

Gabor Por

SOC151

Gender in Film/TV

January 25, 2006

Balancing Acts

(On “So Proudly We Hail!”)

This movie is a balancing act on multiple levels. Its creators attempt to share the dark side of the war, but also provide a positive outlook for the future. However they were not entirely free to do so, because the movie was written and shot at the height of World War II when its outcome was unknown. If they wanted to create a realistic picture that could resonate with the contemporary audience they could not have an entirely happy ending, where the war is over. That would have been more wishful thinking. Instead they wrote a happy ending on a micro-, personal level. Most of the heroines survive and the main figures true love is not lost.

This points to the question what happiness is for a woman serving in the military. On hand this movie reinforces strongly the normative roles that a woman’s ultimate happiness relies on finding her man. Most of the plot revolves around this quest. As one of the women early on in the movie says (after slipping in high heels), “the things we do to trap men.” Women almost anything for this “lofty” goal is depicted as natural behavior. However the country’s war efforts required women to fill in positions previously held exclusively by men. This is the balance the director is struggling to maintain, to show women as effective and active people outside the domestic sphere, while at the same time maintain the domesticity ideology.

A few decades later the question of integrating women in the military will shift. As we learned from Blumenson's article there are proponents for full integration, including combat units and there are people who argue against it. At this point in time, however, at least according to this movie the issue is not even present. In the opening scene we see the women in uniform arriving on a plane to an army base where they are greeted by male officers as returning heroes. However their heroics are immediately downplayed when they are treated as special creatures who need special attention. They are taken care of as "others." They could only be nurses, according to the prevailing ideology no other role was suitable for women in the military than that. This is where they can practice their "maternal instincts."

There is no question where the women in this movie fit in Lockett's typology and analysis of women depicted in military related movies, they are all "professional women undercut by their sexuality." The one exception could have been Capt. 'Ma' McGregor, who is shown to have some masculine traits, no matter how we define that. However in later scenes even she softens and her emotional side, associated with femininity softens her words and actions. We do not witness a single woman from Lockett's third category, who could successfully combine his womanly and soldier roles. It is an impossible quest anyway, because for them, as shown in the movie, the war is a temporary, liminal position. They all know here that once the war is over or they served their duty they will return to their "good luck, long life, and abundance of kids." This is what the chaplain explicitly wished for Janet, and I do not mean "Lt. Janet 'Davy' Davidson" on her wedding. This is the best, the most and all she can and should hope for.

Tasker's article provided the most insights in deciphering the movie. She points to the "carefully managed tension between conformity and individualism." A quintessential way women are supposed to insert the later is through their dress. Thus when we see one of them desparately

clinging to her silk nightgown or when another receives a fancy hat in the middle of the jungle we know for sure, that their individuality, strongly feminine in nature, is not lost.

Bonding is a staple of action movies. While for male soldiers this is done through combat (and its surrounding rituals), the strongest bonding scene we experienced here was when Olivia finally broke and told the others what is bothering her. The fact and way her compatriots learned that Olivia's fiancée was killed created an immediate bond amongst them. However it was based on emotion and a different kind of shared experience. All women in the movie are defined in relation to "their" men. She lost her love, therefore she lost the meaning of life. Thus she could willingly sacrifice herself, because there was nothing else left for her. (This reminded me of female Palestinian suicide bombers. Barbara Victor's *Army of Roses* provides a journalistic explanation to the phenomenon and she mentions that a lot of those women chose martyrdom, because of their social outcast status, either by being barren or not subduing themselves to their society's expectations for women.) As Olivia steps towards death letting her hair down serves the double function of attracting the gaze of male enemy soldiers and signifying that she is engaged to (showing vulnerability for) the country she fights for. She is reminiscent to the famous French painting where the spirit of the revolution is embodied in a bare-chested woman rushing triumphantly towards the enemy.

Tasker posits, while analyzing movies produced four decades later that "muscular physique can function as a signifier for both male and female protagonists." There is no "butch" woman in this, except the aforementioned Captain, but even her "butchiness" is eventually negated. Apparently in the 1940's mass media butch women were not desirable to depict.

Women officers are shown as having both maternalistic and paternalistic duties towards their crews. They are supposed to make them feel at home while maintaining their security too.

