

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MEN AND GIRLS: GENDER REPRESENTATION IN
WOODY ALLEN'S MANHATTAN, HUSBANDS AND WIVES, AND CAFÉ SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Woody Allen established himself as a household name in the 1960s. His half-century long career is celebrated for its generation of numerous memorable female characters and sullied by back-to-back scandals in 1992. For 25 years following an accusation of child molestation Woody Allen continued to produce films and exist as one of the most distinguished directors of all time. In October of 2017 Hollywood was rocked by the viral, sexual assault awareness campaign, #MeToo. In the wake of #MeToo, Hollywood and the online court of public opinion awakened by the viral campaign is using #MeToo as an opportunity to reevaluate a century-old industry and its many players. Woody Allen is amongst the Hollywood-elite being called into questioning over issues of gender representation and sexual assault. Inspired by the dialogue opened by #MeToo, this senior thesis takes a closer look at Woody Allen, and three of his films produced over the last sixty-nine years he has been active, as a means to better understand gender in Hollywood. Through an analysis of *Manhattan* (1979), *Husbands and Wives* (1992), and *Café Society* (2016), paired with an investigation of Allen's biography, critical reception to his films, and an incorporation of auteur and autobiography theory, I found that Allen is able to exist as both a lover of women and an accused sexual assault perpetrator in a way that other Hollywood directors are not. He can, and does, exist as both uniquely celebratory of and intensely creepy towards women, and he is able to do this because of the form and content of his films. The genre of his films allows him to exist simultaneously as problematic and innovative in

terms of gender representations. The types of female and male characters he creates, in the content of his films, exemplify his anomalous status in Hollywood.

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If my films make one more person miserable, I'll feel I have done my job.

- Woody Allen

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INTRODUCTION

There is very little that is mysterious about Woody Allen. Scandalous, yes, but mysterious, no. Woody Allen doesn't hide. He's made a career out of being open about his anxieties, sexual obsessions, and personal dilemmas. Sure, Woody Allen is a private guy. He's relatively shy when it comes to paparazzi and reluctant when it comes to interviews. And sure, there is a mystery, of sorts, in the 1992 accusations that Allen abused his then 7-year-old daughter, Dylan, in the attic of her Connecticut home.¹ He denies all accusations; she denies his denials.² There is no way for us to know, conclusively, what happened, which means that the mystery of the sexual assault is not a mystery that we can solve. Woody Allen, himself, though, has been a pretty open book for the entire time he's been in the public eye. He's shared his anxieties, histories, personalities, and relationships with us in stand-up routines, plays, films, and interviews. He tells us exactly who he is. More than that, he shows us. Woody Allen has been called a lot of things, most of it valid, but he's never been mysterious, which begs the question, why study him? If nothing is hidden what is there to look for? It appears that Allen hasn't anything to hide, which speaks more to a lack of shame than a lack of scandal. I do think Allen's transparency offers us the opportunity to uncover something about gender representation in Hollywood that *is* hidden, which is to say that Allen's lack of mystery is exactly the reason I want to study him and his films.

¹Sopan Deb and Deborah Leiderman, "Woody Allen, Mia Farrow, Soon-Yi Previn, Dylan Farrow: A Timeline," *The New York Times*, January 31, 2018, accessed April 11, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/31/movies/woody-allen-mia-farrow-dylan-farrow-a-timeline.html>.

²Zach Schonfeld, "Woody Allen Denies Dylan Farrow Abuse Allegations: 'I Never Molested My Daughter'," *Newsweek*, January 18, 2018, accessed April 11, 2019, <https://www.newsweek.com/woody-allen-dylan-farrow-abuse-allegations-i-never-molested-my-daughter-784377>. ; Lisa Respers France, "Dylan Farrow details alleged abuse by Woody Allen in her first televised interview," *CNN*, January 18, 2018, accessed April 11, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/18/entertainment/dylan-farrow-woody-allen-interview/index.html>.

Allen's openness hasn't stopped anyone from writing about him. He is, after all, one of the most distinguished directors of all time.³ He is more legend than man now, and in 2018, more cautionary tale than folktale. Aside from the deluge of Allen-related editorial writing released in the midst of #MeToo, Allen is written about for a lot of things. He's written about as a filmmaker, as a comic, as a Jew. Biographies about him tend towards the celebratory or salacious. There are also works focusing extensively on representations of women his film. Richard Feldstein compiles an expansive, although cursory, analysis of Allen's female representation in his *Displaced Feminine Representation in Woody Allen's Cinema*.⁴ His analysis, published in 1989, deals significantly with Allen's earlier work but is helpful in its overview of some of Allen's most famous female characters. *Woody: Movies from Manhattan*, by Julian Fox, chronicles Allen's work until 2005. His essays on *Manhattan* and *Husbands and Wives* provide me important historical insights and an overview of critical and public responses. Here there is greater focus on the intersection of Allen's personal life with his films.⁵ *Perspectives on Woody Allen* compiles reviews and essays on Allen's work up until 1996 as it intersects with autobiography, Jewishness, comedy, and genre.⁶ Similarly, *But We Need the Eggs*, by Diane Jacobs, provides cursory analysis of a great number of Allen's films but was

³"Woody Allen Awards," IMDb, accessed April 11, 2019, <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000095/awards>.

⁴Richard Feldstein, "Displaced Feminine Representations in Woody Allen's Cinema," in *Discontented Discourses: Feminism/textual Intervention/psychoanalysis*, ed. Marleen S. Barr, and Richard Feldstein (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 69-86.

⁵Julian Fox, "1992-95: Husbands and Wives to Mighty Aphrodite" in *Woody: Movies from Manhattan* (Overlook Press, 1996), 227-232.

⁶Renée R. Curry, *Perspectives on Woody Allen* (London: Prentice Hall International, 1996).

published in 1982 and does not address gender thoroughly.⁷ These works provide my research with important background information but lack depth in regards to gender specifically and how gender representations intersect with Allen's personal life. My question will address this gap.

Woody on Rye: Jewishness in the Films and Plays of Woody Allen features two important essays on Allen's depictions of women. "Woody's Women: Jewish Domesticity and the Unredeemed Ghost of Hanukkah to Come," by Giovanna P. Del Negro, focuses on the gentile-Jew relationships of Allen's films, and "Toot Toot Tootsie- Disposable Women in the Films of Woody Allen," by Elliot Shapiro, focuses on the role of women in Allen's post 1990s films as sex workers or victims of murder. *Learning and Laughing about Gender and Sexuality through Humor: The Woody Allen Case* is one of the most comprehensive scholarly works surrounding my topic.⁸ In that work, Andreas Philaretou addresses Allen's use of comedy as a tool with which to deconstruct traditional gender arrangements. In its neglect of Allen's personal life, however, it does not broach my topic completely. Christopher Knight, in his "Woody Allen's 'Hannah and Her Sisters': domesticity and its discontents" and "Woody Allen's Annie Hall: Galatea's Triumph Over Pygmalion," provides necessary analysis of two important Allen films that I have not chosen to investigate myself.⁹ His work offers me analysis of films before and between the ones I've chosen. One article that does focus on a film I will be researching is "The Treacherous and The Good: Two Views of Women," by James Wall, which discusses portrayals

⁷Diane Jacobs, *But We Need the Eggs: The Magic of Woody Allen* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1982).

⁸Andreas G. Philaretou, "Learning and Laughing about Gender and Sexuality through Humor: The Woody Allen Case," *The Journal of Men's Studies* (March 1, 2007), accessed October 09, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.3149/jms.1402.133>.

⁹Christopher J. Knight, "Woody Allen's Annie Hall: Galatea's Triumph Over Pygmalion," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (2004): 213-221, accessed November 15, 2018, <http://proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/226997110?accountid=11091>.

of women in *Husbands and Wives*.¹⁰ This work, however, focuses primarily on feminine depictions, ignoring the masculine.

Additionally, there is a plethora of scholarly work and debate on auteur theory and women's role in film. These works will help inform my understanding of Allen's role as writer/director/star and his characters. Woody Allen, having produced an extensive oeuvre beginning in the 1970s, has been largely dissected by academics, in both his work and his personal life. His sexual escapades, psychotherapy, tragic-comedy genre, and the autobiographical nature of his art have lent themselves to investigation and have been well chronicled. There has not been, however, sufficient, scholarly work reexamining Allen in light of recent movements in Hollywood and newfound understandings of feminist film aesthetics. My work will thus add a new dimension to the extensive scholarly work on gender in Allen's films, which has primarily focused on its relation to Jewish representation; it will use these three films to put art, artist, and context in conversation to examine Allen's films as historically-contained texts as well as evidence of larger trends.

Allen is hidden in plain sight. His private life, as a celebrity, hasn't been private since the 1960s. His films include ill hidden versions of himself grappling with the circumstances and questions we know Allen grapples with behind the camera. Allen is a renowned filmmaker who makes films about himself. My interest in Woody Allen originated because I love his movies, but particularly because Allen occupies an interesting space in the world of film. He's one of the most famous directors in the world, let alone America. He's classic Hollywood, whether he

¹⁰James M. Wall, "The treacherous and the good: two views of women," *The Christian Century* 109, no. 28 (October 7, 1992), accessed October 09, 2018, https://wrlc-gu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=gale_ofa12759013&context=PC&vid=01WRLC_GUNIV:01WRLC_GUNIV&search_scope=DN_and_CI&tab=Everything&lang=en.

wants to be or not. I don't mean Hollywood, California; I mean Hollywood the idea, Hollywood the industry, Hollywood the entity that has held a monopoly on American film since the invention of the medium. Allen is Hollywood. He's Hollywood in the way that Scorsese and Spielberg and Nolan and Hitchcock are Hollywood. What's more, Allen's filmmaking is his identity. Allen isn't a run of the mill director; he's an auteur, and because of this it is hard for us to see him as anything other than a filmmaker. Our conception of Allen doesn't allow him to be Woody Allen, the husband, Woody Allen, the family man, or even Woody Allen, the comic or Woody Allen, the writer. Woody Allen is a filmmaker. Even when we can picture Allen, the husband or father or writer it is always in the context of his films, in relation to his films, as a product of his films. We think about how his marriage to Soon-Yi affected his films, how his relationships were portrayed on camera, how his writing style has affected his films, and how his humor has transformed the romantic comedy genre. He may have started out as a comic and a writer, but Allen found he was most fulfilled, most expressed, through films, and those films are the reason we're still talking about him two decades into the 21st century. For Allen, filmmaking was a calling. Allen has never made movies for monetary profit or success. He makes them, year after year, because he has to. That said, his films, regardless of their financial or critical success, have affected cinema history. Apart from establishing himself as an auteur filmmaker, Allen's work has ignited the careers of a number of celebrities. His films have affected comedy and romance in films. They're taught in college classrooms and screened in indie theaters. Ask a casual movie-goer to name a director and they will likely name Allen, whether they've seen more than 2 of his films or not.

Allen is inextricably linked to Hollywood and has been for the past half-century. But in the last few years, Allen has begun to represent Hollywood in a different way, in a less favorable

context. Again, and again his name has been brought up in the context of #MeToo. TIME IS UP FOR WOODY ALLEN.¹¹ CAN WOODY ALLEN WORK IN HOLLYWOOD AGAIN?¹² WOODY ALLEN CALLS HIMSELF POSTER BOY FOR #METOO.¹³ The last one's my favorite because I agree. This article reminds me that Allen is completely un-self-aware. In calling himself the poster boy of the #MeToo movement, Allen is once again affirming his innocence, and attempting to combat the idea that he is at all connected to the gender issue in Hollywood. But Woody Allen epitomizes gender representations in Hollywood. If a poster boy originally referred to a child affected by some disease or deformity whose picture was used on posters as part of a campaign to raise money for the cause, then Allen is a good place to start if we want to understand gender representation in Hollywood or #MeToo.¹⁴

Allen's personal life and a 25-year-old scandal, as well as a career made on award-winning female characters, makes Allen an interesting case study for gender representation in Hollywood.¹⁵ I'm not arguing that Allen is or is not representative of Hollywood in general.

¹¹Sam Levin, "'Time Is up for Woody Allen': Are Dylan Farrow's Allegations Finally Sticking?" *The Guardian*, January 19, 2018, accessed April 09, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/jan/19/woody-allen-dylan-farrow-allegations>.

¹²Melena Ryzik and Brooks Barnes, "Can Woody Allen Work in Hollywood Again?" *The New York Times*, January 28, 2018, accessed April 09, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/28/movies/woody-allen-dylan-farrow.html>.

¹³Kirsten Chuba, "Woody Allen Thinks He 'Should Be the Poster Boy for the Me Too Movement'," *Variety*, June 04, 2018, accessed April 09, 2019, <https://variety.com/2018/film/news/woody-allen-me-too-poster-boy-1202829361/>.

¹⁴*Dictionary.com*, s.v. "poster boy," accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/poster-boy>.

¹⁵Dave Izkoff, "Annie and Her Sisters," *The New York Times*, July 17, 2013, accessed April 11, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/21/movies/woody-allens-distinctive-female-characters.html>. ; Steve Rose, "Woody Allen's Oscar-winning women: how did his direction affect them?" *The Guardian*, February 26, 2018, accessed April 11, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/feb/26/woody-allens-oscar-winning-women-how-did-his-direction-affect-them>.

Rather, Allen is a good place to start when it comes to investigating gender in film. Why is he a good place to start, why is he a director so worth examining? Both Allen's fans and his critics might argue that it would be easy to write Allen off at this point. The peak of his career happened long before he was accused of sexual assault. One might say, he's in his eighties, leave the man alone. Or, he was never convicted, leave the man alone. He isn't the future of Hollywood, leave the man alone. His films are low budget, he's never been particularly main stream or popular. He's a household name, sure, but so is Scorsese, who has also made an auteur career for himself out of representations of New York starting in the 70s. Allen has a problematic history with women, sure, but so does Bill Cosby, who is arguably more well-known, or Harvey Weinstein, who was more powerful, or Louis C.K., whose misconduct is more recent. What differentiates Allen from other directors, what makes his career the perfect case study through which to investigate gender representations in Hollywood, is the *reflexivity* of his films. Allen's work is notoriously linked to his biography. We cannot separate his personal life from his work because his personal life so clearly influences his films. It is interesting that Allen denies this influence, or, more frequently, contradicts himself in attempting to deny that his work is influenced by his biography. This is a tension I was really interested in pursuing. Here we have a director who has made a career out of representing his life through film, who has used Hollywood as a confessional for forty years, but who is denying doing so. Why? Why pretend his work is fictional when it is so clearly autobiographical, when it fits into a genre of confession more easily than it does romantic comedy? This is the rupture that makes Allen's career so perfect for an analysis of gender representation. What Allen claims to be doing in his art is different from what he's really doing. Allen has been around a long time, been successful and unsuccessful,

made a name for himself, been accused of sexual misconduct, and his films are uniquely reflective of his own life, that's why he's worth studying.

What I'm seeking to prove in this thesis, then, is that Allen's career is uniquely transparent, and that this transparency allows us to better understand his career in terms of genre. In this thesis I argue that due to Woody Allen's anomalous use of form and content, as seen in *Manhattan*, *Husbands and Wives*, and *Café Society*, we are able to perceive the complexities of gender in his work. His work and his self-perception of that work create a space in which something interesting happens in regards to gender. Allen lives. Allen creates films. Allen perceives those films. We perceive how he lives. We perceive the films he creates. Something is happening in the transition between Allen's life as it is lived and Allen's films, and it's worth investigating, not because Allen is the poster boy for #MeToo, or even because he's a genius filmmaker, but because it reveals the complexity of gender representation in his career. Part of what we're shown in an investigation of gender representation in Allen's films specifically is the history of gender representation, the relation between lived experiences, and real men and women and the films they inspire. What Allen's films show us is that solving the gender representation problem in Hollywood is, and will continue to be, nonlinear. Allen has written strong female characters for his entire career. He's written sexually liberated women, unlikeable women, intensely likeable women, stable women, unstable women, girls, sex workers, cheaters, and wives. More than anything, an investigation of Woody Allen reveals the nuance of gender representation in film, and for this his career is useful. We are able to see things in Allen's movies that are harder to see in other directors' films. This isn't to say that those things don't exist in other filmmakers' work. In fact, I'm saying the opposite. Analyzing Allen's work, in which these issues are so in focus, makes it easier for us to notice them when they are blurred in

the work of other directors. It's the Baader-Meinhof phenomenon, the perception of learning something new - a new word or name - and then starting to see it everywhere.¹⁶ Our brains are prejudices towards patterns. That new word, that pattern, was around us before, but we didn't notice it until we learned it for the first time. The fact that Allen's career is reflexive allows us to see things in his films that are harder to see in other directors' work.

When I started this thesis process, I wanted to know how a movie like *Manhattan*, which was released in 1979 and included a relationship, unironically, between a 17-year-old and a 41-year-old, could exist in 2018. I was interested in the aging of films, and *Manhattan* was aging more like bananas than wine. I began to wonder how the context of a film's release affects its reception, but what I really wanted to know was how the context of #MeToo is going to affect the reception of the century of films that had been released before the hashtag went viral. I chose Woody Allen because I loved his films, I related to his characters, and I wanted to understand better what I loved and why. I chose Allen because I am a filmmaker myself and he has undoubtedly influenced the creative work I produce. I chose Allen because I thought dissecting his films and their context might help me understand what I should be doing as a consumer and producer of films moving forward.

I realized fairly quickly that what made Allen such a good case study, forty years of film, made him very hard to study. I decided to choose three films, out of forty, through which to investigate Allen: *Manhattan*, the 1979 romantic comedy that piqued my interest in Allen to begin with, *Husbands and Wives*, the 1992 film that premiered during the public separation of Allen from his longtime partner Mia Farrow, and *Café Society*, the 2016 star-studded period

¹⁶Kate Kershner, "What's the Baader-Meinhof Phenomenon?" *HowStuffWorks Science*, March 08, 2018, accessed April 09, 2019, <https://science.howstuffworks.com/life/inside-the-mind/human-brain/baader-meinhof-phenomenon.htm>.

piece that wrapped filming a year before #MeToo went viral. I began my research by conducting a close reading of *Manhattan*, *Husbands and Wives* and *Café Society*. On top of the fact that Allen has an extraordinarily high output, or perhaps because of it, there's an unpredictable and wide schism between Allen's critically acclaimed films and his less popular films. I wanted to look at films made at different times in Allen's career and films that received varying critique. Although Allen's filmmaking career began in the 1960s, it isn't until the 1970s that he really hit his stride. His breakthrough film, *Annie Hall*, was released in 1977 and ushered in this new Allen era revolving around female protagonists, romantic comedy, and Diane Keaton. His masterwork came out two years later in 1979 -- *Manhattan*. *Manhattan* is my starting point because it is the origin of my questions surrounding Allen. The film also happens to be one of his most celebrated and critically acclaimed works. The next important time in Allen's career is the 1990s. The early '90s represents the end of a decade-long working relationship with Mia Farrow, Allen's muse following Keaton. *Husbands and Wives* represents the end of the Farrow era and its release in 1992 coincides with the most important, if not dramatic, moment in Allen's personal life — his 1992 separation of Farrow, the accusations of child molestation laid against him by Farrow, the ensuing custody battle, and the beginning of his relationship with 21-year-old Soon-Yi Previn, Farrow's adopted daughter. I chose *Husbands and Wives*, then, because of its uncanny connections to Allen's personal life, its mixed critical reviews, its representation of the Allen-Farrow era, and because it's one of five films that Allen himself is proud of.¹⁷ My choice to analyze *Café Society* has more to do with the time of its release than with its content, although it, like *Manhattan* and *Husbands and Wives*, includes a May-December romance. *Café Society*

¹⁷Allen claims to only be proud of 6 or 7 movies he's ever made. *Manhattan* and *Annie Hall* are not on the list. See: Woody Allen, "Woody Allen Interview," in *Woody Allen: Interviews*, ed. Robert E. Kapsis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 231-234.

came out in 2016, released on the brink of the 2017 #MeToo movement that brought Hollywood, and many powerful men, to its knees. It is one of Allen's most recent films and it received incredibly mixed reviews. The data I collected can be broken into data and observations drawn from the films themselves, responses to the films in the form of reviews or articles, and interviews with Allen.

My analysis of these films focused on gender representation in story and structure. I analyzed the films for their characters, plot lines, dialogue, color, costume, mise-en-scene, and cinematography, with an understanding of Allen as auteur, solely responsible for the films' scripts, directing, and vision. I chose, importantly, to analyze three Allen films as the core of my thesis in attempting to answer my research question, rather than analyze purely their critical reception, or Allen's biography alone. I think there are many ways to attack a question about an artist and representations of gender, but I wanted to focus on the actual work Allen produced. Contextualization is helpful, but in the end, I think that each film, and the three films put in conversation with one another, make an argument for themselves.

The next part of my research focused on Allen's biography. I chose to read and analyze pertinent articles, interviews, and reviews from the late 1970s, early 1990s, and late 2010s as exposure to Allen's personal life and evidence of how his life may affect his films and their reception. I read reviews of all three films from *The New York Times*, *LA Times*, *New Yorker*, *Washington Post*, and *Variety*. I chose these papers in part because I had access to their archives through Georgetown, but also because they are all large, reputable sources that are known for their film reviews. Ultimately, in my attempts to understand Allen's biography, I focused most on interviews with Allen from 1979 through 2005. I relied heavily on Robert Kapsis' collection

of Allen interviews.¹⁸ I also watched the two-part documentary movie about Allen's life by American Masters. I analyzed these texts for mentions of recurring themes, like May-December romances, but more importantly, I began reading the interviews and articles for a specific tension I noticed between Allen's insistence that his work is not autobiographical and a general public understanding and acceptance that it is, in fact, very autobiographical. For these texts, I documented similarities in themes, references to Allen's personal life in reviews of his films or interviews, and overlaps between Allen's movies and personal life. The close readings of the reviews and interviews were important to me because they spoke to two different perspectives on Allen and the films during the time of the films' releases.

I supplemented by film analysis with research focused on theory as it was applicable to my work. I used a few, key pieces of feminist film theory in my close readings of the films, like Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema*. I also grounded myself in the world of late '70s and early '90s Hollywood by reading various articles and books about representations of femininity and masculinity in films more generally, including Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape*, Anneke Smelik's *And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory*, and Joan Mellen's *Big Bad Wolves: Masculinity in the American Film*.¹⁹ This research informed my understanding of Allen's texts and helped me to understand the history of feminine representations on screen. I then read theory on stand-up comedy and the autobiography as a means to better understand Allen's work and explain its reflexive nature. Works like Arianne

¹⁸Woody Allen and Robert E. Kapsis, *Woody Allen: Interviews* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016).

