dition of "The Pied Piper" in relation to a specifically Franco-American tradition of the legend, which thus far has not received critical attention. French and later French-inspired American iterations of "The Pied Piper" put into play tensions between bourgeois and Bohemians, commerce and art, which Demy adapts to his 1970s, post-WWII, and post-1968 audience. Although this chapter does not deal with "queer" as laid out in this introduction, it does deal with the marginalization of social and ethnic Others, who bear affinities with the sexually marginalized in his other films. Inclusion of *The Pied Piper*, moreover, conveys the breadth of Demy's sociopolitical engagement with questions of class and social justice in his films.

Finally, chapter 4 examines the ways in which Demy's *Lady Oscar* represents the undoing of the figure of the maiden warrior. The chapter traces the background history of the maiden warrior figure in China and France to its incarnation in Japanese manga and, specifically, *The Rose of Versailles* (1972–73) by Riyoko Ikeda, on which Demy's film is based. Although maiden warrior tales generally and necessarily problematize gender and sexuality through their cross-dressed heroines, questions related to class and political order often go unchallenged. By situating their maiden warrior tales within the context of the French Revolution, Ikeda and Demy end up challenging the very order that makes possible such tales. Especially conscious of class issues, Demy goes further than Ikeda in positing the people, rather than the aristocratic Oscar, as the vehicle for change. This film is also seminal in Demy's oeuvre. Whereas we can read *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* in terms of the heroine not being able to come out of the closet, *Lady Oscar* proves to be a coming out narrative for both Demy's heroine and for Demy himself, who truly comes out as a queer director with this film.

Throughout the book I concentrate on how Demy draws from the fairy-tale genre to explore issues pertaining to gender, sexuality, and class in order to challenge gender, sexual, and social norms. What makes such a study particularly compelling are the ways in which it highlights Demy's creative uses of fairy-tale motifs to put forth liberating models of sociosexual relations through an aesthetic that moves between the visual and emotional pleasures of all things fairy, on the one hand, and the often tragic underseams that hold together conventional fairy-tale plots, on the other. Through his films Demy points to both the constraints and the utopian possibilities of the fairy tale.

1

Fairy Tale and Melodrama

Lola *and* The Umbrellas of Cherbourg

> A knight (cowboy, ex-GI) dressed in white, on his white horse (Cadillac) seeks out the young princess (Lola) whom he loved. Innumerable evil spells (war, bad guys) separated them. For a long time the knight pursues his quest, regardless of pitfalls and bad luck. Finally, the lovers succeed in finding each other in a sort of enchanted grotto (the cabaret Eldorado) and forever reunited, they will depart together in a big white car for (the American) Eden.
>
> —Paul Guimard on Jacques Demy's *Lola*[1]

> Audiences wept, it was so sad. We'd planned it . . . we planned it well because Jacques and I, we wrote on the score: "First hanky, page 38. Second hanky . . ." So we had a score . . . a score full of hankies. [Jacques said] "There are too many of them." [I responded] "No, you'll see."
>
> —Michel Legrand on *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*[2]

At first glance, *Lola* (1961) and *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964) seem to be two very different types of films. Appearing in the wake of Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* (1960), Jacques Demy's first feature-length film, *Lola*, was filmed in black-and-white, and it centers on a moment in the life of a showgirl, whose lost love almost magically reappears at the end of the film. Visually striking in its use of saturated color, *The Umbrellas*, on the other hand, tells the tragic love story of a shopgirl and a mechanic, related through sung lines, as the film straddles the genres of musical and opera. Despite these apparent differences, the two films prove to be closely related, both structurally and thematically. As Jean-Pierre Berthomé has observed, "Many critics have noted the extent to

which *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* is a direct descendant of *Lola,* and they have remarked upon how the same themes of separation, waiting, and fidelity to a dream nourish the two films" (181).[3] Furthermore, as Berthomé rightly insists, "More than the sequel to *Lola, The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* is the inverted reflection of it" (185).[4] Read together, these two films explore what it means for the heroine to wait—or not—for her prince as well as the problematic nature of the "happy ending" premised upon such waiting.

Although *Lola* and *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* do not draw directly from the genre of the fairy tale, as do Demy's later films *Donkey Skin* and *The Pied Piper,* critics such as Paul Guimard have remarked upon their underlining fairy-tale structure, evidenced in the passage that opens this chapter. Both films integrate motifs from "Sleeping Beauty" and "Cinderella," as articulated in particular by Charles Perrault and Walt Disney, whereby the suffering princess, made to carry out domestic chores and rendered passive, waits for and is finally rescued by the handsome prince, who promises the heroine a better life and with whom she is said to live happily ever after. Waiting for one's prince indeed is the stated moral of Charles Perrault's version of "Sleeping Beauty," a tale Demy had read in his youth. Perrault's moral equates the princess's sleeping with waiting:

> To wait so long
> To want a man refined and strong,
> Is not at all uncommon.
> But: rare it is a hundred years to wait
> Indeed there is no woman
> Today so patient for a mate.[5]

Much like Perrault's "Sleeping Beauty," Demy's *Lola* and *The Umbrellas* revolve around the heroine's ability to wait for her dream to come true. However, not only do Demy's cinematic rewritings of such tales question the underlying assumptions about gender and sexuality that these tales communicate, but they also problematize the nature of the dream that underpins the fairy-tale narrative.

In his account of his collaboration with Demy on *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg,* Michel Legrand makes clear that the film was meant to be a tearjerker. Thus, although Demy infuses *Lola* and *The Umbrellas* with fairy-tale motifs, both films can be characterized in terms of "melodrama," which etymologically denotes the combined use of drama and music and has narrative characteristics that elicit tears.[6] Both *Lola* and *The Umbrellas* were to combine music and drama, but Demy could not get the financing to do a full-fledged musical in

the case of *Lola,* which he nevertheless continued to consider a musical.[7] But the connection to melodrama in these two films goes beyond the combination of music and drama. In different ways, both films concern "the experience of loss," which, for Tania Modleski, "is at the heart of melodrama" (28). As opposed to the "happy ending" characteristic of many classical fairy tales, melodrama does not promise a better future. Rather, melodrama usually concerns a loss that is never recovered.

I would like to suggest in this chapter that Demy sets into motion a dialectic in *Lola* and *The Umbrellas* between the utopian promises of the fairy tale and the irrecoverable loss characteristic of melodrama to create films of disillusionment. The fairy-tale life promised in these films takes the shape of the American dream—itself shaped by Hollywood film—which served as the model for post-WWII modernization in France. Demy's films reveal the tragic underpinnings along with the illusions and the renunciations 1950s and 1960s Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty tales demand. Although the focus of this chapter will revolve around gender, I will also suggest ways in which both films elicit queer readings in part through their cinematic intertexts. In particular, it becomes evident that transgression of class and age markers can be read as transgression of heteronormativity, whereas renunciation can be related to the loss of a queer identity.

In the tradition of Charles Perrault and Walt Disney, Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty tales share the common underlying structure of an active hero, the prince, who saves the passive heroine, the princess, from malicious females, who are the social and sexual rivals of the heroine.[8] Walt Disney's cinematic refashioning of classic tales further reinforces underlying commonalities between, for instance, Snow White (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,* 1937), who, like Sleeping Beauty (*Sleeping Beauty,* 1959), is awoken by a kiss, and Cinderella (*Cinderella,* 1950). As Jack Zipes has noted, Disney's Snow White "is at first depicted as a kind of Cinderella, cleaning the castle as a maid in a patched dress" (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 87). Likewise, Disney's Sleeping Beauty is first shown cleaning the humble cottage in which she lives with the three fairies, blending Perrault's "Sleeping Beauty" with elements from "Cinderella." Essentially, Disney makes of all three tales a female rags-to-riches story, infusing them with American values revolving around middle-class domestic bliss.[9]

For David Pace, what characterizes Cinderella stories is the overall narrative movement to establish a correspondence between internal virtue and external status. Whereas Cinderella is dressed in rags and given filthy tasks in her stepmother's home, her ugly and undeserving stepsisters enjoy cleanliness and luxurious clothes. Pace notes that in such tales, "the external, social signs of virtue [i.e., cleanliness, luxury] have not been assigned to the right persons"

(253). The work of the tale, then, is to correct this imbalance and appropriately reward—in other words, assign the proper social status to—the virtuous girl, which brings about the happy ending.

