

CHAPTER 3

DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, all collected data from the film, *Chicago* (2002), are presented and analyzed in relation to the liberation and oppression of women. Focusing mainly on the use of verbal and visual mechanisms, this chapter is split into two parts. The first part is an investigation made through the notions of female characters' desire, especially that of the protagonist while the second part is an examination of the portrayal of the film's principals in order to detect their self-determination, self-reliance and power.

3.1 Desire

Desire refers to an eager wish to obtain some states or conditions. In *Chicago* (2002), the film follows the lives of women criminals who go through a series of attempts at achieving their own desires. At first glance, the filmmakers seem to portray female liberation by providing chances for women to express and achieve their desires through the plot, characterization and lyrics. At a deeper level, oppression is found. The desires of the women shown in the film are discussed in three different aspects of their desires which are mainly for fame, for physical freedom, and for sexual freedom.

3.1.1 Desire for fame

Desire for fame or stardom is seen when the female characters especially the protagonist, have a strong wish to be well known, widely recognized, and in general,

publicly favorable. The desire is acknowledged in the film through the plot or narrative structure as filmmakers let the main character, Roxie Hart, to express her longing for fame in the opening scene and to achieve her fame in the end. *Chicago* (2002) is outstanding in its dramatic structures as the plot first pinpoints the main character, Roxie, with her strong specific desire to have her own stage performance. In the opening scenes, two principal characters, Roxie Hart and Velma Kelly, are clearly introduced with some personalities that differentiate them. Whereas Velma is first introduced as a well known nightclub singer, Roxie is presented as a woman who dreams of stardom and wants to get into the vaudeville like Velma. In the beginning, filmmakers obviously reinforce this motivating desire of the protagonist when the camera closes up to Roxie's eyes and then replaces Roxie in the position of Velma on the stage. The filmmakers make a clear introduction to the viewers that Roxie dreams of singing and dancing her way to stardom.



Figure 1: Roxie replaces herself with Velma.

Subsequently, after shooting her deceitful lover to death, her crime of passion is turned into celebrity headlines in Chicago. The climax of her fame achievement is emotionally emphasized by a musical scene. The film watchers are also encouraged to experience Roxie's conversion into a celebrity through a lyric of her song. After overcoming some difficulties, Roxie finally achieves stardom. In the end, Roxie

appears as a successful vaudevillian having her own show with Velma side by side on the stage.



Figure 2: Signs that connote Roxie's fame achievement.

There are many signs which obviously indicate her achievement of fame such as the bright stage, red roses and carnations, flashes from cameras and a cheering crowd. By throwing flowers on the stage, the audience seems to caress the two killers with outstretched hands, almost smothering them with love. Then the women take their bows. Through the narrative structure of the film, therefore, the viewers can feel as if Roxie is finally liberated with her desire having been fulfilled.

Although the film superficially portrays female liberation by letting us follow the development from rags to riches of the protagonist and experience her feeling of fulfillment through songs, there are some skeptical points which may be taken as female oppression behind the fame achievement.

First of all, in order to get fame, the main character needs to be infamous and exploited by media. Although the story of Roxie Hart whose murder of her lover proves herself to achieve tabloid stardom, she is taken advantages by the media. The story reflects ironic achievement of stardom when women are given fame through tabloid and through sins. Characteristically, the tabloid rather deals with any sensational event that can cause great excitement and interest in short terms. The newspaper does not make any serious effect to happen among the public but it just fulfills the curiosity among the readers day by day. The purpose of this kind of media is just to entertain and attract readers for higher rating. Consequently, sensational news about female criminals is an important gearwheel in seeking that profit. The more exciting the dramatized details about them are published, the better is the selling of the medium. Hence, the lurid details of Roxie's life and crime make her an instant celebrity. But she can not stay on top for long as it becomes too difficult a task to recapture the interest of the public once another sensational crime is committed. Since there is an insatiable appetite for fresh blood in tabloid, Roxie has to come up with new revelations to keep her on the front page, and unless then, she will be quickly forgotten. In *Chicago* (2002), it seems that women have the chance to elicit public sympathy and attention when tabloids print news about the murderesses. The twist however, is that the media oppress female by regarding them as sinners in order to entertain all devouring public who always love to read about scandals. Thus, the protagonist is rather well known for her notoriety from such publications.



Figure 3: Roxie and Velma sign their names with guns.

To support the first suspicion, there is a sign that connotes Roxie's and Velma's notoriety rather than their fame. In the final scene, it can be seen that Roxie and Velma use prop machine gun as canes, then sign their names in bullet holes on the wall of lights behind them. Such actions signify that those females achieve their desire for stardom but becoming well known for their bad reputation as female criminals.

Secondly, the film implies that, on the road to stardom, women can never be friends with other women. In *Chicago* (2002), the central conflict is between two principal female characters that are portrayed as rivals. The film's central characters are Roxie Hart, a housewife who fantasizes becoming a star, and Velma Kelly, a chorus girl who dreams of greater fame than she currently is. Roxie dreams of being successful and beloved by the masses and rich, the same way Velma Kelly seems to be. Consequently, because of their motivating desire for being famous, Roxie and Velma regard each other as rivals for the public spotlight. As a newcomer, Roxie Hart, who learns quickly, rises in a position of prominence while an older, more experienced rival resents the new face that is stealing the show. The film, therefore,

uses the desire for fame as established in the plot to oppress, to a large extent, the relationship among female characters when this key motivation propels the two characters into jealousy, a bad stereotypical image of females. In the end, they finally join hands but only for their own business benefits and survival rather than a true friendship.

Thirdly, the celebrity of women is presented as a “male gaze”. In order to create male visual pleasure, the filmmakers build images of “fetish” Roxie and Velma, and locate them on the stage. The two principal characters are turned into fetishes, perfect objects of beauty which are satisfying rather than threatening. In this sense, their outer appearances are both duplications of two iconic American actresses. The film producers make Roxie (Renee Zellweger) a copy of Marilyn Monroe, who is impressive as a smoldering blonde with fair skin and red lips whereas, Velma (Catherine Zeta-Jones) is portrayed exactly like Louise Brooks, who is a trend setter for charming dark bob hairstyle during 1920s. Both original celebrities are outstanding in terms of their great beauty and sex appeal.

Figure 4: The iconic (left) and the duplicated (right) actresses.



Marilyn Monroe



Roxie Hart (Renee Zellweger)



Louise Brooks



Velma Kelly (Catherine Zeta-Jones)

Moreover, in *Chicago* (2002), voyeuristic visual pleasure is produced by putting female characters on theaters and allowing audiences to enjoy watching their seductive figures. For instance, Roxie and Velma are always shown up on the stage with flapper outfits, sultry black vixen dresses, and tramp costumes to exaggerate their personas. Anyhow, the filmmakers create signs for object of gaze that come with the celebrity. The oppression of women is, therefore, visible on the screen once the two celebrated women, Roxie and Velma, are portrayed as double gaze that includes being the object of stage viewers' gaze and of film watchers since they are fixed for viewing their attractive figures as pleasure.

An important scene in the movie is the musical part where the protagonist gets a chance to express her stardom achievement. The musical transition moment of Roxie Hart, which seems to be the climax of her fame achievement, is produced as a contradiction between verbal and visual mechanisms. The melodic convention in this scene shows Roxie's feeling when she puts expressions to her singing and dancing through her song. Sensationally, the film watchers are also encouraged to experience Roxie's conversion into a celebrity through her lyrics in the musical scene named "Roxie", as below:

[Roxie]

**The name on everybody's lips
Is gonna be Roxie**

**The lady rakin' in the chips
Is gonna be Roxie**

**I'm gonna be a celebrity
That means somebody everyone knows**

**They're gonna recognize my eyes
My hair, my teeth, my boobs, my nose
From just some dumb mechanic's wife
I'm gonna be Roxie**

Who says that murder's not an art?

**And who, in case she doesn't hang
Can say she started with a bang?
Roxie Hart!**

[Men]

**They're gonna wait outside in line
To get to see Roxie**

[Roxie]

**Think of those autographs I'll sign
"Good luck to you"**

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[Men]

Roxie

[Roxie]

**And I'll appear in a lavalier
That goes all the way down to my waist**

[Men]

Here a ring, there a ring, everywhere a ring a ling

[Roxie]

But always in the best of taste

Roxie:

Mmmm, I'm a star. And the audience loves me and I love them. And they love me for loving them. And I love them for loving me. And we love each other. And that's cause none of us got enough love in our childhoods. And that's showbiz, kid.

[Men]

She's giving up her humdrum life

[Roxie]

I'm gonna be – sing it.

[Men]

Roxie

She made a scandal and a start

[Roxie]

**And Sophie Tucker will shit, I know
To see her name get billed below
Roxie Hart!**

The verbal part of this scene shows the protagonist reaching her success. The song is regarded as transition type of song, expressing moment of conversion for the main character. It says that Roxie will become a new Roxie. She will change from being nobody to somebody. Roxie imagines herself with a new definition and sings about her better future as a celebrity. She is sure of being one of the most wealthy and fashionable women. Her boring life will be a past. She also believes that the murder she did is her ticket to stardom. From now on, she will be admired and beloved by the

public. With her modified identity, she will be famous and even more popular than Sophie Tucker, a well known actress in 1920s. However, the lyrics partly conveyed the concept of a sex object within the celebrity. In the song, Roxie sings that if she becomes a celebrity, she will be recognized not for her talents or abilities but for her body such as her hair, teeth, and boobs. Therefore, the song is superficially liberation for the protagonist but some details seem to treat her as a sexy thing by mentioning about her body parts.

