* 219). Sacrifice fixes the boundary between life and death while making death an "irreversible act;" and when "ritualized death" draws this boundary a whole chain of "symbolic exchanges" emerge among "the survivors" (Bronfen, *Over Her* 256).

Sacrifice is actually a "metonymic strategy" in which a body is eliminated as a representation of a whole "semantic realm" (Bronfen, *Over Her* 196). The body to be dispensed with is the incorporation of the 'hostile' paradigm so that non-concrete values can be removed and expelled by such "somatic concretization" (ibid). It is the symbolic gravestone of the enterred feminine corpse that sets and ensures the boundary between the living and the dead, (Bronfen, *Over Her* 201) the good and the bad, between order and disorder. It is Hunyak's enterred feminine body that creates order and reinstates stability in the world of *Chicago*. Both sacrifice and art as diametric opposites are feeding on death and femininity as semiotic mobility, one in a social-symbolic order and the other in a semiotic-symbolic system that marks the signs where the "socio-symbolic" is cracked (Bronfen, *Over Her* 250). Sacrifice is a prohibition of death by language while art introduces death through language; thus, art serves a duplicitious function while producing "a seemingly acceptable representation as safeguard of society" (ibid). The representation of sacrificial violence can produce guilt which can serve as a cultural form of self-protection (Bronfen, "The Jew as" 77). Bronfen elaborates on Julia Kristeva's suggestion that sacrifice occuring in the social order can be viewed as the counterpart to the thetic moment that actually institutes symbolism. In this sacrificial act, the violence is focused on the (body of the) victim and is thus displaced onto the symbolic order while putting an end to the previous presymbolic violence. This way, the sacrifice creates the symbol and the symbolic order in one act. Sacrifice by confining violence onto a single body turns it into a representation while being violent and regulatory at the same time. (Bronfen, "The Jew as" 73)

In Western cultural representations, the threatening woman, the *femme fatale*, is generally directly sacrificed in the form of recuperative murder in an aesthetically and erotically celebrating manner. However, in *Blue Steel* (1989), Kathyln Bigelow is able to show how a previously pathologized threatening woman can turn into a figure of power within that very same symbolic community. In this story, the dangerous woman is depathologized through the pathologization and sacrifice of another body. The destructive drives of the violent woman are confined to another body, thus, she becomes integrated into

the symbolic and she is saved through the sacrifice of another 'Other.' In Western culture, the sterotypes of the internal Others are interlocked and interchangeable. (Bronfen, "The Jew as" 76-77) In *Chicago*, this is what happens, as well. Through the pathologization and sacrifice of another 'Other' the threatening women, the *femmes fatales*, can turn into figures of power who (seemingly) become (re)integrated into the very same symbolic community the rules and norms of which they challenged and violated.

4. 2. Feminine Images and/or Images of Women

The brief discussion of feminine images and/or images of women serve the function to show what and how these are (re)created, (re)presented and performed during (a carnivalesque) masquerade. It will, soon, be followed by a part that theorizes masquerade and (gender) performativity. Images circulating in a community or in a society are meant to represent the values and codify the fears and the desires of the people belonging to this group such as a nation (Banta 2). Ideals are usually converted into types by artists and writers who offer these types for contemplation for the public by "the insertion of art into history" (Banta 4). Official images tend to entrap individuals, however, the possibility for the expression of "free and unauthorized moments" is also involved (Banta 5). When a Type is created it is to represent "the public values and private virtues" to which the given society is expected "to give its allegiance" (Banta 7). Primarily, the function of Types is to make a statement about certain "abstract qualities," which qualities generally do not derive from the "actual world" with its social, "material, historical, and personal realities" (Banta 380). Images of such general ideas and ideals as Truth can be, more or less, accurately imitated but the (creation and interpretation of the) "images of 'the Other' are severely restricted by our experiences and the indeterminacy of our ideas" (Banta 415).

When Woman is allegorized is thus reduced to zero since her original identity gets lost through the endeavour to create an image of "the imageless entity of the Woman" (Banta 417). The image of a woman, her form presented "*as a design*," gets entrapped in formalism which leads to the effacement of her individuality as a person; the woman disappears into the image of Woman (Banta 200). The images of (American) women – as Martha Banta suggests – always underscore their own conventionality and they are always strictly inserted into "classifiable categories" as well as "clearly assigned types" (7). When we examine feminine images or images of women (which two are not primarily the same), we attempt to entangle a whole "set of powerful iconographic signs" into which the (American) woman is transformed

systematically via "cultural 'typing'" (Banta 10). If the procedure of managing Types goes wrong, then, these categories function reductively, simplistically designating a group of people as "the desirables" and the "undesirables" (Banta 17). It is most obvious in connection with the type of the angel woman and that of the *femme fatale*.

The origin of representational art is rooted in desire. It dates back to the 600 B.C. story of Corinthea who had to part with her lover. The awareness of a sense of loss due to his absence made her draw the shadow of her beloved's form cast on the wall by candlelight. This way the yearning took a form. This visual substitute, the loved man's likeness on the wall stood for the love once she had, and then, what she no longer possessed. Her desire to cover up the absence and loss got manifested in an artistic representational form. (Banta 179)

Woman has a paradoxical status in Western discourse since while culture originates from her she is absent from this very cultural process and history. She is pure representation being both object and support of desire while also being absent. As ground of representation (construction of object and desire) combined with power and creativity Woman is the moving force of history and culture. (de Lauretis 13) Bronfen paraphrasing de Lauretis claims that "Western representations work as texts telling 'the story of male desire by performing the absence of woman and by producing woman as text, as pure representation'" (*Over Her* 208). Feminist criticism highlights the fact that there is a discrepancy between images of women and female reality. There is constantly a slippage between the allegorical figure(s) of Woman (Woman allegorized) and Woman who is a subject of existing relations in real life and Woman as a historical-social being (ibid). Femininity is a contradictory cultural construction. It is intentionally constructed so because Woman functions as "the Other" for masculine identity against whom masculinity can find its own definition. As the "Other-than-man" mythic construction, Woman serves as ground and limit for representation, she is a vanishing point and the condition of cultural representations and culture's representation of itself (Bronfen, *Over Her* 209). The position of woman in culture is "fluid, undifferentiated" and ambivalent since she is a supplement to man while also being a point of original unity (ibid).

During the nineteenth century (the feminine iconography of which greatly influenced the cultural representations of the twentieth century), three feminine types were prevalent: "the diabolic […] [and] destructive, fatal demon woman;" the domestic, fragile, self-sacrificial and saintly "angel of the house" and "the fallen woman" who was a specific kind of "Mary Magdalene" – a "penitent and redeemed," intensely sexual and "dangerous woman" (Bronfen, *Over Her* 218). The angel representing "feminine perfection" was an excess since she was beyond the human while the "feminine monster" was an excess because she fell

"short of the cultural code's limit" and could be considered as a "medium for the death drive" (ibid). The "Virgin Mary" or the "Christian martyr" type being physically as well as spiritually pure manifested a masochistic internalization of the death drive by her "physical weakness, self-sacrifice and self-denial" (ibid). The diabolic woman was the incarnation of sadistic, outward death drive. The innocent, pure, ethereal feminine type staged an excessive lack of artifice and performed a fading body while the demonic feminine type staged all this duplicated. The witch constituted an excessive presence of the body with all its dangerous implications and a duplicity of artifice – the redeemed fallen woman was also a medium or an agent of the death drive similarly to the demon woman. In cultural representations, the fallen woman's trajectory – being infected by physical as well as spiritual decay – involved death as a necessary climax similarly to the witch woman. (Bronfen, *Over Her* 218-219)

Martha Banta, however, warns that such qualities as "niceness," "innocence and "charm" are problematic and that feminine/female types and images which supposedly represent a version of the good woman can be rather controversial (49). She adds that nobody should be certain that s/he reads physical and cultural signs of a woman properly since the "[p]hisical appearance discloses inner nature, but only if the signs are correctly read" (Banta 53). At the beginning of the twentieth century, in newspapers, magazines and all kinds of visual representations, it was often taken for granted by editors, writers as well as the readers that "an attractive exterior signifies inner moral beauty" (Banta 67). This is what they make use of in *Chicago*, as well. This is the time when *Chicago* also takes place, in the early twentieth century. It was a commonly held belief and "knowledge that ugly faces and unattractive manners" lead to the ruination of the "American institutions of marriage, family and home" (Banta 69). If a woman, however, had the attractive exterior as an affirmation of her inner world and all this was supported by proper public conduct, then, she could achieve quite much even in the public sphere (ibid). This is what happens in *Chicago* through the manipulation of the media and the feminine/female images as well as the centrality of Roxie's beauty that is capitalized on.

It is of paramount importance that she is referred to as "the prettiest woman ever charged with murder in Chicago" (Watkins 1) and that her face is beautiful (Watkins 4). These 'qualities' are also frequently highlighted in the later versions. Her beauty is backed by (from the time of the preparation of the trial on) proper public behaviour which contribute immensely to her acquittal. This imagery also involved the association of "pleasing femininity with the delicacy of flowers" (Banta 71). In the first two filmic versions of the story, Roxie is holding a bouquet of flowers close to her heart, and in the 1942 version, this bouquet is also

trampled on by Flynn stating that she will be crushed like these flowers if the jury condems her and finds her guilty. (In these film versions, she also receives a lot of flowers and handles them even right before the trial.) This image is close to the "demure debutante" pose as well as "the roses-at-the-breast convention" both of which were to secure the "normalcy" of the woman attributing these signs (Banta 73-74). (Appendix ix/61-62)

However, these visual signs do not grant actually that the poses adopted really penetrate into the 'deepest nature' of the women, and her intentions as well as her 'true nature' are not revealed through them. "The way a woman dresses and looks may be the means by which she displays her ideas to the world, as well as revealing her complex affiliation with the very society she wishes to alter." (Banta 78-79) When it is necessary for a goal to be achieved a woman can easily switch to the domestic angel pose and disappear "into the blur of those domestic poses and roses" (Banta 81). Banta adds that obviously the image alone cannot and does not reveal the intentions and clarify the complexities of nature, yet, the image is the immediate means that is often taken to reach a desired end (81-82). Roxie and Flynn grasp this and take the image of the Vrigin Mary as an immediate means in achieving Roxie's acquittal, and they succeed.

Those women who have some kind of an imperfection or unattractiveness (in physical, ideological, political, sociological etc. sense) can more easily reach their goal(s) by dressing themselves and their ideas up for public presentation (Banta 82). Roxie does so and masquerades herself in such a dress and with such accessories (floers or knitting for the baby etc.) that society needs to confirm her as legitimate and proper. (Appendix ix/61-x/63) Nonetheless, the images that are made available for identification and consumption always involve the ambiguity of the "stagy make-believe;" the question always remains: "[w]here does the fantasy end and the reality begin?" (Banta 87) Images trigger complex processes of meaning production and they are not guarantees for an easy interpretation. Certainly, seemingly easy conclusions can be jumped at as in the case of Roxie, still, her performance as the Virgin Mary remains a stagy make-believe where the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred. It does not really matter whether the image of Woman or images of women are positive or negative because the image of Woman in all its various versions had and has "power over the public imagination" (Banta 91).

By the early twentieth century (when *Chicago* takes place and when it was first produced), American women showed enhanced tendecy to behave more freely than during the preceeding decades, yet, as Elémire Zolla claims, these women still felt a necessity to conform to certain images willingly and voluntarily despite the fact that no official demand

was in currency to make them to do so. Zolla "suggests that the study of national cultures indicates that members of large social units thrive on archetypes – images emanating from personal dream worlds of 'entrancement,' 'magic,' and 'swoon' that possess the power to fix people in their grip." (Zolla 191 cited in Banta 686) He argues that it might happen that a given group that is "caught in the web of manifold, denumbing appearances" changes entirely and reverses all its habits and stock of roles and images, however, what occurs is that the old archetypes are replaced by new ones which also feed on the same sources, hence, actual change does not happen (Zolla 191 qtd. in Banta 686-687). "Dreams, and the looks that nourish them, continually shift up and down, back and forth, leading nowhere" (Zolla 191 cited in Banta 687).

4. 3. (Gender) Performativity and Masquerade

In the story of *Chicago*, masquerade and (gender) performativity play a central role. They are chief attributes that lead the storyline in its specific and special direction. The acts of masquerade and (gender) performance also greatly contribute to the acquittal of the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago*. Masquerading and the 'performance of (a good) woman' are just as important in the rather unique ending of the story as the logic of scapegoating, sacrifice and the functioning of the comic on all levels and in various forms. In *Chicago*, the *femmes fatales* masquerade themselves as nice, homely, good women which seems to be functional and beneficial – it leads them to freedom.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the feminine/female types were to be recognized, perceived and conceived by what that female wore and the gestures she made; these signs made up the social types which an (American) girl had to assume through "the Peircean/Roycean process of imitation, reflection, and interpretation […]" (Banta 46). The *femmes fatales* of Chicago work wonders with all this. They manage to assume any role and type via the application of various clothes, gestures and other social signifiers in order to reach their aims. They wear the mask of one type of woman, then, they switch to another one if it is necessary. They manipulate with ease and skill the images of women available for them through their games of masquerade and performances of masks.

In its original sense, the mask was connected to folk culture – and preceeding it to ancient rituals and spectacles – in its very complexity. It celebrated change, reincarnation and the joyful relativity of all things. It also rejoiced in the jocund negation of sameness and uniformity. The mask had strong ties with metamorphoses and transition – and as a central

element – natural boundaries were violated. (Bakhtin 39-40) In *Chicago*, natural boundaries are violated and the acts of masquerade, the use of masks are related to transition and metamorphoses. Roxie – as a *femme fatale* violates the natural boundaries – metamorphoses into a good woman with the aid of masquerade and successfully gets through this transitory period making use of all of the "peculiar interrelation of reality and image" (Bakhtin 40) on the way. In her case, it is much more the Romantic form of the mask that is relevant because her mask(s) is(are) much rather hiding, deceiving, covering hideous secrets than having a regenerating and renewing function (ibid). Still, what happens is that she becomes regenerated and renewed as a result of this action.

Masks evidently recall the theme of marionette plays. According to Bakhtin, it happened only during Romanticism that the marionettes, the puppets themselves became central as tragic dolls, being victims of outside, alien forces – the marionette plays, certainly, had always been part of folk culture (ibid). In *Chicago*, apart from the general theme of masquerading there is a concrete example for the marionette play in the two latest versions. This is the "We both reached for the gun" musical part in the story. It is one of the most outstanding examples of the comic-grotesque elements in this story. It is not only the critique of the workings of the media and how people can be manipulated through and by it but it is also an excellent indication of the inhuman, alienated and cold atmosphere in which the story actually takes place. According to Wolfgang Kayser, one of the basic indicators of the grotresque is "the estranged world" (Kayser 184), the second is "a play with the absurd" (Kayser 187), and the third is an attempt made to "invoke and subdue the demonic aspects of the world" (Kayser 188). *Chicago* encompasses all these, its world is an estranged one, its theme and how it is treated is absolutely a play with the absurd and it unquestionably attempts to invoke and subdue the demonic aspects of the world. This marionette play scene is a prime example within the story of all these.

> The mechanical object is alienated by being brought to life, the human being by being deprived of it. Among the most persistent motifs of the grotesque we find human bodies reduced to puppets, marionettes, and automata, and their faces frozen into masks. (Kayser 183)

In *Chicago* (2002), this scene is the press conference that turns into a marionette play via singing and dancing the above-mentioned song. Billy Flynn holds the cords of all the journalists and those present who have become his puppets who repeat what he says, who talk only what he wants them to say, who move accordning to Billy Flynn's wishes and

direction. He is directing who can ask and what and certainly he gives the answers, while Roxie's puppet face is mimicking his speaking as he turns into a ventriloquist, as well. Roxie freezes into a puppet that cannot do more without 'her master' than falling down helplessly like a real doll. (Marshall 46 min) Actually, this is the scene when Roxie, in order to gain back her freedom, starts her masquerade and puts on the mask of the ideal, good woman who does not have a body or a mind of her own but is a dumb, blond, bovine-eyed marionette puppet who talks and acts in accordance with the master's directives. From that time on, she performs the good woman role through her masquerading which helps her reach her aim. (Appendix x/64-66) In an inverted mode, although, (probably) serving the same function, Gilda claims (in *Gilda* (1946)) that when she performed the 'bad woman' that was only "an act" (Doane, *Femmes Fatales* 117). By the end of the film we are assured of Gilda as 'essentially good' because she only acted out the 'bad woman' and as such the "threat offered by the woman is canceled," yet, I would argue that her "essential goodness" (Doane, *Femmes Fatales* 117-118) unveiled in the end is just as an act, or even more so, than that of the 'bad woman.'

Part of the performance of perfect femininity is the acquisition and securing of a male figure who grants the 'safe' background for the woman within patriarchal culture. Gayle Rubin claims that there is a system that divides society on biological and gender principles. Everyone gets his/her own position, his/her rights and duties. In this system, women can only be "gifts or commodities" in the traffic between men. "[T]he relations specify that men exchange women, it is men who are the beneficiaries of the product of such exchanges […]." (Rubin 543) This is evidently present in the film since all of the women are married or live together with a man. When they kill their male counterpart, they try to get under the protection of another (dominant) male because this is their only chance to gain acquittal. This father-husband figure is Billy Flynn, whom all of these women seek to help them as they sing in a craving manner: "We want Billy" (Ebb, Fosse 31; Marshall 33) as part of Billy Flynn's song entitled "All I care about" (Ebb, Fosse 31-33; Marshall 33-34 mins). In addition, almost everyone is male in the courtroom – those in power position(s) by all means. "In acquiescing to the proposed union, she precipitates or allows the exchange to take place, she cannot alter its nature" (Rubin 543). These women have no choice: they either play the role of the submissive gift or commodity in the exchange between men or die.

Adrienne Rich's essay on compulsory heterosexuality also proves that no one can break away from the existing system, or at least, these women did not manage to since heterosexuality and motherhood are also only tools in the hands of the social organization to

maintain its power. “I am suggesting that heterosexuality, like motherhood, needs to be recognized and studied as a *political institution* […].” (Rich 232) They also make use of this during the trial. Roxie is considered to be pregnant, so a mother, thus implying that she is an integrated member of the society who accepts her assigned role humbly and acts according to it. This masquerading as a pregnant woman also proves to be immensely instrumental in her acquittal. For the sake of the cause, Roxie has to emphasize their femininity (or even her maternity), even in the Doanian sense of a mask (Doane, “Film and the Masquerade” 185). In the 2002 version, for example, Roxie has to put on that nunlike dress that ‘proper women’ wear to prove that she is decent. She puts on the clothes prescribed by society, and with these, the prescribed societal roles, as well: wife, mother, nun (a rosary is also added to the dress, Roxie is holding it in her hand), daughter (Billy Flynn is standing behind her as a ‘real’ father). (Appendix x/67-70)

She is not only dressed up as a good woman to perform the perfect masquerade but also adopts the adequate behaviourial patterns to meet the requirements of society regarding women such as: a desperate, serious facial expression (combined with a faint smile from time to time), stiff posture, modesty, the daughter/mother role (Billy Flynn standing behind her as a father/husband with his hand on her stomach), knitting (for the baby certainly), to act the perfect illusion of an ideal family life in the form of a hug in public, downcast eyes (and only sparse glances upwards), sobbing and fainting (Appendix xi/71-74) since the only roles ‘offered’ to a woman for being integrated into society is the role of the mother, or the daughter, or the wife. All of these are strictly part of the parenthood structure. (Kristeva, “Stabat Mater” 169) If a woman decides to be outside of the parental-paternal structure, she still has a possibility, she can remain a virgin, i.e.: a nun. The roles as sister/virgin or mother are mentioned by Janey Place, as well (35), and those of daughter, wife and mother by Sylvia Harvey (33), while by E. Ann Kaplan adds that “[…] women, in their fixed roles as wives, mothers, daughters, lovers, mistresses, whores, simply provide the background for the ideological work […] carried out through men” (2). During Victorianism (the cultural ideals of which still had a strong hold on the early twentieth century imagination), the ‘eternal virgin,’ the nun was a powerful image, and a viable female role that embodied feminine ideals of chastity, religious confinement and womanly service, in fact, “superfluous women” were endorsed to choose this life, however, it also has to be added that the nun, at the same time, “became a popular and compelling figure of sexual fantasy” (Showalter xxi).

When considering the strinct dichotomy of feminine images it is evidently apparent that woman is to represent the extremes or the margins of the norm, in general, there is not a

'golden mean.' Woman in representation, most often than not, is either to be pure angel or rotten devil. "Woman comes to represent the margins or extremes of the norm – the extremely good, pure, helpless, or the extremely dangerous, chaotic and seductive. The saint or the prostitute; the Virgin Mary or Eve." (Bronfen, *Over Her* 181) In *Chicago*, these images are juggled with. The images of prostitutes and saints are mixed up and exchanged. Virgins are positioned as whores as in the case of Hunyak while the devils and prostitutes such as Roxie are posited as saints. The devil woman masquerades herself as the angel woman and thus wins while the angel woman refusing the masquerade gets the label of the devil woman and gets executed. As it is said in the 1927 (original) version, "[c]ome on, sister, yuh gotta play ball: this is Chicago!" (Watkins 111), if you don not play you cannot win. Thomas H. Pauly even claims that "Watkins originally entitled her play […] play ball" (xxiii-xxiv).

The image of the woman constantly accompanies her and her "self-being is split into two" (Bronfen, *Over Her* 281). While she enacts herself, in this compact doubleness, she encompasses "the male surveyor and the female surveyed" at the same time (Bronfen, *Over Her* 282). Woman always has to be (according to societal rules) aware of masculine desire which she can stimulate and manipulate with her appearance. When she stages herself it is her decision whether she "confirms or discloses her objectivization" through the masculine look and his fantasies; or whether she reduces this medium, and turns her staged display into "self-authorship" as well as "the materialization of her own fantasies" (ibid). She might stage herself but she might also stage an appearance that has nothing to do with her and both ways can work as a mode of self-authorship and realization of her own fantasies. Woman as surveyed is not at the mercy of the masculine look, it is not the one who looks who is in power position but the one who is looked at. Woman has the power to control the look of the surveyor, she has the power to control how she is perceived, she appears the way she wants to be looked at. Her power to control her looked-at-ness all depends on her ability to manipulate her appearance and to direct the look where she wants it to be directed at. (Bronfen, *Over Her* 281-282) The *femme fatale* figure is generally the champion of this manipulation of the look and makes use of her power to control her visuality. *Chicago* is a prime example of the spectacular play and manipulation of the visuals of *femmes fatales* through their various masqueradings.

Masks constitute a specific aspect of the interpretation of signs and issues of identity. The primary role of the mask is to conceal identity and provide, in a sense, privacy to the wearer. In religious rituals and in the case of ceremonial masks, the focus is on the superimposed image upon the face while the real identity is covered and forgotten; the

attention is paid to "the outward image" that emerges as a "rare presence" while the identity of the wearer fades into nothingness, and only the outer image remains (Banta 221). While camouflage produces concealment through obliterartion of visual signs, masks manage to do so by way of an "alternative presence" (Banta 222). Masks complicate the process of identification and thus generate bewilderment while blazon the idea and acts of identity (and identification). However, types play a central role with their effective design and dominance in the case of both camouflage and masks (ibid).

At the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries and in the early twentieth century, the world of musical-comedy and vaudeville was the place that offered possibilities of masquarede, even to that extent that women could masquerade themselves as men on the (American) stage. These actresses (such as Vesta Tilley or Florenze Tempest) were often renowned beauties, who while being successful and acknowledged male impersonators on stage, emphasized their femininity in their personal lives and kept up the image of the True Woman while condemning masculine women. (Banta 270-271) Although, in *Chicago*, we do not encounter concrete male impersonators, the time of the story's birth is this era and the world of musical-comedy and vaudeville is closely linked with the story. In *Chicago*, they make abundant use of masquerade even if they juggle 'only' with the different types and images of femininity. However, by the 1970s, even gender-beding and cross-dressing enters the picture in the 1976 version with Mary Sunshine and the Matron. Nonetheless, I do not intend to go into detail about this here. What is more noteworthy concerning this issue is that the acts of impersonation (be it transgender or not) "tend to obscure the relation between the exterior appearance and the 'performance' of the innermost self […]" (Banta 275). Banta claims that even if we dismiss the ontological and epistemological questions or difficulties around gender inversions/subversions or switches "the artifice of gender-posing, and […] pretense as such pleased the audiences of the period" (ibid). It seems that the same is valid in the case of *Chicago*, even at its beginning, with the newspaper articles since what these women were/are doing is gender-posing and the pretense. The performance of the gender ideal, that of the regulated female – when they are caught as non-ideal females, as phallic women, who do not conform to the ideal of prescribed femininity – is evident, thus, it is probable that the audience enjoyed this all. They were pleased by this pretense and performance while being aware of its being such.

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and in the early twentieth century, glamour became purchasable just like cosmetics, a new piece of clothing or an adornment. Previously, glamour was the privilege of "semidivine" personages who had "character" but

around this time only "personality" was needed. (Banta 618) Female clebrities only had to have something to display in order to make audiences want to see it. A female celebrity, by this time, did not have to be a unique person or a special personage with semidivine qualities only slightly above the ordinary. Yet, that given star had to be a bit "other," had to have a little extra. (ibid) It was enough to be prettier than the average or if no specific physicality was to be put on display, the given person had to be more mysterious (ibid). The female celebrities of *Chicago* entirely fit this prescription. Velma is said to be the classy girl, a real lady, the dressiest and stylishest one they ever had in the prison while Roxie is said to be the most beautiful, the prettiest one ever charged with murder. (Watkins 30-32) (In the later versions, these termes are also used.) Making use of these little extras, they become celebrities and start their gender-posing and masquerading.

With their poses and masquerade they aim to achieve a dramatic effect full of emotions, which they actually manage to achieve. Through theatricality, they enhance the effect of the images they offer for public consumption and make a stronger statement (even if these are all faked). "Dramatical means *effect* and *statement* attained through poses expressive of emotion, the more intense the better" (Banta 632). Banta adds that it does not actually matter whether the display is enacted on the marketplace or within the theatre because these two forms essentially have the same function, i.e.: to draw attention to the goods for sale. Both the marketplace and the theatre function in a way that they make certain the recognition of "saleable goods," in this case, the "celebrities." (Banta 632-633). In addition, the marketplace and the theatre not only provide recognition but also generate and incite desire in the viewers, the audience towards the "goods on display;" (Banta 633) in *Chicago*, these goods are the *femmes fatales* displaying salebale images of themselves: images of good women. In the marketplace-theatre-circus world of *Chicago*, women like Roxie manage to adapt to the dictates of the logic of these 'places' and capitalize on their function.

In order to produce the image of the "womanly woman," Roxie has to clothe herself in the accessories of womanliness such as being "quiet, unselfish, modest, submissive, unambitious, and passionless" (Showalter xi). When discussing womanliness and what defines a "womanly woman" Elaine Showalter, echoing Judith Butler by saying that "[f]emininity is a construct; growing up female means learning to play a role" (xii), clearly suggests that it is actually role playing and acting since to be, or rather to look like, a "womanly woman" one has to enact that persona and the better she plays that role, the greater success she will achieve with her aims. All Roxie has to perform is only the illusion of compulsory heterosexuality and the existing order that is hidden under the mask of innocence.

Everything happening during the trial and all the publicity surrounding it is only an act, in the Butlerian sense, an act of gender roles. Everyone is parading, they present how to behave according to the prescribed roles since "[g]ender is an 'act' which is both intentional and performative, where 'performative' itself carries the double-meaning of 'dramatic' and 'non-referential'" (Butler, "Performative" 404). Gender is done, it is "a kind of imitation for which there is no original," (Butler, "Imitative" 722; *Gender Trouble* 6) a performance, a theatrality. "[I]t can become an occasion for a subversive and proliferating parody of gender norms," (Butler, "Performative" 724) thus a masquerade.

Butler declares that "gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the casual result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex" (*Gender Trouble* 6). Thus, no matter how strictly described categories of femininity are invented these culturally defined and created categories cannot be explicitly and correctly pressed on every woman because these will not fit her, and as soon as she starts tailoring these images and identities to suit herself, her performance and masquerade of 'alleged femininity' start with it. Butler also adds that "the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders" (ibid). So, a biological female body is not surely 'covered' by a cultural conception of femininity and even if it seemingly reflects culturally prescribed femininity that does not guarantee that she is actually feminine, or maybe, even female. It is also implied that since these gender categories are culturally constructed they vary in different cultures, and in the different phases of even the same culture, as a result, gender categories are never fixed, never essential and never permanent. Gender is, in fact, "a freefloating artifice" (ibid), and as a result, it could be called a mask. As an example, somebody can cover his/her masculinity with the mask of femininity and can be viewed as an ideal woman only because of the performance of this very feminity.

Butler quotes Simone de Beauvoir's famous words: "one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one" (de Beauvoir 301 quoted in *Gender Trouble* 8), and adds that this implies that a person could, "in principle, take on some other gender" (*Gender Trouble* 8). In addition, it is also inferred that one will not primarily become a woman by her own free will "but always under a cultural compulsion to become one" and being a woman does not obviously mean that 'she' "is necessarily female" (ibid). Additionally, "[i]f 'identity' is an *effect* of discursive practices" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 18) then gender is also only and effect within the matrix of compulsory heterosexuality, and accordingly, if it is only an effect, then, it is an artificial product; it is only an appearance, an act. "That the gendered body is *performative* suggests that it has *no ontological status* apart from the *various acts* which

constitute its *reality*" [emphases mine] (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 136), hence 'the woman' comes into being only when she is enacted. Hence, 'the effect of the woman' appears only "*on the surface* of the body" but an internal "organizing principle of identity" is never revealed and only "the play of signifying absences" is to be witnessed (ibid). As a conclusion, Butler states that the performance of a woman is thus a collage of acts and gestures, which are solely corporeal signs to suggest essence or identity, however, these are only "*fabrications*" without ontological evidence: "[s]uch acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (ibid). Thus, to perform proper femininity somebody only needs to enact the culturally prescribed corporeal and other 'surface' signs of a woman.

In her study entitled "Womanliness as a Masquerade," Joan Riviere declares that womanliness is itself masquerade and role-playing (38-39). The *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* such as Roxie make use of this, via masquerade and role playing she performs the ideal feminine image which enables her greatly in achieving her acquittal in all of the versions. A *femme fatale* is a *phallic woman* who has masculine attributes and tendencies, hence, she has to overemphasize her femininity in order to be able to deceive others and avoid retribution. As Riviere explains, "[…] homosexual men exaggerate their heterosexuality as a 'defence' […] women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men" (35). These women who dare intellectually challenge the men, such as a *femme fatale* with her intelligence and ambition, directly or indirectly seek the sexual attentions of those given (challenged) men in a more or less veiled manner (Riviere 36) in order to cover their intellect with their sexuality that will blind the men to her real intentions. Public display of womanhood, in such cases, aims to avert the attention from intellectual proficiency and the possession of the phallus (Riviere 37). Roxie by "'disguising herself' as merely a castrated woman" assures the men (who decide about her fate) that she is not a phallic woman, she does not possess the phallus, she is not hiding that stolen property (the father's penis) and as such she is found attractive and a possible object of love (Riviere 38). Thus, the phallic woman's aim is "to make sure of safety by masquerading as guiltless and innocent" (ibid). Riviere claims that "[w]omanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it […]" (ibid). By masquerading in a feminine disguise the given woman is perceived by the men as showing her love and guiltlessness towards them. However, it is worthy of notice that the woman's mask is only successful with men since it is

transparent for the other women. Nevertheless, the given woman reaches her aim and the masquerade serves her well as the given men's attraction towards her is secured together with the positive feedback. (Riviere 41) Riviere states that these women perform masculine activities and functions under the mask of womanly subservience (42).

Soňa Čajková considers the concept of "feminine masquerade" one of the greatest "feminist contributions to the discussion about gender identity" (188). On the basis of Irigaray's "the masquerade of femininity," Čajková explains the term "as a set of conventions relating to appearance, behaviour and roles that women adopt in patriarchal society to comply with the expectations and desires of men" (ibid). She adds that, in fact, a woman can only become an integrated part of society if/when she assumes the task of feminine masquerade: "[…] a woman can become a 'normal woman' only upon her entry into the masquerade of femininity" (ibid). However, by analyzing the character of Fevvers from *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter, she states that this character while exposing "the artificiality of the masquerade of femininity" creates an own "carnivalesque mask," and as a result she executes "the carnivalization of […] feminine masquerade" (Čajková 192). This is what also occurs in *Chicago*: a carnivalesque feminine masquerade.

Čajková's definition of the term (before its carnivalesque revision) is in accordance with Stephen Heath as he points out in his discussion of Riviere's conceptualization of the masquerade that it is actually what men love in or about women and this is what they expect. They want to be lied to, they want the masquerade. Heath cites Nietzsche – whose hostility towards women is notorious, yet ironically, he is the one admitting the above fact – saying that "[w]oman is secondary and so supplementary and so an act: 'her great art is the lie, her supreme concern is appearance and beauty'; which is after all, 'let us confess it', what we men 'love and honour'" (Nietzsche 145 quoted in Heath 50). Interestingly and slightly self-ironically, similar ideas are expressed by Charles Pinot Duclos: "I don't know why men have accused women of falsity, and have made Truth [*la Vérité*] female" by also adding that men are chasing women with such ardor to strip them naked to get to know the truth and when a man manages to do so in the case of a given woman that certain man loses his curiosity and *illusions* [emphasis mine] and move on to find another one with the possiblility of finding and knowing the "Truth" (Duclos 424 quoted in Brooks, *Body Work* 11-12). Brooks also states that literature in general is driven by anxiety and fascination to find, uncover, understand and explain the hidden, the masked and the unidentified (*Body Work* 26). People in general are interested in this which could be an explanation for the popularity of the figure of the *femme fatale* who is a master of masquerade.

Heath elaborates on the ideas expressed by Nietzsche by saying that "with women everything is mask, masquerade; which is essence and trouble, what we love and honour and what we hate and fear" (51). He goes on analyzing this duality of emotions and the impossibility of knowing the mask/woman by saying that the man is "fascinated and threatened, seduced and mocked: woman is the vanishing point for which he lacks any true perspective, since perspective *he* has guarantees he cannot know *her*, while the impossibility of knowing her is itself *his* perspective, women produced as 'the woman' […]" (51). He continues by suggesting that, in fact, the woman does not have other choice but the masquerade, implying that the "normal woman" is masquerading since hysteria is a "[f]ailed masquerade," and "[t]he hysteric will not play the game, misses her identity as woman" (51). This seems to imply the same that has been quoted from the end of *Chicago*: "[c]ome on, sister, yuh gotta play ball: this is Chicago!" (Watkins 111)

Heath declares that masquerade is actually the representation of femininty, however, femininity itself is a representation, i.e.: of the woman. He adds that representation provides not an essential but a constructed identity: "[r]epresentation gives not essential but constructed identity, which is uncertain and, as the perspectives slide, precisely masquerade, mask, disguise, threat, danger" (53). By masquerading, the woman proves her existence and non-existence at the same time while both reassurance and disturbance are provided. By being a fantasy, a spectacle, a mask "[s]he becomes the woman that she is not, assumes a femininity in a movement that Safouan calls 'playing the game' but also 'the fundamental alienation of her being'" (54). In the end, by analyzing Marlene Dietrich's performance in *Morocco* (1930), Heath claims that masquerade, in fact, is not a defense against the men's gaze (or rather look) but "a derision of masculinity" (57). Dietrich, in general, acts out a mocking masculinity and a mocking of masculinity in several of her performances. (Appendix xi/75-77)

5. "The Defense Rests" – Law and Order as well as American Ideals turned upside down by the *farcical femmes fatales* under the orchestration of a *humorous homme fatale*, or a *Vice figure*

5. 1. The Farcical (Re-)Figuration of *Femmes Fatales*

The term, *farcical femme fatale*, is applied to designate these specific *femmes fatales* that appear in *Chicago*. I intend to name these women so because I think this naming describes and represents most aptly the unique, ambivalent and oxymoronic character of these figures. There is a term that might be used in the case of these specific *femmes fatales* and that is *femme vitale*, a term elaborated by Betsy Prioleau and Anna Kérchy. However, I do not consider this term the most appropriate one because it lacks the hidden ambiguity, the oxymoronic tension and the lurking negativity that is inevitable in the case of a *femme fatale* even if that woman is a comic one. A term like *farcical femme fatale*, on the other hand, more accurately grasps this ambivalent and contradictory, still, one and united specificity. Most concretely, the line between the *femme vitale* and the *femme fatale* lies exactly in her *fatality* which her *vital* characteristic cannot tone down. *Vitale* refers – in Prioleau and Kerchy's interpretation – to her enchantress, her seductress quality and thus becomes vital because she is on the side of love, Eros and not death, Thanatos. A *femme fatale*, however, is never entirely on the side of love and Eros, she is always the unique combination of Eros and Thanatos. She might be *vital* in her seductress capacity but her actions, and more importantly, the outcome of her actions, are *fatal*. The term Mario Praz uses for Carmen and Conchita is the "fatal *allumeuse*" (*Romantic Agony* 209) which highlights this link between the seductress and enchantress aspect that is *vital* but the outcome of their actions are *fatal*. Hence, a *farcical femme fatale* might be vital as an allumeuse/seductress and fatal as a murderer or an instigator of a murder, or 'only' a destroyer of a man/men, still, it is her comic (re)presentation as well as (self-)performance and not her 'inner characteristics' that designate her to this 'title:' how she carries out all these actions and how it is (re)presented within the given narration. This *femme fatale* is *farcical* through her performativity and zany masquearde. Praz also claims that "the figure of the Fatal Woman who was successively incarnate in *all ages* and *all lands*, an *archetype* which *united* in itself all forms of *seduction*, all *vices*, and all *delights*" [emphases mine] (*Romantic Agony* 220), hence, the complexity of the *femme fatale* is circumscribed here with her concurrently fatal and vital attributes, to which the comic performativity adds a new level of meaning in the form of the *farcical femme fatale*.

Nonetheless, let me elaborate on the question of the *femme vitale* a bit. Prioleau basically discusses the seductresses but one of the central features of the *femme fatale* is actually seduction. Together with the seductresses, *femmes fatales* are also usually dismissed by feminists, while in fact, these women are "the liberated woman incarnate" (Prioleau 1). Just as the seductresses, *femmes fatales* are "futuristic models of female entitlement: independent operators, pleasure claimers, *terroristas* of traditional femininity, and big, classy

divas" (Prioleau 1-2). *Femmes fatales* similarly to the seductresses deserve to be demystified and rehabilitated because they have "brains, autonomy, integrity, and high swank" (Prioleau 2). *Femmes fatales* just as the seductresses have existed throughout history but they rarely were celebrated by the official cultures, and generally, they faded into (semi)obscurity by being trivialized, demonized and persecuted by the given establisments. Prioleau claims that the seductresses are, in fact, *femmes vitales* contrary to fable and that their "seductive wisdom" is priceless. (ibid)

Anna Kérchy is similarly discussing basically seductresses and enchantresses whom she names as *femmes vitales* and she also connects this persona to performativity as she is saying: "their performed persona as Grotesque Seductress, Comic *Femme Fatale*, *Femme Vitale*" (*Body Texts* 217). Here she equates the comic *femme fatale* and the *femme vitale* but it does not seem to be entirely correct as I have argued above. If we consider the seductress aspect of the *femme fatale* only, 'she' might be termed as a comic *femme fatale* = the *femme vitale*, yet, a *femme fatale* is never only about the *vitality* of sexuality and allure because this all is overwritten by the eventual *fatal* outcome of all her actions. Hence a comic *femme fatale*, who is attributed with certain comic elements, for example humorous performativity or mocking masquerade etc., in addition to her *vital* sexuality, is still more complex and complicated than a *femme vitale* due to her Life/Death-Eros/Thanatos duality.

