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"The Defense Rests"

Picturing the Unrest of Law and Order in *Chicago*

In the story of *Chicago*, the customary logic of law and order is turned upside down and inside out. It is mostly due to the workings of the comic and a specific *carnivalesque* logic. In this paper, I intend to focus on the figure of Billy Flynn and interpret his role as a modern *Vice* within this story. The most important aspect I would like to highlight in connection with this figure is his comic one. My intention is to show that this comic-devilish figure is central in the twisting and turning of the story and his actions are paramount in the happy endings in spite of the fact that he is not an evidently and entirely comic or positive character.

Elisabeth Bronfen cites Susanne Langer at the beginning of her article, *Femme Fatale – Negotiations of Tragic Desire*, stating that "[t]ragedy is the image of Fate, as comedy is of Fortune" (Bronfen 2004, 103). This clear dichotomy demarcates the dividing line between tragedy and comedy. This line is the one that is blurred in *Chicago* with a comic-*carnivalesque*-farcical subversion thus also producing the unique *farcical femmes fatales* of the story. *Femmes fatales,* as their name suggests, are the 'representatives' of death, they are fatal, they are lethal. Yet, while in *Chicago* we have *femmes fatales* behaving exactly the way an 'exemplary *femme fatale* should' – such as leading a 'sinful' life full of 'guilty pleasures' such as drinking alcohol, smoking, partying all night, wearing revealing dresses, spending much private time with men while being sexually alluring towards them in public, committing crimes (even murder) and so on – their destiny is not Fate but Fortune. The *femmes fatales* of *Chicago* turn out to be not the daughters of Fate but of Fortune, which is quite oxymoronic. They are *femmes fatales* in a comedy, not in a tragedy, thus their fate is turned into fortune. With the use of the comic, Watkins and her successors managed to subvert and change a very basic attribute of the *femme fatale,* that she is bound to death. In *Chicago*, however, the *femmes fatales* stay alive and most of them go free. In spite of this, they are not less lethal in the sense that they cause misery and death but their punishment is not destruction. Thus, the main reason for their acquittal and success is the functioning of the comic within the story because comedy is allied with Fortune, while tragedy is with Fate. These *femmes fatales* are the daughters of Fortune thus they evade Fate themselves apart from the fact that they still are deadly as *femmes fatales.*

In *Chicago*, it is Fortuna who plays a central role and who has power while Justitia and the Fates – who would bring justice, and consequently, death and tragedy – are missing from this story in their full capabilities and endowed with their customary power. The comic is to be found in all aspects of the story: the genres, the narrative strategies, the performances and acts of the characters as well as the complexity of irony that pervades all. The 'salvation' arrives for these *farcical femmes fatales* not through Fate, death and tragedy but through a comic-grotesque-*carnivalesque* encounter with Fortune as they sing and dance themselves out of their own fate. Nonetheless, an interesting twist in the story is that, although, these are the women who seem to be the central characters and the ones who are the real villains, it is, in fact, Billy Flynn who is the main villain or the *Vice* in the story.

The world of *Chicago* is that of the *carnival.* It is a comic-grotesque space of subversion and un/canny abandon. This facilitates the functioning of the *farcical femmes fatales* under the guidance of an ambiguous and "ambidextrous" (Matuska 2005, 1) *Vice figure* who manages to turn law and order upside down and also get away with it. I propose that the figure of Billy Flynn is a modern(ized) *Vice* and serves as a comic-devilish figure who rules over the *carnivalesque* world of

Chicago. The *Vice* figure is ambiguous and involves both a positive and a negative factor which is also reflected in the character's long history as it originated from the morality plays in which the character who was the allegorical representation of *Vice* was to be played "in a fashion both sinister and comic," and within literary history, this figure was often regarded "as a precursor both of the cynical, ironic villain and of some of the comic figures in Elizabethan drama [...]" (Abrams 1999, 166).

