Undergraduate Honors Thesis Projects   Student Research & Creative Work

2024

The Pseudo-Liberation of Women and Feminism in American Cinema of the 1970s

Claudia Smallwood
claudiasmallwood57@gmail.com

2024

The Pseudo-Liberation of Women and Feminism in American Cinema of the 1970s

Claudia Smallwood

The Pseudo-Liberation of Women and Feminism in American Cinema of the 1970s

by

Claudia Smallwood

Department of English

Otterbein University

Westerville, Ohio 43081

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For graduation with Honors

_____   _____

Honors Advisor (Please print name)   Advisor's Signature

_____   _____

Second Reader (Please print name)   Second Reader's Signature

_____   _____

Honors Representative (Please print name)   Honors Rep's Signature

Abstract

This thesis provides an analysis of how women, feminism, and female liberation is depicted in American film of the 1970s, in context to genre revisionism and the second wave of feminism. The portrayal of women in film is reimagined due to the Hollywood Renaissance taking place in the mid-sixties and throughout the nineteen-seventies. As genre revisionists began re-working and undoing the tools of classical Hollywood cinema, the role of women began to shift as well, creating a form of counter-cinema. Films of this era, rather intentionally or unintentionally, start to address relevant issues of marital status, liberation, sexuality, and the stipulations that surround the guidelines and structures of a white, heteronormative, women's lifestyle. My essay will consider how directors in the 1970s such as Martin Scorsese, Alan Pakula, Woody Allen, Martin Ritt, and Barbara Loden provide audiences with contemporary images of "liberated" women, who although liberated in a new sense, still fall victim to the societal and cinematic system working against their said liberations. Furthermore, I will be analyzing how this portrayal of women relates to second wave feminism, as it is important to examine the effects that politics have on a director's interpretation and cinematic depiction of womanhood. Stereotypes of women in film changed to reflect the different stereotypes emerging surrounding the second wave of feminism, leading me interested in discussing how the unconscious of patriarchal society structures film form in the 1970s.

Table of Contents

Preface

I would like to preface this work by explaining that I am a feminist, who oftentimes finds herself enraged by the position society has placed women in. Whether this position be through real life examples, or through cinema, I am constantly thinking about how women are constructed, and why. These thoughts lead me to question the role of women in film. Is the woman's voice truly being heard? Are depictions of women accurate to the female experience? How does the cinematic signification of women affect us, shape us, or even more, society's opinions of us? I aim to bring these personal questions and my own political thinking into my analysis of films of the 1970s, as the portrayal of women and of female experience is a matter very important and close to me.

While I criticize male directors for their depiction of women, and overall, the patriarchal society which in which we all live, I must explain that this does not necessarily mean that I *hate* men. There are actually quite a few men in my life I admire and adore. However, I do hate the way that the patriarchy has constructed the dominant ideological thought of our society. Therefore, I do not hate men for who they are, but instead for the limitations they have placed on women. This of course is not their fault, as they too are a product of the world we all inhabit. I hope readers will understand that my analysis of these films comes from a place of feminist rage against the order, and not from rage against men themselves.

The Depiction of Women in Classical Hollywood Cinema and the Formation of Feminist

Film Theory: A Literature Review

Women are the vehicles of men's fantasies, the "anima" of the collective male unconscious, and the scapegoat of men's fears.

-Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*

Analyzing classical Hollywood cinema and particularly how it portrays stereotyped representations of women is a significant aspect in film theory. Feminist film theory as it has developed since the 1970s works to think through questions of female subjectivity and female desire as depicted in classical Hollywood cinema. Prior to the New Hollywood period (1967-1975), classical Hollywood held rigid conventions in the portrayal of women.

Classical Hollywood was deeply rooted in sexism and the male ideological dominance of society, particularly in relation to marriage, family, and motherhood. As film critic Molly Haskell has summarized, "In the movie business we have had an industry dedicated for the most part to reinforcing the lie…Hollywood promoted a romantic fantasy of marital roles and conjugal euphoria… (Haskell 3). The film industry maneuvered to keep women in a particular and fantastical place, never interested in sponsoring an intelligent, ambitious heroine, as this would go against the conventionally established notions about the female sex—and serve as a threat to men as well.

My essay will examine the history of women in cinema through the lens of feminist film theory. I will be implementing ideas and principles established in feminist film theory by crucial foundational film theorists such as Laura Mulvey, Claire Johnston, Teresa de Lauretis, Molly

Haskell, and others. Theoretical concepts they established regarding the depiction of women in film are critically to examining female spectatorship in 1970s American cinema and theorizing possible moments of radical autonomy in these films.

I will first turn to the portrayal of women in classical Hollywood cinema and look at their depictions through the context of feminist film theory. It is essential to gain an understanding of the roles and stereotypes classical Hollywood cinema enforced in order to understand their shifting depictions in the "New Hollywood" era of the 1970s. As classical Hollywood cinema existed prior to women's liberation movements, it makes sense that women are heavily depicted through the male gaze and rooted deeply in stereotypes, as women were not yet granted any room in society to exist outside of patriarchal convention, where the figure of Man stands as the normative ideal. After reviewing the construal of women in classical Hollywood, I will then turn to US cinema of the 1970s, the Hollywood Renaissance, to analyze how depictions of women in cinema changed throughout this era. The role of women began to shift in this era of film as relevant female issues of sexuality, liberation, and marital status were addressed. Due to the historical changes in society of the 1970s and the second wave of feminism, directors reimagined their approaches, allowing women to become more central in film and ideally leading to the production of a new kind of cinema that could counter the conventions of classical Hollywood.

My thesis raises a central question: In such post-classical Hollywood, in what ways are women accorded liberation, recognition, or autonomy? How does second wave feminism impact the depiction of women in contemporary films? Do we see such depictions as truly liberatory?

My essay will consider how directors in the 1970s, such as, Martin Scorsese, Alan Pakula, Woody Allen, Martin Ritt, and Barbara Loden, began introducing audiences to an image of a more "liberated" women, although "liberated" is a generous term in this context. I will be

looking at the films *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (1974), *Klute* (1971), *Annie Hall* (1977), *Norma Rae* (1979), and *Wanda* (1970). Each of these films centers around a female character and offers a revisionism of the portrayal of women, as compared to classical Hollywood cinema. These films are of interest to me not because they accurately portray women or feminism, but because they begin to push boundaries in the world of film, finally offering audiences with new versions of women, and finally providing women with a greater presence or voice in film that did not previously exist. Radical moments in each of these films exemplify such, as they break away from classical Hollywood conventions, providing women with glimpses of autonomy. Despite attempts to break the mold, new versions of women presented in these films are still further stereotypes of women, and through the lens of feminist film theory, these portrayals are not adequate in representing the female experience. I will argue throughout this essay that although the Hollywood Renaissance attempts to revise the portrayal of women in film, women in these films still fall victim to a societal system that works against them. The female characters are "pseudo-liberated," I argue, merely suggestions of the idea of a liberated woman. Indeed, as I will show, the unconscious of a patriarchal society was in fact still structuring film form in the 1970s, despite significant changes occurring in society for women at this time. Feminist film theory tends to focus on the problems of the spectator and male gaze, along with how women are viewed and portrayed. I would like to start with these principles and take them into consideration throughout my analysis of female autonomy in 70s cinema, as it is necessary to understand these key concepts to properly read the films I analyze. However, I am more interested in how these films from the 1970s at once follow the classical Hollywood mold, while portraying women's liberations struggles in a unique way. Thus, my analysis turns somewhat away from feminist film scholarship that focuses on gaze, and toward their conflicted liberatory, sociological perspective.

While we might initially dismiss these films for lacking truly liberatory politics, they do offer

moments that we find building on the concepts that Mulvey, Johnston, Kaplan, Doane, etc.

explained to us. These films can be considered counter cinema for the fact that they challenge

classical Hollywood conventions of spectatorship, through moments of incoherence. Scholarship

helps us to see new ways to screen the women, and the directors of these 70's films attempt to

reframe the women. Although they may in the end fail to produce a fully autonomous subject,

there are moments throughout these 1970s films that remind us of what theorists have called for.

Feminist Film Criticism in the 1970s: Rethinking Classical Hollywood

Thus the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of

the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified.

-Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"

Feminist film theory in the 1970s sought to understand how women are portrayed in

classical Hollywood, and how they function as a threat to man. Much film theory at the time

emerged in psychoanalytic theory to advance our understanding of the patriarchy and its

cinematic representation. The psychoanalytic model functions to acknowledge subjectivity as a

construction in language, while considering processes like desire and symbolization, and how

they are derived from castration threat, or more largely, the masculine subject. Critics like Laura

Mulvey and Claire Johnston used psychoanalytic theory to theorize the female image and the

female spectator. Mary Ann Doane argues that the utilization of psychoanalytic theory is crucial

to feminist film theory as it "assumes a necessary gap between the body and the psyche, so that

sexuality is not reducible to the physical" (Doane 26). Mulvey and Johnston implement this

theory as they analyze and think through feminist representation in film in terms of social

relations and structure, rather than physical body.

Psychoanalytic theory assumes that resistance and defense mechanisms prevent

unconscious, unpleasant thoughts, and feelings from becoming conscious. As indicated by Laura

Mulvey, the idea of phallocentrism comes into play here, as men did not allow women in film to

bear any meaning. Female differs from man as she is a reminder of the castration threat, due to

her lack of a penis. Sigmund Freud introduced the psychoanalytic concept of castration anxiety

as a boy's fear of loss or damage to the genital organ as punishment for incestuous wishes toward his mother. The fear of castration leads to men feeling a sense of powerlessness, and they are reminded of this anxiety when they see woman, as she is lacking. Mulvey theorizes women as representing a "lack", or a threatening presence to the possibility of castration. To men, women serve as a never-ending reminder of what could be absent, both phallus, and dominance. With the castration threat in mind, providing women any room to function as anything other than an ideal within cinema would detract from the general visual pleasure, as our society traditionally inhabits the male gaze, and therefore would not reach visual fulfillment by watching a female character who works to drive the plot, or in other words, holds some power. The construction of female subjectivity in cinema is articulated through male drive, or desire, which is dependent on the idea of castration. In her classic essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Mulvey states, "Woman's desire is subjugated to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound; she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it" (Mulvey 59). In classical Hollywood, women are incapable of creating the action in the film, since they cannot transcend past the castration effect, which serves as a threatening reminder to men. Women's relation to sexuality in film is then absorbed within masculine sexuality and spectatorship. Mulvey argues that this leads to women in classical Hollywood existing solely to represent a particular role, that being the role of something "to be looked at," or in other words, to be merely the spectacle of a woman. The extent of women in classical Hollywood cinema thus functions to produce a representation of a woman, one which is curated through the lens of the male, and thus is grounded in the male's fantasies and notions of women. Therefore, the women depicted in films of this era do not represent real women, but instead reflect how men wanted to perceive

women. This idea and the theory of spectacle is an important concept to understand when looking towards films of the 1970s later.