Apart from the lyrics, the transitional scene visually repeats that her celebrity is valued only for her sex appeal. Celebrity achievement involves Roxie as an image of a sex symbol. Several visual mechanisms, which are intended to produce the image of sex goddess, make the scene oppressive.

First, the filmmakers obviously link Roxie with the image of an iconic sex symbol, Marilyn Monroe. The musical transitional scene of “Roxie” where the protagonist sings about her fame achievement makes an allusion to Marilyn Monroe from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953).

Figure 5: The original musical scene and its allusion.



A scene from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), an iconic Marilyn Monroe scene.



In *Chicago* (2002), Roxie performs her show with men in her musical scene.

Besides their outer appearances, the allusion is visually made through the musical scene of Roxie's stardom achievement. Both Roxie (Zellweger) and Marilyn are presented in a similar image, the image of appealing showgirls. In *Chicago* (2002), this musical scene also contains faithful choreographies from the former. Similarly, male choruses in tuxedo are elements of Roxie's show. They follow her everywhere,

singing and dancing. During the performance, the men choruses always stare at Roxie. The choreography is also invented in a way that all men try to touch and brace her body. Every step and movement from this scene is possibly interpreted that every man are infatuated with her physical attractiveness. In this sense, film watchers can feel that once Roxie becomes a celebrity, she also becomes a sex goddess, like Marilyn Monroe. Therefore, the oppression of female in the film occurs when the filmmakers emphasize image of “fetish”, a sexual seductive object for men through a similar choreography of Marilyn’s iconic scene.

Camera conventions are important filming techniques portraying Roxie as a “male gaze”. Film watchers are set to look at Roxie from male pleasure view point. As said by Mulvey, having a view of physical attractive traits of women can be a pleasure for men. In this sense, no matter if viewers are male or female, they are given a permission to enjoy voyeuristic visual pleasures on Roxie’s body as soon as she becomes a star. Some close up shots of her appealing parts like her hip and legs were also effectively used to enhance such visual pleasure.



Figure 6: A close up shot of Roxie’s appealing parts.

In this musical scene, Roxie wears a sexy flapper outfit and performs some movements which make her look sexually attractive such as shaking her hip. During her performance, she is placed on a stage and frequently shot in body close up. Such mechanisms to some extent help the filmmaker create the celebrity as a sex symbol who is highly articulate, inviting and alluring.



Figure 7: Roxie lies on the top of her neon name.

In the end of this musical scene, the image of a sex goddess is obviously repeated for the protagonist. Roxie sits on her red neon name in a spotlight. She is then lifted up higher and higher while all the men are calling her name and acting as if they are trying to reach and grab her. This scene can lead the film watchers into a sense that the famous Roxie Hart is found the most sexually attractive by every man. The ending possibly implies that the moment she becomes a celebrity, she becomes an object that all men can dream of as well. Thus, it can be concluded that stardom achievement of the female character cannot be fulfilled without her psychical attractiveness or seductive expression. The oppression seems to exist in the film in a sense that the protagonist is presented as a sex object in the public eyes.



Figure 8: Roxie sings and dances among mirrors.

Moreover, in the scene of her transitional moment, expressionistic cinematography is used to allow the viewers to step into Roxie's innermost feelings. The climax of her stardom achievement is set in a dreamlike atmosphere by using a surrealistic setting. The setting gives a hint that her fame achievement is just a dream. Emphasis on mirrors is one of the symbolic signs creating a sense of distortion. Her reflections on the mirrors signify that she is trapped in her own illusion. What she sings about is unreal because all her expressions are kept in her fantasy. In this sense, unlike a real superstar, Roxie is presented as a dreamer whose identity is fake. The filmmaker brings the film watchers into a crazy woman's world, which is distorted. Having a dream of stardom is perhaps an absurd personality of this female criminal. Hence, the fame achievement of Roxie is actually twisted in an ironic way as the lyrics do not much agree with the expressionistic pictures.

To sum up this part, in terms of desire for stardom, the liberation of female is acknowledged in the film through the narrative structure. Filmmakers let the main character, Roxie Hart, express her strong wish for fame in the opening scene and to

get her fame achievement at the end. Nevertheless, oppression of female in the film can be detected, particularly through the camera conventions and expressionistic images in the musical transitional moment of the protagonist.

3.1.2 Desire for freedom

Desire for freedom is also a significant aspect worth discussing. In this study, the term freedom is defined as the state of achieving one's exoneration and being free from guilt and criminal charges. *Chicago* (2002) demonstrates the female characters' desire for such freedom when Roxie is sent to the Cook County Jail as a murderess. The filmmakers let the audience step into the world of women criminals in the 1920's and show how these females struggle for their freedom, especially the protagonist who actively tries to fulfill her exoneration desire during a trial. For the freedom desire, both of liberation and oppression can be noticed from the film.

For female liberation, it can be observed in a literal sense that the protagonist achieves her exoneration through the plot. At the beginning of the film, Roxie is first introduced with a charge that she shot her lover after discovering that he lied about helping her to fulfill her wish for a singing career. After she finds herself in the Cook County Jail as a murderess, we see the usual conflict resolution plot. Roxie is represented by the slick lawyer, Billy Flynn (Richard Gere), who has never lost a case. Finally, Roxie is found innocent and is released from jail. Therefore, the desire for freedom is fulfilled as Roxie becomes free from criminal charges.

The achievement of freedom for Roxie is described through several film techniques. The best evidence for this emphasis is an ironic musical scene “Razzle Dazzle”. Regarding the musical convention, the scene “Razzle Dazzle”, performed by the lawyer Billy Flynn, is considered as the moment of realization, the moment of reaching an insight.



Figure 9: Roxie is lifted with white spotlight shooting at her.

From “Razzle Dazzle”, the achievement of freedom for the protagonist is visibly celebrated when Roxie ascends on the ring, traveling across the court room. As soon as Roxie is ready to take the stand in her own defense, she is lifted up with white spotlight shooting at her from behind. The visual signifies that she has one of the most important parts in this big show as a main actress who gets a great deal of public attention. From this visual, the filmmakers give Roxie an image of a star instead of a female criminal. At this point, film viewers can see that she will certainly be found innocent because of her acting skills and public sympathy.

However, although the protagonist is granted of her freedom wishes, she is liberated in a satirical way. With the application of expressionistic scene of the

fantasy courtroom, it can be interpreted that Roxie is found innocent because of a tricky and disgraceful legal process. Verbal and visual mechanisms are excellently blended in order to create a sense of distorted justice that liberates the main character from the criminal charge with help from her slick lawyer.

Verbally, the composition of lyric with melodic convention in this musical scene encourages the film viewers to recognize a sense of ridicule and manipulation during the trial, as follows:

[Billy]

**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!**

**Give'em the old razzle dazzle
Razzle dazzle'em
Give'em a show that's so splendiferous
Row after row will grow vociferous**

**Give'em the old flim flam flummox
Fool and fracture'em
How can they hear the truth above the roar?**

[Women]

Roar. Roar. Roar.

[Billy]

**Throw'em a fake and a finagle
They'll never know, you're just a bagel**

**[Billy and Women]
Razzle Dazzle'em**

**[Billy]
And they'll beg you for more!
Give'em the old double whammy
Daze and dizzy'em
Back since the days of old Methuselah
Everyone loves the big bamboozler
Give'em the old three-ring circus
Stun and stagger'em
When you're in trouble, go into your dance
Though you are stiffer than a girder
They'll let you get away with murder
Razzle Dazzle'em
And you've got a romance
Give'em the old razzle dazzle
Razzle dazzle'em**

**[Women]
Give'em the old razzle dazzle**

**[Billy]
Show'em the first rate sorcerer you are
Long as you keep'em way of balance
How can they spot you got no talent?**

Razzle dazzle'em

**[Women]
Razzle dazzle'em**

**[Billy]
Razzle dazzle'em**

**[Billy and women]
And they'll make you a star!**

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The use of ridiculous words in the above lyrics implies that some outrageous astonishing acts can cover up all blunders, and Billy is an expert on performing such acts. The song is regarded as a realization song that is used to reveal the moment of reaching an insight or new level of understanding. And Billy, who sings this song, is portrayed as a master. The repetitions of imperatives such as “Give’em” and “Razzle dazzle’em” are used to emphasize that Billy’s trick is extremely important and must be done. According to the lyric, he is performing a big show. His trick is just to make it “splendiferous” by using some decorations such as “bead and feather”, “sequins”, and “finagle” as props to spice up the show. All mistakes can be hidden under these adornments; any difficult situations can be solved by some dazzling acts such as “roar” and “dance”. Billy, who is qualified to represent Roxie in court, is clever and skillful at stunning and entertaining people. The lyric shows that Billy Flynn can use his trick to help Roxie achieve her freedom.

Apart from the lyrics, larger than life and exaggerating visual techniques from this musical scene serve to make the irony of the trial as obvious to the film watchers.



Figure 10: Billy takes Roxie into a transformed courtroom.

The filmmaker creates images of a distorted courtroom without a sense of justice by transforming it into a fantastic circus with dazzling showgirls. In several establishing shots, the viewers are allowed to see different exaggerated images of a courtroom, where familiar elements such as the judge's bench, the jury box, and the witness stand surrounding a center ring. In this movie, the room in which a legal court meets is not what we normally see. It is presented as a place for spectacular entertainment instead of a place of justice.



