

Re-Envisioning the Artist Hero Through Two Cole Porter Biopics

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ABSTRACT

Songwriter Cole Porter is unusual in having had two biopics based on his life: *Night and Day* (1946) starring Cary Grant, and *De-Lovely* (2004), starring Kevin Kline. The differences in the treatment of the character of Cole Porter between the films are striking, and indicate a change in the way that society envisions its artists, and the very act of creativity. *Night and Day* was conceived partly as a showcase of Porter's songs, but also as a means of providing inspiration to soldiers returning wounded from World War II, based on Porter's recovery from a traumatic riding accident. It depicts Porter as an everyman following a trajectory of achievement, from having little to great success, which was positioned as easy to emulate. *De-Lovely*, on the other hand, is about the relationship between Porter and his wife Linda, and the way that his creativity was influenced by his changing relationships with various people. Drawing on the work on biopics of scholars such as G.F.Custen, together with research into the shifting ideas of how creativity operates and is popularly understood, this article uses these biopics as case studies to examine the representation of changing concepts of the artist and the act of creativity through Hollywood film. It also considers how these changing conceptions and representations connect to shifts in American society.

KEYWORDS

Biopics, Hollywood, musicals, creativity, artist

Introduction

In his study of the biopic, George F. Custen argues that the form is a way in which Hollywood 'played a powerful part in creating and sustaining public history.' (Custen, 1992: 2) Custen demonstrates that the biopic of the classical Hollywood era utilised a limited number of formalised representations of 'important lives' which 'build a pattern of narrative that is selective in its attention to profession, differential in the role it assigns to gender, and limited in its historical settings.' (Custen, 1992: 3) However, in addition to this view of the biopic as constructing a particular view of history for the popular cinemagoer, the genre can also be understood as constructing a particular view of specific types of individual. The 'important lives' illustrated in the biopic represent these individuals to the public as exemplars of their type, be they artists, entertainers, scientists, politicians, or whatever.

It is this aspect of the biopic with which this article is concerned: the representation of an exemplar of the creative individual to the moviegoing public, and particularly the ways that the representation of a particular individual has changed over time. By presenting an exemplar of the artist hero, the biopics studied both reflect and reinforce popular concepts of what it is to be an artist. Of particular interest here is the changing depiction of how the process of creation works and what that suggests about cultural concepts of creativity. This does not mean the particular understandings of creativity amongst specialists actively researching its processes, scientifically or philosophically, but rather the popular conceptions of how creativity works.

There have been many representations of creative figures in film, even if we focus only on the depictions of real people. However, there are few who have been the subject of more than one film: John Lennon is one (*The Hours and Times* [1994], *Backbeat* [1994], and *Nowhere Boy* [2009]), as is Truman Capote (*Capote* [2005] and *Infamous* [2006]), and Coco Chanel (*Coco Avant Chanel* [2009] and *Coco Chanel & Igor Stravinsky* [2009]). On British television, the BBC have made two biographical dramas based on the life of Enid Blyton (the *Bookmark* episode “Sunny Stories” [1992], and *Enid* [2009]), while both Dennis Potter in 1972, and Russell T Davies in 2005 have scripted lives of libertine and writer Casanova (both called *Casanova*). However, while referring throughout to other examples which demonstrate the broader applicability and occurrence of the ideas and tropes discussed here, this article will focus on two films made nearly sixty years apart, which depict the life and music of the popular songwriter Cole Porter: *Night and Day* (dir. Michael Curtiz, 1946) starring Cary Grant, and *De-Lovely* (dir. Irwin Winkler, 2004) starring Kevin Kline.