Building on Mulvey's thesis in her formative text "Through the Looking Glass," Teresa de Lauretis argues that "Represented as the negative term of sexual differentiation, spectacle-fetish or specular image, in any case ob-scene, woman is constituted as the ground of representation, the looking-glass held up to man" (de Lauretis 15). Whether men are portraying women through their sexual differences to themselves, or through their own fetishes and desires, women are always produced as a reflection of the male's unconscious. They are a direct "looking glass," as de Lauretis puts it, to their own enigmas. Women can serve no threat to men if they are produced like this, through the form of spectacle, since this role does not allow women to dominate the plot, or even allow a separation from the man himself. Women portrayed as such are deeply embedded in the man, unable to escape his own reflection, and thus unable to produce any real or significant meaning in film. The feminine spectacle is produced through the male's fantasies, fetishizations, and previous dispositions of women, leading to an outcome and depiction that does not accurately represent what it means to be a woman at all. Women are assembled as an appendage to a man, a mere half-hearted addition to their already developed selves. Men fail to consider how women are their own beings who exist outside of male thought and ideation. Men only consider and think of women in how they correlate to them, which results in warped depictions of female characters in the filmic world. The problem lies in the fact that men do not view women for who they are, but instead only think of them in relation to their own selves, and in how women can further produce their own manhood. As Jane Tompkins argues, "I hate men for the way they treat women and pretending that women aren't there is one of the ways I hate most. What enrages me is the way women are used as extensions of men, mirrors of

men, devices for showing men off, devices for helping men get what they want. They are never there in their own right, or rarely" (Tompkins 9).

Tompkins' statement about female invisibility in cinema is crucial. Women were not at all there in their "own right", but instead produced through the gaze of the male. As Claire Johnston explains, women were never intended as the center of the film. She argues that women are thus instead *excluded* from the film system, *excluded* from having social or sexual desires. In this context, the patriarchy works to displace women from her own self within film. In "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema", Johnston states, "In order that the man remain within the centre of the universe in a text which focuses on the image of woman, the auteur is forced to repress the idea of woman as a social and sexual being (her Otherness) …The image of the woman becomes merely the trace of the exclusion and repression of Woman" (Johnston 25). Johnston further exemplifies the point that the female characters depicted in classical Hollywood did not represent actual beings. They functioned solely to represent an idea of a woman, typically an idea which men held about women. Male Hollywood filmmakers were exerting their power to reinforce patriarchal convictions, while women were unable to possess any depth.

The portrayal of women in classical Hollywood cinema as analyzed by theorists such as Mulvey and Johnston are essential to our understanding of female spectatorship. Mulvey and Johnston use feminist and psychoanalytic theory to exemplify how and why in classical Hollywood women are presented only as what they represent to man, rather than as actual beings, or complex, developed characters. What becomes crucial for them is to show how the characterization of women in classical Hollywood exposes the unconscious of patriarchal society itself. Films are just one cultural form of many that replicate the role of women in society. Therefore, if we are seeing stereotypes of women on screen, it is because these stereotypes are

present in real life. This, however, does not mean that the depiction of women in films is accurate, but instead that the depiction is accurate in portraying female stereotypes that the patriarchy has worked to condition. It is important to understand not only the role of women in society, but also the role in which they are playing in larger forms of culture, or art, such as in films. As de Lauretis points out, culture is created and founded from women, yet accurate depictions of women are absent from history and cultural processes. She argues that cinema is a representation built off the dream of woman, and of keeping woman captive. "Woman is both absent and captive: absent as theoretical subject, captive as historical subject" (de Lauretis 14). Through this context, dominant cinema places women in a position of stasis. She is specified to remain still in a particular identification. As male characters are positioned to actively control the image of women in films, female spectators view the direction of a female character as being controlled by a male character. This leaves women with no choice but to respond in a masochistic manner, as they learn to identify themselves with being objects through film. This portrayal in film leads us to question what these roles are teaching us about femininity and, largely about womanhood. It is up to women to think about and question the ideological codes embedded in their own representation. As cinema is an apparatus of this social representation, it is important to identify the role of women in film, and analyze how the relations of subjectivity, ideology, and gender identity are central to both cinematic theory and in a larger sense, to our lives and personal selves. Johnston, Mulvey, and de Lauretis urge us to think about how women are signified within film, what meaning this produces, and how this affects us.

Melodrama and "the woman's picture"

As a term of critical opprobrium, "woman's film" carries the implication that women, and therefore women's emotional problems, are of minor significance.

-Molly Haskell, "The Woman's Film"

While women are excluded from representing characters of significant meaning in classical Hollywood, their selves and issues become present in the genre of the family melodrama. Melodrama is a fascinating genre for feminist film theory because it at once centers the figure of woman and yet offers problematic images of her and for the female spectator. On the one hand, this genre worked to consider and appeal to a female audience, resulting in what men thought were women's fantasies, or issues, being depicted on the big screen. de Lauretis argues that "female melodrama at least operates in itself to articulate the complexity of female subjectivity and addresses the spectator as a woman, regardless of the gender of the viewers" (294). Addressing the spectator as female opens new possibilities for women, as they are invited and granted the room to consider the questions surrounding their portrayal. But on the other hand, although women are granted some room of greater representation in the melodrama, the old problems of spectatorship remain. The genre of melodrama, or the "woman's picture" is in fact a further representation of how classical Hollywood functions within and to support patriarchal ideology. As feminist film theorist Ann Kaplan argues, within the melodrama genre, woman's desire is not accurately depicted precisely because it is always rendered through or the consequence of the desire of the man. While melodrama attempts to illustrate female desire, this desire is still produced through men, and in turn objectifies women, since it is not women's

desire, but men's desire that places women in sexual pleasure. In "Is the gaze male*?"* Kaplan states, "Assigned the place of object (lack), she is the recipient of male desire, passively appearing rather than acting. Her sexual pleasure in this position can thus be constructed only around her own objectification" (Kaplan 26). Yes, women can enjoy the melodrama and rejoice in the fact that the films are addressing them and that their pleasure is being thought of or depicted on the screen. However, it is important to recognize that women's pleasure, or sexuality in this sense, is merely a construction of the patriarchy, working to produce pleasure or sexual desire in terms of Kaplan's theory of dominance and submission. This leaves woman objectified, as she willingly submits to being a passive recipient of the male's desire for dominance and once again becomes a vehicle for their fantasies, and a spectacle. According to Kaplan, when viewers see female desire depicted in film, they are viewing a positioning of the oppressed woman as she always fulfills the role of the submissive, never able to assert dominance over her male counterpart. The woman cannot hold dominance in her sexual fantasies, even if this is something she desires, for it is the man who possesses the control of the women's desires. This results in the portrayal of female desire centering around the man's sexual desires, as man assumes that female desire is centered around them. "Rarely does the dreamer initiate the sexual activity, and the man's large erect penis usually is central in the fantasy. Nearly all the fantasies have the dominance-submission pattern, with the woman in the latter place" (Kaplan 26). Thus, even when film is concerned with an attempt to portray female desire, or to produce a "woman's picture" the desire is still rooted in male fantasy, voyeurism, and overall, the patriarchy. The women are still inferior to the dominant man, and submit to him, even if this is a fantasy not held by women, it is still held by men and that is what is considered first. It is deemed impossible for

women, or women's issues, to be represented in any genre of classical Hollywood without the

underlying notions of male gaze seeping through.

Hitchcock's *Rebecca* vs Arzner's *Dance, Girl, Dance*: Can Classical Hollywood Offer its own Renditions of Feminism?

The woman, the enigma, the hieroglyphic, the picture, the image- the metonymic chain connects with another: the cinema, the theater of pictures, a writing in images of the woman but not *for* her. For she *is* the problem.
-Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator"

Although women fulfill the role of the submissive in melodrama and in the majority of classical Hollywood cinema, it is important to note that there were films being made in this era that allowed for women to take on the "dominant" role, and even displaced men from the central role. Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rebecca* (1940) was presented to audiences under the genre of a "woman's picture." *Rebecca* inhabits a female point of view, relying on the feminine power of storytelling as an essential tool in driving the plot, as its the female characters who provide the audience with the most information. Female characters take on a more dominant form in this film as they occupy majority of screen time, are the center of the narrative, and are placed into the previously established "male" roles. The nameless female protagonist of the film takes the traditional male position as investigator, while even attempting to embark on her own journey of self-investigation as she becomes obsessed with an idealized version of the late Mrs. De Winters, anxiously comparing herself, and only thinking of herself in relation to her. Female housekeeper Mrs. Danvers takes on the masculine role of the "gas lighter" as she induces psychological control over the female protagonist, causing her to question her own judgement and perceptions, at one point even persuading her to consider ending her own life. Aside from reversing gender

roles, Hitchcock also offers new insights for women into classical Hollywood through his portrayal of marriage in *Rebecca*. Typically, in film, a marriage is viewed as a positive outcome for women, in fact oftentimes the only outcome desired by women, and viable to them. However, in *Rebecca,* it is through marriage that problems arise, and destruction takes place, providing the audience with a new perception of marriage, as it is no longer the happy ending that all women want. It is through this reversal of traditionally inhabited gender roles, and new perceptions of marriage, that *Rebecca* begins to push the boundaries of classical Hollywood.

Although *Rebecca* places women as the central characters of the film, and constructs marriage in a different way, it still falls short in its ability to accurately replicate what women are, as Hitchcock's direction is rooted in patriarchal ideologies. This leaves woman unable to seize her own representation or gaze, despite her being placed as the driving force of the film. In "Framing the Absence and Presence of Rebecca: Female Subjectivity and Voyeurism on and off-screen," Viktoria Osoliova states, "Feminist film theory claims that in the women's films of the 1940s, there is a certain deficiency and failure in the woman's appropriation of the gaze" (Osoliova 2). This claim is evident in *Rebecca* as the female protagonist desires to become a spectacle for Maxim yet is forced to assume the position as spectator as she literally spectates the images that Maxim prefers to perceive her as, that being the images he took of her from their honeymoon. This leaves the female protagonist excluded from appropriating her own gaze, as the male character (Maxim) holds precedence over how he wants to perceive her, or how he thinks she should "be looked at". In her essay "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator," Mary Ann Doane further argues, "The woman's beauty, her very desirability, becomes a function of certain practices of imaging- framing, lighting, camera movement, angle. She is thus, as Laura Mulvey has pointed out, more closely associated with the surface of the

image than its illusory depths, its constructed three-dimensional space which the man is destined to inhabit and control" (Doane 20). Thus, the "woman's issues" presented in this film end up being problems which center around men, or Maxim, and the woman herself is left displaced from her own image.

