

5-8-2005

International Female Film Directors: Their Contributions to the Film Industry and Women's Roles in Society

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International Female Film Directors:
Their Contributions to the Film Industry
and Women's Roles in Society

By: Rebecca Panosky

Honors Thesis: 4/19/05



For My Mother and Father

My Earthly Angels

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Dr. Margaret Breen for her encouragement and insight.

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My individualized major is Film Studies, and I wanted to write about the impact women have had in film around the world. I was interested in delving into the ways women have influenced not only the art of cinema, but also the perspective of women in society. I researched several female directors from countries all over the globe, and deciding which directors to write about proved to be quite challenging. I sculpted my thesis to include and analyze the work of five significant female film directors: Alice Guy-Blaché, Dorothy Arzner, Leni Riefenstahl, Lena Wertmüller, and Penny Marshall. They represent women in film in four different countries: France, Germany, Italy, and the United States. These directors not only made the film industry open and available to female artists, they also challenged traditional roles for women. They provided alternatives to the standards set for women by patriarchal society.

I decided to arrange my thesis chronologically, beginning with the very first female film director, and moving through the twentieth century, ending with a contemporary artist who has continued her work into the twenty-first century. The thesis begins with “Alice Guy-Blaché: A Pioneer for Women in Film,” the analysis of Blaché (1873-1968), who was the very first female film director in the world. I decided to write about Guy-Blaché because she marks history as the first female film director in the world. Her work is inspiring because it was her excitement and ambition that motivated her to make a short film, resulting in tremendous publicity and success for the Gaumont’s camera. Her creative film proved that the camera was extremely marketable and appealing to a mass audience. Her ingenuity was the reason she discovered the profitable potential of the invention. She saw this opportunity when Gaumont dismissed the invention claiming that it wouldn’t be successful if sold to the public.

Blaché utilized gender stereotypes to reinforce women's traditional role in society, while simultaneously supporting the idea that women also have the ability to accomplish great things. She did not reject traditional roles for women, but she encouraged them to go beyond such roles and to create opportunities for themselves. She was an early feminist, and her work affected and influenced women in the early part of the 20th century.

Following Blaché, I explore the work of Dorothy Arzner (1897-1979) in a section entitled "Dorothy Arzner: Feminism and Gender Representation." I combined my discussion of these two directors into the same chapter, since their lives and film careers closely parallel one another. Dorothy Arzner revolutionized the film industry, creating a space for herself amongst the countless male directors. She held strong feminist beliefs that were conveyed through her determined female characters. Arzner challenged female stereotypes vehemently, pursuing equal opportunities for women in society. She dressed in slacks, ties, and suspenders because that's how she was comfortable. However, this proved to be beneficial as it enabled her to fit in amongst her male colleagues. Her driven ambition and dedicated work ethic earned her respect in the industry, along with the admiration of her female audience.

Arzner's characters seem to be modeled after her own personality with their bold decisions and striking individualistic natures. Her films worked to advance the opportunities and choices available to women. Her films are intensely feminist and captivating to watch. In this chapter, I offer a reading of Christopher Strong as I analyze Arzner's main character, Cynthia Darrington. Furthermore, Arzner intrigues me because

she was the only female director in the industry during the late 20's and 30's, and her films laid the groundwork for future female directors to come.

“Leni Riefenstahl: Her Recognized Brilliance and Infamous Legacy,” is the next chapter, focusing on Riefenstahl (1902-2003) and her controversial films. Leni Riefenstahl is one of the most internationally recognized film directors, known especially for her documentaries Triumph of the Will and Olympia. In this chapter, I present my interpretation of both films. Riefenstahl knew how to capture individuals on camera so that even though you realize you are watching a documentary, the continuity editing and connectedness of her shots make it seem as though every movement is choreographed to perfection. She makes this choreography appear seamless and effortless.

She was a brilliant filmmaker; however, her career is infamous due to the National Socialist and Aryan ideals conveyed in the films mentioned above. I have been a personal fan of Riefenstahl's work ever since the very first film class of my undergraduate career. Her techniques fascinate me greatly, and I was intrigued by the controversy over Triumph of the Will and Olympia. The contrast of these films' immense beauty versus the horror of their ideological alignment captivated my attention, and I focus on this controversy in her chapter.