Part of what creates this imbalance is the absence of men, and specifically of the father figure. Cinderella finds herself in an oppressive situation upon the death of her father, which leaves her to the whims of her stepmother, a situation that improves only upon marriage with the prince, who performs the role of male rescuer. According to Pace, "The removal of a male at the beginning of the story (through the death of the father) created an initial imbalance which could only be rectified by the introduction of a new male (the prince)" (253). At the same time that the tale is about rewarding virtue, it also is about family structures and what makes those structures stable and able to function properly. Namely, it is about the reestablishment of heteronormative and patriarchal order, in which virtue is properly rewarded and vice—incarnated by unruly women—is punished.

Whereas the question of waiting to be saved is implicit in tales such as Perrault's "Cinderella" and "Sleeping Beauty," it is foregrounded in Disney films and is particularly evident in the films' songs. In essence, the heroine waits for her dream to come true, for the male hero to whisk her away to his enchanted palace, simultaneously saving her from her miserable environment and rewarding her for her true merit. The notion of waiting and dream recurs in the songs of *Snow White* ("Someday my prince will come. . . . Someday when my dreams come true"); *Cinderella* ("A dream is a wish your heart makes. . . . Have faith in your dreams and someday / Your rainbow will come smiling through"); and *Sleeping Beauty* ("If my heart keeps singing / Will my song go winging / To someone who'll find me" and "You'll love me at once / The way you did once upon a dream"). In all cases, the stationary heroine waits for the prince to come, to find her, and his (re)appearance and the couple's (re)union marks the actualization of her dream.

In her analysis of Walt Disney's fairy-tale films, Naomi Wood contrasts the dream vision of Disney with Freudian and Lacanian notions of desire. In the psychoanalytic model, true satisfaction of one's projected desires proves impossible after the Oedipal crisis and initiation into the realm of the symbolic. For Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, entering the symbolic order, which entails submission to the law of the father—and, more broadly, adhering to sociocultural and sexual norms and prohibitions—is a form of castration. However, in "Disney's dream theory . . . the Symbolic Order is benevolent. It supports wish fulfillment; all that is demanded is faithfulness to the dream" (Wood 34). Of course, underpinning Disney wish fulfillment is adherence to gender and sexual norms as well as class expectations. Just as the heroine is always patient,

kind, and dainty, so the hero is chivalric, wealthy, and physically imposing. Disney films suggest that conforming to such heteronormative and middle-class codes and behaviors is effortless and painless, concealing the "castration" or repression—of singularity, of nonconformist gender and sexual traits and behaviors—such compliance requires.

It is precisely this sense of castration or loss that film melodrama engages. It is about what gets repressed or marginalized in the process of adhering to gender, social, and sexual norms. It is also about the inability to fully adhere to these norms. In many respects, we could read melodrama as the flip side of conventional Disney fairy-tale narratives. Melodrama is about the hero who could not fulfill the role of a prince, at least not without loss; it is about the heroine who could not be satisfied with the socially recognized prince; it is about heroes and heroines who end up betraying each other, either intentionally or unintentionally, often leading to the dissolution of the couple.

In his classic article on melodrama, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith argues, "In the American movie the active hero becomes protagonist of the Western, the passive or impotent hero or heroine becomes protagonist of what has come to be known as melodrama. The contrast active/passive is, inevitably, traversed by another contrast, that between masculine and feminine" ("Minnelli" 115). As Nowell-Smith suggests, then, melodrama gets gendered feminine because of the emasculation of male characters as well as the centrality of female characters, who often are victimized and rendered passive, "waiting at home, standing by the window" (Elsaesser 13). Although melodrama shares with the classical fairy tale the "fantasy" of "the union of an adult, heterosexual couple," as well as the "blockages" toward fulfillment of this fantasy, melodrama usually ends with the failure to realize that fantasy (Neale 12–13). Social pressures, class differences, and moral injustices often are not overcome at the end of a melodramatic film, although, as Steve Neale insists, this does not mean that such films completely eliminate "the possibility of fulfillment of a wish" (21).

Another aspect of melodrama relevant to films by Demy is "the claustrophobic atmosphere of the bourgeois home and/or the small-town setting" (Elsaesser 13), which heightens the pathos of melodrama by intensifying, like a pressure cooker, the social, sexual, or psychological tensions the film puts into play. Demy's films often take place in idealized, nostalgic versions of provincial cities such as Nantes (*Lola*, *Une Chambre en ville* [*A Room in Town*, 1982]), Cherbourg (*The Umbrellas*), Rochefort (*Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*), and Hamelin (*The Pied Piper*) from which characters nevertheless flee due to familial and social pressures or to their failure to achieve their dream. The claustrophobic atmosphere is emphasized by Demy in the use of iris-in and iris-out to open and close his films, which has the effect of containing the action of

the film within a closed space. In fairy tales, insular spaces often translate into utopian ones, whereas the compressed space of melodrama is more suggestive of tragedy or, more precisely, tragedy's cousin, the *drame bourgeois*.[10]

Initially *Lola* and *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* appear to tell the story of, in the first case, a successful Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty tale and, in the second, an unsuccessful one. However, through their filmic intertexts within and without his own cinematic corpus, Demy offers the realization of the dream only to undermine or problematize it, yet his characters continue to dream. In ways that recall Robert Bresson's *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (1945) and Luchino Visconti's *Le notti bianche* (*White Nights*, 1957), Demy plays fairy-tale motifs off melodrama, with an increased focus on loss and disillusion and without ever letting the story completely slip into jaded cynicism: hope keeps one moving forward, despite the process of disillusionment.

Lola, or Waiting Rewarded

As critics have noted, Demy drew from several films to create his *Lola*. One narrative strand of the film involving the American sailor Frankie and his pals recalls *On the Town* (1949), starring Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra, in which three sailors arrive in New York City, fall in love and have a good time, then return to their ship, only for a new crew of sailors to hit the town to start the cycle of love and fun all over again at the end of the film. Another fundamental reference in the film is Bresson's *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, at both a structural and a thematic level. Bresson's Agnès—the fallen aristocrat-turned-showgirl played by Elina Labourdette, who plays the mother of Cécile in *Lola*—anticipates Demy's Lola, a showgirl from Nantes who returns for three days to her hometown to perform at the cabaret the Eldorado. Bresson's film is structured in many respects like a Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty tale, whose happy ending Demy problematizes in *Lola*. Although Demy dedicates *Lola* to Max Ophuls, whose *Lola Montès* (1955) clearly provides inspiration for his film, he also draws from Visconti's *White Nights* in significant ways. All of these filmic intertexts furnish Demy with material to create his own fairy-tale film about the princess who successfully waits for her prince and is rewarded—as least momentarily—with a happy ending. However, the Chinese proverb opening *Lola*, "*Cry who can, laugh who will*," announces the melodramatic undertones of the film.

The not-so-basic plot of *Lola* takes place, like Visconti's *White Nights*, over the course of three days. The film opens with a shot of Michel (Jacques Harden), whose white suit and white Cadillac give him the aura of an apparition; he drives into town after a seven-year absence, having left behind a pregnant Cécile—now the showgirl Lola—with a promise to return. For her part, Lola (Anouk Aimée) has come back to Nantes for three days to do a show at the Eldorado. Roland (Marc Michel), a disaffected, disillusioned young man, wants to leave provincial Nantes. In a bookstore he meets Madame Desnoyers (Elina Labourdette) and her adolescent daughter Cécile (Annie Duperoux), and Roland remarks that Cécile reminds him of a childhood friend, Cécile, whom he fondly recalls. Later he happens to bump into adult Cécile, now known by her stage name Lola, and they catch up on each other's lives. Lola explains that she had fallen in love with a man dressed as an American sailor, Michel, on her fourteenth birthday at a fair, and when he returned a couple of years later, she got pregnant with her son Yvon. Michel then left to make his fortune, but she has had no word from him in seven years. During these three days Lola has also met Frankie (Alan Scott), an American sailor she has been seeing. For his part, Frankie meets adolescent Cécile on her fourteenth birthday, and they go to the fair together, just before he leaves for Cherbourg. Roland believes he is in love with Lola, who thinks of him only as a friend, and when he realizes she will not marry him, he pursues a risky venture and leaves for South Africa. As Lola prepares to leave for another gig in Marseilles, Michel dramatically enters the Eldorado to whisk her and her son away to the new Eldorado, America.