The film's central difficulty involves the heroine coming to terms with a powerful male figure and figuring out how she can mold herself into exactly what the man desires. The female protagonist, who is not even worthy enough to have a name, is holding the look of the film, and the look which Hitchcock presents exists to signify male desire. Before the protagonist can make any radical decisions in the film, she must first figure out what Maxim desires from her. Even then, as she attempts to reach a form of personal empowerment by maturing and becoming more direct as the film progresses, she is consistently undermined by the men in the film as they shut her down to maintain their dominance. It is evident here that even in a "woman's picture" that attempts to address women and place female as central, the male gaze takes over and does not allow the women within the film to function as women alone, but instead as women in relation to men. Additionally, the *real* presence of a fully realized woman is completely absent from this film. The character of Rebecca (whom we never actually see) dominates and fulfills a presence in the film as she is constantly reembodied through remembrance. Through this, Rebecca herself represents a present absence, allowing her to allude the gaze altogether. Her invisibility and absence from the film grants her the ability to evade masculine power, and overall Maxim's control. She is consistently depicted as an intelligent, beautiful, well-liked force of nature, making the audience regularly aware of her nonappearance, and the seemingly large gap her absence has left. Meanwhile, our naïve, inexperienced, nameless female protagonist takes a back seat as she fulfills the stereotype of a clueless and foolish woman, constantly being victimized

throughout the entirety of the film. It is interesting to note here that Hitchcock does not allow for the female protagonist to hold any real power, and that the most accurate characterization of a woman that we get from this film is a woman who is not actually *in* the film. Furthermore, Rebecca only gains and holds this power because she is not there. The power she gains through her absence is solely because she is not physically there for the male characters to impede on her capacity. Rather than allowing a female protagonist to possess any amount of potency, Hitchcock instead prefers to characterize her through negative qualities, even going as far to highlight these pessimistic traits through the disapproval of his other female characters. He proves his female protagonist to be unimportant as he refuses her power and real emotional depth. In "Hitchcock's *Rebecca*: A rhetorical study of female stereotyping," Elizabeth Lagenfeld states

> To further compound and create the heroines sense of her own insignificance, other characters, most notably the women in the film, are portrayed as working against rather than supporting the protagonist…From a close analysis, film readers will gain an understanding of how Hitchcock, believed by many to be a misogynist, has capitalized on this struggle, and has reduced the female characters to neurotics whose only power lies in the negative realms of their own personalities." (Lagenfeld 32-33)

It is clear through the example of *Rebecca*, that films in classical Hollywood did not accurately portray women, and instead further functioned to undermine and damage women's efforts in holding an equal place in society.

When considering depictions of women in classical Hollywood, the work of feminist film director, Dorothy Arzner, is worth mentioning as she provides a form of counter-cinema, while still managing to work within the studio system of classical Hollywood. Arzner succeeds in locating the discourse of women by portraying female protagonists in her films who actively

react against the male discourse. This allows for her to do some re-writing of the discourse, as she urges viewers to consider their own spectatorship, and question the idea of women serving as spectacles in the patriarchy. In "Dorothy Arzner: Critical Strategies," Claire Johnston explains how "In Arzner's films it is the universe of the male which invites scrutiny, which is rendered strange. In this way, the discourse of the male can no longer function as the dominant one, the one which speaks the truth of the secondary discourses in the film" (Johnston 41). It is through her 1940 film, *Dance, Girl, Dance*, that Arzner manages to promote classical Hollywood ideologies, while still offering critique and subverting to a feminist counter cinema, as she displaces male from the dominant position. *Dance, Girl, Dance* encourages the audience to think about the role of women in society, or women as spectacle by showing how characters Bubbles and Judy turn themselves into spectacles to make a living. The male audience is in turn ridiculed and questioned when Judy turns on the audience within the film, finally telling them off for how *she* views *them*. "This return of scrutiny in what is assumed within the film to be a one-way process, a spectacle to be consumed by men, constitutes a direct assault on the audience *within* the film and the audience *of* the film, directly challenging the entire notion of spectacle as such" (Johnston 42). It is through this moment that Arzner displaces the male figure from dominance, as it is evident that they are the ones who should be ashamed, as their discourse is now depicted as fragmented and unintelligible. In Arzner's work women are placed in a more dominant position as a result of the male discourse becoming displaced. However, I would argue that the dominant position women are allowed to inhabit at this time is not equal to the dominant position which men can fulfill in cinema. Judy can stick up for herself and prove a point to the burlesque audience, yet she remains spectacle as the audience ends up laughing at her and Bubble's fight scene. Judy and Bubble's fight is a moment of active agency and of passion as they are fighting

over their career, and of their own desires. In "Dorothy Arzner and Female Authorship," Judith Mayne argues, "And the catfight that erupts between Judy and Bubbles on stage seems to me less a recuperative move- transforming the potential threat of Judy's confrontation into an even more tantalizing spectacle- than the claiming by the two women of the stage as an extension of their conflicted friendship, not an alienated site of performance" (Mayne 169). While many read the fight scene as a further objectification and spectacle of the women, I agree with Mayne that it is a fight over power, ownership, and ultimately friendship. A fight between men over ownership, however, reads much differently in the filmic world. Men have fight scenes in Westerns which are not viewed as laughable, or as spectacle, since they are allowed to fully occupy a dominant space and have desires, as their desires are backed by a possession of power that women do not have. Arzner ingeniously begins to rewrite some aspects of the woman's role in classical Hollywood, however she must still ultimately serve the patriarchal ideology. Classical Hollywood was uninterested in sponsoring the idea of liberated women, leaving Arzner unable to fully commit to portraying such. Johnston states that the films "open up an area of contradiction in the text, but at the same time they are unable radically to change these contradictions" (44). Overall, Arzner can suggest the idea of creating an entirely new and feminist discourse, yet she cannot do anything to ratify this, as both the historical context of society, and of film, prevented her from inhabiting the space to do so.

The "woman's picture" films *Dance, Girl, Dance* and *Rebecca* may appear oppositional to one another as they offer contradicting opinions on gaze and characterize females in differing ways. However, they both serve to push the envelope, or introduce more liberal concepts as they at least allow women to take on some form of dominance- even if this female dominance looks different than a man's dominance. In *Rebecca*, Hitchcock re-explores the concept of marriage

through the woman's angle, as the lead character yearns for a happy marriage but is quickly met

to scrutinize the estrangement of it. This is noteworthy as marriage is typically represented as the

"happy ending" in women's films, used as the resolution for every woman's problem.

Additionally, Hitchcock allows his female characters to take on roles that were traditionally

established for men, providing some liberal themes to his film *Rebecca*. In *Dance, Girl, Dance*,

Arzner offers viewers a lesson in resisting objectification, pointedly commenting on the power of

the male observer. Both films are examples of work from classical Hollywood cinema that raise

the problems that feminist film theory will be interested in throughout the 1970s. Arzner plays a

significant role in the development of feminist counter-cinema, and it is up to genre revisionists

of the 1970s to consider both Arzner's contributions, and classical Hollywood's, when

attempting to produce films which challenge the patriarchal ideology and accurately depict the

female experience.

Moving Feminist Film Theory Forward: The Importance of Contextualizing and Verbalizing Female Depiction in Film

The effect of not naming is censorship, whether caused by the imperialism of the patriarchal language or the underdevelopment of a feminist language. We need to begin analyzing our own films, but first it is necessary to learn to speak in our own name.

-B. Ruby Rich, "In the Name of Feminist Film Criticism"

According to feminist film theory, as we continue to think about the roles in which women occupy in film and the portrayal of female's desires and issues, it is critical that we assess how ourselves, as women, interact with and experience these films. Feminist film theorist B. Rudy Rich argues that there are two voices in which feminist film critics employ- the American, and the British. She describes the American voice as a more sociological approach, speaking on subjectivity through one's own voice, in the context of female experiences. On the contrary, the British voice is described as a theoretical approach, becoming more objective and speaking from a historical context (Rich 7). In my analysis, I will attempt to blend both approaches together, as I deem it necessary to assess these films from both places of personal experience, and from a larger historical context of the ideology of the patriarchal system in which we as women, find ourselves fixed in. According to Rich, women cannot experience culture or society the same way that men can, as women are excluded from the patriarchal discourse that our world revolves around. This is why it is crucial for women to evolve a way, or a language, in which they can consider their own portrayal. In "In the Name of Feminist Film Criticism" Rich states, "For a woman's experiencing of culture under patriarchy is dialectical in

a way that a man's can never be: our experience is like that of the exile, whom Brecht once singled out as the ultimate dialectician for that daily working out of cultural oppositions within a single body" (Rich 14). It is essential to develop a synthesis between these voices to produce an argument that considers the placement of female experience and all contexts. Most importantly, Rich calls for us to create an anti-patriarchal film language when considering feminist cinema. I will be employing the terms she coined throughout my analysis.

It is evident that films serve as an apparatus, as they are exemplars of our culture. We must now look to cinema of the 1970's, as this is when the depiction of women began to shift. They appeared less and less as accessories to the man in the film, and instead began to gain more power, bearing the weight as the driving characters of the plot. Furthermore, genre revisionists introduced audiences to updated stereotypes of women. The previous roles which women inhabited in classical Hollywood cinema are re-worked in the 1970's, producing a new form of meaning for women. I will refer to this shift of the utilization and depiction of women in film throughout the 1970's as a form of counter cinema -a continuation of Arzner's work. Counter-cinema began to refuse the visual pleasures of narrative cinema, which in turn refused the previous notions of the castration threat. Counter-cinema works to get us away from this threat and raises new questions on how we can think about the portrayal of women in film, particularly still considering relation to our patriarchal society.

The Depiction of Women in 1970's Cinema: Revising the Woman's Picture

To question dominant myths and ideologies entails at least some departure from the formal

conventions that play a significant part in their maintenance.