Bakhtin also supports the close relationship between the comic and the devil by stating that, in several medieval literary forms, a jolly devil figure appeared whose function was to represent "the unofficial point of view" (Bakhtin 1968, 41). This jolly devil was not a terrifying or an alien figure, for example, in Rabelais's writing devils were described as "excellent and jovial fellows" (Bakhtin 41). What is more, "[a]t times the devils and hell itself appear as comic monsters" (Bakhtin 41). Bakhtin also adds that the representation of the devil as a terrifying, melancholic and tragic figure arrived only with Romanticism (40–41). Considering the principle of laughter and also taking into consideration cold humor, Jean Paul eventually highlights the comic-tragic melancholic feature of destructive laughter by saying that "the greatest humorist of all would be the devil" (Bakhtin 42). Wylie Sypher also opines that there is a close connection between the fool, the jester and the devil, and states that the "tempter" figure often "disguises himself as clown or devil" (Sypher 1956, 236).

According to Ágnes Matuska, during the Tudor period, the character of the *Vice* as a clownish, jocular, zany and ludicrous character, in spite of the fact that it had its roots in the morality plays and it was the allegory of Sin, served as an interlocutor and mediator between the sphere of the drama and that of the audience. She asserts that during carnivals it was actually a *Vice* figure who was the jolly master of ceremonies and his function was to make people get involved in the fiction of the events or that of the play/drama, and as a result, this *Vice/Master of Ceremonies* formed the bridge between the fictional world of the drama and the reality of the people. The *Vice/Master of Ceremonies* concretely and directly addresses the audience while being part of the performance, hence, his presence is split between the world of fiction and that of reality. Another important feature of the *Vice* is cleverness, he is always intelligent, artful, shrewd and witty. (Matuska 2010) This all can be said about Billy Flynn and although he is not the connection between us as audience and the play/film we watch or see but those within the story who get involved in the performance within the story we watch: he is a *mise-en-abyme Vice/Master of Ceremonies* figure. In this sense, he does not lose his function as a link because he makes the connection between his intradiegetic audience (in court and the people through the media) and the fictional events he directs about the lives of his defendants, here for instance, Roxie. The *Vice/Master of Ceremonies* type of figure that exists only in the 1976 and the 2002 versions is the one who talks to us as extradiegetic audience and tries to involve us in the events. He is rather neutral (and has a limited, minimal presence), as I have mentioned, but in the 1976 version he has slightly more edge, for example, saying at the closing of the vaudeville: "Okay, you babes of jazz. Let's pick up the pace. Let's shake the blues away. Let's make the parties longer. Let's make the skirts shorter and shorter. Let's make the music hotter. Let's all go to hell in a fast car and *KEEP IT HOT*! (He exists with microphone. [...])" (Ebb and Fosse 1976, 91).

In addition, *Chicago* in its latest versions is a musical, as well, and the church fathers have always warned the people that it could only be the devil who taught women to dance otherwise they would not have been able to commit such diableries with their bodies (Prioleau 2003, 12). What we find in *Chicago* are true corporeal diableries in a mockingly *carnivalesque* manner. Flynn as a comic devil is surrounded by the musical diableries and teases of (his) she-devils in a manner which would quite likely earn the disapproval and dispraise of the mighty church fathers. When Roxie utters "Oh God!," Flynn answers with a comic comment (in two versions): "Cut out 'God' – stay where you're better acquainted." (Watkins 1927, 42; Marshall 2002a, 41 min) In addition,

for example, in the 1927 and in the 1976 versions, even Roxie's father claims that "she went to hell" several years before (Watkins 1927, 39; Ebb and Fosse 1976, 34).

The Billy Flynn character has a central role in the way these women are treated due to the fact that he is the top defense attorney and he is the one who knows how to pull strings to win a case. An important characteristic feature which helps him in the successful manipulation of the jury and the public thus winning the acquittal of the women he defends is that he specializes absolutely in female clients. He performs the 'protecting' father figure role; he acts as a respectable paternal figure who stands behind the women in trouble thus projecting an image that the defendant is a 'good' woman. This role-play is central in all of the versions and the defense tactic is entirely based on it – the strong, experienced male defends the fragile and non-knowledgeable female. Its most spectacular version occurs in the 1942 film adaptation – which closely follows the choreography of the trial scenes of the 1927 film version – where after collapsing, Billy Flynn carries the half-conscious Roxie in his arms towards the judge in a (mock-)tragic manner to offer her as a sacrificial lamb on the altar of justice. (Wellman 1942, 67 min) Flynn as a paternal figure, a "paternal authority," supposedly is the representative of the "symbolic law" (Bronfen 2007, 124). He, as a lawyer, is supposed to be the representative of the symbolic law indeed.

