ALAN RUDOLPH'S **TROUBLE IN MIND**

Tampering with Myths

Caryl Flinn

| OUT OF THE ARCHIVES |

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SERIES EDITORS:
MATTHEW SOLOMON AND PHILIP HALLMAN

Alan Rudolph's Trouble in Mind:
Tampering with Myths
Caryl Flinn

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Director and cast of *Trouble in Mind*. From left: Alan Rudolph, Kris Kristofferson, Genevieve Bujold, Joe Morton, Lori Singer, and Keith Carradine. Courtesy of Luke Wynne.

Alan Rudolph's *Trouble in Mind*

TAMPERING WITH MYTHS

Caryl Flinn

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Cover image: Hawk's model. Model by Heather Ramsay. Photo courtesy of David Blocker.

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OUT OF THE ARCHIVES

SERIES EDITORS:
MATTHEW SOLOMON AND PHILIP HALLMAN

Out of the Archives publishes short books that create new knowledge from archival materials in the Screen Arts Mavericks and Makers Collections at the University of Michigan Special Collections Research Center, which document the creative activities of a number of notable independent film and media makers. Books in the series examine subjects and materials that have not received sufficient prior attention, including unsung and unproduced films as well as works that would benefit from reappraisal in light of unexamined archival documents. The series supports researchers' individual trajectories through the archives while encouraging innovative archival configurations, selections, and approaches. A premise of the series is that sustained archival engagements suggest pathways and perspectives that are unavailable through other means and that archival research can generate new paradigms along with new knowledge. The philosophy of the series leverages what can be found in the archives, however fragmentary, incomplete, and idiosyncratic, rather than trying to be comprehensive or definitive.

Each of the individual archives in the Mavericks and Makers Collections is unique and different, like the filmmakers themselves. The respective collections vary in size and box count, although all have been processed and arranged chronologically by project title along the trajectory from pre-production to production through post-production and distribution/exhibition for completed projects. Contents include a wide variety of materials: scripts, correspondence, memos, clippings, notes, ephemera, photographs, along with selected personal items that suggest the ways filmmaking was never a purely professional matter for these individuals who worked independently and/or on the margins of the media industries. For more on the collections, see: https://lib.umich.edu/collections/collecting-areas/special-collections-and-archives/screen-arts-mavericks-and-makers.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In 1985, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* included *Trouble in Mind*, a retro-futurist film noir written and directed by Alan Rudolph, in their ten-best-of-the-year lists. That same year, the Toronto Film Festival identified Rudolph as one of "ten filmmakers for the future, who in our opinion will make the most significant contributions to world cinema in the next decade."[1] Even the reclusive Bob Dylan contacted Rudolph out of the blue to say that he'd seen *Trouble in Mind* and liked it; he predicted that in ten years all films would be like this, with "no reality."[2]

Trouble in Mind is not a typical film. As Rudolph would quip to interviewers, "If you're waiting for a regular movie to break out during one of mine, it's a long wait. It ain't gonna happen." *Trouble in Mind* features five characters whose lives intersect at a café, where their overlapping and competing desires lead to several pairings, one uncoupling, and several comic but violent run-ins with a ruthless mobster in a thinly disguised Seattle called Rain City. Like Rudolph's other films, *Trouble in Mind* requires audiences to leave behind standard viewing and listening conventions—just as the films themselves dispose of stylistic and narrative norms.

> I like for audiences to meet a film in the gray area, where both the film and the audience aren't sure. . . . The films I respond to are ones that are so totally unreal that suddenly you say, "Oh. I understand. I'm allowed to go inside this world. I don't know what to expect here and I don't have to worry about my own reality." Then suddenly the reality of the character or the emotions become poignant and understandable. . . . Any really interesting filmmaker to me creates his own reality and lets the audience wander through it.[3]

To do that is to take some risks, and risks with Rudolph tend to pay off and not pay off, sometimes at the same time.

He tells a story about Keith Carradine, one of *Trouble*'s leads—alongside Kris Kristofferson, Genevieve Bujold, Lori Singer, and Divine—whose character incrementally assumes the deranged appearance of a punk/glam rocker as his character descends into petty crime, *Dorian Gray* with the portrait openly displayed. The performance was one of unquestionable bravado. Rudolph pinpoints the precise moment he knew, however, that Carradine had lost the chances they thought he'd had for the Best Actor Oscar nomination. The two were driving on Sunset Boulevard and had just rounded a corner when a huge billboard come into view. There, "for their consideration," was William Hurt as his cross-dressed character in Héctor Babenco's political prison drama *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1985). Carradine and Rudolph knew instantly that all bets were off. Carradine wouldn't even be nominated, whereas Hurt scooped best actor at Cannes, BAFTA, and the Academy Awards.

Fig. 1. The glam queer punk look of Coop (Keith Carradine)

Fig. 2. Divine as Hilly Blue

There's no small irony that the acclaim went to Hurt's conventionally flamboyant gay man—a stereotypical "tragically gay" figure—over Carradine's hard-to-decipher feckless criminal, whose sky-high pompadour and punky/glam look seem to be merely a haphazard result of the character's haphazard choices. In retrospect, it is a much queerer representation and, at the least, more outré than Hurt's because of the film's lack of guidelines about deciphering his faux-macho character. The detail is not the film's only instance of gender rebellion: Rudolph cast John Waters's large cross-dressing muse, Divine, as Hilly Blue, a merciless "mobster with impeccable taste"[4] in what would be Divine's final film role and the only one in which the performer appeared uniquely as male.

More than the competing masculinities, though, the Sunset Boulevard story presents a theme that marks Rudolph's four-decade career: that of hits and misses and of highs and lows.[5] For not all of *Trouble in Mind*'s reviews were glowing—Pauline Kael assailed it as "a pile of poetic mush,"[6] lambasting, of all things, Carradine for not reprising the quirky but still Hollywood-esque romantic lead he'd played in Rudolph's film the previous year, *Choose Me*. Some were confused by a deeply stylized film that defied both cinematic conventions and audience expectations, one that didn't spoon-feed meanings and messages. In its review *Variety* expressed frustration that the film "suggests more than it explains. Sometimes it's intriguing and other times it falls flat."[7]

For as good a film as *Trouble in Mind* is, and for its importance to American independent cinema, its mixed reception runs like a leitmotif throughout Rudolph's career. Numer-

ous projects that he wrote and directed were lionized critical successes: *Choose Me*, *The Moderns* (1988), *Remember My Name* (1978). Several were mangled by studios: he lost final edit on *Endangered Species* (1982), and when the same thing happened with *Made in Heaven* (1987), he said, "two years of my life, lost," a sting that nettled when he recalled that Carradine, responding to dailies, had said,

> "Hey, this is maybe your best work." And I knew the end of it, the last ten minutes, was as good as anything that I'd done to that point. What came out was nobody's vision—it was a studio that had changed hands three or four times and what remained was bowdlerized beyond recognition.[8]

Rudolph has also been dogged by projects placed into protracted holding patterns. It took him over a decade to get the opportunity to make *The Moderns*, a labor of love about art forgery and patronage in 1920s Paris; still unproduced is a long-simmering adaptation of *The Far Side* cartoon. He has seen favorite movies tank with critics and audiences, such as his adaptation of Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* (1999), despite having the author's blessing, and experienced a sixteen-year gap between making *The Secret Lives of Dentists* (2002) and the microbudgeted *Ray Meets Helen* (2017). He often tells interviewers that he doesn't have a career so much as a careen.[9]

Rudolph's father Oscar, in contrast, had a storybook Hollywood career. In fact, he was such a longtime Hollywood man that the history of the industry can be tracked through his working life. After having started out in silent cinema as a

Fig. 3. Oscar Rudolph, horsing around with Lucille Ball. Courtesy of University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center), Alan and Joyce Rudolph Papers.

young extra in films by Cecil B. DeMille and with costars such as Mary Pickford, Oscar became one of the original members of the Screen Actor's Guild in 1933. Later, he worked as assistant director on films like Bing Crosby's *Top of the Mornin'* (1949) and directed Chubby Checker rock musicals like *Don't Knock the Twist* (1962) and *Twist around the Clock* (1961) as well as the 1954 sci-fi comedy *Rocket Man* (1954), in which six-year-old Alan played a small part (his line: "Look out, Captain Zar, it's the planet pirates!"). By the 1950s and 1960s, Oscar had moved into television, directing vintage fare like *The Donna Reed Show*, *My Favorite Martian*, and *Batman*, among others. Recalls Rudolph, his father directed "thousands of TV shows, from *Playhouse 90* to *The Brady Bunch*. . . . He knew a lot of people, but he wasn't about that. He was a real person."[10]

Growing up as a Hollywood kid may have given Rudolph an insider's perspective on filmmaking, but it was a look deep enough to encourage him to tamper with the DNA of classic genres and types, making crooked—"cracked" is Rudolph's provocative term—cross-genre films that are only playfully faithful to their original underpinnings. In that regard, their messaging, along with their understandings of gender, genre, and ideology, depart from less "crooked," canonical texts. *Remember My Name*, he states, is an "updated version of those melodramas that once displayed the compulsive sides of [the star personas of] Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, and their various devils." But whereas they were beaten into submission and had to suppress their "sassy selves," Geraldine Chaplin's character, who stalks her ex-husband after being released from jail, "bursts right through an audience's expectations with a

very nearly psychotic energy."[11] Critic Richard Combs too considers *Remember My Name* an updated woman's film;[12] for the *New Yorker*'s Richard Brody, it "suggests a quiet revolution in storytelling."[13]

In the early 1960s, Rudolph's older brother got him a Super 8 camera and he started making home movies—"And I've not changed my technique since then!"[14] In 1967 he entered the Directors Guild Assistant Director Training Program and graduated the following year at age twenty-four. At around this time Rudolph took odd jobs at the studios and made short films set to rock music—an unintentional mash-up of late twentieth-century music videos, his father's rock comedies, and Ken Russell's early film work—and became a second-unit director for several directors. His "break," as is well recounted, came when he started working as an assistant director with independent giant Robert Altman on *The Long Goodbye* (1973), *California Split* (1974), and *Nashville* (1975) and as cowriter, with Altman, on the script for *Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting Bull's History Lesson* (1976), leading commentators to start their discussions of Rudolph as Altman's protégé, discussions that haven't evolved very far past this beginning. The perception was furthered by Altman's role as producer on films such as *Welcome to L.A.* (1976), *Remember My Name*, and *Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle* (1994).

If Rudolph's career has been like a careen, *Trouble in Mind* has a special place in it: it is arguably his most accomplished film, and one on which the production experience went smoothly and, to quote him and producer Carolyn Pfeiffer, "everything came together." Its five main leads are loosely

based on Hollywood prototypes of the 1940s, recycled film noir characters whose hopes and fantasies converge in the café run by one of them, Wanda (Bujold). Hopeful characters or no, the film is bathed in melancholy, and the fantasy world Rudolph creates here is one whose options don't open onto much, and whose characters are scarcely able to meet their dreams halfway. Its bluesy, equally melancholic underscoring was composed by Mark Isham, and the songs, all blues numbers but for a small handful, are performed by the inimitable Marianne Faithfull; together, they provide the perfect sonorous complement to the film's bittersweet mood and noirish look, giving rise to a dreamlike setting, Rain City, in which a noir fable of sorts unspools. Today, a small but growing cache of Rudolph enthusiasts—critics, scholars, and audiences—consider *Trouble in Mind* a treasured reminder of independent filmmaking at its best. One online fan calls *Trouble in Mind* "a fantasy film noir like no other";[15] another says that "NOBODY sought to document this strange footnote [of the punky late 1970s and 1980s] in the 20th century timeline other than Rudolph, and he does an excellent job."[16] Yet history has not been particularly kind to the movie or to Rudolph, despite kudos that both received for it, and despite its appearance in prestigious film festivals such as Berlin, Deauville, and Toronto, where Rudolph stood as the only American in its list of filmmakers for the future.

Besides being Robert Altman's protégé, Rudolph is largely remembered today as the director of 1984's *Choose Me*, his best-received film. It is an insufficient memory. What is more, as of this writing, only one book-length study exists on the director,[17] and a relatively recent anthology on American cinema

Fig. 4. Robert Altman and Alan Rudolph. Courtesy of University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center), Alan and Joyce Rudolph Papers.

of the 1980s even fails to mention Rudolph or *Trouble in Mind*.[18] Recent academic work suggests this is starting to change, and along with *Trouble in Mind*'s own hidden histories and contexts, we see that its critical ups and downs illuminate something about the larger arc of Rudolph's oeuvre.

As for the comparisons with Altman, it would be falsifying history to deny the close working relationship between the two men, including their work together on films like *The Long Goodbye*, *Nashville*, and *Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting Bull's History Lesson*. Rudolph happily acknowledges his debt to the director, even at the expense of his own legibility as a key player within the independent film movement: "I'm just proud to be mentioned in the same breath with him":[19]

> In America . . . there's been maybe two or three, at most, true film artists in the last 50 years and Bob is certainly at the top of that group. Can't be imitated. [H]e's a wonderful guy. He's still the most ferocious artist I know. He's the youngest guy I've ever met.[20]

Rudolph describes his influence thus: "I knew how to make movies from being an assistant director. I learned *film* from Bergman, Truffaut, Fellini, et al. It all came together for me with Altman. Hollywood films were never really my interest."[21] From the outside, though, commentators tend to minimize the distinction between the two American directors, noting the ensemble casts that both used, and the actors that they shared, such as Geraldine Chaplin, Jennifer Jason Leigh, and, most notably, Keith Carradine. The two deploy similar formal

features such as roving cameras and overlapping dialogue (*Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle*, *Welcome to L.A.*) and typically tell unconventional stories unconventionally (*Remember My Name* and *Equinox* [1992]).[22]

But the two are very different. For one thing, as Rudolph says, "I'm more shamelessly romantic than Bob."[23] Both have a sardonic sense of humor, but Rudolph's has a forgiving edge and is more playful, making fewer jokes at the expense of his characters (unless they are blowhards who've earned it) and takes as its primary targets the conventions of mainstream filmmaking norms and expectations. "I look at things more emotionally, and I think I'm more interested in details that add up, as opposed to the overview looking in. As stylists, we don't shoot anything alike." Rudolph's stories begin at the inside of characters whom he situates in artificial worlds of fate, luck, chance, love, survival against the odds; Altman—consider *M*A*S*H* (1970), *Nashville*, and *The Wedding* (1978)—creates the situation first and inserts characters that make sense into it. Rudolph places great weight on the emotional states of his characters—something Altman doesn't do—conveying them through artifice and stylized sound and image. He also does not judge or moralize about his characters. His cynicism is more modest, with humanist, even romantic edges, and many of his films—certainly those of the mid-1980s—reshape reality, which Altman typically leaves less troubled, with the style of dreams, many bathed in what we might call the afterglow of familiar stories and old Hollywood.

As critic Emanuel Levy argues, the term "afterglow" aptly describes the director's work. Rudolph's 1997 film of the same

name follows two couples on a downward spiral, both past the heyday of their love, but holding on to the small glimmers of connection that remain. Levy consults a thesaurus to describe "afterglow," and the misty terms he finds don't seem any less appropriate for the feeling created in *Trouble in Mind*: "Almost any definition of the word afterglow applies to the title, be it a 'reflection of past splendor' or 'a glow remaining where a light has disappeared.'"[24] Yet as dreamlike as *Trouble in Mind*, *Afterglow*, *Choose Me*, and other films of the time are, *Trouble in Mind*—like the rest—was grounded in real-world contexts that were anything but dreamy, and as its title suggests, gives rise to their muted expression.

This book argues for the importance of *Trouble in Mind* on several fronts. To begin with, the film has a significant place during the apogee of American independent cinema, as I argue in Chapter 3. While in some ways Rudolph might seem to exemplify indie filmmaking, the term floats on unsteady ground, lending some interesting tensions to his relationship to the movement more generally. The film also plays an important role within the history of film genre, working within the neo-noir tradition that remains influential to this day and that rode a wave of popularity in American filmmaking in the 1970s and 1980s, as I examine in Chapter 4. In the history of cinematic form, *Trouble in Mind* holds an even more outsized place, founded as it is on a deeply conspicuous use of film style, visual as well as acoustic. Chapter 5 details how this creates impressionistic emotional resonances that outstrip any strictly plot-centered engagement with the film. Critics often describe Rudolph's stylized look, feel, and mode of sto-

rytelling as self-contained and dreamlike, yet in Chapter 6 I show how *Trouble in Mind* peers out onto the harsh horizons of the American Dream in Reagan's America, five years into the Republican's presidency, providing commentary on what I call the "broken politics" of the 1980s. Here I explore the film in relationship to neoliberalism of the time, a term I use to refer to market-based policies enforced and characterized by tax breaks, a decline in government subsidies in general and for social programs in particular, lack of regulation (for banks, government, and trade agreements alike), and general forces that work against the interest of workers (such as union-busting) and "little people."

In that same chapter I also show how the film traveled alongside the decade's "postmodernist wave," a movement that thrived on blurred distinctions between high and low culture and between past, present, and future, and that upended the idea of fixed interpretations and stable meanings. For instance, Rudolph describes *Trouble in Mind* as taking place "where the past meets the future, but not in the present." Both visually and narratively, it situates itself within the postmodern 1980s, the neoliberal 1980s, the neo-noir 1980s, an ill-defined future, and a past conjured up by some of the 1940s film noir's more mythic elements. Even a quick look at the film's mixed-source soundtrack feeds into this tradition, roaming from the classic blues of the 1920s through jazz and rock to "new age" electronica. In Chapter 7, I go on to examine the film's marketing strategies and its initial critical reception and, in Chapter 8, its subsequent "afterlives" within the minds of critics, historians, and fans, as well in the archival holdings

in the University of Michigan Library, where the Alan and Joyce Rudolph Collection resides. Most of the research for this book was conducted at those archives, which, despite their relatively small size, contain gems of information for many of the contexts just described, particularly regarding *Trouble in Mind*'s initial reception with film critics.

The book's subtitle, *Tampering with Myths*, comes from a remark made by the director: "I find people get furious when I mess with their myths." Yet myth-messing is precisely what gives *Trouble in Mind* its power and cultural weight. *Trouble in Mind* takes hold of some of our most cherished myths: the allure of classic film noir; conventions of cinematic time; basic narrative exposition and character psychology; the usual "background" place assigned to music and visual style; conventions of cinematic romance and happy endings; and the American Dream. *Trouble in Mind* takes apart these myths and puts them back together in ways that, like Humpty Dumpty, don't return us to the originals so much as expose their cracks and fissures. (Rudolph leaves intact the considerable emotional force of the myths, however.) It shows that we cannot bring back the past. For instance, although its world creates much of the affective menace of old film noir, *Trouble in Mind* withholds the figure of the femme fatale from us, a significant variation on the genre—especially as evil femmes fatales were becoming increasingly successful in their ventures during the often feminist-phobic 1980s. As one reviewer of *Trouble in Mind* summed up its myth-tampering, *Trouble in Mind* "doesn't poke fun at old movies . . . it exploits the expectations old movies have given us."[25]

CHAPTER 2

The Plot

Borrowed Pasts and Unclear Futures

Trouble in Mind [is] . . . basically a movie built of old movie parts, on purpose.
—Alan Rudolph

Trouble in Mind intertwines the stories of two men, John Hawkins (known as Hawk, played by Kris Kristofferson) and Coop (played by Carradine). Under the opening credits, Marianne Faithfull sings "Trouble in Mind," starting her work as what Rudolph calls one of the film's two shared narrators as we are introduced to Hawk. (Rudolph's ornithological character names deserve a book of their own; in *The Moderns*, Rudolph features another bird man, the gossip columnist Mr. Oiseau.) Hawk is revealed to us gradually, much like a Hollywood hero, with his face initially obscured as he is released from prison by guards who clearly admire him. His passage back to Rain City motivates the camera, as he moves through a mistily rendered early twentieth-century train station, descends from a 1940s-style bus, and so on. Our first encounter with Coop, by contrast, is in a cramped trailer—Rudolph's initial screenplay drafts had him surrounded by

Fig. 5. Lori Singer as Georgia in the trailer she shares with Coop and Spike

clotheslines, literally cooped in—in an unspecified rural area with his wife Georgia (Lori Singer). They are discussing their future: Georgia wants to move to the city for "greater opportunities" for Coop and their infant Spike. Coop consents only after a foreman refuses to hire him for day work, bolting after robbing the man's till. They drive their trailer to Rain City, arriving in in a parking lot outside Wanda's Café, run by Wanda (Bujold). The 1940s-style diner, complete with swing music from an old radio and period waitress costumes, will provide the social center of the film's world, of which Wanda is both witness and anchor. Taking pity on the naive young mother, Wanda hires Georgia as a waitress.

This is not before Hawk has returned to Rain City, greeted by Wanda with a delighted hug. Once she offers him a place

to stay above the café, however, he forces her into a sexual encounter in a vain attempt to rekindle their former relationship. Her response, per the script, is "irritated more than angry," but that reads, post–#Me Too movement, troublingly as a rape, a rare lapse of the film's otherwise challenging or even overturned gender roles and representations, whether through the female "narrators," the lack of a femme fatale, and the casting of Divine. More typically, Wanda stays above the fray, perched in her office residence above the café, observing the goings-on below through a round window Rudolph uses as a frame within a frame. She is the film's second narrator, attests Rudolph; her wisdom, experience, and world-weariness are the same features that can be found in the voice of Faithfull. One would do well to note the women's role as *observers* in addition to that of *narrators*. Hawk reacclimates himself to Rain City by way of a model he made of the area in prison.

In quick order, Coop is lured into petty crime, going on jobs with Solo (Joe Morton)—a small-time player in Rain City's world of quick criminal fixes. Solo is a café regular who quotes literature and poetry as if he were its resident Beat poet and whose voice provides insights into characters as *Trouble in Mind* begins. In setting up a heist for the evening with an impatient Coop, he states, "Cervantes says, 'Delay always breeds danger,'" and Coop responds, "Well, who's he, is he coming with us?" Their theft of incoming counterfeit goods, filmed at the docks, is bungled: Solo is an "independent" up against the organized crime syndicate helmed by Hilly Blue (Divine), and when we hear a buddy say, "Hilly's tryin' to squeeze out the

Fig. 6. Coop and Solo (Joe Morton). Courtesy of Luke Wynne.

independents like us," it's difficult, as we shall see, not to consider the line as the director's comment on the filmmaking world of the time.

Frustrated by his life in crime moving so slowly (read: unprofitably) and by the sexual interest Hawk takes in Georgia, Coop starts acting like a tough guy, hysterically presenting himself as a "Don't mess with me" macho stereotype clearly threatened by Hawk/Kristofferson's casual, implacable charisma. Their shared desire for Georgia creates the film's chief tension and its love triangle, pivoting on Singer's portrayal of a blond, innocent "angel," as Rudolph calls her ("someone from another world," per costume designer Tracy Tynan.)[1] Wanda,

by contrast, has two feet planted in the center of the film's world and cedes no control to the men within in it, except on that one occasion with Hawk. She is the wizened not-elder elder, who initially warns Hawk to stay away from Georgia, but later, as she witnesses Georgia's and Coop's deteriorating situation, practically gives Georgia and Hawk their lines in addition to her wry approval. With its two "co-narrators" (Wanda and Faithfull), *Trouble in Mind* takes a detour from conventional film noir, whose distinctive, lone-wolf voice-overs are routinely generated by a male character—and done so through speech, not through character observation (Wanda) or music (Faithfull).