Figure 11: Two sides of reality (left) and fantasy (right) courtroom.

On the screen, there are two contrastive images of the courtroom where both sides of reality and fantasy are portrayed simultaneously. Daytime setting is used to present the courtroom in reality whereas expressionistic nighttime setting represents

the fantasy. During the realization moment, these two settings continue at the same time. As Roxie's case is presented by her lawyer Billy in the real courtroom, the circus entertainment is also performed by Billy and the showgirls in the fantasy side. Such visual techniques make viewers assimilate themselves as witnesses in both real and fantasy situations during the trial in which sense of legitimacy is not felt because the real courtroom scene is distracted by the exaggerated one.



Figure 12: A blindfolded trapeze artist sits on the scales of Justice.

A significant sign which can't be overlooked is a blindfolded trapeze artist sitting on the scales of Justice. She rises from behind the judge's bench with two imbalance dishes hanging from each of her hands. The filmmaker presents her on the screen in order to signify blind and ridiculed judgment. It also connotes that the fault and guilt of Roxie cannot be seen by the judges. In this sense, it is obvious that justice never exists during the trial of Roxie's case.



Figure 13: Billy is presented as a skillful head of a circus.

In agreement with the lyrics, Billy Flynn is visually presented as a master of a circus. His image is created as an expert at performing astonishing acts to conceal Roxie's guilt. In the expressionistic courtroom, the film watchers can see that Billy stands in the center performing eye-catching tricks such as juggling, dancing, and wielding a circus whip. Through all these visual techniques, he is portrayed as a professional magician. Thus, because of the expert wizardly image of Billy, viewers are led to understand that everything in the courtroom is under his control.



Figure 14: Showgirls are used as an important composition.

Besides the image of the sorcerer Billy, it is notable that the dazzling showgirls overwhelm the courtroom. They are an important composition of this musical scene. They create intoxicating atmosphere. With their dancing skills and their fascinating costumes, they look seductive. They perform variety of acts in the fantasy courtroom such as crossing the aisle, descending on long silk, hanging upside down, accompanying the judge to his bench and whispering in the juries' ears. The scene appears chaotic and disorienting because the showgirls amazingly perform lots of acts at the same time. The film viewers can notice that, for the judge and juries, it is unclear what the true situation is because they are unable to see or hear properly. In this sense, the showgirls are a sign of seduction, confusion, and illusion. The film watchers possibly feel that the showgirls can use their charm to mislead the judges and gain complete control over the trial. The portrayal of unfair and distorted justice leaves a stain on Roxie's liberty achievement. It seems to imply that a woman can gain her freedom only through sins.

Furthermore, oppression of the female gender can also be sensed when the protagonist has to satisfy the male juries by showing she is worth living because she devotes herself to family making and childbearing. In order for Roxie Hart to prove innocent, it is necessary for her to portray herself as a subservient wife and protective mother during the trial. Obviously, the key persons at her trial are mostly men including the judge, juries, her husband Amos, and the lawyer Billy. Thus, in order to please them, Roxie follows Billy's advice to act and speak as a "decent" woman. The dependence on how well she has to portray these female stereotypical roles is emphasized in the dialogue when Roxie takes a stand in her own defense. Roxie acts the role of a good wife by portraying herself as a homemaker. She delivers her rehearsed speech that she was a "proper" woman, who typically involves in domestic tasks. She is conducted to reason that she fell into an adulterous relationship because she was unhappy at home. Amos worked long hours at the garage, but "I wanted him home with me to darn his socks and iron his shirts. I want a real home and a child." Apart from her act as a homemaker, she plays a part of the protective mother. Roxie claims that she killed Fred Casely because of her maternal instinct to protect Amos's unborn baby. To get the juries' sympathy, she also follows Billy's advice to knit a baby garment when Amos is on the stand as well. In her own defense, Roxie admits to killing Casely, but insists that she isn't a criminal. Roxie alleges that Casely said he would kill her if she had Amos's baby. Then, following Billy's idea, she says that they both reached for the gun and that she shot Casely not only to defend herself but also "...to save my (Roxie's) husband's innocent, unborn child!". Therefore, Roxie's desire for freedom comes through because the juries are satisfied with the character

that Billy prompts her to act: as a home-loving housewife who is going to be a mother. She is free from the criminal charge because she satisfies the requirement of the male juries' standards of feminine roles, including family making and childbearing. This can be interpreted as female oppression since she is forced to portray herself as a woman who is under a man's control, though she is granted her freedom.



Figure 15: Roxie opens her legs, letting the juries look at them.

In addition, female oppression as an object of “male gaze” can be visually noticed in the courtroom scene. While Roxie is taking a stand for her own defense, she opens her legs, revealing her distinctive rhinestone garter. In the close up shot, she gives the jury a seduction by flashing them a bit of her thighs. Flashing thighs seems to be a clever trick of Roxie to distract male juries' attention leading to her freedom.

This visual mechanism shows that the protagonist gives the male juries a permission to enjoy voyeuristic pleasures on her body in exchange for her freedom. The more desirable she looks for men, the more chances of the exoneration she can get. Secretly watched and enjoyed by the juries, the protagonist is visually fixed to be taken sexually advantage thus succeeding in her efforts to gain her freedom.

Moreover, though Roxie is granted freedom, there is a female character in this film who fails to achieve such desire. Katalin Halenscki or Hunyak is the female character who was the first woman in the state of Illinois to be executed. Although the narrative structure rouses the viewers to attentively follow Roxie in her attempt to achieve exoneration, meanwhile, we are given a chance to take a look at the character of Hunyak. Unlike the protagonist, Hunyak is shaped as an alien. She is a Hungarian woman. She is unable not only to communicate in English but also to afford a proficient man like Billy to be her attorney in the lawsuit for her charge. Hence, this woman is helpless and does not belong to the Chicago of the time. At the end of her part, the character Hunyak is given a death sentence, which is completely different from the protagonist.

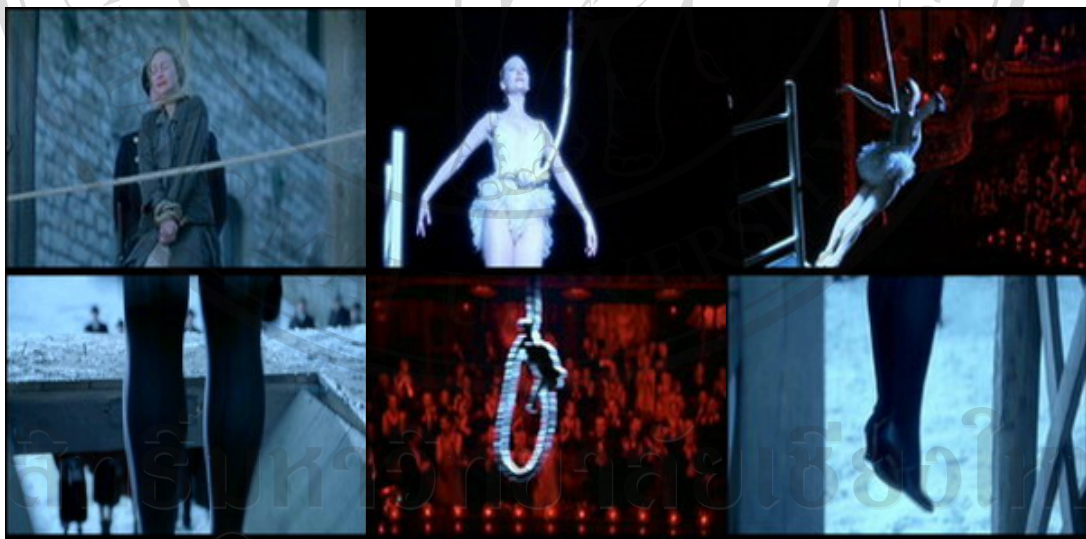


Figure 16: The hanging scene of Hunyak

The female oppression can also be observed from the expressionistic execution scene of Hunyak. Visually, Hunyak is portrayed as an innocent victim who is sentenced to death for the public's pleasure and entertainment. The contrast between the real event and the fantasy of her execution is created in order to satirize the bestial society of Chicago and the contrast between day and night settings which are applied

to reveal Hunyak's oppression. Wearing white, she performs the fantasized "Hungarian disappearing act" while the real hanging scene goes on. In the imaginary night setting, Hunyak pushes off, in a graceful swan dive, as if she is taking off for freedom. Simultaneously, the real situation shows that the floor drops down and she starts to fall. Then, in the fantasy setting, Hunyak is gone, leaving an empty white rope swinging in her place, with the audience under the red light going wild with applause as Hunyak's body twists slowly on the rope as if in the real situation. The hanging scene presents an irony to the film viewers. The moment of execution is visually compared to an exotic show. The image of the glum-faced witnesses is presented as a group of bloodthirsty audience. In the imagination, she is innocent and free but in reality, she is a dead victim. It can be concluded that she can achieve her freedom only in a fantasy world but never in her real life.

To sum, *Chicago* (2002) shows the achievement of desire for freedom of the female characters, especially the protagonist in both liberal and oppressive ways. The viewers can perceive the satirical liberation through the plot and the spectacular musical scene "Razzle dazzle". However, the main character Roxie is somewhat sexually oppressed during the trial although she ends up with her freedom achievement. Female oppression is also witnessed through the portrayal of the character, Katalin Halenscki or Hunyak, who fails to achieve her freedom desire.