-Geoff King, "New Hollywood, Version 1: The Hollywood Renaissance"

From 1930 to 1967 the classical Hollywood studio system produced elegantly

constructed films that served the Hays Production Code. These films generated mass appeal as

they predominantly served the narrative over the visual, proving to be easy to follow for a

general audience. However, European art cinema had no censorship at this time, and the artistic

freedoms of these films began to influence American film directors. Arthur Penn's 1967 film

Bonnie and Clyde was directly influenced by the European New Wave as it featured

discontinuity editing, a stronger sense of the visual, and themes of graphic violence and sexual

desire. Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* jumpstarted an era of filmmaking throughout the late 1960's

and 1970s that can be referred to as the Hollywood Renaissance, or as New Hollywood. Films

began to stop abiding to the production code from 1967-1969, leading to the decision for

Hollywood to begin censoring itself, allowing for more artistic freedom and the exploration of

more liberal or taboo topics in film. It became evident that the types of films being produced in

classical Hollywood, which always followed a similar narrative structure, could be considered

insulting to the audience's intelligence. Audiences became more interested in films that

employed visual style while offering an innovation of politics. The New Hollywood era aimed to

re-work and re-imagine some of Hollywood's classical genres- such as the crime film, the noir,

and the western. By doing so, classical conventions of major film genres were challenged, but a

more critical view of America was reflected as well. This was a direct result of the state society was in when these films were being made, as America was in a position of turmoil. The 1970s were a decade of soaring inflation, assassinations, political upheaval, and overall feelings of distrust and corruptivity. These themes, along with the events occurring, and America's overall psyche, were reflected in the films being made of this period. In "New Hollywood, Hollywood Renaissance" Geoff King states, "Images of America as a place of freedom and democracy were dented, if not more seriously damaged…From counterculture to Watergate, the events of the 1960s and early 1970s seemed to have a distinct influence on the films of the Hollywood Renaissance' (King 15-22). It is evident through the films produced during this era that directors were thinking about and affected by the larger issues at work in American society. A deeper state of cynicism, devastation, and futility plagues this era of filmmaking. These feelings being present in the plot and mise-en-scene of movies is a direct response from the auteurs of this period. The incoherence of these movies are a product of not only the changing film industry, but of the times themselves.

As directors challenged classical Hollywood's dominant ideology, films themselves reflected a new ideal. Some of the hallmarks of 70s cinema emphasized a fragmentary or fractured narrative line, as the idea of a motivating coherence was no longer possible. In fact, as some critics have argued, *incoherence* became a structuring principle, or a way to make films which counter-acted the previous era. In the book *Hollywood Incoherent: Narration in Seventies Cinema*, Todd Berliner states that films of the seventies "Insist on including incongruous ideas and formal devices that seem out of harmony with the work as a whole and threaten its narrative, generic, or conceptual logic. Rather than furthering casual narration, such incongruities gratuitously hinder causality…they resist establishing a coherent moral order; they present

multifarious, and often inconsistent, perspectives…they present story information that is obscure, incomplete, or incongruous…" (Berliner 51-52). Films of this era exploited the traditional genre devices to produce new stylistic techniques, resulting in incoherence in the narrative. These moments of narrative incoherence can be signified as excess, and these excesses allude to a competing, or second, voice within the film. This newfound voice that emerges from excess, or incoherence, permits the audience to question political, or societal issues. Indeed, incoherence was present in New Hollywood cinema due to the personal and cultural influences of the time. The reflection of incongruity in seventies films exists due to these influences, as its emergence is produced as a societal problem. How could filmmakers produce narratively congruent films when life itself was not providing any logical resolution, or coherence? As film critic Robin Wood argues, "The reason why any work of art will reveal-somewhere- areas or levels of incoherence is that so many things feed into it which are beyond the artists conscious control-not only his personal unconscious, but the cultural assumptions of his society" (Wood 47). 1970s directors felt an urge to reaffirm, subvert, rebel against, and overall, overthrow the state of American society. The growing force of protests and liberation movements from this era fed into the desire to revolt against the repression of the previous era of film and had a profound impact on the development of Hollywood cinema in the 70s as the studio system (and attendant ideological systems) was undermined and discredited. However, the utility of incoherence can only go so far. Although directors were attempting to adopt a radical view on woman's issues, there appears in 70s cinema an overall lack of commitment to, or ability to attain, a truly radical vision. As Wood points out, "Yet the films' incoherence- the proof that the issues and conflicts they dramatize can no longer even appear to be resolvable within the system, within the dominant ideology-testifies eloquently to the logical necessity for radicalism" (Wood 69). While

New Hollywood pushed the boundaries of the dominant ideology, it was not totally dismantled.

As I show, New Hollywood appeared to want to discredit classical Hollywood and society at the

time yet did not completely succeed. The films I turn to next in my study are interesting for how

they *almost* deconstruct the patriarchal ideologies of classical Hollywood, but not fully.

Second Wave Feminism and Sexual Revolution in the 1970s

The openness of feminist criticism appealed particularly to Americans who perceived the

structuralist, post-structuralist, and deconstructionist debates of the 1970s as arid and falsely

objective, the epitome of a pernicious masculine discourse from which many feminists wished to

escape.

-Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness"

    As films came out in the 1970's during the second wave of feminism, it is evident that the

idea of sexual revolution, separatism, and female subjectivity became a set of questions many

directors were interested in addressing. As classical genres were being reimagined, it only made

sense for women in film to be reimagined as well, especially considering the political context of

this time. Women were becoming a more present force, demanding to be heard, seen, and

included. In "Movies and the 1970s," Lester D. Friedman states, "Perhaps the most dramatic

transformations during the seventies were seen in the lives of American women. Take, for

example, the world of work: by 1978, 50 percent of the labor force was made up of women

between the ages of twenty-five and fifty-four, with astonishing increases in the professional

areas of law, medicine, and executive positions" (Friedman 14). Women were seeking to make

changes within society which resulted in a cultural shift in social and political life, in public

thought and policy. Female characters were now depicted as heroines capable of making

personal and sometimes radical decisions, reaching sexual liberation, and experiencing intense

feelings. This is an extremely different depiction of women as opposed to films of the classical

Hollywood era. A particular form of feminism appeared in films such as Alan Pakula's *Klute*, or

Martin Scorsese's *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*. As B. Ruby Rich states, "At the start of the 70s, [we] entered a feminist cinema. In place of the Fathers' bankruptcy of both form and content, there was a new and different energy; a cinema of immediacy and positive force now opposed the retreat into violence and the revival of a dead past which had become the dominant cinema's mainstays…its link to an evolving political movement gave feminist cinema a power and direction" (Rich 2). However, it is important to mention that the form of feminism presented here represents a particular demographic and middle-class white women's trauma.

It is also important to consider that while the depiction of women in cinema of the 1970s progressed into modified stereotypes of women, these were still representative of types that are harmful and that do not accurately depict the female experience. With the Production Code no longer in effect, directors were granted more freedom to explore topics like sexuality. This newfound freedom was not necessarily a good thing for women, as this allowed for them to be more readily exploited as sexual objects. Although films of the 1970s were thinking of women as more central characters, it was often that their characterization and traits were produced with and surrounded by themes of sex. As I show, on the one hand 1970s US cinema had feminist leanings and did succeed in causing the audience to think more broadly about the women's point of view. On the other hand, many issues prevail in the portrayal of women in films of the 1970s that do not seem so radical after all. Although the counter-cinema of the 1970s did address women's issues and did place women in more active and central roles, I still track an element of pseudo-liberation. Ultimately, I want to argue that this era of film is far less progressive than it pretends to be, in relation to second wave feminism and female liberation. Women rendered in these films still fall victim to the societal system that militates against the free play of choice, resulting in the figure of the woman still representing a stereotype. Even when considering the

idea of the "woman's film," there are themes and elements of female dissatisfaction. In *From Reverence to Rape*, Molly Haskell states, "After all this, woman reaches, perhaps understandably, a dead end of emotional apathy…The women of these films, torn between the negative and positive of the feminist consciousness- rage at the old order, hope for the new- have arrived, anesthetized, at an emotional and cultural "stasis", a death" (Haskell, 41). I will address the ways in which the portrayal of women and feminism in the 1970's films, *Klute*, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, *Norma Rae*, *Wanda*, and *Annie Hall* represent and reflect problematic displays of pseudo-liberation, and offer, in the end, something of a cultural dead end for women.

Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore *but a Pseudo-Liberated Woman Does*

Cinematic images of woman have been so consistently oppressive and repressive that the very idea of a feminist filmmaking practice seems an impossibility. The simple gesture of directing a camera toward a woman has become equivalent to a terrorist attack.

-Mary Ann Doane "Woman's Stake: Filming the Female Body"

Martin Scorsese's 1974 film, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, is a form of counter-cinema that attempts to shift away from prioritizing masculine framework, to tell a story about the female experience. Previously, all of Scorsese's films conform to the male-centered nature of Hollywood narratives, and *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* is an interesting exception to his preoccupation with men. It is evident that Scorsese is interested in re-working traditional Hollywood genres throughout this film, and that he is interested in directing a film from the female point of view. *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* can be considered revisionist, or counter-cinema to classical Hollywood, as it does work to ratify representations of female personal experience and positive female image. It provides elements of "corrective realism" as coined by Rich, as it is the women's actions which advance the narrative, and the bonding of women which saves the characters. Scorsese accomplishes this through Alice's determination in her career goals, the characterization and portrayal of men in the film, and Alice's ability to have a choice in her ending. However, like many other films, this fails feminist film theory and its objectives. Stereotypes of women are still produced, and there is a failure to advocate for structural change in gender roles in society. *Alice* is a film of pseudo-liberation, because the

portrayal of woman is through Martin Scorsese's own ideas and notions about womanhood, which objectively are not the most accurate.

The film begins by introducing viewers to a young girl named Alice Hyatt, who appears in a Kansas *Wizard of Oz*-like setting, offering a visual allusion to classical Hollywood cinema. However, this allusion is quickly undercut as Alice claims her freedom from classical expectations by stating that she can sing better than Alice Faye, and that "If anybody doesn't like it, they can blow it out their ass." Alice's pervasive language leads to the western-esque visual landscape immediately being shattered, as no woman from the era of the western would speak this way. The screen quickly cuts and transitions to the more realistic life of a twenty-five-year-old Alice who appears in a state of quiet desperation. She is living trapped with her abusive husband fulfilling the traditional roles of a woman. This reinforces the stereotype present in society that there is no sense of growth or progression in a woman's life after she gets married, leading to Alice's dissatisfaction and longing to escape. The desire to escape and get out of a marriage, or motherhood, becomes the central plot line and stereotype for women in cinema throughout this era. The man's film is portrayed of one with a great, exciting adventure – think Western and Gangster genres. On the other hand, the woman's film is presented as the only sense of adventure being one in which she makes the escape from man. Yes, women are being depicted as central characters at the least, yet the patriarchal structure still looms in film as women cannot pursue adventure, or even liberation, without the presence of a man influencing, or being involved in their journeys of self-discovery.