Hawk and Coop articulate their desire for Georgia with the promises (threats?) of control and protection. This is one of the few character traits they share, and it pushes their rivalry out into the open, often taking physical expression. On their very first encounter, Hawk protects Coop from an attack by a ne'er-do-well but soon afterward trips Coop, an ungrateful new visitor to Rain City. From the start, Coop is overeager to provoke skirmishes over ownership rights to Georgia, and Hawk is slow to rise to the nonchallenge of this feckless man. In an inexorable, exaggeratedly depicted fistfight, Hawk lands a punch on Coop's face that actually caused production to stop for several weeks. Kristofferson's blow had loosened some of Carradine's teeth, and the latter had to be stitched up. Kristofferson, meanwhile, who insisted on doing the scene without the stunt men who had been flown up from Los Angeles, had to spend two weeks in the hospital from the infected hand that Carradine's mouth had

given him. In a way, the anecdote offers a real-life corollary to Rudolph's staging of this and other brawls as a slapstick circus of tough-guy clowns. Later, a circumspect Carradine noted that boxers, like his costar, are trained to hit their target, whereas stuntmen are trained to miss it. (Ultimately, Rudolph didn't select the take in which Kristofferson landed the real punch—he said it looked too fake.)

After long nights out partying with half-dressed women, Coop, over time, returns to the trailer or the café wearing heavy eyeliner and makeup, a glam rocker manqué with a pompadour that is part 1950s greaser / teddy boy, part alien, and part enigma. His connection to Georgia is unraveling; she is as confused by his appearance as we are amused by it, and he arrogantly admonishes her to leave him alone so he can do what he needs to do to provide for their family. She cannot stand his absences and soon catches him dancing with the aforementioned women. Desperate and worried for her son, Georgia takes Spike and wanders on foot through Rain City, whose vehicles and residents are in full-blown chaos. She darts into Expressionist-style dead-end streets and scurries past a protest group being thrashed by the militia, the same soldiers we've seen patrolling Wanda's. After catching sight of a well-off family, Georgia, at wit's end, deposits her infant in their open parked car. She immediately regrets her action, but by the time she returns, it is too late—the car has left—and she is forced to cash in on Hawk's deal: he will return Spike to Georgia, who promises him in turn she will "do anything." Such is the tone of their agreements, and with Coop descending into the urban underworld—and his own demons—she starts to

Fig. 7. Lounge singer

soften toward Hawk and the security he seems to represent. Wanda, who has seen how far and how low Coop has sunk, now encourages her. Rudolph plays Hawk's first real date with her both for tenderness and for laughs. Wearing a dress borrowed from Wanda and holding her hair back with barrettes, Georgia sits with him at the restaurant Hawk has proposed, a dodgy establishment that includes drinks with parasols and a badly wigged lounge performer who sings a song about the search for love, concluding raucously that "true love is only found / in your pants."[2] Such is romance in Rain City.

Trouble escalates in Coop's world, where he gets nowhere. Even worse, his tough gangster movie dialogue vexes Blue and his goons, comic creatures who scarcely get words out of their mouths: one of them never speaks, and the main thug is named Rambo (Dirk Blocker, brother of *Trouble in Mind*

producer David Blocker), whose suit suggests a recent escape from a vaudeville stage. Coop and Solo botch a robbery; Hilly's gang is blamed and takes revenge by drowning Solo in his car. In order to square affairs, Hilly throws a lavish, formal party at the personal art gallery in his mansion. The scene was shot at night at the Seattle Art Museum (now the location of the Asian Art Museum), with works contributed/sacrificed by young Seattle-area artists, including several second pieces of renowned glassblower artist Dale Chihuly, whose "firsts" would have gone for six figures at the time. The party starts in impeccable taste—hired violinists genteelly play the bass line of Pachelbel's Canon as waiters serve hors d'oeuvres and drinks—but things quickly turn chaotically, comically violent; artworks—including Chihuly's—are blasted to bits by bullets and fisticuffs. The characters fare no better, particularly the gangsters of Rain City, and Hawk's bullet lands square in the forehead of Hilly, just as it had in the flashback showing him killing Fat Adolph, the "very bad man" who had threatened Wanda and whose death landed Hawk in jail. During the melee at Hilly's mansion, Hawk, who has shown up to talk to Coop on Georgia's behalf in exchange for his getting to "keep" her, is mortally injured. The wild-coiffed Coop, whose bad calls were partially responsible for Hilly holding the soiree in the first place, is miraculously untouched by crisscrossing bullets, finally exiting the mansion as if walking off the canvas of Magritte's *Empire of Light*. Rudolph has saved his life.

Bleeding profusely, Hawk stumbles back to Georgia to leave a farewell note and some cash he'd grabbed from Hilly's corpse. He kisses Georgia, who is sleeping. Later, she reads:

Fig. 8. Hawk and Hilly prior to the shootout. Courtesy of Luke Wynne.

"Just turn around and I'll be there. Hawk." Mark Isham's bluesy jazz trumpet and synthesized underscoring begins, to be soon joined by Marianne Faithfull performing "El Gavilan / The Hawk," the song Kristofferson had written during *Trouble in Mind*'s production, and which closes out the film.

Coop also returns to Georgia and finally appears sincere in atoning for his misadventures, asking her to give him another chance. He is too late. She has given herself to Hawk and to the dream of family he offers her and Spike (the scene occurs in Hawk's newly domesticated space above Wanda's, complete with flowers in a vase). No longer a jangle of nerves, Coop leaves her be. His departure—from Georgia, Wanda's, and

Fig. 9. Coop's last appeal to Georgia.

Rain City—couldn't be less liberating (as his name has always implied): he is shown leaping into one of the militia jeeps that have patrolled Rain City throughout, asking to sign up. The jeep revs up, but we don't see it depart Rain City, partly because Coop isn't moving on to new chapters so much as down a trail toward death.

As the song plays, the camera moves from Georgia reading Hawk's note to the camera following Hawk out of Rain City, leaving it for the first time since the film's opening scenes. Now free, Hawk is in the mountains, in natural light—very un-noir—driving a convertible westward, a hero heading into the sunset. From the passenger's side of the car, Georgia enters the frame momentarily to caress his cheek before retreating from it, leaving a wistful, satisfied smile on his face, indicating

that it has all been worth it. As the camera moves skyward, we see dark clouds forming, obscuring the setting sun. Faithfull's weathered voice now yields to Isham's distinctive arrangement as the credits roll, helping make this scene one of the most beautiful finales in recent film history. It is also one of the most misconstrued ones.

CHAPTER 3

Trouble in Mind in Independent Cinema

Smooth Sailing in a Troubled Term

Independent cinema is a misnomer. By definition, it's an oxymoron. If you're truly independent, then no one can really categorize you and your film can't be pigeonholed. If you're against the system, you're part of the system by definition. I don't think independent means against the system, but you're always dependent on the money.

—Alan Rudolph

1985 was a good year for American independent cinema. Indie and studio-contingent "Indie-wood"[1] releases included *Desperately Seeking Susan* (Susan Seidelman, Orion Pictures), *Fool for Love* (Robert Altman, Cannon, distributor), and the aforementioned *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (Island Alive, distributor). The year before, the Independent Spirit Awards were founded. Indie directors knew that their creative freedom was based on keeping their projects—and hence their funding—out of the hands of media conglomerates. Production and distribution companies dedicated to them began to emerge as early as the 1970s and thrived in the 1980s, such as Altman's Lion's Gate and Island Alive, the company that produced Rudolph's 1984

Choose Me and, initially, *Trouble in Mind* (it dissolved during the making of the film, and Alive Films took over distribution). In the 1980s, indie houses such as Miramax, New World, and Fine Line got on their feet; so too did big-game hunters like Carolco (the producers of the *Rambo* franchise), Cannon Films, Dino De Laurentis's DEG, and Vestron, which were able to compete with the majors on their own terms, that is, with big-budget pictures, through much of the decade. In the end, their indie and art-house films were not able to keep the latter companies solvent, due in part to the stock market crash of 1987, diminishing public funding for the arts, and shifts in structures and ownership of the Hollywood studios.[2]

While American cinema was no longer in the white heat of "the Hollywood renaissance," when alternative, youth-oriented, and risk-taking fare first burst upon the scene (*Bonnie and Clyde*, *Easy Rider*, and *The Graduate* in the mid-1960s), independent cinema emerged quickly in films such as Melvin van Peebles's *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* in 1971 and with it the formation of numerous new auteur directors, such as Robert Altman (*Nashville*). With the widespread success of *The Return of the Secaucus Seven* (1979) by John Sayles—whom many call the godfather of independent cinema—independent cinema seemed to be up and running, and most critics view the 1980s as the beginning of the "classic" indie period, which thrived in structures unavailable to and different from those of Hollywood studios.[3] E. Deidre Pribam notes that, at the time, distribution and marketing decisions were tailored around individual films and their likely audiences. "This was the niche," she writes, "occupied by many of the earlier indie

distributors, giving that extra care to films that were unlikely to succeed without it."[4] In other, more formal ways, the 1980s offered a transitional period for independent-leaning cinema (if not independent per se); films were less in the sway of the "gritty" (Scorsese's *Mean Streets* [1973] and *Taxi Driver* [1976]) and "romantic" realisms (Terence Malick's *Badlands* [1973] and *Days of Heaven* [1978]) of the 1970s. Quirkier stories and stylized storytelling blossomed in films such as *Stranger Than Paradise* (Jim Jarmusch, 1984), Coppola's *One from the Heart* (1982), and *The Brother from Another Planet* (Sayles, 1984), not to mention low-budget cult films such as *The Toxic Avenger* (Michael Herz and Lloyd Kaufman, 1986) and *Repo Man* (Alex Cox, 1984). Audience tastes and consuming habits were shifting throughout the 1980s, which critics have referred to as a time "when movies mattered" or "when movies were made for grown-ups," with a rising number of film schools and festivals, despite several economic downturns and the mixed blessings of videotape and videotaping.

Rudolph's career roughly follows the arc of American independent cinema: opening in the 1970s and thriving through the 1980s and early 1990s, when he interspersed his indie output with projects for hire from studios. His work on Tri-Star's low-budget pic *Songwriter* (1984), for instance, helped secure financing needed for music rights for *Choose Me*, a film whose budget was so small ($640,000) that Tracy Tynan recalls she couldn't even afford second costumes for actors if outfits were damaged or needed dry cleaning. These were the kind of economic realities for many independent films. "Many Hollywoodians," Rudolph told an interviewer about the 1980s,

"were beginning to make shitloads of money with the major studios still in control. For me to survive as a filmmaker moving forward meant stepping back, which meant going small."[5] In fact, he disagrees with the view that the 1980s was a decade of professional successes for him.

In 1984, *Choose Me* ended up being featured at prestigious film festivals like Cannes and Toronto, where it was received with special honors, such as the International Critics Award; *Trouble in Mind* was featured in the 1986 Berlinale lineup, perhaps reducing the sting of Hollywood's failure to give Carradine his Oscar nod. Later in this prolific decade, Rudolph directed *The Moderns*, a film he'd been trying to make for years. In the 1990s he released, among others, *Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle*, *Afterglow*, *Equinox*, and *Breakfast of Champions*, but this was the period in which US filmmaking was increasingly "going big."

Generally speaking, independent cinema had enjoyed relative stability during the mid-1980s. What changed? Late in the decade, after the international success of Steven Soderbergh's *sex, lies, and videotape* in 1989, heritage studios like Universal, United Artists, and 20th Century Fox began to move more aggressively into specialty production and distribution independent arms of their own, often taking the form of "classics" divisions, along with acquiring or buying out smaller, "independent" establishments. Following this trend in the 1990s, Rudolph continued to combine indie work with studio projects like the ill-fated *Made in Heaven* as the big buyouts of independent companies became more common.[6] By the first two decades of the 2000s, independent funding opportunities

dried up, and Rudolph's output declined precipitously, like that of other groundbreaking indie directors.

While Alan Rudolph might be said to exemplify independent cinema, with a career paralleling its highs and lows, it's impossible to define authoritatively what independent cinema actually is. Can we call an independent film independent if it was produced and distributed through a major studio? Are there other situations in which critics might aver independent cinema loses its "independence?" There are no clear boundaries, nothing but gray space. For scholar Geoff King,

> At one end of the American cinematic spectrum is the globally dominant Hollywood blockbuster. At the other is the low-budget independent or "indie" feature and, beyond that, various forms of avant-garde, experimental, no-budget or otherwise economically marginal production. In between lie many shades of difference.[7]

The terms are as contested as they are shaky: what is the relationship of independent cinema to "the New Hollywood" (or, as *Trouble in Mind* asks us to consider, to old, classical Hollywood)? Where is the intersection between independent and cult cinema? Experimental filmmaking? A wobbly line also separates certain aspects of "independent filmmaking" from the category of "art cinema," whose first golden age only slightly preceded that of American indie cinema (the late 1950s vs. the late 1960s). Broadly speaking, critics tend to define art cinema—whose provenance at the time was Japan, India, and Western and Eastern Europe—as more experimen-

tal, enigmatic, stylized, self-conscious, with more taboo content, more narrative innovations than most indies, although there is no clear line of distinction, and, even if there were, it would be less a solid border than a matter of degree. Unlike the United States, however, most films coming from foreign art film traditions benefited from some form of federal and other institutional support.

Rudolph's work fits James Shamus's definition of independent cinema as a "blending of American and European sensibilities"—one that does not take the form of a singular school or style and instead maintains an ambiguous stance toward both. Moreover, he adds, it doesn't take an oppositional stance to Hollywood, in the way that avant-garde and experimental cinema typically does.[8] Critic Michael Atkinson calls these indie films "dependies."[9]

Everything Coming Together

Insofar as "independent" can refer to a fixed thing, *Trouble in Mind* fits the bill. Its $2.8 million budget was, for Rudolph, monstrous, but was in line with other independent features (with the exception of Carolco's infamously bloated budget for 1985 *Rambo: First Blood, Part II*). Financing was strangely, blessedly secure. He told me:

> This was the only time before or since when I've had absolute certainty concerning a future project. Knowing instead of hoping made a real difference how I approached matters on *Trouble*,

> creative and practical. The unpaved road was smooth for one glorious stretch before the next blind corner.[10]

The film came together in other ways. In our conversations, Rudolph stated that he took the best of his crewmembers from *Choose Me*, worked with the same producers, some of the same actors, and found other personnel in serendipitous ways. He would never have thought to hire Kristofferson to play Hawk had it not been for stepping in at the last minute to direct *Songwriter*; he was able to hire composer Mark Isham, sight unseen, based on overlapping phone calls (see Chapter 5, "The Style of Dreams"); he hired camera operator Toyomichi Kurita upon their first meeting in spite of Kurita's shyness about taking on the project and his limited ability to speak English: the meeting, moreover, occurred by chance, within a week of cinematographer John Bailey recommending the Japanese cameraman to him. As for Divine, four other directors had approached him for projects; it was Rudolph's *Trouble in Mind* that landed him.

Even preproduction went smoothly. With the producers and a skeletal crew, Rudolph traveled from Los Angeles to Seattle—an area that he loves for its rainy, overcast cool weather—to scout locations for Wanda's, Hilly's mansion, and different areas (the street protest; the paths Georgia takes running; Coop's and Solo's petty thievery, etc.) In Seattle he found the perfect Rain City, a town that he said had its own "hard-boiled romanticism." Producer David Blocker, by contrast, found Seattle to be an "empty city at the time; there was

actually a sign as you went to the airport that said, 'The last one to leave, turn out the lights.'"[11] (A similar scenario afflicted other North American cities during the 1980s, between industrial shifts and economic downturns.) For costumer Tynan, the faltering economy made Seattle "a mecca of vintage stuff at the time," and she raided its shops for kimonos, military outfits, and Carradine's whacked-out urban wardrobe.

Despite Rudolph musing that Seattle has a "dreamy quality to it"[12] that he would call its "soul,"[13] he knew that to make Rain City "we had to take the Seattle out of it."[14] "During shooting we daily used artwork to mask Seattle or create our world,"[15] covering street and bus signs with their own signs that identified regional sectors or otherwise enhanced the sense of menace parading around the diegetic town. Scouting locations took time: "I had spent many weeks walking Seattle looking for Rain City." But there, at a First Avenue alley, a boarded-up storage room for a neighboring fabric store would become Wanda's Café. "It was just waiting for us," he said. Wanda's Café would end up looking so real that people came in off the streets and thought it was a functioning diner.[16] Just as auspiciously, the upstairs had apartments that could be used as rooms for Wanda and Hawk. Producer David Blocker recalls that a hawk flew by and landed on the building, as if lending its approval.

Blocker produced *Trouble in Mind* with Carolyn Pfeiffer, one of few powerhouse female producers (and the sole woman distributor) at the time, at the newly formed Island Alive with Island Pictures, where she, Chris Blackwell, and Shep Gordon were equal partners, collectively deciding what film projects

to take on. Releases of Island Alive films included *Stop Making Sense* (1984), *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982), and the aforementioned *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. Gordon joined as head of Alive Enterprises, an active music management company (with acts such as Teddy Pendergrass, Alice Cooper, and Blondie), and Blackwell helmed the Island Records label, which included iconic rock clients such as Marianne Faithfull, Tom Waits, and U2, and which introduced Bob Marley and other Jamaican reggae artists to the world. The merger not only traded in indie musical hipness but in youth culture more generally, pitching wares to those open to nonmainstream fare at the time. For a few years, it was a perfect union, with Island Alive burnishing *Trouble in Mind* with young indie cred from the start. But internal squabbles would dissolve Island Alive during the making of *Trouble in Mind*, and its production and distribution would be picked up by Pfeiffer and Gordon's Alive Films (which subsequently produced Rudolph's *The Moderns* and distributed foreign art films such as *Betty Blue* [1986] and the documentary *Marlene* [1984]).

There was a certain convergence of Island Alive, Alive, and Island Records with Rudolph's image as a director with a pulse on youth culture, given Rudolph's familiarity with a wide range of popular music (it helped, as he has said, to have grown up in a house filled with records). Shep Gordon sent Rudolph some songs to consider for a soundtrack from Alive Enterprises client Teddy Pendergrass, the popular R&B singer whose career had taken a downturn in the mid-1980s after a disabling car accident. Rudolph was approached to make a music video for one of them, Luther Vandross's "You're My

Choice Tonight / Choose Me." He countered by proposing to make a movie *based* on the song for nearly the same budget.

Choose Me's soulful R&B had been preceded by the rock and roll soundtrack of Rudolph's United Artists comedy *Roadie* in 1980, a film that followed the tour of the fictional Travis Redfish (played by the inimitable Meat Loaf), and included 1980s rock icons such as Blondie, Alice Cooper, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, and Asleep at the Wheel. Cameos also included country legends Roy Orbison and Hank Williams, and Rudolph would solidify his C&W credentials five years later in *Songwriter*, which featured songwriter-singer superstars Willie Nelson and Kristofferson. Rudolph found the *Songwriter* experience enjoyable, and recalled the friendly rivalry between the two stars, who kept slipping songs under his door "for his consideration." Kristofferson would go on to write the closing number for *Trouble in Mind* that Mark Isham arranged with a moving combination of muted jazz trumpet and synthesizer; Faithfull did the vocals, exemplifying in a single piece not only Rudolph's range of musical passions and interests but his ability to bring different styles in collaboration together. *Roadie* had exhibited a similar crossing of styles when punk/pop singer Blondie performed the Johnny Cash classic "Ring of Fire."

Like his music, Rudolph's casting choices evinced a youthful, counterculture savvy, and his means of hiring people was highly unconventional, typically bypassing tryouts and interviews. He says that his decisions are often made by "lightning bolts" rather than studied tryouts—Divine was "hired in about an hour."[17] Moreover, the director has worked with the same actors on multiple projects: Carradine most notably, who has

appeared in a half dozen of his films; Nick Nolte, four; two each for Bruce Willis, Campbell Scott, Lori Singer, and Kristofferson, who moved on to *Trouble in Mind* immediately after *Songwriter*. *Songwriter* included a secondary role for musical star Lesley Ann Warren, who'd costarred in *Choose Me* that same year and would act again in Rudolph's delightful but underrated *Trixie* (2000) and produce *Ray Meets Helen* nearly two decades later. Here Rudolph ticks off another "indie" box, joining other nonmainstream directors who draw from a personal stable of actors (Altman, John Cassavetes, Hal Hartley). Actors and crew enjoy working with Rudolph, demonstrated not only by returning to work on later projects, but by lowering their usual fee scales to do so. *Trouble in Mind*, for instance, not only featured two of the leads of *Choose Me* (Bujold and Carradine), but also its production designer (Steve Legler), first assistant director (Bruce Chevillat), costume designer (Tracy Tynan), and of course, its producers, Carolyn Pfeiffer and David Blocker. Working with people he enjoyed and already knew, Rudolph told me, made *Trouble in Mind* one of his favorite films to make, and the project, moreover, was unmarred by unexpected financial woes or production troubles—hospitalizations aside.

By the time of *Trouble in Mind*, Rudolph had gained a name for himself for making films efficiently: Island Alive films had been impressed by his ability to complete *Return Engagement* (1983) under time and under budget, making their decision to take on *Choose Me* easier. Hollywood also took notice, asking Rudolph to replace the director of *Songwriter* at literally the last minute (he was approached on a Friday and began shoot-

ing that Monday). As with *Choose Me*, efficiency characterized *Trouble in Mind*'s production: *Choose Me* had taken one week to write and was shot in three—exceptionally speedy, even by Rudolph's standards. *Trouble in Mind*, which he started working on while filming *Roadie* and *Songwriter*, had taken him less than six months to complete three script drafts. The first was done in two weeks. He called it "sparse, straightforward," but knew, as he told Carolyn Pfeiffer, that "we can't do it straight—it's been done straight."[18]

In addition to writing most of his own, non-studio, films, Rudolph was hands-on with editing and, more unusually, with the score (he is his own music director), ticking another box that characterizes nonmainstream, independent filmmaking: that of the auteur, in which a singular vision—usually that of a director—leaves its imprint on a film. The term fails to consider the highly collective nature of filmmaking, a feature of the process that is particularly apposite in Rudolph's case (all colleagues mention the free rein he gives you as soon as he puts his trust in you; it was Carradine's idea, for instance, to go with the strange look for Coop, and Solo's character was built in preproduction in collaboration with Morton).