Another myth about seductresses and alluring as well as sexually-successful women is their "stupidity" – they are usually considered "airheads," women who "play dumb, and keep their mouths shut," however, the really great seductresses were/are smart: "[i]n fact most seductresses talked brilliantly and knew what they were talking about" (Prioleau 6). This all also applies to *femmes fatales*. Another mistaken notion about seductresses and *femmes fatales* next to the "mindless sex bomb fallacy" is that they are "servile man pleasers" (ibid). A link that connects *Chicago*'s *farcical femmes fatales* and the seductresses as interpreted by Prioleau is carnival. Prioleau resounding Bakhtin claims that "[m]en never lose an atavistic appetite for license – the release of social and temporal constraints and ecstatic abandon. Seductresses were mistresses of misrule, carnival queens who cast off repressive shackles." (17)

Elisabeth Bronfen starts her article entitled *Femme Fatale – Negotiations of Tragic Desire* with the following motto from Susanne Langer: "[t]ragedy is the image of Fate, as comedy is of Fortune" (103). This very clear dichotomy demarcates the dividing line between tragedy and comedy. This line is the one that is blurred in the story of *Chicago* with the comic-farcical subversion and production of *femmes fatales*. *Femmes fatales* as their name

signal are the 'representatives' of death, they are fatal, they are lethal. Yet, while in *Chicago* we have *femmes fatales* behaving exactly the way an 'exemplary *femme fatale* should' – such as leading a 'sinful' life full of 'guilty pleasures' like drinking alcohol, smoking, partying all night, wearing flimsy, revealing dresses, spending much private time with men while being sexually alluring towards them in public and so on – their destiny is not Fate but Fortune. The *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* turn out to be not the daughters of Fate but of Fortune which is quite oxymoronic. They are *femmes fatales* in a comedy, not in a tragedy thus their fate is turned into fortune. With the use of the comic, Watkins and her successors managed to subvert and change a very basic attribute of the *femme fatale* that she is bound to death.

Hence, it could be assumed that these are not *femmes fatales* still they are since every other aspect of theirs remain the same, only their connection to death is altered a bit (yet not entirely) as they are not doomed to death themselves. Their (textual and filmic) lives do not end with death as a 'customary' punishment for a *femme fatale* according to the traditional logic. 'Bad' women, *femmes fatales*, tragic female figures who made men suffer through their lethal sexuality and caused their fall as a result of this received their punishment mostly in the form of death with their own fall and often ensuing death likewise – as it was (and often still is) obligatory when writing a story that involved/s a *femme fatale* or *vamp* figure (Hansen 262) –, at the end of such a story the *femme fatale* or *vamp* figure has to disappear together with her (originally) dark appearance and exotic look (Hansen 275-276, Haskell 46). In *Chicago*, however, the *femmes fatales* stay alive and most of them go free. In spite of this, they are not less lethal in the sense that they cause misery and death but their punishment is not this. Thus, one of the reasons for their acquittal and success is the use of comic because comedy is the image of Fortune while tragedy is of Fate. These *femmes fatales* are the daughters of Fortune thus they evade Fate themselves apart from the fact that they still are *femmes fatales* 'to the core.'

A rather interesting aspect of *Chicago* is that it deals with the *femme fatale* imagery, however, not in the conventional way. The *femme fatale* image is originally connected to fate, to tragedy, however, in *Chicago* this *femme fatale* imagery is also subverted through the use of the comic. The *femme fatale* image is that of a very serious, humorless, ambitious, aggressive, sensual etc. woman who destroys the men whom she uses in reaching her aim by making use of her sexuality. In *Chicago*, by mixing all these images: the imagery of the 'ideal woman' and that of the *femme fatale*, and by emphasizing that the 'proper woman' performances are only acts while these women are *femmes fatales* the whole picture turns out to be a travesty of itself: a grotesque, monstrous, carnivalesque playing and faking of wolf in

sheep's clothing. This way, it is not only the ideal femininity that is subverted and parodied but also the non-ideal femininity.

Thus, in *Chicago*, the "eternal types" of women the "angel" as well as the "monster" (Gilbert, Gubar 17), i.e.: the *femme fatale*, are both mocked. Both images are used and abused, they are mixed, turned upside down and inside out, and eventually, the comic 'takes it all.' By acting out the *angel in the house image*, Roxie subverts her own *femme fatale*-ness and since it is evident throughout that all this is only an act there is s double twist to the play of feminine images. For the sake of her acquittal, she internalizes, and at the same time, produces the "eternal feminine" image: submissive, modest, self-less, graceful, pure, delicate, civil, compliant, reticent, chaste, affable, polite (Gilbert, Gubar 23), "slim, pale, passive," snowy and immobile in a porcelain-like manner (25), this way, she subverts her own *femme fatale* essence, yet, it is also true that the "angel-woman" is not only the memento of otherness (as being woman) but also a *memento mori*, the "Angel of Death" (24-25) in herself, which again turns the image back to death, fate and tragedy. The *merry murderers* of *Chicago* subvert the *femme fatale* as well as the *angel woman* imagery: hence, the image turns out to be quite complex one, and through the use of the comic both 'poles' are contested and subverted while they collapse into each other: death-in-life and life-in-death.

In *Chicago*, Fortuna is present while Justitia allied with the Fates who would bring death and tragedy is missing in her 'proper' form (Appendix xi/78). On all levels, with the genres in which the story is told as well as the mode of telling, through the additional, elaborate use of irony and the comic performance(s) provided by the characters, all contribute to the subversion of the fate of the *femmes fatales* in *Chicago*. Their salvation is not through Fate, death and tragedy but through a coquettish encounter with Fortune as they sing and dance themselves out of their own fate. Nonetheless, an interesting twist in the story is that, although, these are the women who seem to be the central characters and the ones who are the real villains, it is, in fact, Billy Flynn who is the main villain or Vice in the story.

5. 2. *Humorous Homme Fatale* or a (comic) *Vice*

The world of *Chicago* is that of the *carnival*, the *circus* and the *cabaret*. These are all comic-grotesque spaces of subversion and un/canny abandon. They facilitate the functioning of the *farcical femmes fatales* under the guidance of a *humorous homme fatal,* or rather an ambiguous and "ambidextrous" (Matuska, "Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 1) *Vice figure* who manage to turn law and order upside down and also get away with it. The space, where these

curious figures carry out their ambiguous and ambidextrous acts, is itself also unique, and shares similar characteristics. On the basis of Bronfen's interpretation of the cabaret it can be said that this specific space "is the seductive, pleasurable realm of the cabaret, serving as a heterotopic realization of day dreams of transgression and self-expenditure" ("Seductive Departures" 124). It appears most concretely in the 2002 version, in which all of the musical parts are realized in a way as if they were Roxie's day dreams and they all are staged in a cabaret or vaudeville (theatre). If we consider the *cabaret*, and accordingly, the *carnival*, the *circus* as well as the *vaudeville* as heterotopic spaces where day dreams of transgression and self-expenditure are realized, it can be understood how and why anything and everything that happens in *Chicago* is possible.

Michel Foucault, theorizing the concept of 'heterotopia,' argues that people do not live in a void, but they live in a heterogenous space, inside a set of relations, inside places which are "like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. […] outside of all places, […] absolutely different from all […]" ("Of Other Spaces" 231). Some of Foucault's "heterotopias" are the privileged, sacred or forbidden places, the boarding school, rest homes, psychiatric hospitals, prisons ("Of Other Spaces" 232), museums and libraries ("Of Other Spaces" 234). In addition, Foucault suggests that in libraries and museums time never stops (ibid). This implies that the courtroom where the whole cabaret and circus takes place in *Chicago* – together with the prison that is listed – is also a heterotopic space. Hence *Chicago*, which is the world of the carnival, the cabaret and the circus, occurring in a prison and a courtroom, is a heterotopic manifestation on the whole. It is a pleasurable, seductive and timeless counter-space, counter-event, counter-performance where the 'real world,' while being represented, is contested and inverted. It is within this heterotopic realm where the *farcical femmes fatales* can perform their tricks under the 'surveillance and supervision' of a *humorous homme fatal*, or rather a *Vice* figure.

I propse that the figure of Billy Flynn is a modern(ized) *Vice* and serves as a comic-devilish figure who rules over the heterotopic world of *Chicago*. As it has been mentioned, the character who was the allegorical representation of *Vice* originating from the morality plays was to be played "in a fashion both sinister and comic" and some literary historians regarded this figure "as a precursor both of the cynical, ironic villain and of some of the comic figures in Elizabethan drama […]" (Abrams 166).

The character of Billy Flynn strongly resembles that of the Master of Ceremonies in *Cabaret* (1972) which production – in its theatrical as well as filmic forms – is also the work

of the creators of *Chicago* (1976, 2002). Yet, it has to be mentioned that in *Chicago* (only in the 1976 and the 2002 versions) there is a Master of Ceremonies likewise, however, this figure is a neutral one and is not endowed with such a significant presence as Billy Flynn. In *Chicago* (all versions), it is Flynn who takes upon himself the role of the (ironic-comic) diabolic male (leading) figure that is quite central in these three major Bob Fosse(-John Kander-Fred Ebb) productions – the third one being *All That Jazz* (1979). There is this tragic-comic/tragicomic, grotesque, doomed, diabolic male figure, who either as a main character or as a minor one, still holds the diverse strings of the story together in his hands either in the forefront as Joe Gideon in *All That Jazz* (1979) or from the seeming background, undercover, as Billy Flynn. This specificity even more emphasizes his duplicity and shrewdness since seemingly he is not in the forefront or is not the master of ceremonies, while in reality, he is. In the other versions, although always appearing and acting 'discreet,' it is much more explicit and apparent, that he is the one who holds the strings and directs the actions of others as well as oversees the 'production,' hence he is the *Vice/Master of Ceremonies* figure. (Appendix xii/79-85)

Bakhtin also supports the close relationship between the comic and the devil by stating that, in several medieval literary forms, a jolly devil figure appeared whose function was to represent "the unofficial point of view" (41). This jolly devil was not a terrifying or an alien figure, for example, in Rabelais's writing devils were described as "excellent and jovial fellows" (ibid). "At times the devils and hell itself appear as comic monsters" (ibid). Bakhtin also adds that the representation of the devil as a terrifying, melancholic and tragic figure arrived only with Romanticism (40-41). Considering the principle of laughter and also taking into consideration cold humor Jean Paul eventually highlights the comic-tragic melancholic feature of destructive laughter by saying that "the greatest humorist of all would be the devil" (Bakhtin 42). Wylie Sypher also opines that there is a close connection between the fool, the jester and the devil, and states that the "tempter" figure often "disguises himself as clown or devil" (236).

According to Ágnes Matuska, during the Tudor period, the character of the *Vice* as a clownish, jocular, zany and ludicrous character, in spite of the fact that it had its roots in the morality plays and it was the allegory of Sin, served as an interlocutor and mediator between the sphere of the drama and that of the audience. She asserts that during carnivals it was actually a *Vice* figure who was the jolly master of ceremonies and his function was to make people get involved in the fiction of the events or that of the play/drama, and as a result, this *Vice/Master of Ceremonies* formed the bridge between the fictional world of the drama and

the reality of the people. The *Vice/Master of Ceremonies* concretely and directly addresses the audience while being part of the performance, hence, his presence is split between the world of fiction and that of reality. Another important feature of the *Vice* is cleverness, he is always intelligent, artful, shrewd and witty. (Matuska, "A shakespeare-i közönségbevonás") This all can be said about Billy Flynn and although he is not the connection between us as audience and the play/film we watch or see but those within the story who get involved in the performance within the story we watch: he is a *mise-en-abyme Vice/Master of Ceremonies* figure. In this sense, he does not lose his function as a link because he makes the connection between his intradiegetic audience (in court and the people through the media) and the fictional events he directs about the lives of his defendants, here for instance, Roxie. The *Vice/Master of Ceremonies* type of figure that exist only in the 1976 and the 2002 versions is the one who talks to us as extradiegetic audience and try to involve us in the events. He is rather neutral (and has a limited, minimal presence), as I have mentioned, but in the 1976 version he has slightly more edge, for example, saying at the closing of the vaudeville: "Okay, you babes of jazz. Let's pick up the pace. Let's shake the blues away. Let's make the parties longer. Let's make the skirts shorter and shorter. Let's make the music hotter. Let's all go to hell in a fast car and *KEEP IT HOT*! (He exists with microphone. […])" (Ebb, Fosse 91).

In addition, *Chicago* in its latest versions is a musical, as well, and the church fathers have always warned the people that it could only be the devil who taught women to dance othervise they would not have been able to commit such diableries with their bodies (Prioleau 12). In accordance with the Church Fathers, Passi – by joining the *Querelle des Femmes* during the Italian Renaissance and Baroque periods – declares while discussing the foibles of women that *Woman* is a demon incarnate who is the subject and also the object of lust, and thus, is a diabolic creature, who is nothing else but an obstacle in tha way of male salvation (Vígh 215). What we find in *Chicago* are true corporeal diableries in a mockingly carnivalesque manner. Flynn as a comic devil is surrounded by the musical diableries and teases of (his) she-devils in a manner which would quite likely earn the disapproval and dispraise of the mighty church fathers. When Roxie utters "Oh God!," Flynn answers with a comic comment (in two versions): "Cut out 'God' – stay where you're better acquainted." (Watkins 42; Marshall 41 min) In addition, for example, in the 1927 and in the 1976 versions, even Roxie's father claims that "she went to hell" several years before (Watkins 39; Ebb, Fosse 34).

The Billy Flynn character has a central role in the way these women are treated due to the fact that he is the top defense attorney and he is the one who knows how to pull strings to

win a case. Concerning his 'person,' there is also a significant characteristic feature, which helps him in the manipulation of the jury, the public, and in winning the acquittal of the women he defends – in fact, his success lies in the fact that he specializes in female clients. He acts as a 'protecting' father figure who stands behind these women in trouble he is helping, and who 'takes care of them,' thus projecting an image that the defendant is a good woman because a respectable paternal figure grants her orderliness and innocence (Appendix x/69). This stereotype role-play is acted out in all versions, as the defense tactic is based on the following logic: the strong, protective and active male character shields the passive, frightened, even infantilized (recalling the Lolita complex with the recurrent theme of leg showing and skirt pulling 'accidents') domesticated, pseudo-angelic, saint-like girl-woman in the pedophilic Mary Pickford mode (Studlar 198-221, Haskell 58) (Appendix xii/86). The most extreme version of this performed stereotype occurs in the 1942 film version – which is, however, strongly choreographed after the 1927 film version concerning the trial scenes – where, after she 'faints,' the half-conscious Roxie is carried to the judge in the arms of Billy Flynn to be offered as a sacrificial lamb in a (fake) tragic manner (Appendix xi/74).

This 'protective' quasi-central male character is the one around whom the female defendants orbit like moons around a planet. He is the embodiment of the concept of the Bentham–Orwellian panopticon (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 170-228), which ensures that the 'orbiting,' erring females supposedly become *docile bodies* the state and society needs (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 135-170). Billy Flynn states that there is one thing the jury and the people cannot resist and that is a reformed sinner (Marshall 2002). This is partly due to the American belief in moral regeneration as Irén Annus puts it: in the realization of "the American Dream," apart from the ideals of "material success" and "social progress," the ideal and the belief in "moral regeneration" is also of great importance (106). The other reason behind the irresistibility of a reformed sinner is the belief (also ingrained into American culture) in the new beginnings and the possibility of restart and renewal (Campbell, Kean 20-43; Kroes 28-32). Roxie plays her role as a reformed sinner and perfect docile body quite well, therefore she gets acquitted and gets her new beginning while the less lucky ones (although being innocent), who do not have enough money to hire Billy Flynn in order to avoid punishment and execution, are punished even for the sins and crimes they did not commit. Thus, it seems that if the order is kept (by a man), there is no further disturbance but peace, and the all-seeing "Eye of power" (Foucault, "The Eye of Power" 146-65) is ensured to be in control since Flynn as a quasi-central figure is behind everything and supervises everything that takes place, hence, it is the case of the Panopticon where the Other's gaze is

present all the time to perform an invisible, unescapable surveillance (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 170-228). In addition, Flynn is a paternal figure – a "paternal authority" who (supposedly) is the representative of the "symbolic law" ("Seductive Departures" 124). He, as a lawyer, is supposed to be the representative of the symbolic law indeed.

It is a rather expressive (re)interpretation of the figure of the *Vice* that Billy Flynn is actually a lawyer. It is true his figure and his profession are rooted in reality since, in the real murder cases, lawyers and attorneys were needed in court to present the different sides and aspects of the cases, yet, this profession involves this unique duality of the bad and the good, the evil and the comic. On the one hand, Billy Flynn as a defense lawyer acts right when he defends his client because it is his duty and he is paid for it, hence, his actions are justifiable when he has his client acquitted. On the other hand, he is evil and corrupt. He lies and cheats, in addition, he deceives and manipulates everybody and everything. In a sense, he even commits crimes, and most of all, makes the jury acquit people who are guilty. In this sense, he does wrong. Hence, he is an ambiguous, double-dealing and "ambidextrous" (Matuska, "Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 1) figure, and not only in terms of morality. Additionally, this all is presented in a comic-grotesque, mock-tragic, but by all means, artificial and theatrical manner. Yet, as Praz also suggests, a lawyer is usually theatrical if he does his job right: "the lawyer who takes pleasure in a showy piece of reasoning, in a complicated argument, a theatrical prosecution or defence" (*The Hero in Eclipse* 163). Billy Flynn is behind everything, he is the one solving the problems, and in fact, he turns out to be in the center. Matuska when discussing the character of the *Vice* brings an example about the definition and explanation of who he is in which "the Vice enters into a long but, in its heterogeneity, quite funny and intriguing monologue enumerating a whole colourful spectrum of real and metaphoric occupations and characteristics, ranging from *lawyer* through 'sower of lies' to mackerel" [emphasis mine] (Matuska, "Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 9). Here, the lawyer as an occupation for him is one of the first ones to be mentioned, although, it is true there are several others, and some less intriguing professions mentioned, as well.

Ágnes Matuska while elaborating on the figure of the *Vice* in sixteenth century English Drama states that it is "a unique and problematic character" and that often the character we meet as *Vice* in the dramas of this period are not exclusively evil, corrupting and 'anti-morale:' "[t]he character, a tempter, a *mischievous, humorous villain* is a real crux" [emphases mine] ("Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 1). Billy Flynn, although not being a sixteenth century English character in a drama or a morality play is still a *Vice-like* character, yet a modern version, in a twentieth century American play (and its later versions) treating

questions of morality, what is more, the committing, treatment and even judgement of concrete crimes. Billy Flynn has his roots in the *Vice* character of the morality plays and as we see in the dramas of later periods likewise. Matuska opines that "[n]o matter whether we take the perspective of 16th century audiences or 20th century critics, a basic problem with the Vice has always been the sense of comedy that makes him, although evil, appealing" ("Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 2). Although, what is said is only that 20th century critics, who might interpret the 16th century *Vice*, can encounter the problems created by this character, yet, I would also add that there are the 20th century audiences just as well who also try to understand not only the 16th century *Vice* but its 'descendant' in the 20th century who is evil as well as comic, and as a result appealing at the same time. For instance, the makers of the 2002 film version claim in the "Audio Commentary" that even though Billy Flynn is "corrupt" and "evil" one cannot resist his charm – "he is charming" as they say – and one can only "like him." (Marshall "Audio Commentary given by Rob Marshall and Bill Condon" 39 min) In the "Behind the Scenes," Rob Marshall, the director of the 2002 version, concretely declares that Richard Gere "is the perfect Billy Flynn" (Marshall "Behind the Scenes" 6 min). Although, it could be claimed that Rob Marshall said this only out of duty in the promotional video, yet, it is obvious that Richard Gere provides a quite convincing, authentic, professional and spectacular performance of Billy Flynn. His understanding of the story and the problems it deals with is rather in the mode of a comic-grotesque, mocking-villaneous but clearly critical *Vice* as he talks about the character of Roxie Hart in the "Behind the Scenes" video and he laughs [!]: "[p]eople don't change. She was here a thousand years before Christ, a thousand years after Christ. The 20s, the 30s, the 40s, the 60s, the 90s, the 10s – it's all the same." (22 min) Then, he adds (about the 2002 version, but, I think it is valid in the case of all of the versions): "[i]t is supremely entertaining but it also has a kind of a realness to it" (Marshall "Behind the Scenes" 22-23 min). Renée Zellweger even claims about the story that "[i]t's a very dark look at a very prominent part of our reality today" (Marshall "Behind the Scenes" 21 min).

Matuska goes on saying that there are numerous diverse figures who were/are called or categorized as 'Vice,' still, she reckons that they all belong to the same type on the basis of a few characteristic features which belong to them all such as "their metadramatic behaviour, their improvisational attitude, their characteristic comedy" ("Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 2). What is even more intriguing and significant in the figure of the *Vice* is that he as an outsider generally "*does not* need to contribute to this doctrine [moral doctrine], quite the contrary" and what he does and what happens to him make "the application of the workings of Justice"

difficult (ibid). This might be rather problematic and questionable if we consider that Billy Flynn is a lawyer who is supposed to be at the service of Justitia but he does concretely what is described above. However, his duplicitous twisting of truth and justice actually serves to present a more complex understanding of morality, crime and how people treat these or react to them. He is the driving force of the play within the play that actually he is directing as a "director-entertainer Vice" – as Matuska states:

> [i]f he is both involved in evil schemes and is a director-entertainer Vice, the origin and prime mover of the whole play, the worst thing we can say about him is that he presents himself paradoxically in his own play in a morally condemnable way, in order to make the moral message complete. ("Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 3)

While emphasizing the connection between the comic and the *Vice* Matuska stresses again that this does not make morality disappear only makes it "more complex and ambiguous" and challenges our sense and understanding of it: "[b]y regarding the clown or fool or jester element in the Vice as significant, the potential moral interpretation does not disappear; rather, it becomes more complex and ambiguous" ("Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 18). Eventually, Matuska suggests that we sould not try to separate the comic and the evil in the figure of the *Vice* because this duality is what gives him his unique power: "[i]nstead of separating the comic and destructive elements in the Vice, we sould rather see them inseparable: a unique merger that is intrinsic to the character, and that gives him the unfathomable energy and power he possesses" ("Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 19). I would add that the same is true in the case of the *farcical femmes fatales*: their specific duality of the comic and the evil is what endows them with their unique power, as well.

Matuska continues the question of comedy in connection with the *Vice* and cites Alan Dessen who analyzes deeply the *Vice*'s "relatedness to the jester and the fool" but lays more emphasis on the "diabolic associations" (Dessen 22 quoted in "Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 2). Then, she quotes Bernard Spivack declaring "that the Vice is essentially a dramatic outgrowth of the medieval clown or jester […]" (Spivack 136 quoted in "Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 4) again asserting the strong ties between the *Vice* and the jester, the fool and the clown. Spivack also states that the *Vice* could only become a theatrical personality thorough distinguishing "himself from his allegorical cohorts" and Matuska adds to this that he probably means "the master-of-ceremonies-type vice who is surrounded by similar minor and less potent vices" (ibid). As it has been discussed above – although not from this point of

view – Billy Flynn is similar to a chief *Vice* who is surrounded by other 'cohort' and 'minor vice' women.

While examining the character called "Merry Report" (Heywood's Vice in *The Play of the Weather*) – which could be a possible naming in the case of Watkins and her *Chicago* as well but what is said is by all means true in this case – Matuska claims that "Merry Report seems to imply that until the report is true, there might be nothing wrong with its indecorously merry delivery" ("Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 4). *Chicago* in all of its versions is an absolutely true, although, indecorously merry delivery of the crimes and sins committed by the characters, yet, it is suggested here that this is not primarily a problem. It is also added as a significant characteristic feature of the *Vice* that "he has no prejudice, no attachment to anything" (ibid). This feature is very true in the case of Billy Flynn, although, it is true that he is very much attached to money, yet, apart from this, he does not care about anything or anybody; and his not being prejudiced is not entirely a merit either since it is just the result of his disinterest in and disregard for anybody or anything, maybe, except himself (and his own money).

To support this, I would like to take an example from two versions, the 1927 and the 1976, (it is the same situation): Amos does not bring enough money to Flynn to defend Roxie and as a result he is angry with Amos: "When you came to me yesterday I didn't say, 'Is she innocent, is she guilty, will it be an easy case or a hard one?' *Nothing* like that, now *did* I? No." (Watkins 40) This might imply that he is really not prejudiced but it is much more his disregard for the case and the people involved in it and he goes on saying "I said: 'Have you got five thousand dollars?' And you said, 'Yes'. [*Eyes him in contempt.*] You dirty liar! … And I took your case – and I'll *keep* it. But she'll rot in jail before I bring it to trial!" (ibid). This second part shows his true colors that he is only interested in money and he will only keep the case to make Amos get the money and he does not care about Roxie and whether she lives or dies. After Amos leaves Roxie tries to seduce him to 'pay for his services,' yet, he refuses her by saying "I'm not interested in your looks, your age, your sex – nothing *except* as it affects the case. You mean just one thing to me: five thousand dollars. Get that." (Watkins 40-41) The same situation in the 1976 version is the following: "Now, when you came to me yesterday, I didn't ask you was she guilty. I didn't ask was she innocent. I didn't ask you if she was a drunk or a dope fiend. No foolish questions like that, now did I? No." (Ebb, Fosse 34) Here, as time passed even that possibility is included in the text explicitly whether she was a drunkard or a drug addict and Flynn seemingly is not even prejudiced against her on these grounds, yet, it is evident that it is only because he is solely interested in the money he

might get. “All I said was, ‘Have you got five thousand dollars?’ And you said yes. But you haven’t got five thousand dollars so I figure you’re a dirty liar.” (ibid) After this, Amos tries to put away the (little) money he managed to collect but Flynn puts his hands on it, takes it away and places it in a drawer. (Ebb, Fosse 35) Although it is not said in the 1976 version as instruction, but in the 2002 version that includes almost the exact same dialogue and actions in this scene, Flynn takes and puts away the money with a half-diabolic/half-mocking smile, but by all means with a fake and artificial smirk (Marshall 39 min). (Appendix xiii/87) Then he goes on:

> But, I took her case and I’ll keep it because I play square. Now look, Hart, I’m not a braggart. I don’t like to blow my own horn, but believe me, if Jesus Christ had lived in Chicago today – and if he had five thousand dollars and had come to me – things would have turned out differently. Now, here’s what we’re gonna do … (Ebb, Fosse 35)

When Roxie tries to seduce him, he tells her: “Hey, you mean one thing to me – five thousand bucks – and that’s all. Get it?” (ibid)

As Matuska goes on with the interpretation of Merry Report, she also claims that this *Vice* character appears to be “rather merry” in every situation, no matter what happens to him; in addition, “he pretends not to care for them [the other characters],” yet, he eventually “does not betray” them and is “indifferent” when presenting “their various wishes” (“Haphazardly Ambidextrous” 5). Billy Flynn, mainly in the later versions, is also like this that he pretends not to care for his clients and people in general – although, he usually really does not care –, but eventually, he does not betray these people. In the 1942, the 1976 and the 2002 versions there is, in each, a tiny period of time when Billy Flynn shows a little compassion as if he really cared – as if he only pretended not to care before – this is the scene when Roxie gets scared before trial, or as in the 1942 version before taking the stand, and he calms and reassures her that everthing will be fine and he keeps his word (Wellman 53-56 min; Ebb, Fosse 75; Marshall 1 h 16 min). However, in general he is very discourteous – for example, he even kicks the tailor who is making his trousers and is kneeling at his feet in the 2002 version (Marshall 34 min) –, although, always well-mannered to cover this. Matuska adds that the *Vice* treats everybody, the characters within his story or the audience of his story, with “the same mockingly disrespectful manner” (“Haphazardly Ambidextrous” 6). Billy Flynn actually does this, he treats everybody in a (mockingly) disrespectful manner. There was an example mentioned above, but there is another one I would like to mention: he plays with

names, he consciously mixes the names up to emphasize how insignificant people are to him because he is not even able to remember their name. In the 2002 version, he calls Roxie Trixie when he is concerned with 'a more important case' (Marshall 1 h 5 min), or in the same film, he calls Amos Andy, then, pretends that he was only thinking about the baby's name, then, he does the same in court (Marshall 1 h 10 min, 1 h 20 min). Yet, in the 1942 version, it also happens that Flynn names Roxie Trixie when they first meet (Wellman 21 min).

The next unique characteristic feature of the *Vice* that is mentioned is the singing-dancing playmaking (Matuska "Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 6). Matuska quotes Richard Axton and Peter Happé saying that "[t]heir capers and apparent improvisations add movement, dance perhaps, and song-like antics […]" (Axton, Happé 13 quoted in "Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 6). The most striking example for this is when Billy Flynn performs a tap dance in the 2002 version as a very expressive and spectacular, symbolic (re)presentation of what he is doing in the courtroom (Marshall 1 h 27-30 min). In addition, at the beginning of the trial he is also a juggler – juggling little golden bags and he throws one of them to the judge (Marshall 1 h 17 min). (Appendix xiii/88-90)

Matuska while going on with her analysis of *Vices* states that "[…] the Vice is the one to reveal how corrupt people are, rather than corrupting them himself," and she also suggests that the *Vice* is to show how people are the same everywhere independently of place or class (or, I would add, time) and that he might actually reveal "the corruptedness of society" instead of providing the source of corruption ("Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 8). In the case of Billy Flynn, it is all valid. It is not him who corrupts Roxie or the judicial system, they are already corrupt and he just makes use of it and plays with his possiblities. Later Matuska adds that the *Vice*'s "evil nature is unreliable as well" implying that he might even be on the good side ("Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 13). It is again this duality of good and bad that creates the ambiguity of the *Vice* characters, and that of Billy Flynn, as well. As Matuska also discusses, we can see occasionally the difference between "the chief vice and his […] minions […][and] the Vice does not necessarily hide his evil identity behind an appealing and cheerful façade with which he is trying to mislead people, but that he is rather ambiguous" ("Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 14) again reinforcing his ambiguity. This ambiguity is also backed up by Darryll Grantley who highlights the hybridity of the *Vice* character as somebody plotting evil but whose actions are not primarily so and again connects him to comedy: "[t]he Vice is an interesting hybrid of the narrative specimen and the scheming servant of classical comedy, and though he often plots evil, his actions are far from consistently malevolent" (Grantley 61 quoted in Matuska, "Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 15).

The ending of the *Vice* is also an intriguing question since often he can leave without punishment or he might even be joking while making his exit. "It seems that the Vice does not subject his view to the moral one, he does not act according to a logic where he, as evil, has to be loser" (ibid). The *Vice* refuses the customary logic of good and bad, right and wrong and can even evade punishment as Billy Flynn does as well as his 'minions:' they escape the logic of morality and even that of the law – crime and punishment. "[…] [W]e may account for the Vice's comic and unrepentant exit as part of the Vice's comic tradition" – as Matuska adds (ibid). Hence, the Vice's leaving unpunished or even joking is a possible part of his tradition. The same happens in *Chicago* likewise concerning Billy Flynn and his 'minions,' Roxie and Velma etc. They leave unpunished, and in the last two versions (1976, 2002), Billy Flynn is even joking as freely leaves the scene and adds in a carefree and mocking manner: "[y]ou're a free woman, Roxie Hart, and God save Illinois. Well, I guess that finishes us, Roxie. (*To the audience.*) And that's the last *you'll* see of me, too. (*To the Bandstand.*) My exit music please." (Ebb, Fosse 88) Here, he also uses his 'metadramatic skill' and functions as a link between the world of the story and that of the audience, us. It is rare that the Flynn character really uses this specificity of the *Vice*, but here it occurs. In the 2002 version (and in all the other ones) he 'loses' this 'ability' of his. The same situation in the 2002 version is the following: Billy Flynn is nonchalantly smoking a cigar while relaxing after the successful outcome of the trial and counting (in his head) how much money he earned – only the two of them remained in the courtroom – Roxie shows no gratitude that he has just saved her life then he reveals to her smiling that it was him who made a half-fake diary out of hers to help out Velma and gets up. He collects his hat and coat and starts to move on. He walks out of the room in a carefree manner while showing Roxie (and us) a last ironic smile saying: "I have never lost a case." – as if explaining why he did that to her and her diary –, then adds still with the same smirk on his face: "[y]ou're a free woman, Roxie Hart, and God save Illinois." (Marshall 1 h 32 min) However, it is also true that in the final scene, he is among the audience when Velma and Roxie perform as famous vaudeville stars on stage. Yet, the merry exit is true in all versions, even if, occasionally it is not that merry (like in the 1927 film adaptation), but it is never tragic or punishing. (Appendix xiii/91-92)

The merriment that is shown in *Chicago* is the merriment of the extradiegetic audience, us, as well as the intradiegetic one, as shown within the story. This way, the audience, either intra- or extradiegetic, becomes an accomplice in crime with the *Vice* because we all laugh together with him. "Laughing with the Vice is quite essential in my argument, because we see here an instance where the audience's merriment regarding the Vice's

schemes is connected to the audience's complete approval of the same deeds" (Matuska, "Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 14). Later, Matuska even says that "[…] the Vice suggests that it is the play itself that is identical with temptation, and the audience identical with sinners […]" ("Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 20). Here, it is even more explicitly suggested that we as audience are the same as the criminals and the sinners within the story if we accept what is happening in it by allowing the 'symbolic' sinners and criminals walk free and even laugh it away. We as audience are equated morally with the comic criminals because the play involves us in its machinations and we do not resist it.

Matuska, then, emphasizes liberty as a cetral aspect of the *Vice*, and it is true in the case of Flynn as well because he is always free and his freedom to do whatever he wishes is very characteristic:

> […] I am suggesting that we accept the Vice […] as a game-maker who is quite unreliable in his malevolence, whose schemes may work in order to sustain moral order, who may be but does not have to be punished after misdeeds, and who has affinity for nonsense and playing – in other words, a character who enjoys and displays a sense of liberty within the drama ("Haphazardly Ambidextrous" 16).

It could be added that Velma and Roxie as minor *vices* or the minions of the chief *Vice* are also attributed with relative freedom. They do not own absolute freedom because they are women and they are confined by the gender rules of society – and have to 'act' accordingly – but they still can carry out a lot of misdeeds, and at the same time, can get away with it.

If we think about Billy Flynn as a (humorous) *homme fatale*, then we emphasize his darkness and splendor a bit more. Although, he is much more a (comic) *Vice*, his dark side is also prominent. Mario Praz discusses the importance of beauty in the case of Evil, and this kind of beauty is an accursed and tainted beauty which fascinates and captivates people. The Devil actually makes use of either his own or a woman's beauty to lure people into corruption and sin against which strict religious dogmas try to warn their people suggesting that dangerous, special, curious or extreme beauty is actually the Devil's tool: "puritan suspicion of beauty as the Devil's bait" (Praz, *The Hero in Eclipse* 356), however, Joanna Pitman rather names a Dominican priest saying this (44-45). Praz also cites the witty remark made by Graham Hough: "[t]o be permissibly beautiful […] a woman must be a Methodist saint or a drowning Jewess" (Hough 50-62 quoted in *The Hero in Eclipse* 357).

Praz also claims that it happens actually "[w]ith Milton, [that] the Evil One definitely assumes an aspect of fallen beauty, of splendour shadowed by sadness and death; he is

'majestic though in ruin'. […] Accursed beauty is a permanent attribute of Satan […]" (*Romantic Agony* 58). Billy Flynn is usually played by an actor who is famously endowed with physical beauty, who is handsome and who is elegant and stylish as this is the suggestion in the texts, as well. (Appendix xiii/93-xiv/95) In the 2002 version, for example, before he appears the inmantes of the prison start to sing about him with longing and erotic pining that "We want Billy" and start to undress, then, he enters and starts to sing that "All I care about in love…" (Marshall 32-37 min). Certainly, it is evident that the one thing he surely does not care about is exactly love but the association is still there that he is an attractive man whom women desire to have. In the 1976 version, the first attribute that is mentioned in his introduction by the official Master of Ceremonies is that he is a silver tongued royalty: "[l]adies and gentlemen, presenting the Silver Tongued Prince of the Courtroom – the one – the only Mr. Billy Flynn" (Ebb, Fosse 31). Then, the "All I care about" song follows the same way as in the 2002 version (Ebb, Fosse 31-33).

In the visual representations, he is usually well-built and tall, ironically, in the original drama he is described as a small man, which heightens his comic aspect, although the references that are made are of Caesar and Napoleon, for instance. Watkins, in the original drama, starts his depiction with mentioning his voice (as it happens later in the 1976 version likewise) – it is telling that the first thing we 'see' of him is his powerful voice with its hypnotic and suggestive quality: his sweet and silver tongue is emphasized as of utmost importance that is usually associated with Evil (and snakes). In addition, the famous singing of the Sirens cannot be forgotten here either as their voice also carries an irresistible and mesmerizing quality. The Sirens also lured people into destruction with their vocal (as well as physical) beauty (*Classical Mythology* 459). Károly Kerényi also adds that there were male sirens, as well, and that the sirens served both Death and Love (43-45). (Appendix xiv/96)

> [*The bell rings and there is heard outside a rich voice, hypnotic in its suggestive power, with a minor undertone that's Gaelic* […] *He's a little man, like Napoleon, and he carries himself with the Corporal's air. A magnificient iron-gray mane, with a forelock he tugs at to convey the impression of thought, or tosses back now and then to reveal the Caesarean brow. The eyes are deep-set and keen; the nose starts out to be Semitic, but ends with an Irish tilt; the mouth is broad without being generous, and the jaw is pugilistic./ He is dressed with careful carelessness: tweed topcoat and fedora, pepper and salt sack-suit, blue shirt with soft collar, and striped nectie with golden horseshoe. He buys on Michigan Boulevard, but follows the style of West Chicago. A millionaire would know his tailor* […].] (Watkins 38)

This first description of Billy Flynn evidently suggests a slightly comic *Vice* association, yet, an appealing-looking man appears. Nevertheless, the visual representations are always more on the cursed beauty side while the actions of the Billy Flynns of these versions add to this appearance the comic *Vice* behaviour. Interestingly, Praz mentions the beauty of the evil women together with the beauty of Satan and suggests that while Satan has a 'natural and inner' beauty, the beauty of these women is only show, magic and appearance – which again implies that women have to play with and project certain images that would secure the illusion of beauty – and this way, this suggestion is also true in the case of the wicked women of *Chicago*, as well, even if not entirely literally: "[t]he Adversary becames strangely beautiful, but not in the manner of the witches Alcina and Lamia, whose loveliness is a work of sorcery, an empty illusion which turns to dust like the apples of Sodom" (Praz, *Romantic Agony* 58).

Then, Praz continues that "[t]owards the end of the eighteenth century Milton's Satan transfused with his own sinister charm the traditional type of generous outlaw or sublime criminal" (*Romantic Agony* 59). He also adds that the "noble bandit" is an ancient type that got infused with satanism around this time (*Romantic Agony* 85). Hence, we get the image of an attractive and irresistible man who has evil tendencies but who is also ambiguous in his actions. Praz concretely calls the men of this type: "Fatal Men" (*Romantic Agony* 61), thus, *hommes fatales*. Since the *homme fatale* is a powerful man, it is quite probably, the the *femme fatale* – attributed with the same qualities as this male figure – appeared with the exact terminology and discourses about her when during the second half of the nineteenth century women started to gain more and more power and independence. So, the certain freedom and power together with the physical attractiveness that is characteristic of this man came to designate the women of the same 'standing.' Praz also adds that the *homme fatale* follows "the pattern of the Byronic hero" (*Romantic Agony* 71, 77) and the type of the 'fatal rebel' (*Romantic Agony* 77).