Alice is granted an unexpected gift of freedom as her husband passes, permitting her the ability to live out her girlhood dream of becoming a singer. It is an interesting choice that Alice is freed from her marriage and her husband only by his accidental death. This is something that

feminists may have difficulty connecting with, as she did not make a liberated decision to stand up to her husband and leave him, even though she longed to. Taking the principles of feminist film theory into account, how can we admire her for this? Is she truly following her dreams if this only happened upon her by chance, and if it's only because she did not know what else to turn to? "Alice provides no realistic model for women, nor does she make any strong decisions for herself" (Webb, Martens, 1). It is evident here that Alice does not provide the most accurate representation of a feminist woman, but instead depicts a pseudo-liberated one, as she does not seek out liberation, but instead falls into a position where she is forced to.

Scorsese works to present Alice as a new idea of self-determination in women. After her husband passes, she is left with nothing except her son, yet continues to push forward in her attempt to make it back to Monterey, California and resume her singing career. This sense of purpose in a female character is something not traditionally established in films from this period, even the ones which were centered around women. Despite Scorsese's attempts, Alice's desire to have a career and be a singer is not developed enough throughout the plot, as the film shifts away from it, providing a more attentive focus to other plotlines. This leaves her dream reading as a half-hearted addition to her character, especially because her desire for this does not stay consistent. A women's longing for a career, and furthermore the capacity to have a desired career, is then rendered as a childish, egocentric dream, something that cannot be fulfilled. Although Scorsese fails to effectively develop a career for Alice, I must give credit to the fact that she attempts to fight against the terms of her pre-determined value during her job search. Alice works to ratify the representations of her image and experience, as she puts her creative ambition and career goals in direct contrast to sexual objectification. It is here that the woman's unnatural climb to success is depicted and highlighted as it looks a lot different than a man's.

Alice must step on toes and put men in their place, running the risk of becoming unlovable, just in an attempt to have a career. While auditioning to sing in night clubs she refuses to let the male gaze objectify or silence her, telling the manager "I don't sing with my ass" after being asked to turn around. This exemplifies that Scorsese is interested in rejecting the underlying assumptions of female objectivity in classical cinema. Nonetheless, this is still a perpetuation of stereotype. Why can't we allow women to achieve a career as readily as we allow men to?

The ending of *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* is one readily dismissed by feminists. Alice chooses to take her boyfriend David back, undercutting her independence and empowerment. The conclusion can be read as an endorsement of an idea of motherhood that both compromises Alice's ambitions and socializes her son into the patriarchal idea of masculinity. Furthermore, it endorses the idea that it is acceptable for a woman to give up everything for love, yet unacceptable if a man does this. As Giddis explains

> For men however, much they may love, simply do not have to make the kind of commitment women are called upon to make; they are not expected to give, and therefore to lose, as much. Or to give *up* as much. A woman parts with much more of her identity than a man does. This involves more than the obvious concessions- going where the man goes, living *his* lifestyle, sacrificing her job to his when necessary. More insidiously, a woman's personality tends to get absorbed in the man's." (200)

In cinema the man will always still have his career and it will be equally or more important than his female partner. However, we fail to let the woman have both career and man- she is always left with making a choice. Yes, all things considered; it is evident that Alice's ability to have the choice to either stay in Tucson or follow her dreams to Monterey is feminist in itself. I suppose we should be grateful that there are even choices to be made by women at all. However, it is still

frustrating, and not entirely liberating that we are presented with a depiction of a woman who must choose between love and a career. "Alice provides neither a realistic character for women to identify with, nor does her happy ending look like a very attractive proposition to someone looking for a way out. But this film moves more in those directions than anything else that has come out of Hollywood recently, and for that it is welcome" (Webb, Martens 1). This ending exemplifies that at the end of the day, it is still a man's world we are living in, but at least women and women's issues are being thought of and are granted a greater form of representation.

When analyzing *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* and its relation to the second wave of feminism, it is crucial to consider that lead actress Ellen Burstyn worked very closely on this project with Scorsese. This is an important consideration as it proves it more difficult to write this film off as being "anti-feminist". In "Hollywood's Last Golden Age," Jonathan Kirshner states that Burstyn "Wanted to make a movie that captured the "movement" at that time, the "energy that was igniting the consciousness of women" (Kirshner 99). Burstyn's direct involvement with this project can change the way this film is discussed. For example, who am I to say that this movie is not an accurate depiction of what it means to be a woman, if this is what Burstyn herself has to say about her own womanhood? "Thus, to hold up Alice as an exhibit of evidence against the New Hollywood is to make rather forward claims about the definition of feminism and its ownership" (Kirshner 99). This leads me to consider whether the ending is functioning to purposely make a point about the woman's movement, and American society in the 1970s. Perhaps Alice's decision to stay with Kris Kristofferson's character represents a social or political commentary of some sort- that in the women's movement liberation is proposed, but not easily accessible to all women. Maybe pursuing a career was too challenging for some

women of this era since the patriarchy is built in preventing this. This would mean that choosing to be with a man, on one's own terms, could have been the only viable and realistic option for some, and still considered a feminist choice. Or perhaps, Burstyn simply believed that a woman being presented with choice was radical enough for this era. Whatever the reason, we must remember that what is feminist to one person, might not be considered feminist to the other. Every woman has different experiences of living within the patriarchy, so we must be sensitive to this and consider that feminism has a different meaning for every individual woman.

A Moment of Radicalism in *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*

Despite my claims that liberatory politics are not offered throughout *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, there is still a key scene that points towards Ann Kaplan's theories of male gaze and de Lauretis's theories of spectatorship, all while paying homage to Judy's character in *Dance, Girl, Dance*. As aforementioned, the sequence of Alice auditioning to perform at night clubs and pointedly refusing to become subject to the male gaze is a moment of radicalism, or incoherence in the film. Alice breaks conventions of classical Hollywood by calling the night club manager out for asking her to "turn around", exclaiming that she "doesn't sing with her ass." This moment provides Alice with a sense of autonomy, while momentarily displacing the audience from the visual pleasures of narrative. The audience is left to question their own spectatorship as they watch Alice's refusal to serve as spectacle to the patriarchy. This scene allows Scorsese's film to be considered counter-cinema as it reflects 1970s incoherence through both the deconstruction of classical Hollywood conventions, and the refusal to *completely* break narrative pleasure. It is evident through this scene that Arzner serves as a great model for Scorsese, as he implements a critique on male gaze and spectatorship like that of Judy's speech in *Dance, Girl, Dance*.

The themes of performance, spectacle, and "to be looked at ness" that we see in classical Hollywood make a return for the female characters in my analysis of 70's films. The figure of performance is one important to Alice's character, as she desires to be a lounge singer, yet refuses the objectification that comes with it. Her denial to perform for the men can be read as a critique on classical Hollywood cinema. Ann Kaplan's analysis on male gaze and spectatorship helps us think through this idea, as she states, "But the problem with this notion of a counter-

cinema hinges on the issue of pleasure. Aware that a feminist counter cinema would almost by

definition deny pleasure, Mulvey argued that this denial was a necessary prerequisite for

freedom…we have (rightly) been wary of admitting the degree to which the pleasure comes from

identification with objectification" (Kaplan 33). As Kaplan explains, counter cinema can only

exist through these moments of narrative incoherence which deny pleasure, and it is through this

moment that both Alice and women are granted some freedom, as they momentarily escape

becoming spectacle through the male gaze. Although only for a short moment, Scorsese's denial

of objectification, and therefore visual pleasure, proves to be a radical moment for his film. The

idea of autonomy is overall limited for Alice, yet this is a moment in the film which suggests

liberation. Overall*, Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, is not a true liberatory film, but it does

offer a slight moment of radicalism that draws on feminist film theory and proves these films of

the 1970s worth analyzing.

Klute and its Projectile Parody of Female Liberation

It is time the bluff was called on the touted authenticity of these works, which pose as objective

while remaining entirely subjective in their conception and execution.

-B. Ruby Rich, "In the Name of Feminist Film Criticism"

The 1971 film, *Klute*, directed by Alan Pakula, is another example of 1970's counter-

cinema that attempts to address women's issues, and to convey a female experience. Pakula

suggests elements of reconstructionism through *Klute* as the film blends elements of detective

and film noir, conspiracy, woman's picture, and paranoia. Although Pakula offers a revisionist

approach and begins to suggest ideas of reconstruction by exploring new ideas for women, the

film is conclusively rendered projectile. It is evident through Pakula's characterization of female

protagonist Bree, that he is merely projecting the male fantasy of women onto her. While he

attempts to explore themes of female liberation, Bree is left stereotyped in the end as she reflects

his own ideas and opinions of what women think of feminism.

Despite Bree being the primary focus of *Klute* it is difficult for most viewers to discern

who the main character really is. Bree drives the story, yet at the end of the day she is a woman,

and the role and portrayal of women in film during this time prove it seemingly impossible to be

deemed as the "main character", despite quite often literally being the main character. Although

finally being granted some room in Hollywood for the development of women in this new era,

Pakula instead somehow manages to further suppress female liberation and parody the idea of

women separatism, as his film participates in the objectification of Bree, and the simultaneous

subjectification of her male counterpart. Christine Gledhill discusses this in her essay "Klute 1,"

writing that "This brings us to the roles of women in the male world of the thriller, and to a kind of dual inflection of these roles…Woman becomes the object of the hero's investigation. Thus, the place of the female figure in the puzzle which the hero has to solve often displaces solution of the crime as the object of the plot" (Gledhill 28). It is evident through this statement that although women play crucial aspects in film noir, they are still only seen in relation to the detective figure as he solves the crime, which in this case would be John Klute. Despite Bree having the connections to aid Klute in solving the crime that essentially revolved around her, she is still viewed as a piece to the puzzle or crime that the detective is solving, rather than viewed as a main character. "These inflections set up a conflict in the treatment of women in film noir. On the one hand, their image is produced in the course of male investigation and moral judgment" (Gledhill 29). This further exemplifies the point that although Bree has every aspect to make her the main character, she is still placed in the shadow of her male counterpart. This is because the portrayal of the female image, in this case Bree, is only curated through the male's perspective of being a sexually exciting part of his investigation, along with representing a lesson in ethics and morals. Comprehensively, Bree Daniels proves to be the main character of *Klute* in the sense that she meets majority of the requirements. However, she cannot fully function as the main character since she is not given the liberation to do so. This can create a sense of ambivalence or incoherence on who the main character really is, as Pakula exploits Bree's most personal moments and emotions, yet fails to even name her in the title, as the man is always depicted superior to the woman.