The focus that I want to take with these two films is on the construction of the artist or the creative figure, and particularly on the act of creation. The way that creativity and success in the creative industries is shown in these films is part of a wider cultural understanding of their function and possibilities, concerning who can be creative, under what circumstances, and how they can turn this into success. By concentrating on biopics, and the portrayal of an actual person known for their artistic skills, this gives a deeper impression of conveying the reality of how creativity works. This sense of revelation of the real workings of creativity stems from the central characteristic of the biopic, that it reveals something otherwise hidden about a famous person. As Dennis Bingham has argued with regard to the biopic, ‘The genre’s charge, which dates back to its salad days in the Hollywood studio era, is to enter the biographical subject into the pantheon of cultural mythology and to show why he or she belongs there.’ (Bingham, 2010a: 76)

While this paper is not really concerned with the mechanics of the performances by Grant and Klein as Cole Porter, it is worth noting Bingham’s point on the role of performance within the biopic. He claims that, while the recreation of the look, sound and mannerisms of a historical individual is important to the job of the actor in a biopic, ‘the pleasure of the biopic performance comes in the private moments, in the performance of emotional depths that no actual person can display publicly, or perhaps privately.’ (Bingham, 2010a: 78) In other words, biopics are interesting because they allow the audience to see something of the ‘real’ person behind the historical or public persona, because they allow access into the private life of the individual to an extent which even those who actually knew that person did not possess. This gives the impression that a biopic can show us what that individual could only express when they are alone, and it can also reveal the secret processes of creation that make this particular person an artist.

Why the Artist Hero?

In this article I will be using the terms ‘artist hero’ and ‘creative hero’ interchangeably to refer to figures which are presented as exemplars of creativity. There are a number of reasons that the creative hero, as opposed to any other kind of heroic figure, was selected for this initial exploration of the way that traits are displayed in film according to the current cultural understanding or idea of those traits. For one, as George Custen identified, ‘all studios with a substantial output placed a disproportionate production emphasis on biopics of either entertainers or artists’ (Custen, 1992: 88). This emphasis on the entertainer or artist figure

within the field of the biopic is part of the wider development in American culture that Custen, and others, have identified, where mass media entertainment came to dominate the field of culture in the post-War period (Custen, 1992: 120).

The artist hero also offers clear incidents to examine in relation to when they are being creative. While it can be argued that the creative individual's creativity stems, at least in part, from personality traits and motivations which they exhibit or which influence them at all times, the artist biopic typically offers clear moments of performance. As performance drives the entertainer or artist, it is exhibited as a central part of the biopic. This means that, in terms of demonstrating the individual's creativity, the composer biopic suffers compared to the performer biopic, because the performance is typically provided by other artists separate from the composer. These performers therefore demonstrate their own skills in interpreting the composition and provide the entertainment value that is central to commercial cinema, directing attention away from the act of creation. As Dennis Bingham has commented, 'narrative films hate to stop and display the hard work of solitary creation' (2010b: 138), making the depiction of the creative act uncommon as the focus of a scene or film, and thereby making interpreting the changing conceptions of this creation more difficult and problematic. However, the on-screen songwriter or composer has the option of performing at least part of their composition, typically on a solo instrument and unaccompanied, to give some impression that this is an unrehearsed development of a concept into a finished product. This is often seen in rehearsal scenes, where the songwriter is demonstrating a new song or helping with their conception of how it should be performed, as shown in *De-Lovely* when Porter instructs a singer in how to approach the song 'Night and Day'. Such scenes not only occur in both of the biopics under consideration, but also in the other screen appearance of a character called 'Cole Porter', in the 1953 film version of Porter's *Kiss Me Kate*. Of course, it has to be acknowledged that these entertainment films, particularly those from the Hollywood studio period, typically use the depiction of the composer's life as a structure for a series of musical performances drawing on the composer's songbook which are the central intended sources of pleasure for the film.