Hence, the *femme fatale* came to stand for all this by the end of the nineteenth century and later on, explicitly for example, during the *film noir* era when she was of 'vogue' again immensely, as a fatal rebel resisting the constraints of society. These were the first occurences when she was empowered enough to be recognized as a real threat and as a result she got this expressive and definite labeling. As Praz also claims: "[w]e shall see how in the second half of the nineteenth century the vampire becomes a woman, […] but in the first part of the century the fatal, cruel lover is invariably a man; and, apart from reasons of tradition or race (the stronger sex remained such, not only in name, till the time of the Decadence, when, as

will be seen, the roles appeared to be reversed) […]" (*Romantic Agony* 79). Later, he concretely adds that the "flowers of evil" got manifested in the "Fatal Woman" by the end of the nineteenth century and that the split between her and the "Fatal Man" is somewhere to be found in mid-century: "Baudelaire and Flaubert are like the two faces of a Herm planted firmly in the middle of the century, marking the division between Romanticism and Decadence, between the period of the Fatal Man and that of the Fatal Woman […]" (*Romantic Agony* 154). What is more, Praz also claims about the victims, who will burn in the flames of attraction, that "the moth destined for sacrifice is in the first case the woman, in the second the man" (*Romantic Agony* 216).

Yet, eventually, Praz also arrives at the point where he claims that this Satanic figure, this "Byronic Fatal Man," becomes a dual image, a good-bad person, a benefactor who has a dark past and who commits crimes in the name of justice for a noble goal; he even states that this 'process' ended in a "sweetened Satan" (*Romantic Agony* 80-81). Thus, the ambiguity is heightened in the end, and maybe, this figure even comes closer to the comic *Vice* or to the image of a *humorous homme fatale*. In addition, the Byronic hero, this *homme fatale*, comes closer to the figure of the *Vice* and the specific role of Billy Flynn since during Victorianism this figure became urbanized and bourgeois, and he served to attack the judicial system. "Thus the Byronic hero came to be adapted to the bourgeois age; thus, also, he was made to serve as a pretext for attacking the way in which justice was administered in England" (Praz, *The Hero in Eclipse* 160).

In the different versions of the story of *Chicago*, law and order (let it be either legal, social or moral) are subverted, undermined and distorted. In *Chicago*, we could talk about 'unlawliness' a word I constructed with the intention to express the duality underlying the story. With the word, 'unlawliness,' I mean to express the lowly-ness of the characters of *Chicago*, as well as to how much extent they are not lawful or holy or faithful, they are the negation of all these, however they appear to be all these. *Chicago* comically subverts the American judicial system and presents how unjust the legal procedures are in the cases dealt with in the story. Certainly, all of the versions of *Chicago* are literary and filmic treatments of the original murder cases, still, Watkins as a journalist to cover them part of the events throughout, and in a sense, she dramatized this story in a satirical play to express her protest against everything she experienced throughout the 'real' judiciary process and the real life events. It is revealed in the original play that Lady Justice is shut out of these procedures, but in spite of this, Watkins did not present the story as a tragedy, instead, she approached the problem from a comic aspect which was kept in all of the versions of *Chicago*.

Chicago (re)presents, criticizes and subverts the judicial system of the United States, or at least, that of Illinois with the help of this comic *Vice* figure and the *farcical femmes fatales* surrounding him. Most evidently, when considering the question of law and order and how the representation of justice is realized visually one image is the one that encompasses this all and that is Justitia or Lady Justice. Justitia, the allegorical figure impersonating morality, justice and correctness, who is a blindfolded female figure holding a sword in one hand and a scale in the other is present in *Chicago*, however, not in all versions. The most telling visual treatment of the image of Lady Justice appears in the 2002 version. The latest version of the story is the one that most explicitly and openly reveals visually how Justitia is turned upside down in the courtroom and how much her non-presence can be detected in the judiciary process presented in *Chicago*. (Appendix xiv/97)

In the 2002 film adaptation, a painting of Lady Justice can be seen right behind the judge and a bit above everybody supposedly guarding law and order, but in its double representation, in the secondary storyline Justitia is presented as she is 'present' in the judiciary procedures, as a glamorous vaudeville performer who is not there to ensure justice but only to create an 'effect' of justice. The 'taking the stand scenes' of the film were mostly shot from an angle that the feet of Lady Justice can be seen in the background. A bit ironically only her legs and feet, her lower parts, are guarding the fake testimonies made by the two major female characters during these scenes. The Justitia who should be reigning over the whole judiciary process is supposedly there in that painting but it is made clear in the film that the Justitia who is really present is the one who is in the foreground only faking justice in her glamorous vaudeville performance similarly to the leading female characters, and in fact, everybody else. In the case of "*Justitia á la Chicago*," it can immediately be recognized that she holds only the scales but not the sword as if in the story the sinners are just there to be measured but not to be judged. This is what happens, Justitia in *Chicago* is not the Justicia who is supposedly lawfully there. Only a thin veil covers partly her eyes and she is not there to sentence the sinners due to the lack of her sword, in addition, she is raised high up right at the beginning of the scene probably in order to remove her away from what is taking place in the courtroom. She is only a decoration, she is part of the entertainment. (Appendix xi/78, xiv/97-98) In the 1976 musical version (upon which the 2002 version is heavily based) Justitia appears as follows when Billy Flynn and Roxie enter the courtroom:

> [l]adies and gentlemen, we present – Justice. The State of Illinois versus Roxie Hart for the murder of Fred Casely. Thank you. (Ebb, Fosse 77)

> […] MARY SHUNSHINE. (Into a microphone.) Ladies and gentlemen, the final day of the trial of Roxie Hart has come. A hush has fallen over the courtroom as Mr. Billy Flynn prepares his summation to the jury. The next voice you hear will be that of Mr. Flynn, champion of the down-trodden. (A LADY representing Justice enters and takes a place on the stairs, S.R. She holds a sword and the scales of Justice. A MAN representing Uncle Sam enters and takes a place on the stairs S. L. he holds an American flag.) (Ebb, Fosse 86)

Billy Flynn is the defense that never rests in spite of the fact that, for example in the 2002 version, he concretely claims that "the defense rests" (Marshall 1 h 30 min). He as a 'Perpetuum Mobile' is making everything move and making everything happen without a rest. In judicial terms, when the sentence is heard: "The defense rests" that means that everything was said and done and justice should follow. In *Chicago*, the defense never rests since there is no justice to be declared. Although, Billy Flynn claims that the defense, that is him, can rest but he does not do so. In the 2002 version of the story, when they enter the courtroom it is presented visually as if he was leading Roxie down into Hell, through the gates of Hell fromed by vaudevillian women, while the courtroom is lit with red light. The defense incarnated is really the devil's advocate or rather the devil himself. In the center of the whole judiciary process stands evil incarnate in the form of Billy Flynn who is the one juggling with the images. Eventually, he is the one who in a final *danse macabre*-like performance, the step dance as visualized in the 2002 version, triumphs over everybody and gains the acquittal for both Roxie and Velma. (Appendix xii/83-85, xiii/88-90)

He perfectly knows how this has to be done, how law and order can be kept or reinstated and since he knows that it cannot be realized in the case of these women, he manipulates the female images to be compatible with the supposed law and order images connected to Justitia. In the end, he succeeds. Roxie is presented as a reformed sinner and her appearance radiates innocence and remorse. Ironically, this is Roxie, who as a 'reformed sinner,' is really granted man's "unalienable natural rights" of equality, "rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Annus 106). The importance of Christian tradition (Annus 102-104) as well as the centrality of "civil religion" and the Judeo-Christian tradition (Annus 109-20) are all exploited in the various versions of *Chicago* likewise since Roxie is posited as a the daughter of God who is expecting a child, and in whose life religion is of great importance, hence, all kinds of law and order are turned upside down.

In the original play, Roxie appears wearing "a dress with meaning: heavy white crepe with surplice collar and bishop sleeves – a nun would envy this chastity; white shoes and hose

of perplexing nudity. […] Her eyes, wide and innocent, stare soulfully at the blank wall that represents the jury" (Waktins 79-80). She "leans back, wan and pale" – adds Watkins (82). The courtroom and the men around her are entirely enchanted by her (*performance*):

> *The* JUDGE *and the* JURY *may be listening to* MR HARRISON – *they certainly hear his thundering tones – but they rest their eyes – maybe feast their eyes – on a fairer object than a dapper* STATE'S ATTORNEY *or the gangling young man in green. You have guessed it, gentle reader:* ROXIE. *And who can blame them? For the courtroom is hot and crowded and she wears that dress with meaning. Her hair, soft and shining, is an aureole in the sunlight. Her cheeks are a petal pink, her parted lips a rose. She's working hard, too – titled forward on the edge of her chair, white hands clasped to her breast*. (Watkins 89)

Roxie is dressed as a little shepherdess in the 1928 version, something similar but more urbane in the 1942 version and as a nun-like convent girl in the 2002. (Appendix vii/41, 45, 46, 48) In the first two cases, she even holds a bouquet of flowers and certainly a very conventional imagery is evoked in this case, as well, that is she is a little innocent, beautiful, fragile flower who must not be crushed. She is identified with the white flowers when in both first films Billy Flynn seizes the bouquet, throws it onto the floor and stamps on it violently emphasizing how this little woman would be crushed in a similar fashion. In the 1942 version, she is even kneeling in front of the jury as if making a confession and then she faints. All of the elements of ideal femininity are enumerated: she cries, looks lost and scared, behaves modest, pious, innocent, harmless, fragile etc. It is emphasized that she is a wife, a mother-to-be to highlight how conventional, law-bidding and 'ordered' she is. Thus, she is turned into a saint that is the conventional image again: the woman as angel. In spite of all this, law and order are reinstated through the enforcement of the images of ideal femininity. Nobody is concerned about the *femmes fatales* since they performed the 'ideal and proper woman' with her entire repertoire of regulated femininity. Roxie as a female saint performs the Assumption of the Virgin Mary when she takes the stand in the 2002 version, as she is elevated into the 'sky' in a circus hoop and is lit by white light from behind as if the light of God covered her and she seems to have a halo, as well. (Appendix xiv/99)

Noone concerns him/herself whether this is only a performance because they enjoy themselves and the entertainment is carried to perfection. As Billy Flynn states: this is all show business, give them the razzle-dazzle and they will be asking for more. In addition, noone will see clearly with sequins in their eyes but they will not even notice since they will be blinded by the spectacle. (Marshall 1 h 16-19 min) The audience gets what it wants: prime

entertainment, and since the performers do their job right, they are revarded (as they can walk away free). As it is presented in the original drama:

> *He [Billy Flynn]'s fighting, gentlemen, fighting, with every drop of his blood, for the life of that little brave woman. The* JURY, *hypnotized, enthralled, hangs on each word and follows every gesture. The* PRESS *watch benignly; they know his whole bag of tricks, but BILLY's always worth watching. Even the* JUDGE *listens. / And* ROXIE – ? *This scene is really the close of an hour's duel between* ROXIE *and* FLYNN. *When the curtain goes up, honors are even and she is faithfully registering the emotions outlined for her in rehearsal. Gradually, however, she extends her field; deeper emotion, gesture, writhing. She works for her audience – the* JURY; *and they, fascinated, are torn between her contortions and the fervid orator*. (Watkins 103)

There are the usual figures of the law, of course, such as the judge, the jury, the policemen, the bailiff, the attorneys etc., and it is set in the symbolic space of law and order, i.e.: the courtroom, however, what reinstates law and order is the figure of an angel-like woman in the hands of a devilish man. The whole trial scene, and in fact, the whole story is only the *danse macabre* orchestrated by Billy Flynn who manages to free the two 'devilish' women, Roxie and Velma (besides many other similar women) dressed up as angels, although, it is true that the hoof of the devil is constantly present and it is continuously evident that everything is an act and everybody knows this but they accept it because they want the razzle-dazzle, they want to be part of the *danse macabre*; and the 1976 version, while the 2002 version only partly, closes with the words cited on page 83-84 of this dissertation. Eventually, it ends as a horror film when in the last shot the supposedly destroyed monster grins into the viewer's face, while being in the belief that the *danse macabre* might have been over, and starts singing:

> Give'em the old razzle dazzle / Razzle dazzle 'em / Give'em an act with lots of flash in it / And the reaction will be passionate / Give'em the old hocus pocus / Bead and feather 'em / How can they see with sequins in their eyes? / What if your hinges all are rusting? / What if, in fact, you're just disgusting? / Razzle dazzle 'em / And they'll never catch wise! (Ebb, Fosse 75-76)

In each of the versions, the questioning, through ridicule, of the basic American values and the contestation of the ideal(ized) American identity are to be found. The '*Chicago theme*' is the critique of the manipulation of the core values of American culture and the

manipulated construction of American identity. However, in spite of the fact that most of the American ideals are presented in an ironic-mocking light, since everything is satirized in the various versions of the story, it still pertains most of these values as well as the ideal of American identity with its basic concepts. Some of these basic American ideals and ideas, which constitute the essence of American identity and culture, are America (meaning the United States) as *the New Eden, New Canaan, New Jerusalem, the Promised Land* or *the City upon the hill* (Annus 102, Kroes 7-13), the realization of *the American Dream*, *the manifest destiny*, the importance and spreading of *Christianity*, *democracy*, and *equality*, conquering *the frontier* – which, according to Annus, is still "a significant part of the American identity and imagination" in spite of the fact that the frontier hypothesis has been contested and re-discussed by many (124); and some other basic ideals which constitute the American identity are *youthfulness*, *beginnings*, *new beginnings*, *restart*, *renewal* (Campbell, Kean 20-43; Kroes 28-32), *freedom* and everybody's right to the *pursuit of happiness* – as it can found in *The Declaration of Independence* (1776): "[w]e hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with CERTAIN [*inherent and*] inalienable Rights; that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness; […]" (Peterson 235).

Throughout the adaptations and the various versions of the original story, it is almost only Roxie Hart who is always present – more or less unchanged – as all the other characters vary, get modified or some are even left out of certain versions. Roxie is the central character and she is the one who is made into a Christian young girl who becomes – although only in principle – a mother and gets freedom. She is the one who is treated in a democratic way, who has the chance to restart her life, who has renewal, who has a new beginning and who reaches and conquers the frontiers. She is a seemingly a self-made individual who manages to conquer the world and realize the American dream in the New Eden. Roxie – who professes none of the ideals and ideas concerning American culture, values and identity; who refuses all these mighty ideals and leads a life opposing them – she is the one who is saved, who is posited as the manifestation of American values and ideals in the form of an 'exemplary' American young individual in the end with her 'new beginning.'

6. The *Farcical Femmes Fatales* of *Chicago*

6.1. The 1920s

6. 1. 1. The Original Murder Cases and the *Chicago Tribune* Articles

In 1924, in the months of March and April, two murder cases took place in the city of Chicago the coverage of which was the duty of a young reporter, Maurine Dallas Watkins (Appendix xiv/100), who did her job right resulting in great success (Pauly xiii-xix). The series of newspaper articles became increasingly popular, and later, these stories were rewritten in the form of a drama, entitled *Chicago*, in 1927 for the delight of even more people. Watkins wrote the series of articles in which she covered the two murder cases of Beulah Annan and Belva Gaertner (Appendix xv/101-102). "No sweetheart is worth killing," (121) so started Belva Gaertner with the (ill-)famed utterance, and continued, "─especially when you have had a flock of them─and the world knows it" (ibid). The next thoughts which hit the headlines were: "[w]hy, it's silly to say I murdered Walter […] I liked him and he loved me─but no woman can love a man enough to kill him. They aren't worth it, because there are always plenty more […]" (121-122). She herself did not take her own advice; however, if she had done so, the story of *Chicago* might not have been born due to a lack of incentive.

Watkins reported the murder cases and the ensuing court cases with a light touch of humour to highlight their comic-grotesque aspect and to point out the contradictory elements. With slightly ironic occasional sidemarks Watkins pinpointed the problematic points and injustices in how these female murderers and their cases were treated. The use of humor does not serve to divert the readers' attention from the facts and to bedazzle them or to postulate the problems insignificant or light but to target and bring to the fore the crude realities of the crimes, cheats and manipulation involved in these cases in contrast to what the "official opinion" and final decisions were concerning the cases. The world of the carnival welcomes the readers on these pages with all of its nonsense, absurdity and revelry. Since these articles are the least fictional ones among the various renderings of the story it might clearly be deduced that the real murder cases and the resulting real court cases were carnivalesque performances as well.

Watkins personally took part in all, although, it is suggested by Pauly that she spiced up the articles a little with wry humour to sell her story. Pauly claims that Watkins knew too well "that a conventional report of this all-too-familiar crime would be buried in her

newspaper's back pages" so she tried to cover the cases as if they were outstanding and significant. (Pauly xiii) Her deep personal involvement was exactly that made her worry when her drama came out fearing that the audience's response might be influenced by the fact that she mocked such a story with such a personal role in it. As time passed her reluctance to release the rights to her play grew and she developed "a deep-seated guilt that her witty *Chicago Tribune* articles had been responsible for murderesses going free." (Pauly xiii) The rights were sold by Watkins' estate to Bob Fosse and Gwen Verdon only in 1969 after her death following decades of numerous futile attempts by several people to obtain them (Pauly viii). According to Fred Ebb, Watkins created Mary Sunshine's character as a literary mea culpa in the drama and the later versions because, as Ebb claims, "Watkins was what we call a sob sister" and Mary Sunshine is such a figure in the later versions (Marshall "Behind the Scenes" 18-19 min). Her name is probably the symbolic representation of her naïve goodness, since she appears to 'equal' the Virgin Mary clad in the rays of the Sun.

Nevertheless, her animated formation of the events started with the first of the *Chicago Tribune* articles by reporting that "Mrs. Belle Brown Overbeck Gaertner, a handsome divorcée of numerous experiences with divorce publicity, was arrested […]" (Pauly 115). It is emphasized in all versions that both women are good-looking: Belva Gaertner is especially stylish and is endowed with an air of class while Beulah Annan is exceptionally beautiful and pretty. It is suggested in all versions that these physical attributes have much weight in the success of these women.

As it could be read, the whole series starts with the case of Belva Gaertner and her past reporting her divorces, (re)marriages, her career as a cabaret singer and dancer, her love relationship with Walter Law (the victim) and the murder case which she declares she knows nothing about since she was too much intoxicated. (Pauly 115-121) She becomes Velma (Kelly) in the later versions. As Watkins reports, Mrs. Gaertner thinks that only a "broad minded" jury is all she needs to walk free and is not even slightly worried: "The latest alleged lady murderess of Cook county, in whose car young Law was found shot to death as a finale to three months of wild gin parties with Belva while his wife sat at home unsuspecting, isn't a bit worried over the case." (Pauly 121) Belva Gaertner opines that "wordly men" would never convict her because they are broad minded and they are men who have heard a jazz band in their lives and know "what it is to get out a bit. Why, no one like that would convict me." (Pauly 122) Then, she starts laughing and right after it frowning and adds that gin and guns are bad even apart but together they "get you in a dickens of a mess, don't they." (ibid) The quick changes of facial expressions and attitudes might clearly signal that she is only acting,

yet, she keeps "her audience" in awe. She even feels (and expresses) a little sorry for Law's wife but immediately concludes that "husbands always cause women trouble" as if she did a good service to the wife (ibid). She asserts that it is not true that she would have killed Law because he supposedly wanted to leave her: "Walter was just a kid – 29 and I'm 38. Why should I have worried whether he loved me or whether he left me?" (ibid)

In the meantime, "Mrs. Beulah Annan, a comely young wife" allegedly killed a man named Harry Kalstedt (29 years old) who "'tried to make love' to her" and Mrs. Annan insisted with her face bathed in a flood of tears that she killed the man to "save her honor" (Pauly 123). However, the reality was – as Watkins narrates – that "'Hula Lou,' [t]he Hawaiian tune was the death song of Harry Kolstedt, […] whom Mrs. Annan shot because he had terminated their little wine party by announcing that he was through with her" (ibid). When questioned next, Mrs. Beulah Annan produces this latter version of the story by also admitting that the two of them had been "fooling around" for two months and that night they were drinking when the problem of who is leaving whom emerged and when Mr. Kalstedt really seemed to leave Mrs. Annan shot him in the back. (Pauly 123-24) She is to become Roxie Hart and he is to be personified by Fred Casely in Watkins' drama. Albert Annan, the devoted husband, rushes home when called and "found his wife in a hysterical condition" (Pauly 124). He is to become Amos Hart. When the husband calls the police Mrs. Annan protests vehemently and then shrieks into the receiver that she shot her husband. "When detectives reached the apartment they found Mrs. Annan – a beautiful woman of 28," [later to be changed to 23] "slim and tall, with reddish brown hair bobbed to the mode – waiting with a fanciful story of having fainted after shooting Kolstedt[iii]." (ibid)

Watkins calls Mrs. Annan the "'Prettiest' Woman Slayer" in the title of her next article and reports that the State Attorneys want a quick trial with a death penalty as an ending. By that time, Beulah Annan had had several versions of *her/story* but "yesterday she only shook her head dreamily and smiled when questioned" (Pauly 125). Beulah Annan just like Belva Gaertner is acting. She starts to perform the dreamy-eyed little girl who smiles mildly when she is questioned but cannot answer so simple she is. An important aspect of the act is her looks: her 'biological properties' as well as her garments and accessories, and eventually how she appears in her entirety – and she is said to be the prettiest woman ever charged with murder in Chicago. Certainly, she makes ample use of this during her trial. The following detailed description is given by Watkins:

> They say she's *the prettiest woman* even accused of murder in Chicago – *young, slender,* with bobbed *auburn hair;* wide set, *appealing blue eyes*; tip-tilted nose; *translucent skin*, faintly, very faintly, rouged, an *ingenuous smile*; *refined features*, intelligent expression – an *"awfully nice girl"* and more than usually pretty. She wore *fawn colored* dress and hose, with black shoes, dark brown coat, and brown georgette hat that turned back with a youthful flare. [emphases mine] (Pauly 126)

The performance of an innocent, lost, little fawn ('latter day readers and viewers' with the image of Bambi flashing up in their minds) is on the show. In addition to the baby deer associations, we get the image of a little angel with an extremely white skin (also suggesting excessive purity), an ingenuous smile, clear blue eyes that are appealing, refined features and a perfect body.

Then, as a next performance Mrs. Annan starts to talk about her little boy born in a previous marriage that ended in divorce and the son remained to live with the father's relatives. (ibid) Here, the image of the mother is played with and this card will be used again during the trial. Although, Mr. Annan earned a respectable sum every week as a mechanic at a garage Mrs. Annan insisted on working to earn a bit extra money. She became a bookkeeper for a laundry. (ibid) Despite the suspicion that there might have been a selfish intention behind this, and that maybe, Beulah Annan only worked to be a bit more independent or to have money to spend on luxury items or liquor it is to be believed that she wanted to support her family and worked hard for it. However, this was exactly the place where she met Harry Kalstedt "who took her for walks, visited her a few times in her husband's absence, and shared with her a taste for 'booze'" (ibid).

Mrs. Annan continues her performance of a carefree and naïve girl during the next phase of the investigation while witnesses are questioned in front of the coroner's jury by nonchalantly playing with a small piece of paper: "[c]almly she played with a piece of paper and softly whistled through it […]" (ibid). Then, she goes on with the same nonchalant behavior projecting the image of somebody who does not have anything to fear by cupping "her chin in a slim white hand, with its orange blossom ring, and didn't blanch as the state read her answer to the question. 'Why didn't he get that far?' 'Darned good reason: I shot him.'" (Pauly 127) She is not the least embarrassed about the facts or her previous behavior, now she is in the middle of the act of a perfect lady almost bordering on the image of the icy Snow Queen. She even starts to play with the piece of paper again while her confession of intimacy with Kalstedt is read aloud and lightly laughs about the lawyers' disputes (ibid). She

even starts to laugh, certainly, only a fine little giggle is allowed for a lady but this does not alter the fact that she laughs when she is charged with murder.

In the middle of her 'frolicky' acting emerges her husband as a bastion of truth and sad reality: while Mrs. Annan is posing "prettily for the photographers […] her husband hides his face with his rough, scarred hands" when he takes the stand (ibid). He bitterly communicated in a statement that "'I've been a sucker, that's all! Simply a meal ticket!'" but while questioned on the stand he just shakes his head sadly without comments (Pauly 128). This all does not bother Mrs. Annan at all who powders her nose while the finding of murder is announced, and then, by taking the money her husband borrowed without flinching she returns to prison at her leisure (ibid). Here, she is clearly a cold-hearted Queen Bee.

Then, a sudden change occurs in the strain of her performance. She becomes deeply immersed in regret and gets covered in a flood of tears over her guilt and crime. "Beulah Annan Sobs Regret for Life She Took" announces the next article (ibid). "'Of course I'm sorry! I'd give my life to have Harry Kolstedt alive again! And I never said I was glad. Why, I couldn't. Why –' and tears filled the eyes of Mrs. Beulah Annan, the 'prettiest murderess.'" (ibid) After this, Watkins sums up that Thursday night she [Beulah Annan] was babbling conflicting accounts of the murder, on Friday, she was "cold and unmoved at the inquest" but the [supposedly] Saturday brought the change in her attitude and she started to realize what she had done while awaiting indictment for murder in the county jail (ibid). Beulah Annan, apparently, is slightly inconsequent. She not only tells the story of the murder and her role in it always in a different version but she also acts a different persona every time she is questioned. This is at least suspicious but within an investigation it signals that she is telling lies, she is untruthful and hides something, not primarily that she is the murderer but that she is not telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth...

Nevertheless, at this point we have to watch the show of how magdalene Mary Magdalene is suffering from the tortures of remorse and penitence. She is horrified and is seized by shivers at how the other inmates are chatting, laughing and listening to music. "'How can they!' she said, shivering." (Pauly 129) Nonetheless, she is able to pose for a picture with Belva Gaertner, however as Watkins makes an acid remark, "as yet the two have not talked over their common interests. A man, a woman, liquor and a gun – " (ibid). Still, while Mrs. Gaertner is protesting her innocence "cheerfully and philosophically" Mrs. Annan is not yet done with being Mary Magdalene and remebers… She utters with "eyes widened in horror" what happened when she shot Kalstedt: "'I'll never forget it'. She suddered." (ibid)

It seems we have been long entertained by this latter performance – and Mrs. Annan's latest confession that they were intoxicated and both reached for the gun that lay on the bed that was unmade – since now she changes her plea into self-defence and "the statements made at the police station would be repudiated as having been made under duress when intoxicated" – all this is evidently done under the counsel of W. W. O'Brien, her lawyer. (ibid) He is to become Billy Flynn in the later versions. Certainly, it is not the whole story that is changed, only small parts of from time to time as if Beulah Annan was a writer of a detective story, except, it is her own one and not entirely fiction, although, she turns it into one. She forgets about Mary Magdalene and now concentrates on her enduring love and respect for her husband and professes that she never loved Kalstedt as much as her "hubby" and would have never killed him [Kalstedt] for leaving her, and anyway, she was the one who was going to quit him. (Pauly 130) To back up her latest confession – "[h]er voice trail[ed] off in a long sigh" and she constantly breaks down into sobs over her ruined life and that she can never get away from herself and the murder she committed, meanwhile her husband is back to work and sends her all the "money he can get to help her out." (ibid) He stands by her, 'no matter what,' while her parents left town without leaving an address since they do not "want to be 'bothered'" (Pauly 131). Nevertheless, the husband (ten years her senior, "quiet and a little stern") is still faithful: "[t]ell her I'll stick – that's all – that I'll stick" and when seeing her attorney, W. W. O'Brien, he says fiercely: "[w]e've got to get her out" (ibid). Other (young) men are also very helpful with whom she had had a "few drinks" by sending flowers and notes to her while a "friend" sends her "a juicy steak, French fried potatoes, and cucumber salad" that she eats instead of the chicken dinner that her husband sent her. (Pauly 132)

In the meantime, however, something less favourable occurs: a woman is given a life sentence for murdering a man. It is Mrs. Elizabeth Unkafer (46 years of age) with a wrinkled face and faded red hair. Her defense is insanity but she cannot get away with it. (ibid) Around this time in the story, Beulah Annan announces that she is pregnant. As Pauly comments:

> That Beulah's story would go through additional permutations was to be expected, but even Watkins was surprised by her announcement that she was pregnant, one day after another inmate, an *illiterate immigrant* [emphasis mine], was sentenced to life for killing her lover. But Watkins was not shocked enough to miss this opportunity for her wit. (xviii)

It is clearly stated here that the woman who could not get away with murder was an illiterate immigrant woman who could not defend herself and probably did not have enough money for

the best lawyer. In addition, she is also considered aged, unbeauteous, unbecoming and unappealing. She is *an Other*, an outsider, an alien as an immigrant, what is more, she is illiterate implying that she is uneducated, uncultured, non-refined, not well-bred and supposedly not able to speak the English language properly. She is age-, beauty-, education-, origin-, class-, social status- and connection-challenged in addition to her financial and linguistic impairment. With all these hindrances she could hardly expect an acquittal and the culture, society and state that she is aspiring for cast her out accordingly while the other women, although maybe not so much disadvantaged but being (white) American citizens, can get away with murder.

The seven inmates on "Murderess' Row" start to think hard after Elizabeth Unkafer's unsuccessful case about what counts with a jury and draw the conclusion that one factor is surely sex since "[a] woman never swung in Illinois" and another is "[l]ooks. [Elizbeth Unkafer was not cursed with fatal beauty]" – is added ironically (Pauly 134). As it is evoked, Elizabeth Unkafer had a "straggly mop of red hair, pale eyes, and flabby cheeks" (Pauly 135). As another example, a certain Kitty Malm was given a life sentence and she "wasn't – well – quite 'refined'" (Pauly 134). One of the inmates declares that "[a] jury isn't blind […] and a pretty woman's never been convicted in Cook County!" and the next claims that it is youth that matters (ibid).

Yet, the stories of Mrs. Annan and Mrs. Gaertner do not dwell, for a long time, on this (tragicomic) figure of a scapegoat and dismiss quickly 'the exception that proves the rule' and go on with their lives and fiction(s) that they create. As the title of the next article announces: "Beulah Annan Awaits Stork, Murder Trial" (Pauly 133). In addition to being young, beautiful, pretty etc. Beulah Annan means to use her approaching motherhood as "the basis for a further appeal to clemency" (ibid). An exceptionally good card, motherhood, is still in Mrs. Annan's hands that she fully intends to use and not without success. What is more, neither Mrs. Annan nor Mrs. Gaertner is worried about Unkafer's sentence. "I can't see that it's anything at all like my case" opines Mrs. Gaertner, "the sophisticated divorcée […] as she twirled about in her red dancing slippers." (Pauly 135) Mrs. Annan is similarly optimistic by stating that "[t]he cases are entirely different" and it is significant to note that while she utters this looks "quite the ingénue in her girlish checked flannel frock." (ibid)

When the time of the trial came the twelve jurors ("good men and true") were selected by the attorneys while Mrs. Annan "smiled and pouted, sighed and turned r.s.v.p. eyes on the jury" (ibid). As Watkins comments: "[a]nd they're a good looking lot, comparatively young, and not too 'hard boiled' – for Beulah herself passed on them. And she's a connoisseur in

men!" (ibid) The selection happened with Mrs. Annan's 'help' since a nod from her meant that a juror was opted for and a pouting no meant dismissal. Mrs. Annan is called a modern "Salome" during this selection and Watkins declares that she [Mrs. Annan] "acts the Czarina." (Pauly 136) In spite of the slightly negativistic connotations mentioned above Beulah Annan sticks to her pretty and naïve girl image and performs perfectly the role of the scared little fawn in the 'terrible concrete woods of Chicago.'

> For she is admittedly *the prettiest murderess* Cook county has ever known and was an appealing figure yesterday in her *simple fawn* colored suit with dark brown fur piece that framed the *flowerlike face* – still *pale* from her recent illness. Only 23, slender, with wide blue eyes and *a halo of auburn curls*, freshly marceled – and "by the advice of counsel" she kept *her head bare*. [emphases mine] (Pauly 137)

It is repreated again that she is the prettiest murderess ever charged in Chicago and her appearance that is called appealing is again similar to a lost little fawn. It is claimed that she wears a simple suit that is fawn colored and she is even likened to a flower to heighten the feelings of sympathy implying that she is also a fragile flower who is surely fragile since she was ill (probably due to the combination of the baby and remorse) and as a result she is pale, hence, her whiteness is even more emphasized. Now, she wears a halo of auburn curls that is uncovered by advice – this way again pointing to her young age and suggesting maidenhood on the one hand, on the other however, her great weapon of beautiful hair is there to snatch the hearts of the men sitting in the jury. She also accessorizes herself with a pensively sighing Raphaelite portrait that she turns towards the jury while leaning wearily upon one marble hand. However, she is still capable of reviving herself sufficiently enough for powdering her nose and posing for some pictures while chatting about her "recent illness." (ibid)

In the meantime, the defense wants to prove that the murder was self-defense while the state might even ask for the death penalty. Yet, the chances of "Beautiful Beulah" seem to be lessened as Judge Lindsay accepts all confessions as admissible evidence and her boasting does not fit well: "I'm the only witness, […] Harry's dead and they'll have to believe my story." (ibid) To which Watkins adds wryly: "But which one?" (ibid) The police officers also testify that Mrs. Annan gave all of the versions of the testimony with full understanding and by her own free will, although, it is ture that "she was in a 'high-sterical' condition for several hours." (Pauly 139) Nevertheless, the defense tries to prove her self-defense and she is called to take the stand to claim that she was offered immunity by the state if she was to make a statement. (Pauly 138) She is pretty again (in a new dress probably designed for this special

ocassion) still sticking to the innocent fawn connotations although with slight glamour added: "[s]lim and straight in her *new brown satin crepe frock*, with *furpiece thrown over one arm*, she walked carelessly to the stand, moistened her lips, and was sworn in; seemingly calm, but her answers […] were weak." [emphases mine] (ibid) Judge Lindsay finds problematic, for example, that allegedly she was so intoxicated even after hours of the murder that she could not rememeber what had happened, and now, she (miraculously) is able to provide "a perfect recollection of minute details." (Pauly 139) However, Beulah Annan seems frankly bored with the technicalitites of the courtroom process and stares "around the room like a *wide eyed kitten* […]" [emphasis mine] (Pauly 140). With this association, the image of another helpless baby animal is brought up which is typically posited for caresses and play. A cat association might even suggest some danger but Mrs. Annan is 'evidently' only a playful little kitten who means no harm …

When questioned about the phonograph that she was playing for hours after the murder Mrs. Annan answers that she just wanted "to keep the neighbours from suspecting" (Pauly 141). Yet, the song itself is also telling and might refer to Mrs. Annan's 'philanderings' (I am consciously employing a term used typically for men) and wanton ways since the played song is about "Hula Lou, who had more sweeties than a dog has fleas" (ibid). It is also brought up during the questioning that Mrs. Annan allegedly refused a date, "a certain Billy," for Kalstedt on the day of the murder (ibid). And Judge Lindsay also rules that the admission is relevant to the case given by Mrs. Annan concerning her confession of repeated intimacy with Kalstedt no matter how hard W. W. O'Brien attempts to object that this is not a case of adultery. (Pauly 139) Watkins adds that during all this time "[t]he judge cast unbelieveing glances at the young woman who sat so calmly listening to the story of the killing as told in her own words." (Pauly 141)

When the jury returns, however, Mrs. Annan puts on her mask of the magdalene Mary Magdalene and "'pepped' up a bit and tried to register *contrition* and *regret* at the *proper intervals*" [emphases mine] (ibid). To complete the performance, W.W. O'Brien stands up and practices his oratorical skills with brilliance in presenting Beulah Annan as a "virtuous working girl" and a "modest little housewife" (Pauly 141-42). His speech carries the entire court away as "the whole court sat up in attention as he depicted Beulah, *the virtuous working girl*! Beulah, *the modest little housewife*! *Tears slowly came to Beulah's eyes* as he told how Kalstedt, a regular 'bum' had come to her apartment […]" [emphases mine] (ibid). Tears are essential tools in the performance of the remorseful Magdalene – since it is told in the Bible how "a Sinful Woman" washed the feet of Jesus with her own tears and as a result cleansed

herself from her sins (Luke 7. 36-50) – in addition to that of a frightened fragile female, hence, Mrs. Annan doubly makes good use of them. In his oratorical act, Mr. O'Brien also lays emphasis on the 'fact' that Mrs. Anna was frightened and begged Kalstedt to leave but he refused to do so. Then, the defense lawyers present everybody (they actually produce live entertainment) how the entire situation happened and why Kalstedt was shot in the back if it was a case of self-defense… (Pauly 142) The jury is evidently appalled and astonished being so much immersed in the live performance that they follow Mr. O'Brien "down the path of 'another little drink'" etc. in their fascination (ibid). Yet, a surprise witness is called by the state, Mrs. Maybelle Bergman, who worked together with Mrs. Annan at the loundry as a head bookkeeper – the flashing glances between the two women obviously reveal their animosity. She repeats her telephone conversation with "Red" on the afternoon of the murder stating that Mrs. Annan sounded evidently intoxicated while pretending to look for Harry Kalstedt in the laundry. (Pauly 143)

Nonetheless, Mrs. Annan does not have to fear this woman either since soon the verdict is reached giving her freedom as the jury finds her "Not Guilty." "Beulah Annan, whose pursuit of wine, men, and jazz music was interrupted by her glibness with the trigger finger, was given freedom last night by her 'beauty proof' jury." (ibid) The jury acquits Mrs. Annan of the murder of her 'obtrusive "admirer"' and "[t]he fair defendant thanked the jury all around, assisted by her faithful husband, Al." (Pauly 144) She flashes a thankful glance at each of the members of the jury and presses their hands while also expressing her gratitude in words and she is only able to finish her sentence in an appealing glance with her husband firmly by her side also "almost overcome with joy and gratitude." (ibid)

Then, Watkins starts to discuss how and why this all could happen and provides great detail concerning the performance of 'Mrs. Annan taking the stand' while she exhorts: "Beautiful – but not dumb!" and claims that it was charm that worked wonders (ibid). She describes the whole endeavour concretely as the debut of a glamorous Hollywood star and talks about everything Mrs. Annan does as a well-planned act with dual (and slightly contarditory) associations of an innocent child and an irresistible woman: a virgin whore. I borrow this term, "virgin whore" (397), from Dijkstra who entitled his last chapter (XI) as "Gold and the Virgin Whores of Babylon; Judith and Salome: The Priestesses of Man's Severed Head" (*Idols of Perversity* 352); and later on he is actually citing Mateo from Pierre Louys' *The Woman and the Puppet* (that was made into a film entitled *The Devil Is a Woman* in 1935 starring Marlene Dietrich as its irresistible temptress): "Virgin or whore, or virgin-whore, all women are the same and will attempt to unman you either way" (*Idols of Perversity*

384-385). However, Dijkstra adds that, maybe, it is virginity that is worse after all since "virginity is the worst form of feminine whoredom, because in her virginity woman maintains her self-sufficiency, and hence her power to 'decapitate' the male by making him wait in impotent longing for her compliance to his wishes" (*Idols of Perversity* 385).

Thus, these contradictory images – the virgin and the whore, or their combination: the virgin whore – are probably included in the repertoire to attract a wider circle of audience and a greater chance to play for the tastes of different people: those who want to believe that she is an innocent child can do so, just as well those who know that she is guilty can get their share 'of enjoyment and/or satisfaction' as well. The projection of dual imagery is usually discussed in connection with parallel hetero- and homosexual messages in films. Weiss states that the dominant culture generally requires to make homosexuality invisible and unspeakable, and it was so in the 1920s and 1930s, as well; however, the studios meant "to keep the star's image open to erotic contemplation by both men and women" to gain more public (Weiss "A Queer Feeling," 285-286). Weiss adds to this that Hollywood often created/s inconsistent images of femininity on purpose:

> [w]hat the public knew, or what the gay subculture knew, about these stars' 'real lives' cannot be separated from their 'star image'. […] This star persona was often ambiguous and paradoxical. Not only did the Hollywood star system create *inconsistent images of femininity*, but these images were further contradicted by the intervention of the actress herself into the process of star image production; certain stars such as Katherine Hepburn, Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo often asserted gestures and movements in their films that were inconsistent with and even posed an ideological threat within the narrative. [emphasis mine] (Weiss "A Queer Feeling," 286-287)

And here is how Watkins desribes this dual imagery of the virgin whore – although probably without homosexual allusions or connotations but in the later versions this is not to be excluded since in the 1976 and 2002 versions Mama Morton is clearly a lesbian and Velma is presented as a bisexual person in the 2002 version, yet, Roxie is neither of them apparently:

> Under the glare of *motion picture lights* – a news weekly – Beulah took the stand. In another new dress – *navy twill* ties at the side with a *childlike* moiré bow – with new necklace of *crystal and jet*, she made *her debut as an actress*. And the jury laughingly nominated the youngest of their sheiks as a Rudolf for the *titian haired sheba*. [emphases mine] (Pauly 144)

While we get Beulah 'the school girl' or even 'the covent girl' with the navy twill and a childlike moiré bow we also get Beulah 'the glamour godess' accessorized by a new necklace

of crystal and jet. In addition, here, she is clearly associated with red hair (she is not auburn any more) and the Queen of Sheba – both associations strengthen the image of a beautiful, powerful, sexually-alluring but possibly dangerous woman – while also alluding to *The Sheik* (1921) starring Rudolph Valentino which was a very popular and well-known film of the era with one of the biggest male stars and erotic icons in it – as her companion, and possibly, even her consort. (Allusions to *The Son of the Sheik* (1926) cannot be made since the report takes place in 1924.)