The concept of auteurism still holds considerable sway in independent cinema, creating director-brands that tell potential filmgoers the kind of films to expect. Auteurist films can also indicate what likely distribution and exhibition paths a film will follow and the kinds of audiences that will be drawn to them in the first place. Conventionally, auteurs are understood to be directors who bring a personal mark to their work—a consistent "vision," style, or set of themes—and

Rudolph has certainly been described this way, with critics labeling his work "dreamlike," "quirky" "atmospheric," "stylized," and so on. Without denying those features, especially regarding his mid-1980s work, such as *Choose Me* and *Trouble in Mind*, we should keep in mind that the concept of auteurism fails to capture the teamwork that marks an "Alan Rudolph" production and the collective experience that he values.[19] James Schamus, former copresident of the indie company Good Machine, further critiques the concept, questioning its implication that Hollywood is the common enemy. Auteurism, he states, is "a peculiarly romantic (and free-market capitalist) notion of artistic identity, one that posits the heroic individual artist fighting for his vision."[20]

With their broad variation in perceived difficulty, unconventionality, narrative resolution, and structural complexity, Rudolph's films exemplify independent cinema's interest in expanding not just the kind of stories that get told, but also how they get told. Some independent films are scarcely different from Hollywood's; others seem closer to art or experimental cinema. Rudolph's work enjoys a broad range across this wide, gray area. *Trouble in Mind* might be said to occupy an indeterminate, middle spot as it asserts his work's most explicit point of contact with Hollywood—especially *old* Hollywood—through the stylized genre of film noir. Although *Trouble in Mind* fits into the category of neo-noir that flourished among studios and independents alike in the 1970s and 1980s, it could just as easily be considered anti-noir, so much does it challenge key generic conventions (in narration, gender, the role of humor). Whether neo- or anti-noir, however,

and in both its near-Hollywood and non-Hollywood features, Rudolph's film uses romance to anchor the film, one with a good old-fashioned triangular structure.

Still, Rudolph is adamant in calling *Trouble in Mind* an "anti-classic," with too many parts to add up to a single sense or meaning. That resistance to packaging is another common feature of independent filmmaking, even if it's more perception than reality, for all films are "packaged" and marketed, by virtue of their directors, stars, or genres. For *Trouble in Mind*, the first and last categories are especially apt, on the one hand because it is an "Alan Rudolph film," and on the other because it does not escape its film noir underpinnings, classic or otherwise.

CHAPTER 4

Neo-noir and Anti-noir

Playing with Tropes

We wanted to push the noir fantasy from [the 1940s] forward.

—Alan Rudolph

For as much as the look and story line of *Trouble in Mind* buck trends of easy temporal placement, the film holds a solid place among the neo-noirs of the 1980s, with its characters, mood, set design, style, and story all bringing noir elements to the table. Stylized 1940s detective movies had been on the rise since the 1970s, with movies such as *Chinatown* (1974) and *Farewell My Lovely* (1975) leading the pack for studios; among indies was Altman's revisionist *The Long Goodbye* (1973), which formally marked the unsteadiness of its noir world by a continuously moving camera. The trend continued well into the next decade (and beyond) with *Body Heat* (1981), culminating the next year in Ridley Scott's inimitable *Blade Runner*, the mold-breaking "retro-futurist noir" whose stylistically and temporally mixed setting informs *Trouble in Mind*.

Other films of the time, including remakes such as *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1981) and *No Way Out* (a 1987

remake of *The Big Clock* [1948]) and new titles such as *Dressed to Kill* (1980) and *Blood Simple* (1984) used noir conventions for the sense of mystery and erotic intrigue they offered, upping the ante with bigger budgets and bigger stars. The 1986 adaptation of Dennis Potter's *The Singing Detective* from the UK used noir tropes—the lead character is Philip Marlowe—in its quirky musical adaptation.

Noir was so ensconced within the public imagination in the 1980s that Carl Reiner was able to make a parody of the genre in his hilarious *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* (1982). Though not a parody per se, *Trouble in Mind* has a certain irreverence in its homage to film noir, producing its characters and conventions with ironic affection and humor, as revealed by casting Divine as the evil Hilly Blue, the mobster whose silly name calls to mind *Hill Street Blues*, a popular US cop show in the 1980s, and who incarnates the iconic "vast and sinister"[1] Sydney Greenstreet, known for classic noirs such as *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and *Casablanca* (1942),[2] where he is also linked to the color blue via the Blue Parrot, his nightclub down the street from Rick's Café.

Rudolph describes Rain City as "a place of 40s Hollywood noir," and, according to David Blocker, he chose Seattle "specifically for its bad weather."[3] (The producer notes that, while filming, Rudolph was always ready and wishing for rain.) Ironically, the glistening, wet, urban streets so common to film noir had to be created for the film: Seattle was going through a dry spell at the time, and adding artificial rain drew curious looks from bystanders.

When asked about his personal take on film noir, Rudolph

Fig. 10. Rain City's film noir streets

Fig. 11. Rain City's film noir streets

said that he "was always drawn to movies that had an invented surface. The contradiction of noir was that it felt realistic because it was so highly manipulated."[4] His own films "are cracked romances, quixotic dreams and cosmic jokes, true love in fake places."[5] Full of fake places, noir is known for its hard-boiled, streetwise stories of down-and-out characters or those on their way down, and for a stylistic flair that compromises any claims to realism. Critics have persistently noted an intriguing tension of the genre: on the one hand, its stories of regular folks with hard lives seem ripped from "true crime" headlines, its films are often shot outdoors and outside studio walls, giving then a documentary aspect; on the other, its off-kilter, low-key lighting; its focus on surfaces—cast shadows and glistening, rainy streets; the dazzling outfits of its equally dazzling femmes fatales; and, more thematically, the deceptive nature of appearances—couldn't be further from the minimal style stereotypically ascribed to documentaries.[6] Although there were exceptions in the 1940s and 1950s, in general film noirs were not big-budget affairs until their revival in the 1970s (compare *D.O.A.* [1949/50] to *Chinatown*). Says Rudolph, "Not having lots of money forces you to come up with ideas that somehow draw upon the best things you can do. You film a certain way to compensate, and the critics call it style."[7]

"My script for *Trouble* never cited time or place or design. It was straightforward, hard-boiled noir. But I wanted to stretch that." Divine as "the Sydney Greenstreet character" was one way to upend convention; in fact, with this provocative casting, *Trouble in Mind*'s sense of "operatic noir" was born.[8] But the kind of noir Rudolph summoned was a noir of the mind,

the collective memory filmgoers have of its classic era, and his neo-noir (to French interviewers he referred to it as *l'amour noir*) isn't fixed in that period in any sense. As Roger Ebert describes the film, "It does not take place in the 1940s, but its characters dress and talk and live as though it did. Could this movie have been made if there had never been any movies starring Richard Widmark, Jack Palance or Robert Mitchum? Yes, but it wouldn't have had any style."[9]

As in many noirs, fate, botched chances, and troubled histories plague the characters. Like others before him, the male protagonist of *Trouble in Mind*, Hawk, has a broken relationship with the police. Once a member of the force, he was fired and imprisoned for killing Fat Adolph, whom Wanda calls a "very, very dangerous man," leaving, at this point, blurry boundaries between the law and the underworld (often depicted as twin syndicates in film noir). Protagonists' hopes and momentary successes—typically financial or sexual—are usually killed off by corruption, collaborators who betray them, greedy women and men, and guns. Hawk brings that knowledge of corruptible dreams with him into Rain City when he says, tired as an old noir legend would be by 1985, "Let everyone get what they deserve." Rudolph follows that precept, but only to a point.

Neither Wanda nor Georgia is the classic untrustworthy femme fatale (or the bland girl next door that noir often set up in opposition to her). Wanda stands up for herself in a way that the later Ida Lupino did, even if she was behind the camera and made a different kind of film. Georgia *might* be one of the girls next door who contrasted with the femmes fatales, but she brings such luminosity to the role that there's no dull-

ness to her, just naive goodness—French critics labeled her the white angel to Hawk's black one. Indeed, that's what attracts the world-weary hero to her, and what her desperate husband may or may not want to hold on to. For only male characters betray other people in *Trouble in Mind*.

Hawk's status as the most fixed noir icon—in behavior, dialogue, look, and movement through the plot—holds him back. Though in the end he appears to leave Rain City, driving into the sunset no less, he's no more successful at realizing his dreams or escaping from his failures than Coop. Regarding the finale, Rudolph recounts the dismay some people have expressed to him over *Trouble in Mind*'s unlikely, last-minute "boy gets girl" ending. "Could be either that," deadpans Rudolph, "or he's dead." Literal readings get you nowhere in the cinematic worlds of Alan Rudolph, and Rain City's harsh, cynical ecosystem—however comically and romantically rendered—is hardly going to serve up such a cliché. Or if it does, it will be trifled with. Again, as Rudoph states, "People hate it when I mess with their myths."

Like many a film noir—and like Rudolph's *Choose Me* the year before—a watering hole or bar provides a gravitational center—think of Rick's café in *Casablanca* as well as Eve's in *Choose Me*. In *Trouble in Mind*, it is Wanda's Café, less boozy than either, that serves as the place where characters cross paths, the only exception being Hilly Blue, whose own empire is sufficiently grand that he's not obliged to leave it. Indeed, we see him outside it only in a Mob meeting at a Chinese restaurant and in a car, both moments in which he coldly asserts his authority over the other characters, notably Coop, Solo, and Hawk.

By the 1970s and 1980s, the splintering of the myth of the intact, wholesome nuclear family may have been partly responsible for the glut of film and television shows in which bars, restaurants, and cafés supplanted the home as places where characters converged and seemed to forge their closest relationships and connections, as shown in American media such as Altman's *Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean* (1982), *My Dinner with Andre* (1981), *Diner* (1982), *Mystic Pizza* (1988), the Tom Cruise comedy *Cocktail* (1988), and the long-running TV sitcom *Cheers* (1982–93), in which the bar is a place of familiarity, "where everyone knows your name." Less utopian versions that centered on this "third space" include *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* (1977) and *Barfly* (1987) and the Miramax film that bucked an X rating, Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (1989). One can trace a discernible path since then through workplaces as the new featured setting—or at least subgenre—of film and TV fare, possibly as an indicator of the increasingly blurred lines between our ostensibly private lives and our lives as laborers.

Wanda's Café fulfills the same function. Its details—like those of all of Rain City—suggest you are in the 1940s, while at the same time they don't. The café is very much made on the model of an old American diner, with waitresses pouring coffee for the (primarily male) clientele seated at stools and at tables; swing music plays from an old radio. Wanda, however, who seems to transcend time and place, doesn't wear the apparel of a noir film—that cross is given to Hawk to bear—and appears in somewhat nondescript dresses, with a few notable exceptions. An exterminator roams the café, period-

ically spraying invisible insects from a pump that seems right out of the 1940s or 1950s; his hair is up in a net, a comic but indecipherable figure who takes Keystone Cop pratfalls during the more chaotic scenes in the café.

Hawk

To cast Hawk, Rudolph said, he "needed a legend to play a legend. Ex-cop ex-con, trench coat, fedora, Garfield, Bogart. Kris was our only casting choice for Hawk."[10] Rudolph had been impressed by Kristofferson's work in *Songwriter* and was delighted to work with him again. Thanks to Rudolph's script and Kristofferson's performance, Hawk expresses laconic authority at every turn. He is self-assured, fearless, with nothing he needs to prove, his only Achilles heel being weariness and, of course, women. It's as if the star's established western-rock image walked in as its film noir corollary. Indeed, costumer Tynan recounts that Kristofferson was reluctant to wear a dark 1940s-style wool suit for *Trouble in Mind* and insisted that the legs be cut tight so that he would be comfortable wearing something akin to the blue jeans he favored. Topped with a fedora, Hawk never changes his outfit and exudes "film noir leading man" even before walking out of jail—the legend Rudolph sought. In fact, the film's opening, with its deep shadows and low-key lighting, followed by the soft lighting of the sepia-toned old train station and the old-city bus that Hawk takes to Wanda's, suggests that he enters Rain City from an earlier time.

Trouble in Mind repeatedly establishes the violence that

Fig. 12. Hawk in the train station from another era

Hawk is capable of and the violence of his past. He'd been imprisoned for killing a man to "protect" Wanda (shown in flashback late in the film); he has a punching bag in his room that he socks before his date with Georgia (with whom he is exceedingly gentle); effortlessly, he stops a man from going after Coop when the latter first enters town and mouths off, and moments later, he trips Coop in Wanda's Café and will soon deck Coop in their altercation over Georgia. Before this, he responds to Coop's dare-posed-as-question:

> COOP: "What're you lookin' at?"
> HAWK: "I'm lookin' at her," pointing to Georgia.
> COOP: "She's my woman."
> HAWK: "Don't nothing surprise me anymore."

In addition to his contrast with Coop, Hawk provides a physical counterpart to Hilly. A fundamentally verbal creature who looks askance at everyone, Hilly has no need to prove his dominance through physical movement (think Mrs. Danvers in *Rebecca* [1940]), but spews mortally serious threats that a gaggle of henchmen are happy to carry out. All are (somewhat) alpha men, worlds apart from Coop, who, whether talking to Hilly, Solo, Hawk, Georgia, or Wanda, seems like a kid training to be a tough guy. Carradine deserved that Academy Award.

Rudolph's commentary on all these tough guys is clear in his slapstick staging of the café brawl, just as he had shown in the brawl between two men who have bedded the same woman in *Choose Me*. They topple over each other as if they were the insects that the out-of-place exterminator seeks to annihilate. About the machismo, and in response to an interviewer's claim that Harvey Keitel appeared "weak" in *Welcome to L.A.*, Rudolph said, "If the men in *Welcome to L.A.* are blank," he said, "it's because they're the ones closest to the machine, closest to the fire. They're getting burned out quicker. And the women are trying to throw them lifelines. Mainly my men are considered weak because there's no physical action." With little physical action except for comically macho fight scenes, *Trouble in Mind* troubled that kind of claim. Women did less to throw physically violent men lifelines rather than try to stop them, as Wanda did, or run from them, like Georgia. (Significantly, neither woman attends Hilly Blue's final "party"—it would have made no sense—but remains at the café as Coop and Hawk come straggling back after its destructive conclusion.)

We see Hawk's barely submerged violence in his relationships with women, especially when he forces himself on Wanda. (In *Remember My Name*, Geraldine Chaplin plays a woman newly released from prison who wants revenge; Kristofferson, by contrast, wants sex.) Both Hawk and Coop speak about women as possessions that can be obtained through contract. Coop turns to crime because Georgia "tells him to [provide for the family]." Hawk is particularly transactional in his approach, making a deal to help Georgia by retrieving Spike and then, after agreeing to get Coop out of trouble, extracting promises first for sex and then for ownership: "So, once I fix this up and send him on his way, you belong to me. Completely. You'll live with me, and I'll take care of you and the kid. . . . Otherwise, let him get what he deserves."

Not unlike his film noir clothing, these attitudes expressing old-school machismo create a certain discomfort, on at least this viewer's part, watching the film thirty-five years later. That sense is enhanced in part by the age difference between Kristofferson, a weathered forty-nine at the time, and Singer, twenty-eight, performing as naive, young waif and "angel." Interestingly, the director gifts the pair with tender hopes and romance—including a brief, discreet sex scene—although he mercilessly skewers a more extreme May-December romance. Nate Nathanson (John Considine) and Sonja (Antonia Dauphin, daughter of one of the Deauville Film Festival organizers) present a truly chilling couple: he a corrupt, wealthy man with connections to Hilly Blue, she a gift-happy child-bride celebrating her birthday. They're the ones Coop and Solo try to rob, meeting them at the Space Needle restaurant and fol-

lowing them to the couple's mansion, where weapons are turned on the inept robbers. Nate and Sonja are nothing but cruel caricatures of greed. (Rudolph has argued that ambition is desire in the lifeworld of capitalism.) There's a schism, then, between Rudolph's affectionate treatment of Georgia and Hawk, despite their age difference, and of this very 1980s couple, who are so grotesque that it would surprise no one if they wore 101 Dalmatian skins, like Cruella de Vil. Does caricaturizing them let Georgia and Hawk's unlikely coupling off the hook? Or does the latter pairing get us to reflect on the trope of doomed heterosexual couples in film noir?

The Model

We learn that, to pass the time in prison, Hawk has made an elaborate model of Rain City. Heather Ramsay, among the many Seattle-area artists whose work Rudolph used in the film, rendered the actual model—or sets of models to cover different areas of the city. Rudolph notes that the model is a "reflection of Hawk's inner noir," despite the fact that, rather than models, film noir more typically turns to the surface world of maps (again, think *Casablanca*). More generally, models in the cinema tend to serve either as three-dimensional blueprints of urban and other planning projects, or as retroactive, sometimes nostalgic miniatures of existing buildings and environs. Mainstream and indie films such as *Wonderstruck* (Haynes, 2017) and *Undine* (2020) use them in both of these ways— *Trouble in Mind* uses them primarily for nostalgic purposes. Sometimes models reinforce class and gender divides,

Fig. 13. Hawk's model. Model by Heather Ramsey, photo courtesy of David Blocker.

with doll houses for girls and miniature train sets for boys. Others, such as those in Jia Zhangke's *The World* (2004), articulate grander themes, such as labor in a thoroughly globalized world that takes shape in a Beijing theme park populated by small-scale versions of famous landmarks, such as the Leaning Tower of Pisa and the Eiffel Tower. In the work of directors such as Peter Greenaway, Jacques Rivette, and Alain Resnais, landscape itself can become an unmoving model, something Stanley Kubrick uses to chilling effect in the overhead shots of the maze at the end of *The Shining* (1980).

Ramsay's models of Rain City for Hawk are magnificently

detailed. They include signs for buildings, streets, and facades and figures of people that were meaningful to Hawk: Wanda's Café, the police station, the red-light district. The director's stylistic sense is captured in the model's miniaturized artifice: through artifice and detail, he says, truths can be conveyed. In *Choose Me*, style enabled the dreams and emotional states of his main characters to come to the surface—both acoustically and visually. In some ways here, the model seems a small-scaled version of Rudolph's personal affection for Seattle and its cultural richness. Happily, some sets of the model still exist, with Wanda's Café in the hands of producer David Blocker.

In this model, Hawk literally carries around his nostalgia for Rain City, for the past he might wish to regain or rewrite, and for the memories and feelings it contains, be it his protective love for Wanda or his resignation over having lost his police job for "protecting" her. Its significance—its literal and figurative weight—is signaled from the beginning of the film: in the first scene, the jail wardens ask Hawk whether he wants to have his model sent to him, likely because it is too much to carry as Hawk reenters nonincarcerated life. Had the model been more portable, its burden would be less obvious. As Hawk later unpacks it in his room at Wanda's, the camera moves deep into it, letting us into Hawk's mind to note the outsized place Rain City occupies within it. And while this obsession doesn't serve the character well, it helps us see the authority that it has over him and, as we shall also see, that he exerts over it.

The model also provided what Rudolph called "establishing shots"[11] of the city that he intercut with shots of Seattle

itself, whose spaces the characters traverse, underscoring the importance of facades and veneers to the subjective realities and feelings they house. Thanks to its carefully positioned buildings and signs for "Police" and "Wanda's Café," the miniature model initiates a movement from the interior of Hawk's mind onto the *external* noirish space of his postprison world. The establishing shots it yields provide a modest sense of the city's spatial relations, and when they are mixed with establishing shots of actual locations and sets, the result is a doubly fictitious group of spaces with little geographical reliability. This combination, more than anything else, contributes to the film's dreamlike style and subjective perspectives. What the model reveals with great *clarity*, however, is the fully enclosed nature of Rain City: it is a destination that trades in repetitions, failed dreams, and endings, granting new beginnings only in the form of departures and death. In this way, and despite the clarity of its details, the miniature Rain City gives out no plans, no future, and a nonbeating heart. Even its past is frozen in time, replete with a waitress holding a plate of food that will never be served. It will never be able to hand Hawk's past back to Hawk or enable him to move forward.

The model also underscores the idea of replicability that *Trouble in Mind* takes up in other ways. Its characters (and the actors who depict them) reactivate famous noir actors and types, as Rudolph notes: Hawk was Bogart (or John Garfield or Ward Bond), Keith was Richard Widmark, with "Genevieve in the Claire Trevor role, Lori as a young Ida Lupino or Jane Greer. Joe Morton was Peter Lorre." In that sense, the film is engaged in reconstruction as much as Hawk's model: refash-

ioning a gallant myth filled with familiar icons. Moreover, the cynical plots of *Trouble in Mind* and of film noir are almost as generic and interchangeable as their characters. (Years after making the film, Rudolph remarked at a retrospective of his work that *Trouble in Mind* was a movie about recycling). To be sure, the plot of *Trouble in Mind* lacks the utter indecipherability of Chandler and Hawks's *The Big Sleep* (1946), but a recent comment made by the director reveals a similar perspective on storytelling: "A film is a living thing. Endings are constantly evolving. Written endings have a general destination but no specific map."[12]

Milica Topalovic argues that models question, not reaffirm, the reality of a place:

> When a space of a place seems to be doubled or multiplied, when a place thus comes to act for another place, the reality of both the original and replica loses credibility. . . . The space of a model always seems unreal. . . . a model always points beyond its specific geographic and temporal coordinates to a different space and a different time. In the space of a model, here becomes there, and now becomes then.[13]

Such temporal irregularity could not be truer than it is for Hawk, a character who seems to drop into this 1985 movie from the 1940s and who, within the film, fuses past and present enough that he believes that Wanda wants to rekindle their relationship and that he can regain his old job. The model's ability to convey Hawk's feelings about it is transparent, providing an object correlative of his desire and frustrated

goals. It carries the weight of additional desires, such as those he holds for Georgia. "Ardor has a pull," Rudolph would say of the "harmonious" tone and design of this film. Placed on a table in Hawk's room, the model twinkles with Rain City's dull but rainy beauty. Unlike the film's other characters trapped in this reproducible world, Hawk, though confined as he'd been in jail, is, through the model, in a position to see it at a partial distance, from bird's-eye view, external to it (in the words of the film's final number, "El Gavilan / The Hawk," with "freedom to fly").

The Rain City miniature allows Hawk to view the small outside worlds from above, giving him a wider perspective than the other characters, particularly Coop, who, as his bird-name implies, is trapped in small spaces—trailers, hotel rooms for partying, private dining rooms, militia jeeps, even the Space Needle elevator—unable to find a way out. Coop's interest lies in assessing the wacky nature of his unique "look," over which he preens, but which leads Georgia to say, in the end, "I don't know you, Coop." Thanks to the model, Hawk's gaze has power over others, particularly over Georgia, his chief object of prey. Wanda shares some of this all-seeing capacity, apportioned to her by her elevated apartment windows that look *into* the café. And whereas Wanda is a somewhat detached narrator/observer on her landing—she stays out of the fray—Hawk is continually jumping into it.

Some artful editing conveys Hawk's partial command over Rain City's inhabitants—and to a certain extent, its space. The camera assumes his POV while looking over the model: a reverse shot points to him, as if the city were returning his

gaze. Then, without cutting, the camera travels to take in the view of the city outside Hawk's second- or third-story window, again adopting his POV while he overlooks Rain City, lowering his gaze to catch Coop and Georgia arguing. Coop storms off, spurring Hawk then to come downstairs to ask an angry, disinterested Georgia out to a nice restaurant. Later, though, he uses his crow's-nest view to follow her (when he catches up to her and she asks why he followed her, he replies, "You looked like you needed following"). As a terrified Georgia runs through Rain City, alarmed for her child and frightened by her disintegrating marriage, Rudolph intercuts the alleys, streets, and buildings of Rain City's / Seattle's exterior spaces with shots of the model, mingling the two to nurture the sense that Rain City is a "world of the mind."[14] (Here its function in establishing shots also becomes clear, without recourse to Hawk's POV.) Hawk might not be able to see or understand all that transpires in his frame of vision, much less control it, but his gaze enables him to roam across Rain City in a way that other characters cannot, and that authority is echoed in camera angles and in his positioning vis-à-vis other characters. When he needs a favor from Gunther, the police chief played by George Kirby, he looks down at the napping cop in a dark scene replete with cast shadows of venetian blinds; he towers over Wanda in their scenes together (Bujold is 5′4″ tall) and appears to loom over Coop as well, even though Carradine is taller by several inches.