Custen is not the only person to have noted that these musical biopics were involved in projecting a standardised view of the creative individual. As Steven Cohan has noted, 'Musical biographies shared a standard rags to riches plot line' (Cohan, 2002: 11). In his popular study of success, *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell recognises the dominance of this narrative within western culture:

In the autobiographies published every year by the billionaire / entrepreneur / rock star / celebrity, the story line is always the same: our hero is born in modest circumstances and by virtue of his own grit and talent fights his way to greatness. In the Bible, Joseph is cast out by his brothers and sold into slavery and then rises to become the pharaoh's right-hand man on the strength of his own brilliance and insight. In the famous nineteenth-century novels of Horatio Alger, young boys born into poverty rise to riches through a combination of pluck and initiative. (Gladwell, 2009: 18)

This model is that which Mark Roth, in studying certain Warner Bros musicals in relation to the New Deal, has connected to Benjamin Franklin's secularization of the Protestant work ethic, 'formulated in its most popular form by Horatio Alger, Jr, in the years immediately after the Civil War' (Roth, 1981: 44), associating them with the heart of American identity

and giving their central narrative model a historical duration, firmly embedding it in American culture. Roth outlines Alger's narrative model as follows:

His hero is generally a boy of obscure birth (usually from the country) who is trying to survive in the big city (usually New York). He has no material advantages, but he has most of the virtues recommended by Franklin: thrift, honesty, diligence, etc. The plots generally involve some incident through which the boy's virtues are called to the attention of a benefactor who suitably rewards the hero. Generally the boy is not given an outright gift of money, but is offered a job and allowed to support himself decently. (Roth, 1981: 44)

Roth also points out that 'the hero must have diligently prepared himself to take advantage of the situation when it presents itself', and that 'success ultimately depends on luck' (Roth, 1981: 44). So the hero has to work hard for his opportunity, but the opportunity will only present itself out of luck.

However, such a narrative arc did not apply to the true lives of a number of the biopic subjects, and certainly did not fit with the well-off, Yale-educated Cole Porter. Nevertheless, *Night and Day* sought to introduce an element of this standardised narrative into its depiction of Porter's life, with Porter electing to give up his privileged life in order to become a music demonstrator in a store, playing other people's songs so that he could improve his understanding of popular music. This element of transformation shows how useful the biopic can be in understanding the way that film constructs overarching concepts of creativity. The biopic narrative can be compared with the recognised facts of a life in order to more easily highlight what has been transformed for the screen, which indicates areas of particular interest for further interpretation and investigation.

The composer musical biopic also stands apart from other musicals in that it is necessarily involved with the creation of the musical number. Jane Feuer has claimed that 'Perhaps the primary positive quality associated with musical performances is its spontaneous emergence out of a joyous and responsive attitude toward life.' (Feuer, 2002: 32) So it is the spontaneous performance of music within the musical that is seen as most positive, omitting the stage of composition in favour of instantaneous expression of feeling. Feuer goes on to point out that spontaneity is shown as a natural thing, while rehearsal is associated with the high-brow and, ultimately, with failure, so that 'Spontaneity [...] emerges as the hallmark of a successful performance.' (Feuer, 2002: 34) This spontaneity can be interpreted as a representation of inspiration, with the music, the song and the dance springing fully-formed into existence through the medium of the performer. Rehearsal, a practice perceived as opposed to spontaneity, is thus something unnatural, artificial, and associated with the artificiality and intellectuality of 'art' theatre or dance.

This is not the case for Feuer, who says instead that the problem with rehearsal shown on screen is that it shows that the person rehearsing 'fails because he has been unable to render invisible the technology of production in order to achieve the effect of effortlessness by which all entertainment succeeds in winning its audience.' (Feuer, 2002: 34) In other words, it is not the place of entertainment to illustrate the process of creativity, the work of achieving the polished final result, but simply to present that entertainment. However, the result of this representation is that it shows spontaneity as natural and rehearsal and effort as unnatural, implying that inspiration is the sole route to creativity. This tendency towards depicting spontaneous performance could therefore be seen as both limiting the possibilities of