The color of Beulah Annan's hair is of significance because it changes in the different versions of the story carrying different connotations while Belva Gaertner's hair is brown/dark brown every time. Watkins first calls Mrs. Annan's hair auburn which is reddish-brown but as the case proceeds, she gets more and more associated with red, at this point of the story she is postulated as a "titian haired sheba" (ibid). What is more, Mrs. Maybelle Bergman clearly calls her by her (supposedly) nickname: "Red" (Pauly 143). In the 1927 drama, Watkins explicitly depicts Roxie Hart as red saying "and hair the color of flame" while also adding that there is a "touch of Medusa" in her profile in spite of resembling "a Raphael angel" (Watkins 4). In addition, in the 1942 film adaptation, it is stated that Roxie is a red-head (Wellman 12 min), although, she looks brown, yet, it has to be added that this is a black and white film, so, it is hard to say the exact color. I am going to discuss this question later. Still, the color red is at hand with its connotations to be examined.

By all means, the color, red, is not generally associated with peace, calmness and quietness. According to Ian Paterson, red is "[t]he colour of blood. 'Red' derives from the Indo-European root *r(e)udh* meaning ruddy and perhaps from the more immediate Sanskrit word *rudhira* meaning 'blood'" (325). The most typical associations of red are rather negativisitc since it is "[a]n indicator of danger and a symbol of courage as well as revenge" (ibid). While there can be found positive connontations such as "good luck, health and happiness," red is still closely connected to "the devil and blood," and is often considered "an evil omen" (ibid). Paterson cites W. B. Yeats stating that "red is the colour '*of magic in almost every country*'" (ibid). So, witchcraft is often associated with this color as well, or at least, people with this hair color are frequently considered to possess magical abilities, and as a result, are often seen as possibly dangerous. In this story, it is also mentioned that it was "charm" that worked in the courtroom (Pauly 144), so, even if Mrs. Annan/Roxie Hart is not a witch, but at least, a charmer.

József Pál and Edit Újvári claim that red can be both associated with life and death, but in either case, it is because of the connection with blood. They also add that red is the

color of libido, hence, it signals sexuality and is considered its symbol. Although, there are several (even contradictory) connotations of red listed and discussed by Pál and Újvári, they suggest that the negative meaning arises from negative labeling and stigmatizing which originates from scarlet, which is the color of "The Woman on the Beast" (Revelation 17. 3-7), "The Babylonian Succuba" – as it is termed in Hungarian but it refers to the English: "The Woman on the Beast" (a slightly more neutral term), although, in English there is also the name "The Whore of Babylon" – who is clad in red and pruple (scarlet) and is an adulteress and holds in her cup all kinds of abominations conneted to sexual misdemeanors (Revelation 17. 3-7). Hence, red implies lechery and loose morals as well. (Pál, Újvári) In American culture, *The Scarlet Letter* signals the same as it is also presented in Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel of the same title. Thus, Mrs. Annan/Roxie Hart's lecherous behaviour, by all means, can be suggested by her red hair symbolically. To this Ferber adds that "[r]ed in literature is the color of fire, gold, and roses; it is the color of faces when they show embarrassment, anger, or the flush of health or passion. It is also the color of blood, of course, but less often than one might think, purple being its traditional literary color" (169). The color, purple, has already been mentioned above with its connection to red and it will have an interesting role in the 1942 version. In addition, Ferber also provides concrete detail concerning the devil association: "[r]ed is sometimes the color of the devil, in a tradition that goes back to Esau, who was 'red, all over like a hairy garment' (Gen. 25.25). Mann invokes this tradition with his eerie red-haired figures in *Death in Venice* and *Doctor Faustus*" (169).

After the discussion of Mrs. Annan/Roxie Hart's hair color that is used in the three above-mentioned versions (much rather the two earliest ones), it is time to return to her debut as an 'actress' as a titian haired sheba…'accidentally' in the 'real' world, and not on the screen, yet, she turns the 'real world' into a fictional world, and a world of carnival. Although, it is evident that Beulah Annan is not an 'offical' actress and what is taking place is not a film or a play on stage, yet, she is treated as a media star and the events really unfold as if it all was a show or performance either on tape or not – it actually turns into fiction. The public – in cooperation with the movie industry and as a result of the latter's machinations of image formation – usually identified the given actress/actor as a person with the role/s that s/he played which were arranged in accordance with the certain image that was created for her/him (Staiger "Seeing Stars," 3-16; de Cordova "Star System in America" 17-29) – that even happens today quite often but in the early years of cinema it was absolutely valid. Staiger notes that while the star-system had already operated on the stage for about a century before the rise of the star-system in cinema these stars were not so profitable. However, "the film

industry exploited its perceived link with the masses" (Staiger "Seeing Stars," 6) and as Staiger quotes Hampton: "everyone in the business was surprised by the 'almost hysterical acceptance of personality exploitation'" (Hampton *History of the American Film Industry*, 85-89 quoted in Staiger "Seeing Stars," 6). The independents having "more direct contact with their consumers' desires" in the interest of more profit invented personality exploitation, according to Hampton (Staiger "Seeing Stars," 6). Staiger refers to Richard de Cordova's article saying that "film discourse about the players shifted in the early teens from information about their professional lives to their personal lives" (Staiger "Seeing Stars," 14). This way, these people's two separate spheres of lives became even more combined, conneced and they were melting into one. Beulah Annan is not yet a movie or a stage (vaudeville) star, although, she would love to be one, hence, she can perform a persona that is in direct contact with, and probably under the influence of, the public – her fiction and persona is moulded in accordance with the feedback from the public and *her/story* is written not only by her and her lawyers, but in a sense, by the public, as well, thus turning this whole event into a real public entertainment, the people's entertainment: a carnival. Actually, Beulah/Roxie's desire to become a celebrity and a vaudeville star (which is emphasized in the later versions concretely) with the 'help' of murder apparently was not so unique around this times since Mae West also recalls a case when somebody reached fame out of notoriety:

> Among the big feature acts was Evelyn Nesbit, […]. Everyone went to see Evelyn on stage. Murderesses (found not guilty) were also stellar attractions for a while, and one female killer who was fired after one week asked, "What can I do to get back on?" The manager said, deadpan, "Go out and kill somebody else." (24)

In spite of the dual imagery that is projected, in the next moment, the innocent child 'takes the stand' with allusions to ladyhood. "More calm than she [Beulah Annan] was Friday, she answered the questions in her *childlike southern voice*, and turned *innocent, pleading eyes* to jury and attorney." [emphases mine] (Pauly 145) It is emphasized that she is an innocent child and a lady(-to-be) since the southern drawl is considered to be a clear sign of quintessential femininity and a lady of the (Old) South, i.e.: the old aristocracy. It is declared early on that Beulah Annan is from Kentucky (Pauly 126). Hence, the image of a refined lady(-to-be) is drawn up in front of the jury which evidently serves (a or) multiple functions. As Haim and Rivca Gordon discuss, "[m]uch of the meaning and nuances of what is said in this drawl may elude the non-southern English speaker" (27). They claim that one of

the most compelling figures of this phenomenon is Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams. Blanche "with her *sweet and polite deep southern drawl*, forcefully conveys the tension that exists between opening up the world of the deep South, and the *concealing of truths* about some of its profound *evils* and perversity" [emphases mine] (Haim and Rivca Gordon 27). They add that "speaking politely and with a sweet drawl" is only a mode of concealment of the numerous crimes (committed in the South) and that "her perfect *southern draw*l was a *manner* by which Blanche endeavors to *conceal the devastation and the evil* that characterizes her being, and much of her society" [emphases mine] (Haim and Rivca Gordon 28). I would add another striking example, Marnie's Mother, Bernice, in Hitchcock's *Marnie* (1964), who also tries to conceal her crimes and sins committed in her hidden past by speaking with the southern drawl. Hence, Beulah Annan acts the 'mini' lady not only to suggest that she is a refined female who does not commit serious crimes but also uses her southern drawl as a weapon to hide her actually committed crimes and sins, and evade punishment.

While going on with this performance, Mrs. Annan almost falls out of character for a second when she supposedly forgets what she has to say: "she faltered and sent an appealing glance to her attorney" (Pauly 145). Her lawyer, however, amicably incites her to carry on with the delivery of *her/story*, and then, "[s]he *closed her eyes* a moment, then went bravely on: 'I told him of my – *delicate condition*'" [emphases mine] (ibid). Here, the image of the mother(-to-be) is also raised to complete the repertoir. She is not only a young fragile flower (a child), and evidently, a lady but also a mother – all of the images of perfect, submissive and dutiful femininity are listed in order to ensure the successful outcome of the performance. Thus, we arrive at the apotheosis of Christian femininity: the Virgin Mary.

She also presents proper feminine fragility by being pale and weak, and she also exercises her eyelids as a mode of calming and expression of emotional horror that she can hardly endure: "[s]he *closed her eyes* – her face *pale* under the glare of the movie lights – in horror of the picture, and *weakly* described the details of the shooting" [emphases mine] (Pauly 146). The ill and pallid appearance is a curcial part of the performance because it also implies proper femininity. Although "the cult of invalidism" (Dijkstra *Idols of Perversity*, 23) became a quintessential sign of proper femininity during Victorianism its cultural heritage was yet in vogue during the 1920s as it is so still today. As Bram Dijkstra states: "[i]n *Trilby* we see the apotheosis of an *ideal of feminine passivity and helplessness* whose tubercular or anorexic presence *is still with us virtually unchanged* in the fashion pages of magazines and newspapers throughout the 'civilized' world" (*Idols of Perversity*, 36). Hence, it is clear that

female invalidism is the sign of proper feminine passivity and helplessness – not the active role of a *femme fatale* – and this imagery still affects us today. Dijkstra also comments that since during the late nineteenth-century painters painted the "paragons of virtue in an advanced state of physical debility and illness" the ultimate icon of "virtuous femininity" became the "resident household nun" harbouring death. (*Idols of Perversity*, 13-23) Accordingly, women of vigour and health became targets of inquiry and accusations (Dijkstra *Idols of Perversity*, 23). As John Ruskin so precisely defined the ideals of men and women and their roles which even prevail today:

> The *man*'s power is *active, progressive, defensive*. He is eminently *the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender*. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever conquest is necessary. But the *woman*'s power is for rule, not for battle, - and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for *sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision*. […] She must be *enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise* – wise, *not for self-*development, but for self-renunciation […] [emphases mine] (90-92)

To this, Dijkstra adds that "it was her job to turn the family home into 'a sacred place, a vestal temple, a temple of the hearth watched over by household gods'" and "the cult of woman as household nun" spread quickly (Ruskin quoted in *Idols of Perversity,* 13). I would like to mention here that Mrs. Annan becomes Mrs. Roxie Hart in the later versions (meaning male deer, a stag – a rather phallic association), in addition to an ironical reference (based on pronunciation) to heart (love and warm feelings) as well as the Queen of Hearts (again association of love and tenderness), and it could also serve as a reference to the hearth (the warm centre of the family home as described above). She is evidently none of these latter associations but as an ideal woman she should be and Watkins possibly wanted to awake these ideas to highlight the ambiguity and incongruity in her [Mrs. Annan/Mrs. Roxie Hart] person(a).

The image of the virtuous household nun was formed by the moulding of the saint and the child into one (Dijkstra *Idols of Perversity,* 22). This leads to the image of the Virgin Mary that is considered to be the role model of married women. "The madonna image as representative of the married woman's role in life was deemed especially appropriate because women and children formed, as it were, an inevitable continuity: The truly virtuous wife was, after all, as innocent as a child." (Dijkstra *Idols of Perversity,* 18) It is evident that Mrs. Annan performs these roles perfectly well turning herself into a virtuous household nun, and

as a reward she is acquitted while success and wealth are also granted. As Dijkstra states, "[t]he cult of *feminine invalidism*, then, was both among men and women inextricably associated with suggestions of *wealth and success*" [emphases mine] (*Idols of Perversity,* 28). As a result it was 'compulsory' for a woman of the middle- and upper classes to become an invalid household nun to assert her standing in society and if a woman was aspiring for the same status she had to copy this behavioral pattern. Dijkstra opines, also citing Abba Goold Woolson, that

> American women everywhere were "afflicted with weakness and desease." To be *ill* was actually thought to be *a sign of delicacy and breeding*: "With us, to be *ladylike* is to be *lifeless, inane and dawdling*. Since people who are ill must necessarily possess these qualities of *manner*, from a lack of vital energy and spirits, it follows that they are the ones studiously copied as *models of female attractiveness*." As a result, Woolson pointed out, feminine invalidism had become a veritable cult among the women of the leisure class. [emphases mine] (Woolson quoted in Dijkstra *Idols of Perversity,* 27)

However, Dijkstra makes a vitriolic and penetrating comment about what the whole point of this imagery was: "[t]hat, ultimately, was what the mid-nineteenth-century hoisting of woman onto a monumental pedestal of virtue was all about: a male fantasy of ultimate power, ultimate control – of having the world crawl at his feet" (*Idols of Perversity,* 19). This is what women like Beulah Annan and Belva Gaertner question but to survive this 'bold act' they immediately have to perform the 'prescribed role,' and since they do so they get away with their 'minor errand.' They (seemingly) turn themselves into the paragons of virtue and act the ideal woman often symbolizing this with a flower, as well.

The flower imagery is a useful one for these dallying dames to get out of their tight spot. In the original articles, it is mentioned that Beulah Annan has a "flowerlike face" (Pauly 137), and later, it is often employed in the adaptations, for example, in a way that Roxie carries a flower bouquet with herself and her lawyer highlights that she is like a flower who is crushed like this one if she is sentenced, and the lawyer tramples on the bunch of flowers. This bouquet is usually made of white flowers emphasizing her innocence and purity. During Victorianism, the female as a fragile flower imagery was also a favoured one which entered the twentieth century visual culture, as well (and evidently, this existed even before this period). The ideal woman was portrayed "as the lily of purity, whose natural realm was the flower garden, and to those denizens, in her *fragile constitution* and *petal-like sensitivity*, she corresponded." [emphases mine] (Dijkstra *Idols of Perversity,* 13) Woman as a flower was

considered the safekeeper of the male soul within the safe confines of "the walled garden of the family home." (ibid) It was a generally accepted idea that the husband was to regard himself to be a gardener and tend to his wife as if she was his flower because in her physical attributes she entirely resembled a flower. "As a matter of fact, in her very essence, her *fragility*, her *physical beauty*, her *passivity* and lack of aptitude for practical matters, woman was virtually a flower herself." [emphases mine] (Dijkstra *Idols of Perversity,* 14-15) Hence, woman turned into a "flower-woman," what is more, a "flower child" herself (*Idols of Perversity,* 16). The white rose was another typical flower to represent female purity, and in the depictions, women were often surrounded by white roses – this is the exact flower that is usually used in the later adaptations, as well –: "[…] depicting woman as a *white rose* in a sea of white roses, was a true turn-of-the-century compendium of visual platitudes concerning the *moonlit purity* and virtuous, *nunlike passivity* of the *Eternal Feminine* on its best behavior." [emphases mine] (Dijkstra *Idols of Perversity,* 16) Certainly, the quintessence of moonlit purity and nunlike passivity is the Virgin Mary, the Eternal Feminine Incarnate, she is the example for the women in marriage to follow since she was the only "one figure in history who had clearly managed to be a complete success at being simultaneously virgin, mother, and wife: Mary, the Mother of God." (Dijkstra *Idols of Perversity,* 17)

Mrs. Annan (later Roxie) only pretends and performs her success of combining the ideal feminine roles (wife, mother, daughter and virgin, i.e.: nun), but for such an earthly creature, this is enough to be celebrated. The image of the "pale, listless, childlike feminine purity" became a fancied depiction of "Winsome Womanhood" – as Margaret Sangster called it (ibid). This is what Mrs. Annan masters and her 'Winsome Womanhood' earns her freedom and success. Throughout the direct questioning she is poised and although the opening attack of the prosecution slightly nonpluses her she quickly rallies herself (Pauly 146). Watkins adds that during the action of the prosecution, Mrs. Annan is searching the prosecutor "with her shallow eyes" trying to find out what is behind all that he is doing but "[o]ne by one she repudiated every statement in the confession, varying the *defiance* of her 'no' with a *childishly petulant*, 'I don't remember'" and when they were done with this "she stepped down *demurely* from the witness stand with the settled *complacency of a school girl* who has said her piece" [emphases mine] (Pauly 147). Then, another hardly resistible tool is employed: the bowed head – "Beulah sat with bowed head through the state's opening argument […]" (ibid). As it is claimed by Dijkstra, the mythologized ladies became "pale creatures with curved necks and weak knees" (*Idols of Perversity,* 9).

The question might arise why Victorian ideology can support this argumentation since we are in the United States on the one hand, and on the other, we are approximately 25 years after Queen Victoria's death. On the one hand, Victorianism was the ruling ideology within American culture, as well, while on the other, Victorianism as cultural imperialism did no cease to exist with her death and its aftermath was still felt deep into the twentieth century. Ann J. Lane while discussing Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* concretely refers to the restrictive atmosphere of "Victorian America" (ix). Just as well, Bram Dijkstra discusses in both of his works cited in this dissertation that Victorian ideology had, and actually still has, a stronghold within and a powerful effect on the thinking and value system of the twentieth century (*Evil Sisters*, 313-316; *Idols of Perversity*, 36). Robert L. Daniel even implies that the ideas that spread in the New World and actually became its cornerstones were "woven into the fabric of European culture," hence culturally, the United States originates from Europe and shares its cultural elements right from its beginning (5). I agree with Glen Gendzel when she is saying that "[t]he 1920s brought dramatic changes in American morals and standards of behavior inherited from the Victorian era. Historians often cite this decade as a cultural turning point […]" (28). However, it is also said here that this very decade was that certain cultural turning point which means that the old concepts and values were still in vogue because there was not enough time to sweep them away entirely and if somebody was an adult (above 20-30 years of age) that meant that s/he was indocrinated into Victorian ideology and value system that did not disappear all of a sudden. As Daniel argues "[m]uch of the nineteenth-century heritage that idealized the qualities of woman and placed her on a pedestal, while severely restricting her sphere to the home and family, still impinged on husband-wife relationships in 1920" (31). In addition, during the 1930s, taking the example of Muncie, it was stated that the value system "with respect to sex roles did not differ greatly from that of the Victorian culture" (Daniel 87). Enikő Bollobás cites Gertrude Stein's opinion about the United States of her time that she considers early Victorian (426). What is more, the "feminine mystique" of the mid twentieth century – which was examined by Betty Friedan – "was a twentieth-century version of the Cult of Womanhood" directing women to domesticity, wifehood and motherhood (290). There was rebellion against Victorianism undoubtedly but there were still many who refused the novelties and the dramatic changes. As an example, "[o]lder, more conservative people were often shocked and scandalized by the behavior of the young during the Roaring Twenties" (Sara and Tom Pendergast 727). In addition, "[w]hen hemlines began to rise, several states made laws charging fines to women

wearing skirts with hemlines more than three inches above the ankle, and many employers fired women who bobbed their hair" (Sara and Tom Pendergast 732).

Additionally, women were excluded from jury duty until 1957 (and even later) (Feinman 8) which means that, during the 1920s, a jury consisted of exclusively men who had to be adults, hence at least 20-30 years old, which implies that Mrs. Annan/Roxie Hart had/has to face a jury of 12 men – since she got a grand jury (Pauly 125, 135) who were/are (on an average) probably middle-aged. Thus, they are still the children of Victorian ideals and even if some of them are the rebellious sort the performance of the ideal Victorian Woman probably will not miss the target.

> The belief that *women* had to be *protected from the sordid aspects of life* in order to *preserve their purity* led to their *exclusion from jury duty*, and even today automatic exemptions are available in many jurisdictions. Exclusion was based on the *English common-law precedent* that gave the right to serve on juries *only to men*. In 1879 the *U.S. Supreme Court* supported the common-law exclusion by deciding that states could constitutionally limit *jury duty to men only*. […] Although women *gained the right* to serve on federal juries by the *Civil Rights Act of 1957*, states continued to impose *restrictions*. [emphases mine] (Feinman 7-8)

Daniel also argues that even during the 1950s-1970s there were continued struggles for the (proper) inclusion of women into jury duty, and the belief was still lingering, even during the 1970s, "that public affairs was a man's world in which women had limited interests" (211, 351).

Accordingly, by returning to the story at hand and going on with its examination, we find again crying as an essential signifier of feminine sensibility, and possibly, remorse in front of the all male jury: "[…] Beulah, the tender hearted slayer, broke into gentle sobs" (Pauly 148). This line is full of ironic and astonishing contradictions – the abject as Kristeva theorized –: the slayer who is tender hearted and the killer who sheds gentle tears, yet, they work. Mrs. Annan is listening to the victrola while her victim is dying, is laughing during inquest, sits quite "calm and composed" while the crime is discussed in court "but she broke down when she heard her attorney's impassioned account of the suffering she had undergone at the hands of the police and assistant state's attorneys, who questioned her for statements" (ibid). Her attorney gives a very vivid account of the events and the terrible ordeal poor Mrs. Annan had and has to go through and causes her to break into tears again while the jury is almost moving together with him in their extasy. "And again she was overcome with emotion when Mr. O'Brien painted the picture of 'this *frail little girl*, gentlemen, struggling with a

drunken brute' – and the jury shook their heads in approbation and chewed their gum more energetically." [emphasis mine] (ibid) After all of the court-turned-carnival entertainment and the perfect performance of femininity – or rather the comic-grotesque masquerade of femininity –, "the people's prosecutor" asks in vain the jury not to let another beautiful and "pretty woman go out and say 'I got away with it!'" as it happens to Beulah Annan when she walks free out of the courtroom (ibid).

Mrs. Gaertner soon succeeds Mrs. Annan in the world of women with advantageous appearance who could claim 'I got away with it!' after a brief encounter with a jury at a courtroom. Since Mrs. Gaertner is a bit older and less beautiful than Mrs. Annan she has to make use of something else to have a positive effect on the jury, and in her case, this is 'class' implying ladyhood. She cannot entirely perform the innocent little girl image, she is a 'more mature version,' hence she has to focus on her alleged 'ladyhood' to appeal to the jury and the public. As Watkins states in the title of her next article: "Mrs. Gaertner Has 'Class' As She Faces Jury" (Pauly 149) implying that she is a refined lady who knows how to behave and supposedly she is not a person who could kill anybody, she is probably not even able to hurt a worm. "Demure but with an 'Air' at Murder Trial" (ibid) – this sub-title also suggests that Mrs. Gaertner is a fine woman who is well-mannered and properly educated while her 'air' also gives proof of her refinement and higher-class status which is considered as an extra to the persona she perfroms. It is as if we suddenly entered *Pride and Prejudice* and Miss. Bingley started to describe and define the concept of the accomplished woman who, according to her, "must possess a certain something in her air" to deserve this 'title' (Austen 27). To be called an accomplished woman meant to be the best in everything even among the highest ranking women. Hence, if a woman had the alleged air of a supposedly accomplished woman, she reached the top ranking among the women in society. (Kelly 256-258) "'Accomplishments' enabled marriageable and married women to display the cultural distinction that demonstrated social distinction and advanced upper- and middle-class family interests." (Kelly 257) So, if Mrs. Gaertner is supposedly a woman with an 'Air,' then, this is an indication again of being a quintessential lady.

Yet, Watkins acidly remarks that when Mrs. Gaertner encounters her jury she is "a perfect lady," although, "the lady herself was so 'dead drunk' after a night of gin and jazz at the Gingham Inn that she doesn't remember!" thus, it entirely weighs on the members of the jury to decide whether she actually shot Walter Law or not (Pauly 149). This clearly reveals that Mrs. Gaertner is not a lady because, among the many accomplishments, abstinence from alcohol is absolutely granted even without a written rule. As a result, 'her ladyship' seems to

fall from grace. Nevertheless, Mrs. Gaertner does not bother herself much with such trifles and the wife of the deceased man appears to be the more concerned of the two of them, as Waktins notices… (ibid)

Although, Belva Gaertner is not as young as Beulah Annan, and she must concentrate a slightly more on her 'mature' lady role she can still gladden the hearts of her audience with an impeccable performance of the innocent covent girl. Noone would tell that she is a cabaret performer – she is by profession – hence, her close alliance with people's entertainment and the world of the carnival is evidently revealed; just as noone would tell that she has already had two divorces – still considered a bit risqué. She perfectly acts the timid and naïve girl with downcast eyes and a shy smile.

> Cabaret dancer and twice divorcee, Mrs. Gaertner was *as demure as any covent girl* – yesterday! – with brown *eyes dreamily cast downward*. Her lips were closed in *a not-quite smile*, the contour of her cheek was unbroken by lines, and rejuvenating rouge made her well on *the dangerous side of 30*. [emphases mine] (ibid)

Nevertheless, since she is not that youthful and is not endowed with such advantageous physicality (as Mrs. Annan) she much more concentrates on her classyness as a tool. "Not so pretty, but more class" – claims a "court fan" (ibid). Accordingly, Mrs. Gaertner endeavours, and actually, manages to capitalize on her 'class' and presents glamorous couture whenever she has to make an appearance. She (re)presents class and prides herself on being "the most stylish" inmate on murderess' row (ibid):

> "Class" – that was Belva. For she lived up to her reputation as *"the most stylish" of murderess' row*: a *blue twill suit* bound with black braid, and *white lacy frill* down the front; *patent leather slippers with simmering Frnech heels*, *chiffon gun metal hose*. And a hat – ah, *that hat!* Helmet shaped, with a *silver buckle and cockade of ribbon*, with one *streamer* tied *jauntily – coquettishly – bewitchingly* – under her chin. [emphases mine] (Pauly 149-150)

It is suggested by Watkins that the last touches of Mrs. Gaertner's attire clothes her with a jaunty, coquettish and bewitching aura, or rather air, but in effect, her whole appearance reflects elegance, taste and STYLE (all in capital letters). She is evidently 'dressed to kill'…

When, her jury is selected Mrs. Gaertner gives proof of one of the major virtues a woman could possess: she is silent. "Mrs. Gaertner spoke only once – a whisper to her attorney […]" (Pauly 150). It is also mentioned above that her lips are closed (Pauly 149).

Dijkstra elaborates on the idea that it was an essential part of a "paragon of virtue and self-negation" that she had to be in silence and if she could not keep her mouth shut that "was enough to send Lohengrin packing in disgust" (*Idols of Perversity* 21). A woman had to project, at least, if she could not entirely embrace, "the house-wifely calm of Penelope" while being "lamblike and silent" (Vicinus 133). Here, it is also worth mentioning that the figure of Penelope is supposedly the symbol of "connubial fidelity" (Rauch 239), i.e.: the most loyal and faithful of women, the perfect wife. Hence, if Mrs. Annan (a divorcé and an adulteress) and Mrs. Gaertner (a twice divorcé and an adulteress) would like to aspire to the projection of this ideal they have to perform their best. In spite of the facts of their lives they manage to do so – they succeed at the performance and the projection, not the real personification… Sarah Ellis' famously quoted words (which are also reflected in Vicinus' title) also emphasize the importance of silence for a proper woman since a woman's "highest duty is so often to suffer, and be still" (Ellis 73).

The selection of jurors proceeds without delay while Mrs. Gaertner poses as a proper woman and Watkins comments that "the questioning went *merrily* on to find a *hat-proof*, *sex-proof*, and *'damp' jury*, who would also accept circumstantial evidence as conclusive" [emphases mine] (Pauly 150). The hat-proof refers to the inquiry whether the members of the jury would be influenced in their decision if the defendant wore stylish clothes and whether her pretty appearance or refined dressing-style would induce them to acquit her. To this inquiry (that occurs in a merry atmosphere) they all answer that they would not be the least influenced by the clothing style or the sex of the defendant, and not even the fact that "the lady had been drinking that evening" would make them prejudiced against her because they are not 'dry' and would even allow a 'lady' a little experiment with a certain substance. (ibid) What is more, when the gin bottle that was found in Mrs. Gaertner's car next to the dead body is presented in court, she 'arm in arm' with the jury shows eager interest and anticipation at the sight. "Belva's jury, selected for their lack of prejudice in favor of the Volstead act, pepped up a bit at sight of this [the gin bottle], and Belva herself leaned forward. But it was empty." (Pauly 152) Later the "floorman of the Gingham Inn" – where Mrs. Gaertner and Mr. Law supposedly got intoxicated evidently suggesting that it was a speakeasy – was asked in court about this alleged intoxication but he swore that "the Gingham Inn is matched in dryness only by the Sahara" (Pauly 153).

The Prohibition evidently adds a little twist to all of the topsy-turviness of the story and heightens its humorous aspect, however, it was no laughing matter in itself. This cultural-historical phenomenon as well as a piece of legislation played an important part in the history

of the United States. It was originally meant to serve the nation and to lessen the alcohol consumption, yet, it did not manage to fulfill its "noble" (Jones 442) goal. "The Prohibition experiment reflected a utopian faith that the alcohol problem could be eradicated by legislation. But the Eighteenth Amendment, effective on January 16, 1920, and the Volstead Act of 1919, passed to implement it, proved impossible to enforce." (Jones 441) It intended to regulate the production, the commerce and the consumption of alcoholic beverages. "Under the amendment, the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors […] was prohibited" (Schweikart, Michael Allen 529). Although, aimed as an amelioration of social-cultural-economic tendencies it resulted in much more severe and damaging consequences – than expected or what could be anticipated – effecting the development of the whole of the United States by, for instance, boosting organized crime and the operation of bootleggers, strengthening the underworld and the gangs, increasing the violation of the law to such an extent that by 1932 it was evident that the given amendment had to be repealed which helped the Democrats to win, and they repealed it by means of the Twenty-First Amendment in 1933. (Jones 441-443; Schweikart, Michael Allen 541-542)

One problem was the flourishing of the criminal world and the inability of establishment to control it but another, more influential, problem was the popular resistance. "A more fundamental difficulty was the extent of popular opposition. A sizeable minority, including both the very rich and the immigrant working class, regarded Prohibition as an intolerable infringement of personal liberty and simply defied it." (Jones 441) While in rural territories Prohibition was generally respected, was considered right and people behaved accordingly, in communities that were against it and mostly the great cities resisted; as an example, "[i]n 1929 New York City possessed 32,000 speakeasies – twice the number of its saloons before Prohibition began" (Jones 442) – and in *Chicago*, we evidently encounter the big city and its attitude. Chicago was famously one of the great fortresses of the anti-prohibition activities with mushrooming illegal saloons all ruled over by Al Capone: "[g]unplay and violence, as law enforcement agents tried to shut down bootlegging operations, led to countless deaths. Intergang warfare killed hundreds in Chicago alone between 1920 and 1927" (Schweikart, Michael Allen 541).

As Mrs. Gaertner as well as Mrs. Annan are women who are in favor of a 'good drink,' it is interesting to mention that the Prohibition was largely induced and advocated by women activists and it was, in great part, created in the defense of women and families, yet, led to the increased attendance of speakeasies by women immensely.

> The leadership of the early Prohibition movement included many famous women, such as Carry Nation, who were concerned with *protecting the nuclear family* from the assault by *liquor* and *prostitution*. She was wrong in her assessment of the problem. Far from protecting women by improving the character of men, Prohibition perversely *led women down to the saloon*. *Cocktails*, especially, were *in vogue* among these *"liberated" women*, who, like their reformer sisters, came from the ranks of the well-to-do. [emphases mine] (ibid)

Hence, we could say that both Mrs. Gaertner and Mrs. Annan could be termed as 'liberated women' who do not seem to be concerned that they should fear liquor or prostitution as threats to their conjugal felicity and familial bliss. They are whether well-to-do or not marching merrily down the road of hard liquor and its 'joint (ad)ventures.' Accordingly, Mrs. Gaertner's case is the 'child' of the Prohibition era and the approach and attitude toward her (and her behavior) as a 'lady' who drinks liquor, hard drink, is a doubly problematic and sensitive issue, however, the jury is selected with care, of people who are not against a 'little night out' and might have visited an 'honorable institution of such services.'

Watkins ironically reckons that Mrs. Gaertner's "defense – loss of memory – will at least be unique," although, the state attorney insists that her case is not different from that of Kitty Malm, hence, suggesting that she could expect, at least, "a verdict of 'life,'" but maybe even a death sentence (Pauly 150). Then, the title of the next article announces: "State Launches Trial of Belva For Law Killing" (Pauly 151) – an evident word play, and the sub-title again refers to her stylishness: "Dancer Faces Jury in Fashion's Latest" (ibid). Belva Gaertner danced herself into this situation – as Watkins suggests – but certainly dances herself out of it with the same "twinkling feet" (ibid). Yet, her dancing days seem to be over, for a short period of time, and she has to curb her leg-related inclinations and resist such temptations. She does not really have another choice and accordingly she "registered virtuous calm" when her case opens (ibid). In her case, it appears, that perfect innocence is not possible to be presented (in court) and even Watkins describes her and her actions as much more 'revealing' than as it happened in the other case. Belva Gaertner, although, plays the virtuous lady with refinement and class she cannot perform the innocent girl (because of her *past*…), and her 'true colors' are more often contrasted with what she presents. Interestingly, it does not mean a disadvantage, and in the later versions, it also appears that she is formed as a more *fatal* lethal woman (than Mrs. Annan/Roxie Hart), a much more serious and experienced woman who does not entirely hide her dark intentions – in a sense, she is much more frank and sincere in all of the versions and she is usually depicted as a slightly more

intelligent woman (than Mrs. Annan/Roxie Hart). In spite of her (relative) 'sincerity,' it is true that she lies about the murder and denies any knowledge of its occurrence while it is evident that she did, at least, she does not try to cover herself in the halo of a saint. She has much more experience in the show business, with men and with life in general, and she does not intend to deny her *past*. In fact, she does not even deny committing the murder, she just claims that she was "so drunk she doesn't remember" (ibid). 'A drunk lady' – that is an 'artistic challenge' even for a professional and experienced actress but Mrs. Gaertner/Velma Kelly succeeds: everybody forgets about the 'drunk' and only the 'lady' remains…

Watkins highlights this visible duality but together with the 'audience' she admires with a certain reverence how Belva Gaertner performs, maybe, the role of her life in order to avoid life sentence or even death. "Her *sultry eyes* never lost their *dreaminess* […] [h]er *sensuous mouth* kept its *soft curves* […] *[c]alm and poised* – but her slim French-heeled shoes beat the floor, *twitched nervously*, and crossed and re-crossed themselves" (ibid). Here, the duplicitousness and the contrasts are more emphasized: sultry eyes (supposedly burning with desire and ambition) that are only timidly swimming in a dreamy haze or a sensuous mouth (that has met many other ones and quite likely expects some more) is closed in a soft smile as if on the face of a Madonna. She is calm and poised but her dancing feet do not lie… Nevertheless, when the "Café Scene" is over as well as the discussion of the 'fact' that she put "her ex-husband's gun, for fear of a hold-up" into the car, and the trial is suspended for the day "[w]ith similar *aplomb*, Mrs. Gaertner, *most 'stylish' of Murderess' Row*, fastened her '*choker*,' gathered up her *white kid gloves* as court adjourned, and *swept out*" [emphases mine] (Pauly 153). She is quite determined, self-assured and confident again in the full bloom of her style and class as she leaves the place of her (future) judgment, yet, some slight contrasts are emphasized here, as well.

Nonetheless, she is found "not guilty" and it does not matter that she was "'[s]o drunk she didn't remember' whether she shot Walter Law "the jury said she didn't" (Pauly 153-154). The minute the verdict is revealed Belva Gaertner forgets about her 'ladyness' and starts laughing uncontrollably and talking loudly, she also hugs her lawyers impulsively while thanking the jury, of course, their kind help. All of a sudden, she is not refined, well-mannered, restrained and silent any more, but it does not matter since the performance was a success, she did her best which won her the desired reward, and the curtain fell.

> Mrs. Gaertner *lost her emotionless poise* she maintained throughout the trial, burst into *hysterical laughter*, *threw her arms* around her attorneys, and

> thanked the jury. […] "O, I'm so happy!" she *exclaimed* over and over, "so happy! And I want to hurry out now and get some air!" [emphases mine] (Pauly 154)

Then, as if nothing happened she goes home after collecting "her elaborate wardrobe from jail" and declares that she "will re-marry her divorced husband" soon, after which "they will sail for Europe 'to forget all this'" (ibid). She behaves as if nothing happened, as if she had not divorced her ex-husband, had several lovers, killed a man, had drinking issues, lied at court etc. Her only concerns are her wardrobe, her remarriage and a European vacation where she could forget all this unnecessary nightmare. She treats everything that happened as trifles and the only thing that matters is the (financial and social) safety that her 'new' marriage will secure while the marriage of another woman is ruined forever… Mrs. Freda Law half-faintingly starts sobbing and utters after hearing the verdict: "There's no justice in Illinois! No justice!" (ibid).

Yet, before Belva Gaertner is acquitted six and a half hours have to pass while waiting for they jury's verdict. In the meantime, she is pacing up and down the "'bullpen'" smoking one cigarette after the other. (ibid) What "the blasé divorcée, Cook county's most stylish defendant" does not know is that the Judge Lindsay himself is of the opinion that even if the jury arrives with "a verdict of guilty […] the Supreme Court would reverse the decision" (ibid). In court, the crowd and "the court fans sleepily" listen to the legal procedure "[b]ut they all sat alert" when the defendant's age is mentioned "and turned to stare at the slim, youthfully rounded creature who'd never looked prettier" (Pauly 155). It is again her looks, style and elaborate clothing that are in focus, and help Mrs. Gaertner immensely. Even if she is being tried for murder, she looks young and pretty, and that is almost all that seem to matter. Her appearance is impeccable as usual, the masquerade is on, still, her hands betray her nervousness and her true age … but nothing more:

> And she wore *a new dress – café au lait, braided in black, with bell shaped sleeves and deep cuffs* – that clung in *soft folds* to her body. And the *cloche hat of a deeper brown matched her eyes*, and the *mink "choker"* softened the lines of her throat. Only her hands with their *rosily tinted nails* showed her age – and nervousness, as she played with her *gloves and fur* while the state attempted early in the day again to prove she was not "too drunk to remember." [emphases mine] (ibid)

It is evident that she is very elegant and wears rich clothes and accessories, hence, her ladyness is supported greatly again with these material pieces and the state is trying in vain to reach a verdit of guilty.