Although Pakula does not allow Bree to function as the main character that she is, it is evident that *Klute* is concerned with only Bree's inner thoughts and monologue, as we don't see an in-depth characterization for any other characters except her. In "Hollywood's Last Golden

Age: The Personal is Political" Jonathan Kirshner argues that Pakula works to explore and portray Bree's struggles of having to deal with men in the "straight" world, which is of course, a depiction of a relevant female issue. *Klute* "uses sexuality as a vehicle in the service of a broader character study…Bree craves turning tricks to recapture the sense of control that does not exist for her in the straight world" (Kirshner 95-96). The desire, or need, to have some form of control over the patriarchal world we live in is a phenomenon that I would argue most women experience. While Pakula fails to depict a female character outside of the male gaze, or even allow her to function as the center of the film, he does succeed in depicting a real women's issue, which cannot be overlooked. Ideas of female self-sacrifice and the suppression of female desire are brought to the forefront through the character of Bree. The unspoken aftermath of this suppression is reflected as viewers watch Bree's internal struggle in needing to seek control or autonomy but knowing that this is a direct confliction with her desire to love and to be loved. In "The Divided Woman: Bree Daniels in *Klute*,", Diane Giddis argues that

> the heroine, Bree Daniels, is not self-consciously "liberated", or even struggling toward the kind of liberation currently meant by that term. If anything, she is going in the opposite direction: from a brittle but genuine self-sufficiency to love and dependence on a man. Yet in her tormented journey she succeeds in embodying one of the greatest contemporary female concerns: the conflict between the claims of love and the claims of autonomy." (Giddis 195)

Even though Pakula offers a "pseudo-liberated" character, a woman's battle with the idea of love is still a relevant issue that many women can relate to. While it is significant that *Klute* conveys a female experience, we must remember that this experience is still through how a man imagines this struggle to be. This proves to be a misguided attempt in suggesting liberation. Furthermore,

this depiction of a female struggle is still one which surrounds the idea of women having to choose between love/relationships and self-identity. We must ask ourselves why the only women's issues brought onto the screen are ones which position the female in choosing between man and self. Why can't women have both, and additionally, why is this the only issue being portrayed?

The ideology behind *Klute* succeeds in teaching us about how women are viewed. There is a theme of truth in this film, but ideological certainty might not be possible due to the ambivalence between what we see and hear with the usage of voiceover. Bree's voice is literally taken from her and used against her, as her stalker terrorizes her with recordings he takes of her speaking, equating a message that she has no power in her own voice. This disembodiment falters the voice of feminism as she is literally displaced and disarticulated from herself. In this sense, the camera functions to objectify her, rather than creating her as subject. Viewers are made aware of this act of voyeurism and the discomfort of this kind of looking at women, yet this still manages to produce Bree as spectacle and as vehicle for males' desires. Patriarchal ideology is maintained as the only times we see Bree possessing any form of power is when she is taking the form of male dominance. As aforementioned in Kaplan's work, "However, as a result of the recent women's movement, women have been permitted in representation to assume (step into) the position defined as "masculine", as long as the man then steps into *her* position, thus keeping the whole structure intact" (Kaplan 28). Bree steps into her masculine form as she turns tricks on men, while Klute assumes feminine form, passively standing by Bree until her eventual submission to him at the end of the film. The dynamic of course must shift back to Klute taking on the dominant role, as Bree assumes and conforms to feminine form, completely submitting to Klute, leaving her life and former self behind. When considering the reversal of

dominance/submission and masculine/feminine forms, we must ask ourselves what this means for women. What kind of message is being portrayed if a woman firstly, cannot even be dominant without being masculine, and secondly, cannot even remain dominant for the entirety of the film? Yes, it can be considered feminist in the fact that Bree is provided with a choice, and there is some liberation in that itself. But as Giddis argues, we are once again plagued with wondering why this choice exists in the first place, especially when women associate this choice with a loss of autonomy: "And the more a woman has a life or mind of her own, the greater the sacrifice seems. In a sense, her identity is more precarious; it is a thing arrived at. A man's identity is more established…women associate losing identity with accepting love, for where one is gained the other is in some part lost" (Giddis 201). When we consider this in relation to the ending of *Klute*, we often wonder why Bree and Klute couldn't have gone somewhere that would help Bree grow as a person. If she is going to give in to her fears and completely submit her life to Klute, couldn't we at least have been provided with some form of compromise? What kind of place will Bree have in Klute's life? Why couldn't they go somewhere Bree would want to go? "The last shot is of Bree's room-totally stripped, except for the telephone, of all reflection of Bree" (Giddis 201). The ending of this film provides woman with the message that we must give up parts of ourselves and assimilate to man if we desire to be loved.

Klute and the Problem of Spectatorship

      While it is obvious that _Klute_ centralizes around the idea of looking, and primarily of looking at the female character Bree, there is one radical moment within this film that appears to be making a commentary on the idea of spectatorship. The scene portrays Bree alone in her home, sitting at a table as she smokes a joint and drinks a glass of wine. As Bree thinks that no one is watching her, it is noticeable to the audience how much her body language has changed. She appears to be much freer and relaxed alone as compared to the scenes previously shown where she is in public. Her change in demeanor can be concluded to the fact that there is no target for Bree to seduce or impress when she is alone, meaning she can let down her masquerade, or excess of femininity. She relaxes with her feet inclined, refusing to be made spectacle as she turns off the light and her face is immersed in shadow.

Although Bree is actually being watched by her stalker in this scene, it is still an interesting moment as viewers see a female character letting her guard down, and in turn disrupting visual pleasure and contradicting male's fantasies of women. This sequence provides Bree with a greater sense of autonomy and depth, as she exceeds being just the surface of an image. Bree's rejection to appeal to male gaze in this moment is a rejection of "to be looked at ness", and a further continuation of what feminist film theorists urge us to think about. Doane mentions that contemporary film "is a project of de-familiarization whose aim is not necessarily that of seeing the female body differently, but of exposing the habitual meanings/values attached to femininity as cultural constructions" (Doane 24). Although _Klute_ is not contemporary work, this particular scene functions exactly to work against classical Hollywood conventions by exploring the notion that women have a dual quality to them, and the ability to masquerade. This provides insight to

values associated with the cultural construction of womanhood, while creating an incoherence in

the audience's visual pleasure, as we are denied full visual access to Bree, and also to the type of

woman we expect to see.

Annie Hall and its Absence of a Self-Liberated Woman

Yet that woman, because of whom the city is built, who is the foundation and the very condition

of representation, is nowhere in the city, stage of its performance.

-Teresa de Lauretis, "Through the Looking Glass"

The 1977 film, _Annie Hall_, directed by Woody Allen, is perhaps the most obvious

example of a form of counter cinema in the 1970s that begins to address issues of female

liberation, but fails to make a full commitment to it. Counter to _Klute_, _Annie Hall_ is named after

the female protagonist, yet is voiced by the male character and told only from his perspective,

whereas _Klute_ is named after the male character but opts to use Bree's voice in telling the story.

This is an interesting reversal in dynamics to consider. It is telling of this era that the films being

produced are unable to allow a woman to serve as both narrative voice, and as the name of the

film, even though each film and director is using woman to exploit what they think "female

issues" are, and how they should manifest onto the screen. Allen's _Annie Hall_ is a story which

"originates from woman and is founded on the dream of her captivity, yet women are all but

absent…" (de Lauretis 13). Allen uses the depiction of the character Annie to drive the plot, yet

her portrayal represents the shell of a woman, one rooted only in offensive stereotypes, resulting

in the absence of an accurate portrayal of women.

Of all the female characters analyzed thus far, it is Annie's characterization that bothers

me the most and materializes as least feminist. Allen portrays Annie through several tired

stereotypes of women- she is "la-de-da", ditzy, shallow, and even a bad driver. She comes across

as empty in the beginning of the film as she is incapable of forming her own thoughts and

opinions or matching Alvy's intelligence level. Of course, we can consider that the perspective we are getting on Annie is through the lens of Alvy, so one reading may be that Allen is offering a broader commentary or message on how men in society viewed women at this point. However, I would argue that his portrayal of Annie is not that well thought out. Based on what we know about Woody Allen as a person, it is unlikely that he was seeking to produce a film that was insightful in displacing the audience and allowing them to consider how men treated, or viewed, women. I feel that Allen was more interested in producing an autobiographical film through *Annie Hall,* once which examined his own relationships with women, and in turn offered a reflection of his fragile masculinity, and how the patriarchal discourse has helped shape that. Whether this reflection was intentional or not I am unsure, however it seems evident that Allen's characterization of Annie is a direct result of his own lived experiences. In his book analyzing the films of Allen, Foster Hirsch states, "The movie may be called *Annie Hall,* but it is in fact intensely autobiographical and self-centered" (Hirsch 82). The character of Alvy seems all too like that of Woody Allen himself. This allows viewers to believe that Alvy's inner monologue is merely Allen's own thoughts and notions about women being reiterated in the form of character, producing another form of a projectile film. While I do not feel that it was his goal to commentate on the misogynistic ways that men perceive women when in relationship's, he still provides this for the audience. This proves *Annie Hall* to be an interesting film to consider when thinking about how women are looked at, and how this perception affects and shapes us.

Although the depiction of Annie's character is one established in female stereotypes, there are still glimpses in the film that allude to her having intelligence, talent, or some form of liberation. Annie participates in a form of masquerade, as the audience sees her cross dress, wearing masculine clothing. Doane states, "To masquerade is to manufacture a lack in the form

of a certain distance between oneself and one's image" (Doane 26). Annie's crossdressing is a moment of masquerade that allows for an ironization of the gaze itself. Wearing clothes which signify a different sexuality (particularly a masculine one), allows the woman to have mastery over her image, granting the possibility of attaching the gaze to desire. This results in her stylization as a moment of incoherence within the film which disarticulates the male systems of viewing. However, her stylization and liberated moments prove fleeting as they are typically undercut by Alvy's character. It is evident that Alvy is more interested in the idea of a "dumb" girl- one whom he can manipulate, teach, and mold into the person he wants her to be. Alvy takes on a God complex, or an all-knowing persona, constantly attempting to teach her what's right from wrong. This is shown as he pays for her to see an analysist, encourages her to take college classes, tells her what books and movies she should like, and pointedly voices his disapproval in her smoking marijuana. He is interested in Annie for the fact that he can easily assert his male dominance over her and believes that she is not established enough in her own person, so she will readily submit to his. As Hirsch explains,

> Alvy, though, begins to take advantage of Annie's lack of self-confidence. He dominates her, taking over her life the way Allen takes control of the film- on one level Allen has made a movie about his own bossiness. Treating Annie like an appendage to his own life and career, making her feel bad because she is not as bright as he is, generally reinforcing her insecurities rather than trying to counteract them…Alvy is attracted to her precisely because she is someone he can mold." (Hirsch 86)

This asserts the premise in our society that men are only interested in women that they can possess a certain sense of control over. Annie is serving as both Allen's and Alvy's vehicle of desire- he simply likes the idea of this kind of woman. Therefore, women are portrayed the way

they are in film (by male directors) because of this interpretation. Men like the *idea* of a type of woman, so in turn they reflect this form of woman in their art, failing to recognize that no women are *actually* like this. The manifestation of this portrayal is founded in our society's patriarchy, which is why women are often met with making a sacrifice when entering a relationship; a theme we see in *Klute* and *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*. It is understood that a lot of men prefer a woman who is not developed in herself, as they desire someone they can easily maneuver and mold. Once a woman begins to assert her selfhood, a man's dominance is threatened, and woman is left feeling unlovable in the relationship, just for being her own person.