The following chapter is on Lena Wertmüller (1932-) and the politics embedded in her work. The Wertmüller chapter is entitled “Lena Wertmüller: The Strong Political Voice and Gender Representation in her Films.” Lena Wertmüller's work beautifully opposes Riefenstahl's, which is why her chapter follows accordingly. Unlike Riefenstahl, Wertmüller intended the political implications of her films. The political convictions present in her films seemingly answer the messages conveyed by Riefenstahl's films.

This is clearly evident in Wertmüller's film, Love and Anarchy, which I analyze in this chapter. I highlight the ways in which Wertmüller's characters answer Fascist society.

The last chapter, "Penny Marshall: Shooting Gender Stereotypes," is on Marshall (1942-) and her humorous films that take a look at women and the roles they create for themselves in society. Marshall is a contemporary director who uses humor in her films to both entertain her audience and communicate messages of gender stereotypes. She is not an auteur, but a popular director with an ability to reach the masses. I grew up on Marshall's films and am extremely familiar with her work. I have always enjoyed Marshall's films, but I wanted to take this opportunity and include her in my thesis so that I could take a deeper look at the meanings in these movies and the effect they have on her audiences. I give readings of Awakenings and A League of Their Own. Both films represent gender stereotypes and gendered identities. In Awakenings, Marshall presents the disabled body and the stereotypical assumptions that society places on disabled individuals, both male and female. A League of Their Own challenges female stereotypes and the roles allotted to women in society. Marshall, like Blaché, engages gender stereotypes in her films. However, Blaché both supported female stereotypes and worked to broaden the scope of possibility for women, while Marshall represents such stereotypes only to explain society's expectations of women. Marshall works to disable such stereotypes, thereby changing the perspective of women in society. She aims to both entertain her audience and demonstrate that gender stereotypes, for both men and women, can be suffocating and restrictive to individual freedom.

These chapters have brought to light the significant influence these female directors have had, and continue to have, in the film industry and society. Male and

female audiences have been affected by the political messages, societal issues, and gender identities represented and analyzed within their films.

This thesis has highlighted the work of Alice Guy-Blaché and Dorothy Arzner, whose films challenged society's narrow definition of female roles and femininity early on in the twentieth century. This thesis recognizes their talent and cinematic contributions. My aim was to share such knowledge with others, since these directors are not particularly well known.

My analyses concerning the political messages in both Leni Riefenstahl's and Lena Wertmüller's films emphasize the political potential of films, and the magnitude of their consequences. The exploration of Riefenstahl's films clarifies the point that an artist cannot be separated from their artwork, thereby dismissing themselves from any accountability for a film's association, effect, or implied message. This can be difficult for an artist, particularly in Riefenstahl's case where grave political consequences existed, yet political intent did not. On the other hand, the analysis of Wertmüller's work provides an opposing perspective to the political messages of Riefenstahl's documentaries. These chapters complement each other well, as both delve into the serious influence films can have on society.

The chapter on Penny Marshall demonstrates that an artist doesn't have to have intense convictions or political associations in order to challenge societal norms and motivate audiences to consider new perspectives. Marshall's films entertain millions. She connects with mass audiences, enabling her to present thought-provoking material to a wide range of individuals. My analysis of her work not only provides a contemporary perspective on gender stereotypes, but the differences in her perspective from the earlier

directors proves that every artist has the potential to convey significant messages and issues through their artwork, regardless of background, technique, or style. Marshall proves that films can be wildly funny and entertaining, and still present an important, original interpretation of society.