The news of Mrs. Gaertner's acquittal warms the hearts of "her playmates in the county jail" – as Watkins comically refers to this whole endeavour that Mrs. Gaertner has been through as a game, and the prison as a playground where nice little girls are playing together using the people, the court, the jury, the media and everybody and everything as their toys (Pauly 156). However, Sabella Nitti is not so 'lucky' since she got the death sentence for chopping up her husband with the help of a roomer. (ibid) Her name and her difficulty of expression allude to her being (possibly) an immigrant with not yet adequate knowledge of English, probably of Italian origin: "'Me choke'" – which being interpreted reads: 'I'm sentenced to hang' – and now awaits a new trial" (ibid). Another example of her linguistic impairment is: "She have gun. She shoot. She go free. Me; no gun, no shoot; me here over a year!" (ibid) She is right nevertheless but this does not help her and does not affect Mrs. Gaertner or Mrs. Annan the least. They leave this 'insignificant creature' and all the other inmantes behind and do not even think about this all again: "'pretty' Beulah Annan and 'stylish' Belva Gaertner, robbed the women's quarters of their claims of distinction and plunged murderess' row into oblivion" (ibid). Oblivion, this is where Sabella Nitti is heading and cannot hope for publicity and acquittal since she is "middle aged and – well, [… is not] cursed with the grace or the beauty of Diana," in addition, she 'only' "bumped off" her husband, not a (possibly) fashionable and handsome young man (ibid). Watkins adds finally that Sabella Nitti, at least, will get the chance for masquerade and can attempt to perform a carnivalesque performance of a lady juts like the other woman before her, but Watkins is not too positive about the result that can be expected either, still, she [Sabella Nitti] will: "be given the same chance with the 'weapons of defense' that the other women have had: powder, rouge, lipstick, and mascara" (ibid).

Watkins concludes by suggesting that all this never stops because this whole masquerade starts over and over again. It is really like a theatre or a circus that never ends functioning. It finishes the performance at one place and continues it at another, in a sense, repeating (almost) the same repertoir. We have just 'released' Beulah Annan and Belva Gaertner but the rest of the women still in jail prepare themselves for their trials with the same 'tools' of feminine masquerade and "[s]hops send dresses on approval, friends bring frocks of their own, and anxious lawyers borrow from their wives for their clients. *They study every effect, turn, and change* – and who can say it's time wasted?" [emphases mine] (Pauly 157).

Finally, it is mentioned that Beulah Annan as soon as she "was out she up and left poor Al cold and flat; and now Belva rushes off to a wedding" also claiming that it must be "charm" by all means and in every sense (ibid). However, dismissing the (implied and alleged) magical abilities of ordinary women it still remains that charm is the result of industrious planning of appearance and properly rehearsed acting of the role of the ideal woman and all depends on the performance in the end. Most of the issues I discussed in this part will apply to the later versions, as well, during the examination of which I will not go into detail about them again.

6. 1. 2. The Original Drama (1927)

It is an interesting question to see why and how the story of *Chicago* started its long-lasting existence in American culture, and the means through which it became a recurrent theme throughout the twentieth century in various media. My proposition is that Watkins foresaw the power behind the murder stories (she started to deal with female aggression and crimes committed by women) and its subsequent media manipulation that later became a quite prevalent issue in American culture throughout the twentieth century. It seemed that the entire context of the twentieth century was all about murder and media manipulation. Today, when more and more news are about women - even little girls aged ten or eleven, who murder somebody or commit some sort of serious crime, not even mentioning numerous films and TV series etc. which feature such topics - *Chicago* seems to be just one story among many others dealing with female murderers or violence committed by women. However, the story of *Chicago* has something unique to offer, a special milieu that has recurrence in various adaptations. Thomas H. Pauly observed the above-mentioned issues when he was discussing Watkins's 1927 drama in 1997:

> That Maurine Watkins and her comedy should be so forgotten today is almost amazing in view of all the attention recently lavished on the trials of Amy Fisher, the Menendez brothers, and O. J. Simpson. Watkins's play offers a bracing reminder that lurid crimes were as aggressively commercialized seventy years ago as they are today. As we grow uneasily aware of the hyperbole and hypocrisy in our media's exploitation of yet another trial, *Chicago* demonstrates that similar conditions have existed for most of the twentieth century. Even better, Watkins's comedy ridicules these conditions and exposes folly far more effectively than the standard complaints about our media-crazed society. Her comic depiction of a woman groping toward liberation and the future foregrounds pressures women still face, but it is downright uncanny in its anticipation of today's news-as-entertainment culture. (viii)

He continues over-viewing the story of *Chicago* before the 2002 version that gave a new swing to this story and to all of the debates and arguments around it. Pauly notes that

> […] the fascination with crime, celebrity, and image fabrication, which factored so prominently into the background and writing of *Chicago*, has only intensified and increased the pertinence of her comedy. These were significant considerations in the 1940s decision to make *Roxie Hart*. They were very much on the minds of the producers who sought the rights to Watkins's play back in the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, they factored prominently into the enthusiastic reception of the Fosse musical when it finally opened in 1975. Today, they are more evident than ever. As criticisms mount over the ways newspapers, the nightly television news, and prime-time gossip shows exploit trials to hold their audience's attention, *Chicago* reminds us that the 1920s had its own Amy's and O. J.'s. Indeed, it portrays a culture enough like our own that it deserves to be remembered. (xxviii)

The critic's jeremiads must have been heard indeed, for in 2002, *Chicago* was adapted to screen again. An upsurge of discussions on the above-mentioned subject matters ensued, and certainly, on the story itself, especially, on the *herstories* of *Chicago*. Marty Richards, the producer of the 2002 film adaptation – when questioned about the latest version of *Chicago* – declared: "[y]eah, it's all about murder, greed and adultery, everything we hold near and dear to our hearts. That's what *Chicago* is about. It's everything that is happening now in the papers. That's what it's about; it's today's headlines, it's the six o'clock news…" (Marshall "Behind the Scenes" 22)

Martin O'Brien, Rodanthi Tzanelli and Majid Yar, in their article entitled "Kill-n-tell (& all that jazz): The seductions of crime in Chicago," are also of the opinion that the case of Beulah Annan was "comparable, in its day, to the 1995 trial of O.J. Simpson" (246). They also add that although the narrative itself takes place in the past hence wearing the marks of a specific era the message it means to convey is contemporary even today: "[a]lthough the storyline is not contemporary – it concerns both something that happened long ago and something that really happened – the messages it contains, as Meyer and Bogdan (1999) observe of traditional stories, are very much so." (Martin O'Brien, Rodanthi Tzanelli and Majid Yar 246) In addition, it appears that the enduring recurrence of the story – reflected "in the story's commercial and cirtical success" – on the theatrical stage and the cinematic screen on a global scale "suggests that the tale's 'fundamental messages' are more than ephemeral reflections of cultural synchronicity" (ibid). They conclude this stream of thought by elevating the story – and concretely its latest, 2002 film version – together with its merits to the highest levels: "[c]onsequently, we hold that this film stands as an exemplary re-presentation of

symbolic themes in the understanding of crime and deviance that have resonated across time and space" (ibid).

In the "Behind the Scenes" video, Rob Marshall states about Watkins's play that "it was a huge hit when it ran on Broadway in the 20s because it was happening then (18 min). Neil Meron, the executive producer of the 2002 version, is claiming something similar about the 1942 film adaptation of Watkins' story: "it's classical of its time" since it provided "a pointed look at the judicial system" (Marshall "Behind the Scenes" 19 min). Then, he goes on saying about the 1976 version that "It is relevant today. It has become even more relevant today than when it opened in the 70s. It feeds into the bureocracy, the judicial system, how everything became commercialized and a showbusiness" (Marshall "Behind the Scenes" 21 min). Then, Rob Marshall, the director of the 2002 film adaptation, gives a rather hard criticism about his own culture while discussing the story: "[i]t's a comment on us, and on how we as a culture tend to celebrate people who have done bad things" (ibid). O'Brien, Tzanelli and Yar cite Penfold stating that "there is a long-standing history of fascination with criminals and their acts," and later, "that from the late 19th century these figures increasingly gave way to two new types of celebrated criminality – the *criminal celebrity* and most recently the *celebrity criminal*. (Penfold 30-31 cited in Martin O'Brien, Rodanthi Tzanelli and Majid Yar 249-250) It is also valid in the case of this version of *Chicago* when Stephen Prince cites Vivian Sobchack's ideas that, for example, in *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), "the stylization of violence" occurs and that "graphic screen violence performs a cathartic effect," and eventually "it kindly stylized death for us; it created nobility from senselessness, it choreographed a dance out of blood and death" (39). An expressive example for this is the *Cell Block Tango* scene where the women sing and dance how they murdered their male companions. (Appendix xv/103-106) Sobchack also makes a critical remark that, according to her with which I do not agree, "[t]oday, most American films have more interest in the presence of violence than its meaning" (120).

However, Marshall also declares right at the beginning that "*Chicago* is a satire basically" (Marshall "Behind the Scenes" 50 sec). John C. Reilly is also of a similar opinion: "It's a satire" with a lot of "humor and humanity" (Marshall "Behind the Scenes" 22 min) suggesting that while it is comic it also provides something substantial. "It is a really funny, fun ride but it also has something important to say," adds Rob Marshall (ibid).

Hence, it seems that Watkins managed to produce a literary piece of work, which might not claim to be on the pedestal of classical works, yet shares something very unique and important with such works of magnitude: it communicates universal truths. As Mario

Praz defines citing Grierson (who bases his ideas on Bruntière): "[t]he work of the classical artist is to give individual expression, the beauty of form, to a body of common sentiments and thoughts which he shares with his audience, thoughts and views which have for his generation the validity of universal truths" (*Romantic Agony* 7). It seems that Watkins' story functions like this and not only for her own generation but for the following generations, as well.

When Watkins wrote her drama, she started to weave the trope of the Black Widow's murderous web in her writing, which soon made its way to the screen. Throughout the twentieth century the story interestingly switched back and forth between stage and screen. The fine lace of murder brought fame and success to the character of Roxie, to her 'author,' and to all other consequent creators of the later versions of *Chicago*. The success of *Chicago* was foreshadowed when the stage performance gained immense success despite the mixed criticism it had. Among the appraisals were literary compilations that listed this text among the best plays of 1926-27 (Mantle v-ix, 12, 27-28, 94-117, 354, 452), especially that of George Jean Nathan, who, in the preface to the 1927 edition of Watkins's work, championed its American features:

> […] with its few unavoidable defects, her play is an eminently worth-vile affair, its roots in verity, its surface polished with observation and humorous comprehension, its whole witty, wise and appropriately mordant. It is American to the core; there is not a trace of imitativeness in it; and it discloses, unless I am badly mistaken, a talent that will go a considerable distance in the drama of the land. (Watkins viii)

Nathan also noted that "[t]his play, the first to be published in the library of significant modern theatrical compositions to be known as *The Theatre of Today*, those critics who have a fondness for pigeon-holes have had a hard time laying hold of an appropriate label" and continued saying that "[t]his 'Chicago' may be described roughly as a burlesque show written by a satirically minded person." (vii). In the same context, the critic observed that

> [t]he note of satirical burlesque is strange to the American theatrical ear. It has seldom been struck, and then with indifferent success. 'Chicago,' it seems to me, marks the happiest attempt to date. In it, we may find inkling and a promise of the soundly sophisticated drama of an increasingly receptive and intelligent native playhouse. (ix)

During that time Broadway meant the recognition and praise of somebody's drama and Watkins reached that. "Broadway was […] the 'legitimate stage,' as it has been labeled in the nineteenth century to distinguish it from vaudeville, burlesque, and the musical revue" (Hamilton 48). Watkins' Broadway success could be considered as a guarantee of quality work. The Broadway was the symbol of the 'Theatre' as Hollywood stood for the 'Cinema.' Even in *All About Eve* during the 1950s, this is suggested. The theatre world of Broadway was not to be defeated by the rising world of the movies. "In the 1920s the Times Square legitimate district was enjoying an unprecedented boom, even in the face of motion picture competition" (Hamilton 48). However, it has to be added that Enikő Bollobás opines that Broadway (already then) only stood for commercial(ized) and mainstream entertainment while the maturation and professionalization of the theatre as art occurred in the alternative smaller theatres and theatrical companies such as the "Provincetown Players" or the "Washington Square Players" etc. She also suggests that the first great boom and flourishing of the American drama happened during modernism, when the topics turned toward the private and the ordinary, the family and the struggles of people intimately connected. (Bollobás 490) Watkins' work from this/these point/s of view is contradictory, yet, it was considered to be a quality work as well as a commercial success – sometimes these two factors do not exclude each other – while considering the themes handled in her work, she combined both the private and the public as well as the ordinary – and poked fun at all of them.

It seems that Watkins and (her) *Chicago* had the best of prospects for future considerable praise, recognition and therefore, further adaptations. According to Bill Condon, the writer of the screenplay for the 2002 version, the disillusionment after the Watergate scandal(s) was one factor in the success of the 1976 vaudeville version (Marshall "Behind the Scenes" 20 min). Thus, in accordance with them and Pauly, I suggest that *Chicago* appeared again and again because it had relevance during the entire twentieth century as it still does in the twenty-first, as well. *Chicago* is not simply one among all the stories tackling the question of murderers or even especially female ones and/or the problem of media manipulation. It reaches a long way back to where all these problems started concerning the public discussion of female aggression. Certainly, female murderers and violent women have always existed, they killed people and committed violent acts of all kinds; the difference lay solely in how it was presented, discussed and tackled. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth – due to the results of the various political, financial, economic, social and cultural changes, not to mention the historical events of varying importance – the

role and situation of women started to change immensely also resulting in a modification and alteration of the discourse related to them. It is true, however, that the kind of discourse concerning female violence and aggressive behavior which really attempted to understand and discuss properly these subject matters appeared only during the seventies but there had been a few attempts before that, as well; and it could be stated that *Chicago* during the twenties was one of these.

The handling of 'deviant' people of all sorts is always one of the most problematic matters of a state, or in other terms, a culture but the question of gender adds to the severity of this problem all the time. Watkins while trying to show a distorting mirror to American culture criticizing several problematic points in it – such as media manipulation, the flaws of the judicial system and so on – she also attempted to cast light upon how problematic the handling of female murderers and women's aggressive behavior are. Watkins presented – and at the same time satirized – the schizophrenic attitude towards female offenders. She tried to present several alternatives to the phenomenon of the female murderer herself – for example, an immigrant woman, or a mother, even a mentally ill person, etc. – yet, the underlying principle of tackling these lawless women is to be found in it exposed and criticized, that is, women who err are either handled too strictly or too leniently in a paternalistic manner, writes Edwin M. Schur (213-231). When using the expression, female murderer, I refer to the women committing crimes; and I exclude from my argumentation the gender-biased term from multiple critical essays, that of the 'murderess.' Schur's position is also relevant in connection with the female murderers of *Chicago* since these convicted women are treated too severely, like the character Hunyak in the 1927 drama, in the 1976 vaudeville and the 2002 film version, too. Other convicted women of most versions of *Chicago* are presented quite leniently like Roxie in the 1927 drama, the 1927 film adaptation, the 1942 film version, the 1976 vaudeville and the 2002 adaptation.

Watkins drew her female murderers by presenting them in a different light from what was customary around her time. In the early twentieth century, the imagery of the *femme fatale* still loomed over the violent or, sometimes even, the solely unconventional women; in the film industry, the duality of the *ingénue* and the *vamp* was also prevalent. The mainstream logic of representation followed this line but Watkins did not adhere to this view. Instead, she turned to the topic of representing criminal women with wry humor and satirical stance. She ridiculed the strict and serious angel-devil duality and highlighted its contradictions via presenting the techniques of how a perfect angel, *ingénue*, can be performed before any court while having much more affinity to the she-devil identity, that is, the *vamp* herself.

According to Enikő Bollobás, one of the main concerns of modernist women writers was to reveal whether there is really a feminine/female essence that constitutes women's identity and conception of themselves or these are only social constructions. Bollobás states that these women writers drew the conclusion that femininity or womanliness is only a construction and is imposed on women by society. The modernist women writers already suggested – long before Butler – that gender identity is only a performance and clothing has a central role in this performative construction of identity while they supposed that underneath the performative covers of clothes, for example, there is an underlying ontological essence that in independent from sex/gender. They also presumed that women have to play roles and through these perfromative acts they become the persona(s) the role(s) of which they (have to) play and they 'transubstantiate' into those covers, costumes and masks. These women writers created female characters that are complex and combine in themselves both femininity and masculinity or own traits that are independent from sex/gender. In addition, underneath the 'covers and masks' of these characters they did not plant an 'essential femininity' but concentrated on androgyny. (Bollobás 424-425) Watkins as a modernist woman writer appears to follow the exact same trend in *Chicago*. She highlights the performativity and masquerade of Roxie and Velma (and everybody around them), she goes into detail about how their public/trial persona is contructed and ridicules as well as criticizes all this process pinpointing how hypochritical, artificial, artful, deceitful and useless the whole construction of ideal femininity is together with its performance. With the help of her wit she treats these questions via the weapons of the comic.

Watkins based her story on real-life events, having had first-hand experiences about the female murders phenomena. As it was written in *The Best Plays of 1926-27* about the season in Southern California, "[…] 'Chicago' continued for two months to teach Hollywood flappers how to handle the law" (Mantle 28). Watkins turned upside-down the existing system with a hilarious play from which the girls and women of the Roaring Twenties, the *flappers*, could learn how to distance themselves from these images and how to "play with them if they pleased." The *flapper*, in a nutshell since 'she' has been discussed, was easy-going girl wearing bobbed hair and short skirt, who mostly concentrated only on partying and leisure time, and for whom social liberation was more important than any other intellectual activity; the *flapper* behaved in a carefree manner and was typically considered sensual because of the sexual liberties she took in the name of the "new morality" (Haskell 75-76; Allen, *Only Yesterday* 61-86; Kitch 121-135). However, what connects the phenomenon of the *flapper* here - apart from the fact that Beulah Annan and Belva Gaertner both belonged to this very

generation - is that the *flapper* women adopted the air of the *vamp* borrowing it from the cinema stars of the era.

In spite of this, if they want to get away with their crimes, they have to put the *vamp* imagery aside a bit for a while and adopt the prescribed imagery of the ideal woman. They can stick to this *vamp* imagery only to that extent that they might look pretty and becoming. As Pauly claims about Roxie, she has to learn that to receive the support of the newspapers and journalists, and possibly that of the public via this, she constantly has to provide interesting news and information. In addition, she also has to "be eye-catching if she is to get noticed" (Pauly xxiv). Pauly also emphasizes that Roxie has to conform to the traditional expectation concerning women: To be found innocent, these murderesses must disavow their original motives and ally themselves with the traditional expectation that women be attractive, loyal, and submissive" (ibid). Pauly even adds such expressive and strong words that she has to "appear compliant and dumb – an exemplary wife" (ibid). So, it does not matter that we are theoretically in the 1920s, after the first wave of feminism, and in the supposed era of women's freedom, if these women want to win their trial, they have to act the dumb and compliant "exemplary wife" and they only have to emphasize their attractiveness and feminine beauty. In the 1920s, the concept of the exemplary wife still requires being compliant, submissive, loyal and dumb; and the only conception of an ideal woman is that of an exemplary wife. As Pauly also adds, Roxie has to learn "the importance of dressing like the fairer sex and behaving like the weaker one," so, the proper "image construction" is paramount (xxiv-xxv).

What is even more important in Roxie's 'education' is that she actually is not demanded or required to convert herself into a good woman, she only has to appear [!] one, what is more, this is the key to (her) success: only appearing something, not becoming one. "The single most important element of this education, by far, is for Roxie to understand that appearance is critical and that actual reform is unnecessary and even undesirable" (Pauly xxv). The advisors of Roxie such as "Jake, Billy and the Matron" teach her how to build up her appearance and capitalize on it since "dress and demeanor are merely *show*, necessary capitulation to a cluture unwilling to relinquish what it no longer believes" (ibid). Hence, as a result of all the masquerade and preformativity – I agree with Pauly when he states that – "[i]n the end, Roxie succeeds precisely because she alters *only* her appearance" (ibid).

That Watkins was able to form and twist this story in a way that it turned out to be such a success mostly laid in its specificity that she combined crime and murder with humor: an issue that is considered repulsive and condemnable while the mode how it is presented and

narrated is comic. As Mario Praz puts into words similar ideas with a slight ironic comment included: "[b]eauty and poetry, therefore, can be extracted from materials that are generally considered to be base and repugnant, as, indeed, Shakespeare and the other Elizabethans knew long before this, though, they did not theorize about it" (*Romantic Agony* 28). Hence, even if Watkins' choice of subject matter might seem strange it is not something to be refused or refuted since there has already been a tradition to treat such issues in literary works with great success, and I would add, even in a comic tone. One other possible reason for the enduring success of *Chicago* might be its materialism – and its down-to-earth approach to its themes. As Mario Praz states about Macaulay citing Mark Pattison:

> He is in accord with the average sentiment of orthodox and stereotyped humanity on the relative value of the objects and motives of human endeavour. And this commonplace materialism is one of the secrets of his popularity, and one of the qualities which guarantee that that popularity will be enduring. (*The Hero in Eclipse* 112)

Since, it is evident that Watkins' humorous approach and ironic treatment of the issues at hand are the result of her reason and her rational interpretation of human absurdities and non-sense. Another mode of rationalization, and quite probably also source of success, of the story – that appeared during Victorianism – is that it entirely dismisses mysticism, magic as well as the horror tradition: "[i]stead of demons there would be criminals, instead of the mystery of a medieval castle, the mystery of a crime; […] during the Victorian epoch, at raising an intellectual thrill, Wilkie Collins, initiated the detective story, that positive, bourgois type of fairy tale" (Praz, *The Hero in Eclipse* 152). Watkins' pratical and honest approach to the narration and presentation of the events and the people partaking in them probably also greatly contributed to her success as was the case with Trollope: "[a]ll he propsed to himself was to look at the world honestly and to portray men exactly as they were, so that his readers should be able to recognize themselves in his books and not feel that they had been transported amongst divinities and demons" (Praz, *The Hero in Eclipse* 265). Watkins' story – just like those of Trollope or Thackeray – is "falvoured with the ironical bourgeois common sense" (Praz, *The Hero in Eclipse* 316).

Watkins' crime story is entirely a bourgois type of 'fairy tale' which treats the characters and the events with reason and wisdom highlighting the problems with the help of humor thus producing a criticising as well as entertaining satire. Thackeray was doing the same, for example, with *Vanity Fair*, although Becky Sharp is also a *femme fatale* figure who

walks free and can mostly get away with anything, the underlying message of the story is that the author does not agree with this, that is why, he also suggests that this is "A Novel Without a Hero" (5). Praz is also of the opinion that Thackeray "wrote deliberately" that it is a novel without a hero (*The Hero in Eclipse* 169). "Thackeray, in short, is an incarnation of the bourgeois reaction against the portrayal of the honourable bandit, of the murderer so gentle that he steps aside to avoid crushing a worm" (Praz, *The Hero in Eclipse* 161). As Abrams also suggests, satire can also be called "corrective comedy" in which the criminal or amoral or immoral or unethical (or their combinations) acts and actors are presented as being "grotesquely or repulsively ludicrous rather than lightly amusing" (Abrams 39). Cuddon adds that "[…] satire is a kind of protest, a sublimation and refinement of anger and indignation. As Ian Jack had put it very adroitly: 'Satire is born of the instinct to protest; it is protest become art'." (780)

Watkins expresses her anger and indignation as well as her (self)-criticism in her satire. She does all this in a rational manner and avoids melodrama, that is why, the 1927 film adaptation being a melodrama greatly diverges from the original, but she uses humor to avoid this and real heroism as well. She is again similar in this to Thackeray. "Both he [Trollope] and Thackeray dislike the melodramatic and the heroic; in them, even violent secenes are tempered with humour. And this, of course, is the typical Biedermeier attitude towards sensationalism […]" (Praz, *The Hero in Eclipse* 162-163). In addition, her humor was able to sell her story so well that the public and the system she criticized cheered her and her work with enthusiasm. This is also a parallel with Thackeray: "[…] Thackeray was received with enthusiasm by the very world against which his satire was aimed" (Praz, *The Hero in Eclipse* 197). Additionally, what is stated about Thackeray's tone is also valid in the case of Watkins as well: "grotesque, caricaturish, ironical" (Praz, *The Hero in Eclipse* 232).

Regina Barreca states that "all the best female humorists" are troublemakers with their "devastating wit" (*Women's Humor* 3). I would suggest that not only the female ones but humorists is general are troublemakers in the manner of the *Vice*. They all are actually devilish figures who dare talk about the problems while manage to package their opinion in humor that let them get away with it. John Parkin suggests that within the roots of the Bakhtinian carnival we can find that the comic and the tragic spring from the same root and there is not really purely comic and exclusively tragic, and Bakhtin illustrates it "via the Dionysian cults of ancient Greece which were the source of comedy but also of tragedy, these being mutual complements and fulfillments of one another" (92). Wylie Sypher while also asserting this, and that "the ancients" already had a "cruel sense of the comic," takes one step

further in claiming that comedy can tell even more about ourselves and our situation than tragedy could (193). Although, he asserts that the understanding of the complexities and contradictions of comedy leads us back to the Greeks again whose "primitive violence of comedy" was refined "almost beyond recognition" by the later generations (Sypher 214).

However it is true that Watkins as a woman was in a doubly complicated situation concerning the use humor since "[T]HE CREATION and enjoyment of humor have traditionally been considered masculine privileges […]" (Barreca, *Women's Humor* 1, Gillooly 15), to this Haskell adds that "[t]he comic spirit […] of silent comedy […] is basically masculine in gender and often antifeminine in intention" (61). In addition, "[t]he girl couldn't laugh, because Good Girls just didn't 'get it' […] [b]ad girls bounced" (Barreca, *They Used to Call Me* 3). Yet, Watkins lived during a time when women's liberation was greatly advanced, so, she could get away with it… It also has to be added that she was personally involved in these stories and she was also emotionally disturbed by all this, and as the use of humor helps in distantiation, she probably protected herself, and maybe also others, by this 'technique.' "[H]umor allows you to have *perspective* on an otherwise potentially overwhelming prospect" [emphasis mine] (Barreca, *Women's Humor* 9). In addition, humor is also a mode of communication with others that, on the one hand, is powerful, yet on the other, is exposed and sensitive because it involves reaction. "*Humor* is a show both of *strength* and of *vulnerability*: you are willing to make the first move but you are trusting in the response of your listener" [emphases mine] (Barreca, *Women's Humor* 10).

Pauly elaborates on the question of humor within this story and he suggests that it mostly lies in that people (seem to) prefer illusion versus reality. People are obviously aware that Roxie is guilty but her performance of the "tearful victim of misfortune and exemplar of demure femininity" amuses them so much that they do not care about truth and justice. (Pauly x) It appears that people, the audience, prefer diversion and entertainment to truth and justice, and the humor greatly results from this.

> Much of the humor of this *conspirational perversion of truth and justice* comes from the play's operative assumption that everyone, especially the audience, *prefers* Roxie's *fabricated image and absurd explanation* to the hard evidence of her lover's corpse. Her radical transformation from vengeful killer into a *tearful victim of misfortune and exemplar of demure femininity* wins her acquittal. Her willingness to be reconfigured into this *tabloid Cinderella* feeds the city's *voracious appetite for diversion* and earns her celebrity, exoneration, and a career in show business. [emphases mine] (ibid)

Actually, the audience's preference of the illusion or the non-real is not so unique because people in general tend to favor this when faced with a 'story.' Amanda Collins argues that the public seems to privilege "the 'hyperreal' over the 'real'" (81). She claims this in connection with the film adaptations of Jane Austen's novels because audiences generally appear to prefer the illusory, romantic, unauthentic, historically irrelevant films over the realist and non-idealized ones. Hence, she suggests that people seem to prefer the simulacra, the hyperreal and the creations not the re-creations (and re-presentations) of the stories (79-89). Although, this might be changing nowadays I absolutely agree with her – as Pauly also seems to suggest – that people like tales and fictions of all kinds, and if it is 'a good story' and amuses them they will prefer it over reality and facts. Nevertheless, Praz states that works of art no matter how artificial they are still bear relation to and carry reality value concerning the (contemporary) life in which they are created: "literature, even in its most artificial forms, reflects to some extent aspects of contemporary life" (*Romantic Agony* 216).

Pauly is of the opinion that this story was considered humorous by a wide variety of people in different parts of the country, and even the Chicagoans enjoyed it immensely in spite of the fact the New Yorkers believed and expected that they would be offended and would not like the drama. "Watkins's depiction of Roxie's indoctrination into the tabloid culture of her age made her comedy engaging not just to New Yorkers but to Chicagoans as well" (Pauly xxvi). He adds that "Watkins's experience in Chicago enabled her to understand that New Yorkers were not unique in their appreciation fot the humor in crime" (xxi). Finally, he highlights the role of comedy in the rendering of the story and states that the comedy itself was central in the turning(s) of the story: "*Chicago* is not just a witty portrait of how grievous crimes get converted into personal gain; the comedy was itelf deeply involved in this process" (x). Here, he also comes up with an idea that connects *Chicago* and Watkins herself to the figure of the *Vice* since he declares that "the play's promotional strategy […] offered its *comic* view of *crime* as *a triumph of* urban *sophistication over* provincial *morality*" [emphases mine] (ibid) as Watkins herself acts as a *Vice* figure outside (and with) her fiction. That she did her job right is also supported by the fact that she received "the highest grade ever awarded by this renowned teacher of American Playwrights [George Pierce Baker]" at the Yale School of Drama (Pauly xii).

We have seen how Watkins described and presented the events in the series of articles covering the murder cases. What happens in her drama, mostly concerning the trial scene, I have partly discussed in the chapter concerning the *Vice* and other parts, yet, I would like to briefly discuss some parts of the work. Watkins provides rather expressive and vivid

descriptions, and her introduction of our heroine reflects that in the Prologue which actually narrates the murder and the questioning of the investigators and the newspapermen after that (Watkins 3-20).

> *She is slender, beautifully slender; as you can see, through the diaphanous, flashy negligee of blue georgette with its flounce of imitation lace and accordion-plaited ruffles. And the face is beautiful, too, with short upper lip, pouting mouth, tiptilted nose, wide dark eyes, skin of the finest texture, and hair the color of flame. Turned now in profile there's a hint of a Raphael angel – with a touch of Medusa*. (Watkins 4)

It is clear that she is beautiful, face and body, and it is also already suggested that although she looks a perfect angel, some danger lurks in her that might erupt, which soon does actually. Her hair is said to be fiery red but by the end of the story she is called "Carrots" (Watkins 110), her descension from a Raphael Angel into a Medusa is final in the end, and it is also signaled by the naming of her hair (color). Watkins' mastery of irony immediately presents itself since after this refined desription of 'an agel' Roxie's first words are the following: "[*a shrill, hysterical voice that is vile in anger*]: You damned tightward! [*Her voice is lowered with hatred*.] Like *hell* you're through!" (Watkins 4-5) The Medusa immediately showed her fangs and claws. Yet, Watkins manages to desribe these killing seconds with refined irony:

> [*One white arm flings around to the dresser, one white hand searches the drawer and brings forth the latest necessity of milady's boudoir: a pearl-handled .32 revolver. Her voice stabs with virulent rage*.] You God-damned louse – ! [*She pulls the trigger, then stands fixed: he sways, crumples, falls – a soft, thuddy fall, Outside the window children are singing and playing under the swaying arc-light; but within there is a silence*. […]] (Watkins 5)

Her description of the search for the gun evidently raises expectations in the reader but the double associations concerning what Roxie might be searching for make it amusing. Watkins creates a really *comic fatal* scene here. Roxie is denoted as a *farcical femme fatale*.

When it turns out that she is the murderer and the newspapermen try to make the most out of the story they ask her to pose for the camera but she hesitates. Babe, the photographer, tells her: "Got Mary Pickford skinned a mile and don't want a pitcher in the paper!" (Watkins 18) He convinces her to pose for a photo and tells her to brush the hair out of her face because "[i]t hides your eyes, and, believe me, you don't want to hide them eyes, does she, Jake?" (ibid). Then, she is told to smile, then, to beg for forgiveness while her husband looks down at her smiling (Watkins 19).

The first act opens with Roxie being in prison, next to her Mrs. Morton and Velma can be seen. Roxie looks quite but nervous as she is pale and she smokes a lot. Mama Morton appears to be a homely mother hen while Velma seems to be a stylish society lady or rather (only) a dame…

> ROXIE *sits at the center table. She weards a jade green satin dress, sleeveless; nude hose, decorated with turquoise ribbon garters, and plack velvet pumps. She is pale – minus rouge, powder, and lipstick. There is a box of cigarettes by her side and she smokes like mad – straightforward, honest smoking, with appreciative inhalation now and then. The table is stacked with newspapers, and the floor strewn with discarded sheets.*
> MRS. MORTON *[the matron, in dark dress with large white apron] sits across from her with scissors, ready to clip any bit* ROXIE *designates. She's a stalwart woman of fifty or so, with iron-gray hair, dark eyes with flabby lids, ruddy complexion, and weak mouth.*
> *Another woman lounges in a low rocker – a dark, quiet woman in the late thirties, with smooth sallowed features, large dreamy eyes, and full lips that have a dipsomaniacal droop. She moves with studied languor and her voice is soft and low. She wears a heavy dull crepe dress and topaz earrings that match a certain tawny gleam in her smouldering eyes. She is engrossed in the Society sheet while* ROXIE *pores over the news sections.* (Watkins 23-24)

It is interesting how stylish and elegant they are in spite of the fact that they are in prison. In the 1942 version, Roxie is also making a fashion show out of her prison and court stay but in the 2002 version, the women get uniforms in jail, and although she can be pretty and elegant when having an interview, Roxie has to wear a simple nun-like dress during the trial, just as well in the 1942 version – although those dresses are more haute couture.

They start to talk about lawyers and grounds for a crime and the Matron clearly reveals her attitude towards the actions these women commit: "I know. … [*Virtuously*.] I never hear of a man's bein' killed but I know he got *just* what was comin' to him. … But you mustn't *say* it." (Watkins 26) Probably, this is the sentence that was turned into the refrain of the "Cell Block Tango" of the 1976 and 2002 versions. Here, she warns Roxie that she must not tell the real grounds for the murder and she should start thinking about something and invent one, and most of all, that she should find a good lawyer. She suggests that maybe self-defense would help: "But it's got to be accordin' to law, dearie: like he threatened or attacked you or somethin'." (ibid) When Velma is questioned about her grounds she claims that she did not do it. Roxie points out that only Velma and the man was in the room, so, who else could do it.

> VELMA: I'm sure I don't know. I was drunk, my dear, dead drunk. Passed out completely and remember nothing from the time we left the café till the officers found me washing the blood from my hands. But I'm sure I didn't do it. … Why, I've the tenderest heart in the world, *haven't* I, Mrs. Morton?/ MATRON: O she has indeed!/VELMA: And wouldn't hurt a worm. … [*Tremolo*.] Not even a *worm*. … (ibid)

Roxie has, in front of her, two women who really can teach her how to get away with murder. Velma in these few words explained her everything she has to do to get acquitted while the Matron plays second fiddle to the performance. The Matron is a rather dubious figure already, in spite of her concurrently motherly aspect, since the suspicion arises whether she should not be one among the inmates, although, nothing concrete is mentioned when she explains Roxie why Billy Flynn is the best lawyer: "My, that's a lot of money – but it's worth it. A cheap one could do it all right – why, with *your* looks you don't need a lawyer at *all*! But it's a satisfaction to know it'll be done *right*! That's what I said when I buried my husband." (Watkins 27) When Roxie insists that Velma must have committed the murder the Matron hushes her by saying: "[…] And as for Velma, she's a pleasure to have around. No figtin', no ugly language, refined and genteel – a real lady if I ever saw one. And classy – all the papers say she's the dressiest one we've ever had." (Watkins 30) Then, the photographers arrive, photos are taken of Roxie and she is told to smile only a little – another important rule of proper femininity. Her legs follow: "we want them million-dolalr knees! More – [*She lifts skirt*.]" for the photo (Watkins 36).

As soon as the deal is made with Flynn he prepares her for the interview with the journalists and also reveals another important rule that should guide her through acquittal (and proper femininity as a means) that she should wear "something simple – plain – dark." (Watkins 40) By the time Mary Sunshine arrives Roxie is educated enough to know what to say to her: she tells that it was temporary insanity, so she could not answer for her actions (but it has passed away), she also performs and repeats Velma's tremolo and "wouldn't hurt a worm" and she also adds that Casely threatened her life. (Watkins 49) Armed with the 'knowledge of the prison,' Roxie navigates rather well in the sea of the press. When, she also invents motherhood as a great tool in her salvation, Flynn 'calms' her that "Don't worry, my dear: the American public will fight to the death for your innocent unborn babe!" (Watkins 73) Additionally, Mary Sunshine exclaims: "And every true woman! Why, Motherhood itself is at stake, *isn't* it, Mr Flynn? O wouldn't it be wonderful if the trial could come just before Mother's Day!" to which Roxie answers with gratitude and claims that she would name the baby after Mary Sunshine if it's a girl (ibid). Here, the ideal of true womanhood and that of

the angel in the house is concretely mentioned with Motherhood as the central and quintessential institution of humanity – with these we are back to the core of Victorian ideals.

In this version, the Hunyak character is a combination Lucia, an Eyetalian woman and Maggie (probably German)who speaks quite unintelligibly. Actually, it is Lucia, who chopped off her husband's head, while Maggie is mentioning Uncle Sam all the time and also crying for he baby. (Watkins 31, 62-63)

When Flynn and Roxie get prepared for the trial they rehearse everything. Flynn instructs her what to do: "Throw your head back – *nobly*! [*She does*.] That's right! – wait! Don't look at the jury on that – you forget them – seek the eyes of your husband. He'll be over there. …" (Watkins 80) Then she Roxie reprets what she has memorized: "'He's divorced me, cast me off,' – I got that all right! – 'but still the father of my child!'" (ibid) Flynn goes on: "[*with deep emotion*]: And a man you really love! … Once the jury get *that* and the fact he wants you *back*, why, they'll fall all over themselves to play Cupid and restore you to his arms!" (ibid) Then, they get prepared for the cross-examiantion:

> You cry./I'll crown him!/No, you *won't*. God, if that jury ever saw you in action – ! Remember: no matter what he *says* or how mad he gets, you shrink – and cower – [*illustrates, she imitates*] – and cry, till the jury are ready to knock him down! [*Grins*.] They always lose when they bulldoze a woman! And if he says they didn't use physical violence to get those confessions – (Watkins 80-81)

Roxie holds out her arms to show the marks. Flynn then adds that she should always say that she does not remember or she does not know to highlight how indecisive little girls she is, and she must always look "Weak, faint, frightened […] with a little flutter – [*blinks his eyes appealingly, she imitates*]" (Watkins 81). Then, Flynn emphasizes several times that she has to "Droop, that's all you do: *droop*. … (Watkins 84, 85) They quarrel a bit about what Roxie has to do and she concretely asks him "*sarcastically*" – self-ironically referring to what she is actually doing – "Why don't you get me a mask?" (Watkins 85) Her appearance during the trial has already been described in the part on the *Vice* as well as how she and Flynn are 'working hard' for the successful outcome of their performace (Watkins 89, 103). Roxie's performance of the pure angel continues with "[ROXIE *lifts her head – the picture of girlish innocence*] […] [*her hands clasped to her heart in prayer*] […] [*starts moaning and sobbing*]" (Watkins 105-106). Flynn closes his last speech with the following words and Roxie's parallel acting that culminates in her fainting:

> We can't give her happiness – [*the* JURY *is with her*] no, it is too late for that. Betrayed, crushed, we can only let her pick up the broken fragments of life, the tangled threads – [she's supposed to quiver her lip, but instead she rises, staggers toward the JURY with outstretched hands.] – we can give her another chance! [She totters, gives a wild shriek, and falls in a dead faint by his side. Grand confusion, and she's carried out. He turns to the JUDGE.] We rest, your honor; you may give the case to the JURY. (Watkins 106)

The final performance escalates into her (faked) collapse and Flynn's oratorical bravado – all spiced up with pathos: she proved that she is a perferct, fragile woman, while Flynn worked hard on the emotions of the 'audience.' The applause is not far away since the Jury acquits Roxie. Here, we cannot find the visual tricks of the later adaptations, the decision is simply announced: "We, the jury, find the defendant not guilty" (Watkins 109). Yet, Roxie does not have time for celebration since, in a few seconds, another murder occurs and everybody leaves and concentrates on the new female murderer: "Come on, Carrots: a picture of you with Machine-Gun Rosie. […] The Jazz-Slayer Meets the Cicero Kid!" (Watkins 110-111) The closing words are that have been mentioned: "Come on, sister, yuh gotta play ball: this is Chicago!" (Watkins 111)

6. 1. 3. The 1927 Film Adaptation

The 1927 film adaptation (Appendix xv/107-xvi/113) is an exception among the adaptations from the point of view of the use of humor since it is, in fact, a melodrama, although, with comic parts in it and as such reserving some aspects of the original story this way. Although the presence of the carnivalesque and the *comic femme fatale* during the trial is evident the story eventually turns out to be a man's struggle with good and evil as it is the rule in the case of melodrama. Instead of *her/story* the 1927 film adaptation makes *his/story*. Instead of Roxie's story we get her husband's (Amos Hart's) story and she gets delegated into the secondary role of the tempting *femme fatale* who has to fall, even if not literally and entirely, by the end of the story while the *true woman*, much rather '*true girl*,'Katie, replaces the evil woman in the home of the husband. Since, as Northrop Frye defines it, "[i]n melodrama, two themes are important: the triumph of moral virtue over villainy, and the consequent idealizing of the moral views assumed to be held by the audience" (47). Interestingly, the 1927 and 1942 versions focus on the family and its problems and as such forget about Watkins' basic idea that concentrated on women and their problems or how they try to navigate their ships of femininity between Charybdis and Scylla. It might be because, as

Kaplan suggests, the idea of comparing melodrama and *film noir* is interesting because both try to solve the problems and contradictions of patriarchy within the bonds of the family that might be threatened by the *vamp* or the *femme fatale* (4). As a result of the generic conventions, the story is converted into a moralistic play instead of the diabolic raillery of the original and all the other versions. Nonetheless, the main part dealing with the murder case and the trial involves the elements of the carnival and the comic-grtoesque performance of femininity.