3.1.3 Desire for sexual intimacy

Desire for sexual intimacy is the other important sort of desire that can be observed in *Chicago* (2002). The sexual desire is regarded as an eager wish of the female characters, particularly the protagonist, to enjoy having love affairs freely. Obviously, such desire is recognized in the film through both verbal and visual mechanisms.

The liberation of sexual desire is acknowledged through the scenes of the first and the last song numbers. Similarly to many musicals, *Chicago* (2002) is distinctive for the process of song placement. The filmmakers provide two songs which contain the liberation for sexual desire within the lyrics. The first musical scene “All that jazz” is introduced as the opening number. The other one is the finale song that is done by a reprise at the end of the scene. Together with the unique lifestyle in the Roaring Twenties, the liberation of their sexual desire is mentioned in both musical scenes.

In a literal sense, the opening number “And All That Jazz” song, sung by Velma Kelly, and used as an introduction song to set the tone for the rest of the film, expresses the sexual freedom as follows:

[Velma]
 Come on babe
 Why don't we paint the town?
 And all that Jazz

I'm gonna rouge my knees
 And roll my stockings down
 And all that jazz

Start the car
I know a whoopee spot
Where the gin is cold
But the piano's hot

It's just a noisy hall
Where there's a nightly brawl
And all ... that ... jazz

And all that Jazz

[Ensemble]
Hotcha!
Whoopee!

[Velma]
And all that Jazz

[Ensemble]
Ha! Ha! Ha!

[Velma]
Slick your hair
And wear your buckle shoes
And all that Jazz

I hear that Father Dip
Is gonna blow the blues
And all that Jazz

Hold on, hon
We're gonna bunny hug
I bought some aspirin
Down at United Drug
In case you shake apart
And want a brand new start
To do that...

[Roxie]

Jazz

[Velma]
Find a flask
We're playing fast and loose
And all that jazz

[Velma]

Right up here
Is where I store the juice
And all that jazz

[Velma]
Come on, babe
We're gonna brush the sky
I betcha lucky Lindy
Never flew so high
'Cause in the stratosphere
How could he lend an ear
to all that Jazz?

[Velma]
Oh, you're gonna see your sheba shimmy shake

[All]
And all that jazz

[Velma]
Oh, she's gonna shimmy 'till her garters break

[All]
And all that jazz

[Velma]
Show her where to park her girdle
Oh, her mother's blood'd curdle

[All]
If she'd hear her baby's queer

[Velma]
For all ... that ... jazz!

[Velma]
All ... that ... jazz

Come on babe
Why don't we paint the town?
And all that Jazz

I'm gonna rouge my knees
And roll my stockings down
And all that jazz

[Ensemble]

**Oh, you're gonna see your sheba shimmy shake
And all that jazz**

**Oh, she's gonna shimmy 'till her garters break
And all that jazz**

[Velma]

**Start the car
I know a whoopee spot
Where the gin is cold
But the piano's hot**

[Ensemble]

**Show her where to park her girdle
Oh, her mother's blood'd curdle**

[Velma]

**It's just a noisy hall
Where there's a nightly brawl
And all that jazz!**

**No, I'm no one's wife
But, oh, I love my life
And all that Jazz!**

[All]

That Jazz!

The sexual freedom is revealed by the showgirl Velma literally through the above lyrics. The tone of the movie is introduced by this opening song, which implies that sexual desire for womanhood can be fulfilled during the period of the Roaring Twenties. It reflects a new style of female sexuality in which women get their own rights to invite men to go out, drinking, dancing, and expressing their love in public in order to satisfy their sexual desire. There are many indications of their independent and confident sexual behaviors in the lyrics. For instance, the expressions used in the song such as “Come on”, or “Why don’t we...?”, portray an image of a lady who confidently encourages men to join her. Words of affection such as “hon” and “babe”

also express feelings of love or fondness for men. Exclamations used such as “Hotcha!” and “Whoopee!” describe happiness and excitement of their sexual behaviors as well. This language shows that being outspoken and seductive for the opposite sex is a common pleasure for the women. Besides, the last stanza saying, “No, I’m no one’s wife. But, oh, I love my life” implies that the woman does not belong to anyone and she enjoys her life flirting with men. This part conveys an idea that it is the woman’s freedom to lead their sexual life without any obligations. In addition, the repetition of the word “All that jazz” seems to emphasize that their sexual lifestyles are just for fun and excitement. Therefore, we can conclude that the words in the song show liberation for female sexual desire.



Figure 17: *The similarities of actions are shown in “All that jazz.”*

In agreement with the lyrics, visual images in the first musical scene “And All That Jazz” strengthen the female achievement of sexual desire even more. The parallel editing encourages the viewers to interpret the song as sexual liberation.

Velma is performing her “All that jazz” number on the stage at the same moment as Roxie is having a sexual activity with her lover, Fred Casely. Casely pushes Roxie against a neighbor’s door and throws Roxie’s arms up as soon as Velma’s arms are

raised up by a male dancer. In the bedroom, Roxie slams her wedding photo face down. The two lovers explode into their sexual act. Meanwhile, the music and dance are performed faster and hotter on the stage. When both actions are about to finish, Roxie's hands reach up and grab the post of the iron bed as Velma grabs two male dancers by the wrists while moving to the top of the piano. Such movements are so well synchronized that it is hard to distinguish between the dancing act on the stage and the sexual act in the bedroom. Thus, the visual techniques in this musical scene tell us from the beginning that the women's desire for sexual intimacy can be achieved in 1920s.

The finale song "Nowadays" also emphasizes liberation for female's sexual desire. In *Chicago* (2002), it can be noticed that such song is done by a reprise, repeating to celebrate the end of the movie with sexual liberation of the Roaring Twenties:

**You can like the life you're living
You can like the life you like
You can even marry Harry
But mess around with Ike**

**And that's good, isn't it?
Grand, isn't it? Great, isn't it?
Swell, isn't it? Fun, isn't it?
But nothing stays**

This melodic convention features the sexual intimacy achievement for women in the 1920s. In the end of the film, the protagonist sings this song twice, after Roxie is found innocent and then the last scene together with Velma at Chicago Theater. With this reprise, the idea of such achievement is conveyed in an emphatic way. The filmmaker let sexual liberation repeat itself through several verbal means in this finale

song. For instance, the repetition of the modal “can” indicates an ability to enjoy one’s own sexual lifestyles. And from the lyrics, even a married woman feels free to have a lover. The usage of word choices such as “Good” “Grand” “Great” “Swell” and “Fun” followed by the tag question, “isn’t it?” emphasizes the expectation of positive attitude towards female sexual independence during that time. Although they believe that this phenomenon exists not for long, it is such an enjoyable period for them. Hence, like the previous “All that jazz”, this last song number literally ends the film story with the emphasis on the pleasure from sexual liberation which can be fulfilled by every woman.



Figure 18: The last song is sung in both fantasy (left) and reality (right).

Visually, with the reprise, the sexual desire in this last song number is repeated in two dissimilar settings in fantasy and in reality. In the end of the film, the above lyrics are firstly sung in Roxie’s fantasy setting after she is free from jail. Finally, such words are again heard in the reality of the last scene where the two main characters, Roxie and Velma, repeat the song together at Chicago Theater. From the visual mechanism that goes with the last reprise lyrics, it can be interpreted that the idea of sexual freedom is allowed to go from an individual to the public in the real situation.

However, there is an ironic remark between the first and the last song numbers, which talk about sexual desire from the liberal views and are voiced out by the infamous women, Velma Kelly and Roxie Hart. Through the voices of these female criminals, it seems that the claimed sexual independence is rather a wrong and sinful behavior. In order to satirize the sexual lifestyles of the period, the filmmakers let the two notorious women voice such sexual idea through songs. In this sense, those two musical numbers are used to criticize or satirize the rotten society rather than to show encouragement of the free sexual lifestyles in the 1920s.

In conclusion, with regard to the three different aspects of desire for fame, freedom, and sexual intimacy, the narrative techniques of film and musical conventions are used to present the achievement of the women. But the liberation of female for those desires seems mostly at a superficial level. For instance, the main mechanisms such as narrative structure, pictorial signs, and lyrics are used to show the achievement of the protagonist in obtaining her desire. However, the opposite image, which is the female oppression, lurks behind at a deeper level. The techniques of expressionism and irony are frequently applied in the film to satirize the fulfillments of Roxie's wishes. In addition, the main character is often oppressed through camera conventions. In other words, film watchers are set to look at the female from male pleasure. Voyeuristic oppression, which is when the body of women is allowed to be viewed through the camera so as to obtain pleasure for men, occurs very often in this film.

3.2 Self-determination, self-reliance and power

The female liberation and oppression can also be seen through the portrayals of each character's self-determination, self-reliance and power. Self-determination is defined as the right or ability of a person to control one's own destiny. Self-reliance refers to the ability to do things and make decisions by oneself without help from other people. And, power means having or taking control over people and activities. *Chicago* (2002) brings the viewers back to the Jazz Age during the 1920s to observe lives of women who were given rights and power to obtain their own independence and identity. The confidence of the female characters is obviously shown through their outer appearances and assertive behaviors. In general, it seems like the film celebrates women's liberation of self-determination and power since the women look independent, assertive and powerful. However, it can be argued that these female characters acquire their self-determination, self-reliance and power at a superficial level but at a deeper level, they are oppressed of all these qualities and they have to rely mainly on the male characters.