CHAPTER 5

The Style of Dreams

Image and Music

It's actors, photography, music, editing, plot—in that order.
—Alan Rudolph

Image and Mise-en-Scène

Writing for the professional cinematographer magazine *Millimeter*, Gregory Solmon describes Rudolph as a "classic mise-en-scène director" for whom "the truth of the characters emerges from their placement in space, and the life of the scene happens in the netherworld between the screen and the audience."[1] Rain City is the setting from which those connections emerge, through set design, lighting, performance style, camerawork—framing, focus, lenses. Nothing from the plot or dialogue gives us as much information, emotion, or space to move around in.

According to cinematographer Toyomichi Kurita, he and Rudolph prepared for the film by reviewing paintings from the German Expressionist movement, whose play with light and shadows had a strong influence on film noir of the 1930s and beyond, as did its unstable perspectives, evidenced in one

Fig. 14. The introduction of a film noir hero, part 1

Fig. 15. The introduction of a film noir hero, part 2

of Georgia's panicked runs through the streets of Rain City. In fact, *Trouble in Mind*'s noir setting and mood are established in the very first sequence as Hawk is introduced. We are inside a prison, as two guards walk the then-unidentified man out of his cell. At first, his back to us, and then, standing to face the camera, a key light takes its time to emerge, finally revealing the weathered face of Kristofferson. It is a classic cinematic entrance for a star player: framed in isolation from others, alone and admired (the banter of the two guards reinforces that visual esteem), and then released, shut out in front of the prison doors, left to his own devices to secure his way back to Rain City. Here, as throughout the film, Hawk moves quietly, never rushed, at once self-assured and weary. Lighting and camerawork continue the noir treatment, generating a gauzy soft focus and slightly sepia tone as Hawk waits in a grand, early twentieth-century train station, creating the dream-like quality so often linked to Rudolph and helping to further romanticize the noir protagonist. Already we are in not in reality, not even in a film noir, but in a dream of noir. The many cars we see are not the gloriously imposing vehicles from 1940s film noir, but the gas guzzlers of the 1960s and 1970s. External shots show steam filtering up on the city streets, presumably through manholes, but its exact provenance is undetermined, generating a man-made shroud, a sense of romantic mystery, perhaps, but also one of atmospheric confinement and danger bubbling up from the underbelly of the city. Rudolph even gives us noir's obligatory venetian blinds, but only in that one scene; he didn't want to overdo it.

The most sustained use of vibrant color occurs in the

Fig. 16. The venetian blinds of film noir. Courtesy of Luke Wynne.

blowout at the party at Hilly's home / art museum, the movie's most slapstick sequence. Otherwise, the color palette for the film is somewhat muted, particularly in contrast to *Choose Me*, which one critic likened to a neon orchid. Not unlike the train station depicted as Hawk wends his way back to Rain City, the visuals of the café are in slightly soft focus. And whereas the effect of this haze at the train station is to render it as nostalgic, dreamlike artifact (perfectly suited to Hawk's costuming with trench coat and fedora), the blanched colors at the café create a different, livelier, and more public kind of past—although both convey an impression of the immediate postwar era. The café includes plenty of other historical time zones as well: Morton's "Solo" outfit and especially his hairstyle—with thin spikes of hair growing out of his head—make him look as if he were still playing a futuristic brother from another planet.[2]

The colors of the café, though slightly washed out, worn and familiar, retain pops of color from Wanda, clad in subdued reds, and Georgia, in muted pastels (Tynan selected them to convey her otherworldly innocence). Particularly in close-ups and in her scenes with Spike or in her romantic trysts, Georgia is shot in flattering, warm hues—a Georgia peach—and however standard the gender conventions at work here, the effect is to render her beautiful. As if to reflect the timelessness of this way of depicting women, Georgia has the fewest clear, historical associations of any character—despite Rudolph calling her his young Ida Lupino or Jane Greer.

For however subdued the colors of Rain City's set, the film eschews the washed-out blue/grays used in the 1980s and 1990s to signify futuristic or military settings (Rain City has

both), from *Blade Runner* to *Blue Steel* (1989), *Terminator* (1984), and *Robocop* (1987), a palette that remains common as of this writing. Irrespective of its actual inhabitants, this bluish cast typically washes over a masculine space and confers a tough-guy masculinity upon whoever enters it. Prior to it, 1960s and 1970s films such as Woody Allen's 1973 *Sleeper* (set design) and Stanley Kubrick's 1971 *A Clockwork Orange* (costuming and props) turned to white to construct "the future." *Trouble in Mind*'s visual tone—which appears in some sense like the color of faded film—asserts a cooled asceticism, but is far more visually arresting and pliable than either these blue-gray or stark-white worlds. (Rudolph himself weighs in on color in a poetic, writerly comment: "Casting is writing; where you put the camera is writing; the color of the wallpaper is writing, because it is film.")[3]

Recently, Rudolph quipped that "plot was his weak suit."[4] While most would disagree with him, it is easy to see why many appreciations of Rudolph focus on his musical and visual style and the moods they generate in his stories. Facing those priorities, details like location fall away: the setting for *Choose Me* was called "placeless" by one critic; *Trouble in Mind* stages its action in Rain City, a thinly disguised Seattle that falls away halfway through the film as Georgia runs through the city trying to find Spike a better set of parents and stands in front of the Space Needle. Later, as Coop and Solo scout the cringe-worthy May-December couple they plan to rob in the Space Needle restaurant, we ride the elevator with them as a guide speaks in Japanese to some tourists, one of many nods to East Asian and Asian Americans living in the real Seattle.

One critic has noted that *Trouble in Mind*'s world is so oneiric that the Space Needle works more as a prop that happened to have been deposited there than as a way to affix a location to the film—in marked contrast to Altman, whose film titles alone demonstrate the importance of concrete place: *Nashville*, *Kansas City* (1996), *Gosford Park* (2001).

Thanks to its rain and overall verdant look, Seattle has gained the moniker of the "Emerald City" (before it "went platinum," as Rudolph later remarked).[5] Like its 1939 *Wizard of Oz* progenitor, Emerald/Rain City bestows Georgia and Coop with a sense of fantasy and hopeful expectations as the couple travels there in search of what Georgia calls a "better life," and for Hawk as well, who attempts to win back his former lover and former police job on his return (early drafts of the script also gave him an ex-wife, Mona). None of these expectations can be fulfilled; Rain City is a film dream, not a real world—and its fantasy takes its cues not just from film noir but from the American "real world" from which it emerged, as fantasy always does. How do we find our way forward in these dreamworlds? How can we steer our way out of them, and their real-world equivalents? It's hard, and the moody atmosphere that envelops the film is not inculpable. As Michael Wood notes while reflecting on the moody atmosphere of film noirs, "Nothing that happens *in* the films quite lives up to the eerie menace contained in the looks of these movies."[6]

In *Choose Me*, Carradine's and Warren's quirky lead characters escape the "placeless" environs of Eve's Bar by getting married, and its final shots highlight their happy, if concerned, expressions at the back of a bus (on their way to Las Vegas, after

the wedding), as if reprising *The Graduate* (1967), minus the angry family mob of Mike Nichols's finale. Escape from Rain City is less possible, especially for its men, with Coop joining the militia as war looms, Hawk bleeding profusely, Hilly and his tribe of goons shot dead. It's almost as if the doubts that *Choose Me* kept under its seductive wraps come to the surface in the less safe or protected world of *Trouble in Mind*, whose danger is visually expressed through the ubiquitous presence of rain and water, whether through the steamy, foggy streets, at the docks where Coop and Solo steal cargo, or, more pointedly, when Hilly's henchman actually drown Solo in his car on dry land in the middle of the city.

When Rudolph describes *Trouble in Mind* as taking place when the past meets the future, but not in the present, he knows that this poetic temporality can easily confuse audiences. The same thing happens when he assesses it as "too silly to be serious, too stylized to have substance."[7] The focus on surfaces over substance characterize this and other of his films. In fact, one of *Trouble in Mind*'s few specific spatial and temporal references goes not to actual historical periods, but to Rudolph's *Choose Me*, when the bus that deposits Hawk at Wanda's displays a faded ad for "Eve's *eau de parfum*," a holdover from his previous year's fiction film.

Rain City is a make-believe magnet for new beginnings and dead ends, however unmappable. While Wanda's Café serves as the chief reference point, there are scenes at the docks, the police station, Coop's decadent parties, parking lots, stores, unidentified streets, the Space Needle, Chinese restaurants[8] with Hilly's thugs, and his lavish party at the end. We

Fig. 17. Chinese restaurants for the Mob

have hardly any idea where anything exists in relationship to one another, or where much of the action takes place, outside of the film's grounding center of Wanda's (or the doubly fictional space of Hawk's model). Solo seems to live inside a clock tower, in a set filled with "orientalist claptrap," according to scholar Markus Nornes.[9] With this detail *Trouble in Mind* trades in a well-worn trope of film noir: generating Asiatic exoticism and indecipherable "mystery" for helpless white protagonists (cf. *The Lady from Shanghai* [1947] and *Chinatown*). Wanda conveys it as well through the Chinese decor and small objects adorning her space above the diner, and in her costuming, especially when she's not working at the diner. (Her dresses feature Chinese cloud patterns, collars and toggles, buttons of threads called Chinese frogs.)[10] There is the tour

guide speaking in Japanese in the Space Needle elevator to the restaurant, where Solo and Coop briefly greet their May-December prey. Solo, however, is most closely linked to Orientalist signs (which is curious given that he is one of only two African American supporting players). Toward the end of the film, he conducts an odd religious rite in his dwelling, seated, with vaguely Asian instruments around him—including a defense system that resembles the bamboo spikes used by the Vietnamese in their war against the United States. When Solo interacts with the other small-time criminals—themselves a group of Asian Americans—they speak in "pidgin Korean" to one another (Rudolph says he pressed one of the crew members into service to help with these lines.) We hear the halting Korean again in Wanda's Café during a violent eruption, when an angry Wanda spits out repeated commands to Solo to get "on his knees, on his knees, Hold your balls,"[11] to which Solo, who is positioned doing both, responds, "I'm already on my knees." None of this is subtitled.

Trouble in Mind includes scenes inside the dwellings of most of its major characters, but municipal authorities remove Coop and Georgia's trailer outside of Wanda's—one of the few domestic spaces that can be placed in relation to another—just as Coop starts staying out nights. Little else can be connected to much else, a point made by the film's repeated shots of moving cars, trains, buses, subways, jeeps, a tank, a trailer, and by the multiple-vehicle journey Hawk takes to get from prison to Wanda's. Although we know we're in Rain City, we don't know our way around it, creating submerged feelings of chaos and destabilization.

Fig. 18. Wanda (Genevieve Bujold) in a Chinese-styled top. Courtesy of Luke Wynne.

Music

With Jazz, you are paying homage to what came before, then adding your own notes.

—Alan Rudolph

What unites or puts *Trouble in Mind*'s film world together, curiously, is less what we are shown by the camera than what we hear (Rudolph shows considerable sensitivity to music in all his work). The distinct instrumental music of Mark Isham (jazz trumpet, sax, and electronica) offers some connection to places, circumstances, and characters. It is mixed seamlessly

Fig. 19. Preparing a bamboo-spear booby trap

with the performed songs, such as the sections of "Trouble in Mind"[12] apportioned throughout the film, and primarily rendered by Faithfull (a recording by Jimmy Witherspoon also plays diegetically when Hawk goes to a bar, and a "live" performance of it begins during Hawk and Georgia's touchingly tacky dinner date).[13] Spatial cohesion might be lacking in this film, but music indirectly equips it with a form of narrative coherence and character commentary, unlike its function in *Choose Me*, which was to bathe the film in sensuality.

Although he has never played an instrument ("not even air guitar"),[14] Rudolph grew up in a house of music thanks to his father, who collected classical music and songs of his era—music was always playing. "It became the language of my interior," he notes, frequently telling interviewers that "music

is a shortcut, a direct bridge to an audience's emotional reservoir";[15] in *Trouble in Mind*, he played portions of Isham's score to give actors information about their characters.[16]

It's therefore not surprising to read a reviewer describe *Trouble in Mind* as "driven primarily by music and images."[17] The film is guided in more ways than one by the 1924 blues number "Trouble in Mind," whose roots go back to the spiritual songs of the nineteenth century (songs of the era include "I'm a-Trouble in De Mind" and "I'm Troubled in Mind"). Composed by jazz pianist Richard M. Jones and first recorded by Berta "Chippie" Hill in 1926—with Louis Armstrong as one of the accompanists—the song uses the eight-bar framework of blues songs of the time. In later years, Nina Simone's and Dinah Washington's recordings would become hits (in 1952 and 1961 respectively). Johnny Cash, Spencer Davis, Aretha Franklin, Merle Haggard, and Janis Joplin also did covers.

Composer and performer Mark Isham leaves an equally indelible mark on *Trouble in Mind* and its moody noir world. Rudolph describes the composer's overall sound as "New Age with edges" and his score for *Trouble in Mind* as filled with "mastery, mystery, and melancholy."[18] In classic noir, brass instruments tend to accompany nightclub scenes or the appearances of the femme fatale. This is not the case with *Trouble in Mind*. Not only does the film eschew the cheesy gendered connotations of brass instruments (never played with noir's "innocent" women), but, in fusing jazz with "New Age" synth music, Rudolph brings the film out of the 1940s and into a sense of the present with multiple musical time zones, including some that haven't been lived yet. Rudolph appreci-

ated the music for not connoting a particular time period.[19] He also notes that the combination of synthesized music and jazz trumpet is not typical, especially during the mid-1980s, and that "it defined the film," lending it a brightness with something darker underneath. We frequently hear a solitary "mournful" trumpet[20] played at a slow tempo, creating a mood of weathered loneliness that extends to the audience as much to any single gender or character. In fact, the atmospheric jazz is arguably less a stylistic rubber stamp than a character in its own right.

Trouble in Mind was the first film in which Rudolph collaborated with Isham. Their meeting was as serendipitous as that of his first encounter with Kurita. He recounts in detail:

> I wanted to have music for *Trouble* before we started shooting [typically, music is added to films after shooting, in costly synching sessions]. I wanted to live with the mood, tone, sound . . . I was after something jazz rooted, haunting, dark yet wistful and beautiful.
>
> About a month before we left for location, I told David Blocker, the production producer, that I wanted the music for *Trouble* before we started shooting. He asked who I had in mind. I said someone who plays all the instruments themselves. Read: Cheap. . . . I went to Tower Records and started going through albums . . . I wasn't sure exactly what I was looking for, but knew the tone I wanted—a new kind of blues and jazz that would marry past and future. . . . I knew our title song would be a starting point but I didn't want anything traditional.[21]

Ultimately, Rudolph made another "lightning bolt" hiring decision—or rather, it was made for him.

> I picked up Mark's cassettes. . . . I very much appreciated Mark's musical abilities in his albums, but his music was often too polite. I drove back and told Blocker that I have selected one from a pile based on our needs, resources, and sound potential. His name is Mark Isham. At that exact moment, no fooling, Blocker's phone rings. I didn't want him to answer because I was so excited about the Isham potential, nothing was more important to me at the moment. Blocker picked up the call and basically said yes and no and yes and took a number and I'll get back to you. Then he hung up.
>
> "That was an agent for a San Francisco composer who's moving to LA to work in films. He likes your work and asked if you were making anything new and needed a composer. His name is Mark Isham."
>
> "Call him back right now and make a deal. . . . when something like this happens, it's meant to be. Everything else is gravy."[22]

The two would go on to make nine films together in an unusually close collaboration of like-minded artists, both of whom appreciate the improvisatory, aleatory features of jazz. ("John Coltrane was a bigger influence on me than John Ford," says Rudolph.)[23]

The soundtrack creates a mood that refuses to saunter in the background, but that takes center stage, just as it had in

Choose Me. With the earlier film, music expressed an intensely sensual, romantic yearning; with *Trouble*, it pivots to outright melancholy—as might be expected in a film named after a piece of the blues. *Trouble in Mind*, in fact, was Rudolph's third film to be named after a song—*Remember My Name* had been his first[24]—and it was during the making of *Choose Me*, in which a portion of "Trouble" is heard, that Rudolph vowed to make and name his next film after it. The two films' titular songs convey very distinct dreamworlds: the sensual soul and longing of Teddy Pendergrass's "Choose Me" soulfully speaks to erotic love, romance, and possibility, features that are more muted in *Trouble*, which articulates character heartaches and the despair of their situations through the song's blues structure and dispirited lyrics, which at one point mention suicide.[25] (Importantly, two lines hold out hope—as Rudolph's films often do, doled out in limited moments, to be sure—"I won't be blue always / 'cause I know the sun's gonna shine in my back door someday.") "Trouble" may be less sensually charged and enveloping than "Choose Me," but as a blues number, it rallies our sympathy for the characters whose circumstances and emotional plights we recognize and in which we might even find ourselves.

As soon as the film opens, Faithfull sings "Trouble" as Hawk is let out of jail; later, portions will play under Georgia at different moments. Interestingly, neither Isham's nor Faithfull's work plays under Coop until the end of the film, when he is begging Georgia for another chance. At this point, even the music conveys that it's too late, for Isham's jazz trumpet and

electronica are moving on, providing a bridge to Faithfull's rendering of "El Gavilan," during which Coop trudges off to join the militia, wiping off his makeup and resigning himself to a fate rather different from the "freedom to fly" professed by the song's lyrics.

Isham worked with "The Rain City Industrial Art Ensemble," which included Pee Wee Ellis, a saxophonist who also played with, among others, James Brown and Van Morrison. Isham wanted the music to help create the self-contained world of the film; he calls the sound "spooky," its underscoring grounded by only hints of rhythm and drums. Isham's use of electronica (a "floor-to-ceiling" synthesizer)[26] in conjunction with the trumpet and sax releases *Trouble* from a heavy, exclusively noir world and into one marked by New Age—a kind of contemporary timeless field from which the chiseled, weathered voice of Marianne Faithfull could take flight in "El Gavilan." Not unlike the film's setting, Faithfull is a performer of considerable iconicity. Her career spanned multiple eras, from the sweet-voiced London pop singer of the 1960s (and love interest of Mick Jagger) to the 1980s, when her career was revitalized with the 1979 release of her LP *Broken English*, in a crackling voice bathed in wear and tear.

Isham's use of the sax is subdued in *Trouble in Mind*, quite possibly because the film lacks the nightclub decadence and dangerous femmes fatales that the instrument stereotypically accompanies in film noir and neo-noir. The muted trumpet appears far more frequently, not unlike that found in Jerry Goldsmith's scores for neo-noirs *Chinatown* and *LA Con-*

fidential (1997) or John Williams's in *The Long Goodbye*. For the final song, Isham lays the jazz trumpet over his synthesizer work (see below), which creates undulating waves instead of a homophonic song, generating a sense of unease—too muted to scream danger, just enough to suggest "trouble" in what might otherwise be a trance-induced dreamscape.

The music culminates in the closing number, Kristofferson's "El Gavilan," as his character drives through the mountaintops in the light of day, away from Rain City (shades of *Blade Runner*'s Rick Deckard, as critics have noted). For someone who has just been through a bloodbath and has been mortally wounded, it's nice, if curious, not to see a trace of blood on him. He has said his adieus to Georgia (leaving money with his note) and drives in his convertible alone (for a while). But Georgia appears, floating in from the left of the frame to caress Hawk's cheek; he smiles tenderly, and Georgia withdraws. (Such was the "boy gets girl" ending that some critics complained about.) Responding to this song, Carradine called Kristofferson a "poet," noting the C&W songwriter's piece "was so perfect and perfectly embodies his point of view, [which was] at the heart of the movie, the relationship between Hawk and Lori's character. It's the most beautiful love song—a paean. The sensibility that Rudolph got together in that song! Kris's lyrics, Marianne Faithfull singing, Mark Isham's scoring . . . it's as good as it gets."[27] Adds Rudolph: "Kris is a master of elusive truths. He ran his poetic might though Hawk's heart and soul. The result is the haunting Mark Isham / Marianne Faithful version which narrates our ending for about ten minutes and is one of my favorite cues."[28]

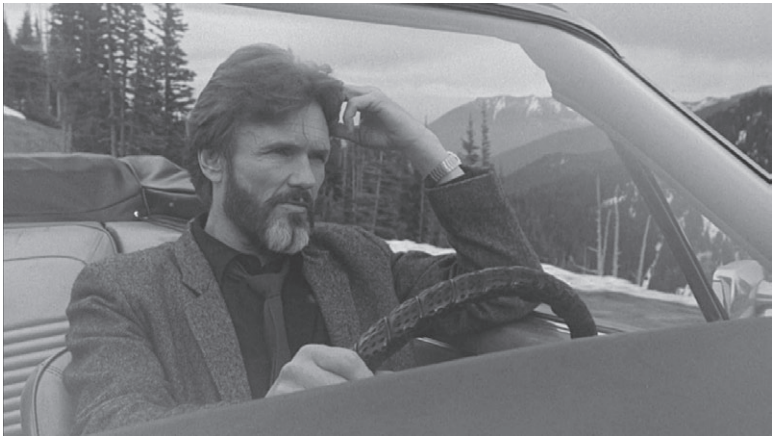


Fig. 20. Hawk driving west in the mountains

"El Gavilan"

Isham's instrumental work on "El Gavilan" begins as Coop enters Georgia and Hawk's apartment, with a muted trumpet playing slowly over a gentle wash of sound that continues into "El Gavilan." Isham used a program that enabled six synthesizers to read the signals of his simple piano playing and trigger multiple new sounds randomly from that (i.e., without Isham's control), and Isham took portions of this material and edited it. Rudolph, for his part, re-edited very little of his film when he received Isham's work that concludes *Trouble in Mind* and continues on to the credits. Remarking on the serendipitous nature of the experience, the director said the breaks fell naturally between the film's dialogue and Faithfull's voice.

