A PLACE FOR *WEST SIDE STORY* (1961): GENDER, RACE, AND TRAGEDY IN HOLLYWOOD’S ADAPTATION

BY

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THESIS

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Abstract

In 1961, three years after *West Side Story* premiered on Broadway, Hollywood created a highly successful film version. Although directors Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins strove to remain faithful to the original production in many ways, the change in medium necessitated a number of alterations, including those that conformed to the particular conventions of the Hollywood studio system. In this paper, I explore the film *West Side Story* as an adaptation in order to demonstrate how Hollywood’s conventions impact the show. The effects of the Production Code, the star system, and the practice of dubbing the actors all had a significant impact on the film. More than that, alterations made to Leonard Bernstein’s music coupled with cinematic techniques modify the musical’s dramatic arc while simultaneously affecting both the gendered and ethnic representations within the show.

My approach within this paper takes into account how the music, lyrics, dialogue, and cinematography all work together to form a creative adaptation of *West Side Story*. Therefore, I combine cinematic and musical analysis in ways that have yet to be applied to this film. I take this approach in order to better understand how *West Side Story* reflects and even challenges the conventions and stereotypes present during the Hollywood studio era. Furthermore, this provides insight into the ways in which *West Side Story* fits into film history, particularly that of the movie musical.
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Introduction

This thesis explores the 1961 film version of West Side Story as an adaptation of the 1957 stage production. My research examines Hollywood’s alterations and their effects through a musical lens. The driving inquiry of my thesis lies in the question: how does West Side Story exemplify certain conventions within the Hollywood industry generally, and the genre of the film musical specifically? What social implications do these conventions carry? While my primary focus centers on Bernstein’s music, specifically the changes made for the film, these questions apply to other aspects of the film as well, including choreography, plot, structure, and performance. The translation from stage to film also affects the representation of both gender and ethnicity within West Side Story. The particular conventions of Hollywood films influence the portrayals of women and men as well as Puerto Rican and white American characters. The differing conventions play a large role in the initial reception as well as the continuing success of the versions.

Just a few years after the Broadway premiere, the film version of West Side Story premiered in 1961. Jerome Robbins, choreographer and director for the Broadway production, and Robert Wise co-directed the film and adapted both Leonard Bernstein’s music and Arthur Laurents’s book for the screen. In many ways, this musical represented theatrical innovation. The original show’s collaborators added a dimension of social commentary by exchanging Shakespeare’s feuding families for warring gangs of different backgrounds. Thematically, West Side Story addressed the modern issues of immigration and gang activity in America through the arts. It also utilized the concept of integration as the music of Bernstein, coupled with Robbins’s choreography, did not simply interrupt the plot but contributed to advancing the story. These elements remain in the film, translated into the language of the screen. Nevertheless, a number
of scholars as well as both Arthur Laurents and Stephen Sondheim have since viewed the film as both racist and dated despite the film’s huge popular and critical success.\(^1\) For better or worse, the film industry transformed the stage production of *West Side Story* into a Hollywood musical, thereby adopting its own particular conventions.

*West Side Story* as a film fits into a particular niche within the film industry, as it represents an adaptation of an adaptation. This aspect applies to a number of examples within the genre of the film musical that adapt a stage musical that had been adapted from another work, such as a play or novel (e.g. *Oklahoma!*, *Porgy and Bess*, and *Kiss Me Kate*). My research seeks to foreground issues of adaptation that are often ignored in the scholarly literature concerning musicals that fit within this niche. Broadway’s *West Side Story* has been widely recognized as an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*.\(^2\) Joseph Swain notes that Arthur Laurents’s book “follows *Romeo and Juliet* even down to the transmutation of particular lines in spots.”\(^3\) Therefore, any discussion of the film version necessarily deals with several levels of adaptation: from *Romeo and Juliet* to *West Side Story*, and from *West Side Story* on Broadway to *West Side Story* in Hollywood. While my analysis will take into account and reference the first level of adaptation, it will focus on Mirisch Pictures’s film adaptation of the stage show by Robbins, Laurents, Sondheim, and Bernstein.

A number of salient issues can be drawn when approaching this film as an adaptation. In her book *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon defines a certain method of adaptation, which she terms “translation.” Engaging in the translation of one autonomous work into another

\(^1\) Chapter 1 includes a discussion of some of the problematic elements of the film, and chapter 4 deals with issues of race.

\(^2\) The collaborators themselves acknowledged the debt that they owed to Shakespeare’s original play.

involves “recoding [the work] into a new set of conventions as well as signs.” The move from Broadway to Hollywood requires many alterations due to not only the shift in medium but differing conventions based on factors such as audience, the star system, and economics. Film, when viewed as a “synthesis of all art forms,” uses its own visual and aural means in order to communicate. Therefore, the adapters made changes to some of the dialogue, lyrics, music, and dances in order to better suit the medium of film. Cinematic techniques also play a large role in how the stage show translates to film. Editing can affect the elasticity of both time and space as well as highlight certain characters or events. Furthermore, these and other techniques serve to make the “interior” thoughts and meanings of external events more explicit. Close-ups, flashbacks, the use of sound bridges, and other techniques help to simulate a world in which “external appearances are made to mirror inner truths.” In musicals, for example, music itself may serve as the “unverbalized subconscious.” West Side Story contains many examples where music (both instrumental and vocal) represents the inner thoughts or emotions of the characters. Tony’s euphoric “Maria” accurately portrays his “interiority,” aided by a number of cinematic techniques.

Literature Review

West Side Story has garnered a great deal of scholarly attention since it first premiered in 1957. The Broadway musical has earned a position as an innovative and influential work, and as such, it maintains an important place within the scholarly literature. West Side Story’s place in

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5Ibid., 35.
6Hutcheon discusses representations of the interior versus exterior. She claims that clichéd thought associates the “telling mode of engagement” with expressions of the interior while the “showing modes of engagement” with the exterior. However, Hutcheon asserts that filmic techniques allow for a more complete expression of the interior as well as exterior, (Ibid., 58-60).
7Ibid., 58.
8Ibid., 60.
film and film music literature, however, remains much more tenuous than in the realm of Broadway. Notably, works that focus on representations of race and gender also address this musical, in both its stage and film incarnations. A broader cross-section of the literature dealing with race and gender in film also aided me in considering how the film uses and even challenges stereotypes present in the original and magnifies them according to Hollywood conventions. *West Side Story* also turns up in works that focus on Shakespearean adaptations. All of these scholarly areas inform my own analysis of the movie musical.

In broad works that focus on American musical theatre, authors organize their research in a number of ways: topically, for example, or by genre, studying individual shows as representative examples in the development of the musical. For instance, Geoffrey Block and Joseph P. Swain spend an entire chapter on the analysis of *West Side Story*. On the other hand, in *The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical*, Mark Grant concentrates on the growth of the musical in light of changes in technology and music, and in writing the book and lyrics. He mentions *West Side Story* to illustrate a point throughout the work. However, he does not include an extended discussion of the production. Larry Stempel includes *West Side Story* in his article, “The Musical Play Expands,” as well as his recent book.

Using Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Oklahoma!* as a benchmark, Block devotes twelve chapters to individual shows; Chapter Twelve discusses *West Side Story* from its inception to an analysis of Bernstein’s score. Block presents this Broadway musical as extraordinary in its tight collaboration between Robbins, Laurents, Sondheim, and Bernstein. He begins with the original conception of the Shakespeare adaptation, detailing the altered versions as the artists began putting the show together. Although Laurents made significant changes from the original Shakespeare (including the fact that Maria lives at the end), as Block concludes, “the adaptation

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both provides dramatically credible and audible musical equivalents of Shakespeare’s literary
techniques and captures his central themes.”

After stressing the collaborative nature of West Side Story, Block focuses on Bernstein’s music. First, he discusses the antecedents and conceptual beginnings of the show’s music. Block observes the influence of Marc Blitzstein’s Regina on Bernstein’s music, especially in the song “Maria.” He also notes how Bernstein drew from his own work as he composed for this show. Most notably, Bernstein employed what Block terms “cross-fertilization” between West Side Story and Candide. Block then looks at Bernstein’s use of motives in the score to provide both unity and dramatic purpose. He lauds the music as “a complex score rich in organicism and motivic and other musical techniques associated with the 19th century European operatic ideal.” Furthermore, the motives serve to foreshadow dramatic events within the plot. For instance, the optimistic “Tonight” anticipates the three motives central to “Somewhere.”

In The Broadway Musical, Joseph Swain also spends an entire chapter on West Side Story. Entitled “Tragedy as Musical,” Swain shows how Bernstein’s music successfully enhances the show’s tragic drama. He claims that while the story remains faithful to Shakespeare’s work, West Side Story becomes “more social tragedy than Romeo and Juliet” as prejudice replaces chance or fate. The music plays a large part in expressing this “social tragedy.” He begins with an extended discussion of the Prologue, citing the use of the tritone and polytonality as indicative of the tragedy. The musical tension mirrors the story and its

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11 Ibid., 252.
12 Ibid., 246.
13 Ibid., 264.
14 Swain, 223.
15 Ibid., 230-34.
setting. Like Block, Swain also praises the use of musical continuity to portray the drama. He sees Bernstein’s motivic organization as a sense of “destiny in the music.”

Larry Stempel considers the operatic nature of *West Side Story* in “The Musical Play Expands” and *Showtime: A History of the Broadway Musical Theater*. The article looks at *West Side Story* as a “ballet-opera,” discussing the marriage of music and dance. He places the collaborators of *West Side Story* in the midst of others writing progressive musicals, including Frank Loesser and the team of Lerner and Loewe. Bernstein’s insistence on composing not only the songs but dance music as well, despite Broadway conventions, provided a “fluid integration of dance with [both] dialogue and song.” Stempel asserts that the “shifting combinations” of words, music, and dance created a “new Broadway poetic” that appealed to the imagination of the audience. In *Showtime*, Stempel discusses *West Side Story* in the chapter entitled, “Opera, In Our Own Way.” He distinguishes “Opera on Broadway” (e.g. *Carmen Jones, The Consul*) from “Broadway Opera” (e.g. *Porgy and Bess, Street Scene*). *West Side Story* fits into the realm of “Broadway Opera” due to Bernstein’s sophisticated music and a hybrid approach to the overall show, “enlarging the possibilities of the genre.”

*West Side Story* also figures with relative prominence in the *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*. It appears in two chapters, “Musical sophistication on Broadway: Kurt Weill and Leonard Bernstein” and “Choreographers, directors and the fully integrated musical.” Paul Laird and Bruce D. McClung compare Bernstein’s compositional style for the stage with that of Kurt Weill. *West Side Story* serves as an example based on its unification of musical styles down to

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16 Swain, 241.  
18 Ibid., 136-169.  
19 Ibid., 161.  
20 Ibid., 162.  
22 Ibid., 399.
the unit of intervals. In the other chapter, Laird discusses the musical in terms of the integration of music, and especially dance with plot. The stage production provides an example of sophisticated complexity and organicism on Broadway in both cases. The collection presents *West Side Story* as one of the pinnacles of American musical theatre, still worthy of discussion.

The popular musical has also been the subject of entire books, such as Keith Garebian’s *The Making of West Side Story* and Nigel Simeone’s *Leonard Bernstein: West Side Story*. Both books focus on different aspects in the creation of the musical. Garebian looks at the background and contributions of each of the contributors. He also traces the musical from its original conception of *East Side Story* through its development, and outlines the tryout and rehearsal process through the initial reception. Simeone adopts a more musical point of view. Although he also covers the genesis and reception of the musical, Simeone also looks at the music. He gleans a great deal of information from the manuscripts, including the working relationship between Bernstein and his orchestrators and songs that were written but eventually dropped. Each of these works provides valuable insight into the original stage production.

The film receives a mere cursory mention in broader film histories, if it is mentioned at all. Similarly, film music literature dismisses *West Side Story* as a movie musical. For example, in *American Film Music*, Darby openly omits movie musicals, deftly explaining that the treatment of music differs in this musically explicit genre. Therefore, the film is most often relegated to the smaller body of literature concerning the Hollywood musical. Even in this case,

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the film may receive only a superficial allusion. Ethan Mordden’s *The Hollywood Musical* and Rick Altman’s *The American Film Musical* mention *West Side Story* but do not spend much time analyzing or placing the film within their respective discussions.\(^{26}\)

Susan Smith’s *The Musical: Race, Gender, and Performance* examines the movie musical’s representation of both gender and race. In Smith’s opinion, the genre is ripe for this type of analysis because the musical presents “highly amplified, ritualized enactments of racial and gender roles.”\(^{27}\) She deals with the two roles separately, discussing race in the first half of the book and gender in the second. Although *West Side Story* contains both racial and gendered stereotypes, Smith discusses the film in the first section. She emphasizes that the film contains “racist hostilities between cultures with a study of the patriarchal oppression of women within the individual cultures.”\(^{28}\) Therefore, the performance of race and gender within this film are closely tied. Smith cites Anybodys and Anita as two strong women within their own cultures, each attempting to resist oppression in their own ways.

Frances Negrón-Muntaner’s article begins with the statement, “there is no single American cultural product that haunts Puerto Rican discourses” more than *West Side Story*.\(^{29}\) She details how Hollywood promoted a negative stereotype of Puerto Rican identity through this film. Negrón-Muntaner addresses the use of white actors to portray the Puerto Rican leads. The use of “brownface” on George Chakiris, the atrocious accents of both Chakiris and Natalie Wood, and the criminal nature of the Puerto Rican gang all perpetuate this stereotype. In the case of Maria, casting Natalie Wood not only brought star power to the film but allowed the audience to safely indulge in an interracial relationship with the knowledge that Maria was in

\(^{26}\)I will examine each authors’ treatment of the film in more detail in Chapter 1.


\(^{28}\)Ibid., 50.

\(^{29}\)Frances Negrón-Muntaner, “Feeling Pretty: West Side Story and Puerto Rican Identity Discourses,” *Social Text* 63 (Summer, 2000), 83.
reality a white woman.\textsuperscript{30} On the other hand, Puerto Rican actress Rita Moreno “paves the way to consider Puerto Rican – American identity as a distinct social and cultural formation” through her powerful performance.\textsuperscript{31} Negrón-Muntaner asserts that despite the fact that it purposely avoids authenticity, some elements of the film are able to speak to the Puerto Rican community.

West Side Story has also been included in works that deal primarily with Shakespeare and later adaptations, notably Shakespeare and the American Musical by Irene G. Dash. The book covers the musicals The Boys from Syracuse, Kiss Me, Kate, West Side Story, Your Own Thing, and Two Gentlemen of Verona. Dash addresses how West Side Story intersects with and departs from Romeo and Juliet. She notes how the collaborators took the poetry of Shakespeare and translated the expression into contemporary terms using song and dance. Dash also stresses the importance of the adapters’ decision to tie the story to a particular time and place and using social commentary rather than tragic fate drive the plot.\textsuperscript{32} This decision becomes the main departure from Shakespeare’s timeless play.

In Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings, Julie Sanders looks at the film as an adaptation of the Shakespeare. She mentions both the “politicized treatment” of the subject matter as well as the focus on youth and lack of central adult characters.\textsuperscript{33} Sanders describes how the mise-en-scène during the Prologue and Dance at the Gym sequence create meaning in the film. She also discusses the role of the dancing and how techniques, such as the blurring effect used when Tony and Maria see each other, affect how the story is told. Sanders’s

\textsuperscript{30}Negrón-Muntaner, 92.
\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., 93.
\textsuperscript{32}Irene G.Dash, Shakespeare and the American Musical, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 81.
\textsuperscript{33}Julie Sanders, “Shakespeare with a contemporary musical twist,” in Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings (Malden, MA: Polity, 2007), 75.
intermittent reference of cinematography in her analysis of *West Side Story* as a Shakespearean adaptation brings to light the different levels of adaptation within the film.

**Methodology**

While these secondary sources offer critical, historical, and analytic frameworks for studying *West Side Story*, they lack an analysis of the translation from theatre to film. Therefore, my research utilizes primary source material, including film scores in the Sid Ramin Papers, in order to fill that void.\(^3^4\) I approach the film as an adaptation in light of the Production Code and with an emphasis on representation of race, ethnicity and gender, utilizing a number of resources and methods during the course of my research. I base my comparison largely on both score material, including an orchestral score compiled from the 1985 Polygram recording that Bernstein conducted, as well as the original Broadway and film recordings. The Broadway and film scores available in the Sid Ramin Papers helped to fill in holes as well as confirm previous observations. Other primary source material includes contemporary newspaper reviews, which also helped to shape some of these conclusions. Of course, repeated viewings of the film itself working in tandem with primary and secondary sources provided much of my information, both musically and physically, since comparison of the Broadway production with the film forms the basis of this thesis.

Chapter 1 situates *West Side Story* within the history of the Broadway and film mediums. I begin with a brief discussion of the changing trends in American musical theatre and how *West Side Story* fits into this trajectory, addressing the innovations of this collaboration. Then, I shift to how the film version of *West Side Story* fits into film history. Chapter 2 deals with my

\(^{34}\) *West Side Story* Broadway and Film Scores, Flat Box 267-8, 701-5, Sid Paper Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library (henceforth RBML), Columbia University in the City of New York.
findings in comparing the two versions of *West Side Story*. I look at how changes, especially in the music, together with cinematic techniques reflect Hollywood conventions and alter the dramatic arc. Therefore, I arrange my analysis of the song topically rather than chronologically in an effort to echo the intentions of the filmmakers’ alterations. Chapter 3 discusses the film’s representation of women in relation to their ethnicity. Bernstein’s music becomes an important aspect in the performance of gender, especially in the interactions and adaptations of “America.” The marginalization of the Jets’ girlfriends in contrast to the strong-willed Puerto Rican women presents an example of how gender and race are tied in this film. Finally, Chapter 4 teases out the issues of masculinity and ethnicity in *West Side Story*. Importantly, these representations conform in part to the stage version of the musical while being affected by conventional images in Hollywood, especially from the 1950s.
Chapter 1

Finding the Niche

In discussing *West Side Story*, many authors conflate the film with the stage version, even as the many differences between the versions as well as their respective reception and legacy have often been neglected. Scholars, notably Joseph Swain and Geoffrey Block, may focus on the stage version but use the film at will, implying that together the original and its adaptation form a single text from which conclusions can be drawn. This approach is helpful in many ways, especially since the original theatrical production cannot be accessed; however, the film departs from the original enough to warrant a deeper study of its implications. My study will begin with how each version of the musical fits into the development of its respective medium: on the Broadway stage and Hollywood film. The film does indeed draw heavily on the original production and thereby on Broadway conventions, but it is also a Hollywood movie musical. As such, the Production Code and other studio conventions affected the filmmakers’ decisions as well as the need to cater to a larger and separate (though perhaps overlapping) audience.

On the Brink of a New Era

Musical theatre scholars often incorporate the early reception of the Broadway production in their discussions of *West Side Story*. A number of authors have acknowledged the mixed reaction that the show initially garnered, including Geoffrey Block, Ethan Mordden, Elizabeth Wells, and Humphrey Burton. Depending on their view, critics either lauded or disparaged the contributions of the collaborators. Nigel Simeone and Keith Garebian in particular include a good distillation of the varying reaction of critics.¹ *West Side Story*, directed

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¹Garebian, 134-37 and Simeone, 113-36.
by Jerome Robbins, opened on September 26, 1957 in the Winter Garden Theatre in New York City. Brooks Atkinson’s first sentence in his *New York Times* review on September 27th sums up both the shock and respect that many other reviewers shared, stating that “although the material is horrifying, the workmanship is admirable.”