This later task however is often delegated to male soldiers, while they retained the former in the home maker and being a venue for emotional outlet roles.

Honor is a key concept for military. These women are honored verbally for staying alive. But we do not witness the rituals associated with this honor: the reception of medals. Instead we are treated in the closes scene with John's letter. The very last words of the movie are his closing line "your devoted husband." Thus we are taught that the highest honor a woman can achieve is to have a devoted husband. As long as she gets that everything is in order. Balance has been reached. In the middle of the movie Janet stated to John, "I can't love you; I won't permit myself, because I have a job to do." But by now duty has been downgraded. Rosie the riveter has to return to her home.

Gabor Por

SOC151

Gender in Film/TV

January 31, 2006

From Being Smothered to Mothering

(On "Now Voyager")

"She is coming down." These are the first words we hear in the movie. "She" is Miss Vale who has to be tiptoed around. One would think that she is some kind royalty, but as soon as we see her we realize that she is an oppressed, quiet woman. This is her journey. I will show below where it fits the self-development path outlined by Gilligan and where it does not.

Gilligan's recurring probing question to her interviewees was "how would you describe yourself." At the beginning of the film we would not be able to get a straight answer from Charlotte. The first two sentences she says about herself are: "I am my mother's servant" and "It's fun making fun of me." What is even more characteristic of her self image is that she passes the right to define herself, her room, and indeed every aspect of her life to her mother. E.g. she pronounces meekly, "my mother approves of sensible shoes and solids books." But under her intonation we already hear the bubbling trouble. After all she says these words to the doctor, who was invited to examine, help her, despite that Charlotte's mother announces that "nobody in the Vale family ever had a nervous breakdown."

Gilligan describes this state as "the self, which is the sole object of concern, is constrained by a lack of power." While we may think that Charlotte is a devoted daughter of her

smothering child, but we do know that she is an introvert, concerned about her self. At this point she sustains the self-limiting belief that she has no power, no control over her life.

However eventually she transitions to the next state. The first sign of this is when she says self-satirically on the ship, "I am poor 'Aunt Charlotte' I am ill and have been in the sanatorium and I am not well yet." Her capacity to talk about herself from an outside point of view is a sign of recovery, a sign that the role of the self is being replaced with something else. Gilligan describes the transition with "the concepts of selfishness and responsibility first appear." This is where Miss Vale's internal voyage is in a different order. After all her sense of obligation to her mother and her feeling of shame and selfishness if she does anything against the maternal will is the force that ruined her health. Thus we can say that she had a huge, unhealthy dosage of these.

The creators of the film use cleverly but predictably the visual tools for making the protagonist a beautiful woman from an ugly duckling. She tells Tina towards the end of the movie, that "you can earn a kind of beauty, that has nothing to do with your face." However this is a mixed message because her transformation is both physical and mental. She blossoms in front of our eyes both internally and externally and this suggests a strong connection between the two. I blame the "male gaze" for this. The movie had to work within the social ambience, where most women were still expected to have as the highest desire of their life to find and get man. In this context of course she had to turn to be attractive for the male. Even if Walsh says that the majority of the audience of women's films was women, the glamour still had to be attached to Bette Davis.

Upon her return from the trip she is confident for the first time. From this point on she is the third phase of Gilligan's ontology. She is assertive for the first time to her mother "You had

no right to move my things." She can afford to be playful, because she knows herself. ("Tell him about your boyfriend! Which one?") By the end of the movie "the criteria for goodness move inward." (Gilligan 84). She decides to care for Tina, against social convention, against socially prescribed roles and family models. Starting of as a pessimist, going through an optimist phase (then entering an interval of tragical events and attitudes), she learns to become a realist with the last sentence of the movie, "Don't ask for the Moon, we have the stars." On the level of the words this may sound grandiose, but if we decipher the metaphor it becomes plain that life can be livable through the constraints she and her mixed family has to endure. Instead of replicating her mother's smothering patterns of behavior there is an indication that she will be a loving and caring mother to Tina.