Initially, we hear two pairs of rising synthesizer chord sequences, with the trumpet coming in to provide a jazz counterpoint before the song even starts. The mood is melancholy, setting the tone as we see Georgia saying goodbye to her disheveled partner, and then locating the bloodstained goodbye note that Hawk has left her. Faithfull's distinctive, low, broken vocals enter here, immediately contributing an extra layer of musical melancholy through very different means. She performs the song slowly,[29] with ample space between verses (curiously, the song has no chorus); Isham's arrangement creates a wavelike movement that avoids any sense of a strong beat. The melody seems to proceed in short question-and-answer pairs, with the first phrase rising and the second falling, suggesting, perhaps, an interior conversation within the sad but gratified Hawk as he drives off to his fate. It is almost elegiac. With the beginning of the second verse ("The moment is yours now"), the synth chords take on a warmer glow, and an underlying line adds texture to the sound. By the beginning of the third verse ("I don't deserve you"), the synth music builds and generates the sound of a string section while the trumpet temporarily replaces the electronic waves. Finally, there appear to be some soft acoustic drums that provide a subtle textural underpinning rather than a beat. From there the music moves into a smooth jazz. The next verse ("storm on the mountain," visualized in the dark clouds at the sunset toward which Hawks drives), gives the song a sense of climax: Faithfull performs it more loudly and in a higher register, and the sense of a beat (from the percussion) is finally discernible. The synthesizer even provides a sound resembling a bass gui-

tar. For the next verse ("Will you remember"), Faithfull returns to her lower tessitura, and Isham improvises with his trumpet and jazz material and is joined again by Faithful in a repeat of the "storm on the mountain" and "will you remember" verses. For several minutes after her vocals conclude, Isham's underscoring continues, closing out the number at a slightly higher range—perhaps an echo of the higher tessitura of the "storm on the mountain" lyrics—and moving into the credits. Before recording, Faithfull had not seen the film nor heard any of Isham's music except on a basic piano; she immediately took a shine to "El Gavilan," taking half a day to record the eight-minute piece—in just two takes.

CHAPTER 6

The 1980s

Broken Politics, Surfaces, and Dreams

Wanda's is just a DMZ in the world of these people's lost souls.

—Alan Rudolph

In terms of situating itself in a time period, I've demonstrated how *Trouble in Mind* borrows from Hollywood's classic film noir productions, filtering them through the stylistic tropes of art and independent cinema. The venetian blinds, Orientalist touches, and glistening, darkened streets keep one foot of the film in the forties, but the other lands in dystopian futuristic spaces and time zones. Past and future are both served by the secondary "Looney Tunes underworld"[1] characters of corrupt goons and henchman, and a more serious, if unexplained, militia presence suggests further unease and temporal unsteadiness, not to mention historical relevance. Rain City has sectors, not neighborhoods, and clusters of soldiers and ominous signs and posters appear in nearly all of the public scenes throughout the city, interior as well as exterior. Periodically, a loudspeaker declaims "Citizens of Rain City. Enlist in the militia. Defense is everyone's business. Join the militia

now." The first time we hear this, the film cuts to Wanda tossing eggs onto her diner grill, pragmatically minding her own business, even as soldiers patrol her café. At the same time, the sizzling eggs release an almost imperceptible sense of violence, a hint of trouble.

To further remove stories like *Trouble in Mind*'s from a fixed, specific time, Rudolph eschews references to contemporary popular culture. To be sure, movies can always be dated through production details: clothing, hair and makeup styles, actors cast or their performance styles, special effects, formal techniques, and even the fading of aging celluloid. Still, beyond *Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting Bull's History Lesson* for Altman, Rudolph has made only a handful of films in a clear historical setting, *Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle*, *The Moderns*, and *Investigating Sex* (2001). In general, and especially in the dreamscapes that constitute films like *Trouble in Mind*, *Choose Me*, *Equinox*, and *Ray Meets Helen*, he omits elements that pin his stories down in favor of creating spaces of fantasy and connection, explaining,

> Subconsciously, an audience's main goal is to lock into something in a film as soon as possible, so that they can be ahead of it. So you really have to establish your own world for the film, your own set of references and your own attitude, and hope the audience will tolerate it until they become part of it and then make their own decisions.[2]

Rudolph's goal of connecting with audiences—on individual rather than mass levels, to be sure—informs his cinematic

ethos, and we root for the myths of *Trouble in Mind* even as he explodes them under our feet.

If his aim within films is to avoid identifying historical contexts, aspects of the film that go beyond storylines and visual details do situate it within particular periods. For just as *Trouble in Mind*, and Rudolph's career, sit well within the independent cinema movement that prospered in the 1980s, *Trouble in Mind* makes use of classical film noirs as a neo-noir that was equally popular. This took place during an era of postmodern pastiche within critical and cultural worlds, and in this regard *Trouble in Mind* is further rooted within 1980s discourse. Its mid-1980s release date coincides with yet another contemporary framework: that of the Reagan era and the receding goalposts of the "American Dream"—a myth asserted with expanding bravado at the same time it was becoming more elusive due to the political and economic groundswell of neoliberalism.

Postmodern Pastiche and the Neo-noir

Take, for instance, one critic's reference to *Trouble in Mind* as a *postmodern* noir. (*Blade Runner* was called the same thing). Coined in the 1960s, "postmodernism" describes the mixing of architectural styles and historical periods that characterized contemporary urban landscapes such as Las Vegas, and demanded an emphasis on the interplay of surfaces, as opposed to high modernism's obsession with finding meaning or substance within some form of depth or interiority, often the psychological state of an individual artist as it was

expressed in a film, a building, or a painting. Postmodern meanings no longer resided "in" a text but through its relationship to others that came from different provenance, mixing cultural and historical contexts, rendering interpretation a more flexible, impermanent act. Recall Rudolph's appreciation for the "surfaces" of film noir and for the sense of artifice they generate—the feeling or impression and not the fixed substance of meaning. Criticism was not alone in creating a foundation for this theory: globalization enhanced the intersection of previously disconnected commodities, styles, texts, and people. And, as Fredric Jameson influentially claimed about the history of postmodernism, the movement had its foundations in the 1940s (the high point of film noir) with the advent of electronic machinery and of nuclear power and weaponry, along with the very beginnings of digital culture in the industrialized West—all developments that further challenged the singularity of a source or meaning through the proliferation of their systems.

Postmodernism became its own cottage industry in film and cultural studies of the 1980s and 1990s, and it seemed the term appeared in literary, art, and cultural criticism everywhere, lassoing texts into its capacious framework. It would not be difficult to situate *Trouble in Mind* in that historical and cultural context. Its story melded noncontiguous time frames, with Rain City being the outpost where "the past meets the future but not in the present." Taken as a whole, the film's score futher fulfills this function, with "Trouble in Mind" having undergone so many incarnations since the 1920s. At Wanda's Café we hear music from the swing era of the 1930s, but

we also hear Louis Jordan, a transitional figure from that era to early 1950s rock and roll. Faithfull comes from rock; Isham, New Age, but his trumpet work was reminiscent of Miles Davis in the 1960s. We hear classical music with Hilly Blue, and cabaret music during Hawk and Georgia's dinner date.[3] Characters named Rambo and Solo pointed partially to "the present," through *Rambo: First Blood* (1982) and *Star Wars* (1977) respectively, although their costumes indicate mashed-up times and styles: Rambo wore a plaid suit that looked like a cross between early twentieth-century music hall entertainers and a 1970s cop from a TV show (in fact, Dirk Blocker was known for a 1970s TV series in which he played a pilot, *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, and he would go on to play a detective in *Brooklyn 99*). And if *Trouble in Mind*'s Rambo lacks the musculature of Sylvester Stallone's, he seems to share his stunted IQ.

Joe Morton's Solo is a distinctly postmodern construction. As noted, he seems to be a Beat poet of the 1950s when he reads Morton's own creative work—a self-consciousness some would link to the postmodern enterprise. Solo is creatively dressed in obsolete fur accessories, such as a small fur wrap—complete with the creature's head, popular from the 1920s through 1940s—twisted around his neck and shoulders over his vaguely military uniform and leather jacket. Yet, at the same time, his hairstyle—with what looks to be several antennae emerging from his scalp—gives him the appearance of a visitor from the future. Of the character Rudolph said, "He's got the soul—hence the name, Solo,"[4] so it's not all *Star Wars*. That Morton, on the heels of depicting the lead in Sayles's racially astute sci-fi comedy *Brother from Another Planet*, was

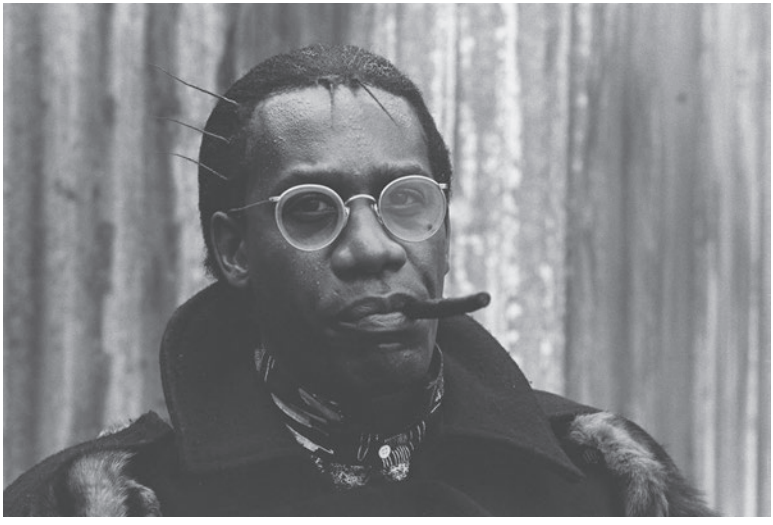


Fig. 21. Solo. Courtesy of Luke Wynne.

cast only enhanced the sense of his being an alien from a compromised future. As the only Black lead in an otherwise multiethnic cast (unusual in much of American cinema of the time), Solo is an ethnically pliable figure who interacts with the white worlds of Wanda's Café and Hilly's band as well as the Asian underworld (again, think *Chinatown* or *The Lady from Shanghai*) with its pidgin Korean.

References ricochet. Rambo, Hilly's chief scheming officer, was a nod to the tough guys overpowering American screens when *Trouble in Mind* was being made; Carradine's Coop and Kristofferson's Hawk referenced the mid-1980s by their own star images. To this day, Carradine remains a towering figure

in American independent filmmaking—and in classical Hollywood filmmaking via the career of his father John and in television through his brother David. As one critic writes, "With the exception of some unfortunate hair styles, Carradine combines old-fashioned movie star glamour, laidback sexuality and an enticing moral ambiguity—like Gary Cooper after a few joints."[5] Kristofferson is a titan performer/songwriter in rock and C&W, and by then had appeared in a variety of films (*Songwriter* he enjoyed; *A Star Is Born* [1976] he most definitely did not). Kristofferson's background as a former boxer and a serviceman was widely known in the 1970s and 1980s; the boxer pops up in *Trouble in Mind*—both with Coop and the punching bag in the character's room. Divine, of course, brings an entirely different set of connotations to the film as the well-known muse of camp cult director John Waters. The star of Waters's underground films of the 1960s and 1970s, Divine played vindictive, violent, deliberately "filthy" female characters who, in one film, famously ate dog feces in a single long take to prove its authenticity. The play of all of these references, star identities, surfaces, and looks sits comfortably alongside the postmodern fascination of competing, even antagonistic borders.

Georgia's and Wanda's characters also lack temporal or stylistic fixity, not through a plethora of reference points but, curiously, through their absence. Bujold's range as an actor was already well established in 1985, though not in mainstream films, and she did not project a unified star image that clashed with or enhanced the personage in the film. Rudolph withholds much of Wanda's backstory from us, and she is not

psychologized to the extent that film characters typically are. For instance, she is a savvy, pragmatic woman who's been around the block, but we don't know what block. ("Ask me anything," she tells Georgia, "I've been everywhere.") Unlike the male characters, her past doesn't leave her with repressed rage, fatigue, or desperation; she is at ease in the café she owns and seems especially comfortable lounging in her apartment, whether alone in her silken robes (playing, like Solo, with muted ethnic drag) or with Georgia and Spike. Her final line in the film is an enigmatic, empty remark: "You know the main reason why I opened up an early morning joint? 'Cause you can't pick a better time of day to watch the sun rise"—dialogue that scarcely provides motivation for her having come to Rain City, nor any indication as to her next step now that she has put the café up for sale (narrative resolution is not the hallmark of postmodernist endings—nor of Rudolph's cinematic ones). Early in the film a few men in the café, notably Rambo, speculate about her sexuality ("Do you think Wanda's into dames?"), attempting to sexualize Wanda and, perhaps, tap our interest in that aspect of her. But it is an anemic attempt, something that the film almost turns into a cliché, another recycled trope that has nothing to do with her relaxed but no-nonsense way of leading her life.

Acting styles and character traits also reflect a postmodern, disunified free-for-all: Solo is the calmly enigmatic poet/criminal/mediator; Hawk is the laconic Hollywood hero; Divine hails from the land of high camp; his goon squad comes from cartoons; Coop is twitchy, exaggerated bravado; Lori Singer's Georgia follows the naturalism of late twentieth-century act-

ing. That naturalism makes it even harder to read her, furnishing no real temporal or generic cues—as I've noted, she lacks even the blandness linked to most "good women" of film noir. Unlike the others, she doesn't drag a past around with her—other than a child and the notion that living in the city will give her family opportunities. Georgia is frequently on the run, on foot (escaping Hawk, looking for and then escaping Coop, looking to place Spike with a family and then looking for Spike), and everywhere she turns, her appearance evokes old-school lechery from men, including a salesman ready to "sell" her a stroller she can't afford if she will go into the back room with him. She runs again. The film accentuates the character's (and actor's) desirability: with her long, blond hair, breathy voice, and attractive features, Singer is conventionally beautiful and made to be an irresistible innocent. Initially, Rudolph wrote Georgia as haggard and street-weary, but experienced an epiphany of sorts when he met Lori Singer. The moment, he would go on to claim, was what made him decide to transform his script so as "not to do it straight." "I get it now," he said. "It's like a dream, the whole movie is a dream," and her character is a "fantasy."[6] He cast her immediately.

Georgia's relationship to film noir is tenuous, even otherworldly—Georgia is pure goodness, awkward and naive, motivated only by a search for a stable future for her son. In several scenes she is shot outdoors in natural daylight, usually jostled around in Rain City's confusing, militarized noir world. In contrast to the men, and specifically the men at her café, she is not a caricature. Her appearance? Her hair is up, netted, as a waitress, and her pink gingham outfit resembles a hospi-

Fig. 22. Georgia on the run

tal candy striper (her bumbling efforts as a waitress seem to provoke desire from Hawk and protectiveness from Wanda). Otherwise, Georgia is dressed in nondescript, "innocent" pastels that have nothing to do with the styles of the 1940s, almost getting lost in her disheveled hair in the same manner she gets lost in the city when she looks for Coop, tries to escape Hawk, or searches for a stable family for Spike. She is one of the figures in the film who seems to most closely fit the 1980s, and in that regard, as we shall see, it is probably not surprising that she is one of its most distressed. For, like Coop, Georgia is in the line of fire.

Some assessments of neo-noir films might label them all postmodern, mixing as they did the surfaces of distinct, separate cinematic worlds and eras. Did they respond to a 1970s/80s

longing for classy glamour and romantic irony? This nostalgia set its sights on a set of artificial surfaces, of two-dimensional images and stories—ones that were never an American reality in the first place. The 1940s loomed large in the imagination of the 1980s. In fact, even beyond the United States, the 1970s and 1980s were keen on harkening back to the 1940s, whether cinematically (Italian, German, and French art films were turning to stories set in World War II and its aftermath, e.g., *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* [1970], *Lili Marleen* [1981], *The Last Metro* [1980]), sartorially (the popularity of 1940s retro clothing in women's fashion), or affectively (did the scarcities of the 1970s and 1980s—the oil crisis, rising unemployment, and inflation—prompt a desire for "real-seeming," tough but seductive noir?). The US president was Ronald Reagan, a former Hollywood star whose heyday was in the 1940s. And as one astute internet critic wrote in 2010: "*Trouble in Mind* functions as a sultry elegy for two lost eras: a cinephile's fantasy of the 1940s, and the Reagan era that spawned it."[7]

The American Dream: Myths of Success

The reason they call it the American Dream is because you have to be asleep to believe it.

—George Carlin

Different time periods and film traditions will always represent the financial and social messages and purported success of the American Dream differently. In US studio output, 1940s noir was a mile away from cinema of the preceding decade.

The 1930, to take films just from Warner Brothers, showed two sides of the contemporary economic coin: there was the scarcity depicted in the Great Depression-themed, social realist movies such as *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), on the one hand, and Busby Berkeley's lavish, formally fanciful musicals, on the other. Bountiful Cinderella rags-to-riches stories—be they in melodrama or screwball comedy genres—were plotted out as so many fairy tales of romance, chance, and lots of dough. Wealth in the 1930s, in short, was good: wealth could relax you, allow you to wear beautiful clothes and even be zany, as Carole Lombard was in *My Man Godfrey* (1936).

In the 1940s, the United States, like much of the globe, was at war, but it was more than wartime deprivations and scarcity that flipped the switch on the depiction of wealth. The dyad of escapist excessive fare and "gritty realism" went missing, although film noir traded in the stylistic shadows of the former—at reduced budgets, to be sure—and the feel and story lines of the latter. Money was depicted as a corrupting force, motivating once-innocent men and their femmes fatales to criminal, usually mortal, money-grabbing acts. In that regard, Coop is the more extreme noir protagonist than Hawk, ready to lose everything for the far-off dream of winning it all.

A word is needed on the American Dream. Regardless of one's standing in life, personal resources, and privileges, the Dream goes, one can rise above one's station (class mobility) through hard work (Protestant work ethic; meritocracy) and moral worth (that is, if you deserve it). This is the myth that avers that any person can become president, even someone like Lincoln, born in a log cabin, if he is good enough. And I

mean "he," given the struggles faced by female candidates, not to mention people of color, or people without the means or connections to secure the millions of dollars it takes simply to run for president. The supporting myths and paths toward the horizon are many—it's the endpoint that constantly recedes. Getting to the top can entail marrying above one's station, especially if one is born poor or outside of the United States (look at the wife of the forty-fifth American president). "Sleeping one's way to the top," the old saw of theater and film, is still with us (brought painfully to light in Harvey Weinstein's case at Miramax). We see the myth at work in the autobiographical remarks made by privileged white men across professions (politics, entertainment, business), who stress their lowly origins and family disadvantages (son of immigrants, an impoverished childhood, a victim of bullies, a broken family, and so forth), who advance policies or star in media vehicles with no care for eradicating systemic problems, but do everything in their power to burnish their public image with the myth of rising above their station, of individual toughness, perseverance, and talent. If they mention the improbability of their success, it is only to highlight their personal strengths and skills in overcoming adversity.

The American Dream demands its adherents ignore adversity and does so by framing obstacles and structural inequities in individual rather than systemic terms. It has been a potent distraction that individualizes and psychologizes success and failure: if you cannot rise above your station, you are morally lacking, lazy, or otherwise flawed and at fault. While statistics show that it is difficult to raise oneself out of poverty

in the United States; it is much easier to fall deeper into poverty, the sub-myths of the American Dream extend branches of hope for success through athletic achievement and influential appearances in media. There are the lures of desperate schemes, crime, gambling, the escapism of alcohol or addictive drugs.[8]

Coop is trapped in this net of fictions. He is as clueless to his entanglement as he is to the ridiculousness of his outfits, which he wears as badges of success, a blind man's bling. It's true that Georgia has her own myths, believing that the city will provide security for Spike, but her hopes don't rely on criminal behavior to make money, nor does she seek out new partners (Hawk swoops down on *her*) or even try to change her lot in life much. She is outside Coop's spinning universe, where his macho bluster, even when face to face with the deadly mob head Hilly Blue, comes off like scraps from a bad TV series: his changing looks show just how deluded his dreams and his tiny successes have made him.

At the end of the film, when he has lost everything but his life, we see him take a damp rag and remove his makeup, finally aware of the Dream and renouncing its illusions. Only one option is left him in that Dream, its lowest common denominator: signing up for the militia, in which trauma, injury, or death await, the material endpoints of a Dream cloaked in nationalistic service. The emptiness of Coop's gesture ("Where does a fella sign up?") and his body language as he jumps into the jeep reveal his resignation and his new disbelief in the Dream. Rudolph's critical awareness of those dead ends is such that he drops even their trappings and depicts the mili-

tia as a multitude of unindividualized, inhuman figures who are kept outside of the story line but leave their impression on the story's world: there are the unseen loudspeakers barking out orders to sign up and the uniforms and helmets, purchased from army surplus stores, that sport an insignia that is vaguely SS, vaguely Soviet (Gorbachev had not yet "torn down his walls" when *Trouble in Mind* was made).

For many, covering up the material realities of war and economic distress, and replacing them with abstracted distractions and lofty, noble goals, is the bread and butter of kitsch. The United States has no monopoly in producing this kitsch—nationalist pride-making machinery works similarly across the globe, combing the past for simplified, partial histories, appealing to fictions of unified regions, ethnic groups, or, in the kitschiest move yet, the "brotherhood of man." Concepts like these may be celebrated, put into speeches and elevated in parades filled with flags, tanks, heroes, yet silent on razed cities, broken families, and battered corpses behind them. "American Dream kitsch" exists in its own right, a subgenre right alongside Catholic kitsch, totalitarian kitsch (as per Kundera), and so on. Success in business and one's career, financial gain, homeownership, marrying someone of the opposite sex, having children, a dog, a family, a house, and a functioning car, are all idealized signs that obscure the hefty obstacles behind obtaining them. American Dreamers believe in the myth of equal opportunity for all, that success is simply a matter of doing hard work and following a moral compass, not a matter of luck or privilege.

Coop's readiness to go down the rabbit hole of petty crime

shows his initial allegiance to pursuing the Dream: since breaking the law is only the means to an end, it doesn't matter (unless you get caught). Coop, for the most part, like other characters and the film, doesn't do much to sentimentalize, heroicize, or otherwise elevate the efforts they're making to get there. Everyone in Rain City is just getting by, and no one is nearing their goals. Wanda, by contrast, seems bereft of these fictitious goals; her feet are planted in the present tense, and for this she enjoys a freedom and agency unknown by the other characters: she exists outside a system of sentimentalized aims and ideals. Indeed, *Trouble in Mind* is not a film that pedals the ideals that other films such as *Rambo: First Blood* were manufacturing in the 1980s. Instead, it deals in the leftovers and residue of those dreams, and in that regard it channels the cynical spirit of film noir and of those who saw through the chipper kitsch of Reagan's America.

The one romanticized or sentimentalized aspect of Coop's journey is Georgia's position as his partner and as a mother, which will be only slightly reconfigured in her romance with Hawk. So thoroughly is her character imbued with innocence and naivete that Georgia comes closest to kitsch—not through anything she's done, but by the attributes assigned to her by Coop, Hawk, and, perhaps, Rudolph. She walks around like a hope for the family in the American Dream but at the same time is the only character who openly, honestly gives voice to her desperation about obtaining it—culminating in her quickly-regretted act of leaving Spike with a well-to-do, conventional white family. Georgia is filmed in constant motion, her fear of being chased or assaulted visible in her panicked

movements, especially when she leaves the safety of enclosed spaces such as her trailer or Wanda's apartment or café: she is either cooped up or left to flail helplessly. The film only toys with the myth that a woman's good looks might "save" her. Men endlessly ogle Georgia, even though Singer's considerable beauty hides under the signs of poverty: sneakers, a shapeless raincoat, dirt, unkempt hair. Until the end of the film, she looks less like the ideal of the domestic hearth than like someone forcibly driven from it, panicking, searching for a way to return her son to it regardless of what happens to her. Only Hawk offers her the fiction of being settled down, in a dream he shares, of having a home, a partner, kids. And by the end of the film, they achieve it, briefly, in a scene in which we see flowers on a table, a clean bed, Georgia entering with groceries, an idealized neatness without a romantic couple being fully present. Nonetheless, this brief snapshot of the Dream within reach had been completely absent from the cramped trailer that she and Coop once called home.