It is a rather expressive (re)interpretation of the figure of the *Vice* that Billy Flynn is actually a lawyer. It is true that his figure and his profession are rooted in reality since, in the real murder cases, lawyers and attorneys were needed in court to present the different sides and aspects of the cases, yet, this profession involves this unique duality of the bad and the good, the evil and the comic. On the one hand, Billy Flynn as a defense lawyer acts right when he defends his client because it is his duty and he is paid for it, hence, his actions are justifiable when he has his client acquitted. On the other hand, he is evil and corrupt. He lies and cheats, in addition, he deceives and manipulates everybody and everything. In a sense, he even commits crimes, and most of all, makes the jury acquit people who are guilty. In this sense, he does wrong. Hence, he is an ambiguous, double-dealing and "ambidextrous" (Matuska 2005, 1) figure, and not only in terms of morality. Additionally, this all is presented in a comic-grotesque, mock-tragic, but by all means, artificial and theatrical manner. Billy Flynn is behind everything, he is the one solving the problems, and in fact, he turns out to be in the center. Matuska, when discussing the character of the *Vice,* brings an example about the definition and explanation of who he is in which "the Vice enters into a long but, in its heterogeneity, quite funny and intriguing monologue enumerating a whole colourful spectrum of real and metaphoric occupations and characteristics, ranging from *lawyer* through 'sower of lies' to mackerel" [emphasis mine] (Matuska 2005, 9). Here, the lawyer as an occupation for this character is one of the first ones to be mentioned, although, it is true there are several others, and some less intriguing professions mentioned, as well.

Ágnes Matuska, while elaborating on the figure of the *Vice* in sixteenth century English Drama, states that it is "a unique and problematic character" and that often the character we meet as *Vice* in the dramas of this period are not exclusively evil, corrupting and 'anti-morale': "[t]he character, a tempter, a *mischievous, humorous villain* is a real crux" [emphases mine] (Matuska 2005, 1). Billy Flynn, although not being a sixteenth century English character in a drama or a morality play is still a *Vice-like* character, yet a modern version, in a twentieth century American play (and its later versions) treating questions of morality, what is more, the committing, treatment and even judgment of concrete crimes. Billy Flynn has his roots in the *Vice* character of the morality plays and as we see in the dramas of later periods likewise. Matuska opines that "[n]o matter whether we take the perspective of 16th century audiences or 20th century critics, a basic problem with the Vice has always been the sense of comedy that makes him, although evil, appealing" (Matuska 2005, 2). Although, what is said is only that 20th century critics, who might interpret the 16th century *Vice,* can encounter the problems created by this character, yet, I would also add that there are the 20th century audiences just as well who also try to understand not only the 16th century *Vice* but its 'descendant' in the 20th century who is evil as well as comic, and as a result

appealing at the same time. For instance, the makers of the 2002 film version claim in the "Audio Commentary" that even though Billy Flynn is "corrupt" and "evil" one cannot resist his charm – "he is charming" as they say – and one can only "like him." (Marshall 2002b, 39 min)

Matuska goes on saying that there are numerous diverse figures who were/are called or categorized as 'Vice,' still, she reckons that they all belong to the same type on the basis of a few characteristic features which belong to them all such as "their metadramatic behaviour, their improvisational attitude, their characteristic comedy" (Matuska 2005, 2). What is even more intriguing and significant in the figure of the *Vice* is that he as an outsider generally "*does not* need to contribute to this doctrine [moral doctrine], quite the contrary" and what he does and what happens to him make "the application of the workings of Justice" difficult (ibid). This might be rather problematic and questionable if we consider that Billy Flynn is a lawyer who is supposed to be at the service of Justitia but he does concretely what is described above. However, his duplicitous twisting of truth and justice actually serves to present a more complex understanding of morality, crime and how people treat these or react to them. While emphasizing the connection between the comic and the *Vice* Matuska stresses again that "the clown or fool or jester element in the Vice" does not make morality disappear only makes it "more complex and ambiguous" and challenges our sense and understanding of it (Matuska 2005, 18). Eventually, she suggests that we should not try to separate the comic and the evil in the figure of the *Vice* because this duality is what gives him his unique power: "[i]nstead of separating the comic and destructive elements in the Vice, we should rather see them inseparable: a unique merger that is intrinsic to the character, and that gives him the unfathomable energy and power he possesses" (Matuska 2005, 19). I would add that the same is true in the case of the *farcical femmes fatales*: their specific duality of the comic and the evil is what endows them with their unique power, as well.