Allen does provide a shift in the narrative of *Annie Hall*, as Annie objectively comes to her senses in the end, proving to be liberated in some regard as she makes the decision to leave Alvy. Viewers watch Annie become more and more educated throughout the film, developing a greater sense of self through her analysist appointments and college classes. Yes, it is great to see a woman educate and choose herself for once in 70s cinema, rather than succumbing to the male. However, it goes without saying that Allen is rather obviously conveying "pseudo-liberation". Annie is the one who makes the choice to be liberated in the sense that she is free from Alvy, but it is clear that Annie was only able to become this powerful figure through the help of Alvy. He is the one who provides her the tools which she needs to stand up for herself and recognize just how toxic he is. "Alvy, she sees as she did not before, is not the only arbiter of value. So, with a confidence instilled by her acquaintance with another set of values, she is able to achieve a degree of autonomy and independence hitherto denied her" (Knight 3). Although she can reach this level of independence, the film is not feminist in the fact that she did not reach liberation on her own. Alvy cultivated her into this person. Struggling to reach autonomy is a woman's issue, but this woman's issue should never be resolved by a man, as this makes it inherently, no longer

a woman's issue. Annie does not hold the power to be the maker of her own meaning, as she can only produce significance in the plot through the help of the male. What kind of message does this portray to women if we can only reach liberation in the filmic world through male assistance? Why couldn't Annie become liberated on her own terms, without the help of a man?

As Annie is liberated with the unconscious help of Alvy, power dynamics change between the male and female characters. Alvy is naïve in his ideas about women, as he did not suspect that Annie was ever capable of reaching this level of independence which he accidentally provided her with. Alvy is unable to handle Annie taking on any form of dominance, or the possibility of the dominance/submission roles between them shifting. This is reflected in the end of the film as he produces a play which centers around his relationship with Annie. However, his play ends with the female character staying with him, rather than leaving him as Annie did. "Here, Alvy is the pathetic Pygmalion, left only with his art, choosing, once again, the "perfect" woman, which is to say the perfectly submissive woman, the one who (even as she is modeled on Annie) stays…" (Knight 5). It is evident through this ending, and the film itself, that Allen is threatened by the idea of a dominant, or liberated woman. Alvy/Allen cannot even allow for a woman to possess independence in his play, let alone his life in general. As soon as the notion that Annie is an idiot dissipates, and as soon as Annie starts cultivating her own life and developing interests, their relationship is doomed.

Annie Hall proves to be an interesting film of the 70s to analyze in the context of women and feminism, not because the depiction of women is accurate, but because the depiction of male is accurate. Although Allen fails to produce a female character with real meaning, he does succeed in providing an examination of how men view women, and how men feel threatened by

women. This analysis allows us to form a better understanding as to why real female portrayals

are left out of film, and what this means for women in society.

Annie Hall's Moment of Autonomy

Although _Annie Hall_ does not allow the female character to embark on liberation through her own terms, there is still a moment in the film which offers some autonomy as it dismantles how women are screened in classical Hollywood cinema. Allen provides the audience with a sequence of incoherence which denies visual pleasure, as Annie's complex thoughts and emotions are explored. The scene begins with Alvy pressuring Annie into engaging in sexual intercourse with him. While they engage in the act, viewers see two Diane Keaton's as the actress steps outside of her body, removing her personal from her physical. This proves to be a radical sequence of autonomy as the feeling of being removed from oneself or stepping outside of oneself during sex is one which many women experience but is never depicted in film as this disrupts male's visual pleasure. Annie therefore denies de Lauretis' theory of spectacle, as spectacle is usually produced through male's fantasies or fetishizations, yet male would not fantasize about a woman experiencing this during sex. Viewers see how Annie is distracted with her own thoughts and feelings, adding some illusory depth to her character, as the depiction of her inner conscience allows her to be more than just the surface of an image, if even only for a moment. This moment is rare in _Annie Hall_ as Annie is finally separated from man (Alvy, or Allen), allowing her to reject male gaze and represent a different idea of woman. Through this, Allen offers a moment of progressiveness, as this is the exact opposite of a moment of "to be looked at ness', and is instead a reflection of the duality, or doubleness of the woman's life. As mentioned earlier, Doane's analysis on masquerade is useful when thinking through the commentary that this sequence offers on how women are filmed. Doane states, "To masquerade is to manufacture a lack in the form of a certain distance between oneself and one's image"

(Doane 26). By stepping outside of herself, Annie is able to achieve the necessary distance of the second look, momentarily dissecting the episteme which assigns woman a particular place in cinematic representation. It is evident that this sequence in *Annie Hall* allows a break from traditional conventions of classical Hollywood, allowing the film to be read as counter-cinema, as it brings forward feminist film theories notions of female spectatorship. Ultimately, *Annie Hall* follows the traditional Hollywood mold, while challenging classical Hollywood's conventions of spectatorship. While it fails to propose a fully autonomous subject, it does remind us what feminist film theorists have called for through its brief moment of radical autonomy, visual disruption, and re-framing of the woman.

Conclusion

There is clearly an overall lack of truly liberated female characters in American cinema of the 1970s. Although these films of the Hollywood Renaissance were considered progressive for their portrayal of women and women's issues at the time, they were merely further examples of classical Hollywood cinema, with some brief moments of incoherence that offered a newfound sense of radicalism. These films still functioned to produce pseudo-liberated versions of women, even as they attempted to depict a different and more accurate portrayal, most likely due to their involvement of women in helping to make these films.

But there will always be more work and more to consider when it comes to analyzing whether depiction of women on screen is truly feminist. We must acknowledge *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore, Klute,* and *Annie Hall* for the revisions of women that they did offer. We must recognize that American film of the 1970s was at least moving forward from classical Hollywood cinema when it came to portraying women, even if these steps weren't always the largest, or most truthful to the female experience.

Coda: *Wanda* and *Norma Rae*

While many films from the 1970s depict a certain type of pseudo-liberated women, there are two films worth mentioning which offer a rendition of female portrayal counter to the one's previously discussed. It is important to note that not every film from this era depicted women in an inaccurate manner, as there were some exceptions. Martin Ritt's *Norma Rae* (1979) and Barbara Loden's *Wanda* (1970) both give rise to depictions of working-class women that were relatively absent from cinema at their times. Rather than offering brief moments of autonomy, the full content of *Norma Rae* is experimental through its sponsoring of a women who reaches

real liberation. On the other hand, *Wanda* produces a female protagonist who outwardly *refuses* liberation, yet the film proves to be the most experimental through its style. Both films draw on the principles of feminist film theory in their portrayals of women. *Norma Rae* and *Wanda* are interesting films to consider in relation to one another, as they produce female protagonists who are wildly different, yet are the most accurate in their time of depicting the realistic struggles women face to reach autonomy.

***Norma Rae*: How Politics of the Working-Class Shapes Female Liberation**

The 1979 film, *Norma Rae,* proves to be a rare moment in Hollywood for its time as two women, Tamara Asseyev and Alex Rose, teamed up to produce the movie. Asseyev and Rose chose Martin Ritt to direct this true story focusing on a women's battle against difficult odds, as Ritt had a reputation for making films about underdogs, that angered people through their leftist thought. Ritt then chose husband and wife Irving Ravetch and Harriet Frank Jr. as writers for the film. It is worth mentioning the numerous people (and most importantly, the women) involved in *Norma Rae*'s production, as they are the reason the film is accurate in both its depiction of female character, and the political environment and working conditions of textile mills in the South.

The character of Norma Rae is one contrasting to the other female characters we have discussed thus far. Norma Rae is found caught in a state of stasis, like that of Alice's. She is acutely aware of the disquieting possibility that there is no other place for her to go in life, leaving her unhappy with the conditions that she has been dealt. Unlike Alice, she lacks the time and resources to think about the social and political forces that shape her life, as her main priority is getting through her long workday and providing for her children. It isn't until labor union organizer Reuben Warshovsky arrives on the scene that she starts to gain consciousness through his pro-union teachings. As her relationship with Reuben develops, she is inspired to become a union leader, providing her with an outlet to express her needs for change, independence, and overall, autonomy. The story provides some insight to her desire for freedom and structural change, by highlighting her past sexual escapades as avenues for expression. Her flirtatious behavior and sexual promiscuity function to convey her distaste for societies conventions for

women, and a hunger for autonomy. This characterization is different from that of other female

protagonists of the 1970s, because Norma Rae's sexual expression is not implemented to further

exploit women. Instead, it allows viewers to gain a better understanding as to why she becomes

an aggressive union leader, who is passionate to fight for change. Furthermore, her sexuality

coupled with her hunger for change is an accurate representation of women union leaders at the

time. "Norma Rae: Unionism in an Age of Feminism" states:

> Martin Ritt argued that his movie looked more realistically at some of the challenges
>
> women in America were facing than other Hollywood films of the 1970s that dealt with
>
> women's issues. Too many of the new pictures focused on middle class women who were
>
> disturbed, neurotic, and "slightly erotic", he said. Norma Rae, instead, looked at a
>
> working-class female who had genuine reasons to rebel. It showed Norma Rae beginning
>
> her awakening awkwardly as she groped for an understanding of her role in a southern
>
> mill community that expected women to be docile. (Toplin 287)

It is through this honest portrayal of a female character that *Norma Rae* successfully highlights

not only what women were coming up against in society, but also what women were coming up

against as union organizers. In this sense, *Norma Rae* exemplifies how women fighting for their

own rights, actually results in women fighting for everyone's rights. As shown in the film, once

women became liberated, true liberation was able to reach everyone in society.