Film noirs are by their nature disconnected from the American Dream. If anything, they show its fraying ropes: families, marriages, and engagements are typically destroyed by a male protagonist straying from the security—and the "goodness"—of a dull, domestic life and the women that represent them and rushing into the arms of a criminal scheme, typically taking the form of a mysterious femme fatale. Even the noirish elements of a film like *Casablanca* destroy the simmering romance of the film's two Hollywood stars in favor of a nobler, less satisfying, kitschy marriage that is subservient to a higher cause: saving the free world.

In noir, it is usually a woman who brings the male protagonist to his inevitable end, of course, but it's important to stress that heterosexual misogyny isn't always the culprit keeping men from their American Dreams. Instead of offering sustenance to their employees, business and capital ruin men in *The Big Clock* and *Force of Evil* (1948). So distant is classic film noir from the Dream, or even the hearts in which it beats, that a dead man narrates *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) and dying ones open the flashback tales of *D.O.A.* and *Double Indemnity* (1944). In 1955, an atomic bomb blows up the world in Robert Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly*; the corrupt protagonist of *Touch of Evil* (1958) is told—by Marlene Dietrich, no less—that his future is "all used up." While the history of noir doesn't run a straight line through the Cold War to the 1970s and 1990s—despite the remakes—there's something telling about the return of such a pessimistic genre during the post-Vietnam era. Jimmy Carter was president during a social and economic depression and admitted this "crisis of confidence"; Reagan, keen on "making America great again," was the great denier who followed him, and Clinton and the two Bush presidencies did nothing to quell what Reagan started. It was not a good time to be down on your luck: social assistance programs were shrinking, military expenditures—and saber-rattling—were on the rise, and the gap between the economic haves and have-nots was widening. It was not a good time to be on the losing side, as Coop's story dramatizes.

Like Coop, other neo-noir characters—usually men—have financial and sexual/romantic dreams, but ultimately become targets, usually falling prey to bigger, more criminal, and more

devious dreamers, as in *Body Heat* or *The Last Seduction* (1994). The conventions only maim. *Chinatown* so upsets the standard familial order that Dunaway's screamed lines in the infamous slapping scene—"She's my daughter. She's my sister"—are both true. By the time of *Blade Runner*, we don't even know if the woman that the hero runs off with at the end is human or not.

Trouble in Mind sits beside these films, sharing their cynicism without succumbing to it. True, Rain City is hardly a waystation for moving on to realized dreams; as noted before, Wanda is the only character who leaves without death nipping at her heels. But the hopes that glimmer there, the briefly enjoyed success of Coop, and especially, that of Hawk and Georgia, create characters that, for all their artifice, seem like real human beings who have emotional lives and real-world struggles, in a way that the characters of conventional film noir do not. Rather than the flashy charisma and glamour of noir's glistening streets and femmes fatales, then, Rudolph gives us sparks of tender exchange. Only love matters, he tells interviewers.

Trouble in Mind: The Neoliberal Neo-noir

I just haven't been able to find any humanity in any Republican candidate ever in my entire life.

—Alan Rudolph

As Solo and Coop unload counterfeit luxury watches, another of Rain City's small-time crooks warns them that Hilly Blue

is trying to "squeeze out independents like us" (Hilly will succeed). Again, film allegories this transparent are no longer allegories: this is dialogue that explains what it's like to be an independent filmmaker at a time when behemoths and bullies are beginning to rule. (Of his film *The Moderns*, Rudolph says that it chronicles the difficulty of finding backing for a film as much as it tells of making it in the art world.)[9] Hilly, of course, is brutally wealthy and shows it: When I asked Rudolph what brought him to stage the final shootout in an art museum, he replied that "a mansion wouldn't do" for a character who "dished out terror with taste" (a violin even accompanies Hilly upon entering most scenes). The organization controlled by this sybaritic figure is populated by barely literate idiots, and in treating the syndicate like this, Rudolph indicts the political and economic realities that were fueling widening economic disparities in the early to mid-1980s. In fact, says Rudolph, "I told Divine to play Hilly Blue as a corrupt president."

Without diminishing the "smooth and pleasant experience" of financing and working on *Trouble in Mind*, Rudolph wanted his film to capture the less pleasant historical moment in which it was made. Neoliberalism was building to a crescendo pitch, with public social services being cut and businesses—not unlike Hilly's—becoming more concentrated, wiping out smaller operations and, along with them, protections against monopolistic practices—not to mention unions and workers' rights.[10] Recalls Rudolph on this era,

> The wealthy and powerful were openly flourishing and flaunting at the expense of the less fortunate. . . . Despite happy-face

> slogans and promises of prosperity, the hard-working middle class was under assault. . . . Innocence was preyed upon, compassion exploited. Perpetual war for profit with a domestic population to mostly fend for itself seemed a mere conceptual way. . . . Escape would mostly come through daydream reality, memory imagination.[11]

The United States was quickly moving rightward, beginning with the 1980 election of former Hollywood actor Ronald Reagan, whose victory immediately mediatized politics in a way the country had not previously experienced (his nickname "the Teflon president" suggested that little might exist beneath his smooth exteriors). Reagan's presidency engaged Cold War threats and postures against the Soviet Union, the controversial "Star Wars" military program, and, perhaps most depressingly when viewed in hindsight from the twenty-first century, unfettered neoliberalist policies that have not abated since: tax breaks for the wealthy, declining social services, privatized public industries and services, weakened environmental and worker protection, tax havens and jobs moving offshore, regulation favoring oligopolies, monopolies in the making, and so on. One of Reagan's first acts as president was to fire striking unionized air traffic controllers, just as Margaret Thatcher did to coal miners in the north of England.

These political moves dovetailed with a phenomenon that Susan Jeffords called the "re-masculinization of America," in which film and other mass media began in earnest to worry about the country's wounded pride for having lost the Vietnam War a decade earlier. Consider bloated, macho fare

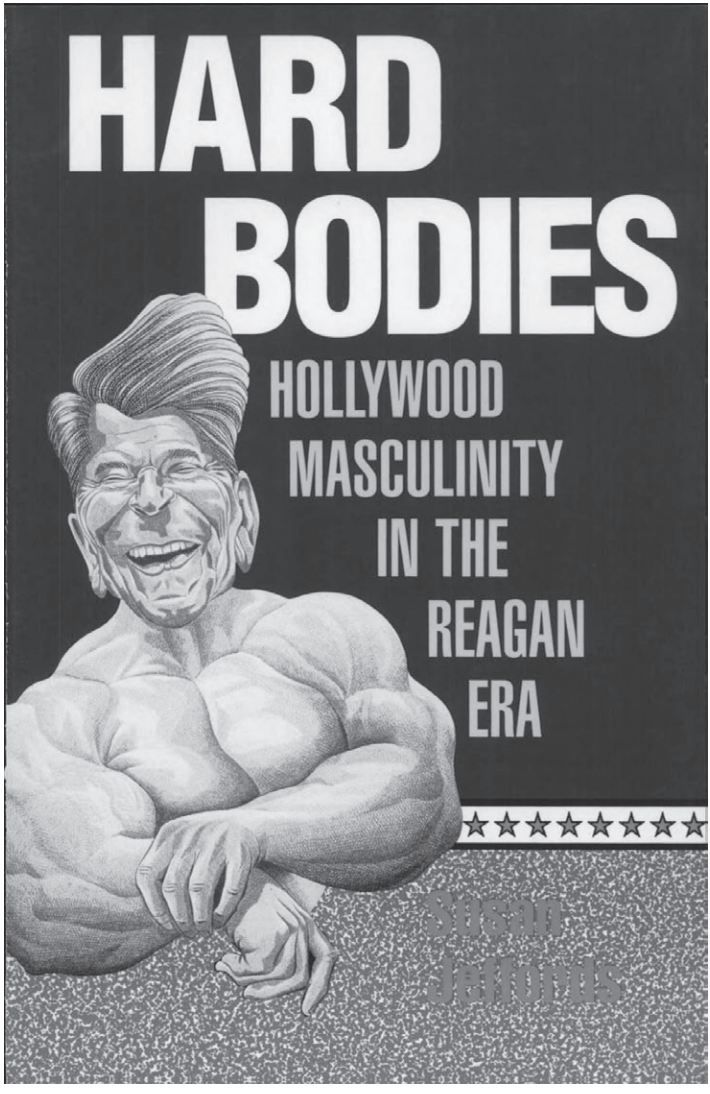


Fig. 23. *Hard Bodies* during the Reagan years. Courtesy of Rutgers University Press.

such as *Rambo: First Blood*, *The Terminator*, and *Rocky*. (*Trouble in Mind* [1976] acknowledges the trend, not least by naming Hilly's chief thug "Rambo.") Of course, the fantasy of remasculinization being played out on Hollywood screens was a poor substitute for generating actual policies to assist Vietnam veterans—which instead were part of public cutbacks—but such was the mythic fix, and its unfortunate consequence was getting Americans to root for privileged but ostensible underdogs, usually white male characters. Michael Douglas's roles exemplify the trend: he played unfairly treated "victims" with passive-aggressive middle-aged, white rage in films like *Fatal Attraction* (1987), *Basic Instinct* (1992), and *Falling Down* (1993).

To be sure, this didn't emerge all at once in the 1980s. Even before the United States left Vietnam, films like *Dirty Harry* (1971—the same year as *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*) reinforced the idea that Americans might make right perceived injustices—here, in a vigilante form that reinforced the American myth of the sovereign power and agency of individuals over gangs of two-dimensionalized bad guys. As for Rudolph, some of his detractors have chafed over what they perceive to be his lack of political and social grounding, but their claims don't hold much water, despite the dream-like setting of many of his films. Politics cannot hide in *Return Engagement*, Rudolph's documentary of G. Gordon Liddy and Timothy Leary's strange, joint lecture tour, with one critic calling it "a funny and compelling slice of the American Dream."[12] And the malapropisms spouted in *Trixie*, such as "he's going to drink himself into Bolivia," were not unlike those gener-

ated by then-president George W. Bush. For critic Armand White, Rudolph presents "tough realities of modern social life in terms of his place-specific characters' all-American emotional needs."[13] White wrote this about *Ray Meets Helen*, but it describes *Trouble in Mind* and much of Rudolph's additional output. *Ray Meets Helen* is political for going "beneath the surface to show what they [the title characters] have in common—what makes them soul-mates." The two leads (Sondra Locke and Keith Carradine) "look destitute," and "economics" makes them seem unsuitable, but then "Rudolph . . . bless-[es]" them with "sudden fortune," "the chance to play out their fantasies" in a matter that avoids the formulaic dimensions of Rob Reiner's rom-com *When Harry Met Sally* (1989). Economics keep Georgia and Coop from surviving as a couple; Georgia's romance with Hawk buys them a speck of time to "play out their [own] fantasies." The social and economic commentary is present in *Trouble in Mind*; it just doesn't scream at your face. Rudolph writes that at the time of making *Trouble in Mind*,

> We sought to comment on society's uncertain fate as it followed a spate of heartless pursuits. My opinion at the time was that despite the warm rhetoric and political smoke screens, our society's increasingly cold blood could easily turn to ice. . . . Despite happy-face slogans and promises of prosperity, the hard-working middle class was under assault and starting to wane. . . . What's important and desirable would soon be hidden, forgotten or missing altogether. Escape would mostly come through daydream reality.[14]

Yannis Tzioumakis argues that low-budget filmmaking came to be privileged during the Reagan-Bush years; critics like Michael Z. Newman maintain that indie cinema intensely positioned itself as a rebel against neoliberal, corporate America, less in the stories it told than in its funding strategies. Since independent funding structures didn't change much from the 1970s and 1980s—other than proliferating—it may be more useful to direct our attention instead to the stories told. To be sure, Hollywood film stories were as invested in championing "the little guy," David versus Goliath, the outlier versus the dominant, as independent films usually were. This was a period, after all, of *E.T.* (1982) and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) on one front, *Working Girl* (1988) and *Pretty Woman* (1990) on another, and Michael Douglas and Rambo films on a third. The trend, of course, is nothing new: think of the Hollywood classic *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), whose protagonist takes on political corruption and gets a taste of pyrrhic success at the end in a movie made by conservative director Frank Capra during the administration of the progressive Democrat Franklin Roosevelt, hardly the political equivalent of Alan Rudolph working during the era of late twentieth-century Reaganism.

Trouble in Mind anthropomorphized the sense of menace of the 1980s not just in the corrupt kingpin Hilly Blue, but more insidiously, in the quiet, ubiquitous presence of its futuristic "SS" soldiers. Deployed from everywhere, it seems, they appear at the edges of the frame, in its background and, once, as blurred figures in the foreground. They are never individualized, not given dialogue or much in the way of faces.

Fig. 24. The ubiquitous militia in the background

The camera treats them as moving pieces of the landscape and avoids settling in on any one of them, and the soundtrack enables their control to be equally forceful and vague. With bullhorns or loudspeakers reminding citizens of their civic duty, their power is intensified, made godlike for having their sound source withheld, in striking contrast to the loudspeakers that punctuate Robert Altman's *M*A*S*H* with humor, voiced by Radar, whose presence gives a humanity to the announcements. Ironically, *M*A*S*H* takes place in the fully militarized locale of a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital in the Korean War, but as a satirical comedy, the setting is worlds apart from the (superficially) nonmilitary diegesis of Rain City, suggesting that a fifteen-year-old comedy made during the Vietnam War broadcasts more relief than a dreamlike neo-noir made

at the dawn of Republican neoliberalism. Despite being formally sidelined in *Trouble in Mind*, the police force suggests a possible path to accomplished success or opportunity to leave Rain City, just as much as Solo and his cadre of crooks do at the docks. Both appear to be escape routes from the world that they actually make impossible to leave, a vicious circle that vacuums Coop up, who is a walking exercise in limited options. People can only fail.

To sustain the myth that personal aspiration could succeed, neoliberalism overhauled many of the myths of the American Dream, which had extended the promise that to rise above one's station took only hard work and dedication. Indeed, the promise and lure of the American Dream and the difficulty of its actualization dictated the fictional worlds of film noir during the social, political, and economic realities of accelerated neoliberalism of the 1980s. The case study in this regard is Coop, who wants the Dream, and who in pursuit of it is "seduced" into criminal life, according to Joe Morton, who plays Solo, his seducer. *Trouble in Mind*'s neo-noir world, romantic in spots, but with militia police prowling everywhere, along with the shifts in American culture of the time, made happy outcomes seem well-nigh impossible. But Rudolph, like his characters, did his best to extend beams of hope, even though, as Rambo warns Hawk after urging him to work for Hilly, "People like you only get one chance."

While political and economic policies gave a free pass to expanding systems of power over them, people were still weaned on the fictions of individual achievement. Female-based film narratives about this struggle had mixed results:

unlike the collective of sex workers in Lizzie Borden's indie feature *Working Girls* (1986), who endured abusive working conditions, Hollywood's *Working Girl* featured the triumph of one upright woman over her corrupt boss. The rom-com formula that structured this aspirational movie also motored 1990s' Cinderella story *Pretty Woman*, in which another sex worker (improbably played by Julia Roberts) is rescued by her wealthy john, Richard Gere, in a runaway hit. (Rom-coms dominated Hollywood's "women's fare" during the 1980s and 1990s—*When Harry Met Sally*, *Mystic Pizza*, *While You Were Sleeping*—movies that featured women whose lives were improved by heterosexual romance and rescue.)

Trouble in Mind keeps the heterosexual romance alive through Hawk, who offers a stable, more conventional masculinity than Coop, who by the end has run amuck with his small-time success. Hawk carries the lion's share of the film's—and the era's—nostalgia for the 1940s world of film noir, whose heroes and heroines may not succeed, just as conditions in the 1980s made it difficult to succeed—but there was glamour, drama, and excitement in their failures. Reagan, too, built on the nostalgia for yesteryears, an America whose military and domestic might in the world seemed unchallenged, when women and people of color knew their lowly place (this was a president who scolded working women for the economic downturn at the beginning of his tenure, and who invented the fiction of the "welfare queen," whose race went conspicuously unstated). Even African American actor George Kirby's police chief, who might seem to enjoy a modicum of power, is unable to control the corruption in his city,

and, significantly, is lying down when Hawk comes to ask him for his old job back.

No-Exit Noir

The ethos and narrative keystone of film noir fits hand in glove with the effects of neoliberalism. People broken by their pasts carried them around, led by hope that they could overcome them and succeed. Noir wears its downbeat tone on its sleeve. In neo-noir, the conventions are often indirect, but nonetheless gain a potency for being situated in Ronald Reagan's United States. Noir heroes always walk the fine line between the worlds of cops and gangsters; former cops are a dime a dozen, and Hawk is no different in this way. After his stint in jail, Hawk, the good noir hero, wants to go straight but can't (the police won't take him back; he refuses Hilly's job offer). While he himself doesn't go for "one last [film noir] crime caper," his final act repeats what he had paid for dearly in the past: being a vigilante who protects a woman. Georgia has asked him to help Coop, and he agrees, but, according to his terms, then gets to "have" her. To fulfill his promise and protect Coop, Hawk must broker a peace between Hilly and Coop, a peace that we know is impossible, and one that ends mortally for Hilly and Hawk. Hawk may get a romantic hero's send-off in the film's exquisite final sequence, complete with a cameo from the woman who had motivated his peacemaking—a woman *unlike* a film noir femme fatale, an angel from another world with genuinely good intentions—but he is sent off nonetheless, leaving Rain City, a place with closed-off

options, unable to have earned a living or secured a woman for himself, and unable to change or improve the town, as the hero of a classic western would have.

Of course, noir never uncloaked worlds of real possibility to its characters—just foolhardy schemes. Noir focused instead on circumstances—bad choices, bad timing, bad pasts, bad women—that boxed them in, with doors closing in with special fierceness on male leads. The opening of *The Killers* (1946) is exemplary in this regard, as the physically imposing Burt Lancaster lies on a cot in a cold sweat, passively waiting to be whacked. Lancaster's character had been a boxer, a detail Rudolph gives to Hawk when we see him with a small punching bag, reminding us that Kristofferson, like Lancaster, had boxed in his past. (Unlike *Songwriter*, which explicitly links Kristofferson's character to music, *Trouble in Mind* gives us only remote signs of violent sport). With its claustral worlds and violence a constant threat, like a punching bag hanging in the air, 1940s noir offered at once an escape and a foretaste of what would happen in the 1980s—the same pessimism but with more old-time glamour.

In her work on American citizenship, Lauren Berlant took the classic noir film *The Maltese Falcon* to illustrate a national fantasy. Sydney Greenstreet—our Hilly Blue of yore—chases down the priceless statue, deploying any dubious means of obtaining it. Once he does, he finds it's a fake, made of lead, not gold. He is so close to achieving his dream—he even holds it in his hands—but it nonetheless eludes him. The Dream itself, Berlant argued, becomes less important than its endurance. There is a collective American consensus around its

desirability, and belief in its obtainability. People get close to it, think they can catch it, or have its promised successes rub off on them, only to be burned by it. In the end, the American Dream is less a moving target than an absent one, made present through myth and rhetoric. And under neoliberalism, the tools we depend on to achieve "the good life"—a safety net, job security, the meritocracy, even "durable intimacy" in our romantic lives—have degenerated into fantasies that bear less and less relation to how people can actually live.

CHAPTER 7

Marketing and Reception

My films can't survive at all if you don't search for your connection to the character. It's like the tree falling in the forest, does it make a sound? . . . My films basically start from an artificial point on purpose. It's very similar to the theater in that the audience has to participate or the films don't work.

—Alan Rudolph

Marketing

Mike Kaplan, who marketed *Trouble in Mind*, recalls that, as the fledgling Alive Films' first picture, the experience was "intense," especially since "campaigns were critical for indie films to succeed at the time." With no offices, Kaplan worked from home, going to Hollywood Hills to meet with the company's two leaders, Shep Gordon and Carolyn Pfeiffer, and to Glendale to work with Ignacio Gomez, who designed the film's poster. For Kaplan, *Trouble in Mind* "seemed to have the potential for mainstream success—there was a lot of meat there. It had a more advanced level of production"—no doubt due to Rudolph's comparatively high budget—"and the look of it was a jump beyond what Alan had done before." Kaplan was more equivocal about the "Rudolph-esque" conclusion, but went on to say that "going into Alan's dreamscape [with it] didn't matter. So much was going on in the rest of the film. Everything was easy to identify with; it was a 'normal' movie."[1]

Kaplan argues that, at the time, a promotional poster alone could determine whether a film was picked up or not, and so he carefully tended to creating one, hiring Gomez on the basis of his earlier work for *Remember My Name*. With Rain City as a functional character in *Trouble in Mind*, Kaplan wanted the poster to prominently display the cityscape, much as it had been in the release poster for Julien Duvivier's 1942 *Tales of Manhattan*.

Most of Kaplan's marketing work involved radio and print. The former medium featured ticket giveaways when the film opened in different cities and when it opened across the country in March; the latter, though continuous throughout the film's run, was especially concentrated for its opening in Los Angeles. As is common, Kaplan mapped out the campaign according to the deadlines to be nominated for Academy Awards. His plans ensured that *Trouble in Mind* had an Academy run before the end of 1985, meaning a one-week theatrical run in Los Angeles that made it eligible for Academy Award nominations; ballots closed on January 24. Screening at the Directors Guild took place December 7. Kaplan put an ad in the *Daily Variety Anniversary Issue* of October 28, made plans to submit the film to the Berlin Film Festival, and suggested a possible LA screening for magazines with long preparation times; one unrealized plan included a "Lori Singer and the Valentine's Day angle!" November and December included full-page ads in *Weekly Variety* and numerous ads in the *Los Angeles Times*; others were scheduled for the *Hollywood Reporter* and *Daily Variety* during the weeks of their Oscar projections. In November, advance screenings in New York and Los Angeles

were held for critics and other members of print and broadcast media. The film opened at the Westwood Plaza on December 11—there was no premiere per se—and Mike Kaplan recalls sitting in a car with Rudolph smoking a joint as they watched audiences enter the theater, Rudolph marveling that he didn't know any of these people who wanted to go see his film. In March 1986, *Trouble in Mind* was released in other North American cities, including Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Vancouver, and Toronto. Alive Film was the distributor for the US market and Quebec; the Canadian company Norstar distributed for the rest of Canada.

It's possible that, because Island Alive dissolved during the production of *Trouble in Mind*, its marketing campaign was not as robust as it might have been. Archival evidence fails to indicate a vigorous billboard campaign, for instance, which, as Rudolph's anecdote about *Kiss of the Spider Woman* makes clear, could play a pivotal role in the run-up to the Academy Awards. In fact, when Pfeiffer and Gordon dissolved their partnership with Island, they split some of the film holdings, with Alive getting *Trouble in Mind* and Island retaining *Spider Woman*, rendering Rudolph and Carradine's "aha" moment at the billboard even more ironic. (It should be noted that as the fortunes of Alive Films rose, the successes of Island Pictures diminished after several years.)