In the 1927 film adaptation the *ingénue – vamp* duality is an interesting one because Watkins did not create this imagery in her 1927 play and did not even imply this conventional role set. Lenore J. Coffe, the scrip writer of this adaptation, however, interpreted the characters this way and adapted the story in a specific mode that made this duality possible. Hence, what Watkins managed to achieve in her drama, was "destroyed" in the 1927 film version. In this adaptation, Roxie is not killed in the end as the *femme fatales* were at that time, yet, she is punished (unlike in the other versions of *Chicago*) but not severely; she is not put to jail and gets away in a specifically Watkinsian mode. However, she loses her husband, unlike in the other versions, where she either refuses him or gets rid of him intentionally.

In the 1927 film version, the *vamp* Roxie is presented as somebody who has lost everything by the end of the story and the angelic *ingénue*, Katie, is the one who 'deserves' the husband, Amos Hart. Although, the husband endeavors throughout the whole film to save Roxie, yet, at the end, he casts her away in a tragic manner by (symbolically) destroying their home, too. An unusual feature of the film is that Amos is presented in a positive light: he is active, potent, and competent and he seems to be mostly in control. This is the only version where he is posited so. The story is even told from his perspective: it is much more his quest and struggle for the beloved woman than Roxie's own battle with crime and the evasion of punishment. She is here the *vamp* figure who is dismissed with nothing; she stays alive and remains free, but loses everything else and the last shot of her is as she is walking down the dark street alone no one knows where while the husband stays in the flat heart-broken, yet, with dignity, and the little *ingénue* claims that she will set everything right for him. This version is quite much in the pattern of the Cecil B. DeMille films where dramas of couples and marriage problems are discussed. His stories were often "sophisticated comedies and[/or] melodramas of marital intrigue" and it often happened that the sympathy was with the wifely problems, the presented women's roles ranged "from sacrificial lamb to social lioness to wanton murderess" (Haskell 49, 76-77). *Chicago* (1927) is really a melodrama of marital intrigue, although, with phases of comedic episodes in it and the leading female character is a

wanton murderess while the girl-woman who is the real 'winner' in the end (as suggested by the film) is much more of the sacrificial lamb-type. This version, although a masterpiece in itself, quite much diverges from what Watkins intended to project through 'her' female murderers and their fates. It was a silent film, one of the last ones to be produced in the American film industry before *The Jazz Singer* (1927), and the arrival of sound in films, "which enthralled the public and brought in enormous profits" (Gronemeyer 68). In my opinion, the reason for the film's meagre success is mostly due to its melodramatic turn since the uniqueness of this story can be found in the discrepancy and tension between violence and humor and how laughing death is performed through masquerade. Partly the comic performance of femininity is executed in the film, but the general melodramatic rendering robbed the story of its 'razzle-dazzle.'

However, as Martha Banta states, melodrama is a catchall term for all of the enhanced effects of dramatrical display that have been discussed as being produced within the marketplace and the theatre for generating recognition and desire for the goods for sale. Melodrama has strong ties with such arts as pantomime, recitation and the tableau and all these techniques actually rely on types. All these are usually received with contempt by critics, although, historians of popular culture acknowledge their importance concerning the sociology of the theatre. (Banta 633-634) Banta summarizes the works written about melodrama and cites Peter Brooks saying that the dramaturgy of melodrama, in fact, converted the theatrical stage into "the universe of pure signs" (Brooks, *The Melodramatic* 53 qtd. in Banta 634). Martin Meisel's claim is also listed that this universe encompassed in itself the drama, the novel and the painting, as well. Meisel also adds that these Victorian art forms from the late nineteenth century strove to present the real and the ideal at the same time with the help of the poses and gestures of melodrama. (Meisel 13 cited in Banta 634)

Melodrama as a genre appeared during the second half of the eighteenth century and having its roots in medieval morality plays advocated codes of morality. During the nineteenth century it evolved into the most popular genre (Cristian, Dragon 50) and it was a favoured genre in the early twentieth century, as well, still relying on strict dualities. In films, cultural myths are fervently utilized, as Glen O. Gabbard suggests based on Claude Levi-Strauss, because this way the film producers expect to win more spectators since these myths work with clear and strict dualities and "express conflicts and binary oppositions (basic oppositions that characterize Western thinking, such as good/bad, white/black) that otherwise cannot be explored openly" (Gabbard 8 cited in Cristian, Dragon 36). Peter Brooks also claims that in melodramas characters are unambiguous and clearcut. (Brooks, *Body Work* 63)

The duality of the *vamp/femme fatale* and the *ingénue/good woman* belongs to this realm, and in the 1927 film version this is exactly that is applied with the aid of melodrama. Within the framework of a melodrama strict and clearcut duality of good vs. bad, good woman vs. bad woman is played out.

What is even more striking in the case of the 1927 film version is its enhanced pathos supported by extreme gestures, facial expressions and large-scale emotions. One would wonder why Watkins' (self-)ironic and refined satire (even if it is a carnivalesque production at the same time) is reduced to such simplicity and schematic types and getures with lavish emotions. One may wonder why this complex work is turned into a simplistic melodrama. A reason might be the fact that this is a silent film from the early twentieth century which operated this way. The actors actually had to perform a pantomime with little technical support to aid them. Brooks also makes a significant remark (in accordance with Banta mentioned above) that the origins of melodrama are to be found in pantomime. "Gestural speech is a constant in melodrama because it permits the creation of visual messages, pure signs that cannot lie – the undissimulated speech of the body." (Brooks, *Body Work* 63)

Brooks claims that, in melodramas, the virtuous as well as the villaneous person have to clearly signal which one is which by the end of the story with a bodily sign or with an object "[s]ince melodrama's simple, unadulterated messages must be made absolutely clear, visually present, to the audience […]" (Brooks, *Body Work* 64). Brooks adds that "[t]his sign is often inscribed on the body itself, in the form of a birthmark or other stigmata, or is an emblem worn on the body […] that eventually permit the public recognition of the virtuous identity" (ibid). When this revelation occurs the villain is punished and driven out of society, and the innocent is rewarded (ibid). William Rothman states the same in the case of film melodramas (74-86). All this happens in the 1927 film version as it is de/prescribed above. The emblem or token that enables this "[*l*]*a croix de la mère*" (Brooks, *Body Work* 64) (the mother's cross) is an Ingersoll watch in this film that Amos actually loses when he tries to get the counsel money to save his wife (during a burgrlary) but Katie, the redeemer, provides him with an exact same watch when he is questioned where his watch is. This is the so-called trial scene when it almost turns out that it was him who stole the money, the it is the evidence against him, but in a bit less moralistic way Katie says that it is his watch and thanks him for lending it to her, while in reality, it is another watch (although looks the same) that Amos gave her as a gift earlier. Thus, Katie knows that Amos is guilty and still saves him since he is virtuous and only committed a crime to save his love, his wife. However, as morality requires, he casts his wife away, the evil villainess – whose 'deserved end' is to be punished –, and

plans to start a new and pure life with the female saint, Katie. It is because marriage is the reward of virtue (Brooks, *Body Work* 65), yet in this sense, it is Katie who is rewarded, not Amos, he much rather turns into the 'prize' itself in a bit ironic mode.

A film review in the *Film Daily*, from 1928, declares that this version of *Chicago* is a melodrama in which the "right conquers after all," and all the reviewer could say, in addition to summing up the story – which is rather telling –, is that "Phyllis Haver, attractive and very good as Roxie Hart. Victor Varconi[iv], as the husband, splendid. Robert Edeson fine as the lawyer. Virginia Bradford lovely in a bit." (*Film Daily* 1-1-28) Another reviewer in *Motion Picture News*, from the same year, opines that Haver plays Roxie excellently and that the film (that is melodramatic) eventually "shapes up as very good entertainment, having been treated intelligently. Some doubt was created in our mind whether the 'fireworks' touched off in the original could be reproduced in the film." (Laurence, *Motion Picture News* 2-4-28) A third review in the *Variety*, still from 1927, states that "[i]t's not a top price picture and no one pretends that it is […] 'Chicago' will neither thrill or grip the higher admission donaters." (*Variety* 12-28-27, p. 16) It is also added that Amos is the best in the film: "[i]n the picture he is transformed into a dynamic husband, who steals to pay counsel fees, finally tells the wife to take air with the finishing inference that he will wed the young house maid who has admired from afar since reel one" (ibid). The review goes on praising the Amos character and also adds that the performance of Roxie is also rather convincing: "Miss Haver makes of Roxie a mincing, pouting, snarling dame who is all dame; nothing more and nothing less" (ibid). However, the glorification of Amos does not stop: "Victor Varconi stands out as the husband who mentally battles to save his self respect by ordering his notorious wife out of his home" (ibid). Then, it is claimed that "the main comedy sequence" takes place in the courtroom as a result of "the reaction of the jury to Flynn's saintly description of his client, and that client's knees" (ibid). So, as I have mentioned, there are ironic-comic parts in the film, it is just a melodrama in the long run.

The really comic part is certainly, as in all versions, the comic performance during the trial and the preparation for it before. There they rehearse what she has to do and say, the yare quarrelling, but eventually agree. She looks like a little shepherdess or a bride (without a veil) in her full bloom of innocent purity – in a white dress with white hat and a bunch of white flowers. During trial, they make use of the symbolic crushing of her as a fragile and beautiful flower since Billy Flynn tramples on the bunch to show the jury what they might do if found Roxie guilty. The destruction of flower bouquet also appears in the 1942 film version and in that version, this appearance is also reproduced by the end of the story but only when she

appears to hear the verdict. When Amos sends Roxie away in spite of the fact that he still loves her passionately she stands alone in the drak and rainy street, and the people walk over the crumpled, muddy and soaked newspaper that announces her innocene, which is finally washed away by the water into the sewage system.

The adoration of the husband for his wife is expressed by his looks but, also right at the beginning, he tells to Roxie stroking her blonde hair: "This is my gold – every curl worth a million" (Urson Scene 22, Title 7). Then, the 'justification' for the killing comes in scene 60 when Casley "slaps her across the mouth with the back of his hand. She stumbles backwards out of scene" (Urson Sc 60) and then she shoots him. This is reused in the 2002 version. Jake, the newspaper man, calms Roxie when the investigators find out that she is the murderer that "Hanging a woman with a face like that – say, Justice ain't so blind!" (Urson Sc 98, ST 41). Then, it is also added: "Sure, I'll help you. I'll phone Billy Flynn --- the best criminal lawyer in town. He'll play you up as 'The Most beautiful Murderess'" (Urson Sc 98, ST 42). The inmates in the prison are: Kitty Baxter, Velma, Lulu – the Charleston Kid, Teresa – an Italian woman and a German one. Mary Sunshine is interestingly included in the script but left out of the film. When the comic rehersal comes Flynn says the following words and Roxie has to adjust her face to them: "this brave --- sweet --- gentle --- NOBLE little woman'" (Urson Sc 347-413, ST 172-211). Then, he instructs her that if the District Attorney might call her names (she wants to retort): "No, you won't – you'll shrink and cower---", then he adds, "Droop --- that's all you do --- droop!" (Urson Sc 349-353, ST 178-180). The bunch of flowers that are trampled on are specified as lilies-of-the valley, which might clearly imply girlish chastity and virtue while she is pulling up her skirt a little all the time during trial to which the full men jury reacts with tense attention but Flynn's strict glare always induces her to pull down her skirt. The famous sentences are also uttered "And then we both grabbed for the gun!" and "And I shot -- to save my honor!" (Urson Sc 395D-395-E, ST 205-206). The flower strampling scene is accompanied by Flynn's words: "Gentlemen --- if you put the stamp of guilt on that delicate girl --- it will be like taking these fragile flowers ---- [stamp] ---- and crushing them into bruised and broken blossoms!" – upon hearing this, Roxie staggers to the remains of the flowers and faints (Urson Sc 434-435, ST 215-217). This is also reproduced in the 1942 film version, in the 2002 version only the fainting remains – there is no flower bouquet, instead she is holding knitting instruments with a half-ready baby garment and a rosary. When she is acquitted and they get home Amos sends her away by saying the following:

> I've stuck through this whole hideous business, letting you think I was a blind fool ---. […] I've lied for you, cheated for you and STOLEN for you, and now I want you to get out! […] I love you from every golden curl of your head down to the soles of your little feet --- […] But I'd see my soul burn in hellfire before I'd touch you again! (Urson Sc 509-511, ST 240-245)

This aspect of the character is never shown in any other versions, in those HE IS a blind fool. When Roxie finally leaves really unwillingly he makes a havoc in the flat, and even breaks Roxie's picture – she is smiling under the broken pieces of glass. He sits heartbroken holding his head in his hands while Katie comes with her healing and cleansing power (ironically both literally and symbolically since she is the cleaning maid) and states with a little sexual allusion: "--- let me straighten them up for you" (Urson Sc 536, ST 254).

It is significant that Roxie's hair, in this film version, turns blonde and with the exception of the 1942 film version she generally remains so. As we know her hair originally was auburn but as time passed it was interpreted more as red than brown emphasizing her dangerous, manipulative and nefariouss aspect. The turning of her hair into blond also involves such connotations and facilitates a similar interpretation. The *vamp* was originally dark haired, her general appearance was dark and sultry (Haskell 46), but as time passed she turned blonde, extremely blonde. As Robert L. Daniel suggests,

> [t]he Vamp, a figure of the mid-1910s, was refashioned. As blonde as possible, she combined innocence with guile, emerging as a sex symbol. At one end of the continuum, Marlene Dietrich in the *Blue Angel* was the "vamp turned temptress"; at the other, Janet Gaynor in *Seventh Heaven* was the "sweet virginal blonde". (88)

Nina Rattner Gelbart, in her article entitled "The Blonding of Charlotte Corday," greatly elaborates on the changes in the representation of hair color in the case of Charlotte Corday as a woman who killed Marat. Gelbart examines several perspectives and opinions because sometimes Corday is described as a brunette, sometimes as a blonde, but the general conclusion is that whenever she is to be presented as a sexually-alluring, attractive and/or dangerous woman – or in an exclusively positive sense "the angel of assassination" –, for example at the moment of the stabbing, she is always (re)presented being blonde, and that even if she was light brown she was seen blonde. (201-217) Gelbart also elaborates on Joanna Pitman's work entitled *On Blondes*, and highlights briefly the most important aspect of blondness (in primarily Western culture) that it is a dual image having the potential for both signaling a demon and a saint: "blondness could signify the root of all evil, or the brightness

and luminosity of the divine. It could code vanity and folly, or incorruptible purity." (210) Joanna Pitman carries out a rather detailed and overall cultural-historical discussion of blondness and explains the dual modes of interpretation of this hair color, however, it is evident that whether good or bad, the blonde woman is generally considered to be or viewed as attractive, beautiful, sexually-alluring, happy and successful (9-261). Pitman concretely places the source of the dual interpretation of blondness in Christianity, because Eve just like the sexual and sinful Mary Magdalene are both usually interpreted and represented as blonde as well as the pure Virgin Mary (39-67), and this dual concept remained in vogue ever since. Pitman gives an explanation why blonde women, in general, are considered to be more attractive than their non-blonde counterparts: "[b]londe hair, although not intrinsically more beautiful than dark, became associated, through these long evolved mechanisms in the male brain, with youthful fertility. It was a kind of visual certificate of reproductive success." (5) It could be but what is even more probable is that blonde hair looks like gold – depending on its shade but eventually evokes white-yellowish-golden associations – which "is pure of rust," so already during ancient times the "golden hair symbolised Aphrodite's freedom from pollution, ageing and death" (Pitman 13). In addition, "[…] in the time of the Proto-Indo-Europeans, the colour was connected to the worship of sun and fire" and possessing "gold metal" was of superior value and often put into the hair to show it (ibid). Hence, the Greek concept of beauty was already "saturated with ancient allusion" and the "popular feminine imagery [of] the golden-haired woman was among the most mighty" (ibid).

Stella Bruzzi states that the *femme fatale* is often symbolized by "bleached hair" while the "'good' counterparts usually possess a more 'natural' look of brown hair" (139-140). Haskell is also of the opinion that the 'good woman' is a brunette and the 'bad one' is blonde, although she places the switch of hair colours in the 1950s-1960s, most explicitly, attributing it to Hitchcock's films: "a dialectic between the blonde and the brunette, using the same moral coordinates as Hitchcock (blonde: conceited, aloof; brunette: warm, responsive)" (349). An explicit example for this is *Marnie* (1964), where she is the icy, 'bad' blonde while Lil is the warm, 'good' brunette. (Appendix xvi/114) In the film there is also an interesting conversation about blondness with her mother when she expresses her concerns about Marnie's hair color suggesting the general conception and association in connection with it: "I see that you have blonded up your hair, Marnie./A little. Why, don't you like it?/No … Too blond a hair always looks like a woman is trying to attract men. Men and a good name don't go together." (Hitchcock 11 min) That is why, in my opinion, Roxie in the 1942 film version, even if called red, appears to be brown since, there, we do not see her shoot Casley that is

clearly presented in all other versions, and in this film, she is posited as (probably) innocent who admits the murder only to gain fame upon the suggestion of the newspapermen. She is a 'good girl' who marries her great love and bears babies to him (certainly all this with a touch of irony).

Hence, Haskell is correct about the duality that "the voluptuous brunette […] is 'good' and the icy blonde […] is 'bad'" (ibid), yet, she is incorrect about the dating since it has a longer history as it has been mentioned. For example, Praz also claims that "the blonde-brunette *motif*" was already a great favourite of the Romantics who often employed the black-white duality when presenting two beauties (*Romantic Agony* 414) – and already here often with a blonde as a 'bad' woman. Additionally, in this version of *Chicago*, Roxie as the *vamp* is the blonde one and Katie, the female saint, is the brunette. As other examples from the same era, *Night After Night* (1932) or *I'm No Angel* (1933) could be mentioned (Appendix xvi/115-xvii/117). In addition, Rita Hayworth, when being a 'not so evil *femme fatale*' in *Gilda* (1946) is a brunette, but in *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947) where she is an Evil evil woman, she is platimun blonde (Appendix xvii/118-119). In addition, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) evidently cannot be left out from this list, in which film although both women are beautiful and alluring it is the blonde (Marilyn Monroe) who is presented as cool and calculating, as somebody who is only interested in money while her warmhearted brunette friend (Jane Russel) is only interested in love and she is presented as the nicer and cleverer person. (This interesting implicated duality (blonde-'more bad'/brunette-'more good') is not to be found in the original story written by Anita Loos in 1925, yet, in this version it is still evident that the blonde is the more attractive one and the brunette woman is the cleverer who takes care of the 'silly blonde' in a bit 'motherly' way, still, they are more equally presented.) Although the 'less nice-more nice' associations are switched, the blonde-brunette duality of the 2002 version of *Chicago* might clearly be a tribute paid to this renowned musical, as well, while it is true that the original 1976 musical was also famously played by Gwen Verdon as Roxie (blonde) and Chita Rivera as Velma (brunette). (Appendix xvii/120-121)

6. 2. The 1930s and 1940s: The 1942 Film Adaptation

Not long after the great success of the original drama and the relative success of the 1927 film, the *Production Code* emerged in full power in 1934 (a milder version of censorship introduced in 1930) and over sought the Hollywood film production for about thirty years (Lasalle 188). After the short and much liberal *Pre-Code Hollywood* period when

"real women" were presented on screen with their "real problems" and not even the murderous or criminal women were posited as demons and she-devils, what is more, they mostly got away with murder (142-164). The rigid duality of angels and devils came in with the *Hays Code* (the other term for the *Production Code*) and the strong influence of the Catholic Church through The National Legion of Decency, which propagated (among several things) that the evil always had to be punished, and it was especially strict about sexuality (and implicitly) women and what they did/showed on screen. Joseph Breen became one of the most important figure of this era (together with Will Hays, Jason Joy, Daniel Lord and Martin Quigley), he was the head of the *Production Code Administration* that (safe)guarded the sanctity of Christian values in the American cinema with strict censorship (Lasalle 62-66; Cristian, Dragon 73-74). The motto of the Code said that: "[n]o picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it." (Lasalle 64; Cristian, Dragon 74) According to these rules, crimes could be portrayed only in a way that excluded the possibility of positive identification and sympathy with the crime itself or the person who committed it. The court always had to be presented as just and positive example of universal punishment. Nudity, profanity, obscenity, vulgarity and any kind of indecency were strictly prohibited; love and sexuality were under especially severe strictures (Lasalle 64-65; Cristian, Dragon 73-74) and

> "[i]mpure love" ─ that is, anything "banned by divine law" ─ could not be portrayed "as attractive and beautiful." It could not be a subject for comedy or farce. It could not be presented in a way as to "arouse passion." And it could not be made to "seem right and permissible." (Lasalle 65)

After getting acquainted with all these regulations one would presume that a story like *Chicago* would never be reproduced under such circumstances. However, *Roxie Hart* (1942) being produced and shown was certainly adopting the regulations described above, for example, in a way that the actual murder scene when Roxie kills Casely – which has a central place in all of the other versions showing explicitly the act of murder – is not shown and the whole story is presented in a way that the spectator actually gets uncertain whether it was really her who committed the crime. According to the story of the 1942 version, Roxie claims it only because she is talked into it in order to gain fame. The court and the jury are all decent and just in their representation. In addition, all kind of nudity, profanity, obscenity, vulgarity and indecency – which, after the disappearance of the *Code*, came into full force in the 1976 version in a multiplied form – were excluded in the 1942 film, not to mention the explicit

sexuality between Casely and Roxie, which again were prevalent in all versions except in the 1942 movie.

In fact, the *Code* was the first factor in the American film industry to cause the most harm in the representation of women. The complex and more realistic characterization of female characters of the *Pre-Code era* was over. The Depression era with the unemployment and the financial hardships, followed by the World War II did not help in elevating the gloomy mood of the masses. While women could get education (even the highest levels), proper work and they could earn money (especially during the war) through the opening up of more and more types of jobs, the role models for women and the cultural representations projected towards them - with the exception of "*Rosie the Riveter*" - still remained quite limited and bound to the traditional ideals. (Daniel 122-159)

Around this time, the *film noir era* also arrived with the most negative images about women possible in all the history of film industry, for example, Barbara Stanwyck is *Double Indemnity* (1944) or Rita Hayworth in *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947). As Haskell puts it:

> [i]n the dark melodramas of the forties, woman came down from her pedestal and she did not stop when she reached the ground. She kept going ─ down, down like Eurydice, to the depths of the criminal world, the *enfer* of the *film noir* ─ and then compelled her lover to glance back and betray himself. Sometimes, she sucked him down with her […], [s]ometimes she used him and laughed in his face […], [s]ometimes she lied and lied and lied […], [s]ometimes she wasn't crooked, just a little out of line […], [S]ometimes she was a murderess […], [s]ometimes she was a *femme fatale* […], [s]ometimes she was a cool, enigmatic career girl […], [s]ometimes she was crazy in love enough to kill herself and her lover […], later she sometimes crossed over to good. […] She had sensual lips, or long hair that passing over her face like Veronica Lake's, cast a shadow of moral ambiguity. Angel or devil, good-bad or bad-good girl, she was a change from the either/or ─ heroine or villainess ─ of the twenties and thirties. […] she hadn't a soul she could call her own. She was, in fact, a male fantasy. She was playing a man's game in a man's world of crime and carnal innuendo, where her long hair was the equivalent of gun, where sex was the equivalent of evil. And where her power to destroy was a projection of man's feeling of impotence. […] She is to her thirties' counterpart as night ─ or dusk ─ is to day. (189-191)

However, more recent debates claim that the *femmes fatales* of the *film noirs* are actually and quite visibly, active agents and subjects in their own rights (cf. E. Bronfen's "Risky Resemblances" and "Femme Fatale–Negotiations of Tragic Desire," and also Cristian,

Dragon 88), a stance that coincides with the women figures of the contemporary *Chicago* adaptations.

With the hardships of the Great Depression, World War II, and the ensuing Communist furor, the society produced a heightened sense of paranoia, alternate optimism/pessimism, as well as a sense of instability and impotence, etc., Haskell claimed (194). According to a *Nesweek* report in August 1943, 56 % of the women in the labor force intended to keep their jobs and continue working after the war (Daniel 131). Haskell adds that even those films, plays and novels which had been written earlier but were (re)adapted in the forties took the era's peculiar colorations (194), just like *Roxie Hart* in 1942. In addition, this was the period when the hardboiled detective fiction genre really started blooming with the works of Dashiel Hammett, Raymond Thornton Chandler, and many others, who also wrote screenplays or whose works were adapted to screen. The *film noir* film production mostly consisted of such detective and crime stories (Gronemeyer 99) combined with melodramas, musicals, and westerns (98, Žižek 41), and since they were basically written for male audiences, the representation of women was far from being woman-friendly (99). As Haskell states, most movies of the forties (especially the male genres) were concentrating on men's soul and salvation and not on those of the woman. She adds that even the musicals of the forties had their central focus on men's quest, on his rather than her story (207).

This above-mentioned statement is (also) valid in *Roxie Hart* (1942) although not being a 'real musical' only filled with 1-2 musical-dancing scenes probably due to Ginger Roger's dancing star identity – "RKO created a new type of romantic film musical around the dream pair Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers" (Gronemeyer 79). The male perspective is also valid since Roxie's story is told by a male character called Homer Howard, who provides the (male) frame to the story. These stories of the *noir* era were presented "as seen by the male in highly subjective narratives, often recounted in the first person and using interior monologue, by which she was deprived of her point of view" (Haskell 198). In the 1927 and 1942 versions, we get the man's point of view (in both cases that of the husband), which is not what Watkins did in her original versions, and what the later versions do. Homer is also a character to whom Roxie (at the end with six children of her own) reveals the great news that they would need a new and bigger car since (probably) the next child is on the way. This is an eerie ending for *Chicago* where Roxie lives the grace of familial bliss. Yet, the *Production Code* "[w]ith its roots in Catholic Church doctrine" (Prince 3) and the *film noir era* made 'wonders' here, too. It is so since "[w]ith the increasing restrictiveness of the Production Code

and the rise of sentimentality, those romantic comedies that did get by were smothered in coyness and prudery" (Haskell 198), this is the 1942 version.

Roxie Hart is a *noir* type of product; Roxie here is not posited as the evil *femme fatale* (of the resurrected Victorian-era syphilistic prostitute type) whose sole aim in life is to destroy men through her irresistible, lethal sexuality. She is not destined to embody this simplified, trivial and one-sided female representation, which abounds on the (pages and) screens of the era. However, her character is not that versatile and exceptional, either, and she is quite much "toned down" in this adaptation and she quite much conforms to the "good bad girl" category (Gronemeyer 99). This film is a screwball comedy with a fake (and also genre-mocking) *film noir* crime story shade. It is true about this version of *Chicago* what Haskell says: "[e]ven when the movies are adaptations of plays or novels written earlier, it is significant that, having been made in the forties, they take on its peculiar colorations" (195).

However, it has to be added that screwball comedy is considered to be a genuine American genre and is conceived as a hybrid of several different comedy styles. (Cristian, Dragon 54) "According to Belton, screwball comedy blended romantic comedy and comedy of manners with *slapstick comedy* […]" (Belton 186 cited in Cristian, Dragon 54). The 1942 film version's close relationship with low comedy is even more emphasized due to the elaboration of "jokes, or "gags, […] slapstick humor and boisterous or clownish physical activity" thus connected to farce (Abrams 40).

Andrew Sarris termed these comedies as "sex comedy without the sex" because they were full of sexual allusions while concrete sexuality did not appear on the screen. (Sarris 8-15 qtd. in Cristian, Dragon 54-55) Historically, almost all of the screwball comedies were produced during the Great Depression. (Altman 20 cited in Cristian, Dragon 55) While screwball comedies were usually centered on undercover sex they also resisted and did not "follow the classical Hollywood narrative trajectory of order/disorder/order […]" (Sikov 56 qtd. in Cristian, Dragon 55). In addition, screwball comedies concentrated on conflicts, however, their resolution was not as elementary as the conflicts themselves and the ending was usually not the "happily ever after" type that was customary in the case of romantic comedies. Belton explains that, in these comedies, the happiness of the couple is generally already shattered by the beginning of the film (Belton 189 cited in Cristian, Dragon 55) and the final outcome and the ending can rarely and hardly be called "the happy end" in the traditional sense. Screwball comedies constituted the subversion of the very system that produced them. (Cristian, Dragon 55) This all is valid in the case of *Roxie Hart* (1942).

In addition, Elisabeth Bronfen also opines that "[i]n the world of *film noir* one can, however, also find delusion and betrayal cast in a mirthful tone," although, she mentions *Gilda* (1946) as an example ("Nocturnal World"). "Rita Haworth uses her ravishing beauty to spur on a lethal love contest, even while the nocturnal phantasmagoria she inspires has nothing fatal about it" (ibid). The same can be said about *Roxie Hart* since it is also a *film noir* with delusion and betrayal all presented in a mirthful tone and our heroine, a *farcical femme fatale*, incites a fierce love contest among several men (including her husband) while there is nothing fatal about her and anything she does (we cannot even know whether she really was a murderer or not). Bronfen also states, similarly to Doane, that Gilda uses "feminine guile as her form of masquerade" (ibid), however, in the different versions of *Chicago*, including *Roxie Hart*, the *farcical femme fatale* uses innocence to mask her feminine guile. Similarly to Gilda, Roxie Hart also makes use of her "feminine fatality," although, not only during one event, "[a]t the height of a carnival night" (ibid) but throughout the whole carnival of her story. Finally, again similarly to *Gilda*, in *Roxie Hart*, Roxie and Homer's "*noir* romance" delves "into parodic excess" (ibid), or rather it is Roxie's romance with several men that transfigures into parodic excess within the realm of a farcical-*noir* story. Bronfen claims that by contrasting Phyllis and Gilda we can recognize "the difference between the tragic and the comic *noir* tone" (ibid).

The 1942 film adaptation starts with the folloing dedication: "This picture is dedicated to all the beautiful women in the world who have shot their men full of holes out of pique" (Wellman 0 min). The frame story is that of a newspaperman who turns out to be Roxie's husband in the end while the barman that husband whom she left taking away all his money to marry this one. The newspaperman, Homer Howard, drinks to the health of Roxie: "To Roxie Hart, the prettiest woman ever tried for murder in Cook County" (Wellman 2 min).

We do not see the murder, we only see as Amos Hart talks to newspapermen who apparently arrived even before the investigators and policemen. Amos is a buffoon in this version. It is also said that Roxie is a flapper wife (Wellman 6 min), yet, it is one of the striking problems with this film that the heroine does not look like a flapper: her hairstyle, clothes and accessories do not reflect the 1920s but the era in which Ginger Rogers was a star. Her stardom overshadows the story that she as an actress should sell as an artwork. It has been said that, in screwball comedies, there is sex without sex, an excellent example for this occurs right at the beginning when Roxie and Jake Callahan are struggling with each other physically because Roxie wants to get away but Callahan does not let her go – it looks as if they were having sex, then he says: "C'mon, what are you scared of? […] This county never does

anything to a dame. Cook County is the most gallant county in the whole country. Why? A pretty murderess is as safe here as if in her mother's arms." (Wellman 8 min) The newspapermen convince her to confess the crime because she can make publicity and a carrerr out of it: "This is Chicago, the city of opportunity! […] I keep telling ya, this county would not hang Lucretia Borgia!" (Wellman 13-14 min)

In prison, they are quarrelling with Velma who says: "You think you are the queen of jail but let me remind you, Miss Sloppy, your whole case is a very low class affair. […] In my opinion, Mrs. Hart, you are a very ordinary bum, and you might as well face it!" (Wellman 18 min) Mama Morton, in this version, is the real stereotypical Mamma, a big motherly hen arranging her little chickens around herself (she is not yet lesbian and mannish). She calmly reads the newspaper while Roxie and Velma are physically fighting (cat fight sounds added) and tells them: "Children! […] You girls, you've got to stop the swabbling" (Wellman 18-19 min) then knocks their heads together, they faint and she sits down reading again. The parent representation is not that positive in any sense (in the other versions they are omitted entirely) since when Amos calls Roxie's father to give money to pay the defense lawyer the following phone conversation can be heard/seen: "I said they are liable to [closes his eyes and his voice trails off a bit] hang her./Good!," and the father hangs up; then turns to his knitting or embroidering demure little wife while sitting down into an armchair on the porch: "They are gonna hang Roxie./What did I tell you?," answers the mother and they do not give another thought to it. (Wellman 21 min)

Before meeting the journalists, Billy Flynn already invents Roxie's story and tells her as if in a dream:

> beautiful southern home, every luxury and refinement, magnolias, cuddled nanny, the full treatment, educated in private schools, sheltered like a little flower, then ruined, parents dead, fortune swept away, a runaway marriage, a heartbreak […] a lovely innconect child bewildered by what has happened, young, full of life and lonely, caught in the mad world of the great city, music, lights, wine […] like a moth to the flame […] butterfly crushed on the wheel. […] And What's left, regret. That's the important thing: regret! You'd give your life this very minute to bring him back! (Wellman 22-23 min)

This monologue occurs in the 2002 adaptation likewise although in a shortened version. After this, the entry is performed, Roxie looks like a 'stylish saint:' her hands are even put together as if parying, she is sweet, demure and calm. (Appendix xvii/122) Mary Sunshine is very motherly while Flynn is fatherly – he is in every version but here these are concretely uttered:

"Oh, poor child, come sit over here. We all understand." [Miss Sunshine]/[Billy Flynn] "Just answer the questions frankly and don't forget just what I told you./Yes Daddy./Just a frightened kid, that's all." (Wellman 25-26 min) Then, a dancing scene follows soon where everybody is having fun in the prison (Wellman 28-32 min). (Appendix xvii/123-124)

When it seems that her case is not improving, she invents her pregnancy and appears in front of the journalists as the Virgin Mary with a covered head and she even resorts to the 'famous' Southern drawl (but she does it only here, and this drawl never appears in this film or in any other version again – while we know that Beulah Annan talked this way). When Flynn instructs her what to do and say, she answers cheekily: "Yes, Daddy" (Wellman 38 min). When seated with the journalists she says to Mary Sunshine: "If it is a girl, I would like to name it after you" and thanks her all her kindness (Wellman 41 min).

When they are rehearsing for the trial they are quarrelling just like in every version (the room is full of white flowers): "At that point you weep./I have just wept./Then, weep again! And every other time I say so!" and Flynn slaps down the mirror in which Roxie was doing her makeup. (Wellman 44 min) Then, he starts doing his 'makeup' by tousling his hair and wearing an old (small-sized) suit to represent his misery and incite sympathy – it is a striking difference since he is a very handsome and elegant man (played by Adolphe Menjou): "May not know much law but I know juries and that's all we need" (ibid). (Appendix xviii/125-126) Then, they go on with the rehearsal:

> Where was I?/My innocent unborn babe./And next, you throw your head back, nobly. [Roxie throws her head back in an pathetic manner] Good, but don't look at the jury on that, just forget them. Seek the eyes of your husband!/He has divorced me and cast me aside but he is still the father of my child/and a man I really love [helps Flynn]/and a man I really love. (ibid)

Then Flynn angrily tells her as she has slumped down the chair: "You do not have to make it out of the floor!/But you said slump, didn't ya!?/But gently, delicately like a leady. You look like a sea lion!" (Wellman 45 min) They go on with the possibility that during cross examination she might be called names. Roxie threatens to talk back. Flynn answers that she cannot do that, only cry: "No matter what he says, or how merry gets, you shrink! SHRINK! ... and cower … and cry … with a little flutter […] and never forget, always you are frightened, helpless and demure." (ibid). When it turns out that Roxie does not know the meaning of the words since she is pulling up her skirt, Flynn pulls it down over her knees angrily and shouts: "Demure means shy, timid, modest!" (ibid) Then, they are summoned to

go in, and in a confusion, he accidentally picks the white geranium bouquet while Roxie the black book, when they are asked about it, quickly exchange the items (Wellman 46 min). According to Mario Praz, the geranium is one of the quitessential flowers and symbols of the Biedermeier ideals of Victorianism (*The Hero in Eclipse* 422). Roxie wears a covent girl-kind of attire, although, a bit more high-couture (of the 1940s): white hat, white scarf, white flowers and a simply-cut black dress.

As the trial proceeds everybody is looking Roxie: the jury (the move as one to have a better view), the judge, the 'audience' and nobody is paying any attention what is said. That is why, the State Prosecutor asks the judge: "Will your Honor, kindly request the jury to give some small attention to the witness [Amos] during this testimony?" and immediately, everybody starts to 'concentrate' on the witness (Wellman 48 min). Roxie is facing the jury ans smiles at them, flirts, picks a middle-aged man in the first row and acts for him, when the lawers are fighting she hides under the table and smiles at the jury while slightly pull up her skirt (Wellman 50-52 min).

However, when Roxie has to take the stand she becomes very nervous and scared – this is the scene when Flynn shows only once a caring, human face: "You see in New York or Los Angeles or some other sissy town, that would be the end of it, nothing but law, but in Chicago the law does not count. It is justice we are after. What do you say, kid?/I am scared./You could do it, you know …" (Wellman 56 min) and convinces her to have a try. Here, she uses a little Southern drawl and the scene when she takes the stand will almost entirely be the same in the 2002 versions, as well. She tells how they met, how they went to the policemen's ball, how Casely was pursuing her etc. Then, Flynn asks whether she believes in the sacredness of marriage to which she answers: "Yes sir, that's what I was telling him all along" (Wellman 59 min). After this, she explains that she only went to the ball with Casely because she quarreled with her husband that morning: "It seemed I just couldn't stop pestering him./Pestering him? What about?/Because I wanted a home, a real home with little kiddies, that's why." (Wellman 60 min) Flynn puts up this question with a surprised face but he is already murmuring the exact answer, as well, and Roxie as utters her wish for familial bliss rises up with pathos but the newspapermen and photographers rush to her at this moment: "Hold it, hold it!" and take photos. (ibid) Then, she claims that casely made her drink something horrible during the ball: "He gave me a drink and that tasted bad, if that is whisky then, bleee" (ibid). In the 2002 version, the explanation of the morning quarrel is: "I couldn't stop pestering him./Pestering him? About what?/ I didn't like him working those long hours at the garage. I wanted him home with me to darn his socks and iron his shirts. I

wanted a real home and a child." (Marshall 1h 22 min) Flynn interprets this in a way that she "drifted into an illicit relationship because she was unhappy at home," to which she answers: "Yes, most unhappy" and pulls up her skirt a little as if holding on to it for strength but the jury could have a peek (Marshall 1h 22-23 min).