From the beginning of the film, the notion of dream is foregrounded. Michel's mother, Jeanne (Margo Lion), thought she saw her son Michel earlier that day "in a dream car, an apparition, the Thousand and One Nights,"[11] but she cannot be sure. For his part, Roland is late for work because, as he puts it, "I dream," to which his boss retorts, "That's unhealthy."[12] Upon losing his job, Roland goes to the cinema and sees *Return to Paradise* (1953), starring Gary Cooper, who plays Morgan, an American who washes up onto the shores of the Pacific island Matareva and falls in love with an island woman, Maeva, with whom he has a child. After Maeva's death he leaves the island to return years later to discover that his daughter has fallen in love with an American pilot, as the cycle of life continues. We discover later in *Lola* that Michel was in fact stranded on the island of Matareva, whose name evokes the French word *rêve*, or "dream." But rather than returning to the island of Matareva like Morgan, Michel returns to the insular society of Nantes to reunite with Lola and his son.

Michel's apparition shares many affinities with that of the Tenant, played by Jean Marais, in Visconti's *White Nights*.[13] In the latter film, Natalia (Maria Schell), very much a Cinderella-like character, waits for her one true love, the Tenant, to rescue her from the grips of her grandmother, who continually pins Natalia to her skirt while they toil to repair carpets. One evening, while waiting on a bridge for the arrival of the Tenant, who had precipitously left a year earlier and who promised to return, Natalia encounters Mario, played by Marcello

Mastroianni. After Natalia finishes recounting the story behind her nightly visits to the bridge, Mario declares, "What an absurd story. . . . Are you telling me you've waited for a man for a year and you've had no word from him? You don't even know what he does?" Constantly questioning the veracity of her story, he asks Natalia, "Are you quite sure he exists?" Although he believes Natalia to be naïve, he is fascinated by her fidelity to a dream. Mario admits to her that "this is all so alien to me, to my way of thinking. . . . I didn't think there were girls like you left in the world. You might as well have told me you believe in fairy tales [*favole*]."[14] By the end of the third night, however, Mario has become more and more like Natalia: "I told you not to believe in fairy tales [*favole*]. Then I started to believe my own fantasy. I felt like you felt." Mario begins to dream about a future with Natalia, and now he is ready to do the waiting, hoping that someday she will forget the Tenant and marry him.

In a certain ironic twist, just as the realist Mario cedes to fantasy, fantasy is reaffirmed with the return of the Tenant, which, according to Nicolas Maille, "signals in some respects the victory of the imaginary over the real."[15] In fact, as Maille has argued, casting Jean Marais to play the Tenant was a deliberate move to enhance the character's fantastic aura: "The choice of Jean Marais to incarnate the mysterious handsome stranger is not innocent. Besides his charisma wreathed in a tragic lyricism, the actor conveys a Star image (thus object of fantasm)."[16] Visconti plays on the star image of Marais as well as the marvelous characters he had incarnated in other films, such as the Beast/Prince in Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* (*Beauty and the Beast,* 1946) and, most recently, Orpheus in Cocteau's *Orphée* (*Orpheus,* 1950). Dream triumphs over reality, just as the mysterious and otherworldly Tenant triumphs over the very real Mario.

Much like the Tenant in *White Nights*, whom he physically resembles, *Lola*'s Michel has an air of mystery about him. Like a mythic hero, Michel leaves his princess behind, only to return rich, as signaled by his white American convertible. Michel's mystique, however, does not arise from associations with traditional fairy-tale heroes, as was the case in Visconti's Tenant, whose incarnation by Jean Marais provided such allusions. Michel, instead, embodies the prince of the American dream, the self-made man who starts out penniless and becomes wealthy. He is the cowboy, the Hollywood movie star. Part of what attracts Lola to Michel is precisely his "Americanness." The film associates him with American sailors and, by extension, with sailors from Gene Kelly musicals, which Demy, a fan, discovered after the war.[17] Driving into town with his white cowboy hat, Michel also evokes the stars of cowboy movies and is associated in particular with Gary Cooper through reference to *Return to Paradise.* His quality as phantasm is underscored at the beginning of the film with

his mother's remark about his almost marvelous apparition in Nantes, making it seem as though Michel had just materialized right out of a Hollywood film (Figure 1.1).

Just as Michel is invested with the mystique of all things American, so Lola is invested with layers of references to filmic showgirls and the divas who incarnated them. As a character, Lola could be described in the same way that Judith Mayne has described *The Blue Angel*'s (1930) Lola Lola: "She is a pastiche, a collection of allusions" (33). Demy's Lola draws on a whole cultural fascination with the showgirl in cinema, from Lola Lola to the eponymous heroine of Max Ophul's *Lola Montès,* characters who, moreover, have become indelibly associated with stars such as Marlene Dietrich. In the 1950s Martine Carol, who played the role of Lola Montès, was the biggest sex symbol in France before Brigitte Bardot.[18] Dedicating *Lola* to Max Ophuls, Demy certainly had Ophuls's *Lola Montès* in mind, although Lola's costume and song clearly are so many winks to Josef von Sternberg's *Blue Angel* (Figure 1.2). It could be argued that both Lola and Michel are fantasy figures, incarnations of idealized characters from Hollywoodian films. However, *Lola*'s 1969 sequel, *Model Shop,* would suggest that neither character can, in reality, live up to the image they appear to embody.

Like that of Visconti's Natalia, and for a much longer period of time, the

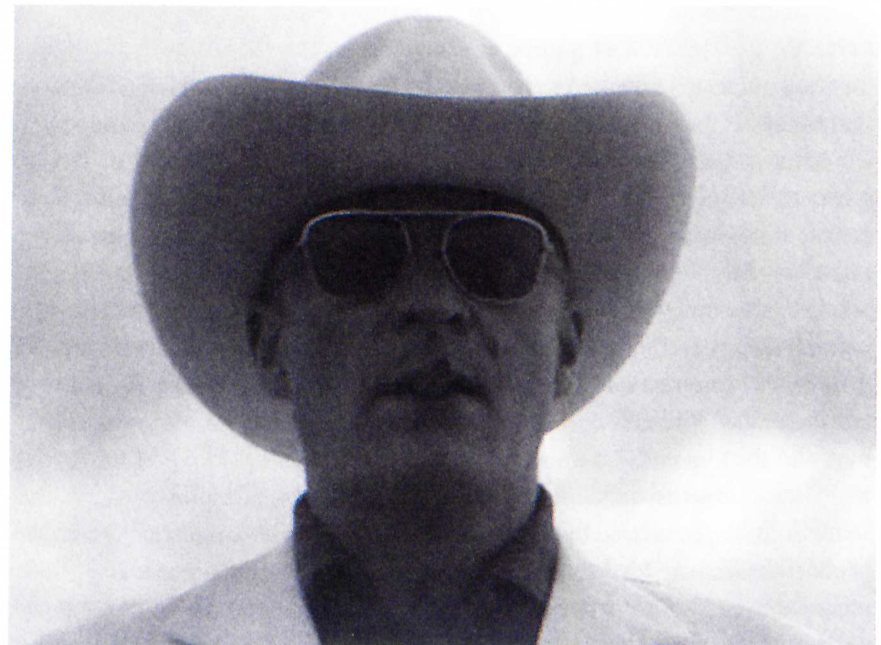

Figure 1.1. Jacques Harden, with cowboy hat and cigar, as Michel in *Lola.*

Figure 1.2. Lola (Anouk Aimée) performs "C'est moi, c'est Lola."

function of Demy's Lola is to wait. She explains to her childhood friend Roland that Michel is the only man she has ever loved and that, whatever happens, "I would have waited for him very sensibly."[19] When Michel finally materializes in a very theatrical entrance into the Eldorado through stage-like curtains, Lola runs to him and says, "Seven years, seven years, can you believe it? If you only knew how I waited for you, I only thought of you and sometimes I cursed you, because your memory poisoned my existence."[20] The film closes with an apparently happy ending, with Lola and Yvon driving in Michel's dream car on their way to America out into the sunset. However, the car passes the solitary and devastated Roland, who was unable to win Lola's love, as Lola looks over at him, and the film ends on a somewhat unsettling note.