Reception

Reception for the film ran the gamut. In the United States, *Trouble in Mind* received high praise from the Midwest and

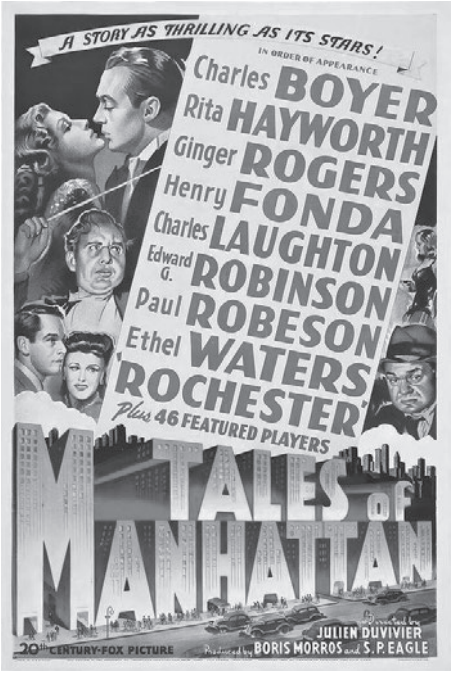


Fig. 25. *Tales of Manhattan* theatrical poster. Courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox.

West Coast. Chicago's premiere critics, Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert, both loved the film. (Siskel stated that Rudolph had done an "even better job" with his "moody adult love story" than he had with *Choose Me*, another film that the critics had praised on their popular television show, *At the Movies*.)[2] The *Los Angeles Times* praised Rudolph's control and the "pulp romance feeling" in which he bathed it, and gave solid nods to the cinematography, production design, makeup, music, and the Kristofferson-Singer couple ("How long since we

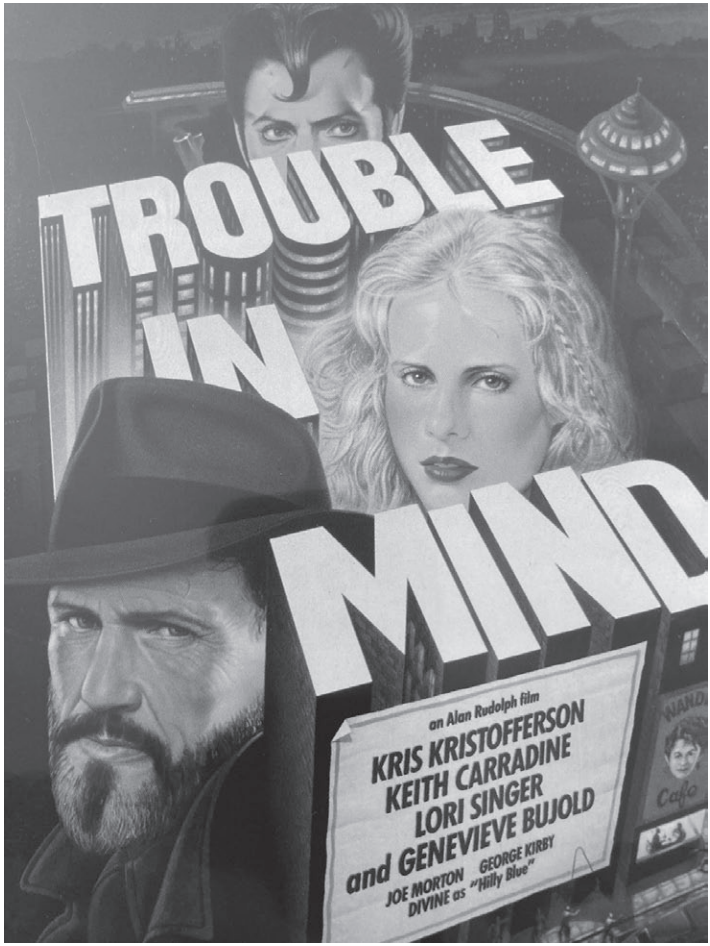


Fig. 26. *Trouble in Mind* theatrical poster. Courtesy of Alive Entertainment.

cared *anything* about a couple on the screen?") and lauded the film's "tart, cheerful undertone of irony—and sometimes outrageous—humor to keep us from sugaring out."[3] *Variety*'s largely positive review also acknowledged the skill behind Rudolph's vision:

> There are few directors who can fill a frame with as much interesting business as Rudolph, here assisted by cinematographer Toyomichi Kurita [praised in numerous reviews], he creates at least a visually tantalizing terrain . . . "Trouble in Mind" captures well the look of a paranoid nether world.[4]

Yet critics on the East Coast expressed more reservations, and more confusion, about the project. *New York Times* reviewer Walter Goodman asked, "What is this movie about? . . . Well, it has something to do with ineffectual bad guys who kill and maim, but mainly it's about its own mood," reflecting kindly on that mood before moving on to damn the film for refusing to tell him how to read it. The *Times*' most negative response comes out of left field and is hurled at the actors: "The leads struggle through the mist, along with the audience, pretending they have some notion of what is going on—but nobody's that good an actor." Goodman reserves his deepest criticism for Divine—who, he bizarrely claims, "giv[es] camp a bad name."[5]

Conventions of mainstream cinema don't crumble easily. Several critics were daunted by the tension between the romantic humanism Rudolph bestowed on key characters and the cynical, unsettled narrative in which they found

themselves; his pronounced emphasis on style and veneer blunted others' ability to land on the fixed messages and meanings they expected from a motion picture. Others didn't know what to make of *Trouble in Mind*'s overlapping genres, performance styles, and time periods, or how to read the ending (recall the complaint that Rudolph had sold out with a "boy gets girl" finale). As Alexander Walker of the *London Evening Standard* wrote, "Alan Rudolph wrote and directed it and is plainly a man who knows and loves movies. The trouble is he knows and loves too many of them."[6]

Many compared *Trouble in Mind*, often unfavorably, to the critical darling *Choose Me*. Kael marched the furthest: "In *Choose Me*, Rudolph seemed to be developing a control of rhythm and mood—a musical and choreographic way of storytelling. . . . But his control fails him here." The evocative, moody style of both films eclipsed the weight of their tales, but it was the second tale that seemed to bother Kael, who opined, "The mixed up lovers have been replaced by gangsters, and what was comic and lyrical is now fatalistic."[7] *New York* magazine similarly bemoaned what it felt was *Trouble in Mind*'s failure to capture the enchantment of its predecessor: "*Choose Me* had the kind of Necco-wafer 'doomed' poetry—the fatalism of sexual adventure gone awry—that can be fun when the director doesn't take it too seriously. . . . But I don't know what has happened to his sense of humor. . . . The movie is a mess."[8] Sometimes you wonder if critics watch movies with their eyes closed.

Given the vituperative nature of some East Coast reviews, it's small wonder Rudolph has joked, "Sometimes I feel like I

walk around with a target on my back with the films I make." But there were critics who "got" the film, in France, England, Canada, and on the West Coast and the central United States. The late Roger Ebert responded to its recycled, film-conscious world, writing,

> Here is a movie that takes place within our memories of the movies. The characters, the mysteries, and especially the doomed romances are all generated by old films, by remembered worlds of lurid neon signs and deserted areas down by docks. . . . This is a world for which the saxophone was invented. . . . *Trouble in Mind* is not a comedy, but it knows that it is funny.[9]

Of the East Coast–based press, *Vanity Fair*'s Stephen Schiff seemed to best understand the project, comparing it favorably to other films of the time, including *Choose Me:*

> *Trouble in Mind* jettisons *Choose Me*'s feeble lessons in amour. This movie isn't about modern relationships or existential solitude or, in fact, anything; it's pure confection—a whirling, silvery toy. Like *Diva* or *Beat the Devil*, *Trouble* builds an improbable flying machine out of old movie parts, particularly out of film noir, with its groggy urban gladiators.[10]

After going on to applaud the performances of the main characters (Hilly Blue "lilts into a room like a hippo in a tutu") and Coop's "Dorian Gray hair," a "do [that] expands as his soul contracts," he extends special praise for Kristofferson's

Hawk: "Kristofferson is genuinely moving . . . at once guarded and vulnerable, and the nakedness of his longing for Singer takes you by surprise. *Trouble in Mind* has heart. Its tenderness is finally what saves it from being another spectacular but empty dreamscape, another *Blade Runner*."[11]

In cinephiliac France, the film was released as *Wanda's Café*. More than one reviewer complained about the title, but it could have been worse; one memo to Alive confidentially reported that a translation being considered was the French equivalent of "The Bat in the Belfry."[12] *Trouble in Mind* played at the 1986 Deauville Film Festival before opening widely in December. Reviews appeared across the country in newspapers and film journals, large and small, and were uniformly positive. Critics appreciated the film's dark, confectionery world and its departures from logistics and reality; they praised rather than condemned Rudolph for letting its meaning and interpretation remain free-floating in the gray area between film and audience. "For Alan Rudolph, for whom writing is more musical than strictly dramatic, it's not necessary for a film to 'mean' something. It simply needs to create a 'mood.'"[13] *Le Monde*'s Collette Godard wrote, "It's poetic realism,[14] American style, with stereotypes from the folklore of American novels: the cop who comes back after having done eight years in prison for having killed a crook. . . . Everything is symbol and metaphor."[15]

The French reviewers in general were enthusiastic in their praise, comparing Rudolph's work to the best of Max Ophuls, Robert Altman, and Jacques Demy. Wrote one:

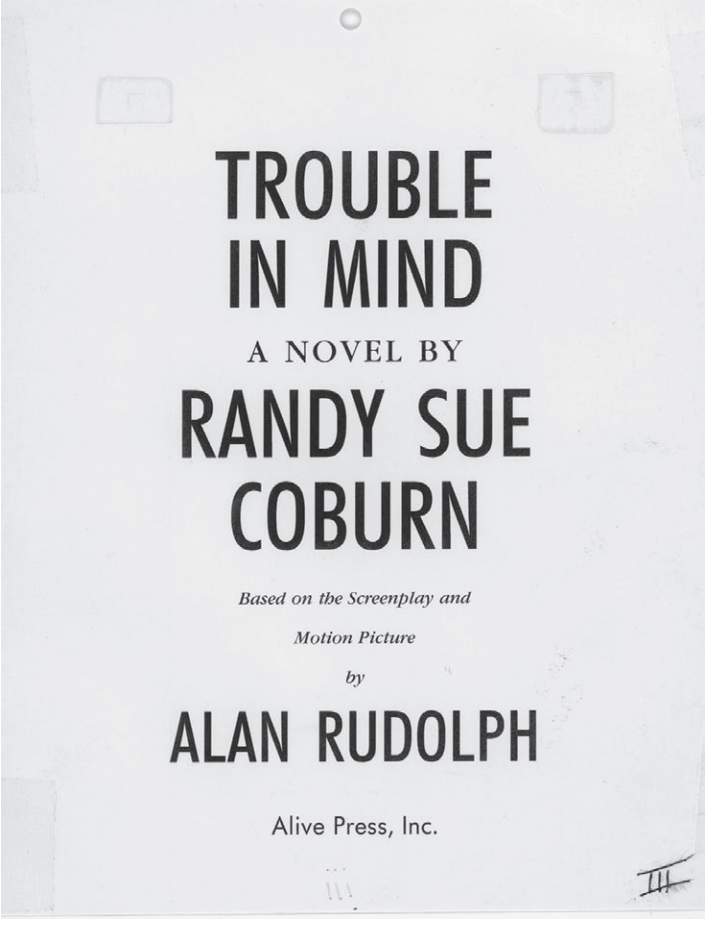
> *Wanda's Cafe* can be placed among the greats. The film takes us to a totally personal world, at once realistic and fantasmatic, raw and baroque—we are swept along with its superb, sophisticated blues, a dream mixed with sweetness and sadness, an allegory, too, with deep resonances of our disoriented times, sad and comic, ridiculous and appealing. Supported by a remarkable cast, *Wanda's Café* constitutes an oasis not to be missed in the desert that is American film right now.[16]

Trouble in Mind was especially well received at the Toronto Festival of Festivals (now the Toronto International Film Festival), where Rudolph had previously been named one of the "top ten directors to watch," and at the Seattle International Film Festival, where a critic later recalled the "massive buzz" it caused. It broke house attendance records at its opening there.[17]

Distribution

As was usual for films in the mid-1980s, *Trouble in Mind* was distributed on VHS the following year by Embassy Home Entertainment, and featured Gomez's theatrical film poster on the cover for the US market. Different images were used for foreign releases and construct different impressions and expectations for the film.

A curious marketing device was used to promote the US videocassette release. Alive released a short novelization of the film, an amply illustrated paperback using set photography taken from the film. Novelization of films was not uncom-



TROUBLE IN MIND

A NOVEL BY

RANDY SUE COBURN

Based on the Screenplay and

Motion Picture

by

ALAN RUDOLPH

Alive Press, Inc.

Fig. 27. Cover page of *Trouble in Mind* novelization. Courtesy of Alive Entertainment.

mon with roadshow movies in the 1950s and 1960s—booklets were sold as souvenirs of high-spectacle blockbusters, often family fare that traveled with films such as *The Sound of Music* (1965)—for people, often children, to relive, often repeatedly, the "theatrical experience" of the special roadshow movie screenings. While not unheard of, they were far less routine as tie-ins with standard film releases. Yet to produce a novelization for an adult *independent* film in the mid-1980s—to promote its release on videocassette, a new viewing medium, no less—seems slightly anachronistic.[18] That Rudolph was not asked to author it seems another curious detail.

Through Glinwood, its chief foreign distributor, Alive made deals for theatrical, television, and home-viewing rights and sales of *Trouble in Mind* (including VHS, Betamax, and even laser disc formats) across the globe. It's important to state that countries did not necessarily option those rights or necessarily opt for all three formats. Although *Trouble in Mind* brought in $400,000 in international sales of these rights by May 31, 1987, the film underperformed internationally in comparison to other indie films of the era such as *Stop Making Sense* or *Spider Woman*, and even *Choose Me*.[19] It consistently did very well in France, though, and in Australia it was popular enough that authorities notified Alive that they were going after a pair that was distributing counterfeit videotapes of it.

CHAPTER 8

Archives, Afterlives, and Acknowledgments

In 2010, a DVD of *Trouble in Mind* was released to commemorate the film's twenty-fifth anniversary. Its promotional trailer unintentionally reveals some of the tensions—indeed, careens—that have consistently marked Rudolph's career, and *Trouble in Mind* in particular. One of its first frames announces, in white letters on black background, "The critically acclaimed long lost film" and, after a few brief cuts from the film, "from filmmaker Alan Rudolph."

The thing is, *Trouble in Mind*, Rudolph's anticlassic neo-noir, was never "lost." Not only was a videocassette released within a year of the film's theatrical release, as I have noted, but a laser disc of the film was pressed (not to mention the release of its soundtrack or its novelization.) When DVDs hit the scene in the 1990s, *Trouble in Mind*, thanks to Rudolph's personal efforts, enjoyed a small-scale release in that format; even a Blu-ray was pressed. True, by 2010, the film had gone out of print in these formats, but the film print was still available to see in revival and art-house cinemas, and several film festivals had mounted retrospectives of Rudolph's work. In other words, *Trouble in Mind* was never a missing film.

Trouble in Mind's asserted absence from history is nonetheless telling, bestowing a characterizing mark on both the director and his output more generally. On the liner notes to the commemorative DVD, Rudolph even joins in on the game: "This film, like the main character of its story, has been locked away for decades, presumably paying its debt to public taste." To revisit *Trouble in Mind* means to observe the interplay of successes and near-misses that characterize Rudolph's work and that inform the reception of this single film.

That tension—along with another, that of presence and absence—finds a material corollary in the Makers and Mavericks Archives at the University of Michigan, where Rudolph has deposited his professional papers and related materials. And to a certain extent, those tensions characterize archival collections everywhere. Film, as a mass-produced, now multiplatform phenomenon, seems to have a permanence, a lasting record, that other time-based arts such as dance and theater do not. But it is far from permanent. Film is notorious for fading and decomposing; tapes and discs wear out. Disinterested institutional stewardship is often the culprit—studios are notorious for losing or tossing prints and negatives, failing to provide proper storage or otherwise abandoning them. And preserving materials poses a special challenge for American indies: small, independent production and distribution companies did not always have the means or facilities to store prints and negatives; many were short-lived, and, by the 1990s, with the endless mergers, collapses, and buyouts, films and film records were often left behind. Directors could easily lose access to their own prints and negatives for rerelease

or transfers to digital formats. Footage that was edited out by worried studios, such as Rudolph's original ending for *Made in Heaven*, are often lost to history. Directors often lose—or, in some cases, are unable to track down—rights to their own work. The same situation faces the many documents associated with filmmaking: business records, casting notes, contracts, shooting schedules, scripts, set photos, press releases, inter alia. In the end, archives are repositories, ghostly ones, for things gone missing as much as they are for things preserved, harboring vanished papers, unrealized projects, and so on. They are vaults for submerged stories as much as records of actual ones.

Like any archival collection, Rudolph's Makers and Mavericks collection is uneven. It is not very large, consisting of several dozen boxes (Robert Altman's, by contrast, spans over seven hundred). Its main contents are script drafts of *Trouble in Mind*, a list of cast and crew contacts, some photographs taken from its production, and copious amounts of magazine and newspaper clippings of reviews and interviews, especially those linked to individual film projects. Going through archival material in Ann Arbor, I found numerous invitations, interviews, and personal notes of gratitude over the course of Rudolph's filmmaking career. There is even a thank-you from schlock-meister William Castle "for assistance [as assistant director] on *Riot*,"[1] a prison drama from 1969, about the time Rudolph's career was getting started with exploitation projects of his own such as *Premonition* (1972) and *Terror Circus* (1974), films that yield little hint about his work to come (the latter film was also known as *Barn of*

the Naked Dead—small wonder that Rudolph does not look back on it with deep fondness).

Few pieces of correspondence exist, but those that do speak volumes. A long, handwritten note from Geraldine Chaplin, star of *Remember My Name* and *Welcome to L.A.*, shows the two were creative kindred spirits. In an undated one, she writes, "I love you and I miss you and I want to work with you again," reminiscing about their first meeting over "great catered food" on the set of *Nashville*, chez Altman, and talking about Patty Hearst.[2] The fact that Chaplin stops and restarts the letter over the course of several days arguably highlights the endurability of their relationship and mutual appreciation: *this is a letter I will work on across different times, ideas and memories, and I will be sure to send it*. It's impossible not to read it without imagining the warm comradery and collaborative back-and-forth the two of them likely enjoyed in projects together; it is also an archival indicator of the esteem in which Rudolph, the anti-Hitchcock, held actors. Another example is found in a small photo album created by Matthew Modine from a 1992 trip to Cannes, with pictures during the flight, of other stars, and, from behind, of Rudolph and Altman walking together. Here too, one detects the warmth and respect in Modine's gift, more evidence of the high mutual regard the director developed with his actors. When asked about his process, Rudolph told one interviewer, "Comradery is essential to filmmaking. My job is to inspire people to participate in their best work and to provide a place where that can happen."[3] (Auteurs noted for distinctive styles and aims don't always work that way.) The point is echoed by producer Carolyn Pfeiffer, with

whom Rudolph remains close: "He has a particular vision of what he wants," and within that vision he gives free rein and "is an inclusive collaborator."[4] That *Trouble in Mind*'s Bujold, Morton, Singer, Carradine, and Kristofferson, producers Block and Pfeiffer, composer Isham, and cinematographer Kurita all appear on the commemorative DVD extras with their fond memories about working with Rudolph on the film shows that the director succeeds.

In the archives, the fact that Rudolph kept a ticket to the special Directors Guild screening of *Trouble in Mind* is slightly curious for an artist constantly mocking his own status as an outsider. For not only does the souvenir indicate Rudolph's engagement with "mainstream" cinematic institutions, but it also shows that he confers respect on them as well. (Other archival documents mention the screening and its importance to the film in its Oscar bid.) That invitation is an unquestionable index of mainstream success that mattered enough to keep, a sign of what Rudolph could transpose in his quip, "Hey, I'm lukewarm in Hollywood!"

The bulk of the business documents regarding *Trouble in Mind* are archived with the company papers of Alive Films in Kihei, Hawaii, including box-office reports (largely from foreign sales), advertising campaigns, and several contracts. The extent of those holdings, however, is somewhat restricted, largely owing to the fact that *Trouble in Mind* was initially green-lit under Island Alive productions and became the property of Alive Films midproduction when Shep Gordon and Carolyn Pfeiffer left the former business to create the latter. Understandably little thus exists documenting the film's

preproduction and actual production (Kristofferson's contract exists, and it reveals that his payment for the film equaled Rudolph's and that he, like the director and other key players, arranged to get a percentage of the film's net profits). No documents definitively pinpoint a moment when the film broke even—if in fact it did. We know that its initial box office didn't recoup its investment, though it was not as low as twenty-first-century IMDb figures have it—at $20,000—enough to account only for its Academy run, according to Pfeiffer.[5] (Over time, Pfeiffer reasonably approximates, *Trouble in Mind* has made back most, if not all, of its investment.) Since the 2020s, Shout Factory has held worldwide rights to it, along with its DVD and Blu-ray rights. The soundtrack, released in LP and CD formats, remains out of print. As usual, Rudolph is circumspect: "My work seems to lack the success gene and popularity chromosome."[6] As I've indicated before, though, the archives, incomplete though they may be, show Rudolph's remark to be only partially true. Documents from the Toronto and Deauville Film Festivals unambiguously verify the success that *Trouble in Mind* enjoyed with critics and audiences, and French newspapers, journals, and television guides convey the wide-ranging enthusiasm with which the film was received across much of the country.

Afterlives

After *Trouble in Mind*, Rudolph completed eight other films in the 1980s and 1990s: the ill-fated *Made in Heaven*, about a romantic pairing that was celestially arranged under the

assumption that the pair could find each other before their clock ran out; *The Moderns*, his dream project set in the Parisian art scene of the 1920s; *Love at Large* (1990), another neo-noir, less stylized than *Trouble in Mind*; *Mortal Thoughts* (1991), a noir mystery starring Bruce Willis, Harvey Keitel, and Demi Moore; *Equinox*, in which Matthew Modine plays a set of twins raised under very different circumstances in a fantastical city; *Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle*, which captures the adventures of Dorothy Parker at the famous Algonquin Round Table; *Afterglow*, a dramatic film of troubled couples starring a radiant Julie Christie; and *Breakfast of Champions*, his playful adaptation of the "unadaptable" social satire by Kurt Vonnegut. (With the exception of *Made in Heaven* and *Mortal Thoughts*, Rudolph penned all of these.) The familiar casts of these films are further proof that actors enjoy working with Rudolph. *Trouble in Mind*'s Genevieve Bujold and Keith Carradine both appeared in *The Moderns*, and Carradine also had a small role in *Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle*; Lori Singer was in *Equinox*, Dirk Blocker in *Love at Large*, and actors of other projects made repeated appearances across the films of this period, such as Bruce Willis, Nick Nolte, Wallace Shawn, Geraldine Chaplin, and Harvey Keitel.