Matuska, while going on with her analysis of *Vices,* states that "[...] the Vice is the one to reveal how corrupt people are, rather than corrupting them himself," and she also suggests that the *Vice* is to show how people are the same everywhere independently of place or class (or, I would add, time) and that he might actually reveal "the corruptedness of society" instead of providing the source of corruption (Matuska 2005, 8). In the case of Billy Flynn, it is all valid. It is not him who corrupts Roxie or the judicial system, they are already corrupt and he just makes use of it and plays with his possibilities. Later Matuska adds that the *Vice*'s "evil nature is unreliable as well" implying that he might even be on the good side (Matuska 2005, 13). It is again this duality of good and bad that creates the ambiguity of the *Vice* characters, and that of Billy Flynn, as well. This ambiguity is also backed up by Darryll Grantley who highlights the hybridity of the *Vice* character as somebody plotting evil but whose actions are not primarily so and again connects him to comedy: "[t]he Vice is an interesting hybrid of the narrative specimen and the scheming servant of classical comedy, and though he often plots evil, his actions are far from consistently malevolent" (Grantley 61 quoted in Matuska 2005, 15).

The ending of the *Vice* is also an intriguing question since often he can leave without punishment or he might even be joking while making his exit. "It seems that the Vice does not subject his view to the moral one, he does not act according to a logic where he, as evil, has to be loser" (Matuska 15). The *Vice* refuses the customary logic of good and bad, right and wrong and can even evade punishment as Billy Flynn does as well as the *farcical femmes fatales* surrounding him: they escape the logic of morality and even that of the law – crime and punishment. "[...] [W]e may account for the Vice's comic and unrepentant exit as part of the Vice's comic tradition" – as Matuska adds (15). Hence, the Vice's leaving unpunished or even joking is a possible part of his tradition. The same happens in *Chicago* likewise, concerning Billy Flynn and his 'minions,' Roxie and Velma etc. They leave unpunished, and in the last two versions (1976, 2002), Billy Flynn is even joking as he freely leaves the scene and adds in a carefree and mocking manner: "[y]ou're a free woman, Roxie Hart, and God save Illinois. Well, I guess that finishes us, Roxie. *(To the audience.)* And that's the last *you'll* see of me, too. *(To the Bandstand.)* My exit music please."

(Ebb and Fosse 1976, 88) Here, he also uses his 'metadramatic skill' and functions as a link between the world of the story and that of the audience, us. It is rare that the Flynn character really uses this specificity of the *Vice*, but here it occurs. In the 2002 version (and in all the other ones) he 'loses' this 'ability' of his. The same situation in the 2002 version is the following: Billy Flynn is nonchalantly smoking a cigar while relaxing after the successful outcome of the trial and counting (in his head) how much money he earned – only the two of them remained in the courtroom – Roxie shows no gratitude that he has just saved her life, then he reveals to her, smiling, that it was him who made a half-fake, out of hers diary to help out Velma. He gets up and collects his hat and coat and starts to move on. He walks out of the room in a carefree manner while showing Roxie (and us) a last ironic smile saying: "I have never lost a case." – as if explaining why he did that to her and her diary –, then adds still with the same smirk on his face: "[y]ou're a free woman, Roxie Hart, and God save Illinois." (Marshall 2002a, 1 h 32 min) However, it is also true that in the final scene, he is among the audience when Velma and Roxie perform as famous vaudeville stars on stage. Yet, the merry exit is true in all versions, even if occasionally it is not that merry (like in the 1927 film adaptation), but it is never tragic or punishing.

In the different versions of the story of *Chicago*, law and order (let it be either legal, social or moral) are subverted, undermined and distorted. *Chicago* comically subverts the American judicial system and presents how unjust the legal procedures are in the cases within the story. Certainly, all of the versions of *Chicago* are literary and filmic treatments of the original murder cases, still, Watkins as a journalist to cover them was part of the events throughout, and in a sense, she dramatized this story in a satirical play to express her protest against everything she experienced throughout the 'real' judiciary process and the real life events. It is revealed in the original play that Lady Justice is shut out of these procedures, but in spite of this, Watkins did not present the story as a tragedy, instead, she approached the problem from a comic aspect which was kept in all of the versions of *Chicago*.