Such moments destabilize the underlining fairy-tale plot through the sense of loss experienced by Roland. His dream did not come true. Other aspects of the film are further suggestive of a melodramatic story of loss without a fairy-tale ending. In particular, the film puts into play three generations of women whose lives together suggest both the possibility of dreams coming true and the disillusion brought about by loss and betrayal.

The film clearly makes a connection between the young Cécile, on the one hand, and Lola, whose given name is Cécile, on the other. Besides their common name and their relationship to the sailor Frankie, they share a common experience: their first true love occurs at fourteen with an older man who looks like (and in the case of Frankie is) an American sailor. It is through Cécile's experience with Frankie that we come to understand the almost fantastic experience of first love that keeps Lola hoping for Michel's return.

After meeting each other by chance in a tobacco shop, Cécile later runs into Frankie the day of her fourteenth birthday, and they go to the fair together. The scene is dreamlike, beginning with the pair climbing into bumper cars as Cécile lets her hair down, with the fast-paced music of Bach's well-tempered Clavier (Book 1: No. 2) playing in the background. The movement accelerates only to climax at the end of the second ride, which spins the couple round and round and closer together. Then everything decelerates, with Bach's slower prelude following, as Frankie lifts an enraptured Cécile out of the ride and they run off, all in slow motion. When Frankie explains he has to leave to take the train to Saint-Nazaire, then Cherbourg, before returning to Chicago, the film returns to a realistic representation of time, and Cécile and Frankie part ways. In many respects the scene's images, music, and rhythms evoke the act of lovemaking, with climax and afterglow, and depicts Cécile falling in love with Frankie in an idyllic, nonrealistic manner.

Through young Cécile's experience with Frankie, we come to understand Lola's affection for Michel and why she is willing to wait for him for seven years. She is attached to the myth of first love, which she hopes to reactivate upon reuniting with Michel, whereas Frankie, who resembles Michel, serves as a temporary replacement, an imperfect substitute. That Michel enters the Eldorado dressed all in white and as if walking onto a stage suggests the unreal nature of his reappearance and Lola and Michel's reunion. Indeed, the other dancers at the Eldorado begin to cry as if they are watching a play or a melodramatic film, which heightens the artificial nature of the scene, with a clear demarcation between "actors" (Michel and Lola) and "spectators" (the other dancers). Earlier in the film the character Claire says, "In cinema, everything is always more beautiful,"[21] and the scene invites the following question: Is this cinema or real life? Is this happy ending for real?

Whereas Cécile represents the young Lola and Lola the adult Cécile, whose dream appears to come true, Madame Desnoyers marks the age of disillusion. To play Madame Desnoyers, Demy cast Elina Labourdette, who incarnated the showgirl Agnès in *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*. In one scene, Madame Desnoyers's daughter Cécile emerges with a photograph of her mother as a showgirl, a frame from *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*. Through this filmic inter-

text, Demy integrates the story of Bresson's film into *Lola* in order to represent the past of Madame Desnoyers's character. As Camille Taboulay has remarked, "Demy thus truly prolongs her role, in short, inscribing Bresson's film into her living past."[22] The connection between Lola and Madame Desnoyers is further suggested through the overcoat Lola wears over her nightclub attire, which recalls the one Agnès wore in *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne.* Daniel Millar notes, "It is easy enough to 'read' the cinematic meaning of Agnès's old raincoat thrown over her scanty black dance costume (Demy gives it exactly the same tarty significance, though a lighter tone, in his *hommage, Lola*)" (34).

Perhaps more explicitly than Demy's *Lola, Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* is a 1940s fairy tale, a Cinderella story with a Sleeping Beauty ending. Agnès, a fallen aristocrat and a fallen woman, becomes a pawn in Hélène's (María Casares) plan of revenge against her former lover Jean (Paul Bernard). Used and abused by both Hélène and her mother, who is ready to prostitute her daughter to get by, Agnès the showgirl is eventually saved by Jean, who returns her to her former aristocratic status.

The film is based on the story of Madame de La Pommeraye from Denis Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste* (1796), which Bresson and Jean Cocteau, who wrote the dialogue, reshaped in part by infusing it with fairy-tale motifs. For instance, direct mention of "Cinderella" is made when Jean reads a letter he believes is from Agnès, which was in fact composed by Agnès and Hélène as part of the latter's ruse to get Jean to marry a "whore." Jean declares, "This is like Cinderella's slipper. If I found a letter like this in the street, I'd do everything in my power to find the girl who wrote it."[23] Like the prince in pursuit of the girl who lost her slipper, Jean pursues Agnès, finally marrying her in the end and loving her despite her past. References to "Sleeping Beauty" are also evident in the film. The "Bois de Boulogne" in the film's title, is not mentioned in Diderot's version. As such, the alliteration of the title, *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, recalls that of the French title for Sleeping Beauty: "La Belle au bois dormant."[24] That the film is somehow a Sleeping Beauty tale is further evident at the end of the film, when Jean resuscitates a near-death Agnès with a kiss. Based on the alliteration of the title and the kiss at the end of the film, it would seem that Bresson and Cocteau were very consciously playing on references to "Sleeping Beauty."

Whereas *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* concludes with a "happy ever after," in *Lola* Demy undoes this ending, and in several respects. First, Agnès, now Madame Desnoyers, is a lonely widow and single mother who lost her husband in WWII. Second, we learn that her Prince Charming turned out to be a gambler with many vices. She proclaims, "May God save us from gamblers!"[25] His gambling and death financially ruined her, undoing the financial stability with

which *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* implicitly concludes. Third, her daughter Cécile is the product of Madame Desnoyers's adulterous relationship with her brother-in-law, who lives in Cherbourg. The fairy tale turns out to be, in reality, a story about betrayal, loss, and disillusion, or, another way of looking at it, the fairy tale constitutes a moment or moments in a larger narrative that is essentially a melodrama.

As Charlotte Garson has pointed out, Demy wanted his films to be interconnected in the same manner as the novels constituting Honoré de Balzac's *Comédie humaine.* In a 1964 interview with *Cahiers du cinéma,* Demy stated, "My idea is to make fifty films that would all be linked together . . . through common characters."[26] This is particularly important with respect to *Lola* and its relation to the films that follow. Whereas *Lola*'s Roland will continue to live on in *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg,* Lola will find herself in LA in the sequel to *Lola, Model Shop.* Just as *Lola* undoes the "happy ending" of *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne,* so *Model Shop* undoes the "happy ending" of *Lola.* Now it is Lola who has been abandoned by her knight in shining Cadillac. Michel has left her for the gambler Jackie, a character from Demy's *La Baie des anges* (*Bay of Angels,* 1963), which further emphasizes ties between Lola and Madame Desnoyers. We also learn that Frankie was killed in Vietnam. Moreover, the fairy-tale world of America reveals itself to be a fiction: *Model Shop*'s LA is an alienating landscape of strip malls and concrete, where Lola, appearing hopeless and desperate, literally is reduced to being the passive object of a camera. There is nothing left of the dream of *Lola.*[27]

In discussing melodrama, Thomas Elsaesser remarks, "What strikes one as the true pathos [of melodrama] is the very mediocrity of the human material, putting such high demands upon itself, trying to live up to an exalted vision of man, but instead living out the impossible contradictions that have turned the American dream into its proverbial nightmare" (15). Elsaesser points to a tension between the "exalted vision of man," which we could associate with the idealized characters of classical fairy tales and Hollywood film, and the "mediocrity of the human material," which is suggestive of the impotent heroes and heroines of melodrama. Lola, the seductive palimpsest of showgirls past and present, becomes a broken heroine in *Model Shop.* Michel, the idealized figure of American heroism associated with Gary Cooper, proves to be far from ideal in his abandonment of Lola and his attachment to gambling, which recalls Jean, the Prince Charming of *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne,* who similarly disappoints, as we learn in *Lola,* his one "true love," Agnès/Madame Desnoyers. The heroines who waited to be saved by their heroes eventually end up abandoned and disillusioned.