This thesis analyzes the work of five international female film directors. I wanted an international gathering of female directors in order to gain a global perspective of women's work in cinema. I wanted to describe the types of contributions that women from different parts of the world had made to the film industry, female audiences, and society as a whole. What I found was that female film directors from different corners of the world have been working toward the same end: liberating women from the gender stereotypes that label and restrict them. Each of these female directors aims to broaden the scope of possibilities and opportunities available to women in society by breaking down society's traditional expectations of women. These directors have all worked to better women's place in society, both by setting examples themselves as talented female artists who succeed in a predominantly male industry, and also by encouraging women to never limit their great potential by conforming to stereotypes. Their female characters are role models for women worldwide. Each of these directors has contributed something distinctly unique and significant to women's work in the film industry and women's roles in societies around the globe.

Alice Guy Blaché: A Pioneer for Women in Film

Alice Guy Blaché made history as the very first female film director. She gave women a role in filmmaking when the art form was in its early years. Female audiences could identify with her female protagonists. Blaché's heroines portrayed strong women who could take hold of their destinies and save the day. However, she also incorporated traditional roles of women in her films, thereby propelling her feminist views while still allowing for traditional conventions to take place. She employed female stereotypes as her foundation, only to build upon that female experience by expanding the scope of opportunities available to women.

Biography

Born in 1873 in Paris, France, Blaché came into the world when the photographic process was being refined and advances in technology were making photography more efficient and marketable to the average population. Blaché grew up in this kind of invigorating society where improvements and changes were occurring at an exciting rate.

A motivated young woman, Blaché began working for Léon Gaumont, who surprisingly hired her for secretarial duties, and immersed herself in the promise of his work with photography. After Gaumont constructed his own version of the Lumiere Brothers' 60mm camera, he became rather disenchanted with his innovation, and this is when Blaché saw an invaluable opportunity.

Blaché took the old French story about a fairy that grows children in a cabbage garden and turned it into a short screenplay, entitled "La Fee Aux Choux" ("The Good Fairy and the Cabbage Patch"). She used Gaumont's 60mm camera to film her story, and this one-minute film became the first narrative film ever. Blaché's film is gendered from

a female perspective because she produces a story based on an old fable familiar to the French public. The film, if classified, would fall into the fairytale genre which appeals to young children. In this way, her film appears gendered because it is traditionally the role of women to tell bedtime stories and fairytales to their young children. Blachè wanted to write a short screenplay, and an old tale that everyone is familiar with was a good starting place. She wrote about what she knew, what everyone knew. Her film debuted in 1896 at the International Exhibition in Paris, and audiences were thrilled at the wonderment of *watching* a story unfold before their very eyes

(www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocid=9106409). Suddenly crowds of people wanted this camera for themselves to capture images on film, and Blaché's vision caused Gaumont's business to flourish from that point on.

Neither Gaumont nor Blachè expected such success to come from these contraptions which seemed to serve the simple purpose of childish amusement. If Gaumont had known that this short film would jumpstart Blachè's filmmaking career, he never would have allowed it. He would have kept that opportunity for success for himself in order to further his own endeavors. The thought of a woman excelling in the art of filmmaking where familiarity with innovative technology and skill is required, is quite audacious. Gaumont saw his camera as a dead end street with limited marketing potential, so if he had known that Blachè would strike gold with her film, he would have wanted to explore that opportunity for himself.

As for Blachè herself, she probably would not have made the film either if she had known all that was in store for her. Although the film gave birth to her directing career, had she known in advance, she might have faltered when faced with the enormous

challenge of developing such early cinema. At that point in time, there were limited numbers of people who were working with photography, cameras, and early film, but those that were making headway with such technologies were men. Blachè blindly fell into this role, but had she known challenges of being the first woman to enter the industry, the task may have seemed too daunting to attempt. In her article “Reel Women: Pioneers of the Cinema, 1896 to the Present,” Ally Acker writes of Blaché’s fresh enthusiasm and quotes Blaché as saying:

I thought I could do better...Gathering up my courage, I timidly proposed to Gaumont that I would write one or two short plays and make them for the amusement of my friends. If the developments which evolved from this proposal could have been foreseen, then I probably never would have obtained his agreement. My youth, my lack of experience, my sex all conspired against me (<http://www.reelwomen.com/blachebio.html>).

Blachè’s initiative to write this short screenplay blossomed into quite the opportunity for her, and directly launched her career making films that portrayed women as highly capable, determined individuals who could accomplish and be just as successful as any man.