¹⁹Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape* (New English Library, Reprint by University of Chicago Press, 1974).; Anneke Smelik, *And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).; Joan Mellen, *Big Bad Wolves: Masculinity in the American Film* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1978).

Baggerman's *Controlling Time and Shaping the Self: The Rise of Autobiographical Writing since 1750*, and Margaretta Jolly's *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* were especially helpful.²⁰ The founding essays of auteur theory by Truffaut and Sarris informed my understanding of Allen and reflexive cinema.

At this point in my research, I was steeped in Allen filmography, biography and theory. The final part of my research was a trip to the Princeton University's Woody Allen Archive, which houses original manuscripts, short stories and scripts. In the two days I was privileged to be in the cold, sterile room in the Princeton library in which you can read Allen's handwritten or typed works, I was able to read the original scripts of *Manhattan* and *Husbands and Wives*, as well as the original manuscripts of *Annie Hall*, *Midnight in Paris*, and *Deconstructing Harry*, and a few unproduced scripts. I read handwritten notes, letters, and drafts of short stories that would later be published in *The New Yorker*.²¹ I knew that I wouldn't find anything groundbreaking in what I read at Princeton; after all, it's the final film that does the heavy lifting. But there was something special about touching the thick manuscripts covered in scrawling marginalia. Allen has always written his films on a typewriter, then cuts up the pages, reorders them, and staples them onto new sheets so that the final hunk of pages ends up looking like an unwieldy scrapbook of thoughts and dialogue. I was reminded at Princeton of how personal and intimate Allen's work is, how close he is to it, and how much of himself is on every page. These were pages, the blueprints to entire films, thought up and written by a single man in his bedroom.

²⁰Arianne Baggerman, *Controlling Time and Shaping the Self: The Rise of Autobiographical Writing since 1750: Conference, 15-17 June 2006* (Rotterdam: Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, 2006). ; Margaretta Jolly. "Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives, and: Memoir: An Introduction (review)" *Biography* 34, no. 4 (2011): 817-821, accessed December 09, 2018, <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.

²¹*Woody Allen Papers* TC002, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Reading the original manuscripts of *Manhattan* and *Husbands and Wives* drew my attention to a couple of things Allen had written that didn't make it into the final film. It also taught me that Allen doesn't know how to spell "couscous."²²

When I started this project, I understood that the wrongdoings Allen was accused of were not unique to him. In fact, sexual misconduct was rampant in Hollywood and being accused of such didn't make Allen unique at all. He was unique, however, in the fact that in the wake of #MeToo he wasn't hiding out, in court, or worse, in jail. Allen, in the wake of #MeToo, is suing Amazon Studios for \$68 million and filming a brand-new film in Spain.²³ He's continuing to produce films. This makes him unique. I thought, maybe, that if I took a closer look at his films and his life, I might find that Allen was, in fact, a microcosm of Hollywood, at least in terms of gender representation. What I found, though, wasn't that Allen was representative of other Hollywood directors affected by #MeToo, but that he is different from them. I found that Allen is able to exist as both a lover of women and an accused sexual assault perpetrator in a way that other directors are not.²⁴ I found that Allen can be both/and. He can, and does, exist as both intensely celebratory of and intensely creepy towards women, and he is able to do this because of the form and content of his films. The genre of his films allows him to exist simultaneously as

²²*Husbands and Wives: original script*, 1992, Box 9, Folder 4, Woody Allen Papers TC002, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

²³Sopan Deb, "Woody Allen Sues Amazon Over Canceled \$68 Million Deal," *The New York Times*, February 7, 2019, accessed April 11, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/07/movies/woody-allen-amazon-lawsuit.html>. ; Sara Aridi, "Woody Allen is Shooting a New Movie in Spain," *The New York Times*, February 21, 2019, accessed April 11, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/21/movies/woody-allen-movie-spain.html>.

²⁴I say "lover of women," in part because Allen considers himself a lover of women, but also because he has demonstrated throughout his career that he is dedicated to producing human, complicated female roles and that he is a romantic both at work and at home.

problematic and innovative in terms of gender representations. And the types of female and male characters he created, in the content of his films, exemplify his both/and status.

An analysis of *Manhattan*, *Husbands and Wives*, and *Café Society*, put in the context of their creator's biography, reveal a unique form and innovative content in Allen's work. I've broken my thesis into two parts. Part 1 will cover necessary background and theory that can be applied to an analysis of Allen's films. In Chapter 1, I will look at Allen and his relation to gender outside of the three films I've chosen to analyze. In this chapter, I will address our understanding of Allen in relation to both real women and the female characters he creates, and the importance of the muse to his work. In Chapter 2, I will show that Allen's career is reflexive and that reading his work as confessional and autobiographical is useful. I will do this by employing film and genre theory and by exploring his films in the context of his biography, his origins in stand-up comedy, and his existence as an auteur filmmaker. Part 2 is a close reading and analysis of the three films I've chosen to look at. Chapter 3 is dedicated to each film individually and Chapter 4 speaks to the films in conversation. In putting the films in conversation, I will analyze how Allen's world view changed over time and how our understanding of Allen and these films changed over time.

PART I: BACKGROUND AND THEORY

CHAPTER I: WOODY AND WOMEN

“ . . . on some level Woody Allen is a woman . . . ” - Kate Winslet²⁵

In 2017 Diane Keaton won a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Film Institute. Their online tribute to her begins - “Le-De-Dah,” her catchphrase written by Allen for *Annie Hall*, the role for which she would later win the Academy Award for Best Actress.²⁶ At the ceremony for her lifetime achievement award, Woody Allen presented her with the award. It was almost poetic. His appearance on stage was received with thunderous applause as huge Hollywood stars rose to their feet. Allen used his platform to say Keaton was never a conventional beauty, to say she dresses to hide her sexuality, to say she looks old, to say she’s been dumped by a half dozen men in Hollywood, and to say that she was bulimic. These all received huge laughs from the star-studded crowd that included Meryl Streep, Martin Short, Steve Martin, and Reese Witherspoon. None of this bothered me. In a moment of sweetness, Allen thanked Diane for being such an inspiration in his life, claiming he owed much of his own success to her. She’s a woman who is great at everything she does, he claimed. Actress, writer, photographer, fellatrix, director. Diane Keaton. The winner of the 45th AFI Lifetime Achievement Award. The room erupted in applause and Keaton accepted the award. I rewind

²⁵Amanda Luz Henning Santiago, "Kate Winslet Recently Said 'on Some Level Woody Is a Woman' Because Woody Allen Writes Female Characters so Well," *Business Insider*, December 07, 2017, accessed April 09, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/kate-winslet-says-of-woody-allen-on-some-level-woody-is-a-woman-2017-12>.

²⁶AFI, "2017 DIANE KEATON TRIBUTE," *AFI*, accessed February 22, 2019, <https://www.afi.com/laa/laa17.aspx>.

the video.²⁷ What did he just say? It happened so quickly and it sounded so sweet, but I swear I heard a word that I couldn't possibly have heard. No, I did hear it. Fellatrix. I had to Google it to make sure it meant what I was pretty sure it meant. A woman who performs fellatio. In the list of things Allen considered Keaton good at, he included fellatio between photography and directing, in the same list as actress and writer. That's the moment I started to understand where people who didn't like him were coming from. Allen didn't think of Keaton as a talented actress without thinking of her as good in bed. All of her talents meant the same thing to him, and he wasn't embarrassed to say it to a crowd of people, in 2017. I was mortified for him. I was mortified for Diane Keaton. I was mortified that I had spent so long defending him.

It is important to establish a connection between Allen and gender apart from the three films in question in this thesis. Woody Allen's brand is women. He loves women, he writes about them, and he marries them. When I developed my interest in Allen I understood his relationship to gender in three, fairly generic, ways. I "knew," first, that he was a champion creator of female roles. I understood that he wrote excellent and complicated roles for women and that the actresses who portrayed them won awards. Second, I understood that Allen had a special relationship with actresses Mia Farrow and Diane Keaton. I knew that Allen had long term romantic and professional relationships with these two women and that over the course of their respective relationships, the actresses starred in most of Allen's films, usually in roles that were written specifically for them. Third, I knew that Allen represented a type of man that was not traditionally celebrated in Hollywood. Allen as the puny New York writer represented a sort of intellectual masculinity that stood in stark contrast to his contemporaries, Robert Redford and

²⁷Boston Fern, "Woody Allen presented Diane Keaton w. The AFI award," YouTube video, 6:03, November 14, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8AAYTDf87Y>.

Clint Eastwood. All in all, my conception of Allen was tied to gender in a number of ways, some more subtle than others, from the very beginning. This, I believe, is not unique to me. Before gender, Allen is probably most associated with Judaism, and then New York. But gender is never far behind. It might sound odd to associate an abstract concept with a director. It's not. We associate race with Tarantino and class with Scorsese. Allen has made a career out of his representations of men and women in the same way Hitchcock made a career of out representations of suspense. So, in the age of conversations about gender and film, it makes sense that Allen is one of the first members of Hollywood we think of. It's important that we take a step back and assess why.

GENDER AND GENRE

Let's start with genre. Allen's films exist beyond genre in an interesting way. Often, they're more easily categorized by their director than by content, style, or association with specific genre conventions. This is because Allen's personal life leads him to create films rooted in his autobiography. The average audience member recognizes Woody Allen films as autobiographical, at least partly. But, when we think of Allen's films we also think of romantic comedy. Allen's films do not function as typical romantic comedies. It's true that his films are almost always comedic and contain a romantic plot, but this alone does not automatically make them romantic comedies. Whether his films are romantic comedies or not, however, does not stop our automatic association. Part of the reason, then, that we associate Allen with gender is that romantic comedies, traditionally, are strongly associated with female stars. Allen is sometimes considered a romantic comedy auteur, although I'm not comfortable characterizing him this way. *Annie Hall* was radical because it suggested that romantic movies can be both

comedic and not have a happy ending, and it stressed female sexual fulfillment in a way that had not yet been emphasized on the silver screen. Not only did Allen make movies that centered on female stars, but those movies gave women a voice that they hadn't had before. It showed women having sex, smoking, asking for what they wanted, getting it, and not getting it. The new romantic comedy proved that women had a lot to say, and that they could say it humorously. It felt, frankly, like a more honest depiction of modern love and femininity. And it was coming from a man. Because Allen's films are at least semi-autobiographical, as much as his films may seem to be about female desires and give women a voice, they are firstly about him. So how is it we came to understand his films as so women-centered?

It may have something to do with the fact that women, marriage, and sex are often at the center of his plots. *Manhattan*, for example, investigates its protagonist, Isaac Davis', relationships with three different women. We are positioned to understand the film as representing three distinct types of modern women and three types of relationships those women may find themselves in. It's tempting to applaud Allen for his representation of bisexuality in the late 1970s, for his intellectualization of the female protagonist, and even in his making a female character, Tracy, much more moral than the character he plays, Isaac. In reality, *Manhattan* is about Davis and how he interacts with those women much more than it is about those women independently. Take, as another example, the opening of *Annie Hall*. Ostensibly, this film is about its titular character, although we are asked to identify with Alvy from the very beginning. The opening monologue belongs to him, and situates us with him as he remembers his childhood and welcomes us to the narrative. The same is true of *Manhattan*. The opening shots of *Manhattan* are accompanied by a voice over of Allen dictating an autobiography he is beginning to write. Right away we are asked to see New York as the speaking character does, before we

even see him. We hear Allen's voice and he is telling us how to see what we are shown. What's funny is that we learn quickly that Isaac's ex-wife has written her own autobiography detailing their humiliating break up. She's beaten him to the punch but we don't start with her side of the story. We start with his.²⁸

Our position in Allen films is worth commenting on. We are positioned in Allen films to see the world through Allen's eyes. This seems obvious. He's the director, writer, and star. But it's important to recognize the implications of this forced perspective. The forced Allen perspective means that we see his female characters as he does, which is why it's easy to see his female characters as strong and interesting from far away, but harder to do so when we take a closer look at the film. His female characters are human and interesting, which is what makes them good representations of women. But, because they exist in a Woody Allen world, we're forced to dislike them. And disliking a character is an easy excuse for calling her a bad representation. The problem with gender representations in Woody Allen films is that independently, the women characters are human and strong, but the films ask us to hate them. Take Sally out of the world of *Husbands and Wives* and we are able to see clearly how intellectual and opinionated she is. Leave her in Allen's world and we see her as he does, loud and contradictory and mean. I mention this because I think it's important as I embark on an analysis of his films for gender representation to acknowledge yet another contradiction when it comes to Allen. It is obvious in his female characters that Allen is aware of women's humanity, and he isn't afraid to show it on screen. In this way, he is indeed creating wonderful female characters. It's true, simultaneously, that his male character, in *Manhattan* or *Husbands and*

²⁸*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (United Artists, 1979), accessed September, 2018, https://www.amazon.com/Manhattan-Woody-Allen/dp/B001EMU31Y/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=manhattan+1979&qid=1555037548&s=gateway&sr=8-1.

Wives or *Café Society*, dislikes these women for the very reasons we consider them good female representations.

Richard Feldstein investigates feminine representation in Allen's films in his contribution to *Discontented Discourses: Feminism/Textual Intervention/Psychoanalysis*, "Displaced Feminine Representation in Woody Allen's Cinema." Feldstein looks at Allen's representation of women chronologically, claiming that his early films portray women as specular icons that the schlemiel/protagonist desires while himself remaining the center of the film. His jokes may be self-deprecating or jabs at more traditional male leads, but either way, they tend to be at the expense of women. We see a change in Allen's depictions of women with the introduction of Keaton as muse. Keaton's consistent appearance in Allen's films helped him to create female characters the protagonist desired without threat. Feldstein claims that by *Manhattan*, though, Keaton had become yet another desirable but threatening woman.²⁹ Part of the threatening nature of Allen's female characters can be attributed to their, and his, religion. Giovanna P. Del Negro investigates Allen's Jewishness in relation to his female characters in "Woody's Women: Jewish Domesticity and the Unredeemed Ghost of Hanukkah to Come." Jewish women are very often missing from Allen's films, while the male characters are frequently Jewish. When they do appear, Allen's Jewish women are used for comic effect, or are exaggerations or stereotypical. The Jewish woman in Allen's films represent a stifling domesticity that is threatening to him and his creativity. Their threatening nature is, however, what makes his female characters strong and independent, in comparison to "their more insecure and timid gentile counterparts to whom

²⁹Richard Feldstein, "Displaced Feminine Representations in Woody Allen's Cinema," in *Discontented Discourses: Feminism/textual Intervention/psychoanalysis*, ed. Marleen S. Barr, and Richard Feldstein (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 69-86.

Allen's characters are invariably attracted and whom he finds less threatening."³⁰ Part of what makes women threatening to Allen is their Jewishness. Part of what makes him unthreatening is his Jewishness. His Jewishness is tied to his entire demeanor, his persona. This persona of a harmless nebbish has allowed Allen to not only make a career out of telling jokes at the expense of women, but to have women laugh at those very jokes. His role in the evolution of the romantic comedy is in making "gender and sexual oppression humorous."³¹ Allen's demasculinization leads to characters, who may or may not originate from their author, who are over sexed as a means of compensation. His sexual conquests, around which most of his plots are formed, are meant to prove a masculinity not yet widely recognized by Hollywood. Allen's plots are about getting the girl, not being happy with the girl, and always managing to get another. We might be shocked to see a young and strikingly beautiful Meryl Streep portray the ex-wife of a short and nerdy Allen in *Manhattan*. We're less shocked by beauties Keaton and Farrow fawning over Allen simply because we are so bombarded with it. Allen writes these scripts and it's understandable that he writes himself in as romantic lead. In doing so, however, he changes our conception of masculinity and normalizes a new masculinity that he represents, without changing the object of masculinity in general, to get the girl. He plays a loser who never loses. It's the best of both worlds. His audience both sympathizes with him and laughs at their own superiority to him, while being forced by his characters' ultimate success to reevaluate their biases. How many movies does it take before we learn that the underdog is not, in fact, the underdog?

³⁰Giovanna P. Del Negro, "Woody's Women: Jewish Domesticity and the Unredeemed Ghost of Hanukkah to Come," in *Woody on Rye : Jewishness in the Films and Plays of Woody Allen*, ed. Marat Grinberg and Vincent Brook (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2013), accessed February 21, 2019, ProQuest Ebook Central.

³¹Giovanna P. Del Negro, "Woody's Women: Jewish Domesticity and the Unredeemed Ghost of Hanukkah to Come," in *Woody on Rye : Jewishness in the Films and Plays of Woody Allen*, ed. Marat Grinberg and Vincent Brook (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2013), accessed February 21, 2019, ProQuest Ebook Central.

The nature of this genre, the romantic comedy, and Allen's own lack of traditional masculinity create a perfect storm from which to bear the strong female lead. This has been the case for Allen. By underplaying his gender and by writing into a genre that typically centers on women, Allen has been understood as the progenitor of the dynamic female lead. His female characters are celebrated. This celebration begins with *Annie Hall* and peaks with *Hannah and Her Sisters*. But even two years ago, big female stars were jumping at a chance to perform in an Allen movie. This makes sense. His female actresses win awards. On top of that, he effectively made careers for two of them, Diane Keaton and Mia Farrow. So, it's hard for me to frown at Scarlett Johansson for attempting to become muse number three. Diane Keaton won best actress at the Oscars for *Annie Hall*. Mariel Hemingway was nominated for best supporting actress. Penelope Cruz won best supporting actress for her role in Allen's *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*. Dianne Wiest has won two Oscars under Allen's direction, best supporting actress in *Hannah and Her Sisters* and *Bullets Over Broadway*. Mira Sorvino was nominated and won for her role in *Mighty Aphrodite*. Jennifer Tilly was nominated alongside Dianne Wiest for best supporting actress in *Bullets Over Broadway*. Judy Davis was nominated for best supporting actress in *Husbands and Wives*. Geraldine Page was nominated for her work in Allen's *Interiors*.³² Allen's female character's and the actresses he casts to play them continue to win awards, adding to his, and the actresses he works with, success and distinction.

³²Grw9952 (IMDb User), "Actresses Who Have Worked With Woody Allen," *IMDb*, August 25, 2015, accessed February 22, 2019, <https://www.imdb.com/list/ls074826151/>.

PRETEND WOMEN

“I was interested in women at a young age. When I was in kindergarten, I was trying to date them . . . I remember in P.S. 99 they called my mother to school - this was in the fifth grade - and said, ‘He’s always in trouble with girls. That’s all he thinks of’,” Allen said in an interview, establishing his interest in women as sexual in origin.³³ “He loves women. He’s not frightened of women. Thank God,” said Barbara Hershey, who acted in *Hannah and Her Sisters*.³⁴ “It’s more of an affinity with women. There’s some kind of relish, some kind of cherishing. It’s complicated, really,” Dianne Wiest said.³⁵ *It’s complicated, really*, might as well be the subtitle to this thesis. “When I started writing professionally, I could never, ever write from the woman’s point-of-view,” Allen said. “It was when I met Keaton that I started. She has such a strong personality and so many original convictions.” He added, “It became fun for me to write from the female point of view. I had never done it before, so it was fresh. It also didn’t carry with it the burden of a central comic persona that had to see everything the way a wit sees everything.”³⁶ Again, we are reminded of the connection between art and artist. Allen’s personal, romantic relationship changed the way he wrote films. It’s that simple. His knowing Keaton is what led to dynamic female characters; the connection is too obvious to ignore.

³³Woody Allen, “The Imperfectionist,” in *Woody Allen: Interviews*, ed. Robert E. Kapsis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 131-151.

³⁴Woody Allen, “The Imperfectionist,” in *Woody Allen: Interviews*, ed. Robert E. Kapsis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 131-151.

³⁵Woody Allen, “The Imperfectionist,” in *Woody Allen: Interviews*, ed. Robert E. Kapsis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 131-151.

³⁶Woody Allen, “The Imperfectionist,” in *Woody Allen: Interviews*, ed. Robert E. Kapsis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 131-151.

So, what makes Allen's female characters so special? His female characters are memorable. Hannah, of *Hannah and Her Sisters*, and Annie, of *Annie Hall*, leave lasting impressions on their audiences. While claiming to write from Keaton's perspective, Allen also claims that he has often wished that he could play the roles he has written for women because they are allowed to be "emotional and sarcastic and flamboyant."³⁷ How often is the Woody Allen character in his films played by a woman? But how often do we claim his female characters are diverse simply because they are placed against the same, neurotic Allen character he always plays? The female characters may only seem nuanced over a forty-year career because they play opposite the same male lead. Here's what we can say of Allen's female characters. They're not one-dimensional. In the cases of Keaton and Farrow his female leads are based on real women, women that we love because he loved. Keaton and Farrow are different types of female leads. Keaton playing the bumbling, insecure intellectual and Farrow playing the introverted, selfless waif. How much of our praise for Allen's female characters comes out of the fact that they aren't likeable? His female characters are nuanced in that they aren't perfect. They're far from it. Why do we love Annie? Because she's immensely flawed. She has no self-esteem. Why do we celebrate Judy Davis' portrayal of Sally in *Husbands and Wives*? Because the character is intensely unlikeable, and boy does Davis make it believable.

REAL WOMEN

I found myself wondering throughout my research process how Allen managed to continue a career for 25 years after a sexual assault allegation. But I realize that this has to do

³⁷Dave Izkoff, "Annie and Her Sisters," *The New York Times*, July 17, 2013, accessed April 11, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/21/movies/woody-allens-distinctive-female-characters.html>.

with Allen's personal life and not his films. So, when I started to look at his films by themselves, adopting a death of the author mind frame myself (as best my Gen Z mind could), I expected my woes to be eased. His art, surely, spoke for itself and proved his genius as much as it touted the reputation of positive gender representation I'd heard so much about. But then I found myself wondering how feminist film critics, how other directors and creatives, could let Allen create movies like *Manhattan* and go unscathed. Part of the issue, surely, was the lack of female voices in Hollywood at the time, certainly ones that would feel comfortable critiquing Allen. That's when I found Joan Didion's evisceration of Allen from the 1979 issue of *The New York Review*.³⁸ And then a quote from Orson Welles that proved to me that men and women in Hollywood were, in fact, displeased with Allen before 2017. Welles begins by claiming that he dislikes the type of man Allen is, those inflicted with the "Chaplin disease." Meaning, the type that acts shy but is actually arrogant. Welles ends the discussion by claiming everything Allen does on the screen is therapeutic.³⁹

But Allen's female characters aren't the only thing that draws a female audience. In fact, it's often his unmasculine portrayal himself that draw women in. In line for *Husbands and Wives*, die-hard Allen fan Nicki Van Winkle says, "Do I identify? In 'Annie Hall,' I was Woody Allen."⁴⁰ Allen and gender are inextricably linked in both his personal life and his films, which is why he is useful as a case study of gender representation in Hollywood. We expect strong female

³⁸Joan Didion, "Letter from 'Manhattan'," *The New York Review of Books*, August 16, 1979, accessed December 10, 2018, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1979/08/16/letter-from-manhattan/>.