demonstrating methods of artistic creation which demands effort, and of reinforcing the concept that all artistic creation is spontaneous inspiration. Moreover, it should be noted that this spontaneous creation of a fully-formed performance is often represented as an aspect of the musical that has most fallen out of favour with audiences (see e.g. Muir, 2005: 6-8), possibly implying that there is an increased level of requirement on behalf of the audience for an understanding of the process of generating performance, for understanding the creative process. Examples of the representation of less spontaneous performance in more recent films include the introduction to 'Light My Fire' in *The Doors* (1991), which begins with Jim Morrison telling his bandmates to give him a bossa-nova beat, which he then builds his vocals over. Spontaneity combines with uncertainty in a number of scenes in *Moulin Rouge* (2001), with characters seemingly stumbling to find words, forgetting lines (much is made of Toulouse Lautrec's inability to remember his lines), and taking part in rehearsals. Of course, all of these appearances of uncertainty are carefully orchestrated to build towards a performance, and particularly towards a moment of revelation of a familiar song, but they at least suggest that there is a process of development and uncertainty, a need for some work, within the development of the performance, as opposed to it arising spontaneously and with complete co-ordination across all performers involved.

Another reason for examining the concept of the archetype of the artist hero through the musical can be found in Thomas Elsaesser's analysis of the films of Vincente Minnelli. Elsaesser argues that the unreality of the musical is well-suited to 'the visualisation of submerged, hardly conscious aspirations' (Elsaesser, 1981: 17), and that Minelli's 'central moral concern' is with the issue of self-realization and the formation of identity in a chaotic world (Elsaesser, 1981: 17). In other words, they are about the formation of a stable self, and that process of formation, or of discovery of identity, means that they are also a reflection on the components of that identity. Focused as they are on performance, integrated musicals are also concentrated around revelation of inner self, the outright expression of aspects of personality and motivation that might otherwise go unexpressed. As with the performances of actors in biopics that seem to reveal the thoughts and emotions and events behind the public face of a famous person, so the musical character presents their secret thoughts and emotions through their performances in song and dance. The musical biopic should thus provide multiple opportunities and routes for looking behind the public face of the subject to examine their motivations and concerns.

What is an 'Artist Hero'?

The first part of considering creativity is to define what 'creativity' is. For the purposes of this article, 'creativity' is simply what Cole Porter employs when he is writing songs, but what *is* he doing when he writes songs? Why is writing songs a creative act? Margaret A. Boden has defined creativity as 'the ability to come up with ideas or artefacts that are *new, surprising and valuable*.' (Boden, 2004: 1 - emphasis in original) Similarly, Robert J. Sternberg and Todd I. Lubart define creativity as 'the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e., original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive concerning task constraints).' (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999: 3) In other words, it is a generative act, but not simply one which brings into being a thing which did not exist before, but a thing which was not foreseen, and which has some use or benefit. As far as Porter's songs are concerned, their value comes from the pleasure that they provide: they have entertainment value. They are also in some sense original, although we shall see that there are problems with this aspect of creativity in relation to Porter's songwriting in *Night and Day*.

Broadly speaking, there are three key approaches to understanding or interpreting the act of creativity. These are the inspirational, the romantic and the psychological. The inspirational is the belief that creativity is a gift from supernatural entities, the breathing in of the new from something divine; in such a case, the individual who has been inspired is essentially just a vessel for this external force rather than someone creative in their own right. The romantic approach to creativity takes the creative individual as less than divine, but still special:

gifted with a specific talent which others lack: insight, or intuition.

[...]

According to the romantic, intuitive talent is innate, a gift that can be squandered but cannot be acquired - or taught. This romanticism has a defeatist air, for it implies that the most we can do to encourage creativity is to identify the people with this special talent, and give them room to work.

(Boden, 2004: 14-15)

Finally, the psychological view stems from the work of, amongst others, Sigmund Freud, who suggested that 'creativity arises from the tension between conscious reality and unconscious drives', and 'that writers and artists produce creative work as a way to express their unconscious wishes in a publicly acceptable fashion.' (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999: 6) From this point of view, works of art, the results of creativity, are individual and could only come from that one person, although the avenue of expression remains open to others - only Cole Porter could write Cole Porter's songs, but that does not mean that only Cole Porter can write songs.