The ways in which melodrama undermines the fairy-tale narrative results

in the "demythologization" of the male rescuer, to use Carolina Fernández-Rodríguez's terminology. Like twentieth-century feminist authors of revisionist tales such as Sara Henderson Hay, Angela Carter, and Luisa Valenzuela, Demy questions the "mythical aura" of the male rescuer while also problematizing his function as "rescuing agent."[28] In *Lola* and its sequel *Model Shop*, the "mythical aura" of Bresson's Jean and Demy's Michel is negated by the revelation of both men's weakness for gambling, which destabilizes the financial security they implicitly promise as heroes, and in the particular case of Michel, by the revelation of his lack of fidelity, despite his earlier mythical return to his one "true love."

Moreover, due to the metaphorical connection between Michel and all things American, the demythologization of the male rescuer can be further related to the demythologization of the "American dream." Indeed, Demy's representation of Los Angeles is far from ideal. As Mark Shiel has observed about *Model Shop*, "The intense anomie generated by Los Angeles's synthetic surfaces is explicitly linked to the ongoing war in Vietnam and the antiwar movement then active in the city" (151). Rather than offer the promise of wealth, stability, and fulfillment, the American dream leaves Lola struggling to get by in an alienating landscape of social unrest and instability.

As scholars such as Kristin Ross and Brian McKenzie have demonstrated, in 1950s and 1960s France images prevailed that represented the "deprived France of the Occupation [that] could now be sated" (Ross 71). This satiation would take the form of modernization, which was inseparable from the concept of Americanization: "The Marshall Plan provided support for French modernization while U.S. public diplomacy simultaneously presented the American way of life as the most desirable outcome" (McKenzie 7). Along with the influx of American films, forbidden under the Occupation, French people were exposed to American culture and ideology through exhibitions that were held in dozens of cities, big and small, throughout the country. Attended by the thousands, these exhibitions were sponsored by the US government through Mission France and included such themes as "The True Face of the United States," which insisted upon Americans' high standard of living and purchasing power, and "The Future Is Yours," which anticipated the American-style modernization of France.[29]

From magazines of the period to cinema and even agricultural exhibits, the United States represented a fantasy world onto which the French people, encouraged by both US and French authorities, could project their hopes and aspirations for themselves and for their country.[30] Indeed, through the character of Michel, Demy's *Lola* plays on the fantasy of an American Prince Charming coming to take the French Cinderella off to a better place. However, *Model*

Shop reveals the underlying illusion—not to mention its politics of empire through allusions to Vietnam—behind this new Eldorado. Just as *Model Shop* illustrates that Michel and Lola cannot live up to their idealized images, so America falls terribly short of incarnating the blissful land where dreams come true.

Lola implicitly and *Model Shop* explicitly question the possibility of the realization of one's dreams in any enduring way. Nevertheless, *Lola* does end overall on a positive note, suggesting that one's dreams indeed can come true, even if only temporarily, and without having to sacrifice one's singularity, in other words, without having to undergo castration or repression. Whereas *Lola* may be characterized as a fairy-tale film hinting at melodrama, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* foregrounds melodrama, even as it draws on fairy-tale structures and motifs, and its aesthetics, especially its nonrealistic use of color, seem to take us into a marvelous realm. Read in light of *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* and Demy's own *Model Shop*, *Lola* undoes the myth of the male rescuer, revealing the figure's weaknesses, faults, and cracks. In *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, Demy similarly problematizes the role of the male rescuer as he examines more closely the ways in which adherence to certain versions of the dream of being saved by a Prince Charming results, tragically, in the repression of one's singular desires, that is, in castration.

Geneviève, or the Impatient Princess

One significant difference between *Lola* and *The Umbrellas* resides in the question of waiting. Whereas Lola manages to wait seven years for her prince, Geneviève fails to wait even four months for hers. Ironically, the theme song of *The Umbrellas* is "Je t'attendrai" ("I Will Wait for You").[31] The melody opens and closes the film, and lyrics are added in the scenes in which Guy announces his draft notice for Algeria, where he is to serve for two years, and in the scene in which he leaves the Cherbourg train station. In the first of these scenes, Geneviève sings,

Je ne pourrai jamais vivre sans toi!	I will never be able to live without you!
Je ne pourrai pas	I will not be able to
Ne pars pas, j'en mourrai	Don't leave, it will kill me
Mais mon amour, ne me quitte pas	But no, my love, don't leave me
....	
Deux ans, non, je ne pourrai pas	Two years, no, I will not be able to

In the scene in the train station, Geneviève assures Guy that "I will wait for you

all of my life" and that she loves him, all the while repeating, "I can't, I can't, I can't."[32] Geneviève both promises to wait for him and expresses her anxieties about her ability to do so. Although "I will not be able to" or "I can't" could be read in terms of the suffering and pain she cannot endure while Guy is away and that will kill her, after Geneviève's betrayal of Guy in the film, these words suggest instead her inability to wait for him: she simply cannot. The romantic promise of being faithful to a dream by waiting for the return of the hero is destroyed when Geneviève, ceding to maternal and social pressure, marries another man.

The plot of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* concerns Guy (Nino Castelnuovo), a mechanic in love with Geneviève (Catherine Deneuve), the daughter of Madame Emery (Anne Vernon), the owner of an umbrella shop in Cherbourg. Geneviève conceals her relationship with Guy from her mother, and when she finally announces that she wants to marry Guy, her mother disapproves, thinking Geneviève is too young—and Guy too poor. Because of her own debts, Madame Emery takes Geneviève with her to see a jeweler to whom she wishes to sell a necklace, and there they meet Roland Cassard (Marc Michel), the same Roland from *Lola* who has since struck it rich as a diamond dealer. He comes to Madame Emery's rescue and buys the necklace. In the meantime, Guy learns he has been called to serve in Algeria for two years, and Geneviève is devastated.

After Guy leaves for Algeria, Geneviève discovers she is pregnant with Guy's child, and as time goes by, she struggles with her feelings about Guy's absence. In the meantime, we learn that Roland is in love with Geneviève. Madame Emery encourages her daughter to pursue Roland, stirring up fears in Geneviève that Guy may not be faithful to her. Roland is willing to marry the pregnant Geneviève, and eventually Geneviève concedes, marries Roland, and leaves Cherbourg. When Guy returns, he is a broken man, who sinks further into depression when his aunt Elise (Mireille Perrey) dies. Madeleine (Ellen Farner), who took care of Elise, now takes care of Guy, with whom she clearly has been in love since the beginning of the film. Guy eventually buys an Esso gas station, marries Madeleine, and has a son with her. The film ends with Geneviève pulling into Guy's gas station with her—and Guy's—daughter, and the estranged lovers part ways during a beautiful snowfall.