For the protagonist, Roxie's lack of self-determination can be perceived mostly in her fantasy scenes. To that extent, such scenes are used to reflect that her success and survival are always up to the male's competency. Roxie never figures out how she can live her life on her own capacity. In this sense, she seems to be a manipulative character. Ironically, the film techniques show that in fact she is under men's control. Roxie's disability to determine her own fate is confessed in front of the viewers through some musical numbers. Visual techniques in the expressionistic style are used to portray the loss of her self-determination as well.

At first, Roxie is introduced as a woman who can manipulate her husband but it is shown later on that she actually cannot do it. The musical scene “Funny Honey”, where Roxie exposes her characters through the song, is an evidence of this inability. Roxie sings this song after she murders her lover, Fred Casely, and tries to pin the fault on her husband, Amos. According to the lyrics below, the protagonist seems proud of her ability to take control over her husband:

[Roxie]

**Sometimes I'm right
Sometimes I'm wrong
But he doesn't care
He'll string along
He loves me so
That funny honey of mine**

**Sometimes I'm down
Sometimes I'm up
But he follows 'round
Like some droopy-eyed pup
He loves me so
That funny honey of mine**

**He ain't no sheik
That's no great physique
Lord knows, he ain't got the smarts.**

**But look at that soul
I tell you, that whole
Is a whole lot greater
Than the sum of his parts
And if you know him like me
I know you'd agree**

**What if the world
Slandered my name?
Why, he'd be right there
taking the blame
He loves me so
And it all suites me fine
That funny, sunny, honey
Hubby of mine!**

In this song, Roxie reveals her inner feelings about her husband from her point of view. She considers Amos to be an inferior. Literally, he is compared with “some droopy-eyed pup” which “...follows 'round” her. The lyrics show that the protagonist did not appreciate Amos’s physical appearance or his little intelligence. But with his loyalty to her, he is a useful man for her. Amos is a man who will always support and protect her no matter if she is right or wrong. Although Roxie does not look at her husband with much pleasure, she has confidence in her control over her husband and her destiny. This song seems to be evidence of women’s self-determination and power.



Figure 19: Roxie’s figure is smaller than her husband’s.

However, hints of Roxie’s disability in controlling her circumstance exist in the later parts of film. The end of the musical scene “Funny Honey” is twisted when Amos decides not to defend his unfaithful wife. The above expressionistic image is shown after Amos comes upon the truth that he is betrayed by his wife, who kills her lover and pins the blame on him. Ironically, this image signifies Amos’s power on Roxie. We see Amos sitting on a wooden chair under his own lamp whereas Roxie

looms over him on a piano. The visual shows that she tries to mislead Amos to defend her from guilt but not to the extent that she can manipulate him, who eventually senses her trick. In the above illustration, the protagonist's figure is much smaller than her husband's. From their unequal sizes, we can say that the protagonist realizes that the protagonist's fate is in her husband's hand. The story of this couple ends up with Amos actually controlling Roxie's destiny because it is him who tells the truth and puts her in jail.

After this, the film portrays Roxie as a wild, sinful woman who needs someone to control her. Therefore, it opens an opportunity for Billy Flynn to help her with her problems as a lawyer. This can be observed from a dialogue in the press conference scene. Such a dialogue shows Roxie's ineptitude of answering the journalists' questions and Billy's control over her assertiveness:

Billy: Good day, gentlemen, Miss Sunshine. My client has just entered a plea of not guilty, and we look forward to a trial at the earliest possible date. Now, if there are any questions...

Mary Sunshine: As you know my paper is dry. Do you have any advice for young girls seeking to avoid a life of jazz and drink?

Billy: Absolutely. Mrs. Hart feels that it was the tragic combination of liquor and jazz which led to her downfall.

Roxie: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm just so flattered y'all came to see me. See, I was a moth...a moth crushed on the wheel. You know, a butterfly...drawn to the flame.
I guess you want to know why I shot the bastard.

Billy: Shut up, dummy.

The dialogue shows that Roxie does not have the ability to cope with this serious situation. The inanity of her answer shows that she cannot handle even her own

speech and she deserves to be directed by Billy. In this sense, the filmmaker gives Billy Flynn legitimacy to control the woman. Consequently, in the musical scene “We Both Reached for the Gun”, we not only witness Billy taking away Roxie’s voice and makes assertions for her but we also see a satiric incapacity of the protagonist to defend herself during the circumstance. From such musical number, the oppression can be seen in both literal and non-literal senses. Literally, the song is presented as follows:

Bandleader: Mr. Billy Flynn in the “Press Conference Rag.”
Notice how his mouth never moves – almost.

Reporter#1: Where’d you come from?

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
Mississippi

Reporter#2: And your parents?

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
Very wealthy

Reporter#3: Where are they now?

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
Six feet under.

Billy: But she was granted one more start...

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
The Convent of the Sacred Heart

[Reporter#1]
When you get here?

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
1920

[Reporter#2]
How old were you?

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]

Don't remember.

**[Reporter#3]
Then what happened?**

**[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
I met Amos. And he stole my heart away convinced me to elope one day.**

Mary Sunshine: You poor dear! I can't believe what you've been through!
A convent girl! A runaway marriage! Oh, it's too, too terrible.
Now tell us Roxie

**[Mary Sunshine]
Who's Fred Casely?**

**[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
My ex- boyfriend.**

**[Reporters]
Why you shoot him?**

**[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
I was leavin'**

**[Reporters]
Was he angry?**

**[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
Like a mad man! Still I said, "Fred, move along"**

Billy: She knew that she was doing wrong.

**[Reporters]
Then describe it**

**[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
He came toward me.**

**[Reporters]
With the pistol?**

**[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
From my bureau**

**[Reporters]
Did you fight him?**

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
Like a tiger.

Billy: He had strength and she had none.

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
And yet we both reached for the gun
Oh yes, Oh yes, Oh yes we both
Oh yes we both
Oh yes, we both reached for
The gun, the gun, the gun, the gun
Oh yes, we both reached for the gun,
For the gun

[Reporters]
Oh yes, Oh yes, Oh yes they both
Oh yes they both
Oh yes, they both reached for
The gun, the gun, the gun, the gun
Oh yes, they both reached for the gun,
For the gun

[Billy]
Understandable
Understandable
Yes, it's perfectly understandable
Comprehensible
Comprehensible
Not a bit reprehensible
It's so defensible!

[Reporters]
How're you feeling?

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
Very frightened

[Mary Sunshine]
Are you sorry?

Roxie: Are you kidding?

[Reporters]
What's your statement?

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]
All I'd say is

Though my choo-choo
Jumped the track
I'd give my life to bring him back

[Reporters]

And?

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]

Stay away from

[Reporters]

What?

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]

Jazz and liquor

[Reporters]

And?

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]

And the men who

[Reporters]

What?

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]

Play for fun

[Reporters]

And what

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]

That's the thought that

[Reporters]

Yeah

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]

Came upon me

[Reporters]

When?

[Billy/ Roxie dummy]

When we both reached for the gun

[Mary Sunshine]

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Understandable
Understandable

[Billy and Mary Sunshine]

Yes, it's perfectly understandable
Comprehensible
Comprehensible
Not a bit reprehensible
It's so defensible!

[Reporters]

Oh yes, Oh yes, Oh yes they both
Oh yes they both
Oh yes, they both reached for

Billy: Let me hear it

[Reporters]

The gun, the gun, the gun, the gun
Oh yes, they both reached for the gun,
For the gun

Billy: Now you got it!

[Reporters]

Oh yes, Oh yes, Oh yes they both
Oh yes they both
Oh yes, they both reached for
The gun, the gun, the gun, the gun
Oh yes, they both reached for the gun,
For the gun

[Billy and Reporters]

Oh yes, Oh yes, Oh yes they both
Oh yes they both
Oh yes, they both reached for
The gun, the gun, the gun, the gun
Oh yes, they both reached for the gun,
For the gun

The gun, the gun, the gun, the gun
The gun, the gun, the gun, the gun
The gun, the gun, the gun, the gun

[Billy]

Both reached for the gun

The song implies that Roxie is manipulated by Billy since she is disallowed to express herself. The lyrics do not reveal her determination and her identity is taken over by Billy's story. And so is her assertiveness, as Roxie's voice can hardly be heard. All we hear is Billy's voice coming out of Roxie's mouth. In order for his client to get attention and sympathy from the press, he spins her story in a dramatic way. At the end of this song, Billy's story is accepted and repeated by all the press. Superficially, being represented by Billy seems to be Roxie's luck. On the other hand, Roxie is robbed of her chance to communicate with the public by her lawyer. Such voice-over technique turns to be an oppressive situation for the protagonist. Under Billy Flynn's decision, she needs to suppress her true identity and continue her "big show" with whatever Billy says.



Figure 20: Roxie is portrayed as a dummy with Billy as her ventriloquist.

On the visual side, the musical scene "We Both Reached for the Gun" does not allow Roxie's self determination either. To a large extent the musical scene satirizes on Roxie's disability in coping with difficult situation. To create senses of humor and exaggeration, Roxie appears on the stage as a dummy while Billy plays the part of her ventriloquist. Through the portrayal of Roxie as a dummy, the protagonist is dehumanized. In this puppet disguise, she is not given permission to move or speak. Her actions are controlled by Billy through a wooden lever attached to her back.

Besides, such image emphasizes that Roxie is a phony. Signs of her fake personality are obviously shown from her doll-like make up and movements. It is obvious that Roxie's identity is unreal but has been made to look genuine by her lawyer in order to deceive people.