While Atkinson observed much to praise in the musical, he found the tragic nature of the story disconcerting. Walter Kerr wrote a famously mixed review for the *New York Herald Tribune*. He focused on the nervous energy of Robbins’ choreography but takes time to complain that Bernstein “served the needs of the onstage threshing machine… dramatizing the footwork rather than lifting emotions into song.”

He also found the singing and acting in the show lacked both technical ability and energy.

*West Side Story* subsequently has held a prominent place in the history of the Broadway stage. With an initial run of 732 performances, the musical constituted a genuine hit (though not a smash). The collaboration between Robbins, Bernstein, Laurents, and Sondheim resulted in a highly integrated musical tragedy. Authors such as Joseph Swain, Geoffrey Block, Ethan Mordden, and others have lauded the show for its sophisticated music and use of dance. While *West Side Story* undoubtedly represents a unique work in the Broadway repertoire, in many ways, it simply synthesizes trends on the Broadway stage from the late 1920s, in the increasing integration of both music and dance typical of the mid-century American musical.

In order to place *West Side Story* within the development of the American musical, a brief discussion of “pre-integrated” musical theatre becomes necessary. In the early twentieth century, one of the most popular theatrical endeavors was vaudevillian theatre. With featured headliners, such as Al Jolson, Fanny Brice, and Bert Williams, vaudeville emphasized variety. The revue

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4*West Side Story* was the eighteenth longest running show from the 1920s through the late 1950s. In comparison, *My Fair Lady* and *Oklahoma!* ranked first and second with 2,717 and 2,212 performances respectively.
also flourished in the first decades of the twentieth century. Producers such as Florenz Ziegfield promoted spectacles consisting of popular songs, sketches, and acts generally unified by some theme. Meanwhile, book musicals abounded on Broadway. Not confined by the ideals of integration, musical numbers (incorporating dance) could often act as vehicles for the talents of the cast or a brief suspension from the plot. All of these musical theatre types influenced the creation of *West Side Story* to greater or lesser degree. The musical comedy number “Gee, Officer Krupke,” represents the most explicit example of this influence. Bernstein plainly calls for a vaudevillian style in the score, and the social commentary couched in stylized, slapstick comedy recalls the earlier theatrical form.

One of the most important trends in American theatre had been that of the so-called integrated musical. Scholars often cite Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Oklahoma!* (1943) as the first truly integrated musical. However, the works of a number of previous composers, lyricists, and book writers illustrated this impulse. The operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan influenced the development of the American musical and brought exposure to what is essentially the “integrated musical” to an American audience. Many authors hail Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II’s *Show Boat* (1927) as a landmark in the journey towards integration. For instance, Geoffrey Block marks *Show Boat* as an “unprecedented integration of music and drama.” Thirty years before *West Side Story*, Kern and Hammerstein’s musical couples a concern with songs connected to the plot with serious subject matter, including racial tension. Despite earlier attempts at integration, scholars consider the musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein to usher in the “era of integration.” *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel* (1945) attempt to tell the story not only through dialogue but extended musical sequences with song and dance. The preoccupation with

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6 Block, 20.
the “integrated” musical in the middle of the twentieth had a significant impact on all of the creators of West Side Story.

The move towards integration increased the role of dance, an aspect that had a particularly significant impact on West Side Story. Rodgers and Hart’s On Your Toes (1936) represented “the first time ballet was being incorporated into a musical-comedy book,” and Rodgers claimed that they “made [the] main ballet an integral part of the action; without it, there was no conclusion to our story.” Classically trained George Balanchine choreographed the main ballet, “Slaughter on Tenth Avenue.” Prior to coming to the United States, Balanchine had been a choreographer for the Ballet Russes. Involvement of ballet choreographers of Balanchine’s caliber marked an important development on the Broadway stage. Despite Rodgers’s assertion, authors have questioned the success with which the dance was integrated into the plot. Ethan Mordden contends that “it was, in fact, a ballet-within-a-play…not a part of the story told in choreographic terms.” Not until Agnes de Mille’s ballets for Rodgers and Hammerstein are plot and dance considered to work together successfully. De Mille added a psychological element to the dream ballet in Oklahoma! that “could function like Shakespearean soliloquy, illuminating not just the action but the consciousness of the characters.”

Carousel also contributed to the use of dance and movement to advance the plot; in particular, the musical begins with a “pantomime,” choreographed by de Mille that establishes the characters and their relationships without any dialogue.

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8For a fuller discussion of George Balanchine’s classical ballet and Broadway work in America, see chapters 11 and 12 in Jennifer Homans, Apollo’s Angels: a History of Ballet (New York: Random House, 2010).
9Qtd. in Block, 89.
10Grant, 263.
These developments, which Bernstein referred to as “plot-dancing,” influenced Jerome Robbins and his conception of how movement and dance work in West Side Story.\(^{11}\) As if an expansion of Carousel’s opening, West Side Story distills months of mounting tension between the Sharks and Jets into a few minutes of highly charged dance and pantomime that finally erupts into a street fight. Irene Dash compares the dance style with Shakespeare’s language, in that “hyperbole characterizes dance rather than language. Extravagance of movement provides insights into character” much in the same way that extravagant language reveals character in Romeo and Juliet.\(^{12}\) Other key events and psychological moments are told through movement rather than song in this musical. In Robbins’s conception, “dance told much of the story, dance revealed character, dance incarnated the tragedy.”\(^{13}\) Robbins develops the role of dance in West Side Story so that many of the key events in the plot are told choreographically. Laird credits this musical as marking “the full integration of dance into the Broadway musical and the true arrival of the choreographer-director.”\(^{14}\) As not only the choreographer but also director, Robbins assumed an enormous amount of control in the work’s development, working closely with the other collaborators and carefully crafting every movement throughout the show.

In addition to dance, the influence of opera on American musical theatre could be found in a number of works before Bernstein’s music for West Side Story. The status of George Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess sits on the fence between opera and musical. Gershwin himself labeled the work a “folk opera,” even using recitative over spoken dialogue. Rodgers and Hammerstein’s conception of integration also imported influences from opera. More than

\(^{12}\)Dash, 89.
\(^{13}\)Garebian, 14.
Oklahoma!, as Block asserts, “the artistic ambitions in Carousel are matched by a deeper relationship between music and drama” with extended musical sequences that advance the plot and reveal character. This trend continued with South Pacific (1949), a musical that Bernstein himself claimed tread “firmly on operatic ground.” Many consider Leonard Bernstein, shaped by his classical music training, to have brought a more sophisticated musical idiom to Broadway. Paul R. Laird and bruce d. mcclung align Bernstein with another successful composer, Kurt Weill. With works such as Knickerbocker Holliday (1938), Lady in the Dark (1941), and Street Scene (1947), Weill extended the musical language of the Broadway stage. Laird and mcclung assert that “Weill and Bernstein shared similar approaches to the Broadway musical, both making fresh use of vernacular musical styles and bringing a musical sophistication unusual for Broadway.”

This combination of the vernacular with a sophisticated compositional style is what Bernstein brought to the music of West Side Story.

Although the collaborators did not want to fall into the “operatic trap,” a number of scholars have since lauded the sophistication and operatic qualities of Bernstein’s music. Block calls Bernstein’s music “a complex score rich in organicism and motivic and other musical techniques associated with the nineteenth-century European operatic ideal.” Bernstein famously organized the score around the tritone; this dissonant interval, the diabolis in musica, signifies both the tension between the two gangs and the tragic love between Tony and Maria. It figures prominently in tense numbers, such as the Prologue and “Cool.” However, it also makes up the main motive connected with Maria’s name in Tony’s “Maria.” Unlike the unresolved

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15 Block, 163.
17 Laird and mcclung, 201.
18 Qtd. in Garebian, 30. Arthur Laurents, in particular, exhibited concern, exclaiming “I’m not writing any fucking libretto for any goddamned Bernstein opera!”
19 Block, 246.
tritone that signifies the hatred between the gangs, “Maria’s name resolves the tritone and thus simply but powerfully embodies the musical antithesis of the unresolved ‘hate’ motive.”

For Tony, Maria represents not only love but a resolution to the conflict between the two gangs and perhaps a means of escape from gang warfare in general. Block likens this type of motivic transformation to Wagnerian leitmotivs.

Authors compare other elements to operatic standards. For example, Swain calls the “Tonight Quintet” “the greatest operatic ensemble ever composed for the Broadway stage.” The sophisticated ensemble before the anticipated rumble includes a reprise of Tony and Maria’s love duet set against the more driving, violent music of the gangs and Anita’s sensual lines (musically related to the gangs). With the intertwining of five viewpoints told through corresponding music, the ensemble clearly fits into the tradition of the operatic ensembles of composers such as Verdi. Elizabeth Wells includes a discussion of other influences from the world of classical music, from Wagner and Berlioz to Stravinsky. Bernstein himself attempted to reinforce the association with the 1985 recording of West Side Story in opera stars which José Carreras and Kiri Te Kanawa sing the lead roles.

With both the increased role of dance and Bernstein’s music, a number of scholars consider West Side Story to defy classification. Wells points out that the show was “considered a new genre of musical theatre, unclassifiable by previous standards.” A number of musical theatre styles influenced the conception of this musical. It contains elements of musical comedy, ballet, and opera with a tragic story infused with social commentary. Bernstein summed up the

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20 Block, 270.
21 Block, 261.
22 Ibid., 248.
23 Elizabeth Wells, “West Side Story(s): Changing Perspectives on an American Musical” (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2004). See Chapter 2 for a complete discussion of these influences.
25 Ibid., 65.
issue in his West Side Story Log, writing “Chief Problem: to tread the fine line between opera and Broadway, between realism and poetry, ballet and ‘just dancing,’ abstract and representational.” According to Arthur Laurents, the musical “doesn’t quite fit into any category” and therefore they termed it “lyric theatre.”

The result of attempting to “tread the fine line” between these elements is that the musical contains aspects of each. In “The Musical Play Expands,” Larry Stempel posits, “West Side Story is clearly a work in the tradition of the musical play… Yet the translation is accomplished not by words or music, or in song or dance alone. It is achieved through shifting combinations of all of these according to a new Broadway musical poetic.” No matter how scholars label West Side Story, it exemplifies a culmination of the integrated impulse. On the other hand, Ethan Mordden points out that the musical tragedy can also be considered part of the “start of the next era, in which the musical play breaks away from the Rodgers and Hammerstein model into new structures.” West Side Story not only represented the product of the previous era but a push in the new direction.

In the minds of the creators, this musical represented the ultimate collaboration. In his recent book, Mainly on Directing, Laurents claims that the success of West Side Story stemmed from the fact that they were all “striving for the same goal” while working on the show. Similarly Bernstein gushed “I guess what made it come out right is that we all really

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27 Laurents, Mainly on Directing: Gypsy, West Side Story, and Other Musicals (New York: Knopf, 2009), 145. Although not explicitly stated, Laurents and the other collaborators may have been influenced by the French blending of opera and dance, termed “lyric theatre.”
28 Stempel, 162.
30 Laurents, 97.
collaborated; we were all writing the same show.” 31 Much of this feeling came from the creative process itself. Bernstein wrote not only the songs but the music that would accompany the dance. Working closely with Robbins for the dance music, Bernstein could cater to the needs of the ballet while unifying the score. Similarly, Sondheim not only collaborated intimately with Bernstein but with Laurents, deriving the lyrics’ language from the characters’ speech, sometimes even developing dialogue into song lyrics. Laurents encouraged the use of his book; Bernstein stated, “I’ve never seen anyone so encouraging, let alone generous, urging us, ‘Yes, take it, take it, make it a song.’” 32 Lyrics for the song, “Something’s Coming” came directly from Laurents’s original dialogue:

Tony: Now it’s right outside that door, around the corner: maybe being stamped in a letter, maybe whistling down the river, maybe –

Riff: What is?

Tony: (Shrugs) I don’t know. But it’s coming and it’s the greatest… Could be. Why not? 33

Authors have also conceived West Side Story as innovative based on its socially conscious, tragic subject matter. Stempel asserts that the musical “expanded the possibilities of what a Broadway song-and-dance show could do.” 34 Rodgers and Hammerstein had introduced serious subject matter in both Oklahoma! and Carousel. While both musicals included the death of a main character, Carousel went a step farther; Billy Bigelow hit his wife and committed suicide after a failed robbery and murder attempt. West Side Story took a full-blown Shakespearean tragedy and transformed it into social commentary. The collaborators took issues

31 Bernstein, Findings, 147.
33 From Block, 256.
34 Stempel, 160.
of race and juvenile delinquency in New York City and applied them to the story of the star-crossed lovers. Norris Houghton claims that the show is “conceived as a social document.”

Sondheim, however, has been quoted as saying that West Side Story is “about theatre.” He felt that the techniques used were the point of the show, and the plot, characters, and elements of social commentary were merely vehicles for the theatricality of the musical.

All of these elements come together to form a unique Broadway musical; yet the literature on West Side Story offers varying opinions about the impact of the work on subsequent theatre. Perhaps one of the most recognizable influences is the impact that the show had on Stephen Sondheim. Composer-lyricist Sondheim reluctantly co-wrote the lyrics when Bernstein realized he would not be able to handle all of the music and lyrics himself. Sondheim saw himself primarily as a composer and did not relish the idea of beginning his career on Broadway solely as a lyricist; however, Oscar Hammerstein II advised him to take a job in which he could work with “top-grade professionals.”

The advice proved to be sound as Sondheim sharpened his skills and learned from each of the other collaborators. Banfield contends that though Sondheim has shied away from the eclecticism that characterized Bernstein’s compositional style, “the musical scope of West Side Story first opened Sondheim’s eyes to many of the possibilities he has [sic] explored.” The most prominent of these is the use of motivic development and “dexterity in handling extended musical forms,” found in works such as Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street,

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36 Qtd. in Readings on West Side Story, edited by Mary E. Williams (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2001), 54.

37 Bernstein eventually gave Sondheim sole billing as lyricist because he said “that he had done so much of the lyric writing, certainly more than I had done, and some whole songs were all his.” Qtd. in Stephen Banfield, Sondheim’s Broadway Musicals (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 32.

38 Qtd. in Banfield, 32.

39 Banfield, 38.
Company, and A Little Night Music.\textsuperscript{40} As mentioned above, Sondheim drew heavily on Laurents’s book. Therefore, the songs revealed character in a meaningful way by developing motivations inherent in the script. This sophisticated lyric writing carried over into his own musicals throughout his career. Jerome Robbins also greatly influenced the later works of Stephen Sondheim. Robbins was known for asking “What is this show about?,” continually demanding that those involved search for the “thematic meaning” of the show.\textsuperscript{41} From this idea, Sondheim expanded upon the so-called “concept musical” where a central theme, presentation, image, or idea governed the elements of the musical rather than the plot.

West Side Story marks a pivotal moment in musical theatre, and it both reflected previous trends and helped to usher in a new era. In the beginning of The Making of West Side Story, Keith Garebian points out how the musical has been considered both the culmination of the impulse towards integration and the start of the “concept musical.”\textsuperscript{42} Ethan Mordden does not “see these shows [West Side Story and Gypsy] as climaxes of the Rodgers and Hammerstein era as much as the first strikes in the next era.”\textsuperscript{43} Furthermore, the role of Jerome Robbins in this musical also influenced later director-choreographers, such as Bob Fosse. Thus, it is useful to view the Broadway production of West Side Story as being on the brink of a new era, incorporating elements of the past while looking to the future. The liminal space that the musical occupies highlights its unique quality and status.

\textsuperscript{40}Swain, 363.  
\textsuperscript{41}Block, 278.  
\textsuperscript{42}Garebian, 11.  
\textsuperscript{43}Mordden, Coming Up Roses, 253.
A Hit Without a Home

The 1961 film *West Side Story* launched the musical from a reasonable success to blockbuster status. Even before its release, writers, such as Philip K. Scheuer of the *Los Angeles Times* claimed that “if any one production can restore Hollywood’s old-time glory, that one is *West Side Story.*” Once released in New York on October 18, 1961 and in Los Angeles on December 13th, the film did not disappoint. Bosley Crowther declares that the film is “nothing short of a cinematic masterpiece,” praising the directing of both Wise and Robbins, and Robbins’s choreography especially. He also mentions Natalie Wood, George Chakiris, and Rita Moreno as giving captivating performances in their respective roles. *West Side Story* went on to win ten Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

Although an enormous success for the time, the film lacks the influential status perceived in the Broadway version. Indeed, the film version holds a much more tenuous place in history than its stage counterpart. As a result, *West Side Story* maintains a relatively marginal role in the literature on Hollywood musicals. Indeed, the movie musical itself holds a rather niche place in film history not quite within the realm of broader film music scholarship. *West Side Story* may receive a small amount of attention in this broader area due to the sheer success of the soundtrack. The film soundtrack spent fifty-four weeks at the number one spot on the Billboard charts. Also, Sid Ramin, Irwin Kostal, Johnny Green, and Saul Chaplin won the Academy Award for Best Scoring of a Musical Picture due to their work on the film score.

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46Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins won Best Director. Awards for Best Supporting Actor and Actress went to George Chakiris (Bernardo) and Puerto Rican actress, Rita Moreno (Anita). Although the music also garnered recognition, the Oscar for Best Music, Scoring of a Musical Picture was received by those who worked on the music for the film, not Bernstein.
Perhaps the very uniqueness of *West Side Story*, with its blend of integrated musical, dance, and opera, disadvantages the work in surveys of the film musical. Prominent authors of the American movie musical, such as Ethan Mordden and Rick Altman, largely focus on the 1930s through the Rodgers and Hammerstein adaptations. Mordden, in *The Hollywood Musical*, considers the ‘30s to be the heyday of the film musical with abundant singing and dancing as well as stars such as Fred Astaire. Mordden spends less than a paragraph discussing *West Side Story*, going not much farther than mentioning the acting – Moreno garners praise while Wood’s performance is disparaged – and claiming that the filmmakers “intended to film the stage show with utmost fidelity.” Mordden does not back with claim up with any source but draws this conclusion from the fairly small changes relative to many other adapted film musicals (e.g. *Can-Can*). In *The American Film Musical*, Rick Altman analyses the structure and genre of movie musicals. He briefly refers to *West Side Story* within the realm of the “folk musical,” a subgenre for which the primary example is Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Oklahoma!*. Altman identifies focus on family as an important element in this generic category and claims that all of the elements “are borrowed from the American past and colored by a euphoric memory.” Altman goes on to outline a number of “rules” for a folk syntax, and it becomes clear that calling *West Side Story* a “folk musical” does not quite hold up. Altman seems to categorize *West Side Story* as a folk musical in part because it deals with a specific aspect of American culture in a uniquely American setting. The film does utilize the syntax of the folk musical as Altman lays it out; however, it simultaneously undercuts and even comments on the subgenre. This is not to say that *West Side Story* deconstructs the folk musical in the way that Robert Altman’s *Nashville*

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49 For a complete listing and explanation of these rules as well as how they apply to the film version of *Oklahoma!*, see pages 306-316 in the Folk Musical chapter of Rick Altman’s *The American Film Musical*.  

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does fifteen years later.\textsuperscript{50} Instead, \textit{West Side Story} begins to broaden the concept of the film musical, not truly fitting within existing subgenres of its time (as conceived by Rick Altman).