That the film draws on the fairy-tale genre is evident in particular in two scenes. First, in the scene in the jewelry store, Roland shows the jeweler Monsieur Dubourg a beautiful necklace, which Roland describes as "the jewels of . . . Sleeping Beauty."[33] Just as he pronounces these words, he gazes up at Geneviève entering the store with her mother. This line already suggests an ambiguity as to the nature of Sleeping Beauty's prince: although she will wait for the

working-class Guy to return from Algeria, Geneviève ends up being "rescued" (depending on one's perspective) by the now wealthy Roland. Moreover, just like Michel in *Lola,* Roland is associated with a character from the Arabian Nights. When Monsieur Dubourg examines Roland's stash of gems, impressed, he refers to it as "Ali Baba's cave."[34]

The second scene in question takes place during Epiphany, which the French celebrate with *galette des rois* (kings' cake), in which a token is hidden; the person who finds the token is named king or queen for the day and chooses a partner to form a royal couple. In the film, it is Geneviève who finds the token in her piece of cake, and she places the paper crown on her head (Figure 1.3). Her mother tells her she must now pick a king and make a wish, and Geneviève, looking at Roland, responds, "I have no choice. You are my king."[35] Hardly the romantic response one would hope to find in a fairy tale, the scene is underwhelming in its designation of Roland as her Prince Charming.

Interestingly, it is as if fairy-tale references ("Sleeping Beauty," "Ali Baba,"

Figure 1.3. Geneviève (Catherine Deneuve) as Epiphany queen in *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg.*

references to kings and queens) work to push Geneviève toward embracing the socially acceptable prince, the wealthy Roland, although the structure of the narrative—Geneviève waiting for the return of her one true love—suggests that Guy fulfills, at least potentially, this function as well. Thus *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* proposes two potential fairy-tale narratives: one in which Geneviève waits for Guy to return and save her from the grips of her petit bourgeois mother, who is willing to sacrifice her daughter's happiness for financial gain; and a second, in which the socially recognizable Prince Charming, this time with a black Mercedes, a black suit, and a stash of gems, "saves" Geneviève from social scorn and her mother's disapproval but ultimately proves unsatisfactory because the heroine cannot love him. The second fairy-tale narrative's triumph over the first results in melodrama, that is, in loss, in repressed or unfulfilled desires, in tears.

Demy divides the film into three clearly demarcated sections with section titles and an epilogue, whose themes are emphasized through Demy's singular use of color as well as time. The film is structured as follows:

1. *The Departure: November 1957*
2. *Absence:*
   - *January 1958*
   - *February 1958*
   - *March 1958*
   - *April 1958*
3. *Return:*
   - *March 1959*
   - *April 1959*
   - *June 1959*
4. *Epilogue [my title]: December 1963*

Part 1 focuses on Guy and Geneviève's love, concluding with Guy leaving on the train, and it is the longest segment of the film—nearly forty out of ninety minutes. Part 2 is focalized through Geneviève and deals with the tensions she has with her mother as well as the pursuit of Roland for her hand. Part 3 tells Guy's story upon his early return, due to an injury, from Algeria, and the epilogue, which takes place a few years later, proves to be the melodramatic climax of love lost. Each of these sections follows a particular color and time scheme, which emphasizes the shifting moments of fantasy and realism, of fairy tale and melodrama, constitutive of the film.

The first part of the film is reminiscent of the scene in *Lola* where Frankie and Cécile go to the fair in its unrealistic cinematography, yet Demy uses different aesthetic techniques. Color is his tool in *The Umbrellas,* which is clear from the opening credits, in which well-choreographed and multicolored umbrellas dance in the rainy streets of Cherbourg. As scholars have noted, "The production literally painted large portions of the real city in the Easter-egg hues of the film" (Herzog 129). The film's saturated hues are reminiscent of Technicolor, the preferred color process for Hollywood musicals, which, especially after *The Wizard of Oz*, signified fantasy as opposed to reality.[36]

Much as Disney made use of Technicolor in films such as *Cinderella,* Demy associates specific colors with different characters and their spaces.[37] In the umbrella shop of Geneviève and her mother, bright pink hues peppered with pastel blues, dominate, whereas Aunt Elise's apartment, associated with Guy and Madeleine, tends to be green and a deeper blue. In scenes recounting Guy and Geneviève's love story, both characters wear pastel blues and pinks, and Geneviève's color scheme consistently jars with the bright reds associated with her mother. Toward the end of Part 1, when Geneviève accompanies Guy to the train station to see him off, fantastical colors give way to natural brown, green, and beige tones, just as fairy tale gives way to melodrama.

Over the course of Part 2, Absence, an interesting movement occurs: Geneviève's color scheme conflicts less and less with that of her mother's, until she finally blends into her mother's space like a piece of furniture.[38] In Part 1 Geneviève's pink and coral often clash with her mother's red, which symbolizes, as is clear in its use in the brothel scene, the loss of innocence. Significantly, Part 2 opens with Geneviève wearing red, just like her mother. Later when they dine with Roland, Geneviève wears a dark, almost reddish pink, whereas her mother dresses in black (Roland's color) and pink. In the following scene, Geneviève wears a washed-out pale blue, as she seems to be fading away, until finally, in the sequence of scenes leading up to her agreeing to marry Roland, Geneviève literally fades into the wallpaper, her dress being the exact same pattern and color (Figure 1.4).[39] The dress may signify springtime (she wears the dress in April 1958) and refer to her pregnancy (she shows quite a bit at this point) as well as mark her assimilation into her mother's worldview. Part 2 ends with Geneviève wearing her white wedding dress, having lost all singularity, all color distinction, through her conformity to her mother's desires.[40]

Whereas bright pastels and saturated hues dominate the first part of the film, the color scheme characteristic of Guy's return revolves around earth tones, especially browns, greens, and rust oranges. Guy is first seen in the brown jacket he wore upon departing from Cherbourg, and when he proposes to the down-to-earth Madeleine at the end of Part 3, they sit in a rusty orange

Figure 1.4. Geneviève's dress matches her mother's wallpaper.

café, where Madeleine wears a dress of nearly the same color. For its part, the colorful umbrella shop has been taken over by the whiteness of a laundromat, almost as if it was erased right out of existence, its colors having washed away. With the exception of the scene in which Guy momentarily tries to escape the reality of having lost Geneviève by going to the sleazy red club where he encounters a prostitute, Part 3 provides a contrast to the rest of the film in its naturalistic use of color.[11]

Colors become less distinct, less saturated, until finally, in "December 1963," the whiteness of the snow takes over. The rain shower that opens the film, punctuated by a plethora of colorful umbrellas, contrasts with the cold absence of color in the film's finale. Paul Coates captures perfectly the significance of color in this scene when he talks about "the melancholy muting of coulour by the whiteness of snow in the finale's registration" as marking Geneviève's "definitive loss at Guy's petrol station" (125). Significantly, the scene also references the ending of Visconti's *White Nights,* whose white snow announces both the magical return of the Tenant and the final desperation of

Mario, who walks alone toward an Esso station in the film's final shot. (Figures 1.5 and 1.6). Pulling into the Esso station now owned by Guy, Geneviève emerges from Roland's black Mercedes in her black fur coat, wearing a black dress. Geneviève tells Guy she is in mourning over her mother's death, but black symbolizes another loss as well: that of Guy, her one true love. With the melody of "I Will Wait for You" playing in the background, we can only imagine how many hankies Legrand and Demy had written on the score as the music crescendos while Geneviève pulls out of the gas station. Indeed, the falling snowflakes foregrounded as the camera pulls out appear to be so many frozen tears.

As the use of color inflects the film's implicit tensions between fairy tale and melodrama, so does Demy's use of time. Part 1, the story of first love, is not broken down into time segments as are the other sections of the film. The longest part of the film makes of November 1957 a sort of eternal present. Just as the use of color transforms Cherbourg, the site of their love, into an unreal, fantastic space, so time is suspended. In contrast, Part 2 is broken down into four moments (January, February, March, and April 1959), which enhances the viewer's sense of Geneviève's anxious anticipation for the passage of time. She waits in January; she waits in February; she waits in March; then she gives up waiting in April, no longer able to bear the weight of waiting. The

Figure 1.5. The last shot of *White Nights,* in which Mario (Marcello Mastroianni) walks through the snow toward the Esso gas station.

Figure 1.6. The last scene of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* in which Guy (Nino Castelnuovo) watches as Geneviève (Catherine Deneuve) leaves his Esso gas station in the snow.

passage of time is further marked by Geneviève's ever-increasing belly. Part 3 is similar to Part 2 in its more realistic representation of time, this time revolving around Guy's return (March), his plunge into depression (April), and his rebirth (June), with the unrepresented May implicitly being the period of his recovery and courtship with Madeleine. The eternal present of love in Part 1 is thus contrasted with the passage of time and with change characteristic of Parts 2 and 3, as the plenitude of fairy tale gives way to the loss that is melodrama.