"Now Voyager" contains all there major elements of women's film. Charlotte Vale triumphs over adversity, both internal (her low self-esteem) and external (her domineering mother.) The film is devoted to spheres of devotion as it is essentially a case study of different styles of parenting. Finally while the movie's theme remains in the realm of domesticity it redefines, extends it.

Walsh's observation that women's movies were "distinctly middle class" does not ring true for this movie, where the heroine was definitely upper class, as we can surmise from the description of her living condition or from the facts that she or anybody in her family did not have to work for a living. Walsh writes "over two hundred letters from daughters poured in, telling Davis how the film helped them resolve their own conflicts with an overbearing mother." This is the most important aspect of the film, its effect on society.

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SOC151

Gender in Film/TV

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On "Double Indemnity"

This movie fits perfectly the model of film noir as set up by Janey Place. She talks about the genre as a "male fantasy" (p.35.) What can prove it more than the fact that throughout the movie we hear the male protagonist's recollection, and narration. Or to put it another way we experience the world through his understanding or possibly through his imagination. The movie made Phyllis a "sexually expressive woman" thus powerful. Place argues that film noir is a movement and not a genre, because the latter refers to a subject matter, while the former to a visual style of a particular era. As such, this film applies the movement's visual styles, with minimal lighting, "claustrophobic, hopeless, doomed" feeling. This reflects the uprooted values of the world or at least the protagonists. Place points out that the two archetypal women in film noir is never embodied in a single individual. Indeed here we have the "spider woman" in Phyllis, whose goal is "independence, but her nature is fundamentally and irredeemably sexual." (p. 46.) Her stepdaughter Lola, on the other hand could be the opposite archetype, the innocent, yet potentially nurturing woman. She starts off however with a tint on her reputation in the movie, that later gets corrected when she separates herself from her man and we see her love as true and deep. That is a value the era could revere in, as it was not consummated (at least not in the stage when she was living on her own.) Place concludes that "male fears are concretized in sexually

aggressive women, who must be destroyed." (p. 54.) This is exactly what is happening here. She must die, while presumably Walter will live on.

Breines prove-using primarily tertiary analysis of secondary sources--that male and female roles were not converging in the 1950's US. She is looking at the theories of the "organizational man", that indeed were about man and not woman. While contemporary theorists realized that the traditional masculinity has been changed from the rugged independent individual to the bureaucratic type, they did little work to understand how femininity has changed. That work largely started with Betty Friedan (,who passed away this Saturday.) Walter in our movie was an almost typical organizational man. His highest aspirations were getting better at his job, selling more insurance. He did not even want to go up on the ladder when his boss offered it the opportunity to him. Importance is approval was still important for him though. He is an "other directed person...., genial and cooperative, anxious, lacks internalized values." (p. 73.) These attributes traditionally were considered feminine, but in the 1950's became part of the masculine repertoire. The last characteristics mentioned, proves almost fatal for Fred, because this allows him to diverge from the socially approved path and attempt to commit a deviant act, an act of crime. "Glamour and humanistic models were never combined in one person." (p.79.). That is why we can see Phyllis as a diva in her house or in public, but seems so out of place in a market. Her conspiratory meetings with Walter were doubly embarrassing and out of character for her. We could not envision her doing the shopping, but she was forced to do so, by his modification of her own plans. Breines also analyzes the development of the overbearing mother stereotype. "Maternal dominance does not exist easily alongside gender convergence." (p. 85.) Phyllis cannot and does not want to be a mother to Lola. Her "spider woman" character is not

suitable within the constraints of the genre to include any hint of maternal nature. Her relationship with her husband is defined in financial and not emotional terms.

On "Pinky"

Pinky is an unusual film, breaking several boundaries. Cripps gives the definition for "ethnic" as "something peculiar or pagan, and therefore inferior." (p.18) Here however, breaking with stereotype Pinky and her grandmother clearly has the moral upper hand. Cripps also mentions films that depicted in the 1920's "blacks in nostalgic southern rural past." (p.22) Here we see rural life, but there is nothing nostalgic about it, it is a harsh existence. He also lumped together a few movies under the "postwar era of social message movies" (p.27), to which Pinky fits fine. Pinky's character can be juxtaposed with some of Sidney Poitier's movies, where "Negroes to whites in disarming situations;" (p.29) she is a potential menace to the local whites. Cripps refers to current situation of black drama and television as "growing homogeneity" (p.32) Indeed it is hard to imagine that anybody would make a movie with this kind of social message today.