³⁹Henry Jaglom, Peter Biskind, and Orson Welles, *My Lunches with Orson : Conversations Between Henry Jaglom and Orson Welles* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt Books, 2013), 37.

⁴⁰William Grimes, "At Woody Allen Opening Devotees and the Curious," *The New York Times*, September 19, 1992, accessed December 03, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/09/19/movies/at-woody-allen-opening-devotees-and-the-curious.html>.

characters from him, we expect movies about women, and we know to look for female-centric plots in his work. There is something worth investigating in play between our expectations of Allen's work when it comes to gender and the reality.

I have stated as fact that Allen's films are at least semi-autobiographical and I don't think I would be wrong in saying that most people understand that Woody Allen plays himself in movies. But I also don't want to take for granted this claim, especially considering how important it is to my argument, which is why I want to lay out some salient examples of how Allen's biography has been reworked for the screen with very little subtlety. The largest, most obvious overlap is undoubtedly his relationships with Farrow and Keaton, so I won't spend much time on that. Rather, I want to draw attention to a few similarities that are unsettling in their specificity. Take, for example, a letter written to Allen by Nancy Jo Sales, who was at the time a 13-year-old pen pal of Allen's. She was born during a hurricane, a detail she doesn't remember telling Allen, but that eerily pops up in Rain's backstory in *Husbands and Wives*.

Manhattan and *Husbands and Wives* are commonly considered prophetic in their inclusion of a relationship between an older man and a much younger woman, but the fact that Allen would start a relationship with a woman 35 years his junior over a decade after *Manhattan* was released is hardly an example of its autobiographical nature. Tracy's part in *Manhattan* was, until this year, only evidence of Allen's perverted interest in young girls. The day I was reading the original manuscript of *Manhattan* in the Princeton archives, the news broke that *Manhattan* was based on a relationship Allen had with actress Babi Christina Engelhardt. Her story seems straight out of an Allen film. Engelhardt was 16 when she met Allen, at the time 41, in 1976. They met in a favorite haunt of Allen's, Elaines, where Babi gave him her number with the

message, “Since you’ve signed enough autographs, here’s mine!”⁴¹ When he called, they began an eight-year affair in which she regularly met him in his Fifth Avenue penthouse. Engelhardt's story was not told with a malicious intent, but it did bring attention to *Manhattan* as an example of autobiography rather than prophecy. Babi was a 16-year-old aspiring actress when she met Allen. She was a high schooler. At the time, the age of consent in New York was 17. Their relationship continued until Allen introduced her to Mia Farrow, at which point it became clear to Babi that she was not his girlfriend, but he did have one. Engelhardt writes of the moment it ended with Allen, “I felt sick. I didn’t want to be there at all, and yet I couldn’t find the courage to get up and leave. To leave would mean to an end to all of this. Looking back now, that’s exactly what I needed, but back then, the idea of not having Woody in my life at all terrified me. So, I sat there, patiently, calmly trying to assess the situation, trying to understand why he wanted the two of us to meet.”⁴² Later Babi would participate in three-way sex sessions with Farrow and Allen, about which she wrote, “While we were together, the whole thing was a game that was being operated solely by Woody so we never quite knew where we stood.” Babi, who now goes by Christina, went on to work for one of Allen’s biggest idols, Federico Fellini.

Manhattan’s Tracy is also an aspiring actor. Engelhardt says that Allen refused to help her get a SAG card, which reminds me of Isaac’s intent to stop Tracy from going to London acting school. When Babi first saw *Manhattan* in theaters, she said she cried through most of the movie, but also knew that she was unlikely the only inspiration for Tracy’s character. Allen also

⁴¹Gary Baum, “Woody Allen’s Secret Teen Lover Speaks: Sex, Power, and a Conflicted Muse Who Inspired ‘Manhattan’,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, December 17, 2018, accessed April 14, 2019, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/features/woody-allens-secret-teen-lover-manhattan-muse-speaks-1169782>.

⁴²Gary Baum, “Woody Allen’s Secret Teen Lover Speaks: Sex, Power, and a Conflicted Muse Who Inspired ‘Manhattan’,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, December 17, 2018, accessed April 14, 2019, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/features/woody-allens-secret-teen-lover-manhattan-muse-speaks-1169782>.

dated Stacey Nelkin a 17-year-old student at Stuyvesant High after meeting her during the making of *Annie Hall*, and there were other young women who participated in three-ways with Engelhardt and Allen. The largest difference, according to Engelhardt, between *Manhattan* and her lived experiences was how publicly Tracy is flaunted. “I was kept away,” she says of her own time with Allen.⁴³

It’s true that Allen has been denying his films autobiographical nature since 1977. “I’m not that iconic figure at all. I’m very different from that,” he told an interviewer in 1996.⁴⁴ Interview after interview that I read included some reference to Allen playing himself, or to his using his personal life as inspiration for his films. In an interview in the 1980s, he was asked point blank if his films were autobiographical. He responded, “My films are only autobiographical in the large, overall sense. The details are invented, regardless of whether you’re talking about *Annie Hall*, *Interiors* or *Manhattan* . . . I never had an affair with a sixteen-year-old girl.”⁴⁵ Often Allen’s response to these types of questions is to explain, earnestly, that he can only write what he knows, like any artist. “You have to use the trappings of the things you know. It’s hard for me to do a movie about a nuclear physicist who lives in Akron. It’s more useful to deal with what I’ve observed,” he says in a 1981 interview.⁴⁶ Again in 1982 Allen says “I play a character who’s a filmmaker because I’m familiar with the outer trappings of a

⁴³Gary Baum, "Woody Allen's Secret Teen Lover Speaks: Sex, Power and a Conflicted Muse Who Inspired 'Manhattan'," *The Hollywood Reporter*, December 19, 2018, accessed April 14, 2019, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/features/woody-allens-secret-teen-lover-manhattan-muse-speaks-1169782>.

⁴⁴Woody Allen, “The Imperfectionist,” in *Woody Allen: Interviews*, ed. Robert E. Kapsis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 131-151.

⁴⁵Woody Allen, “Creators on Creating: Woody Allen,” in *Woody Allen: Interviews*, ed. Robert E. Kapsis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 60-66.

⁴⁶Woody Allen, “Allen Goes Back to the Woody of Yesteryears,” in *Woody Allen: Interviews*, ed. Robert E. Kapsis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 67-70.

profession like that. I can write about them. I'm not going to make myself a nuclear physicist who's having a nervous breakdown, because I don't know what he'd do in the course of a typical day."⁴⁷ It sounds logical to write what you know, but if we apply that logic to his characters' careers, we have to apply it to his characters' personal relationships as well. It sounds vaguely similar to something he said during the *Café Society* press conference at Cannes 2016. He doesn't hide the fact that Bobby, played by Jesse Eisenberg, is the Allen-character in *Café Society*, "If this were years ago I would have played the part in the movie Jessie is playing because he's perfect for this kind of character."⁴⁸ When pushed on the similarities between Bobby's story and Allen's own, Allen said, "The character, the fictional character, is nothing like me. I never went out to Hollywood to try to get a job. I don't have a relative. I didn't get involved with a woman out there. I don't see an acute similarity. I just see the similarity that's inevitably drawn when there's a character vaguely in the ballpark of something that one could believably say might remind them of me."⁴⁹ The *Café Society* Cannes press conference is full of awkward moments, intensified by Allen's use of hearing aids and the thick accents most of the foreign reporters speak with. One of the most interesting moments came 20 minutes into the conference when a female reporter brought up Allen's romantic motif of relationships between older men and younger women. Allen claimed he didn't hear the question and turned to Jesse and Kristen Stewart for translation, which Jesse provided by saying the woman asked about his

⁴⁷Woody Allen, "Woody Allen, Inside and Out," in *Woody Allen: Interviews*, ed. Robert E. Kapsis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 71-78.

⁴⁸Festival de Cannes official, "CAFE SOCIETY - Press conference - EV - Cannes 2016," YouTube video, 41:08, May 11, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHS6WcRnFIM>.

⁴⁹Festival de Cannes official, "CAFE SOCIETY - Press conference - EV - Cannes 2016," YouTube video, 41:08, May 11, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHS6WcRnFIM>.

romantic motifs, not mentioning the May-December aspect of the question. Allen then began to talk about how romantic he believes he is, leaving the question completely unanswered, to my frustration. Later in the conference, another female reporter asked if he's ever considered making a film in which an older woman has a relationship with a much younger man. Allen's answered, "I wouldn't hesitate to do that if I had a good idea for a story with a 50-year-old woman and a 30-year-old man. It's not a common thing and I don't have a lot of experience to draw on for material."⁵⁰ He has reminded us time and again that he draws on his life for inspiration, he has to write what he knows, and in this answer, he tells us that he's able to write about relationships between older men and younger women because he has personal experience with them.

In answering the "are your films autobiographical?" question, Allen always answers with specifics from the film that did not happen to him. He becomes, suddenly, very detail oriented. "I never had a girlfriend who was in an institution. I was never about to marry a French woman with children. I never had any trouble with studio executives, and my driver was never arrested for mail fraud," he said in a 1981 interview following *Stardust Memories*.⁵¹ It sounds eerily similar to, "People think I fell in love with my daughter. They couldn't tell the difference between my real daughter and Soon-Yi Previn. People think I was married to Mia. I was never married to Mia."⁵² Sure, Mia and Woody were never married but they were in a committed relationship for a decade and shared two children. And it's true that Soon-Yi was neither daughter nor stepdaughter to Allen, but his parental role to the Farrow children cannot be erased

⁵⁰Festival de Cannes official, "CAFE SOCIETY - Press conference - EV - Cannes 2016," YouTube video, 41:08, May 11, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHS6WcRnFIM>.

⁵¹Woody Allen, "Allen Goes Back to the Woody of Yesteryears," in *Woody Allen: Interviews*, ed. Robert E. Kapsis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 67-70.

⁵²Woody Allen, "The Imperfectionist," in *Woody Allen: Interviews*, ed. Robert E. Kapsis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 131-151.

by lack of a marriage license. This attention to detail is the mechanism of a very articulate man in an attempt to absolve himself.

This chapter makes clear why we associate Allen with gender, and the importance of that association. It also introduces a central tension in my thesis, that of the autobiographical quality of Allen's work. This chapter sets the stage to look at Allen as an anomalous director in the context of #MeToo, not in his actions, which many men have taken, but in the form and content of the films through which he has spoken to us.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICALLY ALLEN

“My one regret in life is that I am not someone else.” - Woody Allen⁵³

Beginning in 1984, Allen began taking legal action against National Video, Inc. for their use of a photograph of an Allen look-alike, Phil Boroff, to promote their video rental chain. The ad ran in *Newsday* -- a photograph of Boroff with a clarinet under which ran the copy, “This is a Ron Smith Celebrity Look-Alike.” In the ad Boroff masquerades as Allen in an attempt to sell VIP cards to the National movie rental club. Allen’s concern, and his reason for suing, was over the implied endorsement of a product that he was not, in fact, advertising.⁵⁴

Allen’s personality custody battle is just one mildly humorous example of the lengths to which celebrities will go to protect their trademark identity, but it’s also a fairly succinct example of a central notion in my thesis, *the Allen persona*. By bringing National Video and Phil Boroff to court Allen, laid claim to his diminutive figure, his signature quirks, and his lovingly nebbish qualities, all of which Allen is willing to go to court to protect despite disparaging them on screen and in interviews. Allen’s fastidious protectiveness is emblematic of the importance of his particular personality to his career. The importance of Allen’s identity to his career is multifaceted, but it begins with the two aspects of his career for which he is most famous. Allen’s stand-up comedy and filmmaking are both uniquely developed around his specific personality. In stand-up a comic's routine and marketability are routinely tied to their

⁵³“Woody Allen: his 40 best one-liners,” *The Telegraph*, May 5, 2017, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comedy/comedians/woody-allen-best-jokes-and-one-liners/woody-allen/>.

⁵⁴U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, "Allen v. Men's World Outlet, Inc., 679 F. Supp. 360 (S.D.N.Y. 1988)," *Justia Law*, January 29, 1988, accessed February 22, 2019, <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/679/360/1529321/>.

personality. It is a rule in stand-up that a comics character, whether an exaggerated version of themselves or not, is displayed proudly and is very often the well from which they draw their jokes. In filmmaking it is the exception. The closeness of Allen's persona to his films is a product of his status as an auteur filmmaker, the likes of which include Allen's idols, Ingmar Bergman and Federico Fellini, Allen's contemporaries, Martin Scorsese and Steven Spielberg, and Allen's successors, Wes Anderson and Quentin Tarantino. The closeness between Allen's work and his persona are tied to two dominant ideological forces. The first, auteur theory, is a widely understood theory of film that neatly explains Allen's career. The second, theories of stand-up comedy, are less well known but important in a discussion of a filmmaker whose origins in stand-up have heavily influenced his films. Together, these theories pave the way to a reading of Allen's filmography as autobiographical and act as tools we may use to better understand Allen's films.

Allen is arguably one of the most famous directors in the world, most likely because he is widely considered an auteur. An auteur is a film director whose identity is imprinted intrinsically in their work, so much so that the films they produce are unmistakably products of their mind alone. These directors, despite working in a highly collaborative artform, control nearly every aspect of their films, often writing, directing and even starring in them. They are the filmic equivalent of a novel's author, a painting's painter, a concerto's composer. Their work then is recognizable for its distinct style and recurrent themes. Allen writes and directs all of his films, the tone of which can most easily be described as Allen-esque. Auteur theory was borne out of French New Wave cinema. François Truffaut's 1954 essay in *Cahiers du cinéma*, "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français" ("A certain tendency in French cinema") created the phrase, "the policy of the authors." He argued in favor of a cinema that eschewed the idea of a director as

simple stager and instead explained the director as author, functioning with autonomy and clear vision.⁵⁵ The term “auteur theory” was coined eight years later by Andrew Sarris in an essay “Notes on the Auteur Theory,” written for the journal *Film Culture*.⁵⁶ The theory is by no means an accepted law of filmmaking. Rather it is what it proclaims to be, a theory, that has been opposed by distinguished film critics including Pauline Kael. It is, however, an adequate means by which to define Allen’s work, which fits the principles of auteur theory rather neatly. It is also the theory under which I will be operating in order to connect Allen’s personal life to his career.

ALLEN AS AUTEUR

The auteur is author of his film beyond the writing of its screenplay, although Allen is first and foremost a writer. Allen began his career writing jokes for other performers, transitioned to performing them himself, and then began writing plays and screenplays. The first film Allen wrote, *What’s New Pussycat*, he did not direct. His script for this film was altered by stars Peter Sellers and Peter O’Toole, and by director Clive Donner, and the final product was disappointing to Allen. This led Allen to announce to his manager, Jack Rollins, that he would never write another movie he couldn’t direct himself.⁵⁷ The basic tenets of auteurism include recurring themes and visual cues that alert the audience to the filmmaker’s distinct artistic vision, stylistic

⁵⁵Francois Truffaut, “Une certaine tendance du cinéma français,” *Cahiers du Cinema* 70 (1954), accessed March 6, 2019, <http://www.newwavefilm.com/about/a-certain-tendency-of-french-cinema-truffaut.shtml>.

⁵⁶Andrew Sarris, “Notes on The Auteur Theory in 1962,” in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. L. Braudy and M. Cohen (New York: Oxford University, 2004), 561-564.

⁵⁷*Woody Allen - A Documentary*, directed by Robert B. Weide. (PBS, May 30, 2012), accessed December 09, 2018, https://www.amazon.com/Woody-Allen-Documentary-Part-1/dp/B07DS8S5TR/ref=sr_1_1?crd=36YFFJU9ZU62H&keywords=woody+allen+a+documentary&qid=1555440532&s=gateway&prefix=woody+allen+a+docu%2Caps%2C108&sr=8-1.

tropes, self-reflexivity, and a multifaceted role in the film itself. It justifies and celebrates the creative freedom of a director over the course of his (or her, but, let's be frank- *his*) career rather than the work of a hundred men and women on an individual film. At the end of the day, auteurism rests on control. Allen has been privileged from the very beginnings of his career in his ability to exercise nearly complete control over the films he produces. He writes the script, he controls the casting (and often recasting) of actors, he directs and, until recently, stars in his films. Woody Allen films are through-and-through Woody Allen films. We may associate Gordon Willis or Carlo Di Palma with Allen's film's cinematography, but we are never mistaken enough to question these men's subservient position on set. We may also think of Diane Keaton or Mia Farrow as definers of Allen's films, but we cannot listen to their dialogue or watch their mannerisms on camera without seeing Allen's thumbprint.

Part of auteur theory is intuitive. As audience members, we feel it in our guts just as much as we may analyze it on paper. We may recognize an Allen picture without being told it is his based on the white Windsor Light Condensed font over black background used in nearly every title and credit sequence of his since 1977's *Annie Hall*. We may also recognize an Allen picture because the dialogue is delivered characteristically fast, with beats and gestures that we cannot put our finger on but almost certainly originated from the man alternately behind and in front of the camera. Like many auteurs Allen consistently recasts the same actors and actresses, including Diane Keaton, Mia Farrow, Judy Davis, Fred Melamed, Tony Sirico, Tony Roberts, Wallace Shawn, Dianne Wiest, Sam Waterston, and Alan Alda. He also spent the early and middle years of his career, if we work under the assumption that the year 2000 ushered in the late stage of his career, filming New York stories. His films return to themes of mortality, psychoanalysis, romance, Jewishness, and the past. The central characters in his films are very

frequently ill hidden reappropriations of himself. These main characters, whether played by him or a, frequently Jewish, actor avatar like Larry David or Jesse Eisenberg, contain his anxieties, his childhood, his Jewishness, his New Yorker-ness, his refined love of classics, jazz and art cinema, his fear of death, and his history in Freudian therapy. They fall in love with the same type of women, they have creative jobs that generally include writing short stories, for television or for film, all of which Allen has done in real life. They may not be named “Woody Allen,” but the main male characters (sometimes the female ones as well) are based, in varying degrees, on their creator. This character, named Alvy Singer or Gabe Rothman or Isaac Davis or Bobby Dorfman, creates a string that binds together Allen’s filmography.

We know the “Woody Allen character.” We’ve known him for a long time. Each film Allen releases offers us another introduction to the character, another 180 minutes through which we might know him better, relate to him more. It becomes, then, very easy to say we know Woody Allen, which may be the last thing Allen would want us to think. He is a notoriously private person. He participates in interviews on rare occasion and he participates in celebrity culture almost not at all. He’s not a familiar face in Hollywood, his disdain for the town is known far and wide. He has accepted his invitation to the Academy Awards only once in the last fifty years, following 9/11, as Hollywood’s not-so-resident New Yorker. Despite his years of on screen appearances, Allen has dubbed himself an introvert who values privacy almost as much as art cinema. Woody Allen is a lot of things, many of which seem contradictory. He’s a screenwriter, he’s a character, he’s a comedian. He’s a nebbish, a schlemiel, an elitist, a romantic. He’s a jazz musician, a Knicks fan, a neurotic, a sex addict, a Jew. He’s a lot of things, which is exactly why we feel we know him so well. It’s the reason he’s so recognizable, even when Kenneth Branagh or John Cusack is playing him. There’s no one else like him.

The sense of familiarity we have with Woody Allen promotes the very sense of intimacy Allen is averse to. The tension in the Woody Allen character arises from the fact that time and again, Allen has created iterations of himself on screen and in stand-up, but constantly denies doing so in interviews, of which he gives very few. Allen's denial that he is anything like his fictional characters began in 1977 with *Annie Hall*, a movie that was seen as strongly rooted in his biography. Allen's denial of the autobiographical nature of his films has continued forty years since *Annie Hall*. In a 2009 Fresh Air interview with Terry Gross, Allen said "The people always look for clues in my movies, and they think, based on my movies, that they know me, and of course they don't know me."⁵⁸

Since 1977 Allen has been asked by interviewers over and over to distinguish between the person on screen and the identically dressed and habited man they sit across from. If anything, forty years of the same confusion reveals just how deeply the public believes Allen plays himself in the movies. It probably didn't help that the 2012 PBS American Masters documentary about Allen used footage from *Radio Days* and *Annie Hall* as examples of his upbringing and career trajectory.⁵⁹ The sense of familiarity audiences have developed because of how frequently and for how long they have been exposed to the Allen character is aided by the authenticity of the character. The longevity of Allen's typecasting of himself teaches his audience that Allen cannot change. We have a sense that Allen is hiding very little from us. He bares his anxieties, sexuality, and sin on screen. It is further compounded by Allen's breaking of

⁵⁸Woody Allen, "Woody Allen on Life, Films And 'Whatever Works,'" in *Woody Allen: Interviews*, ed. Robert E. Kapsis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 211-224.

⁵⁹*Woody Allen - A Documentary*, directed by Robert B. Weide. (PBS, May 30, 2012), accessed December 09, 2018, https://www.amazon.com/Woody-Allen-Documentary-Part-1/dp/B07DS8S5TR/ref=sr_1_1?crd=36YFFJU9ZU62H&keywords=woody+allen+a+documentary&qid=1555440532&s=gateway&prefix=woody+allen+a+docu%2Caps%2C108&sr=8-1.

the fourth wall and direct address, a habit, no doubt, from his stand-up years. Cecilia Sayad points out in her article, "The Auteur as Fool," that comedic auteurs, like Woody Allen, create for themselves a character of the fool who is excluded from the diegesis. They become outsiders in their own films. This process, Sayad argues, allows auteur fool directors to cross the boundaries of the frame. They become outsiders in the stories, drawing attention to the "problematic connection between their real existence and their screen personas."⁶⁰ Allen's very body serves as authorial signature. We are never given an opportunity to forget who wrote and directed the film. Together this makes for the perception that Allen on screen and off are one and the same, a perception that is widely held among Allen's audiences to this day, despite a minor shift in perception that happened in 1992. After typecasting himself as an unthreatening nebbish from Brooklyn for twenty years, Farrow's accusation that Allen sexually assaulted their shared daughter and the revelation that he was romantically involved with another of Farrow's children, 21-year-old Soon-Yi Previn, created a schism between the Allen of the silver screen and the Allen of the tabloids. Suddenly, Allen was portrayed as threatening and public perception was forced to adapt, despite decades of prophetic films involving romantic relationships between older men and younger women, and plots that function primarily around adultery.⁶¹

Allen's auteur identity is shaped by the use of themes, characters, and locations that not only link each of his films together, but link his personal identity to his films. This is what makes him an auteur director, but it also offers us a staggering amount of evidence connecting his life to

⁶⁰Cecilia Sayad, "The Auteur as Fool: Bakhtin, Barthes, and the Screen Performances of Woody Allen and Jean-Luc Godard," *Journal of Film and Video* 63, no. 4 (2011): 21-34, accessed December 10, 2018, doi:10.5406/jfilmvideo.63.4.0021.