A number of what some have conceived as problems with the film potentially hindered its status within the discipline’s scholarship, problems summed up in what Laurents has called an “uncinematic, mangled, and also anti-Puerto Rican movie.”\textsuperscript{51} The lack of a single director may have produced inconsistencies that led Laurents to uncharitably label the film as “uncinematic.” He also pinpoints one of the primary issues within the film – the representation of the Puerto Rican characters, which I will deal with in Chapter 4. During negotiations, Jerome Robbins insisted that he not only choreograph but direct the film. The studio agreed with the stipulation that Robert Wise, an experienced Hollywood director, co-direct. The studio arranged for Robbins to direct primarily the dances while the Wise handled the rest. However, Robbins was notoriously difficult to work with and the two directors often did not see eye to eye. Also known for being a perfectionist and extremely demanding, Robbins caused the film to fall behind schedule and over-budget. The actors later recalled that Robbins was “unable to say print it” and would constantly re-work dances or ask the dancers to repeat them.\textsuperscript{52} Therefore, the studio ultimately fired Robbins, and Wise finished the film without him. Although he only completed directing a few numbers, including the Prologue and “Cool,” Robbins’s choreography was used throughout the film. Despite the problems, Laurents’s term “uncinematic” does not resonate with the film, which exploits the filmic medium through cinematographic and editing techniques.

\textsuperscript{50}Rick Altman discusses \textit{Nashville} in relation to the folk musical in pages 324-27.

\textsuperscript{51}In \textit{Mainly on Directing}, Laurents makes this statement when discussing the problems with the position of “Gee, Officer Krupke. The full statement follows, “In the uncinematic, mangled, and also anti-Puerto Rican movie, its [Krupke] position was shifted to the first act, which turned the gang even more into musical comedy chorus boys,” 167.

In fact, much of Laurents’s dislike stems from the differences from the stage production, making it “untheatrical” rather than “uncinematic.”

Another issue is one familiar to the movie musical in general when translated from the stage to the more intimate medium of film: song and dance. Graham Wood briefly addresses the perceived artificiality of spontaneous singing and dancing in film. In a musical driven so much by song and dance, the possibility for seemingly unnatural behaviors abound. More specifically, several of the dances may lose something in the translation to the screen. The use of location photography for some of the scenes, particularly the Prologue, not only necessitates changes in Robbins’s choreography but affects how the original dance steps appear to the audience. Rita Moreno expressed her belief that the Dance at the Gym sequence, particularly the “Mambo,” did not work as readily on screen as on the stage. Indeed, the competitive edge created by the simultaneous performance of the gangs in the stage version does not quite translate to the screen. The camera guides the viewer’s attention rather than the performers constantly competing for the audience’s attention. This is especially apparent when the two groups form dancing circles in which to show off. When watching the film, the audience loses the ability to choose which dancers to watch and ultimately decide for themselves which are the more successful.

The continued influence of the Motion Picture Production Code in Hollywood at the time also shapes the film version. The restrictions enforced by the Hays Code reflected the mores of the time, and Molly Haskell posits that “far from being a straitjacket imposed from without, the Production Code expressed, and reinforced, the instincts latent in the American psyche at its


\[54\] “West Side Memories.” Twenty-eight minutes into the documentary, Moreno discusses this number as especially difficult because Robbins had just been fired. She notes it was “a difficult number to film because its such a proscenium number.”
most romantic, puritanical, immature, energetic, and self-deluding.” However, Thomas Doherty notes that as the 1950s approached, “to a defiant cadre of critics, filmmakers, and moviegoers, the Code was no longer an infallible document fated to function in perpetuity. It was being questioned, taunted, and ignored.” Many films began to openly flout the strict rules outlined by the Code. With films such as the epic Giant (1956), the comedy Some Like It Hot (1959), and Hitchcock’s thriller Psycho (1960), Hollywood’s boundaries were more flexible during the filming of West Side Story.

The Code had begun to lose hold by the early 1960s although it did not officially end until replaced by the MPAA ratings system in 1968. During the ‘50s, the Code Administration revised the restrictions, including onscreen miscegenation, in an effort to maintain some semblance of authority in the film industry. The filmmakers could address many of the large issues present in West Side Story, such as gang violence and interracial relationships, with more freedom. On other hand, the Production Code still had some impact on the language and how sexual references could be made. For instance, some of the dialogue and lyrics were altered in order to eliminate any possible reference to profanity. Furthermore, the sexual relationship between Tony and Maria is only vaguely suggested. My analysis of changes made for the film will include salient examples of where and how the Code was most likely applied in order to appease the board.

As Linda Hutcheon mentions, a change in medium usually evokes a sense of hierarchy in the arts. Therefore, the film version of West Side Story represents the lowest rung in a

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57 Ibid., 319.
58 Hutcheon, 34.
hierarchy with *Romeo and Juliet* at its peak based on the change of medium from stage to film. Shakespeare’s play continues to merit study by theatre scholars, while a live performance may be only as good as the people involved in the production. The script for *West Side Story* adapts the Shakespeare and becomes a Broadway musical with all of its own conventions and expectations. Scholars hail the Broadway adaptation as a pioneering and well-executed piece of musical theatre, making it a legitimate source of study though perhaps less serious than its Shakespearean counterpart. Finally, the stage musical is adapted into a Hollywood movie musical. The film version holds less weight; it is either lumped together with the stage version, dismissed as simply a popular success, degenerated as racist and/or badly acted, or ignored altogether. This paper focuses on the transition from one medium to another and the changes incurred along the way without placing the different versions in some sort of artistic hierarchy.
Chapter 2
From Broadway to Hollywood

The film version of *West Side Story* maintains a strong connection with its original stage counterpart; nevertheless, the filmmakers made many alterations in the course of its development as a movie musical. The studio hired Saul Chaplin, Johnny Green, Sid Ramin, and Irwin Kostal to supervise the music for the film. While attempting to preserve Bernstein’s music, these men oversaw a number of changes to the music. Several of these alterations simply accommodated the change of medium. For instance, they omitted music that Bernstein had composed for the scene changes necessary for a stage show.¹ Other modifications may have been more important in regards to the process of adaptation; the film musicians cut, expanded, rearranged, and even omitted sections of Bernstein’s music throughout the work. These more significant revisions as well as adjustments made to the lyrics contain implications of differing conventions as well as a simple change of medium. In this chapter, I will analyze the alterations to the musical score, with a particular emphasis on the structural changes reflecting the requirements of the cinematic adaptation.

The Adaptation Process

Sid Ramin and Irwin Kostal had previously collaborated closely with Bernstein in orchestrating the original Broadway score. Bernstein was an accomplished orchestrator; however, he found that due to the sheer volume of the instrumental music and time constraints, the show needed to bring in Broadway orchestrators. Ramin summed up the situation, saying

¹These omissions include from Act 1: Scene 2, 3a (“Something’s Coming Chase); Scene 5, 7a (“America to Drugstore); Scene 6, 8a and b (“Cool Chase” and “Under Dialogue and Change of Scene”), and from Act II: Scene 2, 14a (“Change of Scene”); Scene 3, 15a (“Change of Scene”).
“Although he was a master orchestrator in the true classical tradition… the arduous demands of the theatre did not allow composers the necessary time to orchestrate and arrange their own music.”

Nevertheless, Bernstein remained involved in the orchestrating process. He provided detailed sketches for Ramin and Kostal. My study of the Broadway orchestral scores in the Sid Ramin Papers reveals that Bernstein checked the orchestrations and made detailed notes and corrections. With this level of involvement, Ramin and Kostal would have had a good knowledge of Bernstein’s preferences when re-orchestrating for the film version.

Ramin and Kostal honored much of the original intent in re-orchestrating and expanding for the film while also utilizing the extensive orchestral resources available in Hollywood. They had access to orchestras of around sixty members for each of the numbers (see Appendix A for a comparison of the instrumentation in the Broadway vs. the film version). Hollywood convention and budget allowed them to increase the number of instruments in some parts, particularly the string section. It also permitted the addition of instruments, such as the bass guitar, harp, and violas. A small write-up in the Los Angeles Sentinel reveals that jazz musicians Shelley Manne (drums), Red Mitchell (bass), and Pete Condoli (trumpet) joined the studio orchestra. These virtuosos provided expert back-up in a few of the numbers, including the Prologue, “Dance at the Gym”, and “Cool.” The “Mambo” actually calls for a solo “screamer” trumpet to ad-lib in an extension of the piece.

My study of the film scores showed the process for working on the music for the film. According to the dates marked on the film scores, Ramin and Kostal began by simply re-orchestrating the existing music. After an assessment of which pieces needed an expansion, they wrote and orchestrated new endings, lead-ins, and even inserts (see Appendix B

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2Qtd. in Simeone, 60.
3West Side Story Broadway Scores, Flat Boxes 701-02, Sid Ramin Papers, RBML, Columbia University.
4Ramin and Kostal used the term “screamer” for the higher, improvisatory trumpet part in the orchestral score.
5West Side Story Film Scores, Flat Box 704, Sid Ramin Papers, RBML, Columbia University.
for full list of completion dates). The full orchestral scores include inserts the “Blues,” “Mambo,” the “Rumble,” and “Cool” that are designed to accommodate the extended choreography.  

The filmmakers chose to use voice dubbing for the lead characters throughout the film to varying extents. Dubbing was a standard convention in Hollywood movie musicals, and West Side Story proved to be no exception. Of course, a number of issues arose out of the decision to use voice dubbers. Marni Nixon, a popular choice for Hollywood musicals, sang the role of Maria.  

However, Wood believed that her voice would be heard in the movie all throughout filming. She sang Maria’s songs, only to have the studio bring in Nixon without her knowledge. Jim Bryant sang the role of Tony since Richard Beymer was not a singer. While both Russ Tamblyn and Rita Moreno sang most of their songs, they were each dubbed for one song. Tucker Smith, who plays Ice in the film, provided Riff’s voice in the “Jet Song.” In a later interview, Tamblyn expressed regret that they chose to replace his original vocal track.

Although an accomplished singer, Moreno could not reach the low notes in “A Boy Like That;” therefore, Betty Wand, who sang for Leslie Caron in Gigi (1958), performed this song. Moreno lamented the necessity because she felt that Anita’s face and voice do not match in the song. 

Wand was not credited for her work and eventually sued for a portion of the soundtrack sales. 

Another Hollywood convention affects the film adaptation of West Side Story: the use of an overture and end credits. The Prologue to the film does not enter until after a nearly five minute Overture that previews some of the main themes or “hits” from West Side Story, such as

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6West Side Story Film Scores, Flat Box 705 and 267, Sid Ramin Papers, RBML, Columbia University. 
7Nixon sang for Deborah Kerr in The King and I (1956) as well as Audrey Hepburn in My Fair Lady (1964).
8“West Side Memories,” Tamblyn’s discussion at thirty-eight minutes and fifty seconds. 
9Ibid., Moreno’s discussion at thirty-seven minutes. 
the “Tonight Quintet,” “Maria,” and the “Mambo” from the Dance at Gym sequence. The larger orchestral forces are used to full effect in the Overture as it cycles through a number of important musical themes. The Overture provides an opportunity to attune the audiences’ ears to the Hollywood orchestra while familiarizing moviegoers with the film’s music. After the finale, the end credits continue the tragic feel with another reprise of “Somewhere.” During the end credits, the orchestra plays all but one of the songs (“One Hand, One Heart”) that focus on the relationship between Tony and Maria: “Somewhere,” “Tonight,” “I Feel Pretty,” and “Maria.” This may attest to the perceived commercial value of the aforementioned songs versus that of “One Hand.” Although all five songs have had an extended afterlife, the songs present in the end credits received more immediate attention via cover versions; “Somewhere” proved to be particularly successful as a single (see Appendix C). However, it also highlights the tragedy by omitting the song that focuses on the permanence of the couple’s union in conjunction with the mock marriage. The credits then end with the tritone theme that ends the “Finale,” even adding a third iteration to highlight the tragedy.

Expansion of the Prologue

The film preserves the centrality of dance. Dance on film, however, may lose much in the translation to what is perceived as a more realistic medium. Jerome Robbins co-directed much of the film and choreographed the dances; therefore, a great deal of the stage choreography remains. Robbins, along with Wise and co-choreographer Peter Gennaro, negotiated the changes required in the translation, necessitated by such factors as location photography. Two major alterations in lengthy balletic dances significantly impacted the instrumental music and indeed the overall tone of the show. The Prologue was greatly expanded for the film and represents the
only instance of Bernstein’s involvement in the film score. On the other hand, Ramin and Kostal omitted the fantasy “dream” ballet for the film, involving a significant cut from the score. In the next two sections, I will explore each of these sequences in terms of dance, music, and cinematography in order to draw conclusions about these substantial changes.

Ramin and Kostal split the Prologue into ten distinct parts designed to connect directly with the carefully choreographed images. The sequence includes over three minutes worth of more music and encompasses roughly ten minutes of the film. Bernstei{n} and the film’s music collaborators expand the Prologue by adding repeats of the Prologue’s own music, interpolating elements from the “Cool fugue,” as well as composing entirely new music. The expansion of this scene’s music serves to enhance the increased tension between the Jets and Sharks in very specific ways.

The original Prologue music does not appear until roughly two minutes into the film. For the first two minutes, a series of aerial shots of New York City are accompanied by distant whistles, intermittent drum patterns, and commonplace car horns. The whistles sound a motive that summons the camera and audience from afar (Ex. 1).

**Example 1: “Summoning” motive**

![Example 1: “Summoning” motive](image)

Disembodied snaps enter from somewhere outside of the frame. Finally horns enter the texture, echoing the softer whistles. The “summoning” motive crescendos and succeeds in drawing the audience in, as the camera zooms into a basketball court. A cut and another zoom reveal the

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11 Dramatic pauses in the music, particularly when the Sharks and Jets encounter each other, account for the extra screen time.

source of the previously non-diegetic snaps; Riff and the Jets lord over the neighborhood basketball court. Thus the musical collaborators use the “summoning” motive, which is based on the show’s central leitmotif and will come to signal the tension/hate between the two gangs, in order to introduce the setting and ultimately the “American” gang.

Bernstein interpolates music from the Cool fugue with the Prologue’s main theme as the Jets play a short game of basketball and then begin to dance for the first time (Exx. 2 and 3). At this point in the narrative, the Jets are secure in their domination over the basketball court and surrounding area. Motives from the “Cool” fugue weave together with the original Prologue music, and the Jets display “cool” behavior. The fugue motives here also foreshadow the later tragedy and loss of control. The sense of security and power that the Jets enjoy will not last. Significantly, Bernardo enters for the first time directly after this section. The music changes and incorporates the “summoning” motive which now signals tension. Significantly, the “Cool” themes appear again once the Shark gang begins to form and dance for the first time.

Example 2: Main Motives from the “Cool” Fugue Used in Prologue

a) 

\[ \text{Music notation} \]

b) 

\[ \text{Music notation} \]

c) 

\[ \text{Music notation} \]

\[ ^{13}\text{From this point forward, this motive will be referred to as the “tension” or “hate” motive.} \]
Example 3: Main Theme of Prologue

One more significant expansion occurs later in the Prologue, as Baby John runs from the now fully-formed Sharks gang. Bernstein composed new music for this dramatic climax. A quick tempo, prominent brass section, and dissonant harmonies characterize this music. The newly-composed music continues through Baby John’s desperate attempt to flee and subsequent beating. The Jets answer Baby John’s desperate call, and the rest of the music is clearly derived from earlier Prologue themes. The music that accompanies this street fight also foreshadows Tony’s impassioned killing of Bernardo during the Rumble. However, the orchestration is fuller and the tempo has been significantly increased. The frenzied music mirrors the brawl that has erupted between the Jets and the Sharks.

At several points throughout the Prologue, the music stops to create meaningful silences that often signal conflict as the Jets struggle to maintain their status. The music halts when a basketball accidently gets thrown into the midst of the Jets. As the boy comes to retrieve the ball, this becomes an opportunity for Riff to assert his authority. The sense of power carries through the next brief silence, which occurs when the Jets first encounter Bernardo. The moment is quickly overcome, and the Jets laugh off Bernardo’s seemingly non-threatening presence. The next musical silence, however, signals the growing force of the Puerto Rican gang. Bernardo and the Sharks interrupt the Jets’ basketball game; this silence is much longer than the previous encounter. Although the Jets successfully eject the Sharks from the playground, the struggle for power has clearly become more difficult. The final use of silence
occurs directly before the climactic chase of Baby John and street fight. Here, Bernardo catches Baby John defiling the Sharks’ graffiti. The pause indicates that the tables have turned.

Movement complements the increasingly complex and aggressive soundscape. Small gestures characterize the opening of the Prologue. The Jets casually stroll about the playground. Diegetic snaps and small musical gestures punctuate the Jets nonchalance. Almost two minutes after the horns initially sounded, Riff performs the first dance move. The rest of the gang emulates his casual movement before dancing in earnest. Bernardo’s entrance interrupts the Jets’ exuberant dance. This initial meeting marks the beginning of a choreographed turf battle between the Puerto Rican gang and the “American” gang. The Sharks get their say in the display of power through dancing before once again the Jets take precedence (Fig. 1b.). It is notable that the screen time devoted to asserting the growing prominence and relative power of the Sharks lasts only a minute, significantly less than the Jets. In fact, the Jets dominate the frame over the Sharks, re-appropriating the minute spent on the rival gang. A light hearted string theme signifies the Jets’ triumphant, yet short-lived, belief that they reign over the perceived territory. Visually, this theme accompanies the energetic dancing and leaps of the Jets, which culminates in a choreographed “dance-basketball” game (Fig. 1a.).

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14Although the Jets attempt to present themselves as wholly American, many of them are actually of foreign descent as well. The Shark gang recognizes this and tries to draw attention to their ethnic roots by using derogatory terms, such as “Mick” and “Pollack.”
Figure 1: Competing for Power Through Dance

1a. The Jets’ dance-basketball game  
1b. The Sharks’ power grows

However, the lighter mood is short-lived, and the tension builds throughout the remainder of the Prologue. Increasingly, the opening theme, heard in the beginning as a summons, indicates the growing conflict between these two groups. Physically, the hostility escalates as Action fights with an anonymous Shark. The Shark spits at Action after the latter has thrown him to the ground. This spit ushers in a fast-paced, jazz-inspired section in which the Jets and Sharks run around, chasing each other and what might be called dance-fighting. After the Sharks chase Baby John, dance-fighting no longer embodies the conflict – the actors employ actual stage fighting here. Only the entrance of the police ends the violent street fight. The movement in the Prologue escalates from tiny gestures to fighting in the streets, dramatizing the growing rivalry between the “American” and Puerto Rican gangs.

Cinematic techniques further enhance the film version of the Prologue. Location photography distinguishes the opening of the film from the stage version. The cinematography takes full advantage of the setting. The helicopter shots of the city establish New York City as

15Roughly four minutes remain in the Prologue.
an important part of the film, showing Yankee Stadium, Central Park, and the upper west side tenement district (now the location of Lincoln Center) before focusing in on the playground. Once the Prologue begins in earnest, the directors often use cuts to play with time and space. For example, the Jets leap into the air only to land in a different spot within the city. The first sequence distills months of rising hostility between the Jets and Sharks. Cuts allow the characters to navigate fluidly the relatively large territory and length of time in a matter of minutes. As the pranks and fighting intensify, the number of cuts used to jump around the city also increases. The cinematography expands the drama to create a visually intense and uniquely cinematic experience.

The nearly ten-minute Prologue dramatizes through music and movement the hostile relationship between the Jets and the Sharks. The two aspects remain intimately tied throughout the entire sequence. The music moves from a mere whistle to small musical gestures that become themes, and culminates in a dense, aggressive orchestral background. Similarly, the movement begins with snaps, increases to small dance moves that develop into full-blown dances, and concludes with a brawl. The visual and aural elements come together building the tension needed for the plot. Furthermore, they work together constructing not only the landscape but the soundscape for the rest of the film. The music and dance effectively train the audience’s expectations for West Side Story. Throughout the Prologue, the viewers become used to the possibly shocking sounds and violent movement that characterize the film.