Figure 21: Billy Flynn is given power to control the whole situation.

Expressionistically, the filmmaker leaves Billy to his own devices during the press conference. In establishing shots of the stage, Billy Flynn does a ventriloquist act with Roxie as a dummy on his lap. Behind them are the marionette reporters. They all resemble lifeless puppets, except Billy Flynn. Billy is portrayed as a puppet master. He stands over a marionette box, pulling the strings. In this optical sense, power is completely in Billy Flynn's hands. He rules not only Roxie's life but also the whole situation. Moreover, the imperative sentence such as "Let me hear it" is in his dialogue before the words "They both reached for the gun" are repeated again and again by the marionette reporters. Such verbal technique again indicates that Billy has command of the press conference.

In addition, a monologue of Roxie given below can be the best evidence for the failure of her self-determination. The viewers get a chance to discover Roxie's innermost thought through her monologue at the beginning of the musical scene,

“Roxie”. In the expressionistic atmosphere, Roxie is transported to the world she has always dreamed about, seeing her life as a vaudeville act. Her suppressed idea is voiced out as a showbiz-fake-intimate conversation with her double audiences, including her imaginary stage audiences and the film viewers. In her imaginary world, Roxie’s monologue is delivered below:

Roxie: Once it said in the paper, “Gangland’s Al Capelli seen at Chez Vito with cute blond chorine.” That was me. I clipped it and saved it. See, all my life I wanted to have my own act. But, no. No. No. No. They always turned me down. It was one big world full of “No.” Then Amos came along. Sweet, safe Amos who never says no.

(In the crowd, people nod knowingly.)

Look, I’ve never done this before...but it’s such a special night, and you’re such a great audience...I feel like I can really talk to you. So forget what you’ve read in the papers or heard on the radio, ’cause I’m gonna tell you the truth.

(The audience glows with gratitude.)

Not that the truth really matters, but I’m gonna tell you anyway. In the bed department, Amos was zero. I mean, when he made love to me, it was like he was fixin’ a carburetor or somethin’. “I love ya, honey, I love ya.” Anyway I started foolin’ around. Then I started screwin’ around, which is foolin’ around without dinner. Then I met Fred Casely, who said he’d get me into vaudeville, but that didn’t work out exactly the way I planned. I guess it didn’t work out too great for Fred either.

(Raucous laughter from the crowd.)

So I gave up the vaudeville idea, because after all those years...well, you sort of figure opportunity just passed you by. Oh, but it ain’t. Oh no, no, no, no, no, it ain’t. If this Flynn guy gets me off, and with all the publicity, now, I got me a world full of “yes.”

From the monologue, the protagonist almost gets liberation in terms of her self-determination as Roxie seems to be in control of her destiny. Literally, this long

speech contains “I” (Roxie) as the main subject. It shows that she has some attempts to determine her own destiny. She comes up with a great dream of having her own act. In order to achieve her goal, she decides to entrust her life to Amos and Fred Casely. However, it should be remarked that her decisions have led her to failures so far as she has chosen the wrong men. Amos, her husband, can not fulfill her sexual pleasure and then, she is deceived by Fred. As a result, she is put in prison because of her decision to kill him. The monologue implies her failures in controlling her own destiny. Billy Flynn is her new trustee. From her speech, with Billy as the subject of the last conditional sentence, he will bring her success. In this sense, such verbal mechanism gives Billy the control of Roxie’s life from now on. After this point, Billy Flynn makes decisions and creates a new identity for her. He has all power over her.

In terms of self-determination and power, “Cell Block Tango” is one of the best musical scenes in the movie. The scene occurs the moment Roxie finds herself in the Cook County Jail as a murderess. She is invited to witness each of the six murderesses’ stories in an expressionistic atmosphere. Once the dripping, tapping, ticking, and drumming join in percussive rhythm, the six murderesses start their “Cell Block Tango”. The musical number is verbally shown as follows:

**[Liz]
Pop**

**[Anne]
Six**

**[June]
Squish**

**[Hunyak]
UH UH**

[Velma]
Cicero

[Mona]
Lipschitz

Bandleader: And now, the six merry murderesses of the Cook County jail in their rendition of the Cell Block Tango.

[Liz]
Pop

[Anne]
Six

[June]
Squish

[Hunyak]
UH UH

[Velma]
Cicero

[Mona]
Lipschitz

[All]
He had it coming
He had it coming

He only had himself to blame
If you'd have been there
If you'd have seen it

[Velma]
I betcha you would have done the same!

[Liz]
Pop

[Anne]
Six

[June]
Squish

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[Hunyak]
UH UH

[Velma]
Cicero

[Mona]
Lipschitz

Liz: You know how people have these little habits that get you down?
 Like, Bernie. Bernie liked to chew gum. No, not chew. POP.
 I came home this one day and I am really irritated, and looking for a
 little sympathy and there's Bernie Layin' on the couch, drinkin' a beer
 and chewin'. No, not chewin'. Poppin'. So I said to him, "You pop that
 gum one more time..." And he did. So I took the shotgun off the wall
 and I fired two warning shots...into his head.

[All]
He had it coming
He had it coming
He only had himself to blame
If you'd have been there
If you'd have seen it
I betcha you would have done the same!

Anne: I met Ezekial Young from Salt Lake City about two years ago and he
 told me he was single and we hit it off right away. So, we started living
 together. He'd go to work, he'd come home, I'd mix him a drink, we'd
 have dinner. And then I found out. Single, he told me? Single my ass.
 Not only was he married...oh, no, he had six wives. One of those
 Mormons, You know. So that night, when he came home, I mixed him
 his drink, as usual. You know, some guys just can't hold their arsenic.

[All]
He had it coming
He had it coming
He took a flower in its prime
And then he used it
And he abused it
It was a murder but not a crime

[Girls]
Pop, Six, Squish, UH UH, Cicero, Lipschitz
Pop, Six, Squish, UH UH, Cicero, Lipschitz
Pop, Six, Squish, UH UH, Cicero, Lipschitz

June: Now I'm standing in the kitchen carvin' up the kitchen for dinner, minding my own business, and in storms my husband Willbur in a jealous rage. "You been screwin' the milkman," he says. He was crazy and he kept screamin', "You been screwin' the milkman." And then he ran into my knife. He ran into my knife ten times.

[All]

**If you'd have been there
If you'd have seen it
I betcha you would have done the same!**

Hunyak: (Hungarian) Mit keresek, en itt? Azt mondjok, hogy a hires lakem lefogta a ferjemet en meg leesaptam a fejet. De nem igaz, en artatlan vagyok. Nem tudom mert mondja Uncle Sam hogy en tettem. Probaltam a rendorsegen megmagyaranzi de nem ertett meg...

Roxie: But did you do it?

Hunyak: UH UH, not guilty!

[All]

**He had it coming
He had it coming
He had it coming all along**

Velma: My sister, Veronica, and I did this double act and my husband, Charlie, traveled around with us. Now, for the last number in our act, we did these twenty acrobatic tricks in a row, one, two, three, four, five ...splits, spread eagles, flip flops, back flips, one right after the other. So this one night before the show, we're down at the Hotel Cicero, the three of us boozin' and havin' a few laughs, and we ran out of ice. So I went out to get some. ...I came back, open the door, and there's Veronica and Charlie doing Number Seventeen – the spread eagle. Well, I was in such a state of shock, I completely blacked out. I can't remember a thing. It wasn't until later when I was washin' the blood off my hands I even knew they were dead.

[Velma]

**They had it coming
They had it coming
They had it coming all along**

**I didn't do it.
But if I'd done it
How could you tell me that I was wrong?**

[All]

**They had it coming
They had it coming**

**They took a flower in its prime
And then they used it
And they abused it
It was a murder but not a crime**

Mona: I love Al Lipschitz more than I can possibly say. He was a real artistic guy...sensitive...a painter. He was always trying to find himself. He'd go out every night looking for himself and on the way he found Ruth, Gladys, Rosemary...and because of artistic differences. He saw himself as alive, and I saw him dead.

[All]

**The dirty bum, bum, bum, bum, bum
The dirty bum, bum, bum, bum, bum**

**They had it coming
They had it coming
They had it coming all along
'Cause if they used us
And they abused us
How could you tell us that we were wrong?**

**He had it coming
He had it coming
He only had himself to blame
If you'd have been there
If you'd have seen it
I betcha you would have done the same!**

Liz: You pop that gum one more time!

Annie: Single my ass.

June: Ten times!

Hunyak: Miert esukott Uncle Sam bortonbe.

Velma: Number Seventeen – the spread eagle.

Mona: Artistic differences.

The verbal part of the song seems to show women who have control over their lives. “The six merry murderesses” are allowed to voice out their inner thoughts individually. The viewers are set to listen to the women’s stories from their point of

view. Each monologue reflects the murderesses' self determination since every one of them expresses her own reason to justify the murder she has committed. From their monologues, the use of subject "I" refers to each murderesses and "he" refers to each of their dead victim. The actions performed by "I" are explained with the "he" to blame. For instance, "I" fired two warning shots after "he" popped that gum. "I" mixed him his drink but "he" could not hold his arsenic. "I" was standing in the kitchen when "he" ran into my knife. In this sense, such speeches show that "I" made a decision because "he" caused the trouble. Moreover, regarding sense of self-determination, the words in the chorus encourage viewers to share their sympathy with the women. The murderesses furiously sing that they are not guilty for it because they are abused first. They admit that they killed the men but not to the extent that it was very wrong. Besides, all the men are blamed as "The dirty bum" who "...had it coming". It means that these guys are worthless and deserve punishments from women. The other special feature of this song is the use of ellipsis. For examples, "Pop", "Six", "Squish", "UH UH", "Cicero", and "Lipschitz". Such technique is applied to show an expectation that the viewers share the understanding of the six murderesses' motives.