To return to Nowell-Smith's characterization of melodrama, loss is inseparable from the notion of "impaired masculinity" and more generally from the sense of impotence experienced by both male and female characters. In the eyes of bourgeois respectability, projected through the character of Madame Emery, Guy is a weak hero in his lack of social status, whereas Roland represents the chance for a better life and enhanced social status typical of fairy-tale plots. However, from another perspective Roland represents an impaired or impotent hero due to his inability to be loved by Lola or Geneviève. Geneviève, who opts for bourgeois respectability over true love, proves weak in her inability to make her singular dream come true.

That Guy somehow is a castrated character is symbolized, upon his return from Algeria, by his limp and, later, by the loss of his job. As a male rescuer, he fails due not only to his lack of social status but also to his powerlessness to avoid the draft, which prevents him from "saving" the pregnant Geneviève. As Neale points out, such forms of "blockages" are typical of melodrama: "Blockages, barriers and bars to the fulfillment of desire are constantly introduced as events change course. . . . These blockages are characterised and motivated in different ways. They may be specified, for instance, in social terms, as the product of family circumstances or the strictures of class and social propriety" (12). In *The Umbrellas,* questions of class and social propriety combine with the brutal imposition of the draft to impede Guy's ability to unite with Geneviève, which results in loss. Because of his impaired masculinity, Guy will depend on Madeleine to recover any sense of control over his life, as the true rescuer of this tale proves to be a woman who saves a man.

Although Roland appears to conform more closely to the traditional male rescuer, he fails to fully execute this role. *Lola* concludes with Roland's failure to "save" the showgirl from single motherhood (although one wonders if Lola really needed saving at all). This background is alluded to in *The Umbrellas* in a conversation Roland has with Madame Emery, in which music and footage from *Lola* is inscribed, thus integrating, in Tabouley's words, Roland's "living past" into the film, just as Demy did with the role of Madame Desnoyers in *Lola.*[42] Roland states very simply that "I loved a woman, she didn't love me."[43] Although he does not want to force Geneviève to marry him, *The Umbrellas* plays out what could have happened in *Lola* had Lola lost all hope of reuniting with Michel and had she felt desperate: she could have entered into a loveless marriage with Roland, as did Geneviève. Although in *The Umbrellas* Roland seems to follow a trajectory that recalls that of Michel in *Lola*—he leaves the provincial city and strikes it rich to return to France and claim a bride—he simply cannot live up to the ideal image and mystical aura that Michel embodies. Roland always falls short, except in the eyes of older women such as Madame Desnoyers and Madame Emery. Madame Emery in particular lives vicariously through her daughter: her desire for Roland ends up being consummated by proxy through her daughter's marriage to him. Nevertheless, Roland only appears to have succeeded and fulfilled his desires. Ultimately, he represents impotency in his inability to gain the love of a young woman with whom he believes he is in love.

For her part, and particularly when compared to Lola, Geneviève proves to be quite a weak character. Lola waits seven years for Michel; Geneviève cannot even wait four months for Guy. Lola has a child out of wedlock and she seems unconcerned about social perceptions of her position; Geneviève caves

in to her mother's manipulation and concerns about what the neighbors might think. Madame Emery continually insinuates that Guy is probably betraying her in Algeria and tries to "sell" her Roland. Geneviève is quite aware of this: "You speak to me about him the way you talk about your umbrellas."[44] But her mother's intimations that Guy might abandon her and that she could end up alone with a child unless she agrees to marry Roland, along with her own inability to wait (she asks herself, "Why is absence so hard to bear?"), finally push Geneviève to renounce her love for Guy.[45]

It is in this sense that we can understand Geneviève's decision to marry Roland as the "acceptance of castration," which occurs "only at the cost of repression" (Nowell-Smith, "Minnelli" 115). The scene with the *galette des rois* is particularly revelatory of Geneviève's passive nature, which allows her to so easily surrender herself to the demands of her mother and, by extension, to French middle-class social and gender norms. When asked to choose a king, she claims she "has no choice" but Roland, which could be read as her failure to act, to affirm her singular desire for Guy. Elsaesser could very well be describing the dynamics at play in *The Umbrellas* in his characterization of the family melodrama:

> The family melodrama . . . records the failure of the protagonist to act in a way that could shape the events and influence the emotional environment, let alone change the stifling social milieu. The world is closed, and the characters are acted upon. Melodrama confers on them a negative identity through suffering, and the progressive self-immolation and disillusionment generally ends in resignation: they emerge as lesser human beings for having become wise and acquiescent to the ways of the world. (9)

Geneviève's disillusionment begins with her own inability to wait or to die from love for the absent Guy: "Why did Guy go away from me, me, who would have died for him? Why am I not dead?"[46] Although Geneviève exemplifies the sense of disillusionment and resignation in the film, even Guy, who tries to create a new life with Madeleine, has lost the sense of joy and idealism that we see in the first part of the film. He remains, as does Roland in his own way, a broken man.

As opposed to the Disney fairy-tale film, with its "benevolent" symbolic order, Demy's *Umbrellas of Cherbourg* suggests that adherence to the fairy tale of middle-class bliss indeed involves castration. Castration takes the form of renunciation or blockage of one's singular desires and the impossibility—either self-imposed or imposed from without—to attain fulfillment of one's dreams. Whereas Guy is forced to momentarily abandon Geneviève by the French state

through military service, Geneviève permanently abandons Guy by giving in to the demands and expectations of her mother and her social class. And for Geneviève, it is not just about giving up the individual Guy. Madame Emery fully recognizes that Guy furthermore stands for an alluring alternative lifestyle for Geneviève: "Guy might have represented a certain ideal for you, but what kind of future could he offer you?"[47] Guy, then, not only symbolizes "true love" but also a way of life, an ideal, and one that clearly does not conform to the petit bourgeois gender, social, and even sexual order to which Madame Emery adheres.

Queer Inflections

In "L'Étrange Demy-monde" ("The Strange Demy-World"), Philippe Colomb asks why *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* appeals so much to so many gay men in France. He compellingly shows the ways in which the film can be read in terms of the dynamics of the closet, involving denial and renunciation. He states, "This story is thus the story of a socially inadmissible love, a romantic and non-petit bourgeois love, which will be broken by the order of social proprieties. It is the story about a love opposed by a society that prefers couples without love to nonconformist couples" (40).[48] In his reading of *The Umbrellas* Colomb suggests that the condemnation of a relationship based on social class can serve as a figure for the condemnation of a relationship based on sexuality. In other words, the relationship between a petit bourgeois woman and a working-class man violates social codes in the same way that a same-sex relation violates heterosexual ones.

Whereas Colomb focuses on carrying out a queer reading of what may or may not be a queer film, I would like to propose that in both *Lola* and *The Umbrellas,* Demy hints at a queer subtext through the intertextual references made in these films. These intertexts suggest that at some level these films stage a sort of queer melodrama, particularly through the characters Geneviève and Roland, which exists in a relation of tension with the heteronormativity of the implicit fairy-tale narrative. It is precisely because of the queer subtext that the heteronormative fairy-tale narrative must give way to queer melodrama.