One stereotype of Hispanics in the movies according to Woll is that they are "loners." (p.58) This applies to Pinky as well, who arrives to the scene alone, being alienated in the old village; and even at the end of the movie, while being surrounded by students she is alone. Woll says about the Latin American males in the movies--written and directed by white men—that they are "incapable of having a normal adult relationship with a woman." (p.59). Pinky's love is also not fulfilled at the end. There is nothing in her fiancée's character as depicted earlier that would stop him joining her on her inherited estate. But he chooses his career and not Pinky, he opts for the easier life, despite that he was shown earlier as rather supportive for her cause.

Woll's analysis is also correct about the "incongruity" (p. 60) of casting a white actress in the leading role. The production code, conforming with the white majority's social norms of the times did not allow the depiction of on-screen interracial relationships.

Sayonara and Pinky is similar in the sense that "civil rights is closest to the emotional heart of the film(s)." (Marchetti 245) On the other hand theme of the "threat of interracial sexuality" (p. 245) is in the foreground of the story for Sayonara and in the background for Pinky. The similarities also extend to the central message beyond "racial tolerance and understanding, it is also about keeping women in their 'place' as wives and mothers." (p.246) While Pinky ends up being neither, but she falls into one of the few acceptable maternal roles for single women: being a nurse. Marchetti's criticism of Sayonara can be applied to Pinky as well, the female protagonists start up as independent characters and later we see them "performing domestic tasks" (p.248). It is also not accidental that Pinky is a woman and not a man, because "any relationship between a man of color and an Anglo-Saxon woman is more threatening to the status quo than the obverse relationship." (p.251)

Myrdal's book chapter from 1944 gives an insight to the perspective from 60 years ago, just 5 years before Pinky was made. His analysis is right on target for Mrs. Wooley, who attacks Pinky and the will: "the main way to get and remain rich in the South has been to exploit the Negroes and other weaker people, rather than to work diligently." (p.45) Mrs. Wooley felt entitled to her cousin's house, just by the virtue of being white. Her lawyer in the court also displayed signs of the "there is no Negro problem" attitude, that is a central point of Myrdal's writing. He clearly thinks that "Negroes are all right in their place; and they on their part do not want things changed." (p. 30) Thus he is surprised and outraged, along with other whites when he finds this not the case.

Friedman suggests that "most Hollywood movies superimpose Americanness as a self-ascribing category whose value orientation totally dominates any primordial ethnic conditions." (p.22) Pinky exemplifies this by being a self-starter individualist, unlike anybody in her background, but like the American ideal. Friedman speaks of the "very fact that Gregory Peck assumes a Jewish person so easily" (just like Jeanne Crain does a black) as a sign "total assimilation" (p.26) One of Friedman's conclusions is that "no creative endeavor can occur in a cultural vacuum." (p.32) I am sure that the post-war era's double V campaign ("Victory at War, Victory at Home") of returning colored soldiers from the war contributed to the conditions that allowed making this movie.

A trivia from IMDB.com: Jeanne Crain, who played Pinky died in Santa Barbara of a heart attack 3 years ago at the age of 78.

Gabor Por - February 20, 2006

SOC151 - Gender in Film/TV

On "A Summer Place"

Haskell identifies a trend when she writes: "the 1950's also ushered a split between movies as 'entertainment' and movies as 'art'." (234) A Summer Place clearly belongs to the former. It was created primarily to entertain and draw in the audience to the movie theater, from where "television had stolen ... bodies and box-office figures. (234). This movie was done at the end of the 1950's by when adherence to the Production code started to loosen up, thus fitting well in Haskell's theory that it acted like "the topsoil that protected the seed of rebellion that was germinating below." (235) The main characters are not yet rebellious; they desire only socially approved goals, but the circumstances like age, and conventions prevent them to achieve them. On the surface Sandra Dee, unlike Hepburn in Pat and Mike, is not "pressured to marry and

become a 'woman'," (240) because of her age. But in due course she is expected to comply with this ideal. As the next article will show Haskell's observation that "split between woman and persona became thematically central" (242) is on target regarding Dee. Just like Marilyn Monroe, "she was never permitted to mature into a warm, vibrant woman." (255.)