⁶¹Caryn James, "And here we Thought we Knew Him," *The New York Times*, September 06, 1992, accessed December 10, 2019, <http://proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/108930181?accountid=11091>.

his films. I do not mean to argue that the Woody Allen character and Woody Allen himself are exactly the same. That would be foolish. Rather, it is important to note the similarities between his biography and the circumstances of his characters, as well as the public perception of Allen. It's important to understand that Allen's position in his films is different from other directors, and that his star quality is different from that other celebrities who have a more diverse dramatic reputation. It is more useful to keep in mind the similarities and differences and think in terms of entertainer personas. Allen's persona is important to his career.

Allen differs from auteurs like his idols, Bergman and Fellini. Auteur theory, as you may have guessed from its French origins and exclusionary effects on Hollywood, can be elitist. To put it simply, auteurs make highbrow films. Allen started as a gag writer for comedy TV shows. His humor is as dirty as it is quick and his films, although they include themes of death and religion, are comedies. Part of what makes Allen an auteur is the very thing that differentiates him from his peers. His films uniquely blend pop culture and art film, stand-up style humor with reflections on love and life. It is easier to characterize films written and directed by Woody Allen as "Woody Allen films," than by genre. His films exist between genres and one of the most significant reasons for this genrelessness is Allen's roots in stand-up comedy.

ALLEN AS STAND-UP COMIC

Allen's films famously reference his origins in stand-up comedy, reminding us once again how deeply Allen's biography is connected to his work, in both its content and form. Allen's work evokes his stand-up in a number of ways. First, stand-up comics are expected to perform as themselves, not as fictional characters. They appear on stage, usually not in costume and unaided by props, under their own identity. Their comedy, then, plays on their own lives,

current events, and how their persona affects how they interact with the present world. What's interesting about stand-up is the means by which comedians exaggerate their personalities into *personas* and treat fictional anecdotes as though they were true stories. We're familiar with this routine. As audience members of stand-up comedy, we have been taught to suspend our disbelief and buy into the stand-up's exaggeration in order to laugh. Despite the obviousness of a comedian's exaggeration or complete fabrication, stand-up comedy is founded on telling the truth. Oliver Double tells us, in *Getting the Joke: The Inner Workings of stand-Up Comedy*, that truth is vital to stand-up's principle of authentic self-expression.⁶² We are led to believe by comedians that the persona addressing us on stage is the same one that would greet us in a bar, that the stories they are telling are in fact truthful. We rarely think of stand-up as pieces of theater. It's commonly understood as a nonfiction genre. The audience's assumption isn't unfounded. Comedians tell us time and again that what they're about to say is totally true, that *this is a true story, no really*. This assumption also helps comedians continue the rouse. They know we believe they are telling the truth, which means they can push their routines to the brink of insanity without risking us losing faith in the truthfulness of the situation, making outlandish comedy funny rather than disappointingly unbelievable. This trust is heightened by the fact that stand-up comedians are liked. This differs them further from straight acting. Characters portrayed by straight actors are never confused for the actors portraying them, except perhaps in cases of type casting or Hugh Grant. Actors, also, need not be liked in order to be hired, or watched by audiences, although this is changing in the wake of #MeToo. Jack Rollins, Allen's long time manager, said of Allen's stand-up, "In a cabaret, if an audience can sense the

⁶²Oliver Double, *Getting the Joke: The Inner Workings of Stand-up Comedy* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014), 160-168.

personality underlying the comic, if they can make contact with that personality, they'll enjoy him more."⁶³ Allen agrees, "What audiences want is intimacy with the person. They want to like the person and find the person funny as a funny human being. The biggest trap that comedians fall into is trying to get by on material."⁶⁴ Allen produces outstanding material, but it wasn't his jokes that made him a household name, it was his persona. As Double says, the stand-up's persona is critical to his or her act, "it provides a context for the material."⁶⁵ Without our understanding of Allen as a well-spoken but outsider Jew, his routine about mistakenly attending a Klan meeting and convincing the members to invest in Israel bonds wouldn't be quite as funny, to say nothing of how intensely false the story obviously is.⁶⁶

Robert Stebbins in *Laugh Makers: Stand-Up Comedy as Art, Business, and Life-Style* reminds us that although stand-up routines are memorized, they're performed conversationally.⁶⁷ They are, however, one-sided conversations. Allen translates this one-sided conversational method to his filmmaking, especially in instances of direct address. Ian Brodie takes Stebbins' claims one step further in his work on comedy, *Stand-Up Comedy as a Genre of Intimacy*. Brodie argues that stand-up comedy maintains control of the "conversation" created by the performer by creating the artifice that they are giving control to the audience, only to wrestle it

⁶³Oliver Double, *Getting the Joke: The Inner Workings of Stand-up Comedy* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014), 99.

⁶⁴Oliver Double, *Getting the Joke: The Inner Workings of Stand-up Comedy* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014), 99.

⁶⁵Oliver Double, *Getting the Joke: The Inner Workings of Stand-up Comedy* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014), 97.

⁶⁶Woody Allen-Topic, "Down South (Live)," YouTube video, 3:25, September 02, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NY1qJZv6xJ0>.

⁶⁷Robert A Stebbins, *The Laugh Makers: Stand-up Comedy as Art, Business and Life-Style* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 3.

back when required. This power dynamic creates an illusion of intimacy and reciprocity in a relationship that actually favors the performer.⁶⁸ Allen uses this form of control in his films, which is why the public is not only familiar with Allen, but trusts the Allen they believe they know. Additionally, the persona stand-up comedians rely on is built over time, as audience members are exposed to the performer in different shows. This same effect, of shows cumulative contributing to an audience's understanding of the performer, can be seen in Allen's career. Brodie reminds us that major events in comedians lives often serve as fodder for their routine, leading audience members to grow invested in the life stories of their favorite comedians. In effect, comedians have the power to control how their lives are perceived, even in the case of scandal.⁶⁹ The comedians take the control away from the public in determining what is true or important about the things that happen in their lives. Allen's origins in stand-up provide him the tools necessary to do this very same thing in film. *Husbands and Wives*, the plot of which is uncannily prophetic of the Farrow-Allen scandal that erupted as the film was premiering, is a perfect example of Allen reframing autobiography into legend. The goal of comedy is to make an audience laugh, and make the audience like you. With these goals in mind, it's no wonder that Allen's films resemble the very stand-up routines that catapulted Allen into the national consciousness in the 60s.

Allen's films invoke stand-up in that he creates a diegetic world in tune with our own. Mentions of pop culture, historical moments, real places, events and artists serve to remind the audience that they are watching a film set in contemporary New York, or Paris, or Barcelona (but

⁶⁸Ian Brodie, "Stand-up Comedy as a Genre of Intimacy," *Ethnologies* 30, no. 2 (2008): 153–180, <https://doi.org/10.7202/019950ar>.

⁶⁹Ian Brodie, "Stand-up Comedy as a Genre of Intimacy," *Ethnologies* 30, no. 2 (2008): 153–180, <https://doi.org/10.7202/019950ar>.

let's be honest, mostly contemporary New York). He further invokes stand-up by breaking the fourth wall and addressing the audience directly in the manner by which a stand-up would address his audience. The opening monologue of *Annie Hall*, as well as the frequent moments in which Allen speaks through the screen to us, or jumps forward and backward in his storytelling remind us of his origins in stand-up. The dialogue in Allen's films is reminiscent of stand-up bits and jokes; his screenplays are strewn with monologues and one-liners. Allen's stand-up comedy is rooted in self-deprecation and self-aggrandizement, which translates to the roles he plays in narrative films. Allen's characters not only share their writer's quirks, but also his style of delivery and his feelings of outsidership.

Lawrence E. Mintz points out the complicated nature of marginality in stand-up comedy. He argues that a comedian's defects are met with audience pity and an "exemption from the expectation of normal behavior."⁷⁰ This is an important point. What Mintz is suggesting is that the relationship formed between audience and performer not only produces intimacy but forgiveness for improper actions. Mintz goes as far as to say of the stand-up that he is a "negative exemplar." Mintz points out that the oldest, most basic role of the comedian is as fool, scoundrel, drunkard, coward, social outcast, those in our societies that we may punish with our laughter. Our pleasure, then, in watching stand-up comes not only out of the humor of the situation but in our relief that despite our relation to the comedians weaknesses "his weaknesses are greater than our own and that he survives them."⁷¹ I would suggest that the relief felt by an audience who identifies with the comedians foibles is derived, at least in part, by the

⁷⁰Lawrence E. Mintz, "Stand-Up Comedy as Social and Cultural Mediation," *American Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (April 01, 1985): 71–80. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2712763>.

⁷¹Lawrence E. Mintz, "Stand-Up Comedy as Social and Cultural Mediation," *American Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (April 01, 1985): 71–80. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2712763>.

understanding that the comedians confession justifies the bad behavior. Weakness, awkwardness and inappropriateness are naturalized on the stand-up stage. What sounds like self-deprecation is very often pride.

ALLEN AS AUTOBIOGRAPHER

“Stand-up comedy implies a level of performed autobiography,” Brodie tells us.⁷²

Performed autobiography could also serve to describe Allen’s filmography. Auteur theory argues that the works of an auteur are imprinted with their director’s world view and specific creative identity. Auteur theory does not suggest that auteur-made films are autobiographical. I am arguing that it is useful to take theories of autobiography and map it onto Allen’s work. I cannot say this without caveat. Autobiography as a genre is hard to define, especially across medium. I also do not mean to suggest that Allen’s work is entirely autobiographical; his films are obviously works of fiction. The links between his biography and his films, as well as the implications of the autobiographical genre, make mapping Allen’s work as autobiographical a useful tool in analyzing his work, especially at a time in which society is refusing to separate the art from its artist.

There have been a few scholarly works done on filmic autobiography. Linda Haverty Rugg’s *Keatons Leap: Self-Projection and Autobiography in Film*, uses Buster Keaton as an example of a filmmaker who “through the force of artistic vision and imagination, make a portal of the cinematic screen and connect between the filmmaker, the world projected, and the

⁷²Ian Brodie, "Stand-up Comedy as a Genre of Intimacy," *Ethnologies* 30, no. 2 (2008): 153–180, <https://doi.org/10.7202/019950ar>.

viewer.”⁷³ Truffaut, writing in 1957, remarked that the filmmaking of the future will become increasingly personal, more like a confession or a diary, than a distant and extravagant work of fiction. Truffaut does not specify whether the films will star their directors or not, and what the implications of an autobiographical film starring someone other than the owner of the narrative would be. Nadja Gernalzick contends with the issue in her piece, “To Act or Perform: Distinguishing Filmic Autobiography,” distinguishing between autobiographical fiction film, which would not require the author to star, and filmic autobiography, which would be a nonfiction documentary of an author's life.⁷⁴

Autobiography is a complex and highly debated genre, even in its original form of literature. Marcus Moseley points out in “Jewish autobiography: The Elusive Subject,” that the truthfulness of autobiography is up for debate. The basis of autobiography may be facts, but in the writing, or in our case, the filming, of the story the text becomes charged with the authors self-reckoning.⁷⁵ Roy Pascal writes that autobiography is a mixture of “design” and “truth.” The decision the author makes about events to include and the ordering of those events is a certain designing of truth.⁷⁶ This mixture is complicated by the inclusion of a camera whose frame can only include certain elements at once, whose lens can focus on only one subject at a time. Perhaps more important than the means of design is the goal of design in autobiography. For

⁷³Linda Haverty Rugg, “Keaton’s Leap: Self-Projection and Autobiography in Film,” *Biography* 29, no. 1 (January 01, 2006): v–xiii, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bio.2006.0026>.

⁷⁴Nadja Gernalzick, *Temporality in American Filmic Autobiography: Cinema, Automediality and Grammatology with Film Portrait and Joyce at 34* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2018), 1-13.

⁷⁵Marcus Moseley, “Jewish Autobiography: The Elusive Subject,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95, no. 1 (2005): 16–59, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/177704>.

⁷⁶Marcus Moseley, “Jewish Autobiography: The Elusive Subject,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95, no. 1 (2005): 16–59, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/177704>.

what purpose does the author choose certain events and order the way they are? James O'Rourke writes in *Sex, Lies, and Autobiography: The Ethics of Confession* that the modern form of confession was initiated by Rousseau and that the controlling ethical principle of autobiographical narratives are to claim that the autobiographer is a good person.⁷⁷ This is important. It's also similar to the goal of the stand-up comic in their routine, the goal of persuading the audience through confession that they, the confessor, are likeable. O'Rourke splits the autobiography into the legitimating narrative of the author as good person and the shadow narrative of the events and acts which somehow hurt other people. The harmful events of the shadow narrative are always portrayed as somehow "unconsciously, unintentionally, unwittingly, accidentally, carelessly, possibly negligently" committed by the protagonist.⁷⁸ Both *Jane Eyre* and *Lolita* are examples of autobiographies written in self-justifying terms. This justification may look, at first glance, like self-judging, as in *Frankenstein* in which Victor tells us that "'during these last days I have been occupied in examining my past conduct; nor do I find it blamable'."⁷⁹ This sounds eerily familiar to Allen's own words in *Manhattan*.

I want to justify my reading of Allen's films as autobiographical, especially given Allen's contentions that his work is not autobiographical and the autobiography's origins in literature not film. First, autobiographies are works that, whether their protagonist bears the same name as their author or not, are clearly identified with their creator's own life. Second, autobiographies

⁷⁷James L. O'Rourke, *Sex, Lies, and Autobiography: the Ethics of Confession* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 6.

⁷⁸James L. O'Rourke, *Sex, Lies, and Autobiography: the Ethics of Confession* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 6.

⁷⁹James L. O'Rourke, *Sex, Lies, and Autobiography: the Ethics of Confession* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 8.

rely on the “I” of the author, while films do not have such an “I.”⁸⁰ Allen’s films, however, star Allen; his body serves as the “I,” as well as include monologues that are littered with “I’s.” In the films that Allen does not star in but for which his own narrative is utilized, Allen appears to be exploring “new models of selfhood” offered by film.⁸¹

In *Confessions and Autobiography*, Stephen Spender details how autobiography transforms an author's experience into an experience for which he can no longer lay claim. Spender claims that the autobiographical writer does not write about himself but about life, the characters he creates, however tied they are to his own observations, exist separate from his experiences once they are housed between the covers of the book.⁸²

The autobiographical genre is rooted in the confession. Autobiographical writings, after all, are dramatic only if the life lead by the author is somehow out of the ordinary. Foucault writes that the ritual of confessing, of truth telling, requires two parties: the confessor and the listener. The confession’s audience, he argues, does not simply listen but is the “authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervene in order to judge.”⁸³ Most importantly, though, Foucault says this of the confession ritual: “a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it; exonerates, redeems and purifies him, it unburdens him of his wrongs,

⁸⁰ Kathleen M. Ashley, Leigh Gilmore, and Gerald Peters, *Autobiography & Postmodernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 75.

⁸¹Linda Haverty Rugg, “Keaton’s Leap: Self-Projection and Autobiography in Film,” *Biography* 29, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): v–xiii, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bio.2006.0026>.

⁸²Stephen Spender, “Confessions and Autobiography,” in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. Olney James (Princeton University Press, 1980), 115-22.

⁸³Kathleen M. Ashley, Leigh Gilmore, and Gerald Peters, *Autobiography & Postmodernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 60.

liberates him, and promises salvation.”⁸⁴ The act of confessing, alone, exonerates the writer of all crimes. In a spiritual sense, the confessor is saved, and his or her fate after death is preserved. These are both important. Foucault, in essence, asserts that the writing of autobiography is enough to justify the author’s wrong doings and that the relationship of power between writer and audience is such that the audience has the power to forgive. In the context of Allen, this means that his films, by their very existence, have justified his history, and that we, as the watchers of those films, have forgiven each of Allen’s confessions, one a year, for the last forty years. As critics calling attention to the aesthetics and mastery of Allen’s work, of its relation to themes of nostalgia and mortality, we stay on the surface level of the films. Why we do this is important, but not nearly as important as the consequences of the surface level criticism. Those who forgive the confessor are complicit in his actions. As audience members we legitimize narratives on the basis of shallow readings of aesthetics and love. Ethics in literature, or film, is oriented towards the future, meaning when we read a text or watch a film we are looking for morals and examples that will influence our behavior moving forward. The same applies when we read or watch something of an autobiographical nature. But that isn’t how autobiographies are written. Autobiographies are written with retrospective ethics.

Allen’s work is autobiographical. It seems clear that his movies are at least more inspired by his own life than most directors, and that many of his films and protagonists draw inspiration from his own life. This matters because the creation and reading of the autobiographical genre has certain implications. These implications are useful to keep in mind as we watch and analyze Allen’s films. It is useful to think of Allen as confessor and audience as absolver, especially

⁸⁴ Kathleen M. Ashley, Leigh Gilmore, and Gerald Peters, *Autobiography & Postmodernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 60.

given the content of Allen's films and the level to which Allen has been allowed to rise as a result of both public and critical approval. If Allen's work is read as autobiographical, then it becomes easier for us to use his characters and plots to further our understanding of his world view. It also grants us the authority to judge him for his films and choose to either absolve him of his sins, or not.

The fact that Allen's work trends towards the autobiographical positions him uniquely as a member of Hollywood in which there are clear connections between his biography and the work he produces. These connections between art and artist always exist but in Allen they are opaque to the point of undeniability. If we doubt that the lives of men in Hollywood affect their films, we need only look at Allen's filmography for a reminder of the clear influence between biography and art. If we are tempted to argue that a man's scandal and relationships should not be used to judge his work, or that a man's wrong doings do not have consequences in his films, we need only look at Allen to be reminded of how wrong we can be. His reflexivity, his tendency to look inward in his filmmaking and share with his audience his own life, lets us see how deeply his worldview and film are connected. The autobiographical nature of his work has given him permission, from the viewing public, to treat women poorly both on screen and off. The fact that his career has extended 25 years past accusations of child molestation proves our willingness to forgive on the basis of confession.

The fact that Allen's films are autobiographical makes Allen an anomaly among his peers. The genre of his work, the autobiographical quality to it, exposes Allen in a way that other filmmakers, abusers or not, are not exposed. It is this autobiographical genre that gives Allen a free pass to speak his truth candidly and publicly. This transparency is part of what makes Allen so different, why the consequences of the #MeToo movement have been different in his case.

Our ability to see Allen for who he is, because he has shown us, is what makes him different.

And he's shown us that he is both good and bad when it comes to women. He's been honest with us in his films, celebratory and critical of women, loving and treacherous.

PART II: FILM ANALYSIS

CHAPTER III: THE FILMS

“I just met a wonderful new man. He’s fictional, but you can’t have everything.” –*The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985)⁸⁵

Recently, while sitting in my scriptwriting class, I felt the class’s gaze shift from my professor to me, a rarity considering how ill frequently I participate. I cannot remember why my professor was discussing the great Italian artist Tintoretto but he was. He asked, “Has anyone seen the Woody Allen film *Everyone Says I Love You*?” I weakly raised my hand but most of the class expected me to have seen it anyway. After all, the topic of my thesis, despite my lack of participation, is not secret. In my professor’s discussion of Tintoretto, he felt the need to stop and say this - “In the movie *Everyone Says I Love You*, Julia Robert’s character is in love with Tintoretto so Woody Allen’s character learns everything about Tintoretto in order to impress her. Now whenever I think of Tintoretto I must also think of Woody Allen. What a great shame.” What a great shame. What a great shame to have to associate Woody Allen and a great artist. I understand the feeling. I felt funny sitting in the class after that. I was first struck by how strange it was that in a screenwriting class, populated by what I suspect are the 17 people most knowledgeable about film on Georgetown’s campus, I was the only person familiar with any of Woody Allen’s films. I was struck also by how unstrange it was that my professor, who earlier in his Georgetown career taught an entire course in the English department on Woody Allen films

⁸⁵“The Purple Rose of Cairo Quotes,” IMDb, accessed April 16, 2019, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0089853/quotes/?tab=qt&ref_=tt_trv_qu.

as adaptations, couldn't speak of Woody Allen without using the word "shame." But mostly I was reminded of the fact that I have been a Woody Allen fan for longer than I've let on, in this thesis or to anyone I speak about it to. I have distinct memories of watching *Annie Hall* in my family's computer room at the age of 13, falling in love with Diane Keaton and the idea of breaking the fourth wall. And I had, for the bulk of this process, considered that moment the origin of my affection for Woody Allen. But I was wrong. My professors reference to *Everyone Says I Love You* reminded me that I have been an avid Woody Allen fan since I was 5 years old. For the first 18 years of my life I spent a month of every summer with my grandparents in Buffalo, NY. Both my grandparents, but especially my grandmother, were cinephiles and loved showing me movies. We often watched the same films every year, which is why I've seen *Adventures in Babysitting* 18 times. It's also why I've seen *Everyone Says I Love You* more times than anyone probably should. It isn't one of Allen's most critically acclaimed films. It's a musical starring Goldie Hawn, Alan Alda, Julia Roberts, and Drew Barrymore. It's hilarious and lovely and perfect to watch with your grandmother once a year. Except when I was little I couldn't remember the name. All I could remember was the last scene in which Goldie Hawn and Woody Allen, having divorced years before, share a dance on the bank of a river and then, magically, start to rise in the air as they waltz. So, I would ask my grandmother, every year, if we could see the "Floating People" movie. And every year we would watch it.

Allen has made forty years of films. Not all of them are worth analysis, but they are all part of his story and tell us something about his relationship with gender. In deciding what I wanted to analyze I narrowed his forty-year long filmography down to three films: *Manhattan* (1979), *Husbands and Wives* (1992), and *Café Society* (2016). I chose these films for specific

reasons having to do with the time they were released, the themes they include, and the critical response they each received.