**Omitting the Dream Ballet**

While the Prologue was greatly expanded for the film, the filmmakers chose to cut another dance section, the “Somewhere” ballet, entirely. Instead, it becomes a duet between
Tony and Maria that represents the culmination of their romantic progression from love-at-first-sight to tragedy. In the stage production, a ballet sequence depicting the perfect, imaginary place in which Tony and Maria can be together dominates the scene. The film omits the ballet and the music that accompanies it. The song, transformed into the movie duet, is sung by an anonymous “Girl.” Other than the fact that the solo becomes a duet, the core of the song remains otherwise untouched. The omission of the ballet results in a much more personal scene between Tony and Maria. Instead of seeking external solace, they turn to each other for comfort. Nevertheless, a set of conditions has been imposed upon their relationship. Although they dream of “somewhere” they can live in peace together, it has become clear that the place they dream of is not their reality.

Without the ballet, the large instrumental dance numbers remain in the realm of the gang rivalry. The Prologue sets up the expectation that the contention between the Jets and Sharks will develop through dance. The highly charged “Mambo” during the Dance at the Gym sequence continues this expectation. The “Cha-cha” and “Meeting Scene” do interrupt the competition; however, this proves to be more indicative of the milieu that the lovers find themselves entrenched in rather than a suggestion that they will be able to overcome it. Also, the stage clears of most of the dancers and the instrumental forces are diminished during the more intimate scene. The instrumental “Rumble” marks the peak of hatred between the two gangs, which results in the deaths of Riff and Bernardo. Even the musical numbers “America” and “Cool,” which involve a large amount of dancing, are marked by the rivalry in some way. The inclusion of the ballet in the stage production provides for a dance space in which the tragedy can be overcome for a time, even if it is only a dream. The stage ballet posits a utopian world
where different backgrounds do not matter and love can thrive in spite of insurmountable obstacles.

While fantasy ballet in the stage production follows directly in the footsteps of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals, the decision to omit the ballet separates West Side Story from movie musicals in the 1950s that included ballet sequences, such as Rodgers and Hammerstein’s Oklahoma! (1955). The film’s omission of the ballet may indicate a desire to differentiate this movie musical from the Rodgers and Hammerstein model. In a 2009 review in Variety, Todd McCarthy states his opinion that the ballet is “an odd and seemingly unnecessary homage to the Agnes de Mille tradition in what is already a dance-heavy show.”16 The “Somewhere ballet” would interrupt the tragic momentum of the film much more than the duet. Joseph Swain laments that “both choreography and stage directions paint the lovers’ dream as a sort of paradise, for this is quite untrue to the tragic plot and denigrates the pathetic loss at the end.”17 The song does what the ballet cannot; it depicts Tony and Maria’s desire to simply be left alone in their love. Swain points out that the song “speaks nothing of harmony between races or the perfect society…It is the musical expression for Tony and Maria’s simpler dream.”18

Reordering Songs as a Means of Maintaining a Tragic Trajectory

The film version of West Side Story reorders some of the songs in such a way that changes not only the overall structure of the musical numbers but the dramatic structure as well (see Appendix D for the order of songs in each version). In moving specific songs, the filmmakers build and sustain tension as well as maintain a tragic trajectory. The song order in the stage version allows for a certain amount of release after the Rumble, via “I Feel Pretty” and

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17 Swain, 253.
18 Ibid., 253.
“Gee, Officer Krupke.” The film moves these songs to before the tragic fight, eliminating their original function to relieve tension. In this section, I will look at the ways in which the new order of songs impacts the characters and dramatic arc of the film.

The reordering of songs impacts the audience’s experience of the progression of the relationship between Tony and Maria. In the stage version, the Balcony Scene occurs directly after Tony sings “Maria.” The film, however, delays the subsequent meeting by interchanging this scene with the showstopper “America,” which reminds the audience of the conflict and gives the Sharks a voice. Therefore, the audience must wait to see further development of the star-crossed lovers’ relationship. The order in the stage production focuses more on Tony and Maria’s relationship. Immediately after Tony sings of his infatuation, his desires are fulfilled. The film delays Tony’s gratification, and by extension that of the audience. After the Rumble, the “Somewhere” duet is the next substantial musical number. The recent deaths of Tony’s best friend and Maria’s brother haunt the more intimate version of this scene. The tragedy is highlighted without “I Feel Pretty” as a buffer.

The filmmakers’ decision to move the position of “I Feel Pretty” impacts how the audience views Maria and experiences the tragedy (Appendix D). In the stage production, “I Feel Pretty” opens the second act, after the Rumble. Blissfully unaware of Bernardo’s death at the hand of Tony, this placement shuts Maria “out of the world in which the ‘real’ and serious drama unfolds.” Her character, therefore, seems detached from the tragic plot and even superficial at this point. The film moves this light song to before the Rumble, and even before the young lovers’ mock marriage. Therefore, the excitement expressed through the song is not disappointed but fulfilled. Furthermore, the new position maintains the tragic trajectory of the

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19 A fuller discussion of the relationship between Tony and Maria, including the songs “Tonight,” “One Hand, One Heart,” and “I Feel Pretty” can be found in chapter 3.

20 Wells, 162.
plot. In the place of “I Feel Pretty,” Maria waits for Tony on the roof of her settlement house after the Rumble. She does not sing but dances simple, balletic steps to the “Cha-cha” in long shot. Although the music and dance becomes increasingly exultant, Maria does not focus on her looks but remembers her meeting with Tony. Dramatic irony informs both versions. However, the film shortens the audience’s anticipation as well as removing an element of tragic irony from “I Feel Pretty.”

One of the most discussed changes made for the film was the decision to switch the comedic “Gee, Officer Krupke” with “Cool” (Appendix D). A number of people, including the original collaborators, have expressed their opinion in regards to the switch. In the interviews that accompany the DVD special edition, Stephen Sondheim asserts that he preferred “Krupke” before the Rumble, as in the film, because it was unrealistic to have a comedic number after the deaths of Riff and Bernardo.21 However, he retracted his original opinion after seeing the film, stating that the song “works wonderfully in act II on the basis of its ‘theatrical truth’ rather than its ‘literal truth.’”22 Arthur Laurents, who did not work on the film, cites the switch as one of the reasons that the film is an “uncinematic, mangled” version of the story.23

No matter the opinion, the decision to change the order of the two songs alters how the audience experiences the narrative. In the stage production, “Gee, Officer Krupke” offers a respite from the tragedy coupled with biting social commentary. The film presents no such respite; instead, inserting “Cool” heightens the tensions that lead to yet another death. The alteration (along with moving “I Feel Pretty” to before the Rumble) in fact manipulates the audience to experience the tragedy on a different level. Sondheim asserted that West Side Story

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21West Side Memories,” Sondheim discusses this point at about twenty-three minutes.
22Quoted in Block, 254.
23Laurents, 167.
was a theatre piece “about theatre.” The placement of “Krupke” in the original adheres to this viewpoint. Inserting a vaudeville-inspired number after the Rumble employs the typical device of comic relief used in musical comedy. Perceived as a more realistic medium, the filmmakers may have considered this theatrical device inappropriate for cinema. The film, therefore, focuses on the tragedy of the story. The convention of comic relief would seem even further out of place since Wise wanted to convey an impending impression of doom. The use of “Cool” in its place continues the tensions that both led up to the Rumble and are sustained by the deaths of the gang leaders.

Switching “Krupke” and “Cool” also produced an interesting side effect. It resulted in the creation of the character appropriately named Ice as well as the reduction of Action’s character. Ice, played by Tucker Smith, replaces the character Diesel from the Broadway production, and much of his character draws from the original. In the beginning, the character does not deviate much from Diesel’s lines and even takes on his role as the initial fighter for the Rumble. The change in his character comes about subtly and can first be perceived in “Gee, Officer Krupke.” Unlike Diesel, Ice does not participate in the antics of the rest of the gang. He stands aside during this comic song, simply watching the role play in which the others engage. This subtle display of restraint alludes to the more serious role that Ice will assume after the death of Riff. Of course, Ice does not come into his own as a character until the song “Cool.” Conversely, Action loses his solo opportunity as the front man for “Krupke.” Since Riff has not yet died and remains the leader of the Jets, he initiates the number. The hot-headed Action also would not have been an appropriate choice to lead “Cool;” therefore, the creation of a “cool” character became necessary.

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24 West Side Memories, ” quote at two minutes and thirty seconds.
“Gee, Officer Krupke” does not sustain any major musical alterations in the film; however, examining the performance does provide interesting insight into the filmmakers’ approach. In its new position, “Gee, Officer Krupke” becomes a comic vehicle for Russ Tamblyn. Unlike in the “Jet Song,” Tamblyn did his own singing for this song. Known primarily for his athletic dancing, Tamblyn presents one of the final moments of levity in the film. The song’s lyrics change at times in order to present a commentary at least lacking in swear words. For instance, any mention of drugs in the song goes untouched; Riff sings of “junkies,” “drunks,” and “marijuana.” However, the swear words present in one verse must be removed. In the stage production they read: “My father is a bastard, My ma’s an S.O.B. My grandpa’s always plastered, My grandma pushes tea.” In the film this line becomes: “My daddy beats my mommy, My mommy clobbers me. My grandpa is a commie, My grandma pushes tea.” Side-by-side comparison of these lines reveals that the language, not the content, of this song required editing. By the 1950s, the Code allowed regulated use of language such as hell and damn but not much other vulgar words or phrases. Doherty also explains that the ban on illegal drugs had been lifted, though “the restrictions on crime scenarios were somewhat tightened.” Therefore, perhaps the role of this song as a vehicle for social commentary, condemning and not condoning these behaviors, saved it from further censorship. West Side Story came at the end of the Production Code era, at a time when films began to explore previously banned subjects more and more. Therefore, cursory language changes would conform to the Code during a tumultuous time at the end of Classical Hollywood’s heyday.

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26Tucker Smith (“Ice”) sang Riff’s part in the “Jet Song” only.
27Russ Tamblyn appeared as Gideon Pontipee in the film version of Seven Brides for Seven Brothers, demonstrating his considerable dancing abilities.
28Doherty, 324.
Like “Krupke,” the music in “Cool” is not substantially different. The function also remains the same but the piece becomes a cinematic entity. Robbins directed this musical scene before the studio fired him, and several of the dancers recall this number as the most grueling in the entire film. Characteristically, Robbins strove for perfection not only from the dancers’ steps but in highlighting the movement through cinematography. In the film, “Cool” takes place in an empty garage. The few cars present serve to light the Jets as they dance out their frustrations. The camera constantly changes position, sometimes showing the dance as a whole while only focusing on certain characters or body parts at others. The editing intensifies the emotional impact. For example, a number of cuts and quick pans highlight the section when the characters punctuate the music with exclamations of “Crazy,” “Cool,” and “Go!” Like the stage production, the focus is on Robbins’s choreography. In the film, however, the camera guides the audience to the particular moves or characters that should be followed as well as the moments in which they should feel the tensest.

Changes made for the film *West Side Story* reflected the change in medium, from stage to cinema. In many ways, the filmmakers catered to Hollywood conventions, the mass audience of cinema, and the declining Production Code. Robbins and Wise, along with Ramin and Kostal, also made a number of large order alterations that affected the film version in meaningful ways. The choice to expand the Prologue, omit the “Somewhere” ballet, and reorder several songs impacts the audience’s experience of the social commentary and tragic romance. Cinematic technique enhances these changes, exploring the possibilities of film. As such, *West Side Story* transforms from a singularly theatrical work into a cinematic entity – a transformation that influences the ethnic and gender representation of the characters as well.

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29a.“West Side Memories.” An extended discussion of “Cool” begins at about twenty-seven minutes.
Chapter 3

Feminine Space and Performance of Ethnicity

Laura Mulvey defines, what she calls, the “three different looks associated with cinema:” the camera, the audience, and the characters.\footnote{Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” in \textit{Feminism and Film Theory}, Constance Penley, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1988), 68.} It is the “complex interaction” of the three looks that results in the fetishized portrayal of women that tend towards their depiction as innocent madonnas or sexual objects.\footnote{Ibid., 69.} In many ways, the camera as well as the male characters in \textit{West Side Story} guide how the audience views or experiences the “to-be-looked-at-ness” of the different female characters.\footnote{Ibid., 63.} The images of Maria and Anita in particular reinforce stereotypes found in mid-twentieth century film. The cinematography works together with dialogue, costuming, and songs to portray Maria as naively attractive. On the other hand, Anita emerges as a feisty, sexy woman. The depiction of the two lead female characters corresponds with popular stereotypes (innocent virgin and spitfire) of women in film. My analysis will explore how cinematic techniques combine with musical and other elements, including changes in dialogue made by screenwriter Ernest Lehman in ways that both utilize and challenge these stereotypes as applied to Maria and Anita, as well as the other women in the film.

Although much of my analysis assumes the heterosexual male spectator, the fact that the creators of \textit{West Side Story} were all homosexual men must be acknowledged. In fact, Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Elizabeth Wells introduce elements of a queer reading in their respective works; Wells calls \textit{West Side Story} “a glorious celebration of men.”\footnote{Elizabeth Wells, 151.} The role of dance and sheer screen time that the two gangs receive may be interpreted to acknowledge the presence of gay male spectator. In fact, \textit{West Side Story} differs from many mid-century musicals where men are
“defined in relation to women; they are secondary. Women sing more (and more interesting) songs; they take up more stage space.”5 The opposite seems to be the case in this musical; even the lead female characters are defined in relation to the men. This results in a marginal space for women within the stage production, and subsequent film, that becomes an important aspect when exploring their representation.

As discussed earlier, the issue of gender is intimately tied to race in this musical. Jerome Robbins, Leonard Bernstein, Arthur Laurents, and Stephen Sondheim highlighted the difference between the Puerto Rican Sharks and the white “American” Jets in their production. Like their male counterparts, the female characters are defined primarily by their race. The two leading female characters are Puerto Rican, and their femininity is often identified at least in part in terms of their ethnicity. Their speech, music, dance, and even dress signify them as distinctly Puerto Rican women, even as Maria and especially Anita express the desire to assimilate into “American” society. Unlike the male gang members, the girls from different ethnic backgrounds rarely, if ever, interact. Instead, the women perform according to (or against) the prescribed views of their gender within their particular societies. This chapter will therefore treat the film’s representations of the women in West Side Story in relation to their identity as Puerto Rican or white “Americans.”

Defining Maria Through Love and Beauty

Like Juliet in Shakespeare’s play, Maria enters only after the audience has become familiar with her future love, Tony, in the song “Something’s Coming.” From her first appearance, Maria is depicted as the embodiment of virginal purity. In the film, the scene opens

with a close-up on Maria’s face. The entire exposition of Maria’s character centers around the alterations of her old communion dress, which is white, for the forthcoming dance (Figure 3a. and 3b.). Maria first implores her confidante Anita to lower the neckline. When the more experienced woman refuses, Maria proceeds to beg her to dye it red.⁶ Once again Anita denies the younger girl, and Maria is destined to meet her love in white. Negrón-Muntaner posits that the emphasis on white stresses not only Maria’s sexual purity but that she is still “untouched by American culture and uncontaminated by racism.”⁷ Therefore, this short scene sets up Maria as a paradigm of youthful innocence.

The setting of this scene takes place within the specifically female space of a bridal shop. The film’s dialogue makes explicit the fact that the shop is within the feminine sphere when Bernardo and Chino arrive. This brief dialogue indicates that the shop is for women only, making it uncomfortable for men to enter. A tiny change from the stage production highlights this (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Bridal Shop Dialogue in Original Script vs. Film**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Script:</th>
<th>Film Version:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria: Come in, Chino. Do not be afraid.</td>
<td>Maria: Come in, Chino. Do not be afraid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chino: But this is a shop for ladies.</td>
<td>Chino: But this is a shop for ladies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernardo: Our ladies.</td>
<td>Anita: We won’t bite you ‘til we know you better.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁶I will discuss this scene later in the paper, focusing on the important aspects of Anita’s character that comes out of her introduction.

⁷Frances Negrón-Muntaner, 94.
In the stage version, Bernardo counters Chino’s hesitance with the possessive response “Our ladies;” the film’s slight change removes Bernardo’s implication that he can navigate the women’s space because these women belong to him. Instead, Anita asserts her authority in a sassy, playful manner with a hint of sexual tension by teasing Chino with the statement, “We won’t bite you ‘til we know you better.” Thus established as a space ruled by women, the bridal shop becomes one of the primary settings that Maria can safely occupy without Tony.

**Figure 3: Anita vs. Maria in the Bridal Shop**

3a. 3b.

3c. 3d.
After the bridal shop scene, Maria’s musical self seems to exist only in relation to Tony; even “I Feel Pretty,” the first song that Maria sings without Tony, refers directly to her love for him. Surrounded by women in the bridal shop, Maria sings without Tony for the first time. The scene opens with Maria in mid-shot, trying on various hats in the mirror. As the dialogue between Maria, Rosalia, and Consuelo begins, the love struck Maria continues to “doll” herself up. The ensuing song, “I Feel Pretty” provides an extension of the visual focus on looks. While Negrón-Muntaner posits that “Maria only feels pretty when a white man, Tony, sees her,” Natalie Wood’s performance in the film suggests that Maria feels pretty as soon as she puts on her party dress. Nevertheless, Maria’s happiness manifests as a feeling of prettiness, and the cause of her happiness is not only a man but a white “American” man. Her exultation in Tony’s love reflects her ultimate goal to become Americanized. The Spanish guitar and use of the tambourine in the music keep Maria within the realm of the “Hispanic.” However, the music notably takes on a more explicit “Spanish” sound when the other girls sing. This is exemplified by the addition of castanets and highlighted in the film when Maria performs a pseudo-flamenco style dance. Despite the marginally “Hispanic” sounding music, the lyrics directly reflect Maria’s desire to be a “young lady of America.” Sondheim included lyrics about Miss America that imply this position would be “the highest pinnacle that she could reach.”

Maria’s other solo song, “I Have a Love,” follows Anita’s angry and passionate “A Boy Like That.” The camera focuses on a close-up of Maria as she interjects “Oh no, Anita no!” Here, the film makes a significant cut; Ramin and Kostal remove the duet between Anita and Maria that links their songs, morphing Anita’s diatribe into Maria’s love song. Interestingly, this

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8 Negrón-Muntaner, 95.
9 Wells, 157.
cut does not appear in the film scores at Columbia University. Ramin and Kostal simply reorchestrated the entire song, and the decision to cut the duet seems to have come later.

Example 4: Maria’s Transition from “A Boy Like That” to “I Have a Love”

In the film, Maria sings a brief section that provides a transition into “I Have a Love” (Example 4), suggesting that love quickly trumps all else. Maria defines herself as Tony’s lover to Anita. Although the audience has not seen her as an independent woman throughout the entire movie, Maria explicitly admits that she is no longer just herself. Throughout the song, the camera cuts between the two grief-stricken women. The shots catch both Maria’s emotion and Anita’s reactions. Significantly, the light falls on Maria’s face as she sings of her devotion. The force of that love convinces Anita, and they finish the love song together.

10.“A Boy Like That/I Have a Love;” West Side Story Film Scores, Flat Box 704, Sid Ramin Papers, RBML, Columbia University.