Scheiner quotes Sandra Dee complaining "about being typecast as a 'perennial teenager' or 'junior Doris Day'." (90) Scheiner details the source of real ambivalence about sex in films and in real life of the 1950's. Young women, including Molly in the movie, had the "new responsibilities to be sexy and to be virtuous" (91) at the same time. Having learned about Sandra Dee's abuse by her stepfather made me think how the actress might have felt in Molly's role who had a close relationship to her father. Similarly, what kind of effect Bart Hunter's alcoholism might have had to her own later problem with alcohol? The way Scheiner explains how anorexia and incest/sexual abuse got recognized (and focused upon) only after this time period as a legitimate social and individual problems, reminded me how in the 1950's juvenile delinquency was the recognized social ill, social scientists and the public in general was fond of focusing on. All of these are real problems, but are also social constructs at the same time.

In theory the Motion Picture Production Code was "created to foster the common interest of those engaged in the motion picture industry." (Inglis, 377). In reality it was a reaction against the League of Decency's and other attacks on morality issues. The industry decided that it is in its interest to self-regulate itself. It is questionable whether *A Summer Place* satisfied the primary principle of "not to lower the moral standards of those who see it." (378) It also assumes the questionable existence of a common moral standard. Sandra Dee's example could have been a liberating example for some young women to follow their heart (and libido), while for others an example of what not to do. The other problem is that the goal stated above assumes that the

movies have measurable direct effect on those standards. This movie still followed the Code strictly regarding the details (no profanity, no crime against "natural and human law" was shown....) However its theme would have been very much objectionable to the Code's enforces just a decade earlier.

"The housewives heroines are forever young, because their own image ends in childbirth." (Friedan, 38) Friedan's observation about women portrayed in women's magazines in the fifties does not fully apply to the women of this movie, but is relevant. All women's development seemed to have stopped with childbirth, from that point on their identity is defined only in relation to the children (in addition to the husband. This applies to Sylvia, Helen and even Helen's mother. Similarly we know their dreams--as opposed to Friedan's view of "concrete details of women's lives are more interesting than their thoughts, their ideas, their dreams" (49)—but they are limited to the domestic sphere. It is indeed limited to this picture to "housework and work to keep their bodies beautiful." (30)

Walker's point is somewhat applicable to this film, "[films] are frequently structured around a trauma from a character's past." (Walker, 211) The background story of movie is organized around the secret (and then repressed) relationship between Ken and Sylvia. Following Walker's logic this secret has to come out into the open and dealt with. "The fact that women at work for pay outside their homes were overlooked allowed the perpetuation of economic and social disadvantage." (199) We don't see anybody in this movie working, but it is understood that men brought the bacon home either by working or through inheriting it. As if women would have on potential for either at all.

According to IMDB, Sandra Dee died a year ago today, here, in Thousand Oaks

On "The Nun's Story"

Haskell posits that the collapse of the studio system "gave the actresses freedom, but as nonstars they had less power." (327) This resulted in women having, "only sexual liberation or nonliberation, either/or nudity or full dress." (340) *The Nun's Story* is an example of the latter, where sexuality of the protagonist is treated as nonexistent. For example she is christened by a man's name (Luke), asexualizing her personal identity. Her "full dress" is the fullest possible, the nun's habit, not leaving any part of her body (thus metaphorically her soul) to get exposed.

French writes in his analysis that Sister Luke "discovers that Christ as the Ultimate Husband is the Absolute Enemy of female career aspirations." (124) He also explains how she is confusing the father, lover, and God functions. This observation gave a new meaning to Sister Luke's reaction upon learning about her father's death, "I am not a good Christian; when I think of my father I cannot forgive the enemy." Besides the meaning of her not being able to forgive the soldiers who killed him, it also can be interpreted that she blames her heavenly father for letting her earthly father be killed. The "Ultimate Husband" becomes the enemy who let it happen.