In addition to these understandings of creativity, there is the consideration of the uses of creativity. Where the inspirational and romantic approaches to creativity suggest the importance of the individual, either chosen by supernatural forces or possessed of a particular innate gift, the psychological approach implies that creativity is accessible to all, even if the specific expression of creativity is absolutely personal to the individual. There is a still-current approach to creativity as a skill or attribute that can be exercised and developed, particularly in relation to its use in business. The works of people such as Edward de Bono have popularised this approach from the 1960s onwards, providing techniques for spurring lateral thinking, breaking of habits of thinking, considering different approaches and methods for the individual or organisation to develop their creativity. More recently, in 2008-9, Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers* topped the *New York Times* bestseller list for eleven consecutive weeks, with its populist approach to the concept that high achievement in any field of endeavour is the result of a minimum of 10,000 hours of practice, suggesting that there is a continued interest in understanding the mechanisms of success in fields including creativity.

Creativity has also been studied using a social-personality approach from the late 1960s onwards. The studies have correlated levels of creativity with specific personality traits, indicating that a creative person is likely to have 'independence of judgement, self-confidence, and attraction to complexity, aesthetic orientation and risk-taking.' (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999: 8) These personality characteristics tie in, not only to *how* an individual is creative and what leads them to success in a creative field, but also to what drives them to be creative.

Despite this suggested interconnectedness, when analysing the depictions of the creative individual in film it is important not to confuse concepts of creativity with the different drives

towards creativity shown in different individuals, particularly as these motivations are typically more of a focus for the film's narrative than the processes of creation. For example, in *Ray* (2005), Ray Charles is shown to be driven by the need to prove to his mother that he is not limited by his blindness. The Howard Hughes of *The Aviator* (2004) is depicted as driven by the need to overcome limitations, primarily his own but also the limitations of film production techniques or of aircraft engineering. *Finding Neverland* (2004) shows James Barrie as someone who feels the need to express his 'inner child', in life as well as in his writing.

These drives, however, are not the same as the creative process which these individuals are shown to employ in these films. Barrie is depicted as being inspired by his environment and creating because these ideas flow through him; his creativity is connected to catharsis, with the character of Peter Llewellyn-Davies being inspired to create his own stories, and finding himself unable to stop writing, after seeing the first production of *Peter Pan*. Hughes, in *The Aviator*, approaches problem solving in the opposite way, by throwing effort and resources at it. Charles displays combinatory creativity, mixing gospel and rhythm 'n' blues to create a 'new' sound, as well as improvisatory creativity in the way that he is shown to improvise the song 'What I Say', in order to fill in a gap in a set.

Production Background and Summaries

This article is concerned more with the ideas of the way that creativity operates within these films, and the attitudes to and understanding of creativity that they suggest within the wider culture, than it is with any particular intention of the filmmakers. However, the primary intentions of the filmmakers are recorded in relation to both of these films, and can be quickly summarised so that their influence on the final production can be considered. *Night and Day* was intended as a morale booster for those injured in the war, who would be shown how Porter had overcome his own injuries, which were sustained in a riding accident (Schwartz, 1979: 215-216). It is also an example of the conscious manipulation of the facts of an individual's life in order to fit in with dominant cultural ideas, because, as Custen has argued, 'The average viewer, it was reasoned, would hardly find [...] inherited wealth and the seeming absence of a work ethic - congruent with American values.' (Custen, 1992: 123) It is also relevant to this argument that *Night and Day* was intended as a showcase for Porter's songs which acted also as an encouragement to those dealing with war injuries. This means that the emphasis placed on the film throughout production was on moving from one recognisable song to the next, while delivering a morale-boosting story of a man who succeeded despite his injuries and through his own willpower in between the numbers. In other words, the film was never intended to show how Porter created his songs, or how his creativity worked, even if the eventual script did engage with these ideas in developing its 'road to success' narrative.