First of all, Demy's interest in the genre of the musical from the beginning to the end of his career (his last film, *Trois Places pour le 26* [*Three Seats for the 26th,* 1988], was a musical about making a musical) could be read in terms of Demy's longstanding interest in forms of gay aestheticism and camp, which will be treated at length in chapter 2. Several critics have noted the close associations between musicals, camp, and gay culture. John Clum remarks, "Musicals were always gay. They always attracted a gay audience, and, at their best, even

in times of a policed closet, they were created by gay men" (9). Part of such associations, as Clum implies, has to do with the extent to which gay men influenced the very shape of Hollywood musicals. In his study of the largely gay Arthur Freed unit, which was responsible for many popular MGM musicals, including those of Gene Kelly of which Demy was so fond, Matthew Tinkcom convincingly argues that these "products" are marked by those who produce it. Tinkcom maintains, "Labors performed by particular subjects . . . can in some cases display the mark of the subject upon the product; the net effect of this claim is that some commodities are indeed . . . queer" ("Working" 29).[49]

Tinkcom points to aspects of the musical film that may have appealed to queer artists. Ostensibly, the musical, much like the classical fairy tale in the tradition of Disney, is a heteronormative genre: "The world in which a man and a woman meet and find initial attraction, in which their union is frustrated, and where ultimately the prohibitions to heterosexual bonding are overcome through the mediation of the song and dance number is typically the world of the musical" (Tinkcom, "Working" 33–34). However, the focus on spectacle—of both the male and the female body—and on performance destabilizes the "natural" order of gender and heteronormativity. Tinkcom argues that by integrating the musical numbers into the film instead of bracketing them off, an innovation of Minnelli, such films blur the distinction between realism and performance and emphasize "everyday life as performative, not least of which when it comes to thinking about gender" ("Working" 35).

Gene Kelly musicals in particular raise some interesting questions about gender and sexuality. Kelly sought to challenge stereotypes of the effeminate male dancer by donning a sailor suit, which accommodated the need to outline the dancer's body while masculinizing the dancer's appearance. But as Steven Cohan has remarked, "A man dancing immediately troubles normative masculinity, even if he does it in a sailor suit" by making his body a spectacle, an object of the Other's gaze (158). Moreover, the very reference to sailors destabilizes the heteronormative masculinity Kelly apparently was trying to project, for "sailor," much like "musical," was coded language for "homosexual."[50] Cohan points to the scene in *Anchors Away* in which Joe Brady (Kelly) pretends to be a "dame" to show the inexperienced result of all-boys schools, Clarence Doolittle (Frank Sinatra), how to pick up a woman. During their role-play on the street, a man in a suit walks by and gives them a funny look. For Cohan, "The scene alludes to homosexual gossip about sailors," who spent much time at sea without women and whose uniforms were particularly revealing of the male body (169). *On the Town* also provides an example of cross-gendered role playing, in which sailors Ozzie (Jules Munshin), pretending to be a woman, and Gabey (Kelly) play out a scene of "heterosexual" flirting and pickup.

Although I cannot address the extent to which "musical" would have served as a code word for homosexuality within a French context at the time Demy was producing films, sailors indeed were associated with homosexuality, as exemplified in the works, for instance, of Jean Genet.[51] Nevertheless, the queer inflections of these MGM musicals clearly appealed to Demy, who inserts similar types of inflections into his own films, most obviously through the inclusion of well-known gay actors whose sexuality in real life problematizes the homosocial and apparently heteronormative relations between characters in his films.

For instance, in *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*—his homage to Gene Kelly, who appears in the film—Demy cast George Chakiris and Grover Dale as the two main carnies of the film. Both actors were gay and implicitly form, as Colomb has argued, a gay couple in the film. In the case of Dale, he was known for his relationships with men, and at the time of *Les Demoiselles,* his partner was Anthony Perkins, whom Demy had considered for the role of the prince in *Donkey Skin.* As Svea Becker and Bruce Williams have argued, the casting of Dale in particular "carries . . . weight in the creation of a gay celebrity intertext" (308). Jean Marais, whom we will discuss in more detail in the following chapter, also serves as a "gay celebrity intertext" in Demy's *Donkey Skin* as well as in his film *Parking* (1982).

Such examples only scratch the surface of queer intertexts in Demy's films. What I would like to suggest here, however, is that the implicit signifiers of queerness—for example, sailors in *Lola,* the musical aesthetics in *The Umbrellas*—hint at the possibility of reading the tensions in both films in terms of queer desire. Drawing from Colomb, I have already proposed that we can read the story of Geneviève in terms of the closet: her renunciation of Guy means the renunciation of her singular desire that goes against petit bourgeois social conventions. Another character who merits further attention within the optics of queer desire and melodrama is Roland.

Roland's character crosses both films, and in both cases, he never quite manages to find true love. His character is always located on the side of melodrama—of loss and lack—and can never claim any kind of real fairy-tale ending, despite appearances in *The Umbrellas.* In *Lola,* he proves to be the weakest male character: he is unable to gain Lola's hand, or even her bed. Although he seems to have "made it" in *The Umbrellas,* he presents a contrast to *Lola*'s Michel in his less imposing appearance and his melancholic demeanor, which is made manifest in his association with black suits and cars as opposed to Michel's association with white.

Interestingly, in both films Roland believes he is in love with women who are passionately in love with other men and who show no amorous affection

toward him. His love for Lola and Geneviève is completely misplaced, and the only reason he manages to marry Geneviève is the motherly and social pressures Geneviève experiences as an unmarried and pregnant woman. However, in both films it is the older women, Madame Denoyers and Madame Emery, who clearly are attracted to Roland. After recounting her life story to Roland and how she lost everything after the war, partly because her husband was a gambler, Madame Desnoyers declares, "What I needed was a husband like you."[52] For her part, Madame Emery tells her daughter, "It's amazing how nice he is,"[53] and throughout the film she gazes longingly at Roland. Both films hint at the possibility of a relationship between Roland and the older women, a possibility that is foreclosed upon with Roland's departure for South Africa in *Lola* and his marriage to Geneviève in *The Umbrellas.* One wonders, then, if Roland fails to act upon a form of forbidden love—a younger man and an older woman—in the same way that Geneviève similarly fails to marry the working-class Guy.

Reading *Lola* and *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* together highlights the ways in which Demy creates a dialectic between fairy tale and melodrama. With its forceful and idealized hero and heroine who are reunited, thanks in large part to Lola's ability to wait, *Lola* proves to be a fairy tale in which dreams can come true. Yet read in light of the film's intertextual allusions to *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* and *White Nights* and in relation to its sequel *Model Shop, Lola* has melodramatic underpinnings. Through the representation of Cécile, Lola, and Madame Desnoyers, the film stages the cycle of romance from the fantastical foundations of first love to love's consummation to its final demise; in other words, it traces a movement from idealism to disillusion. "Matareva," then, not only signals "dream" (*rêve*) but also the death of that dream (*matar* means "to kill"). *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg,* on the other hand, foregrounds melodrama, as either the fairy-tale narrative is prevented from being realized—Geneviève does not marry her true love Guy—or it is problematized: marriage to the socially recognizable prince proves unsatisfactory. *The Umbrellas* starts off as a fairy tale whose movement toward wish fulfillment is blocked by war, social pressures, and the heroine's own weakness, and the film quickly moves into the melodramatic narrative about loss, impotence, and disillusion.

On one level, we can read the story of disillusion to be about France's romance with American culture. Both Michel and Roland represent different incarnations of the American dream and the American hero, and both characters fall short of being able to satisfy their princess. Just as the utopian promise of America is undermined in *Model Shop* by shots of LA that reveal its underlying empty and alienating landscape, so Michel and Roland prove to be empty and disaffected heroes. On another level, the story of disillusion is also the story about the queer subject who was unable to actualize his or her desires due to social pressures that make certain types of relationships untenable or even unthinkable. Cross-class and cross-generational couples can thus be read as figures for queer relationships, which are renounced in order to conform to the sociosexual and gender norms of middle-class French society.

Through recourse to fairy tale and melodrama, Demy creates films of hope and despair, idealism and disillusion. In different ways, *Lola* and *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* point to the possibility of fairy-tale moments, those magical moments in life when time is suspended and the world is seen through Technicolor-tinted glasses. These films also deal with the reality of loss, repression, and feelings of impotence, which are sometimes the result of misplaced desires or personal weakness and sometimes the work of larger forces, such as the power of the state to draft young men into useless wars. Despite feelings of disillusion and despair, Demy's characters continue to dream and to struggle with the gender, sexual, and class tensions of their society from film to film. Sometimes they even come to terms with their queer desires, which still does not guarantee fairy-tale endings.