Manhattan came out two years after Allen's breakthrough *Annie Hall*. It is his attempt to combine the humor of *Annie Hall* with the melodrama of *Interiors*, Allen's 1978 release. A black and white love letter to New York City, *Manhattan* is about love, or a lack of it, in a world being corrupted by modernity. It's also an interesting case study through which to analyze Allen's world view, especially when it comes to gender. In *Manhattan*, Allen plays a 42-year-old twice-divorced comedy writer dating a 17-year-old, Tracy. Over the course of the film, Allen's character, Isaac Davis, falls in love with his best friend's mistress. Yale, Davis' best friend, is a yuppie who is cheating on his adoring wife with Mary (Keaton), a snobby but insecure intellectual. There are four important female characters in the film: Tracy, Isaac's teenage girlfriend, Mary, Isaac's secret crush turned lover, Jill, Isaac's lesbian ex-wife, and Emily, Yale's unassuming wife. The two male leads, Isaac and Yale, offer a male perspective.⁸⁶

Husbands and Wives came out at the beginning of the 1990s but at the end of the partnership between Farrow and Allen. Made in faux-documentary style, *Husbands and Wives* follows two married couples. Jack and Sally end their relationship at the beginning of the film only to wind up back together, and their friends Gabe and Judy start out strong but are rocked by their friends' separation and eventually separate themselves. The two pairs' coupling and uncoupling is complicated by Jack's young, aerobics instructor girlfriend, Sam, Sally's and

⁸⁶*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (United Artists, 1979), accessed September, 2018, https://www.amazon.com/Manhattan-Woody-Allen/dp/B001EMU31Y/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=manhattan+1979&qid=1555037548&s=gateway&sr=8-1.

Judy's competition for the affections of Michael, and Gabe's flirtation with one of the students in his college class, Rain.⁸⁷

Café Society is an example of a late Allen film. Released in 2016 with a star-studded cast, *Café Society* is a 1930s period piece that follows Bobby Dorfman from his Jewish upbringings in New York to glamorous Hollywood. While in California, Bobby falls for his uncle's secretary, Vonnie, short for Veronica, only to find out that Vonnie has been having an affair with her boss, his uncle. Bobby moves back to New York, starts a family with another woman named Veronica, and rises in the nightclub business with his gangster brother Ben.⁸⁸

MANHATTAN

CRITICAL RESPONSE

Manhattan was immediately deemed a masterpiece upon release. Although nearly every review I read mentioned the age gap between Isaac and Tracy, seeing as it is important to the plot, very few editorialized it with a negative connotation. It was an integral part of the film, but nothing more. Mariel Hemingway's portrayal of Tracy was praised repeatedly. One reporter writes, "The wrong girl, as Mariel Hemingway's co-star Michael Murphy points out, could have turned '*Manhattan*' into the wrong movie. Had the actress who played Tracy, a 17-year-old girl with an uncomplicated love for the 42-year-old man played by Woody Allen, had the least bit

⁸⁷*Husbands and Wives*, directed by Woody Allen (TriStar Pictures, 1992), accessed September 10, 2018, https://www.amazon.com/Husbands-Wives-Woody-Allen/dp/B009NX3868/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=husbands+and+wives&qid=1555037630&s=gateway&sr=8-1.

⁸⁸*Café Society*, directed by Woody Allen (Lionsgate/Amazon Studios, 2016), accessed September 11, 2018, https://www.amazon.com/Café-Society-UHD-Steve-Carell/dp/B01LXR96CR/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=cafe+society&qid=1555037682&s=instant-video&sr=1-1.

Lolita in her, the film might have taken a sleazy turn.”⁸⁹ Might have? In justifying his casting Allen says, “I thought ‘Oh she’s kind of tall and she’s very kid-like.’ She wasn’t anything like what I thought she’d be, I mean she’s still one of those kids who says ‘yuck’ and ‘gross.’” But in the end Allen says it was important that she was young, “I wanted her to be someone whose natural inclinations are very simple and very giving and very affectionate and open and uncomplicated. Her being 17 had a lot to do with that. By the time she gets to be 27, she will have had ten years of going to England and going to school and becoming an actress and maybe meeting a guy and getting in a relationship that’s not so good.”⁹⁰

Manhattan was almost universally praised as a commentary on modernity and love. But it wasn’t without some criticism. In an article titled “Hollywood and the New Man,” Joyce Sunila writes that the male characters, Yale and Isaac, are representations of the “Old Man of yesteryear” and that neither of them do the women in their lives any good. Feminism, in *Manhattan*, hasn’t done a damned thing, suggests Sunila. Rather, “*Manhattan* tells the most depressing story extant about what’s happening in the battle between the sexes. No wonder everybody’s so eager to tell you how foreign ‘*Manhattan*’ is to their universe.”⁹¹

⁸⁹Janet Maslin, "I Share My Character's Views on Men--and Stuff Like that'," *The New York Times*, May 20, 1979, accessed December 10, 2018, <http://proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/120859760?accountid=11091>.

⁹⁰Janet Maslin, "I Share My Character's Views on Men--and Stuff Like That'," *The New York Times*, May 20, 1979, accessed December 10, 2018, <http://proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/120859760?accountid=11091>.

⁹¹Joyce Sunila, "Hollywood and the New Man," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 05, 1979, accessed December 11, 2018, <http://proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/158925541?accountid=11091>.

ANALYSIS

I've chosen to analyze the final sequence of *Manhattan* for this thesis. The final sequence begins with a close up of Isaac's recorder, as we listen to him dictate a short story idea. It begins, in this way, with a parallel to the start of the film in which a disembodied Isaac is also dictating writing ideas. Only this time the camera cuts to Isaac lying on his couch and we watch him speak into the microphone about what makes life worth living. His list isn't long but it is consistent. Art is what makes Isaac's life worth living. Art, as Joan Didion importantly pointed out in her 1979 evisceration of Allen for *The New York Review*, is what Isaac passively consumes.⁹² *Manhattan* is about art. It equates people to the art they make. When Isaac first meets Mary, at an art gallery, she and Yale discuss what they call the "academy of the overrated." Isaac is disgusted by this. Mary and Yale are harsh jurors, but everyone in the film treats people as they would art. They judge, consume, and move on from. Tracy is held up as an artistic ideal in an otherwise grim reality. She, listed alongside Cezanne still lifes, is the only character with the beauty and purity of good art. She, like Mozart's "Jupiter" and Flaubert's *A Sentimental Education*, can be passively enjoyed by Isaac. She doesn't challenge him, ask too much of him, or complain.⁹³

When we first heard Isaac doing this "writing" in the opening sequence of the film, his voice was paired with intense visuals of New York City. The shots were dynamic and grandiose despite the fact that Isaac was talking about one man's experience of the city. In the final sequence, Isaac talks about the greatest artists to ever live while the camera stays in a tight shot of him in his living room. He ends his list on "Tracy's face," with the realization that he has let a

⁹²Joan Didion, "Letter from 'Manhattan'," *The New York Review of Books*, August 16, 1979, accessed December 10, 2018, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1979/08/16/letter-from-manhattan/>.

⁹³*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (1979).

good thing go. And then Allen shows us New York again. This time from the ground rather than above, as Isaac runs to Tracy. This time the city is not the main character, this time it is the background that blurs past us as Isaac makes his way to Tracy's apartment building, only to find her minutes away from leaving for the airport. Through the glass doors, he watches her brush her hair in the lobby of her building. There's something beautifully childish about Tracy brushing her hair as Isaac triumphantly arrives to reclaim her. It's a moment in which her youth is made poetic rather than demonized. It reminds me of an earlier scene, one in which Tracy is allowed to exist in her own world rather than in an adult one, the scene in which she requests a carriage ride in central park.⁹⁴

Tracy's face is framed in a close up, as it is for the majority of the film. Mary's face, though not in this scene, is usually framed from a greater distance. It is Tracy's face that Isaac ends his list on and it is Tracy's face that the film asks us to remember, although the final shot is of Isaac smiling at her words. She's characteristically inexpressive in this final interaction, revealing by comparison how overly expressive Isaac is. The position of the camera also acknowledges her height over Isaac, rather than evening it to make Isaac seem the same height. Most of the conversations in the film are not shot in shot-reverse-shot. They're often tracking shots of the characters walking side by side or they show each participant of the conversation in a shot all to themselves. In returning to a more traditional form of conversational editing in the last sequence, Allen is playing into the traditional romantic comedy ending he has written. If a movie's genre was determined solely by its ending, then *Manhattan* would be unquestionably a romantic comedy. Isaac runs across New York City to reunite with his love, only to find her

⁹⁴*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (1979).

minutes away from leaving for London. He even draws attention to the absurdity of the situation saying, “What do you mean? If I got over here 2 minutes later you’d be going to London?”⁹⁵ By using shot-reverse-shot for this final interaction, Allen returns to tradition. He also reminds the audience of how closely the two are standing, how much they are influencing what the other says. We are always aware of how present Tracy is in the shots of Isaac’s face and vice versa. Maybe this is because this scene is one in which the conversation isn’t premeditated. In previous conversations, like the one in which Isaac breaks up with Tracy or when he confronts Yale in the classroom, Isaac has been speaking *at* the person beside him. Here he is speaking *with* Tracy. He doesn’t come in knowing exactly what he wants out of the interaction, he isn’t berating her, and he doesn’t have an ulterior motive that he is trying to hide. Here, for one of the first times in the film, Isaac is listening as much as he is talking. He isn’t getting what he wants. Tracy, with her inexpressive face and four inches on Allen, gets the last word.

Isaac, however, never actually apologizes for leaving Tracy for another woman. He deflects when Tracy says “You really hurt me,” by saying “It was not on purpose.” He admits to making a mistake in the same breath in which he asks her to not go to London, an opportunity he pushed her to take earlier. When he asks her if she still loves him, she responds by telling him that she turned 18, “I’m legal but I’m still a kid.”⁹⁶ He responds by telling her she’s not such a kid, only to tell her, some 30 seconds later, to not be so mature, as though she has no right to be mature at her age. In the typical romantic comedy (although I admit when I say typical I’m thinking about *When Harry Met Sally*, a movie that comes out ten years after *Manhattan* and was

⁹⁵*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (1979).

⁹⁶*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (1979).

called “the best 1977 Woody Allen movie made in 1989”⁹⁷ at the time of its release) our hero runs across the city to find the woman he loves and admit that he loves her. He asks her to be with him forever and he lists all the things about her, those things no one else loves, as the very reasons he loves her so much. If you watch the last 10 minutes of *Manhattan* on mute you might think that’s what happens. You might see New York City dash by as Isaac runs across the city and you might see him tuck Tracy’s hair behind her ear and you might see him smile at the end and think well there, there’s the prototypical romantic comedy ending. But Allen movies aren’t muted, it’s their dialogue that makes them Allen movies. He is, after all, the screenwriter as well as director. And when you listen to the words Isaac is saying to Tracy, in comparison to say, Harry’s “When you realize you want to spend the rest of your life with somebody, you want the rest of your life to start as soon as possible,”⁹⁸ you that realize *Manhattan* hardly fits into the romantic comedy genre at all. Isaac never apologizes to Tracy. He doesn’t tell her he loves her, and all the reasons why. Instead, he asks, repeatedly, if she still loves him. He balks at the fact that they’ll be separated for six months rather than acknowledging the months of separation he caused by having his affair with Mary. And he doesn’t list the reasons he loves her. Instead, he begs her not to go to London, where she’ll be exposed to actors and directors (and other creatives that aren’t him), because he doesn’t want her to change. “I just don’t want that thing about you that I like to change.”⁹⁹ It’s almost romantic. *Almost*. Until you realize how manipulative it is.

⁹⁷Christopher Rosen, "What Critics Wrote About 'When Harry Met Sally' In 1989," *The Huffington Post*, December 07, 2017, accessed February 22, 2019, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/14/when-harry-met-sally-anniversary_n_5584730.html.

⁹⁸*When Harry Met Sally*, directed by Rob Reiner (Columbia Pictures, 1989), accessed December 15, 2018, https://www.amazon.com/When-Harry-Sally-Billy-Crystal/dp/B00ARCOHNW/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=when+harry+met+sally&qid=1555037944&s=gateway&sr=8-1.

⁹⁹*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (1979).

What Isaac likes about Tracy is her innocence. He likes that she hasn't been to London, or lived on her own, or been exposed to people outside her high school, and him (God knows how). He wants her to keep from growing. Maybe that's why she tells him she's had a birthday when he asks if she still loves him. Maybe that's her way of saying no. But it's at this point that the music starts swelling and Tracy reassures Isaac "Not everybody gets corrupted. You have to have a little faith in people."¹⁰⁰ And then Isaac smiles. It's a Mona Lisa smile. We know it's there but we don't know why. The script only gives us a partial answer. Allen writes "Last shot of her innocent face, beautiful and we don't know for sure exactly what will happen. Will she get corrupted, changed, spoiled or what? Cut to Ike's face and it bears a quizzical, wondering look: a mixture of love for her and hope and anticipation of God knows what."¹⁰¹ Is Isaac smiling because Tracy has reassured him that she'll stay "God's answer to Job" or because he's proud that she's doing what's best for her? Is he smiling because he knows they'll be together in six months or because he knows everything will be different in six months and Tracy's statement is so naive it proves, once again, how good she is?¹⁰²

MORE MANHATTAN!

The female characters in *Manhattan* very neatly represent four, unique types of women. First, we have Tracy, the girl. In the script Allen writes, of Tracy "Tracy, as always, is

¹⁰⁰*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (1979).

¹⁰¹*Manhattan: original script*, 1979, Box 10, Folder 4, Woody Allen Papers TC002, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

¹⁰²*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (1979).

adorable.”¹⁰³ She’s a high school student in a relationship with a man older than her father, the origins of which we are never privy to. Tracy is mature beyond her 17 years, has a wide and generous face to match her sweet temperament, and appears to be good through-and-through. She’s clever and not shallow. Mary, as played by Keaton, on the other hand, is an overly cerebral journalist with a high vocabulary and low self-esteem. Mary is a mature woman with the insecurities of a girl, despite her constant protestation that she knows her worth. She’s lonely, involved with a married man, and unsatisfied. She’s a representation of second-wave feminist. She wears high-waisted pants and ties and asserts herself in male conversations confidently. Emily, Yale’s wife, represents the woman untouched by feminism. She wears flowing skirts and dresses (the other female characters nearly always appear in pants, blazers and button-down Oxfords). She wants to move into the country with Yale to start a family but she defers to him in everything she does. Jill is Isaac’s ex-wife. She’s left him for a woman with whom she is now raising her and Isaac’s child. She’s cool and stern in her interactions with Isaac, leading us to question how they could have ever been married rather than how she could be a lesbian.

In its time, *Manhattan* seemed to offer three entirely non-stereotypical portrayals of New York women. And it is women that have the sexual power in *Manhattan*. Even teenage Tracy is the one in control of her and Isaac’s sex life. She seems to be the one most enjoying their sex; she’s the one we see asking for it. She even says at one point “we have great sex,” which, even in black and white, is hard to take seriously. Mary is portrayed as sexually liberated because she

¹⁰³*Manhattan: original script*, 1979, Box 10, Folder 4, Woody Allen Papers TC002, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

chooses her partners and enjoys sex unabashedly. Jill, Isaac's lesbian ex-wife, exercises her control over Isaac through denial.¹⁰⁴

While Isaac is clearly a variant of the Allen character that he'd already established by 1979, Isaac is more unlikable than Alvy was in *Annie Hall*. The lovable persona Allen concocted up to this point is undermined by Isaac's confidence and sleaziness in his relationship with Tracy. Mary, similarly, has none of the likability that made Annie such a warm and inspiring character. While Annie was insecure in a way that made the audience relate to her, Mary is insecure to a fault. Annie wasn't afraid to be herself. In *Annie Hall*, Alvy spent the film trying to get Annie to think intellectual thoughts. In *Manhattan*, Isaac remarks to Mary, "the brain is the most overrated organ I think."¹⁰⁵ That which Allen tried to promote in *Annie Hall* has now become a flaw in the female character. The charm of Alvy exposing Annie to the passive leisure of high society in *Annie Hall* is replaced by a negative sense that Isaac liberates women by exposing them to jazz. Mary doesn't need to be exposed to anything, but she still defers to the genius of the men around her. The opinions she does have are hypercritical, and we don't trust them because they seem based in contrarianism rather than genuine criticism. When Mary isn't touting her critical opinions on Isaac's favorite artists and directors, she's referring to her devastating, genius ex-husband, the man who exposed her to the world and taught her everything she knows. She was a student in his class, after all. In one of the funniest moments in the movie, Mary and Isaac bump into Jeremiah, the devastating ex, in a clothing store. He's shorter than Allen, if that's possible, and much balder. This is the man who devastated Mary? The one she cannot shut up about? It's ridiculous and humbling. It reminds us of her insecurity, and of

¹⁰⁴*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (1979).

¹⁰⁵*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (1979).

Allen's goal to undermine the traditional male chauvinist role in romantic comedy. It also reminds us that what we're scared of doesn't always look the way we expect it to. The whole gag plays on the audience's expectations that Mary's ex-husband looks like Robert Redford. In showing us Wallace Shawn instead, Allen thinks he's teaching us a lesson, showing us our flaws as audience members. In reality, he's reminding us that the patriarchy takes many forms; our worst nightmares might be shorter than six-feet-tall.

This feels like an appropriate time to bring up one of the most concerning aspects of *Manhattan*, aside from the underage love affair. When Isaac and Mary get to know each other while walking her dog, Mary asks about Isaac's ex-wife. He tells her that his ex-wife left him for another woman. "I thought I took it rather well under the circumstances, I tried to run them both over with a car." When he tells Mary about this, he says it with levity, almost joking. He seems proud of it. Mary glosses over this sentence. Instead she claims such a demoralizing situation could turn a man off to women altogether, "and I think it accounts for the little girl." Mary is the first person in the film, other than Isaac himself, to comment on Tracy's age negatively. "Sixteen-years-old, no possible threat at all," she says after blaming Isaac's infatuation with Tracy on the sexual humiliation of marrying a lesbian. She ends the conversation by ranting about her beauty, "you'll never believe it but I never thought I was very pretty . . . I hate being pretty." In *Annie Hall*, Diane Keaton played the female love interest who offered love without threatening Allen's character, Alvy. In *Manhattan*, she's another threatening force, confronting Isaac.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (1979).

The comment about Isaac attempting to run his ex-wife and her new lover over with a car isn't brought up again until Isaac stops by Jill's house to pick his son up. Here we get to see him interact with Jill for the second time in the film, and we see Jill's girlfriend, Connie, for the first time. He's in their home. Isaac brings up Jill's tell-all book again, which she claims is an honest account of their marriage. While running away from him around the house she says, of the book, "I'm not going to dwell on the part where you tried to run her over with the car." This is how Isaac responds:

ISAAC: Wha- I tried to run - I tried to run her over with a car? What're you talking about?

JILL: That's what I said.

ISAAC: It was late at night. I . . . you know I don't drive well. It was raining. It was - it was dark.

JILL: What were you doing lurking around outside the cabin anyway?

ISAAC: I was spying on you guys 'cause I knew what was happening in there.

JILL: Obviously.

ISAAC: You were-you were falling in love.

JILL: So you felt that you had to run her over with a car?

ISAAC: Do I look like the type of person that would run someone over in a car?

ISAAC: You know how slowly I was going?

JILL: Not slowly enough that you didn't rip the whole front porch of the cabin off.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷*Manhattan: original script*; Woody Allen Papers, TC002, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Isaac denies it.

Later in the film, when Isaac is on an impossibly uncomfortable double date with Mary, Yale, and Emily, they find Jill's published book, titled "Marriage, Divorce and Selfhood," and read passages of it aloud. "Did you hear the one where he tried to run her lover over?" Mary asks, indicating that Jill did, in fact, dwell on that in the book. "Whose side are you on? No, I didn't try to run her over. It was raining out. The car lurched," Isaac defends himself. We cut to Isaac confronting Jill about her portrayal of him as a sort of Harvey Lee Oswald figure, "I came here to strangle you."¹⁰⁸ This is another threat of violence played off as a joke.

ISAAC: Do you - do you honestly think that I tried to run you over?

CONNIE: You just happened to hit the gas as I walked in front of the car.

JILL: Well, what would Freud say?

ISAAC: Freud would say I really wanted to run her over. That's why he was a genius.¹⁰⁹

I bring this sort of odd, recurring joke up because I think it highlights a few important things. The jokes about running women over with his car, even the one-liner about coming to strangle Jill, are jokes after all. We're supposed to laugh at them, mostly because we feel sorry for Isaac. It's funny that his ex-wife is spreading gossip about him through an autobiography. It's even funnier to image someone of Isaac's demeanor doing anything threatening at all. This

¹⁰⁸*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (1979).

¹⁰⁹*Manhattan: original script*, 1979, Box 10, Folder 4, Woody Allen Papers TC002, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

character cries at *Gone with the Wind*; we know he cannot really do any harm. He operates in a world of comedy, in which nothing is taken seriously, even when he is asking us to. But how can we take his discussions of mortality seriously and not his jokes about violence against women? Allen asks us to trust that the good things about his characters stem from his real life, but that the bad do not. He wants to tell us the shameful things he does/says when it'll get a laugh, but not when it provokes anger. He cannot have it both ways.

The second point I want to make about this recurring joke is how beautifully it parallels one of the central tensions in my thesis. Allen denies doing things we know he does. Allen's work is autobiographical; we know this because as a celebrity, we're exposed to Allen's life and as a filmmaker, we recognize it on screen. In interviews, Allen claims that his films are not autobiographical, that he isn't anything like the persona he portrays on film. Allen claims he exaggerates for his art, for the sake of humor. In *Manhattan*, Isaac essentially does the same thing with the car joke. When he is telling Mary about his divorce, he willingly admits trying to run Jill and Connie over with his car. He's proud of it; it's funny. It's important, also, that this admittance of guilt is our first exposure to the car incident. Audiences come into Allen movies knowing that they're about to experience something at least slightly autobiographical. Later, Isaac denies trying to run Connie over when confronting Jill. He denies it two more times after that, as well. Then, in a moment of beautiful irony, he admits it on Freudian ground. Maybe he wasn't consciously trying to run Connie over, but Freud would say that was really his motive. Maybe Allen isn't trying to make his films autobiographical, but it's happening. What's the point of denying it? Just like trying to run a woman over with a car, some of the things Allen shares with us in his films would be pretty damning, or at least damn shameful, if they were autobiographical.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

Husbands and Wives is stylistically very different from *Manhattan*. It uses a shaky hand-held camera to invoke a sense of documentary. It feels like cinéma vérité, like we are seeing real life transpire right before us. Allen plays with the documentary style, and his audience's trust, by including talking head interviews with his characters conducted by a narrator we never see in person. The characters never acknowledge the camera unless addressing it in an interview. In fact, Allen begins his script with this annotation, "The impression should be given that the characters always have a camera present. There should be much ad-libbing and the script is meant to give an idea of the story. Some of the dialogue in the script is good, some jokes are worth keeping, but the real behavior is more important."¹¹⁰ The "documentary" camera films at times in which it would not be reasonable for a camera to be present, during intimate conversations between couples, even intimate moments. It is clear that Allen is investigating the "real" in *Husbands and Wives*. Our uncertainty of what is truth and what is not is compounded by our uncertainty of whether the characters are telling the truth or not. While the cinéma vérité feels raw, the interviews feel rehearsed, unnatural, or lying.