When Roxie is asked whether she considerd herself guilty she answers almost in tears (it is again almost entirely the same as in the 2002 version): "Roxie Hart, are you guilty or not guilty?/Not guity, I killed him, but not murder!" (Wellman 61 min) In the 2002 version, she says: "I'm not guilty, I'm not guilty. I killed him, I did but I am not a criminal, I am not a criminal!" (Marshall 1h 22-23 min) and her voice drowns into sobs. The 1942 version goes on with telling that Roxie bought powder to make biscuits for her husband. Then, at home "I was singing about my housework when the doorbell rang and thinking it was my girlfriend, Irma […] I went to the door and who do you think it was?" [in the meantime she is rocking her bouquest as if a child] it was Casley in the door "INTOXICATED!" (Wellman 62 min). Then, the details are listed and "Both grabbed for the gun" scene is presented, "And then he started for me and I can see him now with an awful look in his eyes, a wild look./What kind of a look? Describe it to the audience, oh, to the jury." (Wellman 63-64 min) – This occurs the same way in the 2002 version that Flynn 'mistakes' the jury for an audience. "Could you tell the audience, the jury, what happened next?" (Marshall 1h 23 min) – "And then I shot my eyes…/Go on Roxie./And then I fired…/In defence of your life!/My life, yes, but not just mine…" [and she droops while her voice trails off] (ibid). The photographers and the journalists immediately rush to her: "Hold it, hold it!" and she is up and smiling in a second. (Wellman 65 min) In the 2002 version, Roxie says that when Casely came to her on the night of the murder, she said to him the happy news that she and Amos were going to have a baby, and Casely, in a rage, said that he would kill her before bearing somebody else's child. In this version, the description is much more vivid and passionate (probably due to the 60 years that passed). Roxie goes on saying that they "both reached for the gun" and she got it first. Casley went towards her with a wild look in his eyes [Flynn shouts to the jury in extasy: "WILD"]. He probably would have killed her, so Flynn shouts that she probably did it "because it was his life or yours/Oh, yes, but not just mine … and then I closed my eyes, and I shot./In defense of your life!/To save my husband's innocent unborn child …" [Roxie shouts all this in extreme desperation crying while Flynn silently repeats the same words] and she faints in exhaustion. (Marshall 1h 22-24 min)

In the 1942 version, Flynn rehearses his final speech and Roxie is arranging her makeup and clothes to look nice not paying attention to him. "Now here's where you weep.

You may take her life, gentlemen, as the state asks but that won't bring Casley back. That's always news to the jury. And for what purpose, to protect society? Well, weep, you fool!" (Wellman 65 min) Then a cut is made and his speech goes on in front of the jury addressing them: "Do you fear that weeping girl? [Roxie is crying, shaking and trembling] No./Do you?/No." [some in the jury start to weep too], then Flynn asks why they would persecute her: "For her reformation? She learned her lesson, Gentlemen, in those dark hours alone in her cell." (Wellman 65-66 min) He is speaking louder and louder while Roxie is crying louder and louder, then, he tears the bunch of flowers from her hands (silences her) and stamps on the flowers: "Gentlemen, if you convit this delicate child, it will be like taking these fragile flowers and crushing them into dead and broken blossoms." (Wellman 66 min) Roxie falls to her knees in front of the remains of the flowers (and in full view of the jury) holding them up crying: "No! No!" (Wellman 67 min) Then, Flynn announces with pathos: "The defense rests, Your Honor!" and holds up the 'half-dead' body of Roxie as a sacrificial lamb to the judge (ibid). In the 2002 version, there is no flower performance and not even a final speech like this since there is Velma to be aquitted, who entirely disappears from the 1942 version. This defense speech is solved in a way that Velma takes the stand as if reading from the fake diary of Roxie and Flynn makes it as if she was a perjurer because having made a 'pact' with Harris for freedom. He performs his tap dance as he 'fiddles' himself out of this thight situation and in the end shouts "The defense rests!" (Marshall 1 h 25-30 min). After this, both women are freed quickly, although, it is only Roxie whose case ends publicly. It is solved in a way that when the jury should say how they decided we are shown the newspapers down the street sayinG GUILTY, and next to it the others saying INNCONET. A sign from the window says that she is innocent and they immediately start selling these newspapers. (Marshall 1 h 31 min)

In the 1942 version, Roxie arrives in full white looking like a bride or a little sheprdess, similarly to the 1927 film version. Her hat looks like with its flowers as if she had a halo around her head. (Appendix xviii/127) The announcement of the jury's decision goes the same way as it has been described in the case of the 2002 version: "We, the jury find the defendant" [signal] and the start selling the "Roxie Freed" newspapers. (Wellman 67-68 min) She starts thanking everybody the help and support, she is cheered and celebrated: "Thank you, thank you, all of my Dear, dear friends" but within seconds new shots are heard and she is left alone. (Wellman 69 min) Even Jake Callaghan says to her: "I am sorry, kid, it's all over. You are yesterday news!" (ibid) Her (divorced) husband is taken away as a 'new show' since he claims that, in reality, he shot Casely. Roxie remains alone with two men and has to

choose a new husband: the poor, young man she likes or the middle-aged, rich one. She picks the Packard and the film closes with revealing that it is the barman, who is now poor, was the rich husband, and the young(er) reporter is the new husband who was that poor, young man dismissed for him. Then, Homer meets Roxie in the Packard who is waiting for him with their 6 kids saying: "I got some news for ya. We are gonna have to have a bigger car next year" (Wellman 69-72 min)

6. 3. The 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s: The 1976 Stage Adaptation[v]

In the forties and fifties filmmakers tried to defend themselves by safe-play, which often resulted in creating films with very simple and innocent plots or they adapted already famous and successful literary works or they made great historical opuses. This period produced mostly glamorous musicals, sentimental melodramas or costly historical spectacles. Alfred Hitchcock was one of the greatest directors of this period, the father of suspense and thriller (Gronemeyer 101-109); his female representations differed greatly from what was/had been in habit and his depiction of unruly, erring, aggressive, criminal or even murderous women was/is not that negative, prejudiced and one-sided (most of the time); and he usually made an attempt to understand and to present the problems of women as they were with as little distortion as possible, for example, in *The Lady Vanishes* (1938), *Vertigo* (1958), *North by Northwest* (1959) or *Marnie* (1964) and so on.

The significant turning point in the general representational trend – also including the representation of women's violence and violence in general – was from the sixties on. This turn was not only due to the significant cultural and political changes taking place as a result of the various civil rights movement(s) involving the second wave of feminism, the gay and lesbian movement, black liberation movement etc. but also because the *Production Code*'s power diminished due to the emergence and spreading of television (Gronemeyer 109-111) and because of the fall of the studio system (105-107). As Molly Haskell puts it: "[t]he disintegration of Hollywood in the traditional sense came from within as well as without. Thematically as well as technologically, the death of Hollywood was an idea whose time had come, […]" (232). Haskell adds to this the role of television in all this process:

> […] in robbing movies of their mass audience, television had stolen more than bodies and box-office figures. It had destroyed the faith: that belief in their fictions and fables by which the movies touched base with millions of viewers and had the authority of received religion. In a land of many churches and no

> Church, this mythical bond constituted the only national religion America had ever known […] and the only "realism" film has ever known. With the best dreams that money could buy, filmmakers created a reality that was far more real for most people than the world they lived in. (234)

In addition, after years of hard censorship in movies, people wanted to see sex and violence in films and to watch films without the artificiality of the *Code* regulation. As Haskell claims, the films and the stars of the fifties "were all *about* sex, but *without* sex" (235). The visible "chastity" of cinema held up by the *Production Code* were then considered "unhealthy" mainly with the "breast fetishism" and the Lolita lechery of the existing movies. Society was in a postwar phase, similarly to the twenties, and the time of sexual freedom was there (235).

> It was as if the whole period of the fifties was a front, the topsoil that protected the seed of rebellion that was germinating below. The cultural disorientation had begun, but it had yet to be acknowledged. By the sixties, the break would be official and the divorce a quickie (235).

The sixties, according to Haskell, were not promising years for the filmic representation of women; her pessimism was further echoed by the beginning of the seventies, that signaled the fact that the growing strength of women's liberation resulted in a backlash in commercial film (323). However, there were positive changes, as well, since the less human, glamorous figures of Code-era female stars turned into more human-humane beings during this period even if it was not a happy conversion.

> The sixties, which witnessed the disappearance of the studios and the phony glamour industry, gave the stars a chance to find out, as they receded and "real" human beings took over (showing their "authenticity" by scorning lipstick for eyeshadow and dresses for jeans). But somehow it wasn't the great love-and-reality trip it was supposed to be. (324)

Haskell also discusses what the ideal woman of the sixties and seventies was in fact, not a woman but "a girl, an ingénue, a mail-order cover girl: regular featured, generally brunette, whose 'real person' credentials were proved by her inability to convey any emotion beyond shock or embarrassment and an inarticulateness that was meant to prove her 'sincerity'" (329). It was *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), which was the real breakthrough from the point of view of the representation of sex and violence with a female lead next to a male character. By the seventies and into the eighties, sexuality and violence abounded in films. (Appendix xviii/128-129) "The beginning of the shift, that point when the graphic representation of

physical violence first became a distinct stylistic possibility in the American cinema, is easy to date. Ultraviolence emerged in the late 1960s, and the movies have never benn the same since." (Prince 6) Stephen Prince adds about *Bonnie and Clyde* that it "was the most explicitly violent film that had yet been made" and its extreme violent scene of slaughtering Bonnie and Clyde in the end has become iconic (9), and this film (was one of those that) signaled the beginning of the proliferation of violent films upon the public's demand since "the public had hithero unappeased appetites for screen carnage" (12). Sobchack also opines that the representation of violence took a new turn during that time, and she lays emphasis on the stylization and aestheticization of violence:

> screen violence in American films of the late 1960s and early 1970s was new and formally different from earlier "classical" Hollywood representations of violence. This new interest in violence and its new formal treatment not only literally satisfied and intensified cultural desire for "close-up" knowledge about the material fragility of bodies, but also – and more important – made increasingly senseless violence in the "civil" sphere sensible and meaningful by stylizing and aestheticizing it, thus bringing intelligibility and order to both the individual and social body's increasingly random and chaotic destruction. (119)

However, in the middle of the great changes in the representation of women in cinema and the expanding character number of female murderers on screen *Chicago* was reproduced again in the seventies, yet, on stage. After several failed trials and attempts to gain the rights of *Chicago* from Maurine Watkins to readapt it again and to put it to stage in musical form, the crime story opened in 1975 on Broadway. In spite of the continuous interest in the story throughout the fifties and sixties, Watkins - by this time an eccentric recluse and a born-again Christian (Pauly xxix) - refused to sell the rights of the drama. When she died in 1969, her estate finally released the rights and Bob Fosse with Gwen Verdon, Fred Ebb and John Kraft managed to bring to life the story of *Chicago* again, this time as a musical, entitled *Chicago, A musical vaudeville* (1976). Although it gained mixed reviews, it had a successful run (Pauly viii) and it has ever since. However, as a counterexample, Denny Martin Flinn does not praise the musical version of *Chicago* in his work entitled *Musical! A Grand Tour, The Rise, Glory, and Fall of An American Institution*. He criticizes it in a contradictory manner Bob Fosse's choreography while claiming that his style was individual and unique (Flinn 302); he dislikes Gwen Verdon's singing and dancing abilities while acknowledging her mesmerizing stage presence and persona (450). He also suggests that *Chicago* is a dark vaudeville (468). Finally, Flinn labels *Chicago* (1976) "respectable" and still ranks it among the best musicals (488).

His attitude is quite ambiguous, which might be the symptom of the "mixed reviews effect" the version received after opening.

On the positive side, Andrew Lamb, in his book entitled *150 Years of Popular Musical Theatre*, states that "[t]he quarter-century from 1943 to the late 1960s was perhaps the core period of the development of the American musical" (294). He also claims that "[t]he work that has most closely rivaled *Cabaret* in its style and success is *Chicago* (1976) […]" (300). Lamb claims that:

> [t]he production was notable for the way it continued to break down musical theatre conventions. The story unfolded on a multiple-purpose set as a sequence of vaudeville turns, with the traditional pit orchestra replaced by a jazz band perched high above the action. The conductor announced each of the turns, which included important dance sequences by director-choreographer Bob Fosse. (300-301)

John Bush Jones is also of the opinion that *Chicago* was among the great successes of the period and while he acknowledges that the issues treated in it are a bit 'heavy and tough,' yet, people attended the performances eagerly because it was highly entertaining.

> Although the public stayed away from heavyhanded message-musicals, they enthusiastically attended shows that were purely or primarily entertaining, and the 1970s had plenty to offer in that department. *Applause*, *Sugar*, *A Little Night Music*, and *Chicago* had runs in the high hundreds of performances. (Jones, *Our Musicals, Ourselves* 269)

He also adds that this period, when the 1976 version of *Chicago* appeared, was a hard time for most Americans because of the several crises affecting their lives; and as it has been mentioned, this probably also contributed to the success of *Chicago* partly because it was entertaining and provided relief but also because it treated the question of corruption and manipulation of the media and the judicial system, hence, also reflected on the problematic points in the lives of the people of the 1970s.

> For many Americans the 1970s were difficult times. The strides made in civil rights and women's rights and the U.S. exodus from Vietnam notwithstanding, Watergate, Nixon's resignation, several recessions, the 'energy crisis,' and late in the decade, the Iranian hostage crisis challenged many Americans' trust in the government and their belief that it could solve problems on a global scale. (ibid)

This version bears the marks of the events of the sixties since it encompasses all kinds of 'freedom,' which might occasionally turn into 'taking liberties.' As an example for this latter, there is cursing, a rather strong language use and a lot of slang. An example is when the Matron is called "Butch" (Ebb, Fosse 38). Haskell claims that the terms "butch" and "femme" – that are used within the realm of lesbian relationships – got quite widespread during the late 1960s and "butch" stood for "the active, 'male' sexual posture […] or machismo" and it also referred to women's intrusion into "all-male domains" and also their aggressive "sexual casualness" (357). Actually, Mama Morton really becomes a lesbian character in this version and remains so in the 2002 version, too.

The 1976 version is the most lively and at the same time, surprising. From the point of view of the representation of female murderers, it is again of the same standing as the original drama. It is witty, ironic, and occasionally sardonic. It does not condemn its anti-heroines, it does not want to tame, domesticate or punish them. This is the version which celebrates these women most explicitly. The 2002 version builds on this version most closely. It follows the same narrative structure and the songs, as well. Velma here gets a (quasi-) central role; in none of the earlier versions this female character becomes as important as here. Interesting to note that it is for the first time that the character of Hunyak takes on her ethnic identity: she speaks Hungarian openly and is claimed to be Hungarian; 'othered' from the rest of the convicted mass, she also gets focus as the innocently executed immigrant figure, a counter-example to the evidently guilty female murderers of the story. She is supposed to say "Mit keresek, én itt? Azt mondjok, hogy a hires lakem lefogta a férjemet en meg lecsaptam a fejét. De nem igaz, en ártatlan vagyok. Nem tudom mert mondja Uncle Sam hogy en tettem. Probaltam a rendorsegén megmagyarazni de nem ertettek meg…" (Ebb, Fosse 21). It is slightly full of grammatical mistakes but it is evident that she is Hungarian who cannot speak English and she cannot make herself be understood.

When the story opens the Master of Ceremonies, in a true *Vice*-like manner, announces: "Welcome. Ladies and gentlemen, you are about to see a story of murder, greed, corruption, violence, exploitation, adultery, and treachery – all those things we all hold near and dear to our hearts. Thank you." (Ebb, Fosse 9) Velma immediately follows him with her song, "All That Jazz." What is interesting is that she also makes such a meta-comment as *Vices* and Masters of Ceremonies do, when Casely asks Roxie whether her husband is at home, she answers: "No, her husband is not at home" (Ebb, Fosse 11). While Velma is still singing her song, on stage right, the whole scene happens between Roxie and Casely and she shoots him (here she is not beaten as a 'justification'). (Ebb, Fosse 9-13) When the

investigators arrive and question Roxie and Amos she has her number entitled "Funny Honey" singing about how nice her husband is because he would take the blame for her, but the truth turns out (Ebb, Fosse 13-17). Then, the "Cell Block Tango" is performed by "the six merry murderesses of Cook County jail" (Ebb, Fosse 17), in which, the refrain is: "He had it coming/He had it coming/He only had himself to blame/If you'd been there/If you've seen it/I betcha you would have done the same" (Ebb, Fosse 17-23). Mama Morton's entrée is "When You're Good to Mama" (Ebb, Fosse 24-26). During this song Mama and velma are talking and Mama claims that "[…] Vel, you know how I feel about you. You're my favourite. You're the classiest dame in this whole joint. […]" (Ebb, Fosse 25) Although not here, but it materializes visually in a (probable) lesbian relationship between the two women in the 2002 version. Mama also tells – presenting in a few senteces the depth of corruption goin on –

> Ah, Baby, you couldn't buy that publicity. You took care of Mama and Mama took care of you. I talked to Flynn. He set your trial date for March the 5th. March 7th you'll be acquitted. And march 8th – do you know what Mama's gonna do for you? – She's gonna start you on a vaudeville tour (ibid).

Then, she closes her song by saying "When you're good to Mama/Mama's good to you" (Ebb, Fosse 26). This goodness exclusively means (a lot of) money. In the 2002 version, she symbolically pulls a green scarf out of her décolletage and then walks with in her hand it while performing (Marshall 17-21 min). When Roxie is panicking and starts to pray the Hail Mary in her desperation the Matron stops her and tells: "In this town, murder is a form of entertainment. Besides, in forty-seven years, Cook County ain't never hung a woman yet. So it's forty-seven to one, they won't hang you" (Ebb, Fosse 28).

Billy Flynn's entrée is "All I Care About" and he is announced as "the Silver Tongued Prince of the Courtroom – the one – the only Mr Billy Flynn" (Ebb, Fosse 31). His concrete appearance occurs in the midst of the chorus girls' erotic pining for him "We want Billy" and he "*appears in silhouette. He is dressed 'to teeth,' and very elegant. During the following Fan Dance with the Girls, he strips to his underwear* " (ibid). In the 2002 version, a visual trick is done since we believe that the elegant man that appeared is him, but no, it is the poor guy cleaning the rich one's shoes. Yet, the editing shows parallelly that he is really the rich man and does not care about love that he sings, yet, in the end he is also stripped (Marshall 33-37 min) When Flynn and Roxie discuss what they will do he claims that she has to get the sympathy of the Press and the best way to do is to 'perform the reformed sinner:' "Chicago is a tough town. It's gotten so tough that they shoot the girls right out from under you. But

there's one thing that they can never resist and that's a reformed sinner – so I've decided to rewrite the story of your life. […] 'From Covent to Jail.'" (Ebb, Fosse 37) Then, he describes almost entirely the same as in the 1942 version culminating in "[t]he most important thing to remember […] is remorse, regret. You're sorry. *Sorry*. You would give your life to bring him back." (Ebb, Fosse 38) However, a new addition is 'inveted' that she was "educated at the Sacred Heart" (Ebb, Fosse 37). Into the 2002 version this addition is included. The Sacred Heart is interesting because it clearly signals that she studied at a Catholic school, she is really almost a covent girl. "Kate O'Flaherty (later Chopin) attended the Sacred Heart Academy in St. Louis with her friend Kitty Garesché, who became a Sacred Heart nun" (Chopin 197). In the 2002 version, when Roxie is dressed for the trial she wears a dress that looks as if she really was a covent girl and Flynn throws her a rosary to hold (Marshall 1 h 17 min). In addition, when she takes the stand she is presented as if she reproduced the Ascension of the Virgin Mary as she is elevated into the sky in a hoop and is lit from behind, so she really looks like a saint lit by the light of God wearing a halo (Marshall 1 h 21 min).

When the reporters appear, they sing together with Flynn and Roxie "We Both Reached for the Gun," (Ebb, Fosse 38-43) so the press is bought and roxie's carrerr 'skyrockets.' Soon she performs "Roxie" (Ebb, Fosse 44-47) and she is the star, the celebrity she has always wanted to be. Velma tries to take some attention back by trying to convince Roxie to join her in a double act with "I Can't Do It Alone" but she refuses (Ebb, Fosse 48-51). When Kitty, the new inmate, gets into the center of all attention and all hope seems to fade, both Roxie and Velma sing "If life is a school/I'll pass every test/If life is a game/I'll play it the best/'Cause I won't give in/And I'll never bend/And I am my own best friend" (Ebb, Fosse 56). Then, Roxie comes up with the idea that she is pregnant and a doctor proves it, so she must be …: "Doc, would you swear to that statement in court?/Yes/Good … uh … button your fly." (Ebb, Fosse 58-59).

When they start rehearsing for the trial they mostly only quarrel and Flynn tells Roxie to knit that she cannot and do not want to do. Roxie is confident and fires Flynn who answers: "You're a phony celebrity, kid. You're a flash-in-the-pan. In a couple of weeks, nobody'll even know who you are. That's Chicago." (Ebb, Fosse 71) Right after it Hunyak is interrogated "*and the* Matron *is acting as her interpreter with a Hungarian-English Dictionary in hand*." (Ebb, Fosse 72) Hunyak tries to explain her case in vain but she has a firm belief that she will not be put to jail because Uncle Sam is just and she is innocent: "Uncle Sam jó és igazságos, ö nem fog börtönbe csukni, mert artatlan vagyok." (ibid) However, soon, we only hear

> Not guil … ty. Not guil … ty. Not Guilty Uncle Sam. (*She walks Upstage to a rope ladder that has been flown in* S. L. *and removes her prison garment to reveal a circus costume.* […]) MATRON. And now, ladies and gentlemen, for your pleasure and your entertainment – we proudly present … the one … the only Katalin Hunyak and her famous Hungarian rope trick. (HUNYAK *disappears off stage*. […]) ANNOUNCER. (*Off Stage*.) After 47 years a Cook County precedent has been shattered. Katalin Hunyak was hanged tonight for the brutal axe murder of her husband. The Hungarian woman's last words were, "Not guilty." (Ebb, Fosse 73)

In the 2002 version almost the execution happens similarly and a cheering crownd is applauding the entertainment but it is called the "famous Hungarian disappearing act" (Marshall 1 h 13-14 min). The execution frightens Roxie and she is willing to do everything and anything Flynn wants her to do or say. They enter the courtroom with Billy Flynn's song entitled "Razzle Dazzle." (Ebb, Fosse 74-77) The trial procedure is almost entirely the same (same words, same gestures, movements etc.) as it has been described in the previous chapter also involving examples form the 2002 version. (Ebb, Fosse 77-83) However, her description is the following: "Mrs. Hart, her usual gracious self thanks the bailiff and he smiles at her. She looks simply radiant in her stylish blue lace dress and elegant sliver shoes. […] With rhinestone buckles." (Ebb, Fosse 83-84) In addition, the stealing of Velma's shoes is not in these other two versions, yet it is in the original drama (Watkins 54). When Flynn makes his final speech, he is introduced as "the champion of the down-trodden" and closes his speech a bit self-ironically (referring to his actions and those involved) but nobody understands it: "You have heard my colleague call her temptress, call her adulteress, call her murderess. But, despite what the prosecutin says, things are not always what they appear to be […] The defense rests!" (Ebb, Fosse 86-87) Additionally, in the middle part that I left out, he removes mary Sunshine's wig and clothes and she is revealed to be a man (Ebb, Fosse 97). This is not to be found in any of the other versions but it is a striking addition to the masquerade of femininity and all of the comic-grotesque performativity that takes place. Then, it is not explained how velma gets out and how they find each other but in the final act Roxie and Velma appear as the famous double act and perform "Nowadays/R.S.V.P./Keep It Hot" (Ebb, Fosse 89-91). In the 2002 version, Velma gets out because she makes a pact with Flynn and acts in court as if she found Roxie's true diary (I have described that scene), and when both of them are free and Roxie cannot be successful alone Velma offers her again a double act which proves to be a great success. (in the next chapter discussing the 2002 version, I will not go

into detail again about the particulars of the story that have been touched upon in the previous chapters.)

> MASTER OF CEREMONIES. Ladies and gentlemen, the Vickers Theatre, Chicago's finest home of family entertainment, is proud to announce a first. The first time, anywhere, there has been an act of this nature. Not only one little lady, but two! You've read about them in the papers and now here they are – a double header! Chicago's own killer dillers – thosetwo scintillating sinners – Roxie Hart and Velma Kelly. (Ebb, Fosse 89)

6. 4. From the 1980s Until Our Present Day: The 2002 Film Adaptation

According to Dawn B. Sova, after a slow climb back during the seventies, the eighties became a decade full of possibilities for women and their representation.

> Women forced Hollywood to reopen its doors to them in the 1980s; positions from the boardroom to both sides of the camera could finally be called women's work. They took over some of the most powerful jobs in town. Even on-screen roles were affected as more secure actresses rebelled against the meager "bimbo or bitch" choices offered them, and chose to write their own script, deepening the roles for women characters. […] In short, the 1980s signaled women's return to the business aspect of the film industry for the first time since its infancy. (168)

This trend continued during the nineties. Sova calls this era the limitless decade (181-196). After the great success of *Alien* (1979) (and its succeeding parts) another significant milestone in the representation of violent women was *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) with the character of Clarice Starling FBI agent. This film was a great success and empowered women and challenged the limiting categories of womanhood (Dole, "The Gun and the Badge" 86-89). The real turning point, however, was *Thelma & Louise* (1991). This film created a great controversy and heated debates on the subject of female aggression in general but, by all means, on screen. Barbara L. Miller calls this film "gun-in-the-handbag" film, a type of film typical of the early nineties. This film "portrayed a type of female empowerment that was possible only then. This type of empowerment simultaneously speaks to the limits of Hollywood conventions and the changing political and social attitudes of the early 1990s" (Miller 203). The male viewers and critics generally reacted to it with vehement aversion while female viewers and feminist critics praised it highly since it offer(ed) real role models for women; the film is considered to be one of the most important feminist landmarks (204).

After *Thelma & Louise* (1991), more and more other films dealing with female aggression and women's violent behavior followed, for example, *Basic Instinct* (1992), *Diabolique* (1996) – both featuring Sharon Stone in murderous female roles. According to Susan Knobloch, Sharon Stone's star image works both in a feminist way and as an antifeminist "backlash" (125). Also, "[i]n Stone's work we can investigate the intersections of thirty years of recent feminism with the archetypal Hollywood figure of female violence, the 'spider woman,' or femme fatale" (126). Knobloch adds to this that "Stone's mayhem-dealing characters at least flickeringly 'true' hearts and comprehensible minds, despite the evidence in her films that Hollywood still seems unable to conceive of a violent woman ─ a functioning fighter, a sexual object ─ who is fully 'real'" (140).

In *Fargo* (1996)[vi], however, the Coen brothers come quite close to one in the form of Marge, and the film "ironized stereotypes about women through its sly representation of an ungainly but shrewd pregnant detective, and tested them by combining the traditionally separate qualities of toughness and nurturance" (Dole, "The Gun and the Badge" 90). Actually, Marge is a perfect example of comic-grotesque feminity as well as a comic violent woman (who is violent out of duty being a police officer) as she points a gun at the criminal over her belly of seven month pregnancy. She is "polite, friendly, and cooperative" (Dole, "The Gun and the Badge" 92), yet, she is able to make the criminal as well as us, viewers, believe that she would shoot him to death unflinchingly, and eat another hamburger after that. Her character was/is praised and its performance acknowledged widely by audiences as well as critics because she is a unique combination of the comic and the dangerous woman: "affectionate and satirical" (ibid). (Appendix xviii/130-131)

It happened actually in the late 1980s, early 1990s that violent women started to populate the screen, even in the action and crime film genres, sometimes as sidekicks but also more and more as protagonists. In spite of this development, there were still stereotypes used in the creation of roles for women in this field. They came up with such categories as "'butch' type" such as Ripley in *Alien* (1979) or Sarah Connor in *Terminator 2* (1991), "tomboy and the 'feisty heroine'" such as Clarice in *Silence of the Lambs* (1991) – but as an earlier example for the feisty heroine Princess Leia is mentioned from *Star Wars* (1977) –, and finally, "the conventionally glamorous and/or sexual action women" such as "the action/porn hybrid *Barb Wire* (1996)" with Pamela Anderson. (Tasker 67-69) In these films, the makers tried to solve the 'problems' of the visual combination of strength and (traditional) femininity to create complex and 'real' figures (Tasker 69). Tasker also discusses *new film noir* and these *neo-noir femmes fatales*, as well, and claims that this *new femme fatale* is still defined by "her

seductive sexuality," the power of this sexuality, "the deceptions, disguises and confusion," and as yet the quandary of "woman as 'enigma'" but she is always "an independent woman," (120-121) and usually, a professional in some field, for example, banking. Thus, more and more these are working women who are also financially independent and good at their jobs. Yet, the *new noir femmes fatales* still mostly follow the trajectory and conventions of the 1940s *film noir femmes fatales* in general, however, there are some small changes such as the explicit presentation of sexual activity or in a few cases the *femme fatale* can "be succesful in her schemes," for example, in *Body Heat* (1981) (Tasker 122-125).

Stella Bruzzi is also of the opinion that in many of the films produced during the 1980s and 1990s "subjectivity resides more with the woman than the man" in spite of the "backlash" working during this time (127). These scheming and alluring professional women do not lose their "castrating potential" and more and more of these "cool, phlegamitc heroines out-smart all the men and get away with it" (ibid). Additionally, Bruzzi also states that these deadly women are "professionally successful," they "usurp the traditional social male role" with their professional participation in the job market and they are not solely defined on the basis of their looks (ibid). *The Last Seduction* (1994) is mentioned as an example for and exceptional *femme fatale* (by both Bruzzi and Tasker) since she is able to combine glamour, style and doing business with ease while she is a "knowing dominatrix," Bridget manages to create "an equation between the working woman and sexual performance," she is competent (Tasker 130-131), and last but not least, she wins it all by the end of the story. Bruzzi also states that she is an outstanding example of how to make feminism compatible with "excessive femininity" (127). Yet, I would not call her femininity excessive. She is unquestionably stylish, however, she is much more androgynous with her suits and trousers, as an example, than feminine. Undoubtedly, she also wears very feminine clothes but only when she wants to achieve something with it concretely. In addition, she also belongs to those *femmes fatales* who use a substitute and sacrifice that other person for her own deeds, and her case is rather rare since this person is a man, not a woman (which is more frequent). In the end, Tasker adds that it is "a parodic fantasy of women's professional achievements in America today" as the men in the film (with whom she has a certain kind of relationship) want to marry her and settle down with her while this is what she does not want, she is the professional working woman and the men are the homemakers (134). Yet maybe, from about fifteen years of distance and being another generation, I do not see it as a parody.

Later, for example, *Kill Bill Vol.1-2.* (2003, 2004) was produced treating the issue of a female serial killer who executes her former 'colleagues' out of revenge – although this film

is only slightly elevated above the level of *Barb Wire* (1996) with its senseless violence and soft-porn associations (even if the final meassage is that she did all this to take revenge for her lost love and to get back her daughter). It was followed by *Monster* (2003)[vii] dramatizing the real-life story of a female serial killer named Aileen Wuornos which is much more lifelike and rational trying to understand and explain why and how somebody resorts to this form of life (Appendix xviii/). There is also *Million Dollar Baby* (2004) with the character of a female boxer who is a really androgynous-looking while fighting as a man, not to mention the numerous TV series and various TV films which (also) handle the question of female investigators, soldiers, and all sorts of violent women on either side of the law. *Mr. & Mrs. Smith* (2005) could also be mentioned as an example for a *femme fatale* who appears in a comedy. *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (2007) is not primarily interesting form the point of view of *femmes fatales*, comic or otherwise – in spite of the fact that Mrs. Lovett makes meat pies out of humans –, but because it is a horror musical. What is more, the theatrical version of this musical is the contemporary of *Chicago* (1976) being adapted to the stage in 1979 as Stephen Sondheim's macabre musical parody (Lamb 310, Flinn 72-73, 488).

Additionally, as a contemporary example for the comic-grotesque performance of femininity as well as a *comic-grotesque femme fatale* Lady Gaga could be mentioned, especially with her *Paprazzi* music video, in which she is sitting in an erect posture like a lady, totally calm, legs crossed, sipping a tea from a Biedermeier tea cup in a military Mickey Mouse patterned tight overall-like garment (with a corset-like belt) while her boyfriend dies because of the poison she put into his drink, then, she only smiles (artificially). Following this, she is quickly released because the police investigation, and probably, a trial found her not guilty and the newspapers announce "she's innocent" – it is very similar to *Chicago* (2002). The video ends with a (probable) allusion to the female 'techno-monster' of *Metropolis* (1927), the evil modern-day Frankenstein, due to the costume-dress Lady Gaga is wearing. In the music video entitled *Telephone*, featuring Beyoncé as well, Lady Gaga – as well as Beyoncé a killer – becomes a mass murderer. In this video, there are multiple references to (cinematic) female murderers (or even serial killers), for example, the beginning prison part and the dancing in the prison might be a reference to *Chicago* (2002), the diner massacre to *Natural Born Killers* (1994) with Mallory as (one of) the most socio-and psychopathic, ruthless female murderer ever created in cinema, and the Pussy Wagon borrowed from *Kill Bill Vol.1-2.* (2003, 2004) as the 'ride of assassination and revenge' in which they drive out of the video in a 'Thelma and Louise style' (promising never to return and holding each other's hands similarly to when Thelma and Louise really drive off into the

Grand Canyon) at the end – all this certainly happens within a comic-grotesque masquerade of femininity.

The 2002 version is the most complex adaptation of Watkins's plot because it encompasses both the filmic and the theatrical 'roots' in its dual storyline. The theatrical parts (the actual musical vaudeville pieces) are embedded in the cinematic text of *Chicago* (2002). Usually, in the case of a musical film, the ecstasy associated with musicals depends on the sensation of displacement; however, *Chicago* (2002) does not make a clear distinction (and displacement) between the narrative itself and the musical numbers; in spite of the blurring of registers, yet, there is an awareness of distinction which makes the whole musical work here (Belton 153). "*Chicago* opposes reality (the prison) and fantasy (the nightclub) through abrupt juxtapositions, but the editing also fuses the two worlds together," writes Belton (153). This intermingling process, however, ends in the final number where: "[t]he basic pattern for the musical numbers in *Chicago* involves an alternation between reality and fantasy within the numbers themselves. This tension is resolved in the final number entitled 'I Move On,' when fantasy becomes reality" (153). This way, the narrative action itself takes place within the musical performance on stage thus turning fantasy into reality, as well as Roxie's and Velma's separate dreams into one actual partnership (153 -154). "The fundamental pattern of alternation between narrative and number that structures most musicals frequently moves toward an ecstatic resolution in the final musical number, but *Chicago* makes that pattern and process more explicit than other works of the genre" (154).

Jane Feuer discusses the question of "the self-reflexive musical" and the suggestion that several musicals are "self-referential" can be applied to *Chicago* (2002) and its 1976 version as well because it/they include/s self-refential instances to "popular entertainment" (486). She claims that these musicals construct a myth of entertainment, yet, the audience willingly participates in the deceptions of this mythical construction (Feuer 487). This is also true in the case of *Chicago*. Feuer asserts that similarly to myths these musicals also have "a stratified structure" since they "demystify" – on the surface they mean "to give pleasure to the audience by revealing what goes on behind the scenes in the theatre or Hollywood" – as well as "remythicize" themselves and the myth of entertainment at the same time (Feuer 488).

Then, the myth of spontaneity follows and Feuer highlights the ironic and paradoxical aspect of film musicals since in spite of the fact that they are "technically the most compex type of film produced in Hollywood" this is the very genre that endeavours to project the greatest ease, "the greatest illusion of spontaneity and effortlessness" (Feuer 491). This is again relevant in the case of *Chicago*, in all of the three later versions, although the 1942 one

is not a 'real musical' only contains some musical references to Ginger Roger's career since she plays Roxie, and however, the 1976 version is not a film musical it still strives to project this spontaneity and ease when staged as if it was that easy to perform those songs and dances while also having self-referential elements in it. About the myth of integration Feuer claims that "[t]he musical film becomes a mass art that aspires to the condition of folk art – produced and consumed by the same integrated community," (493) hence, it is a clear reference to the carnival. The myth of the audience works the same way in *Chicago* (2002) just as it is described by Feuer: "[t]he use of theatrical audiences *in* the films provides a point of identification for audiences *of* the film" (494) as this is what happens here, as well, while it also has to be emphasized that it is only 'a' point of identification provided. It is also suggested that the "inserted shots of applauding audience" is a similar trick to "canned laughter" but Feuer asserts that it is done more subtly in self-reflexive musicals (ibid). Yet, in *Chicago* (2002), it is much rather the means of highlighting that we as (film) audience are also accomlices in crime since we enjoy watching the film just as the audience in the film enjoys all the crime, corruption and manipulation coated as sugary performances, so, it is much more a self-reflective and awarness-raising method than an invitation for carefree laughter, or if it is still the latter then only in the manner of the *Vice*. Feuer concludes that the myth of entertainment implies that it is so natural that the performance itself is real life, and the boundary between life and art ceases to exist, and that the (film) musical has always been "the quintessential Hollywood product" (495-496).

Martin O'Brien, Rodanthi Tzanelli and Majid Yar, while approaching *Chicago* (2002) from a primarily sociological and criminological point of view, make such comments and elaborate on its issues in a way that helps the argumentation of this work, as well, and suggest that "[a]s such, it provides access to a thick repertoire of culturally available tropes through which (noninstrumental and experientially embedded) narratives of criminal action are constructed" (247). They are of the opinion that the underlying principle that drives the criminals of *Chicago* is to become famous and know, a celebrity, and also claim that, for these characters, nothing is sacrosanct on their way to achieve this. They define this goal as: "'celebrity' is an iconic cultural figure of western industrialized societies […] and the film offers a biting exposé of the desperate lengths to which individuals will go to secure their celebrity and the rewards it entails." (Martin O'Brien, Rodanthi Tzanelli and Majid Yar 249) Hence, they term this "desire for fame as pathological" – as it is depicted in the film adaptation – while they also highlight that the public is not innocent either since they encourage this with their expectation of "the spectacle of celebrity and notoriety" (ibid). The

public is crazy about Roxie, everybody wants a little piece of her, hence during the auction they buy everything she has ever been in contact with as these fantasy pieces metonymically substitute her corporeal presence for them is a fetishistic mode. "This presents us with a perverse and sacrilegious inversion of the reverence once invested in religious icons and artefacts," and they suggest on the basis of Schickel "that the public's relation to celebrity is founded on an 'illusion of intimacy'." (ibid)

Then, they focus on the morality projected by the story and express their concerns that it is strikingly different from the general message of 'customary' musicals, and it is most concretely without moral scruples:

> [t]he cultural economy of *Chicago*, in which acts of cruelty and violence can be parlayed into status and financial rewards, is alarmingly amoral, and can be seen as one of the most critical and unsettling elements of the film, which refuses to simply conform to the template of 'wholesome entertainment' once cultivated for Hollywood screen musicals. (Martin O'Brien, Rodanthi Tzanelli and Majid Yar 250)

This is true but that is why it is unique and special, additionally, this polemical-lamenting remark rather sounds as Joseph Breen, who ruled over the sacrilegious monument of the Production Code which, as history has proven, was dysfunctional eventually. Quite many people misunderstand this story because they interpret it literally as if it suggested that criminal celebrities and celebrity criminals are to be cherished, and they miss the satirical tone of the whole enterprise.