In the visual part, the power of the murderesses is also acknowledged in the "Cell Block Tango" through several film techniques. The women are liberated as they are given power to release their anger at their partners through the tango. To a fast strong beat, the murderesses dance with their victims. Sounds of pounding of the floor as well as the heavy and insistent rhythm arouse excitement. Such audible

mechanisms strongly cause film watchers to experience the criminals' powerful moment.



Figure 22: The choreography shows the criminals' power

The murderesses are also given rights to exercise their power through the choreography. The steps and movements are invented to illustrate the women's control over the dance. They can ride, straddle, and stand over their men. When the criminals tango with their partners, they act as if they are the hunters. They show abusive movements with their victims. For instance, one of the murderesses is seen to kick a man across the stage, to grab his hair, to push him to the floor, and even to strangle the victim.



Figure 23: The murderesses are frequently shot in low angles.

Camera convention is also applied to emphasize the females' power in this scene. The inmates are portrayed as being powerful through low angle shots. The dwarf angle is frequently used while they are expressing their inner feelings. At first glance of women's emotion and power, such mechanism seems to show liberation.

However, at a deeper level, if we analyze further, the oppressive side in this musical scene can also be found. In the "Cell Block Tango", we see the filmmakers portraying female power with threatening images through the unique expressionism filming style.

Firstly, although the power of murderess is expressed through the low angle, the camera shows neither admiration nor appreciation of the women's power. The powerful females are filmed in several oblique angles at the same time as the low angle. Such angles create diagonal lines so their pictures look tense and distorted behind bars. The mixtures of those shots suggest that their power is rather dangerous, abnormal and animal-like.

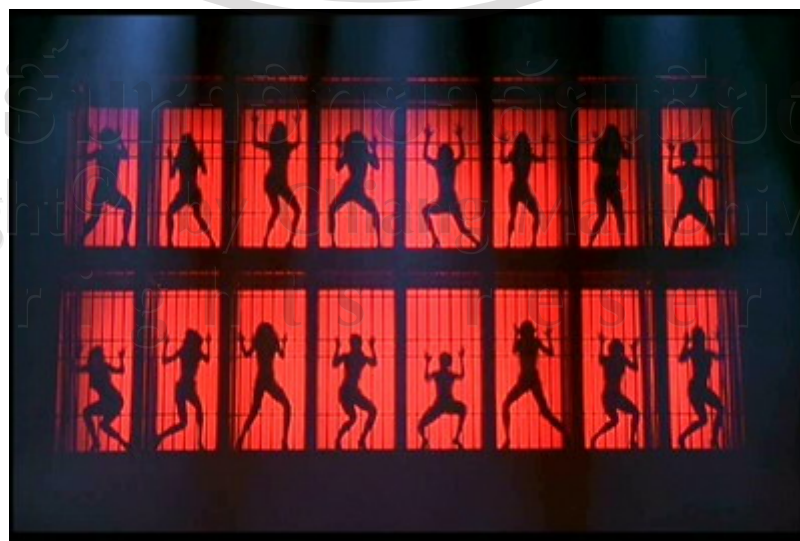


Figure 24: Chiaroscuro and red lightings create monstrous figures.

Monstrous images are created to criticize the power of the female criminals. In order to construct the images of monsters, the tango scene unites the heavy use of red light with dark contrasts. Red, as a psychological tool, can arouse the viewers' negative emotions. Such color probably suggests aggressive and indignant feelings. When the red color is combined with the silhouettes figures of those women, the results look frightening. It is obvious that those women are portrayed as harmful creatures behind bars.

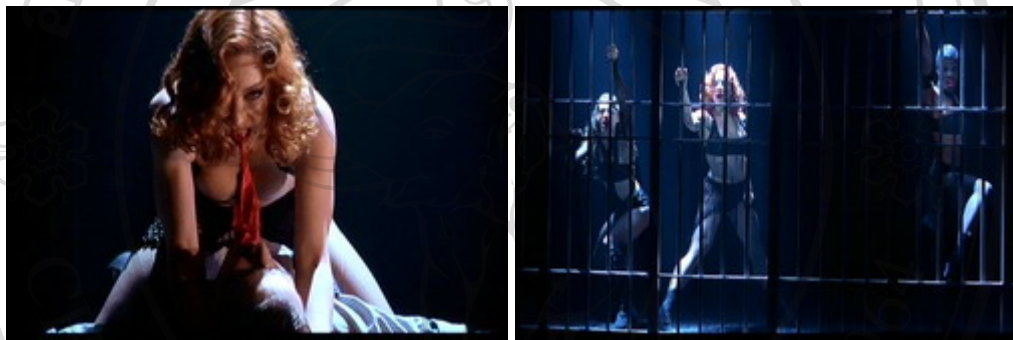


Figure 25: Red scarves and cell bars signify guilt of the criminals.

Emphasis on symbolic props implies that the murderesses are guilty. In conflict with the visual language, guilt of the criminals is visually presented through the objects used in the scene. For instance, the female prisoners (except Hunyak) pull out red scarves as a sign that they killed their victims. The connotations of the red scarves in their hands can be blood, sin, or murder. In addition, playing with stripes, the filmmakers apply the cell bars as the main prop for the tango scene. The cell bars probably represent oppression, punishment, a cage or a space restriction.



Figure 26: Different spaces between the fantasy and the reality.

Space is an important element in this scene. Two sides of the criminals' spaces, fantasy and reality, can be observed. In the fantasy setting, the women are given unrestricted space out off the cell bars. Under a spotlight, they can dance, twirl, and chase after their victims without boundaries. The murderesses are liberated in the dreamlike space. On the other hand, the images in the real prison show that their spaces are obviously restricted. In reality, those inmates are trapped in their confinement. In this sense, the tango scene reveals oppression of the murderesses.

Although more space is available in their imaginary world, the women are never given large open spaces in the real world as a result of their determination.



Figure 27: Costumes reflect oppressive conditions of the criminal.

Furthermore, the murderesses' costumes are created to show their oppressive side. Colleen Atwood (2002), the costume designer of this film noted in *CHICAGO: The Movie and Lyrics* that she got an inspiration for the "Cell Block Tango" costumes from a photograph of Man Ray, an American artist who spent most of his career in Paris. The black-and-white photograph named "Blanc et noir variante" (1935) shows a portrait of a semi-nude woman. Atwood (2002) mentioned about her costume that "It's of a black piece of elastic across her (model) chest and over her privates and black high heels, and she has her hand bound." (93). She added that the design can reflect sense of bondage and the criminals' oppressive experiences with men (93).

Thus, wearing the outfit, these females are portrayed as oppressed women who are sexually exploited by their men.



Figure 28: Erotic slavery images of the murderesses.

Oppressive images can also be witnessed as filming technique presenting the prisoners for voyeuristic pleasure. In close up shots, physical attractive traits of the murderesses in their near-nude costumes can be noticed. It seems that the filmmakers intend to give the viewers a chance to enjoy such voyeuristic pleasure. As Atwood (2002) said, “[A]nd if they are hanging out together in the dorm, they might as well just wear their underwear. But you get girls like that, that are all pent up, you are going to get that sexuality thing going on” (93).

To sum it up, while the monologues and lyrics above reveal the six murderesses’ self-determination, the power of the female criminals is portrayed as distorted and animal-like through non-verbal mechanisms and through expressionistic filming. Moreover, the power of the criminals is restricted through the visual mechanisms such as the limited spaces, erotic costumes, and voyeuristic oppression. Therefore, the murderesses never achieve real power as a result of their determination. Instead of power, the filmmakers justify their oppression by portraying them with jealousy and

great desire for revenge. In other words, the murderesses deserve punishments because their decisions are wrong.

In terms of self-reliance, the other important female character, Velma Kelly, is not portrayed as an independent woman. Though she opens the film as a very strong and fearless character, the latter portrayal of Velma shows that she lacks self-reliance. As the best example, Velma's musical moment "I Can't Do it Alone" uncovered her loss of self-confidence in going on with her single vaudeville. Velma realizes that she has lost her popularity and she cannot continue without her sister. In this musical number, she tries to convince Roxie to perform with her as a duo. Velma's desperation is shown through the lyrics below:

[Velma]

**My sister and I had an act that couldn't flop
My sister and I were headed straight for the top
My sister and I earned a thou a week at least
But my sister is now, unfortunately, deceased
I know, it's sad, of course, but a fact is still a fact
And now all that remains is the remains of a perfect double act!**

Velma: Watch this. Now, you have to imagine it with two people.
It swells with two people.

**First I'd...
Then she'd...
Then we'd...
But I can't do it alone!
Then she'd...
Then I'd...
Then we'd...
But I can't do it alone!
She'd say, "What's your sister like?"
I'd say, "men"
She'd say, "You're the cat's meow"
Then we'd wow the crowd again
When she'd go...
I'd go...**

We'd go...
And then those ding dong daddies started to roar
Whistled, stomped, and stamped on the floor
Yelling, screaming, begging for more

Velma: And we'd say, "O.K. fellas, keep your socks up.
 You ain't seen nothin' yet!"

But simply I can't do it alone!