Night and Day represents Porter as feeling 'fenced in' by his family money and his law studies. He also says that every time he reads a law book he hears a tune, and every contract he reads becomes a lyric, thereby suggesting that he is innately musical. He announces his decision to give up the law and turn to song writing as a career, and also meets Linda, a young friend of the family who he will later marry. When his first stage show fails because of the start of the First World War, he goes to France to join the French military, suffers leg injuries, and is reintroduced to Linda, who is serving as a nurse. On his return to America, his attempts at selling new shows are stymied because his songs are 'too clever', so he becomes a song demonstrator in a music store, where the general public's reaction to him playing one of

his own songs convinces him that he can become a success. This time, everything falls into place and his shows are successful, taking him around the world, including meeting Linda in London, and their subsequent marriage. The pressures of Porter's success lead to the couple separating, and Porter suffers terrible leg injuries as the result of a riding accident, but he persists through success after success and is finally reunited with Linda at an event in his honour at Yale.

With regards to *De-Lovely*, screenwriter Jay Cocks has stated that the relationship between Linda and Cole Porter is the core of the film:

It was her belief - her unswerving belief - in his potential, in his gift, that became his bulwark. [...] She wasn't patronizing him, in the literal sense. She wasn't setting him up in the life so he could compose. He had plenty of money. What she gave him was something he couldn't find anywhere: belief, acceptance, and true love. And it kind of went beyond the biology. (Quoted in Muir, 2005: 250-251)

Cocks is interested in telling the 'true' story of Cole Porter, and his relationship with his wife, Linda, as well as exploring the dynamics of a partnership in which love and sexuality were partially separated. However, Cocks is also interested in showing how this relationship played a part in Porter's success as a songwriter, and as an artist.

De-Lovely tells the life of Cole Porter as a post-mortem musical, directed by a character called 'Gabe'. Socialite Cole Porter meets socialite Linda in Paris, romances her, despite his preference for men, and they marry. She encourages his talent for song writing, introducing him to Irving Berlin, and Porter turns professional, experiencing great success. However, Porter continues to have affairs with men; Linda does not object to the affairs, but she does object that they take up parts of their life which she wanted to share with Porter, such as celebrating the success of his latest show. The couple separate, but Linda returns to Porter's side when he is injured in a riding accident, and she pushes the doctors into reconstructive surgery rather than amputation of his legs, and drives Porter through his rehabilitation. However, Linda is herself suffering from lung cancer, and eventually dies, following which Porter deteriorates, producing no new work, driving away his friends, and himself dying.

In addition to the particular intentions of those responsible for producing each of these films, it is also important to remember that these are Hollywood musicals, films with the intention to entertain through the performance of music. This requires an engagement with a specific level of unreality, as Thomas Elsaesser has argued:

The quickly changing décor, the transitions in the lighting and the colours of a scene, the freedom of composition, the shift from psychological realism to pure fantasy, from drama to surreal farce, the culmination of an action in a song, the change of movement into rhythmic dance - all this constitutes the very essence of the musical. (Elsaesser, 1981: 16)

This unreality is not only in the film's visual aesthetic, but also in the actions of its protagonists, and particularly with their tendency to burst into performance. It is these performances which are arguably at the core of the musical film, rather than the narrative that brings them together. However, this article is concerned primarily with that narrative framework, because the changing approaches to *why* these characters are choosing to burst

into song, and why they perform a particular song at that particular moment, reveal changing ideas of what is acceptable or reasonable to the audience. The performances themselves showcase the song, together with the talents of the performers, but they also contribute to the progression and interpretation of the film as a whole; the musical may be centred around artifice, but, as Elsaesser suggests, this is not an artifice divorced from all other things, but one that contributes to a unified sense, a world that the film occupies on its own: 'it is the exaltation of the artifice as the vehicle of an authentic psychic and emotional reality.' (Elsaesser, 1981: 16)

These two summaries make it very apparent how different approaches can reinterpret the facts of an individual's life and reshape that life to different purposes. The outlines of the lives may appear similar, but the details are very different. And it is to these details that this article now turns.