CRITICAL RESPONSE

Criticism of *Husbands and Wives* was altogether tainted by the Mia-Woody divorce scandal and most of it focused on the striking similarities between the movie and the events that transpired as it premiered. Some reviewers tried to ignore the scandal and focus on the film by itself, but this proved nearly impossible. "Matching up fiction and reality is a simple-minded

¹¹⁰*Husbands and Wives: original script*, 1992, Box 9, Folder 4, Woody Allen Papers TC002, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

response to art, but watching Woody Allen and Mia Farrow's relationship crumble on screen is too eerie an experience to ignore," one reviewer wrote in a piece titled "And Here We Thought We Knew Him."¹¹¹ In the same article we're told:

Once, moviegoers were expected to believe that on-screen personalities matched the off-screen reality. Cary Grant was endlessly charming; Rock Hudson was heterosexual. The on-screen Woody offered a less glamorous myth, that of the angst-ridden New York intellectual, but it was no less a fiction for being calculatedly down-to-earth. Gabe is a variation on the standard Woody figure, from Alvy in 'Annie Hall' to Cliff Stern in 'Crimes and Misdemeanors.'¹¹²

Later, "The Woody character was beloved. Now viewers feel the way any lover does after a relationship goes sour: How could I have been so wrong about this person?"¹¹³ Some reviews commented on the films humor, wit, and striking performance by Judy Davis, but in the same breath commented on the similarities between the character Judy and Farrow. "You feel like a peeping Tom watching this movie," one man told *The New York Times*, "Everything is so loaded with subtext."¹¹⁴ The similarities between Allen and his character Gabe weren't lost on the critics either. In reference to the courtroom drama taking place while *Husbands and Wives* was in theaters, one reviewer wrote, "Once again Mr. Allen is playing Woody, only this time for

¹¹¹Caryn James, "And here we Thought we Knew Him," *The New York Times*, September 06, 1992, accessed September 11, 2018, <http://proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/108930181?accountid=11091>.

¹¹²Caryn James, "And here we Thought we Knew Him," *The New York Times*, September 06, 1992, accessed September 11, 2018, <http://proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/108930181?accountid=11091>.

¹¹³Caryn James, "And here we Thought we Knew Him," *The New York Times*, September 06, 1992, accessed September 11, 2018, <http://proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/108930181?accountid=11091>.

¹¹⁴James Barron, "Plot of New Woody Allen Film Seems to Mimic His Life," *The New York Times*, August 21, 1992, accessed December 15, 2018, <http://proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/428627865?accountid=11091>.

other people's cameras."¹¹⁵ One man wrote in a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* that "I will use the film to teach about the dangers of male abuse of privilege and power in the classroom. The scenes between the professor and student vividly illustrate how men take advantage of their social position at the expense of women. I am a member of the academic community, and this film made me ashamed of my sex."¹¹⁶ Vincent Canby's review of the movie was titled "Fact? Fiction? It Doesn't Matter." In it he writes, "Fact? Fantasy? Fiction? Who cares? This sort of material is better analyzed by the critical biographer than by either the gossip columnist or the film critic."¹¹⁷ Neal Gabler wrote in "Chaplin Blazed the Trail. Woody Allen Follows," "Geniuses, as both Chaplin and Allen's other inspiration, Ingmar Bergman, demonstrated, must play by different rules - which makes Allen's behaviour certification of his brilliance."¹¹⁸

I was beginning to wonder if Allen ever faced criticism for his female representations until I read a 1992 commentary in the *LA Times* called "Woody Takes Another Blow." In this article Liz Smith comments on a recent Francine Prose article called "They Don't Get It." Smith quotes Prose, who writes, "Just watching a steady diet of Woody's films would make any

¹¹⁵Walter Goodman, "Even When Life is Hard, It Can Resemble a Sitcom," *The New York Times*, March 27, 1993, accessed December 14, 2018, <http://proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/109221092?accountid=11091>.

¹¹⁶Bruce D. Weinstein, "Woody Allen: Textbook Case," *The New York Times*, October 11, 1992, accessed December 14, 2018, <http://proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/108841440?accountid=11091>

¹¹⁷Vincent Canby, "Fact? Fiction? It Doesn't Matter," *The New York Times*, September 18, 1992, accessed September 11, 2018, <http://proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/108895517?accountid=11091>.

¹¹⁸Neal Gabler, "Chaplin Blazed the Trail. Woody Allen Follows," *The New York Times*, September 27, 1992, accessed September 14, 2018, <http://proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/108901015?accountid=11091>.

sensible woman start looking over her shoulder to check how rapidly the younger, prettier model is gaining on her.” Prose continues:

‘With the exception of a few female characters who have the good fortune not to become involved on-screen with the intellectually superior (and patient) mentor, played by Woody Allen himself, it’s hard to think of a woman in an Allen film who isn’t some variation in the dithery air-head - charming, scatty, even bright, but an unformed airhead, nonetheless.’¹¹⁹

All of Allen’s most favorite themes resurface in *Husbands and Wives*: adultery, romance, prostitution, a relationship with a younger woman, and religious conversion.

ANALYSIS

I want to begin my analysis of gender with an introduction to the characters. Allen, as the screenwriter, created these characters to stand alone as much as he created them to interact with one another. A very basic understanding of each character will enhance our understanding of the two scenes I’ve selected to analyze. The film follows two couples, Jack and Sally, and Gabe and Judy. Jack is a gruff businessman going through a midlife crisis. Sally, as played beautifully by Judy Davis, is the harsh contrarian whose neurosis and incessant undermining serves to sabotage her own happiness. Gabe, the bumbling Columbia writing professor and second husband to Judy, is somehow so completely un-self-aware that he’s found himself in the trappings of two self-possessed and ambitious women, Judy and Rain. It’s heavily implied that Judy has managed to attract both Gabe and Michael by convincing them that she is what they want, whether or not they actually do. Gabe is portrayed as the victim in his marriage, in the way the mates of black

¹¹⁹Liz Smith, “Woody Takes Another Blow,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 1992, accessed April 15, 2019, <http://proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1723368701?accountid=11091>.

widows are victims of sexual cannibalism. But Gabe's victimhood extends outside his home. He's also portrayed as the victim in his relationship with 20-year-old Rain, a student in his class. "My heart does not know from logic," he says about Rain, an ominously similar statement to the one Allen makes about Soon-Yi soon after. *The heart wants what it wants.*¹²⁰ Judy, on the other hand, is portrayed as meek and passive-aggressive. The two wives are compared, in turn, to Sam, Jack's aerobics instructor girlfriend who's obsessed with astrology and health food and swears Shakespeare wrote about a King Leo, and Rain, a confident college writer with a penchant for older men, including her therapist. The husbands are compared to Michael, the tall, mild-mannered romantic who weeps at Keats but is ultimately ensnared by Judy in the same way she caught her previous two husbands.¹²¹

There are two parallel scenes in *Husbands and Wives* that I want to discuss. Both scenes take place in cars and feature each of the male characters, Gabe and Jack, with their younger female counterparts, Rain and Sam. These scenes are important because they give us a glimpse into Allen's world view, at least the parts that have to do with gender. It might seem odd that I'm choosing two scenes neither of which include the two lead female characters, Sally or Judy. Their absence, however, in what I consider two linchpin scenes from the films is telling in and of itself.

The first scene takes place at the estate of one of Jack's peers. It's a party full of the type of people Jack, Sally, Judy and Gabe belong to, but Jack hasn't come with his wife. He's accompanied by Sam, an aerobics instructor that he's dating, having split from his wife Judy.

¹²⁰Walter Isaacson, "The heart wants what it wants," *TIME*, June 24, 2001, accessed April 16, 2019, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,160439,00.html>.

¹²¹*Husbands and Wives*, directed by Woody Allen (1992).

Sam is blonde, fit, and much younger than Jack. She's what Gabe refers to as a "cocktail waitress."¹²² Gabe's disregard for Sam's actual job is reminiscent of Allen's disregard for it in the script. In the manuscript, Allen crosses out "personal assistant" and replaces it with one word, "aerobics."¹²³ The scene opens on Sam surrounded by Jack's friends. She's seated and they're standing, looming above her while she argues that astrology can be proven true. The camera volleys between the four characters as they talk but it's hard for it to stay in one place long. They talk over each other. There is no listening. Before Sam can defend herself, the female party goer suggests that Sam be introduced to their babysitter, someone Sam's age who doesn't know anyone in New York. Before long Jack creeps up behind Sam and drags her away from the conversation, at the protest of his friends who say "we're just getting started," in a way that sounds more like locker room talk than the stuff of intellectual debate among equals. Immediately Jack begins berating Sam, suggesting she not talk so much, but Sam isn't having it. She argues back. She stands her ground. In a moment of humor, Jack suggests Sam "listen," a piece of advice, it appears, no character in the film, thus far, has heeded. Jack manhandles Sam out of the party, pulling her by the arm while verbally abusing her interests in "bullshit astrology" and "soybeans." At this point, it becomes clear that Sam's only comeback is that Jack's friends are "stupid," not her. She says it over and over again. Then, the scene turns ugly. Jack insists that Sam get in the car. She refuses. He insists. Then he attempts to force her physically, at which point she falls to the ground screaming for help. They are no more than 3 yards from the door of the party at this point. They somehow manage to get in the car, at which

¹²²*Husbands and Wives*, directed by Woody Allen (1992).

¹²³*Husbands and Wives: original script*, 1992, Box 9, Folder 4, Woody Allen Papers TC002, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

point Sam suggests Jack may be too drunk to drive. After hitting the cars parked in front and behind him, Sam leaves the car, this time sprayed with the headlights of Jack's skewed vehicle. As Sam is walking away, Jack comes up behind her and grabs her by the neck, pulling her into him and wrestling her into the car, all while she screams for help. There are people congregating at the doorway now, although we cannot be sure if it's because of the screaming or the sounds of cars being rammed into one another. "Get in the car, you infant!" So, she does.¹²⁴

It's ugly. It may be uglier than we've ever seen in an Allen film. To begin with, Sam is out of place. She doesn't belong in this world. Her seated nature forces her to look up to these people who have no trouble looking down on her. They suggest she meet their babysitter because that's what Sam is to them, a lower class of people who work for them, who teach their aerobics classes or serve them cocktails or watch their kids. The scene is built on the newly-revealed knowledge that Sally is seeing Michael, but we cannot sympathize with Jack. Jack, in this scene, is not a scorned ex-husband who has just found out his wife is shacking up with a tall, Irish Liam Neeson. Jack's not even the New York upper class man who realizes, mid-party, that he's made a horrible mistake by bringing a girl who clearly doesn't belong. We aren't embarrassed for him. We cannot be. Because in this scene, Jack doesn't have our sympathy. We aren't part of this world. We also aren't Sam, surely. We're the man with the camera watching from a few feet away, seeing it all but not saying anything to stop it. We've been invited in but we cannot seem to actually disturb anything that transpires in this world. This is unusual for Allen films. In most Allen films, we are invited into his world, this world of upper-middle class New York creatives, and we feel like we belong because we identify with him, or the female lead, or even the Yales

¹²⁴*Husbands and Wives*, directed by Woody Allen (1992).

of this world. Though, to be fair, when we as an audience have been invited here before, we also have not been able to change anything. But Allen's character, Gabe, isn't in this horrific car scene. As audience members we have no nebbish with which to sympathize, no Allen character who earns our trust by making fun of his peers *to us*, who makes known his dissatisfactions with this group of people he belongs to. Jack is proud of these people in a way *Manhattan's* Isaac, for example, is not.

The scene places a huge emphasis on Sam's childishness. To begin with, she's placed below the real adults. The only other female character in the scene offers to set Sam up with their babysitter. Is she suggesting that Sam and the babysitter belong to the same class of people or that Sam is in need, herself, of some babysitting? Sam's repeated response to Jack's anger is that his friends are "stupid," not exactly the most mature insult in the book. When Jack yells at her to get in the car, we're reminded of a dad forcing a stubborn child home at the end of a play date, and Sam responds as a child would. Her first response is to scream for help and drop to the ground, the way a child does when they throw a temper tantrum, making their body as heavy as they can. The way Jack manhandles Sam isn't sexual; it's fatherly, which isn't to say it's any less violently inappropriate. He grabs her under her armpits and around the shoulders. When she does surrender and get into the car the final time, she puts her head down so that she nearly disappears. She's pouting.¹²⁵

The Jack-Sam scene is redone with Gabe and Rain later in the film. Gabe is a professor of writing and Rain is his most promising pupil. We hear at the very start of the film about Rain's story "Oral Sex in the Age of Deconstruction."¹²⁶ Rain is a big fan of Gabe but she doesn't fawn

¹²⁵*Husbands and Wives*, directed by Woody Allen (1992).

¹²⁶*Husbands and Wives*, directed by Woody Allen (1992).

over him to the point of losing herself. She's a rich girl from New York with a penchant for older men, including her therapist. Gabe is clearly fond of Rain, fond enough to give her the draft manuscript of his novel. Rain and Gabe meet to discuss the novel and Rain begins by praising it, calling it "entertaining," "imaginative," and "moving." Rain praises Gabe's ability to make funny "all the suffering." After claiming that he can take criticism and that Rain is, after all, a sucker for his work, Rain claims she is "objective." But things take a turn when Rain realizes that she's left the manuscript in the cab she took to meet Gabe and the two rush off to the cab company to retrieve it. They're on their way to the home of the cabbie now in possession of his manuscript when Rain really begins to criticize the novel.¹²⁷ It's here that we see the parallel to the Jack-Sam scene from earlier in the film.

Both scenes take place in and around cars. In the Jack-Sam scene, Jack is forcing Sam into a car she doesn't want to be in. When she does get in Jack has trouble moving it, he hits the cars parked around him. There's a horrible starting and stopping, screeching momentum to the scene. We're not sure we want Sam in the car, but we're certain we want to get away from this scene, though the car won't move. They cannot get out fast enough. In the Gabe-Rain scene, the car is in motion and both Gabe and Rain are sitting in the backseat. It's a cab, after all. Gabe isn't in control of the car the way Jack is; in fact, Rain seems to control the scene up to the very end. The reason they're in the cab to begin with is because Rain has lost the manuscript, and the camera remains on Rain's face the entire ride. We hear Gabe next to her but we cannot see him.

Rain begins by commenting on the Freudian nature of their situation, her having left the manuscript in the car, because she was threatened by the manuscript. She goes on to list those

¹²⁷*Husbands and Wives*, directed by Woody Allen (1992).

things about the novel that she was threatened by, namely his attitudes towards women and his ideas on life. She claims she loves the book then goes on to say how disappointed she was by Gabe's attitudes, the fact that his characters casually have affairs, and the way Gabe portrays life as a decision between "chronic dissatisfaction and suburban drudgery." Rather than defend the ideas that Rain is disappointed in, Gabe claims that his novel is a work of exaggeration, for comic purposes. "The book doesn't condone affairs, I'm exaggerating for comic purposes." He's deliberately distorting it to show how hard it is to be married. Rain doesn't stop there. She says that his main character's opinion of women is retrograde and shallow, at which point Gabe is no longer enjoying the criticism. All the while, between her jabs, Rain calls the book wonderful, alive, and brilliant. "We're not arguing about whether it's brilliant or not," she claims. Then Gabe turns on her. We watch Rain's reaction as Gabe ends the conversation, "I don't need a lecture on maturity or writing from a twenty-year-old twit." The conversation ends as Gabe says, "Boy, I'd hate to be your boyfriend. He must go through hell," to which Rain responds, "Well, I'm worth it." The last word is hers.¹²⁸

In the Jack-Sam scene, Jack treated Sam like a child because he believed she was saying stupid things and embarrassing him. With Gabe and Rain, we see a very similar scene play out. Rain is defending her opinions, just as Sam was, only to be cut down by Gabe once he is embarrassed by her critique. Again, the men treat their female counterparts as children. Rather than argue against what Rain says, Gabe chooses to defend himself by claiming she has no right to say them. She's a "20-year-old twit," a child. Her opinion doesn't matter.

¹²⁸*Husbands and Wives*, directed by Woody Allen (1992).

This is a scene of instruction. It doesn't seem to serve any purpose in the plot and it's disjointed from the rest of the film, but it's important because it instructs the audience on how to read the film, whether Allen intended it to or not. Scenes of instruction give us the language we need to reflect and make meaningful the film it exists in. But this scene goes beyond the normal scene of instruction. The Gabe-Rain scene diegetically gives us, as audience members, an opportunity to instruct the film's director. In this scene, we are given no option but to sympathize with Rain as she tells Gabe/Allen the complaints she has with his novel, the same complaints we have about his films. Because the camera stays on Rain's face for the entire duration of the conversation and never once shows us Gabe, we are forced, or maybe allowed, to watch Rain listen to Gabe and consider her response before speaking. In a more traditional film, the conversation might have been displayed with shot-reverse-shot editing so that we do not get to see Gabe's or Rain's responses. If Allen had filmed it as a two shot, the audience would have had to choose who to pay attention to. Allen doesn't make us choose. From the audio we can hear Gabe's responses growing more and more belligerent; visually, this is probably more expressive than Rain's response. But in this scene, we get to watch Rain consider everything she's about to say before she says it. She's obviously toeing the line with Gabe, deciding how far is too far and what's worth saying. It's important that we are forced to see her internal calculation because it reminds us of two things. One, Rain is not a victim, or at least she's not portrayed as one. Rain takes initiative; she's not too shy to tell Gabe how she feels about his book. She's the one who makes a move at her party by asking Gabe for a birthday kiss. She's not Sam. Her responses are calculated and cool. She keeps calm while being lectured by Gabe. She doesn't repeatedly call him stupid like Sam does in the car scene before. Rain is, however, still made out to be a child in

her car scene. She chews on her fingers and plays with her hair suggesting her own childishness is quieter than Sam's but still very present.

The novel that Rain is critiquing is a semi-autobiographical according to Gabe. We're shown earlier in the film a scene of Gabe and Judy's first introduction because Judy is complaining, in present day, that Gabe has portrayed their meeting as an example of Judy's passive aggressive tendencies. When we do see the scene set ten years earlier, we're not sure if what we're seeing is the real meeting or the meeting as written by Gabe for the novel. Later, as Rain reads the manuscript, we are shown bits and pieces of the manuscript acted out by actors. We know going into Rain's critique that the novel is autobiographical. So, when we're faced with her criticisms, we understand that we must hear them as criticisms not only of Gabe's novel, but also of Gabe's life and worldview. More than that, we understand that the movie in which this is all taking place is Allen's own autobiographical work on the ending of his relationship with Farrow, and the criticisms Rain espouses in the car apply more generally to the movie she is appearing in and to all the movies Allen has made. At the end of the film, the faux documentarians re-interview their subjects a year after wrapping. Gabe says he's working on a new book, "something less confessional, more political."¹²⁹ In *Husbands and Wives*, Gabe isn't the only one confessing to working on autobiographical art, Allen is too.

The ending of *Husbands and Wives* is eerie. There's a sense that very little has changed over the course of filming, or even a year later when the documentarians check in on their subjects. The ending, for me, tells us pretty clearly that this film is not a romantic comedy. To say nothing of how unromantic and unfunny the film is, the ending has more in common with a

¹²⁹*Husbands and Wives*, directed by Woody Allen (1992).

horror film than a chick-flick. The shaky hand-held camera is reminiscent of the *Blair Witch Project*. It gives a sense that no matter what the camera is focusing on, there are things worth focusing on that aren't in the shot. There's a sense that anything could pop out or go wrong or fall apart at any time and the camera could swivel to catch it. Every moment is charged with danger, or an anxiety that danger lies just outside the frame. The sequence in which Gabe offers Rain a ride home is a perfect example of this. The whole interaction is tense. As audience members, we aren't sure if Gabe is going to make a move on this young college student. He's clearly apprehensive about going up to her apartment and we think that's what we should be worried about. Then, as soon as they get out of the car, Rain's ex-boyfriend and ex-therapist (one person) is waiting for them. He confronts her about moving on to another older man and harasses Gabe. We couldn't have planned for this danger. It popped out of nowhere and it's entirely unsettling. In the final sequence we see Michael and Judy interviewed as a married couple and we understand that the monster, Judy, lives on. Michael is her next victim.

MORE HUSBANDS AND WIVES!

Allen is angry at the women in *Husbands and Wives*. It's his anger that scares me. These women aren't universally stupid or slutty or shameful. They're fleshed out and human, intellectual and self-confident. Independently analyzed, these female characters could be role models; they have won awards and earned Allen a reputation as understander of women. But it doesn't matter because Allen hates them anyway. Gabe's anger at Rain in the cab, Jack's anger at Sam at the party, and the film's indictment of Judy as passive aggressive man-eater reveal Allen's anger towards women that has, before 1992, been well hidden in humor. *Husbands and Wives* doesn't rely on humor in this way. It bares its anger righteously. It asks its audience to

agree with it, to vindicate it. But the female characters in *Husbands and Wives* are reasonable and Gabe/Jack's anger is not.