11.The cut encompasses the last beat of measure 45 through the first beat of 62.
Cinematic technique helps to define the character of Maria in relation to her lover. During love scenes, the two most often share the frame (frequently in a close embrace). At other times, the camera appropriates Tony’s adoring gaze. The “Tonight” duet offers an example of how the camera guides the audience to see Maria through Tony’s eyes (Figure 4). Wise uses a mixture of close-up counter shots (a style of editing that implies characters are looking at one another by alternating shots of their faces) and mid-shots with Tony and Maria looking at one another rapturously (Figure 6c. and 6d.). As each begins to sing their verse, a close-up is used on the other’s face in order to portray the reaction before sharing the frame.

**Figure 4: Images of Maria During the “Tonight” Duet**

4a. 4b.

The camera lingers on close-ups, which seem to have no other purpose than to marvel at the beauty of Maria/Natalie Wood (Figure 4a). Therefore, Tony and the camera both guide the audience to see Maria as most beautiful during the moments she appears most in love.

While striking, close shots are not the only means by which the camera assumes Tony’s point of view. The end of the same duet shows Maria at the top of the fire escape (Figure 4b). During the dialogue before the final verse, the space is used to separate Tony and Maria. Tony
has descended the fire escape to leave, and the two finish their conversation looking through the stairs or railing. Maria, in particular, looks trapped as she peers at Tony through the prison-like bars. The couple sings the last verse apart as Tony gazes up at Maria from the ground level. At the final utterance of “tonight,” it cuts to his point of view, and the audience remains aware that Maria is reaching out to Tony. A repetition of the final three chords further prolongs the moment. These chords, which only sound once in the original score, can be heard three times in the film and allow the camera to linger on the image of Natalie Wood. The cinematography enhances the characterization inherent in Maria’s music: she exists in the film as an extension of the relationship with Tony.

Other intimate scenes and musical numbers between Maria and Tony further reinforce the beauty of Natalie Wood as Maria. The “Meeting Scene” occurs directly after the “Cha-Cha,” during which Tony and Maria dance accompanied by three other couples. The “Cha-cha” music remains entirely intact. However, an interesting change of dialogue occurs in the course of the scene (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Maria and Tony’s Meeting**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage version:</th>
<th>Film version:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria: My hands are so cold. <em>(He takes them in his)</em> Yours, too. <em>(He moves her hands to his face)</em> So warm.</td>
<td>Maria: My hands are cold. <em>(He takes them in his)</em> Yours, too. <em>(Tony moves her hands to his face)</em> So warm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony: Yours, too.</td>
<td>Tony: So beautiful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria: But of course. They are the same.</td>
<td>Maria: Beautiful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The dialogue in the original script simultaneously confronts and dismisses the issue of ethnicity in the minds of Tony and Maria. Maria’s declaration that “they are the same” relates to the audience that this love transcends their difference while simultaneously foreshadowing “One Hand, One Heart.” The film sidesteps this declaration and the allusion with a change of dialogue. While rapturously looking at Maria, Tony simply says “So beautiful.” This slight change makes the cold hands/warm face exchange much more trivial. The film’s dialogue emphasizes Tony’s gaze during the “Meeting Scene.” Not only does the dialogue fail to address their ethnicity but emphasizes the visual aspects of their attraction, highlighted by the cinematography. The moment soon ends as the world slowly returns. The Promenade music slowly encroaches on their private world and people return to the frame. Glad Hand blows the whistle, and Tony and Maria kiss as the lights come back up.

Cinematic techniques highlight the couple’s relationship as it progresses from ecstatic meeting to tragic ending. Counter shots, like those used in the “Balcony Scene,” establish that Tony and Maria only have eyes for each other. They are prominently used during the couple’s first meeting and “One Hand, One Heart” as well as during the “Tonight” duet. These types of shots also serve to direct the audience’s gaze at the beauty of Natalie Wood as she visually expresses her love for Tony. In the case of the “Meeting Scene” in particular, counter shots also reduce the audience’s ability to focus on the other characters and emphasizes the love relationship over community. Once Tony and Maria become aware of each other’s presence, their surroundings are extremely out of focus and the “Mambo” music sounds increasingly far away, creating the impression that the lovers are entering their own private world (Figure 6 and 7). It appears as though the cinematographer used the common technique of applying Vaseline to the lens to create the blurring effect. The cinematographer uses this technique once again
during the “Tonight” duet as Tony and Maria sing in unison and look out into the distance (Figure 7d.). Repeating this technique implies that the world of the two lovers does not include reality; they enter their own private world. In fact, this song proves to be the point at which the lovers’ relationship is most secure; they readily confirm their love and the real world has yet to disrupt their obvious bliss.

**Figure 6: Representative Counter Shots of Tony and Maria**

Tony and Maria’s Love at First Sight

6a.  
6b.

“Tonight”

6c.  
6d.
“One Hand, One Heart”

6e. 6f.

Figure 7: Blurred Surroundings Indicating the Lovers’ Private World

7a. 7b.

7c. 7d.

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In the duets, “One Hand, One Heart” and “Somewhere,” the effects of the outside world on Tony and Maria’s relationship become increasingly apparent. The song “One Hand, One Heart” emphasizes the couple’s progression as they proclaim their fidelity and unity. Like the “Tonight” duet, the music of this song does not sustain major alterations. A thirty-bar cut, from 91-129 does shorten the song (Example 5). The purpose of the cut seems to be to avoid repetition; however, a side effect of this economy is to vocally separate Tony and Maria. The film removes the unison section and moves straight into the ending where the hitherto repeated text is sung in harmony.

Example 5: Cut Duet from “One Hand, One Heart,” mm. 91-106

![Example 5: Cut Duet from “One Hand, One Heart,” mm. 91-106](image)

Significantly, the filmmakers do not utilize the same techniques as in previous scenes between these characters. Most notable is the decision to keep Tony and Maria’s surroundings in focus throughout both the dialogue and music. Despite the fact that they are playacting, seemingly still in a world of their own making, the camera keeps the real world in focus. The mise-en-scène is arranged to look like a church particularly when the camera zooms out to include a small window above the shop (Figure 8). The lighting also indicates a church with a

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heavenly glow descending from the ceiling. However, the presence of dummies makes the space always recognizable as a dress shop. The song begins in a mid-shot that encompasses the church-like space as Tony sings. As the song progresses, the camera cuts in closer to capture Tony and Maria lovingly staring at one another in a series of counter shots; here, the camera does not appropriate the characters’ gaze but focuses on the adoring looks that they give (Figure 6e. and 6f.). The camera’s position reflects the closeness that the young lovers feel during their performance of marriage.

**Figure 8: Dress Shop as a Church**

“Somewhere” represents the culmination of Tony and Maria’s musical progression. Color dominates the *mise-en-scène* during this song; stained glass in Maria’s room casts the entire set in bright red and blue (Figure 9). Red tint is used throughout the film to signify the animosity and violence of the gangs. Towards the beginning of the duet, the red-tinted wall is behind Tony while Maria stands in front of a blue portion (Figure 9b.). This construction highlights the tragedy that has just befallen. The use of these colors can also be viewed as an ironic reference to America as the tragedy of the circumstances more closely affects the young couple. American prejudice now touches Tony and the formerly innocent Maria. A close-up shot of the two embracing takes up the frame as Tony begins the duet. After Maria has had her
say, the camera cuts to mid-shot from a position behind the bed frame. The bars of the frame separate the Tony and Maria, and each appears to occupy a separate box (Figure 9b.). However, they soon stand up, escaping the frame, in order to come together again visually as they sing in unison. The song ends with a close-up of the lovers kissing and collapsing together, leaving only the red and blue behind them (Figure 9c.).

**Figure 9: “Somewhere”**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the change from external ballet to a duet makes this scene much more personal. It becomes a highpoint in the relationship between Tony and Maria as well as serving to give the lead characters more concentrated screen time. In fact, the alteration provides another vehicle for the dramatic powers of the film’s star, Natalie Wood. Despite the fact that Maria’s singing voice was dubbed, another song allowed for Wood to garner more close-ups and interact with her leading man. All of these elements make the moment of Tony’s death more powerful when Maria sings a fragment of “Somewhere” in an attempt to sustain him (Example 6). At this moment, she refers not to an abstract, utopian place but their own dreams of living together in peace. It also gives Maria a tender, final interaction with Tony, enhanced by
a shot of her emotional singing followed by a counter shot of Tony’s reaction and subsequent death.

**Example 6: Fragment of “Somewhere” from Tony’s death**

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Hold my hand and we're halfway there hold my hand and I'll take you there some how some day
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For such a central character, Maria maintains a relatively marginal role. Not until she meets and falls in love with Tony does Maria sing. Significantly, Sondheim and Bernstein believed that the show needed “a strong song for Tony earlier since he had none until ‘Maria,’ which was a love song. We had to have more delineation of him as a character.”\(^{12}\) The composer and lyricist obviously felt no such qualms about Maria’s short, introductory scene without any such song. In fact, the first song that Maria sings is the duet “Tonight.” The audience does not witness a solo song from Maria until much later in the show with “I Feel Pretty.” Maria gained her voice when she met Tony and subsequently lost it with his death. Although Bernstein tried to write an aria for Maria’s final speech, the music never came. Scott Miller attributes the difficulties in composing for this scene to “the fact that Maria is dead inside; she can’t sing because Tony was her music.”\(^{13}\) Unlike her male counterpart, Maria can neither sing before nor after the love relationship; she is completely defined by it while he maintains a degree of autonomy.

In lieu of a final aria, Maria delivers a powerful speech after the death of Tony. In this scene, the virginal white dress has been replaced by a red one. However, this costume does not


\(^{13}\) Scott Miller, “An Examination of *West Side Story*’s Plot and Musical Motifs,” in *Readings on West Side Story*, Mary E. Williams, ed. (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2001), 91.
feature the sexy, low-cut style that Maria had in mind for her party dress. The dress is form fitting with a high neckline, and the message is clear: Maria has lost her innocence and is now a woman. American culture has affected her, though not in the positive way she had hoped. The cinematography heightens the emotional power of this scene. It begins in mid shot when Maria takes the gun from Chino. She places the blame entirely on the gangs with the lines, “All of you. You all killed him and my brother… not with bullets and guns. With hate.” In the original script Maria shares the blame, stating “We all killed him.” In her naïveté, Maria sent Tony to the Rumble in order to stop it; his presence instead causes the fight to escalate rather than dissipate. Scott Miller posits that Maria’s use of “we” also has larger societal implications. He asks “what kind of world have we made in which teenagers carry guns and knives, in which they are taught by the adults around them to hate others?” The camera cuts in closer to Maria on the line “with hate.” There is a cut to long shot as she contemplates killing as many as possible. Maria walks over to Ice and the camera pans, leaving Maria towards the bottom right of the frame. *The mise-en-scène* appears slightly askew, mirroring Maria’s emotions. The underscoring begins again as she falls to the ground sobbing. With “Somewhere” in the background, Maria runs to Tony and with only imploring looks brings members of each gang together to carry him away. Despite her tragic loss, “Maria gains agency as a result of losing both her lover and brother.” She thus gains a degree of independence and authority as yet unknown to her and is able, if only for a moment, to stop the antagonism between the two gangs.

In the original Broadway production, the collaborators decided to cast relatively unknown singers and dancers. Without a star, the original show focused on theatrical elements of the

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14Miller, 92.
15Negrón-Muntaner, 100.
musical as well as creating an “ensemble effect” coupled with a “youthful zest.” Hollywood, however, chose to cast the beautiful and famous Natalie Wood. By the 1950s, Wood had made the transition from child actress to Hollywood leading lady. In 1956, Wood’s performance in Rebel without a Cause (1955) was nominated for an Academy Award. With an Oscar nomination under her belt, the dramatic actress would be a large box-office draw for the film. The star’s extremely public love life also brought several associations which made her a viable romantic lead. At the time, Wood had not only dated Elvis Presley but was married to Robert Wagner. Furthermore, the young actress had just finished filming Splendor in the Grass with heartthrob Warren Beatty. Natalie Wood brought her fame as well as romantic and dramatic clout to the film.

Also noteworthy is the fact that Natalie Wood was not Hispanic. Born in California to parents originally from Russia, Wood had a background more in keeping with the Jets. Casting a Maria from the continental United States produced a myriad of problematic results. For instance, her portrayal of a newly arrived Puerto Rican with an inauthentic accent can be viewed as difficult at best and even racist. Similarly, Wood’s make-up was a few shades darker than her natural olive skin tone. Robbins had requested Rita Moreno to audition for the Broadway production, but “once the play was transformed into a Hollywood production, the likelihood that a Puerto Rican or Latina actress would be granted the lead role considerably diminished.” More specifically, it was less likely that a Puerto Rican lead would be cast opposite a white male lead in Hollywood, especially while the Production Code remained in place. Negrón-Muntaner

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\(^{16}\) Theatre Arts review, “West Side Story Sets a New Standard for Stage Musicals,” in Readings on West Side Story, Mary E. Williams, ed. (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2001), 113.

\(^{17}\) Her most notable role as a child was Susan Walker in the Christmas classic Miracle on 34th Street (1947).

\(^{18}\) It was this role, not West Side Story, that earned Wood her second Academy Award nomination.

\(^{19}\) Notably, only George Chakiris performed in “brownface” for the film. The other Puerto Rican characters had slightly darker make-up than the white characters.

\(^{20}\) Negrón-Muntaner, 91.
asserts that casting Natalie Wood as Maria also allowed “white audiences to enjoy the interracial seduction without its consequences… [Therefore,] the interracial exchange becomes a safe spectacle for white audiences.”

Sexuality and Agency in Anita’s Characterization

Another Puerto Rican character, Anita, takes her place as the film’s secondary female lead. As both Maria’s confidante and Bernardo’s girlfriend, Anita shows herself to be an almost motherly influence as well as more sexually experienced than her innocent friend. The film introduces the two female leads simultaneously in the dress shop, setting them up as foils to one another (Figure 3). Elements of Anita’s character surface in this short introductory scene; in contrast with the virginal Maria, Anita immediately emerges as sexy, strong, and demanding. Her dialogue includes sexual innuendo as she teasingly warns Maria about what can happen with boys.

Maria: When I look at Chino, nothing happens.

Anita: What do you expect to happen?

Maria: I don’t know: something. What happens when you look at ‘Nardo?

Anita: It’s when I don’t look that it happens.

This brief exchange highlights both Maria’s naïveté and Anita’s knowledge. Once Bernardo enters, Anita demands both his praise and attention (Figure 3d.). Although she clearly asserts herself as a sexual being, Anita is by no means a passive female existing purely for male pleasure. In fact, throughout most of the film, she actively gains agency from her sensuality. Moreover, Anita plainly enjoys her interludes with Bernardo. Later in the show, she eagerly anticipates a meeting with Bernardo, exclaiming “after a fight, that brother of yours is so

21Negrón-Muntaner, 92.
healthy!” to Maria. Moreno’s portrayal both plays into the typical representation of women as sexual object (particularly that of the “Hispanic spitfire”) as well as seeking to subvert it through key displays of strength.

In a musical where not just song but dance connotes power, Anita’s dancing abilities become particularly significant, and the Dance at the Gym provides the best and earliest example. Once the “Mambo” begins in earnest, Moreno soon demonstrates her considerable talent. The Puerto Ricans dance steps are stereotypically more suggestive than the white girls, as the Jets counter the Puerto Ricans’ hip thrusts with a head bob. Nevertheless, the dance highlights Anita. The dance becomes competitive, and the two groups split into semi-circles featuring the gang leaders and their girls. Unlike any woman on the Jets side, Anita is an equal dance partner with Bernardo. In fact, the steps often emphasize her rather than Bernardo as the star dancer (Figure 10a.).

Anita represents the strongest female character in West Side Story. Interestingly, she attributes her independent behavior to being in America. Some key lines make this association explicit. For instance, she exclaims that Maria can dance with whomever she likes because “girls here are free to have fun. She is in America now.” And after the number “America” (discussed below), a brief exchange between Anita and Bernardo reaffirms this belief.

Anita: I am an American girl now. I don’t wait.

Bernardo: Back home women know their place.

Clearly, both equate being in America with strong women. Ironically, this does not mesh with the reality of the position of “American” girls. In fact, the opposite seems to be true, particularly in the case of Anita. By challenging Bernardo’s “sexist expectations,” Anita represents
“women’s resistance to the patriarchal structures of control.”\textsuperscript{22} The Jet girls, with the significant exception of the tomboy Anybodys, make no such challenge. At the same time, Anita’s behavior is playful. She can use her appeal in order to speak her mind, though perhaps never really crossing the line. Her sassiness can even be seen as desirable because it is always connected with her sexuality. She keeps Bernardo on his toes, sometimes annoying him slightly but remains privy to his outside world. Though he would not allow her accompany him to any gang related activities, he obviously confides in her. In the film, the song and dance number “America” emphasizes the characterization of Anita as a strong and independent woman. It also represents one of the most noticeably altered musical sections in the film. Unlike in the stage version, the boys do not leave the girls but join in the song. This significant revision not only results in the reduction of the character Rosalia but changes the dynamics in the song. Dash feels that the in the film “the song loses its kick; no longer a debate between women, it became a contest between men and women.”\textsuperscript{23} Indeed, “America” becomes a continuation of the previous argument between the sexes. Anita argues with and even mocks Bernardo but their squabbles are always tinged with sexual tension. The original music largely remains intact; the biggest changes are the omission of Rosalia’s nostalgic melody and the expansion of the instrumental music at the end (accomplished by repetition). Obviously, the addition of the men incorporates another vocal dimension as the girls and boys alternately sing the lines. The lyrics are also significantly altered for the film, adding a level of social commentary less present in the original script (see Appendix E for lyrics). Alberto Sandoval points out that “although Bernardo discredits and demythifies [sic] Anita’s exaltation

\textsuperscript{22}Smith, 51.
\textsuperscript{23}Dash, 103.
of the ‘American Dream,’ his comments are subordinated and silenced.”

Anita’s power, drawn in part from her pro-U.S.A. stance, becomes more explicit with the addition of the men.

The addition of the boys to “America” also adds a competitive edge that plays out especially through dance. The male and female dancers alternately dance in a manner that mirrors their respective viewpoints. For example, Bernardo and his Sharks mimic fighting through dance. Anita and the other girls put on a show for their boyfriends while simultaneously challenging them. Through editing, the camera gives primacy to each gender in turn. Editing and solo dancing also highlight Anita as both a talented dancer and sensual woman (Figure 10b.).

After each separately vying for the space, the boys and girls all finally dance together. The music has been slightly extended here to accommodate the couples ending the number together. Tellingly, the song ends with the couples laughing and embracing as they leave the roof.

“America” demonstrated Anita’s advocacy for assimilation; Bernardo’s death, however, causes Anita to adopt his way of thinking. Sandoval observes that “Ironically Anita, the most assimilated, ends up the most ethnic by affirming her cultural difference… From a position of pain and rage, she advises Maria to forget Tony and, ‘Stick to your own kind!’” In this scene, now it is Anita advocating racial and ethnic segregation.”

Although Anita has changed her opinion, the use of lighting shows that her vision of Tony is wrong. For example, Anita sings “a boy like that wants one thing only” in the shadows (Figure 10c.). Anita’s anger towards Tony has become racially charged, and she cannot see past her newfound hate. Maria soon challenges Anita’s intolerance and persuades her via “I Have a Love.” Although Joseph Swain claims that “Anita’s animosity is rooted in the shallowness of her own relationship with her lover Bernardo,” I would argue that the ease with which Maria persuades her friend attests to the depth of feeling.

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25 Ibid., 62.
that Anita and Bernardo did share. Maria reminds her friend of the love that she felt for Bernardo. The cut in the film actually makes this more explicit in that Anita needs less persuasion. By seeing the same depth of feeling in Maria that she has experienced, Anita can overcome the racial intolerance that her anger caused.