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

In the 2002 film adaptation, a painting of Lady Justice can be seen right behind the judge and a bit above everybody, supposedly guarding law and order, but in its double representation in the secondary storyline, Justitia is presented as a glamorous vaudeville performer who is not there to ensure justice but only to create an 'effect' or an illusion of justice. The scenes, in which the major female characters take the stand, were mostly shot from an angle that only the feet of Lady Justice can be seen in the background. Ironically, these are solely her legs and feet – her lower parts – that guard the fake testimonies made by Roxie and Velma during these scenes. The Justitia who (theoretically and ideally) should be reigning over the whole judiciary process is supposedly there in that painting but it is made clear in the film that the Justitia who is really present is the one who is in the foreground, only faking justice in her glamorous vaudeville performance similarly to the leading female characters, and in fact, everybody else.

In the case of *Justitia à la Chicago*, it can immediately be recognized that she holds only the scales but not the swords as if in the story the sinners and criminals are just there to be measured but not to be judged. This is what happens, Justitia in *Chicago* is not the Justicia who is supposedly

lawfully there. Only a thin veil partly covers her eyes and she is not there to sentence the sinners/criminals due to the lack of her sword. In addition, she is raised high up right at the beginning of the scene probably in order to remove her away from what is taking place in the courtroom. She is only a decoration, a part of the entertainment.

While Lady Justice is placed in a 'safe distance' from the events of the *carnivalesque* courtroom, Billy Flynn as a comic-grotesque *Vice* figure performs his tricks. In fact, he is the defense that never rests in spite of the fact that, for example in the 2002 version, he concretely claims that "the defense rests" (Marshall 2002a, 1 h 30 min). He, as a 'Perpetuum Mobile,' is making everything move and making everything happen without a rest. In judicial terms, when the sentence is heard: "[t]he defense rests" that means that everything was said and done and justice should follow. In *Chicago*, the defense never rests since there is no justice to be declared. Although, Billy Flynn claims that the defense, that is him, can rest, he does not do so. In the 2002 version of the story, when they enter the courtroom it is presented visually as if he was leading Roxie down into Hell, through the gates of Hell formed by vaudevillian women, while the courtroom is lit with red light. Here, the defense attorney is really the devil's advocate or rather the devil himself. At the center of the whole judiciary process stands evil incarnate in the form of Billy Flynn. Eventually, he is the one who in a final *danse macabre*-like performance, a step dance (as visualized in the 2002 version), triumphs over everybody and gains the acquittal for both Roxie and Velma.

He perfectly knows how this has to be done, how law and order can be kept or reinstated and since he knows that it cannot be realized in the case of these women, he manipulates the feminine/female images to be compatible with the supposed law and order images connected to Justitia. In the end, he succeeds and everybody believes that these *femmes fatales* are actually angelic ladies. Roxie is presented as a reformed sinner and her appearance radiates innocence and remorse. Ironically, this is Roxie, who, as a 'reformed sinner,' is really granted man's "unalienable natural rights" of equality, "rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Annus 2005, 106). The centrality of "civil religion" and the Judeo-Christian tradition (Annus 2005, 109–120), and most concretely the Christian tradition, are all exploited and undermined in the various versions of *Chicago* as Roxie is placed on a pedestal as the daughter of God who is expecting a child ('evidently' from her rightful husband), and who leads a strictly religious life thus turning all kinds of law and order upside down.

This religious representation and imagery is as follows: in the original play, Roxie appears wearing "a dress with meaning: heavy white crepe with surplice collar and bishop sleeves – a nun would envy this chastity; white shoes and hose of perplexing nudity. [...] Her eyes, wide and innocent, stare soulfully at the blank wall that represents the jury" (Waktins 1927, 79–80). She "leans back, wan and pale" – adds Watkins (Waktins 1927, 82). The courtroom and the men around her are entirely enchanted by her *(performance)*:

> *The* JUDGE *and the* JURY *may be listening to* MR HARRISON – *they certainly hear his thundering tones – but they rest their eyes – maybe feast their eyes – on a fairer object than a dapper* STATE'S ATTORNEY *or the gangling young man in green. You have guessed it, gentle reader:* ROXIE. *And who can blame them? For the courtroom is hot and crowded and she wears that dress with meaning. Her hair, soft and shining, is an aureole in the sunlight. Her cheeks are a petal pink, her parted lips a rose. She's working hard, too – titled forward on the edge of her chair, white hands clasped to her breast.* (Waktins 1927, 89)

Later, Roxie is dressed as a little shepherdess in the 1927 film version, something similar but more urbane in the 1942 version and as a nun-like convent girl in the 2002 film adaptation. In the first two cases, she even holds a bouquet of flowers and certainly a very conventional imagery is evoked in this case, as well, that is she is a little innocent, beautiful, fragile flower who must not be crushed. She is identified with the white flowers when in both first films Billy Flynn seizes the bouquet, throws it onto the floor and stamps on it violently emphasizing how this little woman would be crushed in a similar fashion. In the 1942 version, she is even kneeling in front of the

jury as if making a confession and then she faints. All of the elements of ideal femininity are enumerated: she cries, looks lost and scared, behaves modest, pious, innocent, harmless, fragile etc. It is emphasized that she is a wife, a mother-to-be, to highlight how conventional, law-bidding and 'ordered' she is. Thus, she is turned into a saint that is the conventional image again: the woman as angel. In spite of all this, law and order are reinstated through the enforcement of the images of ideal femininity. Nobody is concerned about the *femmes fatales* since they performed the 'ideal and proper woman' with her entire repertoire of regulated femininity. Roxie as a female saint performs the Assumption of the Virgin Mary when she takes the stand in the 2002 version, as she is elevated into the 'sky' in a circus hoop and is lit by white light from behind as if the light of God covered her and she seems to have a halo, as well.

Noone concerns him/herself whether this is only a performance because they enjoy themselves and the entertainment is carried to perfection. As Billy Flynn states: this is all show business, give them the razzle-dazzle and they will be asking for more. In addition, noone will see clearly with sequins in their eyes but they will not even notice since they will be blinded by the spectacle. (Marshall 2002a, 1 h 16–19 min) The audience gets what it wants: prime entertainment, and since the performers do their job right, they are rewarded (as they can walk away free); as it is presented in the original drama:

> *He [Billy Flynn]'s fighting, gentlemen, fighting, with every drop of his blood, for the life of that little brave woman. The* JURY, *hypnotized, enthralled, hangs on each word and follows every gesture. The* PRESS *watch benignly; they know his whole bag of tricks, but BILLY's always worth watching. Even the* JUDGE *listens. / And* ROXIE – ? *This scene is really the close of an hour's duel between* ROXIE *and* FLYNN. *When the curtain goes up, honors are even and she is faithfully registering the emotions outlined for her in rehearsal. Gradually, however, she extends her field; deeper emotion, gesture, writhing. She works for her audience – the* JURY; *and they, fascinated, are torn between her contortions and the fervid orator.* (Watkins 1927, 103)

The usual figures of the law are also present such as the judge, the jury, the policemen, the bailiff, the attorneys etc., and the whole trial is set in the symbolic space of law and order, i.e.: the courtroom, however, what (seemingly) reinstates law and order is the figure of an angelic woman (or rather merely its performance and/or appearance) in the hands of a devilish man. The whole trial scene, and in fact, the whole story is only a *danse macabre* orchestrated by Billy Flynn who manages to free the two devilish women masked as angelic ones, Roxie and Velma (besides many other similar women), although, it is true that the hoof of the devil is constantly present and it is continuously evident that everything is only an act and everybody knows this but they accept it because they want the razzle-dazzle, they want to be part of the *danse macabre*. Eventually, it all ends as a horror film when in the last shot the supposedly destroyed monster grins into the viewer's face – while still being in the belief that the *danse macabre* is over – and the creature, here concretely the comic-grotesque-devilish *Vice* figure, starts singing:

> Give'em the old razzle dazzle / Razzle dazzle 'em / Give'em an act with lots of flash in it / And the reaction will be passionate / Give'em the old hocus pocus / Bead and feather 'em / How can they see with sequins in their eyes? / What if your hinges all are rusting? / What if, in fact, you're just disgusting? / Razzle dazzle 'em / And they'll never catch wise! (Ebb and Fosse 1976, 75–76)

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