If we think about the context of *Husbands and Wives*' release, it becomes clear that Allen is portraying himself as a victim at the hands of castrating women as a way of protecting his reputation while his relationship with Farrow is coming to an end. The release of *Husbands and Wives* was pushed up in order to take advantage of the press surrounding Allen and Farrow's celebrity break up. The content of the film and the breakup surrounding its release make it difficult to watch the film without being acutely aware of how pervasive Allen's biography is in its story. The characters of Gabe and Judy are very clearly modeled on Allen and Farrow. The film is about their relationship deteriorating as Gabe begins a relationship with 20-year-old Rain. It is not a coincidence that he would have been falling in love with 21-year-old Soon-Yi at the time he was writing it, or that Farrow discovered the damning polaroids before shooting had wrapped. It's clear even in the way Allen writes his scripts how much he is writing about himself. *Husbands and Wives* opens on a shot of a TV. In the manuscript Allen has written, "Perhaps the first thing we see is on the TV and the program is on Einstein - I saw a documentary on him last week."¹³⁰ He isn't trying to hide it. There's another interesting moment a few lines later in the manuscript. Here Allen writes, "And yet every now and then, I get a pupil . . . a girl showed me a short story this week . . . she's Ellen's age . . . it was called: Oral Sex in the Age of Deconstruction."¹³¹ Ellen is a reference to Judy's daughter from another marriage. In the final film the line is changed, "It's worth it when you get a gifted pupil. A girl in my class

¹³⁰*Husbands and Wives: original script*, 1992, Box 9, Folder 4, Woody Allen Papers TC002, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

¹³¹*Husbands and Wives: original script*, 1992, Box 9, Folder 4, Woody Allen Papers TC002, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

wrote a great story . . .”¹³² Perhaps the comment about Rain being similar to Judy’s daughter was a bridge too far when it came to actually shooting the film.

CAFÉ SOCIETY

Café Society differs significantly from the previous two movies. It’s an example of late-Allen work, coming out in 2016 just before the #MeToo movement cast a shadow over Hollywood. *Café Society* garnered neither the critical praise of *Manhattan* nor the scandalous commentary of *Husbands and Wives*. It is unquestionably an Allen film. The opening credits in white Windsor Light Condensed set to jazz music tells us so, as does the tangled narrative of lovers in a novelic style. *Café Society* is a sparkly 1930s period piece all about the heyday of Hollywood. It’s a romantic, albeit damning, representation of Hollywood itself. If New York City could be listed among the protagonists of *Manhattan*, then Hollywood could be a supporting character in *Café Society*. The scene I’ve chosen to analyze in *Café Society* comes towards the last 2/3rds of the film. Bobby is now the successful manager of a New York nightlife hotspot, he’s married Veronica, and they have a baby girl together. His life in Hollywood, and his relationship with his uncle’s girlfriend, Vonnie, are past him. He has moved up to bigger and better things.

We’re introduced to the nightclub by the Les Tropiques singer. Her song, “Mountain Greenery,” fills the room as well-dressed couples sway on the dance floor and even more well-dressed elites sit and drink. Before long our trusty narrator, voiced by Allen himself, sets the stage for us, “Café Society it was called, and Bobby Dorfman was right in the thick of it.”¹³³ The

¹³²*Husbands and Wives*, directed by Woody Allen (1992).

¹³³*Café Society*, directed by Woody Allen (2016).

narrator goes on to introduce us to the regular players in this cafe society. Buddy Winslow Fain, a millionaire playboy, is surrounded by no less than six elegant women in cream-colored dresses and diamond jewelry. The narrator suggests he buys his women. The corrupt politicians sit together smoking cigars. This is where we first see Bobby, wearing a jacket the same cream color as the bought girls surrounding Buddy. Except Bobby, it appears, has been bought by the dark-suited politicians. Norton Lockerbie and the pigtail wearing, underage, Cherry Grace are juxtaposed with Remsens, an elegant elderly couple who stayed at the home of Adolf Hitler. No one is without fault in cafe society. Nazism is put on par with statutory rape and organized crime is seated next to New York politicians. When we next see Bobby he is standing on the upper level of the club, looking down on the characters we were just introduced to. Here we get a quick but important cut to explain the absence of Veronica, Bobby's wife. We see Veronica dressed in white holding their infant baby close to her chest, kissing its head and smiling, over which the narrator remarks "His wife Veronica now rarely came in, having succumbed to the joys of motherhood."¹³⁴ The dialogue and visuals are in contradiction. The sweet image of mother and child are paired with accusatory language. The word succumbed suggests some weakness in Veronica for choosing her baby over night life.

Directly following, we cut back to the lower level and in walks Vonnie and Phil, "the past."¹³⁵ Shown right after the images of Veronica at home with child, the shots of Vonnie and Phil seem to represent the life Bobby could have had if he didn't start a family. Vonnie is also dressed in white but her get-up is extravagant. She's wearing full length silk gloves and her shoulders are covered in white ruffles. She looks like a bride.

¹³⁴*Café Society*, directed by Woody Allen (2016).

¹³⁵*Café Society*, directed by Woody Allen (2016).

Bobby is shocked by Vonnie and Phil's presence. At their persistent demands, Bobby joins them at their table. Vonnie immediately launches into a story of how she and Phil met Irene Dunn. The story is full of celebrity name dropping and wealth pornography. "So we're at Busby Berkeley's party, and she was asked to have a puff of a cigar, and it was as if she'd been asked to take her clothes off or something. She was just absolutely mortified, and then Errol leans in and introduces her to this teenage starlet and she asks if it's his daughter. Without missing a beat, Errol looks at her and says, "No it's my granddaughter." As Vonnie continues flaunting her new lifestyle (they're always vowing to get a place in Venice), Phil stares at Bobby. Bobby excuses himself as they congratulate him on the baby.¹³⁶

At the bar, a politician follows up the conversation of fatherhood, commenting on never seeing Veronica anymore. Bobby responds, "She's become very domestic since our daughter came." "They become mothers and everything falls off . . . if you know what I mean." "Now all I see is diapers."¹³⁷ The camera swivels around the pair so that it is behind the men's backs as they enter into a covert conversation about Bobby's brother's gangster crimes.

Next, Vonnie comes over, having lost her huge ruffled bolero to speak to Bobby one on one. Their conversation is shown in classic shot-reverse-shot. Bobby derides Vonnie for selling out, on becoming everything she used to poke fun at. She quips back that he also isn't the same person anymore. They set up a lunch date in which Vonnie promises to "behave herself," meaning she won't "babble on like a Hollywood wife." The interaction ends with Bobby commenting, "I will say, you're still amazingly beautiful."¹³⁸

¹³⁶*Café Society*, directed by Woody Allen (2016).

¹³⁷*Café Society*, directed by Woody Allen (2016).

¹³⁸*Café Society*, directed by Woody Allen (2016).

I would be remiss if I didn't mention, if briefly, a scene nearer the beginning of *Café Society*. It's a scene that bears almost no significance to the plot. In fact, it feels randomly thrown into the film, perhaps at its expense. The scene is of Bobby in his temporary Hollywood hotel waiting for a prostitute he has called at the behest of his older brother, Ben. "Too Marvelous for Words" plays on the radio as Bobby pours himself a drink and checks the time. Just as he's taking off his shoes his door knocks and Candy enters. He lectures her for being late. Then they each admit to each other that they've never done this before. He offers her the money without having her sleep with him, to which she says "It's all right. I'm willing." The scene progresses with Candy practically begging Bobby to sleep with her. She asks if he finds her attractive, if he even wants to try her. The pair go back and forth, Candy begging Bobby to have sex with her for money out of what appears to be low self-esteem rather than dire financial circumstance, and Bobby demanding they have sex out of frustration with the whole situation and Candy's not-so-hidden desperation. As he unbuckles his pants he questions her name, Candy. She admits her real name is Shirley Garfein. "A Jewish hooker, this is a first." That's the final straw, he cannot take it. He gives her the money and ushers her out.¹³⁹

The reason the scene feels it doesn't belong is because Allen has been trying to write this scene into a movie for forty years. This scene has more to do with Allen than it does with Bobby or the plot of *Café Society*. I know this because I read the original manuscripts for *Husbands and Wives* at the Woody Allen Papers at Princeton University. At the beginning of the movie, we're introduced to an escort that Jack has been seeing regularly through an interview with her. In the film she talks about Jack being unable to have sex with her the first time they met in a hotel and

¹³⁹*Café Society*, directed by Woody Allen (2016).

her thinking he was having a heart attack. In the script, Shawn's line is "Finally I remember I moved us into the bedroom - and I don't know how it happened but we were talking and he said his name was not really John Adams - and I told him my name was not Shawn Grainger, it was really Natalie Feldman and that I was Jewish - and that just stopped him short - he couldn't go through with the sex . . . couldn't get it up."¹⁴⁰ This was written in 1992, but never made it into the movie. In another box of the archive I read an Untitled Screenplay (identified only as a second draft with a character named Moses). On page 12 of the manuscript there's an interaction between Moses and a character named Carlotta.

CARLOTTA: My name's not really Carlotta. I just love the sound of it.

MOSES: I see, it's an expotic stage name so to speak.

CARLOTTA: It's better than my real name -- Selma Shapiro.

MOSES (taken aback in mid-sex): What?

CARLOTTA: It's true -- I'm a landsman.

MOSES: But it's not right - you're a nice, Jewish girl. . . you take heroin and you're hooking?¹⁴¹

The Woody Allen Papers at Princeton are made up of some 56 boxes of manuscripts, letters, notes and drafts, the oldest of which he penned in the 1960s. I managed, in the two days I was at Princeton, to skim through about 8 of those boxes. So, I was surprised that I read not one

¹⁴⁰*Husbands and Wives: original script*, 1992, Box 9, Folder 4, Woody Allen Papers TC002, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

¹⁴¹*Unidentified Script: original untitled & unshot TMs (characters include Rifkin, Carlotta, Moses, Kate)*, undated, Box 11, Folder 6, Woody Allen Papers TC002, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

but two different versions of this Jewish prostitute scene. What are the odds? Did I somehow pick the two magic boxes, one of which held the manuscript of a 1992 movie I was writing on that had a scene written in it that would reappear in the 2016 movie I was writing about, also. If I had managed to get through all 56 boxes would this scene have appeared six more times? If the archive included journal entries, and if Allen had kept a journal, would I have read it there, in first person?

This scene offers me an opportunity to talk about gender representation in Allen's films in two ways. The first harkens back to my point about Allen's work being autobiographical. This scene does not prove that. I have no way of knowing if Allen really refused to sleep with a Jewish prostitute. But it's clear that whether this happened or not, this scene stuck in Allen's mind, for at least thirty years. The fact that Allen wrote it into three movies, at least, tells us that he either thought the scene was exceptionally funny, or that it spoke to some Jewish-gender relationship that resonated with Allen, that held true over time for him. It's a way to get to know the Allen character. It doesn't matter if that character is named Moses, or Bobby or Jack (we know from interviews that Allen wrote both male parts in *Husbands and Wives* willing to play either. Perhaps Shawn's lines were changed with Sydney Pollack agreed to play Jack, rather than Allen).¹⁴² A man who is willing to call a prostitute but not willing to sleep with her when he finds out she's Jewish. Can you think of a better one sentence descriptor of the Allen character? This scene tells us that Allen, or the persona he rewrites in films, isn't above paying for sex, but he is above defiling a Jewish woman.

¹⁴²Woody Allen, "Husbands and Wives," in *Woody Allen: Interviews*, ed. Robert E. Kapsis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 101-108.

This leads me to the second important thing this recurring scene tells us. Allen's Judaism matters to his representation of men and women. To begin with, Allen's masculine identity is based in his Jewishness. The best way to describe this character that Allen embodies and has written into scripts for years is as a nebbish, a Yiddish descriptor turned North American slang. Time and again, Allen's movies include a theme of religious conversion, his male characters are frequently Jewish, which draws our attention to how frequently his female characters are not. In fact, Jewish women are largely absent from Allen's films. He uses his own Jewish upbringing as fodder through which to beef up the backgrounds of his characters. The female romantic interest in an Allen movie is usually a gentile. When we do see a Jewish woman she's either a mother figure or, it seems, a sex worker. Jewish women are supposed to be domestic in Allen's narratives. When they are, they're threatening and unappealing, but when they're not domestic, like Candy/Shirley, they're not supposed to be there at all.

CHAPTER IV: FILMS IN CONVERSATION

Analyzing the films separately helps us unpack each film's values, characters, and plot lines. Putting them in conversation helps us to see how Woody Allen's world view, where gender is concerned, has changed between *Manhattan*'s release in 1979 and the release of *Café Society* in 2016.

Visually, *Manhattan* is both striking and dramatic. At some points, the visuals seem to be in opposition to the levity of the dialogue. The opening sequence, for example, pairs Rhapsody in Blue and striking visuals of New York City with a voice over of Isaac dictating the first chapter of an autobiographical book into a recorder. The soda fountain scene in which Tracy sips on a milkshake and Isaac fools around on a harmonica is another example of *Manhattan*'s visuals juxtaposing its words. The scene appears innocent and nostalgic. In reality, Isaac is dumping Tracy for Mary.¹⁴³

Isaac, before we can even see him, is trying to figure out the best way to start his story. Is it about the decay of morals in modern New York City? Is it about the man who romanticized the city too much? We're given options before we get into the thick of the film. Only later do we find out that his ex-wife, Jill, has already written a book about their marriage and divorce which will later be released to Isaac's embarrassment. She's beaten him to the punch. We're given the impression that he doesn't have any control of his own story. In *Husbands and Wives*, we get the same feeling. Some disembodied documentarian is controlling how the story is told. Isaac and Gabe have no control, despite the fact that Allen is the puppet master of it all. What is Allen trying to tell us? Why does he feel so out of control of his own narrative? The idea of

¹⁴³*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (1979).

constructing truth appears in *Manhattan* in the discussion of both Jill and Isaac's novels, as well as the black and white visuals of the film. Something about the black and white color scheme serves as a reminder that we are not watching real life. We're watching life through a filter. We're watching New York as a romantic like Isaac might see it. We're watching something that has been altered from its original state. Are we meant to trust the visuals or the dialogue? They're so frequently put in opposition it seems we must choose one over the other.

Allen's overarching concern about who controls truth, of only seeing part of the story, is most pressing in *Husbands and Wives*. We are repeatedly reminded, by the jerky hand-held camera or the interviews, that we are watching a movie. We are being told a story, not shown the objective truth. The camera's inability to keep up with the dialogue, the fact that it grows shakier in moments of heightened emotion, serve to remind us how hard it is to capture emotion on film without bias, without leaving other emotions out of frame. The interviews, contrived and formal, remind us how many ways there are to tell the same story. Frequently the characters are more vulnerable during the interviews than they are in the lived moments captured by the documentarians. Judy, for example, is able to explain her outburst after Sally and Jack announce their separation to the interviewer, but not to her friends and husband in the moment. Other times it's clear that the characters are lying to us in the interviews. At the end of the film, Jack and Sally sit with their heads tilted in the same direction as they rationalize their remarriage having solved none of the problems they started with. Judy and Michael similarly offer a rewrite of their meet-cute as the interviewer questions them. There's an artificiality to both parts of the film. We know that in the interviews we aren't being told the whole truth, and we are reminded of the nature of filmmaking when the shaky handed cameraman follows around the live action. In this way, Allen is reminding us how constructed films and marriage are. Is Allen asking us to

distrust everything he's told us in film form? Or is he suggesting we trust him more because he's the director willing to admit the faults in the medium?

In many ways, *Husbands and Wives* feels like an ugly sequel to *Manhattan*. The movies share so many themes and character types that it isn't hard to read the 1992 film as the continuation of *Manhattan*, a return to the characters and situations of *Manhattan* in a less romantic world. *Husbands and Wives* takes the worst of *Manhattan* and escalates it to its extremes. It's *Manhattan* fifteen years later. Tracy has become Rain. Mary has become Sally. Gabe is Isaac. Yale is Jack.

One of the most significant ways in which the three films I'm analyzing are in conversation is their inclusion of a May-December romance. When we take a step back from the individual films, it's easy to see a pattern in Allen films and their inclusion of a relationship between an older man and a younger woman. In light of Allen's personal life, this pattern can seem foreboding. When the films are put in conversation, there's evidence of change in Allen's opinion of younger women. As he ages, Allen's infatuation with younger girls stays constant, but his approval of them as people lessens over time. Between 1979 and 2016, Allen's representation of female characters evolved from ignorantly negative to maliciously so. The female characters in *Manhattan* are allowed a level of complexity and diversity, if only to serve his male vision, that is lacking in *Café Society*. By 2016 it appears that Allen has grown lazy in his depictions of women, reducing them to stereotypes without the consolation of intellectual dialogue. The female characters in *Manhattan* are complex and likeable, despite Allen's constant degradation. The female characters in *Husbands and Wives* are complex but dislikeable. The female characters in *Café Society* are neither complex nor likeable. There seems to have been a shift between 1979 and 1992 in which Allen lost faith in the idea of the beautiful ingenue, despite

maintaining the obsession. The character of Tracy in *Manhattan* is the beacon of morality in an otherwise dreary landscape of modern love. The final scene of the film includes her assuring Allen's character that not everyone can be corrupted. She is naive but good. The young female character in *Café Society*, Vonnie, begins the film as a sort of outsider in Hollywood. She wants the simple life, she's above the name dropping and glamour of Hollywood, and cannot stand how phony everything is. By the second half of the film, she's everything she hates. She has become the typical Hollywood wife. She has been corrupted. Similarly, in *Husbands and Wives*, Rain, the college student that falls for Allen's professor character, Gabe, is jaded and abrasive even before her 21st birthday. She's passive aggressive and controlling, letting Gabe think he's mentoring her but, in fact, knowing exactly what she's doing. She is, in effect, a younger version of Gabe's wife, played by Mia Farrow, who is equally passive aggressive and controlling. By 1992, and especially by 2016, Allen has chosen to prove himself wrong. In 1979 he wrote a character that argues she cannot be corrupted. In 1992 and 2016 he rewrites her. She is no longer good, despite still being the object of his desire.

Tracy becomes Rain. Tracy had had two lovers before Isaac, even at 17, but those were boys, she tells us, and he's a man. Tracy lovingly teases Isaac, but she's never mean or overbearing. She corrects him, for example, when he says he was in the trenches of WW2 by reminding him he was eight during WW2. Even when Tracy gets what she wants, in the end, she's never cold or threatening to Isaac. Rain, on the other hand, has had a string of affairs with much older men by the age of twenty. She's been with her father's business associate and her own therapist. Her interest in Gabe, then, is tainted by our knowledge that she has a thing for older men. Tracy, it appeared, loved Isaac despite his age, not because of it. Rain challenges Gabe in a threatening way. She doesn't challenge his hyperbole, she challenges his world view,

his writing, and his confidence in his art. In her final scene with Gabe, she's the one to request that he kiss her. Isaac managed to exercise some control over Tracy, but he has almost no control over Rain. By 2016's *Café Society*, the Allen-esque character, Bobby, has entirely lost control of the young love interest. Vonnie chooses someone else despite Bobby's proposal. She rejects his true love for money and glamour. She's easily corrupted and Bobby cannot save her.

Café Society is different from *Manhattan* or *Husbands and Wives* in that the older man dating Vonnie is not the one with whom we sympathize. Bobby, the young New York Jew trying to make it in Hollywood, is very clearly the Allen avatar and our protagonist. His Uncle Phil, the powerful agent dating his secretary, ultimately wins Vonnie's hand. This is interesting because *Café Society* comes out right before #MeToo goes viral. *Manhattan* and *Husbands and Wives* are meditations on contemporary society while *Café Society* looks back on Allen's life (I realize of course that Allen would not have been Bobby's age in the 1930s). In *Café Society* Allen isn't the older man, he's the young one scorned by both the woman and the older man. In all three of the movies, he's the victim of the May-December romance. In *Manhattan*, Tracy doesn't choose him. In *Husbands and Wives*, Rain is mean to him. In *Café Society*, Vonnie leaves him for his uncle. But in *Café Society*, the older man isn't the protagonist, he's the enemy. More importantly, he's an older, powerful man. Phil cannot be mistaken for the Allen-character. He's the antithesis of the Allen character. He's well spoken, powerful, and gruff. More importantly, he's Hollywood. Phil is Hollywood personified. We may identify Allen with Hollywood because he's been a household name since the 1960s, but he's never been a Phil. In *Café Society*, Allen is reminding us that he's always been a Bobby in a world of Phils. He's reminding us that he doesn't fit into that world, that he doesn't represent it, and that he has been the victim of Hollywood just as much as Vonnie has. He's telling us that the bad guy, the real enemy is

Hollywood, is Phil. Hollywood/Phil gets Vonnie. Hollywood's the predator, not Bobby, not Allen. It's odd timing to be trying to tell his audience that Hollywood is the bad guy when it comes to inappropriate relationships and gender representation, not Allen. In *Café Society*, Allen is reminding us that he was never the powerful Hollywood broker preying on young girls. He was the young Jew who ends up moving back to New York because he couldn't hand the snobbery of Los Angeles. *Café Society* isn't the story of what would happen if Tracy chose Isaac instead of going to London acting school. It's the story of what happens because she does. *Café Society* proves *Manhattan*'s Isaac right. Vonnie is the aspiring actress turned corrupted secretary that Tracy will become when she disregards Isaac's advice to not go to London. But it's obvious that Bobby treats women as milestones on his race towards manhood, learning opportunities on his painfully self-aware bildungsroman. They are worthy of time and attention but only as a means to better himself, his position, his understanding of the world. Bobby's relationships are transactional, and I don't just mean with Candy. Bobby may not be as powerful as his Uncle Phil, but he expects just as much from the world. The film, and our sympathy with Bobby, is built on the understanding that he's entitled to money, success, and women. *Café Society* asks what can Hollywood, what can Vonnie and Veronica, do for Bobby, not what he can do for them. It's an entitlement we saw in Isaac when he asked Tracy to give up her acting career for him, and again in Gabe's marriage to Judy in *Husbands and Wives*.

If *Manhattan* was the product of a more confident Allen in 1979, with no reference to his Jewishness or upbringing, then *Café Society* is a reversion. Allen misses no opportunity to mention his Jewishness, in fact, Bobby's wife Veronica finds Jews exotic and charming in the same way Annie Hall found Alvy so. Bobby's parents in *Café Society* could have been plucked from *Radio Days*.

There are hints throughout Allen's scripts about how confessional his writing is. When Mary and Isaac discuss his novel on their famous Manhattan walk he says:

IKE: Oh years ago I wrote a short story about her called the Castrating Zionist . . . I'm trying to develop it.

MARY: Right, right. New York, Jewish, confessional, psychoanalytic novel, very sixties-seventies - whynot?¹⁴⁴

There's a moment in the *Manhattan* script that speaks to Allen's indifference, or perhaps too much attention, to the age of his leading ladies, that's particularly uncomfortable. On page 53 of the script Ike says "Kiss me. A big open mouthed beauty - God, for a 17 (16 is crossed out) year old you've really got the body of a 16 (15 is crossed out) year old."¹⁴⁵

Again, and again Allen has positioned himself as an everyman, an alternative to a more threatening masculinity, a masculinity more frequently touted in Hollywood as the *right* masculinity. He said in a 1996 interview, "I didn't want to play Bogart. I didn't want to play John Wayne. I wanted to be the schnook. The guy with the glasses who doesn't get the girl, who can't get the girl but who's amusing."¹⁴⁶ The Allen character, alternatively, is the nice guy who has flaws but doesn't lie about them. It's his own self-judgement, however, the painstaking attention he pays to his flaws, that tricks his audience into accepting his actions and thoughts as

¹⁴⁴*Manhattan*, directed by Woody Allen (1979).