The film’s final view of Anita is as a victim. After she has been presented as strong, sassy, and sexual, the Jet gang seemingly steals all of this away from her in the attempt to rape her. Anita enters wearing the head wrap seen previously when she enters Maria’s room; the wrap provides visual proof of a newfound modesty brought about by Bernardo’s death. Tellingly, the “Mambo” plays on the jukebox as Anita enters Doc’s drugstore. In her dissertation, Wells asserts that “It is not just Anita as a character, but her signature music (both Hispanic but also the moment –in ‘America’- in which she showed the most impudence and spark) which is battered by the Jets.” Although persecuted by the Jets, Anita shows some of her strength by persevering in her attempt to reach Tony. Clearly, she is afraid but has courage. The gang begins to physically harass her, and the camera shows them pulling at her face and clothes then focuses on body and legs. Meanwhile, a distorted version of “America” music plays on the jukebox as they push her around. The camera moves around, providing flashes of the assailants and Anita. Although Doc prevents an actual rape, the audience’s final image of Anita is that of a victimized woman, who, desiring revenge, brings about Tony’s belief that Maria is dead.

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26 Swain, 2002.
27 Wells, 177.
28 The script and comments from the collaborators imply an attempted rape. However, the scene can be staged more explicitly and even suggest an actual rape. For example, the recent Broadway production makes it clear that Doc is interrupting Anita’s rape rather than preventing it. See Conclusion, page 88.
Casting Rita Moreno as the fiery Anita conjured certain associations. Born in Puerto Rico, Moreno moved to New York City at five years old. She had a steady career as an actress throughout the 1950s, often playing a Hispanic or “exotic” sexpot. In 1954, Moreno appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine with the caption “Rita Moreno: An Actresses’ Catalog of Sex and Innocence,” thus solidifying her sexy persona (Figure 11a.). Also a trained singer and dancer, Moreno appeared in the films *Singin’ in the Rain* (1952) and *The King and I* (1956). In Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *The King and I*, she played the unfortunate Burmese slave girl Tuptim, a role that required both a great deal of singing and exotic appeal (Figure 11b.). In 1961, Moreno brought not only her considerable talent to the film version of *West Side Story* but an exotic image that the filmmakers exploited. Moreno’s costuming in the film plays on this image (Figure 10). Her dance costume exemplifies this tendency with a purple, low-cut dress complete with flounces and accessorized with a pair of large hoop earrings. A glamorous short hairdo, dark eyeliner, and darker cheek and lip colors further enhance Moreno’s exoticism and sensuality. This image effectively conveys her Hispanic heritage and sex appeal. Despite the
fact that she was actually Puerto Rican, Moreno had to wear a slightly darker shade of make-up than her natural tone and speak with a fake accent.

**Figure 11: Images of Rita Moreno Prior to West Side Story**

![LIFE Cover of March 1954](image1)

![Tuptim in The King and I](image2)

Rita Moreno won the Academy Award for her portrayal of Anita, becoming the first Hispanic actress to receive the coveted Oscar. She also eventually became one of the few performers to win all four of the major entertainment awards (Oscar, Tony, Emmy, and Grammy).\(^{29}\) Moreno was able to utilize and perhaps even transcend her initial image to become a respected performer with a long career.

**A White American Tomboy**

The tomboy Anybodys attempts to challenge the male-dominated society but remains continually marginalized throughout the film. She is also one of the few characters that does not have a Shakespearean counterpart. Wells defines Anybodys as “a tomboy who is almost

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genderless, rejected by the Jet girls as too unfeminine and by the Jet boys as kind of a freak.”

She sees the inclusion of Anybodys within the musical as a nod to the growing prominence of girl gangs. Wells’s observations also highlight the liminal quality of this tomboy; she does not truly fit into any part of this world. An alternate reading of Anybodys identifies her need to join the gang and dress as a boy as a potential outlet for lesbianism. Negrón-Muntaner points out that in this world where white women are nothing more than “accessories,” Anybodys’s indeterminate gender role is the subject of laughter throughout the musical.

In a musical, both song and dance connote power and enhance characterization. Therefore, it is notable that the collaborators never allowed Anybodys to sing and rarely allowed her to dance. Sondheim and Bernstein originally wrote a song called “Like Everybody Else” that featured Anybodys, Baby John, and A-Rab. This song brings the marginalization of these three characters to the forefront as each character sings about what makes them different: being a girl, young, or small, respectively. Anybodys confronts what makes her different, singing “I swear and I smoke and I inhale. Why can’t I be male/Like everybody else?” This song would have given Anybodys a forum to address her liminality and an agency that she otherwise lacks. However, the filmmakers do not appear to have considered reinstating the song for the film version. Therefore, Anybodys maintains her thoroughly marginal and powerless role. In the Prologue that introduces the rivalry between the Jets and Sharks, Anybodys does not appear in the dance sequence but does slip in for the final fight. After A-Rab mocks her undesirability, Riff sends her away just before the “Jet Song.” Clearly, she cannot be defined as a Jet. Similarly, she does not participate in the “Gee, Officer Krupke” or “Cool.” She is either

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30 Wells, 179.
31 Negrón-Muntaner, 99.
32 Simeone includes a section which discusses the reasons that this song was cut, 59-60.
33 Quoted in Simeone, 59.
relegated to the sidelines or simply not present at all. However, she dances for a brief period during the “Dance at the Gym” sequence.

**Figure 12: Anybodys at “Dance at the Gym”**

Unlike the rest of the gang, she still wears her street clothes (Figure 12). Not only is she not dressed like a girl but does not even “dress sharp,” highlighting her outsider status. For roughly ten seconds of the “Blues” section, Anybodys dances not with but *as* one of the guys. However, A-Rab accidentally kicks her while dancing and seemingly just realizing she was there, he ejects her from the dance floor. For the rest of the dance, Anybodys takes her place on the sidelines.

After the Rumble, Anybodys appoints herself as Tony’s unofficial protector. Not actually present at the Rumble, she seems to have lurking in the pipes and therefore can help rescue Tony from the police after everyone else has fled. In fact, she refuses to leave without him, repeatedly shouting “Come on, Tony!” until he escapes with her. After “Cool,” the audience and Jets discover that Anybodys has been “infiltrating PR territory” and found out that Chino wants to shoot Tony. This information earns Anybodys the commendation she has been seeking from the gang’s new leader, Ice. Twice more, Anybodys attempts to act as Tony’s protector. She finds him and brings him to Doc’s when he leaves Maria’s bedroom. However,
Tony ultimately rejects Anybody’s help by countering her pleas with “You’re a girl. Be a girl and beat it!” Thus, Anybody’s triumph is short-lived as the last lines directed at her once again bring to light her outsider status.

Dumb Broads

Graziella and Velma, the girlfriends of Riff and Ice, suffer a similarly peripheral role. The two characters are never really introduced; they first appear at the “Dance at the Gym” on the arms of their boyfriends. The dance shows a difference in treatment between the “American” and Puerto Rican girls. Before the “Promenade,” Riff simply jerks head to summon Graziella. She answers by strutting over and taking his hand. In contrast, Bernardo ostentatiously but graciously holds out hand for Anita and presents her to the whole room. Once the “Mambo” begins, the Jet girls dance moves are much less sexual than the “spitfire Latinas.” As the dance continues, Graziella and Riff become the center of their semi-circle. Riff quickly upstages Graziella as he performs a series of gymnastic moves. Furthermore, the camera clearly follows him, even cutting her out of the frame during closer shots. The “Dance at the Gym” shows the white “American” girls to be both less desirable and less important than their Puerto Rican counterparts.

The most extended stretch of dialogue that Graziella and Velma have occurs directly before “Officer Krupke.” The film uses the dialogue originally placed before “Cool” as the two songs have been interchanged in this version. When Riff warns the girls to leave before the Sharks arrive, Graziella puts on a show of possible independence. Haughtily, she claims “we might, and then again we might not.” However, this one line of defiance is never developed, and Graziella does leave when Riff shoos her away with a pat on the behind. Although Graziella
argues that “I and Velma ain’t dumb,” their superfluous, superficial, and ungrammatical talk contradict the assertion. Giggles and vacuous nonsense words, such as “oo, ooblee-oo,” punctuate their dialogue. This scene serves to further demarcate the Jets’ girlfriends as arm candy.

The girls appear once in relative prominence after the Rumble, highlighted in the film by the switching of “Krupke” and “Cool.” Graziella can be seen mourning the death of Riff, succumbing to the hysteria that Ice wants to prevent. The gang and girls retire into the garage. Ice turns on a car’s headlights, and Velma follows suit. She seems ready to back up her boyfriend and play it cool. The presence of the girls allows for some couples dancing; they also do dance on their own for brief sections of the fugue. However, the guys remain the focus of the dance; significantly, this is in opposition to the Puerto Rican women’s role in “America.” In “Cool,” the girls often dance in back and sometimes even stand on the sidelines watching the male dancers. While the girls sing during the chorus, this scene does little to bring the Jet girls out of the margins. In fact, the placement of “Cool” in the film further explains why the girls need to compose themselves without attaching too much importance to their presence. They must also avoid police suspicion, not because they were involved but to protect their men.

The Mamas

The absence of adult women in West Side Story emphasizes the powerlessness of the adults, especially women, in regards to the lives of these youths. Notably, the lack of adult women marks a significant departure from Romeo and Juliet. Although Shakespeare’s play also focuses on the tragedy of the youth, the adults are far more present and display an agency that West Side Story removes. Laurents turned Juliet’s nurse into the young, sexy Anita who also
loved Maria’s brother, Bernardo. Thus, Maria’s mentor is not an older woman but a young, albeit experienced, girl only a few years older. Laurents cut the mothers of the two protagonists completely from the cast. In *Romeo and Juliet*, both Lady Montague and Lady Capulet each appear in the play. Lady Capulet, in particular, plays a role in the events of the tragedy. After the death of Tybalt, she pleads with Prince Escalus to put Romeo to death. After Romeo’s banishment, she discusses poisoning the young man and presses Juliet to marry the eligible Paris. *West Side Story* eliminates both the influence and reactions of the young lovers’ mothers, making them even more ineffectual than the adult men.

The musical contains two significant references to mothers in the mock marriage sequence preceding “One Hand, One Heart” as well as in the comic number, “Gee, Officer Krupke.” Tony and Maria imagine introducing one another to their parents, focusing particularly on the “mamas” (as Maria refers to their mothers). In their play-acting, Tony asks his mother for permission to marry Maria. As Dash points out, “the shop mannequins are wonderful surrogates; they can’t talk – or fight.”34 In theory, Tony acknowledges the importance of parental (especially maternal) approval without actually seeking it. Tony and Maria represent their mothers as benign but insignificant in terms of their actual lives. The lyrics of “Gee, Officer Krupke” paint a different picture of the mothers’ roles. No more important than other factors, mothers share the role as a cause of juvenile delinquency. Lines such as “our mothers all are junkies” and “my mommy clobbers me” depict these mothers as abusive drug addicts. Much less benign than Tony and Maria’s mothers, these women seemingly play a role in how society views their children.

The literal absence of these women may also mirror anxiety towards working women in the post-war era. On one hand, “Krupke” represents the mothers as only part of the problem, a

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34 Dash, 107.
single link in the chain. They may also, however, embody the tension between the homemaker and working woman. Jim Lovensheimer describes this tension in relation to Nellie Forbush from Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *South Pacific* (1949). Drawing on Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, Lovensheimer notes that postwar cultural trends encouraged women “cultivate lives as little more than appendages to their professional husbands, and that they should find satisfaction in that domestic role.” Furthermore, Maureen Honey asserts that “the nuclear family came to represent the values of all Americans and…also stood for the survival of decency and humanity in a world rent by suffering.” Without this stability, the teenagers in *West Side Story* turn to delinquency. The film gives precious little information on any of the mothers’ careers, legitimate or otherwise. Lieutenant Schrank does reveal that one gang member’s mother is actually a prostitute with the taunt, “How’s the action on your mother’s side of the street, Action?” During the mock-marriage scene in the bridal shop, Tony implies that his mother stays home when he claims, “she lives in the kitchen.” This possibility opens up the opportunity for Tony to escape the clutches of gang life because he has a more stable home life. Although he was once leader of the Jets, Tony, more than any other member, shows the potential for another life. The expected return of “Rosie the Riveter” to the home leads to another level of commentary concerning juvenile delinquency in the 1950s.

All of the female characters occupy a marginal space both within the world of the narrative and from the perspective of the audience. The male characters manage to push aside even the two women who most challenge stereotypes. The Jets victimize Anita and Tony rejects Anybodys. In the film, cinematic techniques accentuate women’s marginalization in a number of ways. The camera encourages the audience to view these women as largely unimportant or

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36 Qtd. in Lovensheimer, 122.
objects of beauty. The secondary status of females may indicate a homosexual male spectator. However, the look of the camera assumes a heterosexual male, particularly in the case of Maria and Anita. Gendered ethnic stereotypes abound in the representation of women. The film challenges these stereotypes in important ways yet seems to ultimately succumb to the marginalization of women.
Chapter 4

Ethnicity and Masculinity in the Battle over Turf

Opera and musical theatre have portrayed Hispanics for years, creating a tradition upon which *West Side Story* builds. Exoticism in nineteenth century classical music attempts to evoke foreign music through rhythm, melody, and instrumentation. These musical elements as well as the characters depicted draws upon the “Eastern” as well as southern Spain. Wells points to Bizet’s *Carmen* as representative of European fascination with the Hispanic image in opera.\(^1\) In musical theatre, “Hispanic” characters from various countries made appearances in a number of shows. Alberto Sandoval stresses the significance and influence of performers such as Carmen Miranda and Desi Arnaz, both on Broadway and in film. From Brazil and Cuba respectively, each of these performers played with stereotypes of the “Latin other” in ways that enhanced their popularity in the United States.\(^2\) With the Latin dance craze coming to the forefront in the 1930s, songs that Wells calls the “Latin number” became popular in many Broadway musicals.\(^3\) From “Havana” in *Guys and Dolls* and “Whatever Lola Wants” in *Damn Yankees* to “The Rain in Spain” in *My Fair Lady*, Spanish or Latin American music, characters, and settings added an exotic (and popular) flair to musicals in the 1950s.

Addressing Race on Broadway

Racial bigotry as a theme on Broadway also set the stage for *West Side Story* in 1957. Musicals such as *Showboat* and *South Pacific* addressed issues of bigotry, focusing on African

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\(^1\)Wells, 111.


\(^3\)Notably, Bernstein’s own musicals each contained a “Hispanic number:” “I Wish I was Dead” in *On the Town*, “Conga!” in *Wonderful Town* and “I’m Easily Assimilated” in *Candide*.
Americans and South Pacific islanders respectively. Showboat features a mixed race marriage in Act I; Julie LaVerne, leading lady and mulatto, and her white husband Steve, must leave the showboat while in Mississippi (see Figure 13a.). Rodgers and Hammerstein’s South Pacific also includes an interracial relationship as well as the offspring of a previous mixed marriage. The prejudice of the white American characters becomes a crucial conflict within the romantic plots. The importance of this theme in South Pacific is highlighted by Joe Cable’s song “You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught.” An especially significant aspect of South Pacific is the theme of tolerance coupled with the use of stereotypes in the musical itself. Despite the condemnation of bigotry, Bloody Mary’s character invites a certain amount of ridicule from the characters onstage as well as the audience. Andrea Most puts forward that Bloody Mary “seems to have come directly from World War II film stereotypes of grinning Chinese peasants with betel-stained teeth.”

This problematic image is compounded by the fact that a light-skinned African American actress originated the role in both the Broadway and film versions (Figure 13b.). Mary’s daughter, Liat, is beautiful and exotic yet literally silent; though intended as Cable’s love interest, she speaks only a few lines in French. Instead, Liat communicates through dance, highlighting the connection between the exotic “Other” and physicality.

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4 Both of these musicals have well-known film versions produced by major Hollywood studios. Universal Pictures produced Showboat in 1936; MGM then produced a significantly revised version in 1951.
Hispanic Representation in Hollywood

Film in America also utilized as well as challenged stereotypical representations of Hispanics. Representations such as these provide a frame of reference for mid-twentieth filmgoers. “Latin musicals,” featuring stars such as Carmen Miranda and Desi Arnaz, presented Americans with singing and dancing comic Latino/a performers, Latin lovers, and sexy spitfires. As previously mentioned, Miranda and Arnaz developed highly stylized “Latin” personas throughout their careers both onstage and in film. Exaggerated accents, over-the-top costuming, suggestive dancing, and comedic performances marked their performances (Figure 14a.). The earlier “Latin” lover was often Italian, made famous by Rudolph Valentino. However, the figure developed into a generally Latin American male, a “strong, slender, suave, sophisticated, slightly accented, slightly dark, simmering, sultry - is it necessary to say sexy? - figure” able to seduce women of all types.  

Portrayals of Latin lovers and seductresses set up stereotypes in Hollywood that would be subtly defied and often parodied in a number of films (Figure 14b.).

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The 1952 western *High Noon* introduces a beautiful Mexican woman as Grace Kelly’s competition. Mrs. Helen Ramirez, played by Mexican actress Katy Jurado, owns a store in the small town. From the beginning, it becomes clear that she has had extra-marital relationships with a number of men in the film, including both the hero and outlaw. According to José Limón, “Casting Mexican women, in particular, as sexually promiscuous made them morally available within a code of racism ratifying and extending the right of Anglo conquest to the realm of the sexual.”7 Dark make-up and costuming highlights her difference from Grace Kelly’s young, innocent character (Figure 14c.). In many ways, Helen clearly fits into the stereotype of the sexually experienced Hispanic woman; however, key lines, such as “I don’t like anybody to put his hands on me unless I want him to,” signify her as a woman with agency, in control of her life. None of the white men in the film have successfully conquered this Mexican woman. More than that, Helen’s attitude “voices a strong subtext against male power and violence against women.”8 According to Jeremy Byman, these aspects of her character allow her to become the “unstereotyped, un-male, un-Anglo” business person who “shocks us with her independence.”9 Thus, the character of Helen Ramirez both utilizes and thwarts stereotypes of Hispanic women.

By the 1950s, Mexican characters in westerns became prevalent in Hollywood. These films often depicted Mexican men as either lazy workers or bandits, while Mexican women were sexy spitfires who attempted to seduce honest white men. *Giant* (1956) directly challenges these stereotypes with its theme of racial tolerance. From the beginning, the audience recognizes the Benedict family as racists who have taken advantage of the Mexican community in Texas in order to gain land. Leslie Benedict immediately rejects her husband’s view that the Mexican

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7Limón, 601.
population is lazy and unworthy of care or attention. Ultimately, their son marries a Mexican-born woman, and Jordan Benedict accepts and defends the Mexican community.