How different Sister Luke's life could have been in 1970, after the Sister Formation movement—as explained in Ebaugh's article—and the Pope's "Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life" (7) call was answered? The first ended the restrictions that prevented Sister Luke to study and encouraged nuns to get higher degrees. The second "put the responsibility for [finding a] job on the individual." (37) Sister Luke's main anxieties came from the fact that she was assigned by mother superior without any input from herself. A decade

after the movie was made (and four decades after it was set) the new "to discern where the Spirit is directing her" (37) principle would have allowed her to flourish.

For Acker "gendered means that advantage and disadvantage... are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female." (269) Here are some examples of how the 5 different "gendering" processes play out in this movie "Divisions along lines of gender—divisions of labor of allowed behaviors..." (269) certainly exists, where nuns can only become teachers are nurses (and e.g not priests.) The nuns weddings rings (to Christ) work as "symbols and images that explain, reinforce... those divisions." (269) An example for how "interactions between women and men... enact dominance and submission" (269) is the fact that the mother superior calls the novice nuns children and the priest calls them daughters. Both suggests patriarchal rule, but the one uttered by the male person is also gendered.

Eisenstein in her summary of patriarchy as a feminist concept argues that it "took place by means of the engineering of consent among women themselves." (6) The convent in the movie was a locus for creating this consent. Indeed, the first thing the novices learn is that "the first condition is silence, interior and exterior." The emphasis on the "interior" part of this Holy Rule is essential, because that is designed to help the gender roles to be "internalized by women and perpetuated by them"(10).

In order to apply Bielby and Bielby's ideas about dual-earner couple's willingness to relocation to this movie a two abstractions/replacements are necessary. First, it is an abstraction (as opposed to physical reality) to consider a nun and his betrothed Christ as a "couple." Bargaining and decision-making has a different dynamics, because both the nun's superiors in the patriarchal institution and her own inner voice representing of G-d speaks on behalf of Christ. Second because the economics work differently in this setting too; the nuns don't earn money for

themselves, but they may provide revenue for their "family", that is the Church. In this movie the only financial exchange we saw was Gabrielle's father giving dowry when she entered the convent, and she getting it back upon exiting it. Thus the dual-earning concept, if measured monetarily does not apply to either side. But if is thought of in terms of providing resources the nuns do it. It can be tracked here how "gender-role ideology introduces asymmetry in the process [of decision making about relocation]." (1245) The husband, through its intermediaries of church officials decides where the nun, i.e. the couple goes to. Even though Sister Luke could help more, thus earn more prestige for the church, in the Congo, the organization has the final word whether, if or when she can go.

On “Klute”

Giddis provides an almost scene by scene analysis of the movie. She uses this to support her thesis according to which the two main male characters of the movie can be viewed as the externalized projections of different aspects of the female protagonist's character. In this perspective Klute, the investigator “can be seen as a projection of Bree's simultaneous need and fear of losing control, Cable can be seen as a projection of the need to maintain control.”(59) I would argue with this point because despite Klute being represented as not interested in control, he is controlling/heavily influencing the evolving situation. He poses as an outsider, but realizes that there is no such thing as being uninvolved. Similarly Bree, through her ambivalent behavior, acts as if she wants to “keep her cool,” but as we learn through the scenes with her psychotherapist, she is very much in need to let go. Bree and Klute, and similar, but Klute does not believe he needs to be in control, while Bree does. The irony is that by the end of the film the situation would get reversed.

The first chapter of Jenness's book explains the basic background, history and characteristics of the prostitutes' rights movement, and in particular COYOTE's (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics). The essence of their three-tiered message is that 1, “not all prostitution is forced” (p. 5), 2, prostitution should be viewed as a legitimate service, 3, it is women's civil rights to choose this occupation. We also learn there about the opponents of the movement (law enforcement agencies, moral entrepreneurs, and public health officials (p.6)) and how COYOTE is fighting them. Underlying all this is the intention of legitimizing prostitution not just legally but socially. They set out to change the pejorative charge of the words like “whore”, decriminalize it and even create respect for it .Bree would fit well in this movement despite that the movie was made in 1971, and this movement officially launched only in 1975 (p. 2) We can

hear pride for her work in her voice when she pronounces, “For an hour I am the best actress in the world.” She is an example for the three COYOTE tenets: as far as we know she was not forced to become a prostitute, she views it as a business transaction (just listen to her tone, when she says “I like to get business done at the beginning”) and she resists Klute’s half-hearted efforts to change her occupation.