Since these years marked by intense filmmaking activity, Rudolph has been recognized at numerous retrospectives and film festivals. Here the official archival record is spotty, but there have been retrospectives in Italy, Prague, Chicago, New York City, Seattle, and other places, including university campuses (like the University of Michigan) and at independent theaters, what few there are left.

Rudolph's online presence shows that a new generation of fans has come to appreciate his work in general and *Trouble in Mind* in particular. If you type "Alan Rudolph" into the search page of IMDb, what comes up first is "Alan Rudolph (I) (Director, Trouble in Mind [1985])."[7] Customer ratings and reviews of the film introduce new angles: "Photoscribe" calls it "a genuine cult sleeper," a cultural time capsule. After praising Coop's weird "capturing" of the glam look of the time, another fan comments, "After finding out that jobs are hard to come by . . . Coop soon turns to crime," adding, "This movie captures the neon world of the late seventies new-wave/punk era near-perfectly and is unique in the fact that it is the ONLY movie to do so! The acting, specifically Carradine, Bujold and Morton, is top-notch, the music, by Mark Isham, is moody, jazzy and noir-perfect and humor abounds throughout. . . . Buy this movie, and I assure you, it will stay in your OWN mind for quite a while."[8]

Another Amazon critic[9] offers a description that is more astute than some of the professional critics who first reviewed the film:

> There is a pervasive sense of melancholy that hangs over it like a cloud. The people who live there all have their pasts, but what really drives them is the hope that they will make it and overcome their circumstances. That, I believe, is at the heart of what this movie represents. In many film noirs past, the general thematic tone was one of fate and destiny, and it being out of human control. Here, in a similarly constructed world, we have people trying to wrest control back into their own hands.

All of these popular assessments hit the mark, and many of the comments—"jobs are hard to come by," "people trying to wrest control back into their own hands"—sound as if they could have been made by the director himself. Another ("Johnny Rocker") writes:

> It's a hard movie to follow at times. . . . Yet it's intriguing and infectious because of it. At its core, it's about love and redemption—but for who? They all seem like good people in a very bad place, trying to protect themselves from losing themselves, and making painful sacrifices to protect those that need it most. It's so ambiguous as to time and history. . . . It seems futuristic in one regard, then so retro and squalid in another. . . . by the end, the viewer feels they have lived a strange dream with a happy ending—but whose dream was it? A low end pretentious sci-fi thriller, or a sophisticated high end art house character study?[10]

Other appreciations have come from critic/filmmaker like Dan Sallitt[11] and professor Steve Rybin,[12] who have posted lengthy critical appreciations of Rudolph's career that demonstrate they "get" the director's fractured "adult fairy tales"—as Vincent Canby put it in his 1985 review of *Choose Me*.[13] These newer voices compensate for some of the gaps and silences encountered in the filmmaker's history and indeed, in his archive.

The ongoing and enhanced traces of *Trouble in Mind* in particular—in two sets of archives, on the DVD interviews, in print and online media—indicate to me, at least, that this film should not be considered "lost to history," as has either been

claimed or inferred. For *Trouble in Mind* speaks quite forcefully to American political and cultural history of the mid-1980s; it exhibits the stylistic flourishes of film noir and art cinema at their best; and American humor at its most engaging. Rudolph—and *Trouble in Mind*—deserve a more robust inclusion in the history of American independent cinema, with all the irregularities, gaps, and careens that that history, like his own, cannot elude.

Acknowledgments

If an archive can never tell a full story, neither can a short book cover the entirety of a film's life and achievements, much less those of its director and writer. Still, it's been my aim here to begin to do that, and to bring *Trouble in Mind* back into the limelight of independent cinema, along with Alan Rudolph, whose unique perspective and contributions to that movement—at its pinnacle in the mid-1980s—far exceed those of a "protégé." Fortunately, I've had the help of a number of others, including several members of Rudolph's circle. Some of those people, such as the film's producers, costume designer, and the director himself, have weighed in on the project in concrete ways, transforming what for me could have been a piecemeal stumble through clippings and interviews into a rewardingly concrete, collaborative experience.

First and foremost, my appreciation goes to the staff at the University of Michigan Library Special Collections and to my editors at the University of Michigan Press, Sara Cohen, Matthew Solomon, and Phil Hallman. The open-access publication of this book was made possible through the generous support of Joshua A. Bilmes and JABberwocky Literary Agency. I want to thank the two anonymous readers of the manuscript of this book for the press for their useful suggestions and observations. I also want to acknowledge the varied contributions of the following friends, colleagues, and students: Bailey Apollonio, Gabby Dias, Krin Gabbard, Gary Goertz, Genevieve Havemeyer-King, Ungsan Kim, Richard Ness, Markus Nornes, Sarah O'Brien, James Reel, Justin

Wyatt, and Feiyang Zhang. I extend my deep gratitude to those involved in the production of *Trouble in Mind* who took the time to speak with me or otherwise assist this project: David Blocker, Luke Wynne, Mike Kaplan, Tracy Tynan, Shep Gordon and his assistant Kanza Scott, and, especially, Carolyn Pfeiffer, for her help across many interactions about the film's production and Rudolph's work more generally. Her contributions have helped this book immeasurably. My deep appreciation and gratitude also go out to Joyce Rudolph, for her help with this project in ways both direct and indirect and for her overall *menschlikeit* and, last, to Alan Rudolph, for our many interviews, for his humor and support . . . and for making films like *Trouble in Mind* in the first place.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. Letter from Piers Handling to Alan Rudolph, May 15, 1985, Alan and Joyce Rudolph Papers, University of Michigan Special Collections, Ann Arbor (henceforth referred to as *AR*), Box 2, Folder: Film Festivals 2 of 2. Others on the list commemorating the tenth anniversary of the festival were Chantal Akerman, Phillip Borsos, Lino Brocka, Paul Cox, Bill Forsyth, Raul Ruiz, Andrei Tarkovsky, Bertrand Tavernier, and Magarethe von Trotta. Today the festival is known as the Toronto International Film Festival.

2. Henry Béhar, "Au rendez vous des freaks," special section of *Starfix* (France), December 1986, AR, Box 12, Folder: AR—Trouble in Mind—Articles and Reviews, 1985–1988 1 of 2.

3. Alan Rudolph, quoted in Susan Christian, "Director Alan Rudolph Seeks His Own Niche," *Evening Outlook*, September 6, 1984, C-1, AR, Box 11, Folder: Choose Me—Articles and Reviews, 1984–1989.

4. Tracy Tynan, *Wear and Tear: The Threads of My Life* (New York: Scribner, 2016), 225.

5. For instance, *Choose Me*, his biggest commercial and critical success, despite winning festival awards and doing strong box office domestically and abroad, did not parlay into residuals for the director. It did, however, give him the cachet to take on *Trouble*.

6. Pauline Kael, "The Current Cinema," *New Yorker*, April 7, 1986, 92–96.

7. Jagr., "Trouble in Mind," *Variety*, vol. 319 no. 2 May 8, 1985, 58.

8. Walter Chaw, "You Might Even Say They Glow . . . : FFC Interviews Alan Rudolph and Michael Henry Wilson," Film Freak Central, October 21, 2002, accessed April 17, 2022, https://www.filmfreakcentral.net/ffc/2002/10/you-might-even-say-they-glow-ffc-interviews-alan-rudolph-michael-henry-wilson.html

9. Gavin Smith, "Alan Rudolph: 'I Don't Have a Career, I Have a Careen,"

Film Comment, May 1993, 59. The phrase was coined by friend and fellow wordsmith Tom Robbins.

10. Interview with Author (no date).

11. Michael Ventura and Ginger Varney, "AR: I Live on the Edge," *LA Weekly*, February 13, 1979, 22.

12. Richard Combs, interview questions for "Monthly Film Bulletin July BFI Issue," May 28, 1985, AR, Box 1.1d, Folder: Correspondence, Personal 1973–2002.

13. Richard Brody, "Remember My Name," *New Yorker*, accessed April 7, 2022, https://www.newyorker.com/goings-on-about-town/movies/remember-name

14. Alex Simon, "Alan Rudolph: The Reluctant Auteur," *The Hollywood Interview*, November 28, 2012, reprint from *Venice Magazine*, July 2000, http://thehollywoodinterview.blogspot.com/2008/02/alan-rudolph-hollywood-interview.html

15. Johnny Rocker, review of *Trouble in Mind (Special Edition)* DVD on Amazon, posted October 5, 2017, accessed February 15, 2022, https://www.amazon.com/Trouble-Mind-Special-Kris-Kristofferson/dp/B0041SI7D4#customerReviews

16. Photoscribe, review of *Trouble in Mind (Special Edition)* DVD on Amazon, posted April 14, 2003, accessed February 15, 2022, https://www.amazon.com/Trouble-Mind-Special-Kris-Kristofferson/dp/B0041SI7D4#customerReviews

17. Richard Ness, *Alan Rudolph: Romance and a Crazed World* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996).

18. Stephen Prince, ed., *American Cinema of the 1980s* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

19. Jeffrey M. Anderson, "Interview with Alan Rudolph: Something to Chew On," *Combustible Celluloid*, April 17, 2003, 2.

20. Simon, "Alan Rudolph."

21. "An Interview with Alan Rudolph, Rain City's Cinematic Ambassador," *The Sunbreak* (Seattle), March 21, 2016.

22. Gregory Solmon, "Roundtable Manners: Inside Alan Rudolph's Elite Circle," *Millimeter*, November 1994, 40. Altman often would slowly zoom in and cut midway to a zoom out; Alan Rudolph instead pulls out slowly (to reveal increasingly filled shots); zooming in isolates and fragments without cuts.

23. Anthony D'Alessandro, "Collaborating with the Master: Colleagues Talk of Filmmaker's Method, and His Influence on Their Work," *Variety*, December 10, 2001, A7.

24. Emanuel Levy, *Cinema of Outsiders: The Rise of American Independent Film* (New York: NYU Press, 1999), 257.

25. Stephen Schiff, "Rudolf" [*sic*], *Vanity Fair*, February 1986, AR, Box 12, Folder: AR—Trouble in Mind—Articles and Reviews, 1985–1988 1 of 2.

Chapter 2

1. Interview with author.

2. "True Love" was penned by local cabaret artists Phil Shallat and John Engerman, and should not be confused with Cole Porter's tune of the same name.

Chapter 3

1. The term is Geoff King's, to designate the connections and arrangements (funding, distribution, etc.) between Hollywood studios and alternative "independent" filmmaking.

2. For an overview of the independent industry and marketing of the 1980s, see Justin Wyatt, "Independents, Packaging, and Inflationary Pressure in the 1980s," in *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980–1989*, by Stephen Prince (New York: Scribner's, 2000), 142–59. It's worth noting that, although studios made more money in the 1980s than ever before, movie viewership was falling and production costs were rising. Responding to these crises, Hollywood turned increasingly to blockbusters and franchise films, a trend that has endured—indeed, flourished—well into the twenty-first century.

3. Geoff King, *Indie 2.0: Change and Continuity in Contemporary American Indie Film* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 4.

4. E. Deidre Pribram, *Cinema and Culture: Independent Film the United States, 1980–2001* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002).

5. David Rensin, "The Man Who Would Be Different," *American Film* 11, no. 5 (March 1986): 50–54.

6. Beyond definitional matters, the result of the many mergers, buyouts, and formation of new companies in the late twentieth century is that the rights of many independent films have passed hands between one company and the next, leaving directors without access to their own work for media transfers, streaming and screening venues, or revisions and adaptations. Even a titan such as John Sayles, for instance, is unable at this writing to secure rights to his film about the massacre of striking coal workers, *Matewan*, for plans of turning the tale into a musical.

7. Geoff King, *Indiewood, USA: Where Hollywood Meets Independent Cinema* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 1.

8. Quoted in Pribram, *Cinema and Culture*, 12.

9. Quoted in Michael Z. Newman, "Indie Culture: In Pursuit of the Authentic Autonomous Alternative," *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 3 (Spring 2009): 17.

10. Interview with author.

11. "Making *Trouble in Mind*," *Trouble in Mind (Special Edition)*, directed by Alan Rudolph, DVD (Los Angeles: Shout! Factory, 2010).

12. "Making *Trouble in Mind*."

13. "Making *Trouble in Mind*."

14. "Making *Trouble in Mind*." It needs to be stressed, however, that the film includes conspicuous shots of both the Space Needle and the monorail.

15. Interview with author.

16. "Making *Trouble in Mind*."

17. "Making *Trouble in Mind*."

18. "Making *Trouble in Mind*."

19. The term also fails to consider—as all claims do that would split mainstream and independent or art cinema into distinctly separate categories—the extent to which personal vision or a particular style, imprint, or "touch" (think Lubitsch) can operate in Hollywood and dominant modes of production more generally. It is as much of a fiction to think all indies are "personal," individual endeavors and all mainstream "impersonal" ones as it is to consider the modes of production mutually exclusive.

20. Quoted in Pribram, *Cinema and Culture*, 12.

Chapter 4

1. Michael Wood, *America in the Movies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 26.

2. For some, *Casablanca* is less a film noir than a film made in the style of film noir.

3. Quoted in Rensin, "Man Who Would Be Different," 54.

4. "Interview with Alan Rudolph" (*Sunbreak*).

5. Neil McGlone (NeilMcGFilm), "Alan Rudolph Interviews in *Vérité* and Arrow Video's Blu Ray of *The Long Goodbye* (1973)," *There's No Place Like Home*, posted December 11, 2013, accessed April 19, 2022, https://neilmcglone.wordpress.com/2013/12/11/alan-rudolph-interviews-in-verite-and-arrow-videos-blu-ray-of-the-long-goodbye-1973/

6. All films, documentary included, are stylized for being produced through specifically selected sounds and images, be this in preproduction, recording and production, or editing.

7. Rensin, "Man Who Would Be Different," 52.

8. Interview with author.

9. Roger Ebert, review of *Trouble in Mind*, directed by Alan Rudolph, RogerEbert.com, originally written March 21, 1986, https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/trouble-in-mind-1986

10. Interview with author.

11. Interview with author.

12. Interview with author.

13. Milica Topalovic, "Models and Other Spaces," *OASE* 84 (2011): 37–52.

14. Smith, "Alan Rudolph," 59.

Chapter 5

1. Solmon, "Roundtable Manners," 40.

2. In John Sayles's *Brother from Another Planet*, Morton played said alien Brother. In Wanda's Café, Solo also drops into the role of wizened elder, a widely read man, who reads his work as if he were at the side of Ferlinghetti, Corso, and Ginsberg in the 1950s. Morton, in fact, provided his own writing for the character.

3. Quoted in Solmon, "Roundtable Manners," 40.

4. Alan Rudolph, as a guest in Matthew Solomon and Phil Hallman's Authorship and the Archive class, University of Michigan, Winter 2018.

5. "Interview with Alan Rudolph" (*Sunbreak*).

6. Wood, *America in the Movies*, 98.

7. "Interview with Alan Rudolph" (*Sunbreak*).

8. These settings are *Trouble*'s take on the Italian restaurants of Mob-themed films and TV shows.

9. Markus Nornes, email, January 2022.

10. My thanks to Feiyang Zhang for these observations. Interestingly, the Ida Lupino character in *The Bigamist* (1953), another film noir with a love triangle, works in a Chinese restaurant. My thanks to Matthew Solomon for drawing this connection.

11. My thanks to Ungsan Kim for his translations.

12. The song had also appeared in *Choose Me*, at which point Rudolph was inspired to use it in the next film he wrote.

13. As if to keep us from being lulled into any musical or romantic dreamworld, the latter precedes her performance of "Trouble" with a raunchy number, "True Love," at the restaurant.

14. Alan Rudolph, interview with Krin Gabbard, April 2018.

15. Interview with author.

16. "Conversation with Mark Isham," *Trouble in Mind (Special Edition)* DVD.

17. Nathan Rabin, "Trouble in Mind," *AV Club*, December 15, 2010, accessed February 26, 2022, https://www.avclub.com/trouble-in-mind-1798166746

18. "Conversation with Mark Isham."

19. "Conversation with Mark Isham."

20. "Conversation with Mark Isham." Remark by Isham.

21. Rudolph, interview by Gabbard.

22. Rudolph, interview by Gabbard.

23. "Conversation with Mark Isham."

24. Alberta Hunter actually wrote a piece for the film; *Welcome to L.A.* similarly features a song written for the film with the same name.

25. Sometimes I feel like dyin'//
    I'm gonna lay my head
    On the lonesome railroad line
    Let the 2:19 train
    Ease my trouble in mind.

26. Interview with author.

27. Keith Carradine, "Making *Trouble in Mind*."

28. Interview with author.

29. OX-IT, "Kris Kristofferson & the Borderlands—El Gavilan (The Hawk)," *YouTube*, posted July 6, 2019, accessed March 3, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMneGszOUA8. Kristofferson's own performance of the song is brighter, with less smoky vocals whose register is scarcely lower than Faithfull's. The piece is performed more quickly, and its central instrument is a strummed guitar, supported by harmonica, drums, and bass guitar. Overall, it creates an impression that is less melancholy than a weary voice imparting wisdom ("Gotta make your own rules, child / Gotta break your own chains").

Chapter 6

1. Schiff, "Rudolf."
2. Rensin, "Man Who Would Be Different," 52.

3. My thanks to one of the anonymous reader's reports for this insight.
4. "Making *Trouble in Mind*."
5. *Choose Me*, AR, Folder: "Choose Me."
6. "Making *Trouble in Mind*."
7. Rabin, "Trouble in Mind."
8. The height of entrepreneurial cynicism is that more loan shops, liquor stores, and gun stores exist than grocery stores and pharmacies in many impoverished areas of the United States—often with majority people of color.
9. Interview with author.
10. Martin Scorsese, AR, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence. Among the few materials in the archives signaling the politics of the era is a petition generated by Martin Scorsese and signed by Rudolph, along with many other filmmakers, that was sent to President Reagan saying they did not want their films shown in apartheid South Africa.
11. Alan Rudolph, liner notes from *Trouble in Mind (Special Edition)* DVD.
12. Rensin, "Man Who Would Be Different," 53.
13. Armond White, "Political Romance and Political Tragedy: Alan Rudolph's *Ray Meets Helen* Revives *e pluribus unum*," *National Review*, published May 11, 2018, accessed April 19, 2020, https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/05/movie-reviews-ray-meets-helen-the-seagull/
14. Rudolph, liner notes.

Chapter 7

1. Interview with author.
2. Transcript from "At the Movies" with Siskel and Ebert, taped February 27, 1986, to air March 8–14, 1986, AR, Box 27, unmarked folder, Alive Films.
3. Sheila Benson, "Love Reigns over 'Trouble in Mind,'" *Los Angeles Times*, December 13, 1985, OC G1.
4. Jagr., film review, *Trouble in Mind*, *Variety*, December 1985, 16–18.
5. Walter Goodman, "Film: 'Trouble in Mind,' with Kris Kristofferson," *New York Times*, March 28, 1988, C-23.
6. Alexander Walker, *London Evening Standard*, accessed March 22, 2022, https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/trouble_in_mind/reviews?intcmp=rt-scorecard_tomatometer-reviews
7. Kael, "The Current Cinema."
8. David Denby, "Boy Crazy," *New York Magazine*. April 7, 1986, 68.
9. Ebert, review of *Trouble in Mind*.

10. Schiff, "Rudolf."

11. Schiff, "Rudolf."

12. Note from "Jim" to PR at Alive Films Archive, August 12, 1986, AR, Box 48, Folder: *Trouble in Mind*.

13. *Tele Magazine*, November 22, 1986, Wanda's Café, AR, Folder: AR—Trouble in Mind—Articles and Reviews, 1985–1988 1 of 2.

14. A French film movement of the 1930s that is characterized by romantic but gritty stories of regular people often down on their luck or drawn to desperate measures, with a visual style full of fog and gauze.

15. Collette Godard, "Wanda's Café," *Le Monde*, December 10, 1986.

16. "FA," Wanda's Café, review in *Fiches du Cinema*, December 3, 1986, AR, Folder: AR—Trouble in Mind—Articles and Reviews, 1985–1988 1 of 2.

17. "Interview with Alan Rudolph" (*Combustible Celluloid*).

18. Thanks to Phil Hallman for a conversation on this topic.

19. In the period July to September 1986, for instance, *Trouble* sold 55,000 units through EHE, compared to 82,000 for *Stop Making Sense* and 115,000 for *Spider Woman*. Fax from Shep Gordon to Peter Dekom, Alive Film Archives, AR, Box 48, Folder Trouble in Mind, EHE loose sheet, May 31, 1987, and July 17, 1987.

Chapter 8

1. William Castle to Alan Rudolph, Note, AR, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence. No art film snob, Rudolph took on other ostensibly "low brow" jobs such as "The Alice Cooper [television] Special."

2. Letter from Geraldine Chaplin to Alan Rudolph, AR, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence. In the same letter, written from Madrid, she laments that "nothing has changed" there, despite Franco's death, and that she, "la Chaplinita," and Carlos Saura have been banned on television.

3. Unidentified bio draft sent to Rudolph in advance of its publication, AR, Box 2.

4. Interview with author.

5. "*Trouble in Mind* (1985)," IMDb Pro, Amazon, https://pro.imdb.com/title/tt0090209/?rf=cons_tt_atf&ref_=cons_tt_atf, accessed June 23, 2022.

6. AR, Misc. sheet.

7. https://www.imdb.com/find/?q=alan%20rudolph&ref_=nv_sr_sm, accessed February 25, 2023.

8. https://www.amazon.com/Trouble-Mind-Special-Kris-Kristofferson/dp/B0041SI7D4/ref=sr_1_1?crid=1YAOK3TEAKJJ2&keywords=trouble+in+mind+film+dvd&qid=1661704223&s=movies-tv&sprefix=trouble+in+m

ind%2Cmovies-tv%2C262&sr=1-1#customerReviews, accessed August 28, 2022.

9. Canadian Rocker, review of *Trouble in Mind (Special Edition)* DVD on Amazon, posted October 5, 2017, https://www.amazon.com/Trouble-Mind-Special-Kris-Kristofferson/dp/B0041SI7D4#customerReviews, accessed February 15, 2022

10. https://www.amazon.com/Trouble-Mind-Special-Kris-Kristofferson/product-reviews/B0041SI7D4/ref=cm_cr_getr_d_paging_btm_next_2?ie=UTF8&reviewerType=all_reviews&filterByStar=four_star&pageNumber=2, accessed August 28, 2022.

11. Dan Sallitt, "Alan Rudolph, 1985," *Thanks for the Use of the Hall* (blog), August 19, 2016, http://sallitt.blogspot.com/2016/08/alan-rudolph-1985.html. Sallitt had been commissioned by the Toronto Film Festival to write a short monograph on the director's work through *Choose Me* and *Songwriter* to include in a book about its ten filmmakers to watch, but the project was canceled. Sallitt nonetheless put it online in 2016.

12. Rybin is the author of an appreciation of Rudolph's career in the online journal *Senses of Cinema*, https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2016/great-directors/alan-rudolph/, accessed August 26, 2022.

13. Vincent Canby, "Film Review: Alan Rudolph Finds His Upbeat Style," *New York Times*, January 13, 1985.

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