**Figure 14: Images of Hispanic Performers in Film**

14a. Carmen Miranda performing “The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat” in *The Gang’s All Here* (1943)  
14b. Publicity Still of Ricardo Montalban in *Latin Lovers* (1953)  
14c. Katy Jurado as Helen Ramirez in *High Noon*

An important development within Hollywood in regards to *West Side Story* concerns the comparatively recent depictions of Puerto Rican youths as juvenile delinquents. Puerto Rican immigrants, as the creators of *West Side Story* had discovered, created both a cultural richness and ethnic tension in New York City. Films such as *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) and *12 Angry Men* (1957) address both delinquency and racial bigotry towards Puerto Ricans. *Blackboard Jungle* is set in a diverse, inner city school. Notably, the students focused on within the film are either white or African American. One Puerto Rican student, Pete Morales, surfaces as a character in the film; a telling scene establishes him as an outsider when the white students ridicule his accent and call him a “spic” in class (Figure 15a.). Mr. Dadier, the teacher, attempts to curb the racial tensions present in his classroom by forbidding name calling. By the end of the film, the true delinquent is revealed to be a white kid, implying that race does not indicate a propensity towards criminal behavior. In *12 Angry Men*, the defendant is an eighteen-year-old

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10 In one of his first roles, Sidney Poitier plays a downtrodden but intelligent and ultimately good kid.
Puerto Rican male. The film begins after the boy’s trial, and the audience only sees a fleeting image of him in the beginning (Figure 15b.). Remarkably, the Puerto Rican, though central to the plot, has no voice. In the deliberation room, two issues immediately emerge: ethnicity and age. Juror #10 shows himself to be extraordinarily racist, representing a viewpoint that the jury ultimately rejects. Each of these films focuses on how juvenile delinquency affects adults, particularly adult white men.

**Figure 15: Lone Images of Puerto Rican Youth in 1950s’ Films**

15a. Pete Morales in *Blackboard Jungle*  
15b. The Defendant in *12 Angry Men*

*West Side Story* draws on influences from theatre and film but breaks away as well, including a minority group as a community and integral to the story. The themes and stereotypes discussed above in theatre and film from the 1950s make an appearance in this film. In particular, both delinquency and bigotry figure prominently in the story. Much like in *South Pacific*, *West Side Story* both condemns intolerance while making use of stereotypes. I will explore how these stereotypes appear in the representations of the Puerto Rican gang in the film. Similar to previous representations, *West Side Story* marginalizes Puerto Ricans in comparison with the white “American” characters. One key way that this occurs in *West Side Story* is through the absence of significant musical scenes that characterize the Puerto Rican characters.
The beginning of the film in particular focuses on the Jets; the white gang and leading man get songs that provide a deeper level of characterization. On the other hand, Negrón-Muntaner draws attention to the fact that “different from earlier films, West Side Story represents Puerto Ricans as part of a community and allowed to be central in the narrative.”

In the films Blackboard Jungle and 12 Angry Men, only one Puerto Rican youth figures somehow in the plot while remaining marginal throughout the film. West Side Story shows its youths as a community complete with the difficulties of fitting in as well as their own relationships and worldviews.

Power Through Song and the Characterization of White Males

After the Prologue, the Jets and Tony sing songs that establish their characters (or relationship to one another). Strikingly, the Sharks do not get a song that establishes them as likeable, sympathetic, or in fact anything other than the Jets’ nemeses. Maria does not get more than a short scene to establish her as the romantic leading woman. Therefore, it is remarkable that the musical numbers between the Prologue and the “Dance at the Gym” sequence highlight the white male characters. The “Jet Song” establishes not only the gang mentality of the Jets but Riff as their leader. Tony’s song before Maria’s scene gives him an agency and importance that the Puerto Rican girl lacks. The song “Maria” further stresses his primacy; Tony sings two songs before the audience even hears Maria sing a note. This group of songs asserts the white “Americans” power over the more marginalized Puerto Rican characters.

Directly after the street fight, the Jets sing a song that establishes their characters and camaraderie as a gang. Bernstein and Sondheim did not decide upon the “Jet Song” right away; in fact, other options had been written. One such discarded song was a number entitled “This Turf is Ours.” The film scores in the Sid Ramin Papers include this song (written across the top

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11Negrón-Muntaner, 86.
is the note “not used in stage production”), implying that they considered either adding it or replacing the “Jet Song” with this earlier piece. The lyrics for this song are much more territorial and focused on battle rather than the solidarity and feelings of importance that are stressed in the “Jet Song” (see Appendix F for complete lyrics). For some reason, the filmmakers chose not to use “This Turf is Ours” and retained the “Jet Song.” Therefore, this song introduces the white gang and their charismatic leader, Riff.

A comparison of the Jet song in the published orchestral score versus the film implies a significant cut. In the score, the music changes at square 101 to accompany the text:

Oh, when the Jets fall in at the cornball dance,
We’ll be the sweetest dressin' gang in pants!
And when the chicks dig us in our Jet black ties,
They're gonna flip, gonna flop, gonna drop like flies!

The film cuts this tutti section and the Jets sing solos that continue where Riff left off after their dialogue. This section represents a change in both tone and music. As the lyrics allude to the upcoming dance at the gym, so does the music. It breaks away from the sound of the Jet song in order to foreshadow the swinging music of the dance. However, the film maintains continuity by cutting this incongruous section. This cut also notably occurs on the Original Broadway Cast recording. Therefore, the decision to omit the brief section had been made prior to filming. The only other alterations made happen in the lyrics. These small changes reflect the stringent Hay’s Production Code still in place. The lyrics in the stage production reveal the lack of such a Code on Broadway; they could be slightly edgier, hinting at language that could not be referenced in Hollywood. In the first verse of the film version, Riff sings “let them do what they can” in place of “let the spit hit the fan.” The lyrics then remain the same until the final line of

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12West Side Story Film Scores, Flat Box 704, RBML, Columbia University.
13Doherty discusses the heated debate over vulgar language, 319-22.
the songs. The Jets end with “on the whole buggin’ ever lovin’ street,” not the original “on the whole ever mother lovin’ street.” Although extremely tiny, these changes indicate the need to further soften lines that merely allude to more objectionable slang.

Although the changes to the Jet song for the film are fairly miniscule, Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins use space and cinematography to translate the song to the screen. During the dialogue before the Jet song, Riff moves his gang into a more private space, from the basketball to a narrow alleyway. The beginning of the song undeniably establishes Riff as the leader. The music immediately sets this up with Riff’s solo line, and the film highlights it even more. As he sings his uplifting lyrics, Riff swings himself onto a metal bar. The camera follows him, thus isolating him from the other gang members. With a cut, it appears that Riff has risen above the others. The shot opens up to encompass the sky, implying that Riff’s leadership extends beyond the closed off alleyway. Riff then leads the Jets out of the make-shift conference area and leaves them. The remaining Jets are now free to repeat Riff’s music and dance in a larger playground space.

Tony’s music takes its place among the most untouched in the entire film. Added later in the show, “Something’s Coming” further characterizes this former co-leader of the Jets. Sondheim and Bernstein believed that the show needed “a strong song for Tony earlier since he had none until ‘Maria,’ which was a love song. We had to have more delineation of him as a character.” The addition of “Something’s Coming” functions as an “I want” song for Tony; although he does not yet know what he has been desiring, the film indicates that Tony’s something is indeed Maria. The cinematography remains fairly simple during the song. The

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14 The keys of both “Something’s Coming” and “Maria” have been lowered a major second in order to accommodate Jim Bryant’s vocal range.
camera stays focused on Tony, toggling between close-ups, mid-shot, and a few long shots that track his movements. The music does not change until the final “maybe tonight.” Tony repeats this text three times, and on the third repeat, he soars up to an octave G. Meanwhile, the camera pans up, fades, and lands on Tony’s something – Maria.

Once Tony meets Maria, he sings rapturously of the mere sound of her name. Like “Something’s Coming,” the music stays intact in “Maria.” This may also reflect the relative success that this song received with Johnny Mathis’s cover in 1960, making it one of the “hits” from the Broadway show (Appendix C). The film uses cinematic techniques that reflect Tony’s feelings of wonder and love. The young lover simply walks forward towards the camera as the background fades from the dance indoors to the city. The night sky appears a rosy pink that mirrors Tony’s inner state. After an extreme long shot, the camera cuts to a close-up on the lyrics “Maria, say it soft and it’s almost like praying.” The background is also out of focus in order to emphasize Tony’s euphoric facial expressions. A cut then shows Tony on the playground in another extreme long shot. When Tony repeats the previous stanza, the visuals are parallel to the first statement. The song ends with a close-up then zooms out to an overhead shot of Tony in the street. Once again, the film fades to a close-up of Maria, now at her bedroom window.

Puerto Rican Males as Disillusioned Immigrants

Puerto Ricans are set up as dangerous rivals to the Jets from the beginning. The very name of the Puerto Rican gang, the Sharks, highlights both their difference and danger. As compared to the Jets, the Puerto Ricans have a bite that carries “implications of cannibalism and of sharks’ horrifying ferocity. For this reason, sharks are used as a metaphor to denominate the
immigrant Latino otherness coming from the Caribbean.”16 Throughout the film, the Sharks continue to be stereotyped as prone to criminal behavior. The blatantly racist Lieutenant Schrank sides with the white Jet gang stating, “you’re gonna start makin’ nice with the PRs from now on” and after the war council, “Fellahs, I’m for you! I want this beat cleaned up and you can do it for me. I’ll even lend a hand if it gets rough.” Schrank implies that the Puerto Rican gang poses the larger, more dangerous problem and even attempts to elicit help from the white gang. Sandoval shows that the “Jets skillfully transfer the concept of deadly weapons to the Puerto Ricans: ‘They might ask for blades, zip guns…But if they say blades. I say blades…”17 Similarly, the events of the Rumble point to the Puerto Ricans as the more criminal of the gangs. Not only does Bernardo refuse to accept Tony’s attempt at reconciliation but he kills first. Significantly, the Sharks may be allowed to dance but receive no song of their own; in fact, they do not sing until the “Tonight” ensemble in the stage version. Like Liat in South Pacific, the Sharks are reduced to primarily physical expression. As discussed above, the characterization in the beginning centers around the white “American” gang. The film only shows the Puerto Rican gang in relation to the Jets until after the “Dance at the Gym” sequence.

The addition of the male Shark members to the song and dance number “America” gives a voice to the Puerto Ricans lacking in the stage version. It also removes some of the more controversial lyrics regarding Puerto Rico and adds a socio-political element to the song. In the original lyrics, Anita counters Rosalia’s glowing portrayal of Puerto Rico with the negative “Puerto Rico, you ugly island. Island of tropic diseases…” (Appendix D for complete lyrics). A number of Puerto Ricans objected to this negative and false portrayal of the island. In a New York Times article from three days after the premiere in 1957, Howard Rusk noted that “today,

16Sandoval-Sanchez, José 68.
17Ibid., 69.
Puerto Rico has no significant disease problems related to its tropical climate.”¹⁸ The film replaces these lyrics with Anita’s own personal disdain for her home, softening the “racist and defamatory articulation toward Puerto Rico” somewhat.¹⁹ The men’s lyrics directly challenge the “American dream,” pointing out the effects of bigotry in New York City. Bernardo and the other men counter the women’s bright optimism with the negative aspects of living in New York. For instance, when Anita sings “I’ll get a terrace apartment,” Bernardo answers “better get rid of your accent.” The film orchestral score contains a direction for Bernardo to sing this line “with an exaggerated Mexican accent.”²⁰ This note indicates a further element of commentary by insinuating that Americans cannot or will not discern the differences between Hispanic accents from separate countries. However, this biting bit of commentary does not necessarily come through in the film. George Chakiris’s inauthentic Puerto Rican accent makes any possible attempt at a purposely egregious Mexican accent virtually inaudible.

Not only the lyrics but dance moves embody the Sharks’ point of view (Figure 16). The men first do a stylized dance in a courtly style followed by fight moves. This section mirrors their disdain for the Jets’ hypocrisy when insisting on “gracious living” during the war council and before the Rumble. The film’s version of “America” provides insight into the motives of the Puerto Rican gang members less present in the Broadway show.

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¹⁹Sandoval-Sanchez, José 72.
²⁰“America,” West Side Story Film Scores, Flat Box 704, Sid Ramin Papers, RBML, Columbia University.
The character of Bernardo encapsulates the vision of the Latino hood in many ways but a closer look shows him to be multi-faceted. During the Prologue (discussed in Chapter 2), Bernardo might first be seen as a victim of the Jets’ taunting but grows into a major threat as he assembles a new gang. Another side of him comes through when he interacts with Anita and Maria in the bridal shop scene. Bernardo acts as a caring and overprotective brother as well as an attentive boyfriend. He carefully instructs both Anita and Chino to keep an eye on his innocent little sister in case he cannot. His protective behavior towards his sister continues when he lectures her after dancing with Tony and culminates in his extreme animosity towards Tony during the Rumble. For Bernardo, the fight represents a personal battle as he believes that he is fighting for his sister’s honor. Throughout “America” and the preceding scene, Bernardo’s deeply felt resentment surfaces. The following dialogue makes Bernardo’s motivations clear as well as the fact that he repeatedly complains about their treatment since Anita knows his speech by heart.

Bernardo: Sí, and Chino makes half of what the Polack makes. The Polack is an
American.

Anita: Here comes the whole commercial.

Bernardo (Anita joins mockingly): Your mother’s a Pole. Your father’s a Swede.

Anita: But you were born here. That’s all that you need. You are an American.

But us? Foreigners!

All: Lice! Cockroaches!

Bernardo: But it’s true. When I think about how I thought it would be for us here…

In these few lines, Bernardo’s disillusionment due to bigotry becomes apparent. He is both angry and afraid for the well-being of his community. Through Bernardo’s position, the audience learns to question the ubiquity of the “American dream” for immigrants.

Visual and Casting Choices in Representation

Costuming becomes one of the most significant visual indicators of ethnicity in West Side Story. The darker colors red, purple, and black mark the Puerto Ricans while the Jets tend to wear lighter colors, such as yellow, blue, and tan. Leather wristbands also differentiate the Sharks, giving them a tougher look than the “all-American” gang. Each gang’s leader embodies the style of their ethnically divided gangs (Figure 17a.). Bernardo wears black tennis shoes, pants, and undershirt with a deep red button-down shirt. He also has a black wristband. Riff, on the other hand, wears white tennis shoes, brown pants, and a yellow jacket. Visually, the contrast between the two groups sets them apart from the beginning of the film. The “Dance at the Gym” sequence adds the women, reinforcing the difference between the Puerto Rican and “American” youths (Figure 17b.). Once again, the most discernible difference lies in the color scheme. As evidenced in the “Promenade” section, the Sharks’ girls are all in some shade of red
or purple while the Jet girls primarily wear light blues and tans. The styles are also generally indicative of their separate ethnic backgrounds. In particular, full skirts with pick-ups and flounces dominate the Puerto Ricans’ dress style.

**Figure 17: Costuming the Jets vs. the Sharks**

The actors chosen to play Puerto Rican characters in the film were primarily white Americans with Hispanic actors in a few of the secondary roles. American-born actors played the lead roles, Maria and Bernardo. Natalie Wood (discussed in conjunction with the character Maria) was born in California. George Chakiris had Greek parents and was born in Ohio. Notably, he had originated the role of Riff in London. He was also the only actor to be “brownfaced” in order to highlight Bernardo’s difference. Negrón-Muntaner points out that “since Puerto Ricans are a multiracial people and some are indistinguishable from both whites and African Americans (as coded in the cinema), other visual and aural devices had to be mobilized to signify the specificity of the Puerto Ricans.”

The use of brownface for Chakiris became one such signifier. In both the original and recent Broadway productions, not only

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21Negrón-Muntaner, 91.
darkening of hair and skin but the use of black actors differentiated the Sharks from the Jets. Exaggerated accents also played a role in differentiating the two groups. The inauthentic accents of both Chakiris and Wood contribute to problematic and even racist portrayals of Puerto Ricans. Puerto Rican actress Rita Moreno did play the fiery Anita and became the first Hispanic woman to win an Academy Award. Casting Moreno as Anita opposite a white actor could be considered less problematic due to the fact that “it is acceptable for leading white men in Hollywood to seduce a nonwhite woman,” implied in the earlier film *South Pacific*. However, Chakiris’s brownface also served to visually emphasize the ethnic similarity between Bernardo and Anita. The secondary characters were played by a mixture of Hispanic and white American actors and dancers. Significantly, blacks remain absent in the film. In the film *West Side Story*, Puerto Ricans are coded as “Latino/as” without the connection to racial tensions involving African Americans in the continental United States.

**Adult Attitudes**

*West Side Story* tells the story of disaffected youths in New York City. As such, the few adult characters are ineffectual and marginal. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to look at the various attitudes of the adults towards the Puerto Rican youth. The most vocal of the adults is the racist Lieutenant Schrank. He constantly belittles and forces the Sharks to leave public areas, such as the playground and candy store. After the war council, Schrank enters and derides Bernardo and his gang in an attempt to buddy up to the Jets. He even acknowledges his abuse of authority: “Oh, yeah, sure, I know. It's a free country and I ain't got the right. But I got a badge. What do you got?” On the other hand, Gladhand and Doc are well meaning but irrelevant. During the dance, Gladhand makes a genuine attempt to overcome animosity and bring the two

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22Negrón-Muntaner, 92.
gangs together. However, his plan backfires when the kids begin a competition through dance in the “Mambo.” Similarly, Doc hopes for peace between the gangs but is unable to persuade them to get along. He is, however, able to stop the Jets from effectively raping Anita. Despite this, Anita has been victimized and exacts her revenge upon Tony.

The final image in the film reinforces the incompetence of the adult males. After Maria implores members of each gang to carry Tony’s body, many of the other members join in the procession. A few other young people, who as Lehman indicates “are not yet ready, perhaps never will be ready, to give up war as a way of life” meander out of the frame. Several adult men and women stand watching on the other side of the fence, out of the realm of the playground and the world of the young. Only Lieutenant Schrank, Officer Krupke (with Chino in custody) and Doc remain on the playground. The camera has moved into a long shot, highlighting the smallness of these characters’ influence and role in the story. All three stand for a moment, helpless before trailing after the youths. These characters do not fit into the traditional role of adult males as leaders in patriarchal society. Maria, not the supposed authority figures, takes charge at the end of the film. The adult men are simply left to follow her lead. In this way, the end of the film solidifies the inability of the adult male characters to provide a positive and productive model for the youths; the young, not the old, must make the move towards tolerance.

The gang members in West Side Story engage in a turf battle in which issues of masculinity and ethnicity play a part. Both the stage production and film give primacy to the white “American” Jets through enhanced characterization via songs and screen time. The film version draws on stereotypes of Hispanics in Hollywood but also attempts to challenge these expectations. In particular, the new version of “America” adds another level of social commentary and a glimpse of communal agency for the Sharks. The conflict between the two
gangs not only sets the backdrop for the romantic love story but proves to be an integral element of the story as well as embody the message. As the lack of adult authority suggests, it ultimately remains up to these warring youths to overcome their prejudice in order to create a peaceful, tolerant society.

Ultimately, *West Side Story* tells a tragic story and engages in social commentary. Like many other musicals of the time (e.g. *South Pacific*), it condemns racial intolerance while utilizing popular racial and gender stereotypes. The film enhances these stereotypes through a number of elements, including acting, cinematography, costume, and casting choices. Bernstein’s music also plays a role in the characterization of men and women and their relationship to one another. Music and movement exemplify the drama in *West Side Story*. While the film adheres to the collaborator’s original intent, the changes reflect the change to a more intimate medium as well as Hollywood’s conventions. Both derived from an earlier work and autonomous, Hollywood’s *West Side Story* represents an important contribution to film adaptations.
Conclusion

West Side Story in the Twenty-first Century

The 1961 film West Side Story remains popular in the realm of movie musicals. It still holds a place in the American consciousness, in part due to the sheer number of Oscars the film received in 1962. It made a prominent showing on the American Film Institute’s series of 100 greatest lists, appearing six times on three lists.\(^1\) For the fortieth anniversary of the film in 2001, Turner Classic Movies sponsored a celebration with a special screening at Radio City Music Hall at which several cast and crew members were present. As the fiftieth anniversary approaches, a new book, West Side Story: Music on Film Series by Barry Monush, is coming out. In my own experience, many people without much musical training or knowledge feel that they can connect with my research because at one time or another they have seen the movie West Side Story. The ongoing awareness of the film has bearing on stage productions of the musical throughout the United States.