The Creative Process Depicted

There are two sequences in *Night and Day* that show the origin of specific songs. Porter is shown serving in the French military in World War I, seated amongst ruins, a piece of manuscript paper before him at the top of which he has written 'Begin the Beguine'. He is listening to a group of African troops drumming and singing, with the wordless vocal resolving itself into the introduction to Porter's 'Begin the Beguine', with Grant picking up on and echoing that vocal to emphasise that he is essentially transcribing something that he is already hearing. The scene is cut short by a bombardment, which leads to Porter being hospitalised with leg injuries. He is later shown composing 'Night and Day' in the recreation room of the hospital where he is recovering from these injuries, sitting at a piano surrounded by scraps of paper. While these signify discarded attempts, failed creativity, the successful creativity occurs when he picks up on his surroundings for cues: the drip-drip-drop of raindrops, the tick-tick-tock of the stately clock that stands against the wall. He continues to play the piano as he talks to Linda, interrupting her queries about what he intends to do after the war when he identifies another key musical phrase for the song. This indicates both the obsessional nature of his creativity, which will be shown to be a constant interruption to his relationship with Linda, and that Porter does work at his music.

However, successful creativity seems to depend on a direct outside stimulus: a tune played by others, sounds in the local environment, the presence of his future wife. Such an interpretation suggests a form of creativity somewhat different from Boden's summary definition of creativity as necessarily providing something 'new' and 'surprising', although she later expands her definition into three forms of creativity: firstly 'making unfamiliar combinations of familiar ideas' (Boden, 2004: 3), then 'the *exploration*, and in the most surprising cases the *transformation*, of conceptual spaces in people's minds.' (Boden, 2004: 4) So the originality of Porter's songs can be through their juxtaposition of images like the ticking of a clock and the sound of raindrops, as well as through introducing a new audience to the North African music he transforms into the Latin American music of 'Begin the Beguine', his transformative effort being another form of creativity.

Porter is also shown composing 'Do I Love You' in his hospital bed, working on a song during the montage which shows the process of his healing alongside his growing success on stage, and during the rehearsals held at his house. All of this occurs while he is estranged from Linda, showing that she is not the source of his creativity. In fact, apart from suggesting a (failed) attempt to have Porter's songs performed by a French cabaret singer at the end of

the war, Linda plays no real part in his success. Porter's decision to abandon his law studies in order to pursue a career as a songwriter actually precedes his meeting Linda. In relation to his creativity and success, Linda has very little significance; Porter is a self-made man who succeeds through his own efforts. However, as the film is building towards their climactic reunion, Linda is positioned as Porter's goal, with his work during this period being orientated towards their ultimate reunion. However, while their reunion is the climax to the film, there is no indication in the montage of success that builds towards the end of the film that Porter misses his wife. In fact, he explicitly asks that she be kept away from him during the series of operations which reconstruct his legs, suggesting that he is intent on showing that he can succeed without her, as he has done at all points of the film before this. Their reunion is therefore little more than a standard, heteronormative romantic trope, where the hero of the drama is rewarded for his efforts by the love of a woman.

Night and Day does show that Porter works at his songs, so he is not simply represented as transcribing his tunes and lyrics from his environment. The key to interpreting this construction is in the final sequence of the film, where Porter returns to Yale to be honoured, and where his recovery from his injuries is explicitly held up as an attainable goal for injured servicemen. Establishing that Porter had served in the First World War, and been injured there, directly connects him to those injured serving in the Second World War. By showing that Porter's creativity is a matter of utilising his environment and applying effort, together with his conscious decision to reject his moneyed background, and to work his way up through show business, even demonstrating other people's songs in a store, *Night and Day* connects him with the American ideal that an individual can achieve whatever they want through hard work. If he can do it, anyone can, and this is again connected to the morale boosting intentions behind the film, as clearly shown in the Yale celebration at the end of the film, where one crutch-bearing serviceman turns to another, who has two walking sticks and a gloomy expression, and says, 'What are you kicking about? He did alright didn't he?'. It should be noted that the detail here slightly undercuts this narrative. What Porter learns from going to the bottom of the career ladder and demonstrating other people's songs is that he should be concentrating on writing his own songs in his own way and trusting the public to recognise genius when they hear it.