Although Norma Rae is introduced to the idea of organization through a male character,

she does not learn *everything* from Reuben as Annie does from Alvy in *Annie Hall*. Norma Rae

does reach maturation, like Annie does, as viewers watch her sit down with her children,

preemptively telling them about her promiscuous past, taking responsibility. However, this

maturation is through her own journey of self-enlightenment, and not because of Reuben's

presence, unlike Annie's journey. Additionally, class struggle is portrayed in these characters as

they learn equally from each other, since Norma Rae's lived experiences are valuable to Reuben

in helping him gain more insight to the work environment he is attempting to unionize. It is

evident that they teach things to one another, and despite the obvious class divide, Norma Rae is

portrayed as just as realized, opinionated, and autonomous as Reuben is. Henry Giroux argues,

> Not only do we see remnants of the class struggle exposed in this relationship, but we
>
> also see it giving way to more politically progressive social relationships, as Norma Rae
>
> and Reuben forge a friendship that moves beyond the sexist, exploitative relationships
>
> portrayed between men and women in most Hollywood films. The Hollywood formula of
>
> sex, power, and intimacy gives way in this film to a dynamic that demonstrates that men
>
> and women can come together on different terms. (3)

The presence of a nonsexual relationship between the leading man and woman in this film is

something we have not yet seen in the films previously discussed. This is an important aspect of

the film which sets it apart from other films of its era. There is an attraction between the two

characters, yet it is mediated by the awareness of its own limits. If this were like *Klute*, or *Alice*,

Norma Rae would run off with Reuben, abandoning her life in the South, perpetuating to viewers

that love is the only answer and option for women. Instead, the film allows Norma Rae to reach

new levels of autonomy as she recognizes her and Reuben's cultural differences, denying

viewers any possibility of an intimate affair forging between them. This film is instead about

how men and women can come together to overcome the forces that oppress them, rather than

about how men and women can come together intimately. Therefore, Norma Rae is allowed

existence as not an appendage to any men, but instead her own, liberated self. Overall, the

accurate portrayal of the fight for autonomy, and of the characterization of women throughout

Norma Rae proves it to be an exception to the other pseudo-liberated films of the 1970s.

Wanda: How Autonomy Arises Through Refusal

The 1970 film, _Wanda_, directed by Barbara Loden, is a film that works to resist the creation of entertainment, further functioning to alienate the spectator itself. Although it is debatable whether the character of Wanda is a liberated one, she is a character who denies becoming spectacle, as she simply refuses to do anything that would put her in such a position. Her ultimate refusal to submit to what society expects of her is one which disregards all notions of classical Hollywood conventions, as she actively disrupts visual pleasure for the entirety of the film, proving the style to be experimental. It is evident that this film offers viewers with a different form of women along with a form of politics, that being the politics of refusal. Wanda is like the character of Alice, in the sense that she is left without a man, yet she differs in the fact that she lacks any determination or fight. She is an unresisting character, who rejects the ability to change anything in her life, ultimately leading to her resignation. Bérénice Raynaud states, "Silenced by his accusations, she says: "Listen judge, if he wants a divorce, just give it to him." What is at stake in this court is Goranski's (her husband's) desire, not hers. What does she want? Not her husband…Nor her children…" (Raynaud 1). Through this sequence, Loden's politics of refusal is evident, as the character cannot want or become anything, since society's structure prevents her from doing so. She is stuck in a position of helplessness, one which leaves women with no longing to want anything, as she has likely learned a long time ago that her desires must be suppressed, as they are not achievable.

It is evident that Loden is producing a commentary on the societal structure of the 1970's as viewers watch it continuously fail Wanda, ultimately preventing her from any accomplishment, as every change she attempts to make is eventually thwarted by society. Wanda

is exhausted from simply being a woman, making her depiction perhaps the most realistic of all to the female experience. In her essay "*Wanda*, Loden, lodestone." Elena Gorfinkel states:

> She sees in the space opened by Wanda's silence a place for reckoning. It is a reckoning with all those ill-advised, risky, 'unsympathetic', ambivalent tendencies that roil within any woman who confronts the cruelties of subsisting in the exhaustion of just being, in facing, time and again, the circumscribed terms of her value, a value defined by men, by capitalism, by law. (3)

Wanda's resignation to the patriarchal, capitalistic society she lives in might be the greatest exercise of autonomy we see in these films of the 1970s. Along with refusing to become, the character of Wanda refuses to make any decisions as to where she wants to go, or what she wants to do next. Reynaud states, "*Wanda*'s nomadic sensibility is apparent first in its narrative structure: from the Pennsylvania coal fields to the Connecticut highways, from Waterbury where Mr. Dennis meets his father to Scranton where the robbery is performed, the protagonist keeps going in circles and "not going anywhere"" (Reynaud). This narrative "nomadic" performance of Wanda's character may be frustrating to some viewers, and they may grow agitated with the character as it appears that she is not even trying. However, Loden is offering a character study of passivity through Wanda. She submits to whatever her fate may be, but this is because she has no other options. Like Norma Rae, society does not allow for her to live a fulfilling life, as the women's movement was not inclusive for all women, particularly not for women of the working-class. While Norma Rae becomes liberated through the union, Wanda is not offered an outlet like this, or any chance of hope to get out of the situation she is in. This leads to her refusal to go anywhere, along with her refusal to let viewers into her personal psyche becoming a feminist statement. Gorfinkel states, "*Wanda* refuses symptomatology and the certitude of psychological

causality. Who gets to articulate their trauma…*Wanda* makes clear that such self-scripting is itself a privilege that not every woman can afford" (Garfinkel 2). Her passivity and erasure are a deliberate, poetic choice as they create a refusal to be read and a refusal to submit to the spectator. The fact that *Wanda* is the only film discussed which is directed by a woman is the reason for its accurate portrayal of a female protagonist who gives up, and who is exhausted by the state society has placed her in. While it may seem anti-feminist that Wanda lacks a fight or drive towards a better life, it is clear that this lack exists for good reason. This is the power and politics present in Loden's 1970 film, *Wanda,* yet absent from the other pseudo-liberated films of the 1970s. Wanda does not reach maturation, or autonomy in the way that Norma Rae does, yet she does provide an interesting character study for a different kind of autonomy, one which is realistic for the women who lacked the privilege to be included in the women's movement.

Bibliography

Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore. Directed by Martin Scorsese. Performances by Ellen Burstyn,

      Kris Kristofferson, 1974

Annie Hall. Directed by Woody Allen. Performances by Woody Allen, Diane Keaton, 1977.

Berliner, Todd. *Hollywood Incoherent: Narration in Seventies Cinema*. University of Texas

      Press, 2010.

Bonnie and Clyde. Directed by Arthur Penn, Performances by Warren Beatty, Faye Dunaway,

      1967.

Dance, Girl, Dance. Directed by Dorothy Arzner. Performances by Lucille Ball, Maureen

      O'Hara, 1940.

De Lauretis, Teresa. *Rethinking women's cinema: Aesthetics and feminist theory*. na, 1987.

De Lauretis, Teresa. "Through the looking-glass." *The cinematic apparatus*. London: Palgrave

      Macmillan UK, 1980. 187-202.

Doane, Mary Ann. "Film and the masquerade: Theorizing the female spectator." (1982): 74-87.

Doane, Mary Ann. "Woman's stake: Filming the female body." *Feminism and film theory*.

      Routledge, 2013. 216-228.

Friedman, Lester. *American cinema of the 1970s: themes and variations*. Rutgers University

      Press, 2007.

Giddis, Diane. "The Divided Woman: Bree Daniels in *Klute*." *Movies and Methods Vol. I*. Ed. Bill

      Nichols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1976. 194-201.

Giroux, Henry. "Norma Rae: Character, culture and class." *Jump Cut* 22 (1980): 1-7.

Gledhill, Christine. "*Klute* 1: A Contemporary Film Noir and Feminist Criticism." *Women in Film*

      Noir. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan, London: BFI, 1998. 20-34.

Gorfinkel, Elena. "*Wanda*, Loden, lodestone." Institute for Contemporary Arts. 2016.

Haskell, Molly. *From reverence to rape: The treatment of women in the movies*. University of

   Chicago Press, 2016.

Hirsch, Foster. *Love, sex, death & the meaning of life: the films of Woody Allen*. Da Capo Press,

   2001.

Johnston, Claire. "Dorothy Arzner: critical strategies." *Feminism and Film Theory*. Routledge,

   2013. 36-45.

Johnston, Claire. "Women's cinema as counter cinema." *Film theory: Critical concepts in media and*

   cultural studies 3 (1973): 183-192.

Kaplan, E. Ann. "Is the gaze male?" (2010).

King, Geoff. *Quality Hollywood: Markers of Distinction in Contemporary Studio Film*.

   Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.

Kirshner, Jonathan. *Hollywood's Last Golden Age: Politics, Society, and the Seventies Film in*

   America. Cornell University Press, 2019.

Klute. Directed by Alan Pakula, Performances by Jane Fonda, Donald Sutherland, 1971.

"Klute 2: Feminism and *Klute*." *Women in Film Noir*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan, London: BFI, 1998-99.

Knight, Christopher J. "Woody Allen's Annie Hall: Galatea's Triumph Over

   Pygmalion." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 32.3 (2004): 213.

Langenfeld, Elizabeth Irene. "Hitchcock's" Rebecca": A rhetorical study of female stereotyping."

   (1999).

Mayne, Judith. *Lesbian looks: Dorothy Arzner and female authorship*. na, 1991.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema." *Feminism and film theory*. Routledge, 2013.

   57-68.

Norma Rae. Directed by Martin Ritt, Performances by Sally Fields, Ron Liebman, 1979.

Osoliová, Viktória. "Framing the Absence and Presence of Rebecca: Female Subjectivity and
Voyeurism on and Off-Screen in Alfred Hitchcock's Rebecca." *AMERICANA E-journal
of American Studies in Hungary* 17.1 (2021).

Raynaud, Bérénice. "For Wanda." *The Last Great American Picture Show: New Hollywood
Cinema in the 1970s*. Eds. Thomas Elsaesser, Alexander Horwath, Noel King.
Amsterdam UP, 2004. 223-248.

Rebecca. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Performances by Joan Fontaine, Laurence Oliver, 1940.

Rich, B. Ruby. "In the name of feminist film criticism." *Issues in feminist film criticism* (1990):
268-287.

Showalter, Elaine. "Feminist criticism in the wilderness." *Critical inquiry* 8.2 (1981): 179-205.

Tompkins, Jane. "Me and my shadow." *New Literary History* 19.1 (1987): 169-178.

Toplin, Robert. "Norma Rae: Unionism in an age of feminism." *Labor History* 36.2 (1995): 282-298.

Wanda. Directed by Barbara Loden. Performances by Barbara Loden, Michael Higgins, 1970.

Webb, Teena, and Betsy Martens. "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore A Hollywood
liberation." *Jump Cut* 7 (1975): 4-5.

Williams, Linda. "Film bodies: Gender, genre, and excess." *Film genre reader iv*. University of
Texas Press, 2012. 159-177.

Wood, Robin. "The Incoherent Text: Narrative in the 1970s." *Hollywood from Vietnam to
Reagan* (1986). 46-69.