In 2009, a new production of West Side Story, directed by Arthur Laurents, premiered on Broadway. The revival earned five Tony Award nominations and Karen Olivo (Anita) won Best Featured Actress in a Musical. I was able to see the revival in June 2010. One of Laurents’s goals was to update the production while remaining faithful to the intent of the original Broadway production. The original Broadway orchestrations were used, and the majority of Robbins’s choreography painstakingly preserved. On the other hand, aspects of the story represent a post-Production Code sensibility, retranslated onto the stage. The dialogue between Hollywood and Broadway is evident; the 1961 film tames the musical in many ways, \(^1\) West Side Story appeared as #51 on ”100 years, 100 films,” #59 on 100 Songs” for ”Tonight,” #35 on “100 Songs” for ”America,” #20 on “100 Songs” for ”Somewhere”, #3 on “100 Passions,” and #2 on “25 Greatest Movie Musicals.”
while the recent revival highlights controversial aspects. The hostility between the gangs becomes more visible, partly accomplished by moderate use of vulgar gestures, such as the middle finger. The attempted rape of Anita is actually accomplished in this production. The gang manhandles Anita then Doc enters only to interrupt the rape, not prevent it.

Not just in the Taunting/Rape Scene but throughout the show, sex gains greater prominence. At the Dance at the Gym, Gladhand proves that he is a “square” by preaching abstinence. This added bit received a lot of laughs from the audience. In fact, sex jokes pervaded the show. In the scene before “America,” the boys and girls argue and the line “you came with your pants open!,” though delivered in Spanish, is accompanied by Pepe spreading his legs for the audience. Similarly, the Jets use sexually-charged physical humor in the song “Officer Krupke.” In another scene, the production not only hints at but makes Maria and Tony’s sexual relationship explicit. Before she sings “A Boy Like That,” Anita actually opens the covers to look at the sheets on Maria’s bed in order to discern the exact nature of her friend’s transgression. Moments like these heighten the role of sex within the story, a device that could not be used in the 1961 film or indeed in the original 1957 Broadway production.

The new production drastically alters representations of the Jets’ girlfriends. During the Dance at the Gym, the Jet girls wear incredibly short, sexy dresses. In particular, Riff’s girlfriend Velma (in the film Graziella is Riff’s girl) wears an extremely short red dress that shows her dance bloomers. Velma has a very cultivated sexy yet all-American look that is reminiscent of Reese Witherspoon in *Legally Blonde*. During the “Mambo,” Anita and Velma are on more of an even footing. Both girls show off their dancing skills to the best of their ability. Furthermore, Velma proves to be much feistier than in the film. This production includes a bit in which she tries to fight one of the boys, and Riff lifts her up and away, still
punching and kicking the air. The females’ costumes, in general, are less differentiated in colors than in the film. However, the styles still serve to separate the different ethnic groups. For instance, the Shark girls still wear the Hispanic-looking flounces that permeate the film’s costumes.

Representation of race remains an important concern in the new Broadway production, of which the most notable change was the decision to translate a number of the Puerto Rican characters’ lines into Spanish. Laurents cites realism and desire to give the Puerto Rican characters greater agency as one of the main goals of the revival. Casting choices, such as the inclusion of a black Shark and Spanish speaking cast members, do result in a more realistic portrayal of the Puerto Rican characters. Yet the use of Spanish at many points proves to be problematic. Ben Brantley notes that while the use of Spanish “effectively underscores the sense of cultural estrangement that the show demands,” it also has the potential to make the plot less understandable for non-Spanish speakers unfamiliar with the show. Often the actors would actually throw away these lines, making the supposed point of using the language moot as it gave the Spanish less importance than the lines in English. Also, it seemed to vary as to how much Spanish is used depending on the cast member. For example, this Maria began “I Feel Pretty” in English while Josefina Scaglione begins the song in Spanish on the new recording. Laurents unabashedly scorned the film version of the musical, citing racist portrayals and bad acting as the primary reasons. However, the marginalization of the Puerto Rican characters through the use of Spanish arguably may engender similar problems.

As mentioned in chapter three, the musical can be read in terms of homosexuality, and the film necessarily downplays any undertones due to the Production Code. Once again, in the

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2 Laurents, 153.
2010 production, no such inhibitions limit the stage version now. Robbins’s balletic choreography can be construed as homoerotic. Movements between the two gangs that include rolling on the ground and playing leapfrog in the Prologue often seem more flirtatious than threatening. The relationship between Tony and Riff also warrants a closer look. Ethan Mordden posits a sexual relationship between the two close friends, drawing on the scholarly opinion that Romeo and Mercutio were lovers as well as the probable sleeping arrangements in a small New York tenement. In the new production, one of the most intimate scenes in the production occurs when Riff (John Arthur Greene) convinces Tony (Matthew Hydzik) to come to the dance. The gang leader is clearly hurt by the defection of his best friend. Soft voices and physical closeness mark this scene with a touching tenderness. While Tony’s relationship with Maria teems with passion, his relationship with Riff surpasses it in intimacy. Furthermore, the death of Riff incites the gentle Tony to kill and not just anyone but Maria’s brother.

The story and issues in West Side Story continue to resonate today. Intolerance and gang warfare still exist in contemporary America, and stereotyping still permeates the entertainment industry. The representations of gender and race in the musical follow from precedents but also allow for updated ways to challenge the stereotypes. Although based in 1950s New York and addressing contemporary issues, the connection with Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet promotes a timeless quality in the adaptation. The notion of the star-crossed lovers has spoken to a number of generations and continues to do so. Four great talents of musical theatre came together to create a well-crafted timely and yet timeless musical. Despite the problems and static quality of the 1961 film, it remains a creative adaptation that in many ways remains relevant.

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*Mordden, 242.
Appendix A

Instrumentation for Broadway and Film

The Broadway instrumentation can be found in the published orchestral score. I compiled the film instrumentation from the film scores in the Sid Ramin Papers at Columbia University.

Broadway instrumentation:

Reed I: Piccolo, Flute, Alto Saxophone, Clarinet in B?, Bass Clarinet
Reed II: Clarinet in E?, Clarinet in B?, Bass Clarinet
Reed III: Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, English Horn, Tenor Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone, Clarinet in B?, Bass Clarinet
Reed IV: Piccolo, Flute, Soprano Saxophone, Bass Saxophone, Clarinet in B?, Bass Clarinet
Reed V: Bassoon

2 Horns in F
3 Trumpets in B? (2nd doubling Trumpet in D)
2 Trombones
Timpani
Percussion (four players) **
Piano / Celesta
Electric Guitar / Spanish Guitar / Mandolin
Violin I - VII
Cello I - IV
Contrabass

** Traps, Vibraphone, 4 Pitched Drums, Xylophone, 3 Bongos, 3 Cowbells, Conga, Timbales, Snare Drum, Police Whistle, Gourd, 2 Suspended Cymbals, Castanets, Maracas, Finger Cymbals, Tambourines, Small Maracas, Glockenspiel, Woodblock, Claves, Triangle, Temple Blocks, Chimes, Tam-tam, Ratchet, Slide Whistle

Film Instrumentation:

6 Piccolos, 3 Flutes, 6 Alto flutes
Soprano Saxophone, 2 Alto Saxophones, 2 Tenor Saxophones, Baritone Saxophone, Bass Saxophone
2 Oboes
English horn
3 Clarinets in Bb, Clarinet in Eb, Bass clarinet
2 bassoons
4 Horns
8 Trumpets
4 Trombones
Tuba
4 Pianos
Celesta
Electric guitar, Spanish guitar, Bass guitar, Mandolin
Harp
18 Violins
6 Violas
8 Cellos
3 Bass
Percussion: Traps, 2 vibraphones, 4 pitched drums, timpani, 3 xylophone, 3 bongos, 3 cowbells, conga, timbales, snare drum, police whistle, gourd, suspended cymbals, castanets, small maracas, large maracas finger cymbals, tambourines, glockenspiel, woodblock, claves, triangle, temple blocks, chimes, tam-tam, ratchet slide whistle, tubular shaker, steel chime, large gong, guiro drum set
Appendix B

Completion Dates of Songs in Film Scores

I compiled these dates from the scores in the Sid Ramin papers at Columbia University.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Song/Scene/Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/10/1960</td>
<td>“I Feel Pretty”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/14/1960</td>
<td>“The Rumble”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/18/1960</td>
<td>“Something’s Coming”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/22/1960</td>
<td>“America”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/28/1960</td>
<td>Part 8 of Prologue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/11/1960</td>
<td>“Maria”</td>
</tr>
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<td>9/9/1960</td>
<td>“Tonight Quintet”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/22/1960</td>
<td>“One Hand, One Heart”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/23/1960</td>
<td>“Tonight”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/28/1960</td>
<td>“Tonight” Part 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/10/1960</td>
<td>“Mambo”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/26/1960</td>
<td>“Blues”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/27/1960</td>
<td>“Maria Cha-cha”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/28/1960</td>
<td>“Promenade”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/28/1960</td>
<td>“Jump”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/16/1960</td>
<td>“A Boy Like That/I Have a Love”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/2/1960</td>
<td>“Somewhere”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/8/1961</td>
<td>Part 9 of Prologue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/9/1961</td>
<td>Part 2 of Prologue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/10/1961</td>
<td>Part 1 of Prologue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/10/1961</td>
<td>Part 4 of Prologue (Revised 4/21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/10/1961</td>
<td>Part 5 of Prologue (Revised 4/21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/10/1961</td>
<td>Part 6 of Prologue (Revised 4/21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13/1961</td>
<td>Part 10 of Prologue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13/1961</td>
<td>Part 7 of Prologue (Revised 4/21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5/1961</td>
<td>Part A of Prologue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/6/1961</td>
<td>“Something’s Coming” new ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/7/1961</td>
<td>“Tonight” Part 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/7/1961</td>
<td>“Balcony Scene”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/7/1961</td>
<td>“I Feel Pretty” Lead-In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/10/1961</td>
<td>“Bridal Shop” Scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/10/1961</td>
<td>“Mambo” jukebox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/11/1961</td>
<td>“One Hand” Lead-In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/20/1961</td>
<td>“He Killed your Brother”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/20/1961</td>
<td>“A-Killed your Brother”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/20/1961</td>
<td>“A-Rab Shadows”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/20/1961</td>
<td>“Dig It Good”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/12/1961</td>
<td>“I Have a Love” new ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/1961</td>
<td>“Blues” insert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/1961</td>
<td>“Mambo” insert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/1961</td>
<td>“Maria” (Coat over Shoulder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/1961</td>
<td>Entr’acte (“I Feel Pretty”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/1961</td>
<td>“Rumble” insert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/1961</td>
<td>“Tony dies”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15/1961</td>
<td>“Maria Drops Gun”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/17/1961</td>
<td>“Thanks Daddy-O”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/17/1961</td>
<td>End Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/18/1961</td>
<td>“Rumble” percussion insert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/18/1961</td>
<td>“Cool” insert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/19/1961</td>
<td>“Killer, Killer”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/21/1961</td>
<td>Bars 1-8 of “Somewhere” (2 bars added)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Selected Covers of the Romantic Songs


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Artist, Album/Track Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I FeelPretty”</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Julie Andrews, <em>Broadway’s Fair Julie</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“One Hand, One Heart”</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Dionne Warwick, <em>On Stage and in the Movies</em>, track shared with “With These Hands” as a medley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Maria”</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Johnny Mathis, <em>Rhythms and Ballads of Broadway</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Perry Como, <em>By Request</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Maria”</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Andy Williams, <em>Moon River and Other Great Movie Themes</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>P.J. Proby, single reached #8 on UK charts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Somewhere”</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>P.J. Proby, single reached #6 on UK charts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>The Supremes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Len Barry, single reached #26 on Billboard Hot 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>The Temptations, <em>The Temptations in a Mellow Mood</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Barbra Streisand, <em>The Broadway Album</em>, single reached #43 on Billboard Hot 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Tonight”</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Eddie Fisher, <em>Tonight with Eddie Fisher</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Andy Williams, <em>Moon River and Other Great Movie Themes</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instrumental Covers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrumental Recording</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Andre Previn and His Pals Play West Side Story</em> (1959)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. “Something’s Coming”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “Jet Song”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “Tonight”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “I Feel Pretty”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. “Gee, Officer Krupke!”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. “Cool”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. “Maria”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. “America”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*won the Grammy Award for Best Jazz Performance for Solo or Small Group in 1961

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Prologue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “Something’s Coming”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “Maria”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “America”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. “Tonight”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. “Cool”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. “I Feel Pretty”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. “Officer Krupke”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Taunting Scene (The Rumble)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. “Somewhere”-Finale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*won the Grammy Award for Best Jazz Performance for Large Group in 1962
## Appendix D

### Broadway vs. Film Order of Musical Numbers

Song order of the stage version can be found in the published orchestral score. Film song order compiled through repeated viewings of the film.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broadway version:</th>
<th>Film version:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prologue</td>
<td>Prologue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jet Song</td>
<td>Jet Song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something’s Coming</td>
<td>Something’s Coming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance at the Gym Sequence</td>
<td>Dance at the Gym Sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Maria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool</td>
<td>Balcony Scene (Tonight Duet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Hand, One Heart</td>
<td>Gee, Officer Krupke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonight ensemble</td>
<td>I Feel Pretty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumble</td>
<td>One Hand, One Heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Feel Pretty</td>
<td>Tonight Ensemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhere Ballet Sequence</td>
<td>Rumble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gee, Officer Krupke</td>
<td>Somewhere Duet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Boy Like That/I Have a Love</td>
<td>Cool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finale</td>
<td>A Boy Like That/I Have a Love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finale
Appendix E

**Broadway vs. Film “America” Lyrics**

Lyrics for stage version can be found in the published orchestral score. The score of “America” in the Sid Ramin Papers at Columbia University shows the changes made for the film.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broadway version:</th>
<th>Film Version:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rosalia:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Anita:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico,</td>
<td>Puerto Rico,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You lovely island . . .</td>
<td>My heart’s devotion--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island of tropical breezes.</td>
<td>Let it sink back in the ocean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always the pineapples growing,</td>
<td>Always the hurricanes blowing,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always the coffee blossoms blowing . . .</td>
<td>Always the population growing,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anita:</strong></td>
<td>And the money owing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico . . .</td>
<td>And the population growing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You ugly island . . .</td>
<td>And the money owing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island of tropic diseases.</td>
<td>And the population growing . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always the hurricanes blowing,</td>
<td>And the money owing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always the population growing . . .</td>
<td>And the hurricanes blowing,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the money owing,</td>
<td>Always the hurricanes blowing,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the babies crying,</td>
<td>Always the population growing,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the bullets flying.</td>
<td>And the money owing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the island Manhattan.</td>
<td>I like the island Manhattan,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoke on your pipe and put that in!</td>
<td>Smoke on your pipe and put that in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All (except R):</strong></td>
<td><strong>Girls (chorus):</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to be in America!</td>
<td>I like to be in America,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.K. by me in America!</td>
<td>Okay by me in America,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ev’rything free in America</td>
<td>Everything free in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For a small fee in America!</td>
<td>For a small fee in America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rosalia:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Bernardo:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the city of San Juan.</td>
<td>I’ll have my own washing machine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anita:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Juano:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know a boat you can get on.</td>
<td>What will you have, though, to keep clean?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rosalia:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Anita:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hundreds of flowers in full bloom.</td>
<td>Skyscrapers bloom in America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anita:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Another Girl:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hundreds of people in each room!</td>
<td>Cadillacs zoom in America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Another Girl:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobile in America,</td>
<td>Industry boom in America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chromium steel in America,</td>
<td><strong>Boys:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wire-spoke wheel in America,</td>
<td>Twelve in a room in America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very big deal in America!</td>
<td><strong>Anita:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rosalia:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Bernardo:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ll drive a Buick through San Juan.</td>
<td>Lots of new housing with more space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anita:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Bernardo:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If there’s a road you can drive on.</td>
<td>Lots of doors slamming in our face.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anita:</strong></td>
<td>I’ll get a terrace apartment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rosalia:
I'll give my cousins a free ride.
Anita:
How you get all of them inside?
All:
Immigrant goes to America,
Many hellos in America;
Nobody knows in America
Puerto Rico's in America!
Rosalia:
I'll bring a T.V. to San Juan.
Anita:
If there a current to turn on!
Rosalia:
I'll give them new washing machine.
Anita:
What have they got there to keep clean?
All:
I like the shores of America!
Comfort is yours in America!
Knobs on the doors in America,
Wall-to-wall floors in America!
Rosalia:
When I will go back to San Juan.
Anita:
When you will shut up and get gone?
Rosalia:
Everyone there will give big cheer!
Anita:
Everyone there will have moved here!

Bernardo:
Better get rid of your accent.
Anita and Three Girls:
Life can be bright in America.
Bernardo:
If you can fight in America.
Girls:
Life is all right in America.
Boys:
If you’re all white in America.
Anita and Consuelo:
Here you are free and you have pride.
Bernardo:
Long as you stay on your own side.
Anita:
Free to be anything you choose.
Boys:
Free to wait tables and shine shoes.
Bernardo:
Everywhere grime in America,
Organized crime in America,
Terrible time in America.
Anita:
You forget I’m in America.
Bernardo:
I think I go back to San Juan
Anita:
I know a boat you can get on.
Bernardo:
Everyone there will give big cheer.
Anita:
Everyone there will have moved here.
Appendix F

“This Turf is Ours” Lyrics

Lyrics transcribed from the score present in the Sid Ramin Papers at Columbia University.

Riff: This Turf is Ours!
All: Drew a Big white sign with “keep out” sign and they crossed it.
Riff: This turf is ours!
All: Gotta hold our ground or we’ll turn around and we’ve lost it! We’re staking a claim. The boundaries are set out! The foreigners came. Well, now they’re gonna get out! We know the score, we fought before and this is war! So let ‘em leave us alone and get a turf of their own. This turf is ours!

Repeat sign:
Riff: This turf is ours!
All: Got a long term lease and no lousy greasers will break it.
Riff: This turf is ours!
All: And we’re gonna fry anyone who’s trying to take it! You’re gonna get hurt or else you’re gonna beat it! Stay off our dirt or else you’ll have to eat it! So listen world, and listen clear, stay out of here! Go home and leave us alone, go get a turf of your own. This turf is ours!

Riff: C’mon, Jets! Straighten up! We’re on a spot! Time to get hot! Buddy boys.
Gang: Hot!
Riff: It’s only a little dot. It may be small but it’s all we got.
Group 1: it’s our beat!
Group 2: It’s our street!
All: It’s our turf!
Riff: East to the avenue
All: The ever-lovin’ avenue!
Riff: And west to the drive,
Gang: The ever mother-lovin’ drive!
Riff: south to the parkin’ lot,
Gang: The cotton-pickin’ parkin’ lot!
Riff: And north to the five and ten.
Gang: Amen, amen!
Riff: c’mon Jets! Straighten up!
Gang: Crazy, daddy-o,
Riff: You ready?
Gang: Daddy-o
Riff: You hear me?
Gang: Daddy-o
Riff: You with me?
Gang: Daddy-o
Riff: The word’s out!
All: The word’s out! The word’s out!
Bibliography

Archival Collection

Sid Ramin Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Works Cited


Darby, William and Jack Du Bois. *American Film Music: Major Composers, Techniques*,


Films Referenced