While *De-Lovely* does not really focus on Porter's creative methods, it does show them. Porter is shown to work at his songs almost constantly, either with a small pocket manuscript book or at a piano surrounded by reference materials and pages of manuscript. This implies a much more effortful method of constructing and creating songs to that shown in *Night and Day*, not only suggesting research but also demonstrating Porter playing with different melodic and lyrical possibilities. This is particularly seen in his composing the song 'I Love You', which he has explicitly taken on as a challenge to write a song with the blandest possible title. This approach to the challenge, which is also emphasised by his reaction to the demands of working for Hollywood and so meeting the tastes of a broader audience, suggests that part of what drove Porter's creativity was the need to be challenged, and to prove himself capable of meeting the challenge, preferably while subverting the set task. Like wooing Linda with his piano playing, his songs, and a little acrobatics in a Parisian park, it is 'just showing off', but it is a form of showing off that requires effort and skill to do well.

When Irving Berlin is introduced to Porter as part of Linda's plan to turn Cole from an amateur into a professional songwriter, Berlin not only urges Porter to follow the professional path, but also to 'get back to work'; this combines with the many other scenes within the film which show Porter composing at his piano during the day, while socialising at night,

implying a disciplined approach to a work / life separation. The film does have Porter explicitly state in dialogue that his music comes from his entire being, his talent and his social life and the way that he behaves, and misbehaves. This connection of creativity to the individual emphasises the relationship, the personal aspects of the film, particularly as, during his separation from Linda and after her death, Porter is shown to have difficulty composing successfully. Porter's life and music are totally intertwined, to the extent that when Linda is told that at least one of Porter's legs should be amputated, she replies that without his legs he would lose his pride, his music, he would be left with nothing, and subsequent events show her to be correct, although it is possible that it is the loss of Linda that actually drives this decline. This fits with the psychological conception of creativity outlined above: only Porter can write Porter's songs, because of who he is, whereas *Night and Day* emphasises that Porter's songs come from his environment and from his determination to succeed.

Where Porter's output in *Night and Day* increases when he is separated from Linda, in *De-Lovely* it follows the more accurate historical trajectory of decreasing during the separation and after her death. In both films the artist is shown to suffer, but in *Night and Day* this only drives him to greater achievement, whereas in *De-Lovely* it diminishes his output. This suggests that *Night and Day* is also drawing upon the idea of the artist who suffers for their work, indeed, who *has* to suffer to make their work successful. This idea is supported further by a secondary character in the film, the singer Gracie, who appears at various points in Porter's career. On their second meeting, Porter hears her sing and tells her that she is 'different'. He asks, 'What happened to you?' Her reply is simply 'I suffered', but as Porter's line suggests that her performance skills have improved since the last time that he saw her, this suggests that her suffering has been beneficial to her artistry.

Conclusions

As I have shown, in *Night and Day* Porter's rise to success is shown as being one which requires him to give up his life of privilege and work his way up from the bottom of the career ladder. This myth of the path to success is a strong, controlling narrative, making it unsurprising that it was the model that was adopted for this biopic. While it has been pointed out that 'In the United States [...] the log cabin myth is just that - pure myth' (Simonton, 1994: 157), this narrative is the one that *Night and Day* largely follows. It suggests that what was 'special' about Cole Porter was his ability to recognise and take an opportunity when he saw it, whether it was the opportunity to transcribe a tune or to take lyrics from elements of his environment, and to keep on trying despite failure. *De-Lovely* takes a different stance: Porter succeeds because of his talent and his constant working at that talent, but it is Linda who provides the drive and the connections that put him into the position where he can exploit his talent. *De-Lovely* therefore is less egalitarian, in that it does not suggest that 'if he can do it, anyone can do it'. It also emphasises the importance of personal relationships in providing the individual with support and motivation, where *Night and Day* shows the hero as being more successful when free of his romantic attachments and able to collaborate with other professionals. Where the creative hero of the 1940s was an everyman, the creative hero of the early 2000s is a specific individual, and it is the particularities of that individual that make them a success.

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