¹⁴⁵*Manhattan: original script*, 1979, Box 10, Folder 4, Woody Allen Papers TC002, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

¹⁴⁶Woody Allen, "The Imperfectionist," in *Woody Allen: Interviews*, ed. Robert E. Kapsis (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 131-151.

good, or at least justifiable. When Allen questions himself on screen he isn't asking us to also question him. Instead, he's letting us off the hook. He's telling us that he's done the work for us. He positions himself as his harshest critic, and while it might look like he's *judging* himself at the lowest moments of his films, he more frequently *justifies* his actions in the end. His judging turned justification guides us to accept the conclusions he reaches, which more often than not is that he is still the nice guy despite his flings with underage girls, his flirting with college students, his adultery, or any other crime he commits in his films. Ultimately, the harshest repercussions the Allen-character faces are his own criticisms, the take-away being that self-pity is just as biting as any other consequence. But Allen is working in a binary system in which there are only two options for men- the lovingly nebbish intellectual or the macho-man. There have to be more options.

His films, and these films that I am studying in particular, give us a window into Allen's world view. The female characters and the plot lines in the films can be read alternately as empowering and disempowering. I find the characters empowering in their humanity, in Allen's apparent disregard for "strong female characters" in favor of "real female characters." They are, however, perceived through an Allen (& character) lens, which is sometimes too sexual, angry, or belittling to *feel* empowering. A reading of his films in their context gives us some clues as to how Allen feels about gender and how those feelings are translated on screen. They can also show us the subtlety with which gender representation can go very wrong, or right. A close reading of any film, but Allen's films in thesis, can teach us how gender is represented on screen and what to look for, how to look at what we're shown.

The content of Allen's films, though these three are just an example of his broader work, are anomalous in their inclusion of female characters that are human. I say this because Allen is

often celebrated for his strong female characters, and rightly so. The female characters he creates refuse to be static or stereotyped. An easy reading of them could be negative; they are, after all, often portrayed in a negative light. But his characters are more than good or bad, which is exactly why they're such good representations of women. It might be easier to understand if we replace the word "good" or "strong" with words like "real" and "human" when we look at female characters. Allen creates exceptionally real female characters, and by doing this he complicates notions of gender on screen and in our expectations. Allen humanizes women, for better or worse. And in creating human characters, often based on real living people, Allen is letting himself be both good and bad, as a character and a creator. He is letting himself be both celebratory and distasteful towards women. More importantly, he's letting us see him as both, understand him as both, so that when we think of Woody Allen, we're struck by how good to and bad to women he is. It is the stuff of his films that cements in his audience's consciousness the anomalous quality of Woody Allen.

CONCLUSION

Late in the summer of 2017, a slew of stars, including up-and-coming Timothée Chalamet and old hand Jude Law, as well as Selena Gomez and Elle Fanning, joined the cast of a Woody Allen film titled *A Rainy Day in New York*. Production began in September of 2017 and ended a month later in late October. A year had passed before Amazon announced that the film had been “shelved indefinitely.”¹⁴⁷ The shelving of this film marks 2018 as the first year in four decades, since 1982’s “A Midsummer’s Night Sex Comedy,” that Allen has not released a film. This is remarkable for multiple reasons. Little was remarkable at the end of summer 2017, however. Looking back at August 2017, it is tempting to shake our heads at promising Timothée Chalamet, who is now well on his way to becoming the on-screen face of a generation, or at Selena Gomez, executive producer of Netflix’s *Thirteen Reasons Why*, a teen show ostensibly about the horrific consequences of sexual assault. It is even more tempting to frown upon Jude Law, an established actor born before Allen’s 1992 sexual assault allegations. Their decisions to work with Allen in 2017, nearly thirty years post-scandal, was hardly shocking. Just a year before, Justin Timberlake and Kate Winslet starred in *Wonder Wheel*, written and directed by Allen. The year before that, Allen cast Kristen Stewart, Blake Lively and Jesse Eisenberg in his 2016 *Café Society*. That same year, Amazon, in their attempt to add filmmaking to their list of services, offered Allen \$20 million for distribution rights to *Café Society*. Now they are hiding his films, with three years and three more films left in a contract struck by Roy Price, the studio head who left Amazon after his own sexual assault allegations. Still waters run deep. What

¹⁴⁷Catherine Shoard, “Woody Allen’s new film shelved by Amazon,” *The Guardian*, August 20, 2018, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/aug/30/woody-allen-new-film-shelved-amazon-rainy-day-new-york>.

changed between late 2017 and early 2018? What put an end to Allen's astonishing forty-year track record, and prompted a dozen actors and actresses to admit regret for working with Allen? In some ways, 1992, as well as a lifetime of questionable female portrayals and personal scandals, caught up with Woody Allen in 2017.

The #MeToo movement is a social media-based anti-sexual harassment campaign that spread virally in October 2017, the same month *A Rainy Day in New York* wrapped shooting. Following the Harvey Weinstein sexual abuse allegations, and eventual takedown, #MeToo was popularized by Alyssa Milano, but originated by Tarana Burke in 2006. The purpose of the hashtag is to draw attention to the magnitude of the sexual assault problem in America by giving women, and men, the sanctioned opportunity to admit they too had been affected. The movement spread far and wide, virtually, but it hit industries the hardest. Alyssa Milano's use of the hashtag in accusing Weinstein spawned usage by a number of other celebrities and soon trickled throughout Hollywood until the list of accused included James Franco, Louis C.K., Nick Carter, Richard Dreyfuss, Dustin Hoffman, John Lasseter, Steven Seagal, Kevin Spacey, Jeffrey Tambor, and George Takei.¹⁴⁸ Four months later, #MeToo was followed by and inspired the Time's Up movement, also targeting sexual harassment but specifically by Hollywood celebrities. In tandem these movements did many things, including convicting Harvey Weinstein and ending the career of Louis C.K., they also prompted Dylan Farrow, Allen's daughter, to resurface Woody Allen's sexual assault allegations, while he wrapped on a film that supposedly involves an older male character, played by Jude Law, flirting with a 15-year-old character. It's

¹⁴⁸Glamour, "Post-Weinstein, These Are the Powerful Men Facing Sexual Harassment Allegations," *Glamour*, December 01, 2018, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.glamour.com/gallery/post-weinstein-these-are-the-powerful-men-facing-sexual-harassment-allegations>.

not surprising that established actors agreed to work with Allen in 2017, and it wasn't surprising that actors agreed to work with him in 1993. It should have been. In the wake of #MeToo, it's striking how long we have put up with Allen. If we disregard his years of vaguely creepy casting and personal affairs, we must at least admit to the nearly thirty years after a very real sexual assault allegation that we let Allen produce a film a year, open Cannes film festival, and remain relatively unscathed by allegations that would have, and have, devastated a career in 2017.

In June of 2018, Allen said he should be the “poster boy” for #MeToo, despite receiving criticism since #MeToo went viral. His poster boy status, he claims, has been earned by a 50-year long career in Hollywood that hasn't included a single accusation by the hundreds of actresses he's worked with. This holds, of course, if we ignore the allegation made by actress Mia Farrow that Allen molested their shared daughter, Dylan. It bothers him that he is lumped together with the likes of Weinstein, “people who have been accused by 20 women, 50 women, 100 women,” when he “was only accused by one woman in a child custody case which was looked at and proven to be untrue.”¹⁴⁹ Actresses have not accused Allen of misconduct but they also haven't been silent on Allen and #MeToo. Mira Sorvino, who won an Oscar in 1996 for her role in *Mighty Aphrodite*, wrote an open letter to Farrow expressing regret over working with Allen. This was followed by Ellen Page, Greta Gerwig, and Rebecca Hall similarly expressing their regret over working with Allen and their assurance to never do so again.¹⁵⁰ No new information regarding Farrow's allegations came to light between 1993 and 2017. This means, of

¹⁴⁹Kirsten Chuba, "Woody Allen Thinks He 'Should Be the Poster Boy for the Me Too Movement'," *Variety*, June 04, 2018, accessed April 09, 2019, <https://variety.com/2018/film/news/woody-allen-me-too-poster-boy-1202829361/>.

¹⁵⁰Alissa Wilkinson, “Every actor who as publicly expressed regret for working with Woody Allen, so far,” *Vox*, March 13, 2018, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/culture/2018/1/16/16896392/actors-regret-woody-allen-dylan-farrow-greta-gerwig-timothee-chalamet-michael-caine>.

course, there's no way to prove Allen guilty, no new information to add to a debate against friends in favor of or against Allen. The debate around Allen's affair with Soon-Yi, the accusation of child molestation made by Farrow, and the subsequent custody battle make for lively dinner table conversation, especially in 1992 and again in 2017. In these conversations, facts about Soon-Yi's age, lie detector tests, and trial transcripts are mixed indiscriminately with opinions, gut feelings, about cheating, age differences in relationships, privacy, and scorned women. Also mixed in are opinions about film. It seems odd. In a discussion about Woody Allen's innocence or guilt, about his romantic relationships or perversions, his art is included. Why? #MeToo gave actors and audiences reason to reevaluate Allen in the shadow cast by Weinstein. #MeToo offered a new opportunity to do what society had not done in 1992, 1993, 2000, or even 2015, an opportunity to stop supporting Allen and his films.

Why has Allen been allowed the career he has? Has the quality of his art saved him from admonishment? Should it? Since 1992, Allen's artistic reputation has remained relatively unscathed. Perhaps because of my specific upbringing, or maybe because of the time in which I began to form my own opinions, I cannot wrap my head around the philosophy of separation of art and artist. As I was deciding that Woody Allen was my favorite director, my mother was informing me that she refused to watch his films, without telling me why. I knew not to listen to Chris Brown, although no one ever turned off Michael Jackson out of moral motivation growing up. Roman Polanski wasn't even talked about. I was raised by two women, both of whom majored in theater, one of which is an artist to this day. Maybe that's why I understood, even at a young age, that art should not, but perhaps more importantly cannot, be separated from life. This fact does not make rejecting Woody Allen any easier for me. I have admitted that he is my favorite director. I can admit to participating in the very discussions of Allen's guilt and

innocence, creepiness and genius, (in his defense) that I now understand as deeply problematic and, in 2019, that are conducted in hushed tones.

No, art and artist are permanently and intrinsically bound. And it would be hypocritical, not to mention artistically mutilating, of us to wish otherwise. If Allen existed apart from his art, we wouldn't have *Annie Hall*, or *Manhattan*, or *Deconstructing Harry*. It wouldn't matter that we could watch them guilt free. If art and artist were separated, we wouldn't have the art. We may be left with craft, but we would not have feeling inspired and inspiring art, art that brings us to tears, or to our knees or out of our shells. Art is an invitation into the soul, messy or ugly or lovely, of its artist. Allen, in particular, has bared himself to us in his films. For this we should be thankful as much as we may be disturbed. Allen has made a lifetime of work about himself. It would be one thing if, following #MeToo, Allen-addicts like myself were left to ourselves to grapple with the consequences of his escapades, what to do with a lifetime of work that we love but may be morally repulsed by. This is, however, not the case. Allen's work hasn't touched a handful of people, despite what his meager box office showings may suggest. His oeuvre is intense, his presence in Hollywood over a half-century in the making, his comedy has spawned a generation of self-deprecating stand-ups and his films opened the door for an entirely new style of romantic comedy. Without Allen we may have to bid adieu to Diane Keaton, Billy Crystal, to Michael Cera. He is one of the only comedic auteurs in existence and one of America's only auteur filmmakers ever. His work is mentioned in every film studies textbook sold. It should be. His influence on the American canon of film is as undeniable as his influence on my own filmmaking predilections, the types of jokes I laugh at, the standards by which I judge whether a film is good or bad. This does not mean, however, that I, the writers of textbooks, the critics of movies, and the average movie goer, need not reexamine why we were touched by his films,

what exactly in his jokes made us laugh. We may not be happy with the answer. A scrutinizing of Allen and his place in American film is called for, and this thesis is one small result of that scrutiny. More importantly, however, may be the call to scrutinize what comes next. Allen is an 82-year-old man and it appears that his continued presence in the world of film is uncertain for the first time in forty years. We can no longer justify behavior like Allen's, or in another 50 years we will be faced with the challenge of rejecting another perverted talent that we excused for too long. Allen's influence on American film is undeniable. It is within our power to deny another Allen-type in the world of film, in the world of art. Here, I am reminded of the fact that Roy Price, the Amazon executive who signed the now massively expensive five picture deal with Allen, was pushed out of the company for sexual assault allegations of his own.¹⁵¹ It is not simply the artists we must be mindful of but the men with the money, the men who choose the art we will be consuming five years before we know we'll be consuming it.

Why eschew the New Critics theory of art and artist separation? Art, quite naturally and eternally, is married to its maker. Additionally, however, art cannot be separated from the lives of its beholders, its listeners, its audience, its fans. If art is to continue affecting change in our lives, it is important that that art be produced by those we are comfortable with affecting our lives, with those we respect and trust into our everyday, our psyche. I am not suggesting isolating ourselves or the world of art to that which we are already comfortable, that which is safe or that which is familiar. As we reassess Allen, and continue to assess new and yet-unknown artists, it is important to keep in mind that artists hold a special and important role in our world. They define

¹⁵¹Elahe Izadi, "Roy Price resigns from Amazon Studios amid sexual harassment allegations," *The Washington Post*, October 17, 2017, accessed April 16, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2017/10/17/roy-price-resigns-from-amazon-studios-amid-sexual-harassment-allegations/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.fde774a6f206.

our surroundings for us. Often artists hold mirrors up to that which we are ignoring, or that which our own forward-facing perspective wouldn't have the ability to look at without their aide. It is through art that we recognize ourselves or find new idols after which to model ourselves. Art shows us normal, teaches us regular. Done well, we are reminded of our humanity, of those things which we haven't had the chance to learn yet, made comfortable with or mournful of those things we have not experienced first-hand. Done dangerously, we are subdued, justified in an artist's validation of our very worst habits. I would hate to see Allen's movies abandoned, but I would hate for them to go on existing in textbooks and collective recognition as the work of a genius monster, who we once believed was just a genius.

DEATH OF THE AUTHOR . . .

One of the largest assumptions I make in this thesis is that the author is very much alive. I dismiss right away the possibility of the separation of art and artist and I stand by this. It is, however, worth revisiting as a central counter argument to my thesis. "The Death of the Author" is a concept that comes out of mid-20th century literary criticism. It holds that an author's biography and intentions should not affect a reader's interpretations of their writing. The artist's view of his or her own work is no more or less valid than our interpretations of it upon reading, watching or viewing. The logic behind the theory is that art is created to be consumed, read not written, so the reader's interpretation of the text is as real as the authors.¹⁵² This is the logic I find especially hard to apply to Allen's work. I said in my introduction that for Allen, filmmaking was a calling, not a means to success or money or fame. Allen made films because he had to, and

¹⁵²Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Aspen*, no.5-6 (1967), accessed April 12, 2019, <http://artsites.ucsc.edu/faculty/Gustafson/FILM%20162.W10/readings/barthes.death.pdf>.

that's why he's an auteur filmmaker. By this logic, Allen made the films for himself, not for anyone else. They were very literally made to be made not necessarily to be watched. This is what Allen tells us himself. To go further, I would suggest that the fact that Allen's work is autobiographical and confessional cements the fact that Allen did not make his films to be watched. When someone confesses, they aren't confessing for the priest's benefit.

"The Death of the Author" argues that the work outlives its author, but even while he/she is alive, we should treat them as if they were dead, unavailable for comment. It's a democratic theory in that it suggests that all readers' interpretations are equally valid and that the reader's creative sensibility is equal to that of the artist. "For Barthes, the act of writing, allows the author to lose some of his conscious self and that for a work to be enjoyed, a reader has to project some of his own thoughts and views."¹⁵³

... THE BIRTH OF THE READER

The suggestion that in the death of the author arises the power of the reader is a point in which the theory can be useful in moving forward in these debates about Allen's work or anyone else's whose private lives make their public art questionable. Our connection to art gives us as audience members a special right of interpretation. We have to take back the power of interpretation. Their art belongs to us. It is a product of their lives, but it is just as much ours as theirs. As soon as Allen's movies are projected onto screens across the world, he should no longer have any power over their legacies. "The Death of the Author" proposes a separation of the art from the artist in part as a way of taking their power away, and handing it to the consumer

¹⁵³"Death of the Author," *TV Tropes*, accessed April 09, 2019, <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/DeathOfTheAuthor>.

of that art. If we separate the art from the artist we are given the power to define it in our own terms; they, the artist, are no longer in control of their works' interpretation. There's something very valid about this reading. And if we accept this type of separation of art and artist, which is perhaps more accurately the attachment of art and audience, we are giving ourselves the power to define the artist's legacy. In this case, letting the author die is good but only if death does not bring about sanctity. If we let the author die, then, we must also be willing to speak ill of the dead.

Since #MeToo has forced a long-due reexamination of the films we hold up as exemplars, *Manhattan* and its director have become go-to examples of Hollywood gone wrong. When *Manhattan* was released in 1979, it was the black and white brainchild of harmless and adorable Woody Allen, the nebbish who miraculously always got the girl. In 2019, *Manhattan* is the perverted product of a man we no longer think of as harmless. But Allen hasn't changed. When did he become the monster? Did we blink and miss it? No. Perhaps we have since developed a new set of healthy fears. Or maybe we didn't expect the monster to be in the bed rather than under it. Maybe we expected him to be hiding. Allen has never hidden. On the "About the Author" page of *Without Feathers*, a book of his short stories, Allen writes of himself, "His one regret in life is that he is not someone else."¹⁵⁴ He's lying. Allen, whether he says so or not, has time and again proudly bared himself for us to see, not because he was ashamed, or trying out new versions of himself, but because he was justifying the one, true version that he stuck to.

¹⁵⁴Woody Allen, *Without Feathers* (New York: Warner Books, 1977).

During my visit to the Allen archives at Princeton, I came across handwritten notes titled “A Rainy Day in New York (excerpts from an unproduced film).” The film has since been produced, although we still haven’t seen it. I write these words only a day after it was announced that Allen was suing Amazon for \$68 million dollars, on account of their refusal to continue their five-year contract over an allegation they knew about when dotted lines were signed. The notes are scrawled in pen on a piece of paper torn from a yellow legal pad. They’re log lines and character names, some dialogue written diagonally to the right side. Just above the first margin, above the name of one of the female characters, is written this note: “should not be 20 or 21, sounds more like 18 - or even 17 - but 18 seems best.”¹⁵⁵

I cannot say with certainty what I think we should do with *Manhattan*, or Allen or whatever he names the movie he’s now making in Spain. But I can say that in Allen we have a lesson. We can choose now whether or not to learn from it. We can choose, also, whether or not to apply it to Hollywood in general. I cannot change film history and wipe it clean of Allen, or music of Elvis or painting of Van Gogh. Those aren’t choices we can make. What we can do is learn from our artistic past and apply it to the future of art. We can choose to support female-centric stories. We can choose to explain what we mean when we say a film has a “strong female character.” We can give our time and attention and money to art we are proud to endorse and tell our friends about it, and share it with our loved ones to make up for years of hushed justifications for finding pleasure in artists who were pain-inflicting in their personal lives. But we cannot continue to cancel artists because of their personal lives. We cannot continue to respond to the issue of art and artist as the online court of public opinion suggests we do, by ignoring,

¹⁵⁵“A Rainy Day in New York” (excerpts from an unproduced film), undated, Box 26, Folder 2, Woody Allen Papers TC002, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

forgetting, and moving on from artists who have committed wrongdoings. This issue is too complicated for a solution as simple as cancellation. Cancellation leaves no room for reflection or grief. I say grief because in the wake of #MeToo, we've forgotten how important our culture is to us. We know, collectively, how important it is to know where our culture is coming from. But we've forgotten that the movies we watch and the music we listen to means something to us deeply. Whether we grew up listening to Michael Jackson or watching the *Cosby Show*, when artists are cancelled and the art they produced becomes taboo, we lose something. And we must grieve that loss. Cancellation lets the artist off the hook because it suggests we stop talking about them. It lets us off the hook because we are no longer asked to make decisions about the art we consume. But we cannot let artists, and ourselves as consumers of art, off the hook. We need to keep them on the hook, forever. We cannot stop talking about them. We need to continue talking about them, forever and ever. We need to investigate them and figure out what they told us, where they lied, what their work meant to us, and how to move forward. But we can only figure out how to move forward by looking back and becoming conscious consumers of culture, by opening the door to investigate the good culture produced by bad artists.

I can watch Woody Allen movies now, but not as I did when I was first discovering him or my love of film. I can watch *Annie Hall* and fall in love with Alvy, and I can watch *Manhattan* and be attracted to the charm and wit of Isaac. They are still beautiful and moving and funny to me. I'm glad they are. I cannot watch them, however, without noticing how insulting the Allen character, played by him or an avatar like Eisenberg, is to his female counterpart. I cannot watch them without remembering their stakes. When I tell people I am writing, or at this point, have written, a thesis on gender representation in Woody Allen's films, I am met with a standard reaction. Eyebrows are raised and exclamations of the importance of this

sort of work are made. Most people immediately question me on Allen's personal life, on his association with #MeToo, or begin listing the names of other men they feel are in the same boat as Allen, a boat, I might add, that is groaning under weight of scorned and cancelled artists. Often when I tell people I am writing on Allen I am forced to bite my tongue when they respond, "Isn't he the director who married his daughter? Or stepdaughter, or something?" *No*, I think. He didn't marry his stepdaughter, but correcting them inevitably sounds too much like defending Allen. Somehow correcting them makes me sound more biased than letting them believe a lie. Rarely am I asked about the movies I am examining, or the significance of the gender representation of his female characters. Never does my partner in conversation ask how I feel about Allen. If they did, I wouldn't be able to answer, in part because I do not know how I feel, and in part because I do, and it is shameful. I love Allen's films. This means, of course, that I love him. I love him in character and out. I trusted him. I trusted Alvy and Isaac and Gabe and Allen because they didn't hide. Allen has always told us who he was. This transparency is attractive. His characters, and their creator, were who they were and they were scared of death, just like me, and they wanted love so badly, just like me, and they didn't have great self-esteem, just like me. Except, if Allen's just like me, I've messed up somewhere, badly.

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