Next, they target the question of "diachronic endurance" of the story together with the same of "the meanings of crime" and add that "*Chicago*'s sequential generational appeal may indicate something about how (and why) these emotions articulate modern understandings of the sensuality and intensity of deviant behaviours" (Martin O'Brien, Rodanthi Tzanelli and Majid Yar 253-254). It might be a justifiable claim that the sensual and intense emotional impact and general effect of the actions of these female criminals might suggest that it is appealing to the general public' understanding of crime, even if, in a fictitious form, yet, it still sounds as a moralizing concern. Their following issue is that it is a novelty that the story is about female violence and the criminality of women, what is more, that it is "told from a woman's point of view," (O'Brien, Rodanthi Tzanelli and Majid Yar 254) additionally, in the following part they express similar outdated, inaccurate and less knowledgeable ideas. However, later they start to compare the two leading female characters and how they struggle with the problems they face stating that "[d]espite the burgeoning similarities between the two

women, there are also conspicuous differences: Velma's cool personality, her eloquence and cold-blooded calculation, are contrasted to Roxie's naïvety," and analogous to this, they evoke two iconic film historic ideals as represnetatives of what these women stand for: Roxie – Marilyn Monroe and Velma – Louise Brooks, the image of the sexy, dumb, blonde woman and that of a dark, dangerous and strong one. (O'Brien, Rodanthi Tzanelli and Majid Yar 255-256) This way, their hair color duality is emphasized, yet, they suggest that the blonde imagery implies that Roxie is innocent and non-threatening with which I cannot agree (although it is evident that blondness has a dual message). In spite of the fact, this article is a remarkable, interesting and even enjoyable one, its general attitude, apart from the professionalism in the fields of sociology and criminology, is rather backward looking and moralizing.

Chicago (2002) is a special, unusual musical combining the theme of murder with music within film. This version builds primarily on the 1976 vaudeville, thus, the merger of musical comedy and the subject of murder is recycled and not totally new in this musical film. The adaptation of the irony embedded in Watkins's original play lies in the famous editing of the film, which is a masterpiece in itself (not only from the point of view of Belton's considerations). This film – in its complexity and in its ways of adapting the original script – remains true to the spirit of Watkins's message and while fascinates viewers with its flamboyance and exuberance it also provides a sardonic and sharp critique of the narrating and narrated times. It is a double-edged sword because through the mechanisms of the musical the viewers are channeled to partly forget the fact that it is about murder and vile women; at the same time, the representation of aggressive women through the musical genre lessens the prejudices against them. The image of female murderers is unquestionably positive in this film and allies with the politically correct notions of the current times that witness the amelioration of the modes, methods, traditions and representation of most violent, mean, murderous, fallen, unconventional, unruly and even vile women.

An interesting vaudeville reference can be found in the 2002 version to the Dolly Sisters. (Appendix xix/133) The name of Velma Kelly and her sister, Veronica Kelly, can be an allusion to them since they are called the "Kelly Sisters" and they are considered to be a great vaudeville "sister act," and are well-known as well as successful vaudeville performers: "Chicago's hottest dancing duo, two jazz babes moving as one, the Kelly Sisters" (Marshall 58 sec-2 min). Rosie and Jenny Dolly (these are their 'artist' names) were born in Hungary and the twin sisters became famous vaudeville performers in the United States, appearing in the *Ziegfeld Follies*, in several films and on numerous stages, later also touring around Europe

(Cullen, Hackman and McNeilly 316-317). One of their first performances was described as the following – similarities (seemingly) are also to be found with the performance of the Kelly Sisters at the beginning of the 2002 film version: "[t]he Dolly Sisters' dance number represented them as conjoined twins, a bizarre idea that audiences of the day found charming" (Cullen, Hackman and McNeilly 316). Later, it is also mentioned that they were quite successful: "[t]he Dolly sisters had fair success as youngsters in a twin-sisters act" (Cullen, Hackman and McNeilly 403).

What is also added is not so flattering concerning their artistic abilities and their singing-dancing talent, but, again create a possible connection with the Kelly Sisters – we actually never glimpse Veronica but Velma looks similar to the Dolly Sisters physically and she is evidently a great performer of femininity, she has 'Style,' she can dress, she can act the glamour queen and she capitalizes on her celebrity status (Appendix xix/134-135): "Jenny and her sister, Rosie, had pooled their most valuable assets – their exotic beauty and the ability to wear clothes – and formed the Dolly Sisters, an act that made them international favourites of the idle rich" (Cullen, Hackman and McNeilly 404). It is also added concerning their limited artistic merits that "[t]hey were graceful dancers, but their routines were no more intricate or demanding of athleticism than ballroom dances. They did not sing or act, and they changed costumes and jewelery more often than their dance steps. Their success was founded in glamour […]" (Cullen, Hackman and McNeilly 316). Probably, the same could be said about the Kelly Sisters – we only know what Velma is doing and it wears a great resemblance – in addition, she tells to Roxie that she and her sister were really successful, "were headed straight for the top" and "earned a dough a week, at least," then starts dancing to her (Marshall 57 min). In 1916, again in the *Ziegfeld Follies*, the Dolly Sisters danced together "and played their first vaudeville date as a sister act at the Palace. By this time, they commanded $ 2,000 per week." (Cullen, Hackman and McNeilly 316)

Velma tries to convince Roxie to join her in her double act and be her 'sister' instead of her deceased sister. Roxie resists the offer for a long time, yet, eventually, she accepts it and they become a double act by the end of the story. Thus, Roxie and Velma becomes the sister act and they together can be also an allusion to the Dolly Sisters, although, it is true they look differently. However, this difference is as if they were really each other's doubles since they are created in a mode in the film as if they were each other's negatives, for example, Velma is black haired, Roxie is blonde. The official poster of the film is a very good example for this. It explicitly posits this fact. (Appendix xix/137) There are the two female protagonists, and they are just like each other's 'other,' they are each other's complementary

parts, they are as if they were each other's negative. In the middle stands Billy Flynn as an axis, as a mirror between the two figures and their reflections, mirror images. The two female figures are complementary since Velma stands on the left side of Billy Flynn, 'the mirror' which separates and unites the two images/imagos, and Roxie stands on his right side. Velma can be seen in a white dress, with dark hair, holding the gun in her left hand while Roxie is shown in a black dress, with blond hair, holding the gun in her right hand. The make-up and the nail polish they are wearing are more or less the same, just like the hairstyle and the cut of the dresses they wear. Additionally, it was also mentioned in the original articles covering the murder cases that the two women's (inner) characteristic features and their cases were similar (Pauly xvi).

In addition, the film is shot in a way that the two women are usually opposing each other as if they were standing on the two sides of a mirror, as if they were the photo negatives of the other on the other side of the picture. One of the first parallel shots of them is when Velma is still on stage performing while Roxie is going home with Fred Casely at the beginning of the film. In the staircase, Roxie pulls Fred Casley to herself; Velma does the same with a man on stage as part of the choreography. In all of these shots, it can be seen that the two women are like each other's reflections in a mirror. They do everything as the other's reflection or mirror image. The following example for this is when Roxie is going up the stairs and Casley touches her leg, the same happens to Velma on stage. When in the choreography of the performance Velma's hands are held up by a man in an erotic mode, the same happens to Roxie with Casely. When Roxie and Casley fall in an opening door by accident, a fall takes place on stage likewise. When Roxie reaches up during lovemaking in the bed, a similar scene takes place on stage that Velma reaches up and she is pulled up by the male dancers. It is made in a way that it seems the two movements are each other's continuation.

When they are shown in relation to someone else, they act again as each other's mirror image. When Velma is in Mama's room, she is behind her; when Roxie is in the same room, she is facing Mama. When Velma meets Billy Flynn to discuss her case, she is on his right side; when Roxie appears and has her discussion about her own case, she is on Billy Flynn's left side. This is also the scene where the change, or shift between the positions, statuses of the two women is visualized. The camera focuses on Velma's face first, and the double is blurred in the background, but the camera decides to focus on Roxie in stead, and Velma's face becomes blurred. With this, Roxie comes to the fore and Velma has to withdraw. She becomes only the second one, and Roxie enjoys her total victory but she does not know that

she can become the second likewise. Velma warns her to be cautious and not to be too self-assured and presumptuous because this time will arrive for her, as well, because for Billy Flynn, the most important person is always himself. In the end, however, they manage to overcome their rivalry and form a unity to perform their 'double act.' (Appendix xix/138)

The double also involves love, though, primarily self-love (which is narcissistic love), it is worth having a look at what Freud said about love-choice, object-choice.

> We see that the object is being treated in the same way as our own ego, so that when we are in love a considerable amount of narcissistic libido overflows on to the object. It is even obvious, in many forms of love-choice, that the object serves as a substitute for some unattained ego ideal of our own. We love it on account of the perfections which we have striven to reach for our own ego, and which we should now like to procure in this roundabout way as a means of satisfying our narcissism. (Freud, "Being in Love" 143.)

Velma is obviously and explicitly narcissistic, and it is stated that she is formed and presented as a "Queen Bee" (Marshall, "Audio Commentary given by Rob Marshall and Bill Condon" 2 min). Roxie, although, originally not so much narcissistic she slowly becomes that: a Queen Bee in the making. The overflow of narcissistic self-love onto the object of adoration, the Ideal-I, serves to secure the unity with this ideal other, with whom the two beome one. This does not mean that Roxie and Velma were in love with each other – there is no implication of this in any of the versions – this only means that the ego formation and the choosing of the ego ideal works similarly to the processes when we are in love. At first, it was only Roxie whose ego ideal was Velma because she was everything Roxie ever wanted to achieve but as the film approaches its end, the situation turns and it will be Velma who wants to be like Roxie. In this way, they become each other's ego ideals with whom they want to identify and become united. At the mirror stage, we gain our ego, our identity through identifying ourselves with the imago, the ego ideal. Later on, there are new "identificatory processes" when we act similarly to the first one. The imago we identify with is the double, the mirror image which is (usually) an Ideal-I (Lacan 179). Hence, if there is a person one admires for his/her perfection, then, that person will become the ego ideal with whom one wants to identify and in this identification, a great amount of narcissistic libido 'has its share.'

The double does not appear only on the level of characterization but also on the structural level of the story. This connectiuon is Roxie between the structural and the character duplications since the theatrical/musical versions of the events are mostly the result of her imagination. In the "Behind the Scenes" video, Rob Marshall states that "[i]t was all

taking place on a stage and we did not want to disguise that" (2 min). It is also added that the makers of the film tried to integrate the theatrical scenes into the narrative of the film in a way that they are Roxie's fantasies. It is suggested that the theatrical/musical scenes are "Roxie's dreams:" when she cannot handle the situation emotionally she starts dreaming; "[s]he is a dreamer, we see everything through her eyes" (Marshall, "Behind the Scenes" 1 min). Colleen Atwood, the costume designer of the 2002 version[viii], when explaining how she had to make the costumes also declares that "Roxie's character is the most complex because we see her in reality and then we see everybody through her eyes" (Marshall, "Behind the Scenes" 14 min). In the "Audio Commentary," it is repeated again several times that we see the story, the events and the characters through Roxie's eyes (30 sec, 1 min, 3 min). Although, it is not so necessary to repeat this to us because it is obvious since the very first shot of the film is Roxie's eye(s) concretely and it slowly dissolves into the C of Chicago, then, starts the whole story. An interesting addition is that Joe Gideon, in *All That Jazz*, is also a dreamer and we see everything through his imagination; it is even said about him by the end of the story that "he didn't know where the games ended and reality began" (Fosse 1 h 49 min).

I would add then, that Roxie is not concretely dreaming – meaning a night-time activity – but is rather day-dreaming. She is the one who is day-dreaming, and through this, her imagination is set into motion and creates the colorful, spectacular and fabulous visions. It is essential here to cite what Freud said about day-dreaming and fantasies. "In the same way, the growing child, when he stops playing, gives up nothing but the link with real objects; instead of *playing*, he now *phantasies*. He builds castles in the air and creates what are called *day-dreams*." (Freud, "Creative Writers" 438) This is what actually happens in most of the cases when the theatrical/musical version of the events takes place: Roxie starts fantasying. She does this because:

> Let us now make ourselves acquainted with a few of the characteristics of phantasying. We may lay it down that a happy person never phanatsies, only an unsatisfied one. The motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single phantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality. (Freud, "Creative Writers" 439)

It is clear now that only that person fantasizes who has unfulfilled wishes and is, in general, unhappy. These are all true in Roxie's case since she is not really happy. She is not satisfied with her marriage, she does not love her husband, she gets involved with several men, she has liaisons, she is a drinker, and she spends time in bars while creates (day-)dreams about

becoming a famous vaudeville performer. She would like to be famous and successful, she would like to be known and admired. She would like to be a star, but it is not given to her as we get to know from her during the performance of the song entitled "Roxie" that she never managed to make her dreams come true and the world was a big world full of NO for her (Marshall 50-56 min). When she day-dreams, everything is glamorous, fascinating and spectacular. She fulfills her wishes through these day-dreams, and we can see the events in 'their reality' and 'through the filter of Roxie's imagination,' as well, and by this we get a double representation. With this double presentation, quite often a parody comes to light.

The mode of film production is a bit different from an 'average' musical in this case because the musical scenes are not shot in 'filmic surroundings,' i.e., they are not presented in the 'original filmic space' but in a 'unique theatrical space.' Still, these theatrical scenes are shot in a filmic way to make it have certain attributes of the film and, thus, making it less alien because the aim is not to cut in remote and foreign theatrical bits about a similar issue but to make a whole by combining the elements of film and theatre, as well. These scenes are always shot on stage with stage decors and costumes with theatrical lighting and with a choreography designed for stage performance. However, the angle of shooting is not that of a 'typical' static one. The camera eye often records the events from a full 360°, by this it happens that not only the stage is shown but also the spectators. It is an interesting – although not a unique – feature of this film that it shows 'both sides of the performance.'

The interaction of the actors and the spectators is highlighted which disrupts, in a way, the sanctity of the theatrical sphere, yet the viewer can have a 'real theatrical experience.' There are several examples for this shot-counter shot relation between the performers and the spectators which obviously pinpoints the filmic features, although, by disrupting the theatrical aspect the filmic one is also questioned as via showing the presence and the actions of the spectators/viewers the 'mystic' filmic sphere is also interrupted. An outstanding example for this is Amos' performance as a clown (Marshall 1 h 8-12 min) or Mama Morton's 'entrée' (Marshall 17-21 min) but several other instances could be listed likewise.

It has always been a problem how to interpret and define *theatre* and *film* in relation to each other and how to compare and/or make them compatible with each other. There are several aspects of these media that can be taken into account when attempting to carry out such a task. An example could be the following: "[m]ovies are regarded as advancing from theatrical stasis to cinematic fluidity, from theatrical artificiality to cinematic naturalness and immediacy. But this view is far too simple." (Sontag 362)

The next quotation presents clearly why and how cinema is able to encapsulate any of the performing arts within its scope, what is more, it differentiates between medium and art and claims that cinema is actually the one which 'deserves' both titles: medium and art.

> Because the camera *can* be used to project a relatively passive, unselective kind of vision – as well as the highly selective ("edited") vision generally associated with movies – cinema is a "medium" as well as an art, in the sense that it can encapsulate any of the performing arts and render it in a film transcription. (ibid)

This passage reveals that cinema is able to adopt any kind of performing arts because it is capable of unselective as well as selective vision, and in this way, it can create a filmic transcription of any of these. This is what happens in *Chicago*, as well. Accordingly, *Chicago* (2002) can pay tribute to the original work likewise since the original version was a play, a theatrical piece of art; and *Chicago* (2002) in spite of its primarily filmic 'nature' managed to provide a 'truly' theatrical performance within its boundaries.

The following citation goes on with the definition of cinema and theater in relation to each other. It is an essential task since one of the dualities of the film arises from this specificity that *Chicago* (2002) attempts to carry both a filmic and a theatrical aspect/attitude in itself. *Chicago* (2002) is a versatile and complex combination of the different artistic branches.

> One *can* film a play or a ballet or opera or sporting event in such a way that film becomes, relatively speaking, a transparency, and it seems correct to say that one is seeing the event filmed. But theatre is never a "medium." Thus, because one can make a movie "of" a play but not a play "of" a movie, cinema had an early but, I should argue, fortuitous connection with the stage. Some of the earliest films were filmed plays. (Sontag 363)

An interesting inversion of the succeeding claim can be detected in *Chicago* (2002). "Cinema, at once high art and popular art, is cast as the art of the authentic. Theatre, by contrast, means dressing up, pretense, lies." (Sontag 364) Certainly, it is not the authenticity of cinema or the pretense of theatre is what is questioned in the film; the interesting aspect of it is that *Chicago* (2002) reveals or highlights the truth through and/or with the help of the theatrical scenes. These scenes make the story even more ironic, present the ambiguities and throw light on the problems by way of showing the events in parallel in two lights: in the 'true,' everyday filmic version and in the 'artificial,' abstract theatrical one. Quite many times, the discrepancy between the actions and what is said (shown in the two different

versions) or the dual (different) presentation of the same event are the ones which reveal the truth and create an ironic, mocking impact. An example for this can be the scene when the only innocent person is executed. This woman is called Hunyak and she is of Hungarian origin. In the 1976 and in the 2002 versions as well, it is stated that Hunyak (re)presents "the famous Hungarian disappearing act:" "And now, ladies and gentlemen, for your pleasure and your entertainment – we proudly present…the one…the only Katalin Hunyak and her famous Hungarian rope trick. (*Hunyak disappears off stage.*)" (Ebb, Fosse 73; Marshall 1 h 13-15 min) This all is shown in two parallel versions: in its 'reality' in the prison where she is hanged, and in a glamorous stage performance where she falls down from a scaffold in a white tutu dressed and made up as a successful ballerina. This mode of presentation of death and dying as well as the audience's cheerful and applauding reaction to the event is similar to that happening in *All That Jazz* when Joe Gideon dies (Fosse 1h 49-58min).

The last quotation in connection with the characteristics and the difference(s) between cinema and theatre is about their different use of space. It is stated that editing is the tool which helps cinema in making use of space much more. It is true in the case of *Chicago* (2002), as well, since the editing of the film is incredibly elaborated.[ix] In *Chicago* (2002), through editing, we do not only get a greater use of space but also the switch between the theatrical and the filmic space. The structure of the film became extremely complicated and complex by a tremendous editorial work. The theatrical and the cinematic space is frequently and repeatedly switched, changed and combined throughout the whole film which makes it extremely spectacular and highlights its dualities. An outstanding example for this is when Amos is making his statement that he shot the victim lying on the floor while Roxie is singing ('in the theatrical space') about him. This is her mental projection of the event. She is thinking, day-dreaming about it, how all these happenings would look like in a 'more welcoming way.' However, when it turns out that the victim is Fred Casely, Amos realizes that he was cheated and refuses to carry on. Roxie, first only in her thoughts, quarrels with him in a way that both spaces are shown in a parallel mode: Roxie 'in the theatre' and Amos 'in reality.' Then, she attacks him by moving 'out of the theatrical space into reality.' She starts the movement 'in the theatre' (which, however, is also part of the filmic body) and ends it in 'reality,' in the cinematic space. The following quotation also explains the role and significance of editing in films and how this process determines greatly the nature and functioning of films and creates immense differences between the presence and visibility of a character in theatre or in film.

> If an irreducible distinction between theatre and cinema does exist, it may be this. Theatre is confined to a logical or *continuous* use of space. Cinema (through editing, that is, through the change of shot – which is the basic unit of film construction) has access to an alogical or *discontinuous* use of space. In the theatre, people are either in the stage space or "off." When "on," they are always visible or visualizable in contiguity with each other. In the cinema, no such relation is necessarily visible or even visualizable. (Sontag 367)

The third millennium is an age in which cinema, as opposed to the Code era, celebrates female murderers and violent women of all sorts. Could it be the case that we have reached the time when the representation of aggressive women exceeds the old clichés of *vamp* and/or *femme fatale*? Recent cinemas hold a lot of potential for changes in the representation of violent women and it seems that the filmic output "strengthens" new images of contemporary women's lives (stories), where "women move away from the moral (and nonviolent) purity of the Victorian 'Cult of True Womanhood' and onto men's turf ─ police work, military service, and a growing self-defense movement" (King and McCaughey 5).

What comes next in the filmic world regarding women and aggression related to women is an open question. The method and modes of representation are still not totally ideal, many of the films are still 'on the level' of *Kill Bill* (sexualized ideal female bodies in fetishistic tight clothes are brandishing huge phallic objects), to support my stance, I would like to quote King & McCaughey again: "[a]nalysist observe that many violent women on-screen look like runway models: young, thin, large breasted, and bare skinned. Many feel that this pulls them from the realm of feminist activism and back into the uselessness of male fantasy" (16). Nonetheless, there are also several more successful attempts at positive female representations (mainly focusing on violent women), for example, *Chicago* (2002). There is the possibility that there will be more and more lifelike and woman-friendly images about women in general and about unruly women, as well, since the two are intertwined. However, it is still valid what Neal King and Martha McCaughey claim in the 2001 book entitled *Reel Knockouts, Violent Women in the Movies*, although, it is true that it is absolutely positive that by the dawn of the twenty-first century we can talk about unruly, deviant, murderous, aggressive and violent women this way in the movies, that we can have a discourse of this type:

> Violent women draw strong responses, on-screen and off, whether they're agents of the law like *Fatal Beauty*'s Rizolli, novice bank robbers like the heroes of *Set It Off*, or mass murderers like Mallory of *Natural Born Killers*.

> Violent women appear in a variety of genres, from classic horror and film noir to 1970s blaxploitation and 1990s road movies. […] Sometimes violent women characters are malicious villains; other times they save the world from destruction or just uphold the law. In almost all cases, however, somebody will imply that such action, because done by a woman, falls below the standards of human decency. This is why we call them all "mean women." Depictions of women's violence seem more horrific to many people, perhaps because we find far fewer of them than we find scenes of male violence. Moreover, cultural standards still equate womanhood with kindness and nonviolence, manhood with strength and aggression. (1-2)

As King and McCaughey suggest regarding the future of violent women on screen:

> Some of the films with violent women will be co-opted: racist, homophobic, procapitalist, nationalist. Others will be feminist, queer, or antiracist. We hope that all of these violent women frighten people who snicker at women's protests. Whatever their roots in male fantasies, their places in dominant orders, or their distance from real lives, may these images at least subvert the notion that women will suffer abuse patiently. (19-20)

These films should be "possible tools in the liberation of women from racial, class, gender, and other political constraints that oppress women and deny them equal chances and equal rights" (20) on and off the screen.

7. Conclusion

In my dissertation, my aim was to discuss how the representation of violent and aggressive women changed throughout the twentieth century in the United States in the field of cinema and theatre. The focus of my investigation lied in *Chicago*, a story which started its long-lasting existence in the early twentieth century and reached into the twenty-first century through its various revivals. My intention was to examine what ways are open for female criminals and murderers, who are generally personified by the figure of the *femme fatale* in literary and filmic representations (as well as in other branches of visual culture), to evade their customary tragic end. The story of *Chicago* is a perfect example of the rather unique appearance of the *farcical femme fatale*. I intended to prove that within (the various versions of) *Chicago* we can find the entire repertoire of the modes of letting a *femme fatale* figure walk free by the end of the story. The combination of this (originally) tragic figure and the comic results in a very specific occurrence: the comic-grotesque performance of femininity embedded in the events of the *carnival*. This unique figure, the *carnivalesque femme fatale*,

can manage only the trespassing of all boundaries and limitations without having to pay the price. *Chicago*, in its numerous versions, presents us this unique occurrence in all her glory.

I proposed that, in *Chicago*, we encounter *farcical femmes fatales* who are the minious of a modern(ized) version of the figure of the *Vice* of sixteenth century drama, and all their comic-grotesque performance and masquerade takes place in the heterotopic space of the *carnival*. Thus, the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* can walk free because they are the farcical refigurations of the tragic *lethal woman*, in addition, ironically they are not entirely the central figures of the story because they are governed and directed by a quasi-central male figure, the *Vice*, who in fact oversees everything, and all this happens in the unique heterogenous and heterotopic space of a world turned upside-down and inside out. The comic-grotesque performance of femininity occurs in the temporary revelry of the *carnival*, yet, this time is enough for these women to make use of the suspension of ordinary logic and rules and get away with their crimes and sins. Another possible way of salvation for the *femme fatale* figures is the sacrifice of another human being who will take the blame for them, this is the logic of scapegoating that is also to be found in *Chicago*, and historically, this is actually also part of the rituals of the carnival. Additionally, the mode in which this whole story is presented is comic, as well. All of the versions of *Chicago* were made in a comic genre – generally in the field of lower comedic genres to serve popular entertainment as carnivals do – , and even the 1927 film adaptation that is a melodrama contains at least ironic parts. What is more, the spirit of the *carnival* that is originally defined by Bakhtin as people's entertainment which involves positive energies and thus excludes the negative humor of satire, which is a means of criticism, *Chicago* manages to combine both.

Since the theme of the *femme fatale* is immensely vast, and its discussion and the various examples of the manifestation of this kind of a woman is almost inexhaustible, I concentrated primarily on the different versions of *Chicago*, and thus traced the steps through the representational history of violent and aggressive women. I named and problematized the iconic, essential and eternal image of the *femme fatale* or *lethal woman* or *deadly woman*. Throughout my argumentation I theorized and analyzed this eternal feminine/female icon, and in effect, my intention was to reveal how the female murderers in the different versions of *Chicago* rework the imagery of the *femme fatale*. My proposition was that the whole question greatly lies in humor, the use of irony and that all of the versions belong to the categories of satire, screwball comedy, musical vaudeville and their sister genres accordingly, thus, bringing the element of the comic into the elaboration of the issue of the *femmes fatale*s. I did not intend to write my dissertation about the theorization and detailed discussion of the comic,

irony, satire etc., however, devoted attention to these subjects since in my opinion these all have a central role in how the thematization and handling of *deadly women* occur in the *Chicago*s. My primary object was to investigate the changes and history of the representation of the *lethal women* in American culture of the twentieth and early twenty-first century with the help of the story of *Chicago*.

The discussion of the comic is attached to this issue in an attempt to find why, if at all, *Chicago* differs from the other works dealing with the *femme fatale* imagery. My analysis and argumentation thus involved a historical aspect and overview, while primarily, in the forefront, cinema, theatre and gender studies stood with a focus on cultural representations.

Hence, the result of the dissertation was a detailed discussion of the unconventional and uncommon modes of representation of *deadly women* in the different versions of *Chicago* through the elaboration of humor. Originally, traditionally and most commonly, the central element in the definition of the *femme fatale* is tragedy and the representational methods employed are strongly linked with tragic desire thus combining death and femininity, plus, female sexuality, within the figure of the *femme fatale*. This is the fundamental imagery of the *lethal woman*, although, in very rare instances it occurs that the *femme fatale* is presented in comic light or through the employment of humor but these are always exceptional cases and not of frequency.

Chicago is unique in its treatment of the *femme fatale* theme because while discussing and employing all of the clichés and constitutive elements of the conventional representational logic and tools it still subverts and challenges them through the use of humor, especially irony. Not all of the versions of the story make use of irony to the same level and all of the versions belong to different genres, however, they are all in connection with humor, and the comic aspects are paramount in all of the versions. My supposition was that one of the main reasons for the unconventional handling of the *deadly women* in *Chicago* is humor. For instance, they do not end their lives by violent means such as murder, suicide or through execution. The *lethal women* of *Chicago* get acquitted, and in fact, get away with murder instead of being punished through the death penalty that would be their 'due' sentence according to the law. Therefore, I discussed several theories and aspects of humor to present its mechanism. The central theoretical concept I dealt with in detail is Bakhtin's theory of the carnival, its specificities and implications. Since my proposition was that *Chicago* is a modern(-day) *carnival* I examined how its elements can be found in this work while I cited other secondary materials referring to or treating Bakhtin's idea.

The second part (following the introduction) discussed the theories and concepts in relation to the *femme fatale*. Here, sub-chapters concentrated on her different aspects or attributes such as her fatality or the connetion between death and femininity or her body and appearance as well as there was a short discussion of the historiographic, cultural and mythological roots of this dangerous female figure. In this part, there is to be found the treatment of the issue of the *New Woman* and the *Flapper* who both are strongly connected to the image of the *femme fatale* or its Americanized version, the *vamp* – it was also deliberated – since the story historically takes palce in this era and the female figures of *Chicago* are not only *farcical femmes fatales* but also *flapper femmes fatales*. The question of androgyny was examined here, as well, as a result.

In the third part, the focus was on the comic and the different ideas concerning the role and functioning of humor. The different (general) comic genres that surface in the case of the various versions of *Chicago* were presented as well as the relationship between gender and humor was examined. The discussion of Bakhtin's *carnival* took place in the succeeding, fourth, part. The discussion of scapegoating as well as that of the issues of (gender) performativity and masquerade were also included here. Following this, the fifth part concentrated on the formation and figure of the *farcical femme fatale* and those of the (comic) *Vice* or the *humorous homme fatale* explaining how these figures appear and function in *Chicago* while disrupt law and order. In the last part, divided into sub-chapters, the different versions of *Chicago* were analyzed starting from the original *Chicago Tribune* articles and ending in the 2002 film adaptation.

Hence, I conclude that the *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* manage to evade their tragic fate because they turn into *farcical femmes fatales* under the 'command and guidance' of a (comic) *Vice* or a *humorous homme fatale*, within the realm of the heterotopic space of the *carnival*, through the comig-grotesque performance and masquerade of femininity. In addition, this whole performance is presented in a humorous manner and in various comic genres while the underlying satirical tone is always present as a mode of critisim. Maurine Dallas Watkins managed to create a story that in spite of its historical embeddedness and specificities still carry and communicate relevant messages today. In addition to its timeless and general message about human behaviour and weaknesses Watkins succeeded in providing us with a unique treatment of *femmes fatales*, as well, and presented the dangers and advantages of humor at the same time. *Chicago* is a story, as John. C. Reilly suggested, full of humor and humanity, and as a result, will probably witness several revivals.

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[i] When thinking about women, aggression or violence are usually not the first words, which spring to our mind if we are to describe the behaviour of the 'weaker sex.' What is more, there are still many who consider this issue to be non-existent. Still, it exists. It has always been a part of everyday life even if there was not much word about it. In general, among ten articles or essays discussing the topic of 'women and aggression or violence' nine depict women as the victims of violence, and only one presents them as the perpetrators of violence (of course, these figures are only the result of a haphazard estimation, in addition, the numers are increasing rapidly and the ratio is also changing). This ratio also reflects the frequency of this issue, although, there have been several sociologists, psychologists, criminalists, writers and journalists who have been dealing with it from time to time since (approximately) the 70's. Carol Travis writes about the handling of the question as follows: "[w]hy aren't particular gender topics, like female aggressiveness, evenly distributed, like raisins in a cake? Why do they bunch up, like bushes on Fifth Avenue? You wait forever, and suddenly there's a cluster of them" (3).

Jacquelyn W. White and Robin M. Kowalski's study entitled *Deconstructing the Myth of the Nonaggressive Woman* is a very detailed and complex work on the issue of women's aggression. They argue and present why and how people in general thought that women were/are not aggressive and not able to commit crimes like men do; as an example, it was easier to make women believe that they were defenceless because this way they had a necessity of strong and brave men who could protect them from any evil or this way women did not take part in the political life of the state and men could get every control of the political and the economic fields and so on. (White, Kowalski 492-493) White and Kowalski do not only analyse the concepts and beliefs in connection with women's aggression, but also bring up quite a lot of evidence and discuss why women are just as aggressive as men and that they actually commit the same crimes as men do. "[T]he notion of the nonaggressive woman is a myth perpetuated by sociohistorically rooted cultural attitudes and values, reified by data based on statistical and methodological biases and flaws. Although women are reported to commit fewer crimes than men, this does not imply that they are not aggressive." (492) In conclusion they claim, "[b]y deconstructing the myth of the nonaggressive woman, the trap of gender dualism (male/female: powerful/weak: perpetrator/victim) is recognized and the advantages of the myth to men is diminished. […] Thus, the question is not who is more aggressive. In fact, available data do not provide a clear answer to this question. Rather, the important questions concern cultural, social, and psychological circumstances surrounding incidents of aggression by women and men." (White, Kowalski 504)

There are nine murder cases discussed in *Chicago* (2002). In all of the cases, the murderer is a woman, and the victims are mainly men (if there are women among them, then they were with the men at the time of the murder). In the *Cell Block Tango*, six of these cases are retold. The first woman telling her story is Liz. She arrives home from work tired, and as she says, she only wanted a little sympathy, but instead of this, Bernie is lying on a couch drinking beer and chewing a gum, what is more, popping it. She asks him to stop doing it, she always hated this bad habit of his. He does not act so, Liz takes the shotgun off the wall and fires two warning shots into his head. The second woman is Annie. She met Ezekial from Salt Lake City. He said he was single, so they fell in love quickly and started living together. One day, though, Annie found out that her man was not only married but he had six wives. On the night of the murder, she fixed him his drink as usual, except this time with a little arsenic in it… June is just making dinner when her husband storms in and starts screaming about her infidelity. Then, he accidentally runs into her knife ten times. The fourth woman is Hunyak (of Hungarian origin), she is accused of murdering her husband, but she did not do it. She tried to explain it at the police station but she cannot speak English very well, and she was not understood. The next is Velma Kelly, who murdered her husband, Charlie, and her sister, Veronica, because she caught them in the act of adultery. She claims that she did not do it since she absolutely blacked out and does not remember anything, but if she had done it, she thinks, she would not have been wrong. The last one is Mona, her great love was Alvin Lipschitz, a painter. He was always trying to find himself. He went out every night in search of himself and on the way he found Ruth, Gladys, Rosemary and Irving. After this he saw him alive but not so Mona… (Marshall 21-29 min)

These cases are presented in a way that the characters recount them in the filmic body, and embedded in that is shown the 'theatrical presentation' of the same event. In the 'theatrical presentation', only black, dark blue and red colors are used. The use of colours, the contrasts, the lighting, the choreography, the music and the message all express aggression, dynamism and force. Nothing suggests regret or remorse. In the 'stage performance,' the murder is symbolised by pulling a red scarf out of the men. The first woman, Liz, pulls the scarf out of Bernie's head. Annie pulls it out of Ezekial's mouth. June pulls it out of Wilbur's stomach, and this scarf is so long that it tries to imply the stabbing ten times. Hunyak is the only one who is not lit by red but white light, she pulls a white scarf out of her husband's head, and this is the only occasion that the man stays standing. Velma lets down a red scarf from both of her hands and Mona presses a red scarf onto Lipschitz's throat. All the way through the refrain can be heard: "He (they) had it coming/he (they) had it coming/he only had himself to blame […] It was a murder/but not a crime!" (ibid)

The rest of the murders happen in front of our eyes on the screen. The one we know the least about is when the woman kills her (supposedly) husband on the steps of the court-house right after Roxie is not found

guilty by the jury and she is freed. In the film, there is not more information about it. In the 1976 version (which is the primary basis for the 2002 adaptation), this case happens during a divorce trial in the neighbouring courtroom where the woman shoots her husband, her mother-in-law and the defence attorney. The second onscreen murder of minor importance is the case of Go-To-Hell-Kitty, the rich heiress. She shoots her lover (and the two other women with whom she finds him in bed). This woman's facial expression as well as Roxie's are the same when they fire. Both of them are crying, look disappointed and seem to be in despair. The murder case, which happens in front of us in its entirety is that of Roxie. When it turns out that Fred Casely cannot help her in building her career, and he was only using her, Roxie, first, is astonished, then, she tries to be nice and tries to joke, she even tries to hug him, cuddle up to him, but he pushes her away and is being rude. Casely is about to leave, Roxie searches quickly for the gun in her drawer, gets it, point it at Casely and shoots. Her face is not calm and severe, she is crying.

[ii] The note that Hungarian is a non-slavic language and culture is made here because it is generally considered one – actually it is Finno-Ugric. For example, even in the 2002 film version, Hunyak, the Hungarian woman (she speaks Hungarian in the 1976 and 2002 versions) is played by Ekaterina Chtchelkanova who is Russian and is not able to utter her part intelligibly, although, undoubtedly she 'looks' Eastern-European.

[iii] Watkins made several corrections throughout the story because some names and data were not correct first. Kolstedt was finally Kalstedt and Mrs. Annan was 23 years old.

[iv] Victor Varconi was actually born Mihály Várkonyi in Kisvárda, Hungary – as another interesting Hungarian reference. (Biography for Victor Varconi, *The Internet Movie Database*)

[v] "Fosse and Ebb's Broadway musical version grossed over US$330 million between 1975 and 2002, won six Tony awards in 1997 and a Grammy for the soundtrack in 1998. As well as clocking up close to 900 Broadway performances, the stage version has toured Europe, Australia and South America." (Martin O'Brien, Rodanthi Tzanelli and Majid Yar 246)

[vi] For this role Frances McDormand earned an Academy Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role in 1997. (Awards for *Fargo* (1996), *The Internet Movie Database*)

[vii] For this role Charlize Theron received an Academy Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role in 2004. (Awards for *Monster* (2003), *The Internet Movie Database*)

[viii] Colleen Atwood received the Academy Award for "Best Costume Design" for her work in *Chicago* (2002) in 2003.

In addition, the film itself was the recipient of several award nominations and concrete awards, as well. For example, Academy Award nominations: Best Actor in a Supporting Role – John C. Reilly, Best Actress in a Leading Role – Renée Zellweger, Best Actress in a Supporting Role – Queen Latifah, Best Cinematography – Dion Beebe, Best Director – Rob Marshall, Best Music, Original Song – John Kander (music) and Fred Ebb (lyrics) For the song "I Move On," Best Writing, Adapted Screenplay – Bill Condon. Academy Award winners: Best Actress in a Supporting Role – Catherine Zeta-Jones, Best Art Direction-Set Decoration – John Myhre (art director) and Gordon Sim (set decorator), Best Picture – Marty Richards, Best Sound – Michael Minkler, Dominick Tavella, David Lee, and what was/is mentioned especially: Best Costume Design – Colleen Atwood, Best Editing – Martin Walsh.

Golden Globe nominations: Best Director - Motion Picture – Rob Marshall, Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Motion Picture – John C. Reilly, Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy – Catherine Zeta-Jones, Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in a Motion Picture – Queen Latifah, Best Screenplay - Motion Picture – Bill Condon. Golden Globe winners: Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy, Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy – Richard Gere, Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy – Renée Zellweger.

Additionally, several Screen Actors Guild Awards were given to the makers of the film. The Directors Guild of America, USA also gave awards to the film. The film was also nominated for the David di Donatello Award for "Best Foreign Film." The Costume Designers Guild Awards also awarded Colleen Atwood for "Excellence in Costume Design for Film - Period/Fantasy." Several BAFTA Awards nominations and some winners are also to be listed. The film aslo received an award from the American Choreography Awards, USA, for "Outstanding Achievement in Feature Film." An interesting addition is that Bill Condon received and Edgar for "Best Motion Picture" from the Edgar Allan Poe Awards, which is given to the best works written in the mystery and detective 'genre.' (Awards for *Chicago* (2002), *The Internet Movie Database*)

[ix] Martin Walsh won the Academy Award for "Best Editing" for his work in *Chicago* (2002) in 2003, in addition, he also received an Eddie for "Best Edited Feature Film - Comedy or Musical" from the American Cinema Editors, USA. (Awards for *Chicago* (2002), *The Internet Movie Database*)

"The 2002 film version is one of the 100 highest grossing movies in US film history earning in excess of US$100 million before it won any honours (Filmsite, 2005; Gillespie, 2005), and garnered yet more awards including six Oscars, three Golden Globes, and two Baftas in 2003." (Martin O'Brien, Rodanthi Tzanelli and Majid Yar 246)