The fourth chapter of Jenness’ book goes into further details of the three newly proposed definition of prostitution as a service work, chosen work, and civil rights issue. The first challenges society’s pervasive view of the associated “master concept of crime.” (67) When Klute first meets Bree she asks him in a rapid-fire manner “You’re not a cop? You’re not FBI? You’re a private detective?” Apparently she had plenty of reasons to suspect the first two category of people for causing her harm, because her line of work is considered illegal. He gains her trust very slowly. And we cannot exactly grasp the second when his view, based on societal norms gradually shifts, but it does. He is willing and capable to see the person behind the “criminal.”

Hartmann’s article covers a slightly wider period (post-war to 1987), but Klute’s era falls into it. Hartmann’s main point is that “on the whole the economic changes of the past several decades have been positive for women.” (p. 33) She emphasizes that the relative increase social welfare spending, the delay in marrying and childbearing, having fewer children, “the tendency for women to form and head households on their own,” (p. 41) “educational attainment and labor force participation” (p. 42) all contributed to this change. The key for Hartmann to decide what is positive is the “increased autonomy from men and their increased economic independence.” (p. 45) Bree epitomizes the independent woman. She does not depend on anybody financially, although in the past she was associated with a male (pimp.) When she says things like “I can

make \$200 in a lunch break,” it is a joy to see/hear the confidence in her voice. A key sentence to understand the movie is what she repeats at least twice, “Inhibitions are always nice, because they’re so nice to overcome.” She can and did overcome psychological and financial inhibitions. As long as she is a free person (not in prison for a crime she did not commit) she is has a chance to be free on the inside too.

On “Saturday Night Fever”

Haskell’s last chapter posits that strong women in general disappeared from the screen in the period of 1974-1987. In their place males took the leading roles. For example “John Travolta [...was] delighted to assume the sex-object roles abandoned by women.”(p. 374) In Saturday Night Fever he is revered by women like Anette, who adores him and the girl who with an almost religious awe asks permission to wipe his forehead. Furthermore his persona controls the whole club, as his character’s brother put it when he enters it separates like the Red Sea before Moses. Haskell also talks about the “virgin-whore fantasy” (p. 384) in regards to Blue Velvet. In our movie Tony also embodies both aspects as on one hand he is the sexual exploiter of the night, on the other hand his socially constructed true, pure love for Stephanie has the potential to be the virginal one. Until the scene towards the end, when he (practically) rapes her in the back of the car.

Harrington and Bielby talk about new images of love: independence (with emphasis on the development of self) and interdependence, where “mutual support and affection between partners is expected and love is a precondition to full self-development.” (p. 131) I believe a variation of this plays out between Tony and Stephanie. Stephanie brings a whole new world of possibilities for Tony by boosting his ambitions and challenging him to do more with his life. Besides the obvious infatuation he feels for her this gives the edge that changes his feelings towards “true love,” which is more respectable than what he does with the “chicks” at the club. As for Stephanie her acquaintance with Tony has a chance to turn into a relationship only if he develops his self and allows her to do the same. She finds him “interesting yes, intelligent maybe.” If he can prove the second (by setting up goals and reaching them) then she can allow

herself to be involved with him. This would make their relationship interdependent if it would ever reach fruition.

In Swidler's treatment of how the traditional image of love shifted in modern times and took a central position in defining adulthood she mentions that "women and love represent the entangling bonds of social obligation." (p. 126) This is Joey's original problem. His girlfriend got pregnant and he is struggling throughout the movie whether to marry her or not. Swidler's comment that in the great American novels the male hero acts alone helped me to understand why Joey's girlfriend is never shown on screen. According to the American ethos he has to fight this over alone. The pressure this puts him and his desperate attempt to gain his idol's attention is what eventually kills him. He cannot handle the choice of whether to commit or not. He defies the logic of love being the great justification of conformity [...] for 'settling down' and 'toeing the line'." (p. 131)