She'd go...

I'd go...

We'd go...

And then those two-bit Johnnies
Did it up brown
To cheer the best attraction in town
They nearly tore the balcony down

Velma: And then we'd say, "You know what boys, we're going home.
 But before we go, here's a few more partin' shots!"
 And this...this we did in perfect unison.

Now you've seen me going through it
It may seem there's nothin' to it
But I simply cannot do it
Alone!

Literally, Velma expresses herself as an expert showgirl but then has to depend on a partner. Repetitions of "I can't do it alone" emphasize that Velma finds it impossible to achieve on her own as her ability is conditional because she feels confident only in a double act.

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Figure 29: Velma sings and dances in her act of desperation.

Visual mechanism is in line with the above lyrics. This musical scene illustrates Velma's feat of dancing but discourages her self-reliance. We can see that she combines her words in the song with choreography. In order to tempt Roxie, Velma recalls her past performing experiences through her acrobatics dances such as climbing the stairs, spread eagling on a chair, sliding down a pole, and gliding on her stomach across the table. However, this musical scene shows difficulty of Velma being alone and dancing awkwardly without a partner. She continues her performance with emptiness and tries to fill the space of her sister. Moreover, it can be seen that

Velma performs her dance behind a cage. The glimpse of the mental bars diminishes the sense of independence and confidence. The scene also features two tone colors,

red and blue, as important compositions. Spotlights, neon stage and Velma's costume use these two colors. Ironically, such combined color makes Velma, who is skillful and energetic in her dance, look pathetic and nervous. We can say that the

combinations of verbal and visual mechanisms in "I Can't Do it Alone" portray

Velma as a dependent woman.

Another interesting woman in this film is Matron Mama Morton (known as “Mama”), a female character who seems to have power over the other women. In general, she is in charge of looking after the female prisoners in the Cook County Jail. However, Mama Morton uses her duty to earn some extra profits from the prisoners. The rendition of the song “When You’re Good to Mama” is practically an introduction and a summary of her personality:

Bandleader: And now, ladies and gentleman- the Keeper of the Keys, the Countess of the Clink, the Mistress of Murderer’s Row-Matron Mama Morton!

[Matron]

**Ask any of the chickies in my pen
They’ll tell you I’m the biggest mother hen
I love them all and all of them love me
Because the system works
The system called reciprocity...**

**Got a little motto
Always sees me through
When you’re good to Mama
Mama’s good to you**

**There’s a lot of favors
I’m prepared to do
You do one for Mama
She’ll do one for you**

**They say that life is tit for tat
And that’s the way I live
So I deserve a lot of tat
For what I’ve got to give**

**Don’t you know that this hand
Washes that one too
When you’re good to Mama
Mama’s good to you!**

**If you want my gravy
Pepper my ragout
Spice it up for Mama
She’ll get hot for you**

**When they pass that basket
Folks contribute to
You put in for Mama
She'll put out for you**

**The folks atop the ladder
are the ones the world adores
So boost me up my ladder, kid
And I'll boost you up yours**

**Let's all stroke together
Like the Princeton crew
When you're strokin' Mama
Mama's stroking you**

**So what's the one conclusion
I can bring this number to?
When you're good to Mama
Mama's good to you!**

Mama Morton is given power in the song to a certain extent. From word choices, Mama is portrayed as being superior to the murderesses. But introduced as “the Countess” and “the Mistress”, Mama becomes a respectable character. She claims her seniority by comparing herself to “the biggest mother hen” among “chickies” in a pen. The use of imperative sentences also suggests that she has an authority. However, it is only an authority over the female prisoners. Although she can exploit the female prisoners with her system of “reciprocity”, she does not have much capacity to exercise her authority outside the female inmates’ world.

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Figure 30: Mama's authoritative figure is presented with shadows.

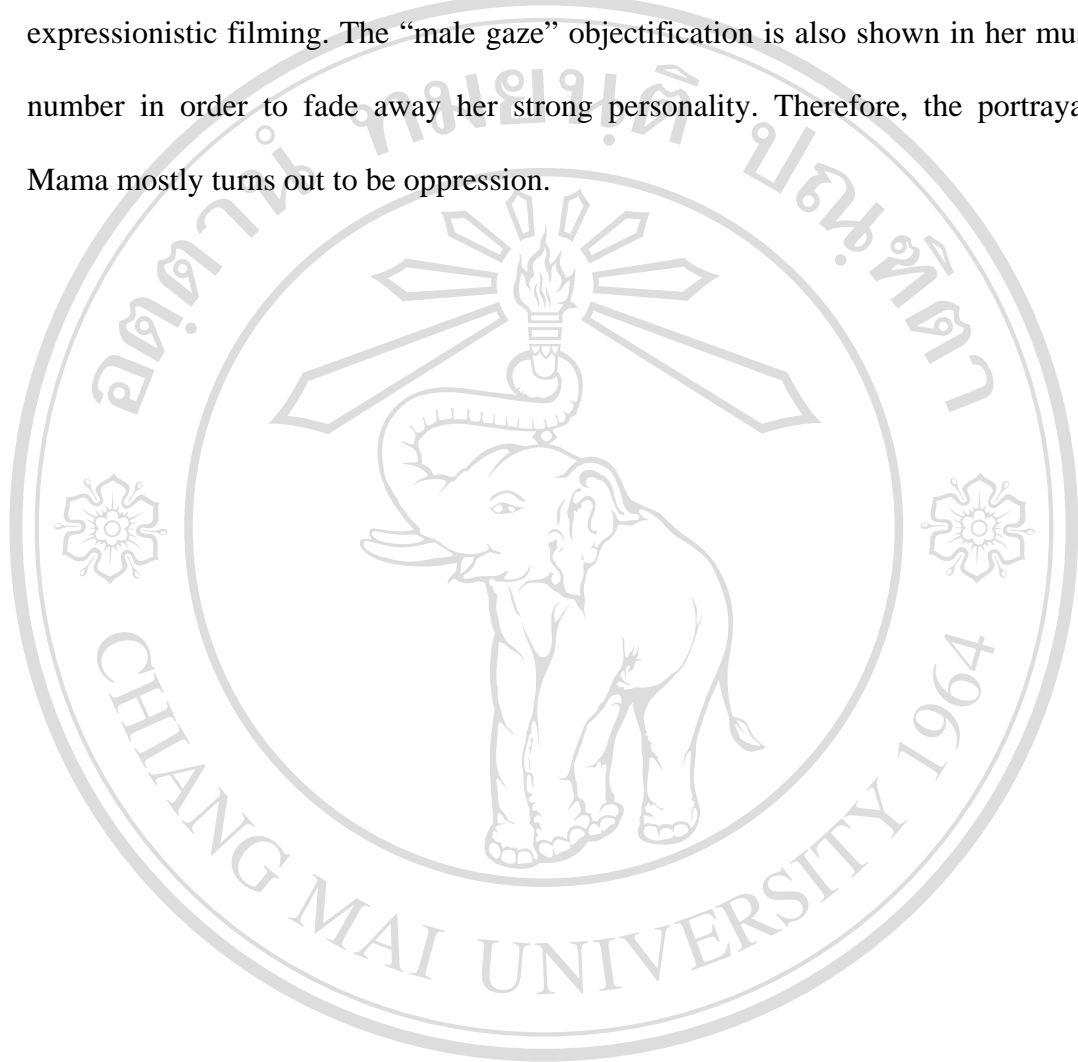
On the visual side, chiaroscuro expressionistic lightings are used to illustrate Mama Morton as a monster. The filmmakers show disapproval of the matron's power through the shadow preceding her figure, which is shown through a frosted glass wall before she enters a holding room for her first introduction to the new inmates. Then, while Mama is performing her musical number, she moves behind one of the panels and dances in silhouette. These two scenes similarly show her figure under a heavy use of light and dark contrasts. Physically, Mama (Queen Latifah) is a tough figure. Her big and strong body possibly makes other people regard her as an authoritative person. Hence, as soon as her figure is enlarged by the chiaroscuro, she looks like a powerful giantess. However, her power is revealed in a distorted manner since such expressionistic image describes her as a monster-like woman.



Figure 31: Mama performs her show in Sophie Tucker's style.

Like other female characters, Mama is oppressed as she is visually portrayed as “male gaze”. The musical scene “When You’re Good to Mama” intentionally makes an allusion to Sophie Tucker’s show. In terms of her outer appearance and performance, the matron impersonates Sophie Tucker, an iconic American entertainer in the 20s. Hence, the image of a “fetish” is created once she assumes the character of a celebrity. In Sophie Tucker style, Mama appears on the stage in a low cut dress showing half of her breasts for male pleasure. In this musical numbers, Mama performs by flirting with male audiences. She entertains at the same time the viewers with several saucy provocative dances such as teasing a fan, pulling a green scarf from her bosom and bobbing her chest. As described by Mulvey (1992), “fetishistic” look responses to male “castration anxiety”. In this sense, we can say that Mama’s duplicated figure is portrayed as a “fetish” so that she becomes reassuring rather than hazardous. Her authoritative image portrayed in the verbal language therefore is reduced and ridiculed by the visual mechanism. Cinematic techniques visually make

this powerful woman equal to a monster and an object of “gaze”. The achievement of Mama’s power is skeptical as soon as her threatening presence is infused through the expressionistic filming. The “male gaze” objectification is also shown in her musical number in order to fade away her strong personality. Therefore, the portrayal of Mama mostly turns out to be oppression.



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