Wexman's treatise on the changing nature of narrative construction of romance on movie includes two dualities that can be seen in *Saturday Night Fever*. In Tony's room a picture of Farrah Fawcett is facing Sylvester Stallone. She is the "actress who becomes the subject of the myth of love" (p. 17) and he is the ideal whose abs and aspects Tony compares himself. By physically living in a space surrounded by idols, he works himself into being one. This way his goals are always in front of him. Wexman also talks about the importance "the structuring power of the kiss as an erotic crescendo." (p. 19) Let's compare Tony's two onscreen kisses: first a woman on the dance floor asks him to kiss her and he promptly does without passion. But the second one happens during his big competition dance-off with Stephanie and this one is show through the soft light elusive music, warm colors as a culmination of their experience with each other. Even in this post-sexual revolution time period the sign of "true, romantic love" is a passionate kiss we've been waiting for.

Dowd and Pallotta shows how romance as a genre of drama ended as major impediments--social differences, importance and frequency of marriage (p.562)--that they revolved around have been removed by modernity. They posit that contemporary romantic comedy--“a lightweight affair” (p. 564)—reinforcing traditional cultural norms. While our movie does not fit the genre, but despite its depiction of sexual promiscuity it does the same thing. 1, Stephanie follows a kind “marital fidelity” (p. 565) even though she is not married, but feels committed enough to her sponsor to not get easily engaged with Tony. 2, Joey does not want to marry, because it would be not for the “right reason, love.” 3, Every character selects her/his own mate this movie, “family preferences” are not even present. 4, “Mutual self-disclosure” is the driving force between Tony and Stephanie.

Log #9: Questions

Soap Fans

1. Authorship is delineated into three categories on page 155: legal, technical (actual), and moral authors, the last one being people who “feel that a soap opera is morally or emotionally theirs”. I am questioning the separation of these categories. I believe that there is a good chance that the people in the first two categories feel just as strong moral and emotional ownership as people who are only in the third category. Is there any support for this assumption?
2. I did not find data (as in numbers) about the extent of soap fandom, besides random numbers for the size of three or four fan clubs. On the other hand there is reference to “soap opera’s gradually dwindling audience.” (p. 165) The question inevitable arises how relevant this books is now, 10 years after its publication? (Disclaimer: I never saw any of the shows mentioned in the book, except Star Trek; and I don’t know anybody who does. This surely influences my perception that by now it is a marginal phenomenon, size wise.)
3. A central theme, indeed the aim of the book is dismantling the negative stereotype surrounding soap fans. This reminded me very much of how COYOTE is/was fighting for prostitutes’ rights. A key for both processes is the assertion that participant chose their paths and not forced into it, it is “their conscious participation.” (p. 177) Another similarity is the de-stigmatizing the associated terms. While COYOTE actively works on changing the public’s attitudes, I read little evidence that the fans would be interested in an outgoing manner to do the same for their reputation. While they are viewed as losers and lunatics, and they complain

about poor quality writings “insulting their intelligence”, yet they do not act much to raise their reputation of being of low intelligence. Why not?

Readings from the reader.

4. Jenkins posits that "the American public gets programming that is calculated to attract the "commodity audience" with limited concern for what most viewers actually desire." (p. 30) Isn't this a contradiction? Most new (and existing) shows are carefully designed based on market research of what would sell, thus they are exactly what the audience desires.
5. Brown writes about soap fans that they "treat the soap and its characters with familial loyalty." (p. 19) Is one of the reasons for this loyalty the disappointment of social institutions and ideologies people used to be loyal to? Is it replacing those?
6. None of the 130 respondents in Cooper's research on *Will & Grace* identified her/himself as gay, while 7-10% of the population is. Cooper talks about the series as set in an outgroup as opposed to the dominant culture's ingroup. Cooper should have made some kind of recognition that this show helps to blur the line between the two, shouldn't he?
7. Harrington and Dielby states that in scholarly texts "fans are typically conceptualized as a subset of viewers" (p. 907) Is it possible to be a fan without being familiar with the product? E.g. McDonalds was mythically popular in Hungary, even before the first one opened in 1985. I am a fan of the TV series "Lost", despite never having seen an episode. But by the virtue of its topic, reputation and friends' recommendations I consider myself a fan.