Blachè happened upon the opportunity, and following the camera’s success, Gaumont made Blaché a producer. She also began learning the art of editing. Blaché herself described the experience as the following “...In experience acquired day by day, by mistake, by change, I discovered small tricks such as film turned inside out allows a house to collapse and be reconstructed again like magic. A person can tumble from a roof and go back up again instantly...” (<http://www.reelwomen.com/blachebio.html>).

Blaché continued to make films for Gaumont and eventually met Herbert Blaché who worked for Gaumont in London, England. They were married in 1907 and later moved to the United States and settled in New York. With her new life in New York and her innate passion for filmmaking, Blaché began her own production company named “The Solax Company” (<http://www.reelwomen.com/blachebio.html>). The Solax Company did so well that Blaché created a filmmaker’s dream...an overwhelming film factory in Fort Lee, New Jersey, where she combined all the raw materials and elements needed to make her films. It cost an impressive \$100,000 and served as a playground for Blaché’s imagination.

Blaché’s Feminism

Not only was Blaché the first female director, but she also believed in women’s rights and conveyed her beliefs on the subject rather subtly. Her daughter, Simone Blaché, said of her mother, “In many respects she (Alice Guy-Blaché) was a nineteenth-century person. She believed in the family structure. And yet, she had strong feminist views. She was enthused by everything she saw and heard that was feminist in any way”(<http://www.reelwomen.com/blachebio.html>). Blaché agreed with the role women held in society in her day, yet she simultaneously thought women capable of accomplishing more. She worked for women’s advancement in society, for their voices to be heard, yet also worked to maintain the traditional family structure of cohesiveness with women playing a strong, yet nurturing role. Blaché herself testified her feelings on feminism in the following quote:

Not only is a woman as well fitted to stage photodrama as a man, but in many ways she has a distinct advantage over him because of her very nature and

because much of the knowledge called for in the telling of the story and the creation of the stage setting is absolutely within the province as a member of the gentler sex. She is an authority on the emotions. For centuries she had given them full play while man has carefully trained himself to control them. She has developed her finer feelings for generations...and she is naturally religious. In matters of the heart her superiority is acknowledged, her deep insight and sensitiveness in the affairs of cupid...it seems to me that a woman is especially well qualified to obtain the very best results, for she is dealing with subjects that are almost second nature to her...There is nothing connected with the staging of a motion picture that a woman cannot do as easily as a man, and there is no reason why she cannot completely master every technicality of the art

<http://www.reelwomen.com/blachebio.html>).

Here Blachè utilizes gender stereotypes to further the belief that women deserve, and are naturally inclined, to work in film. She took the familiar norms that society offered and made it work for her own benefit, and the benefit of all women. Rather than working against the grain by declaring bold, new roles that women should adopt in society, Blachè elegantly suggested the notion that women are naturally suited to create films due to their biological sensitivity. Phrases like “gentler sex,” “naturally religious,” and “she is dealing with subjects that are almost second nature to her” imply that women have (or at least should have) an innate compassion and tenderness. Blachè took the feminine stereotypes already accepted by the men of her time, and instead of challenging their views, she simply agreed with them, emphasizing how these feminine characteristics also gave women special insight into the nature of filmmaking, an insight unnatural for men.

Therefore, she furthered her feminist convictions by affirming society's current gender images, instead of beliefs that would threaten men and upset the order of things. In this way, Blachè used her femininity and the stereotypes of women to their advantage.

Blaché had unconditional faith in women and the contributions they could make to enhance the film industry. Although she was the only female director during that time, she understood the significance of a woman's perspective shown on screen.

Interestingly enough, Blachè employed this fine balance between current gender images and feminist beliefs to create female characters that held traditional roles yet pushed the boundaries of their roles with androgynous, even masculine, traits. Unable to view some of Blaché's most famous films for myself due to the fact that some are in moratorium, while others simply cannot be found for viewing, I was able to find some descriptions of her films that remark on her feminist conventions. In her film Winsome but Wise, the lead protagonist, a young woman, heads west and becomes determined to hunt down a dangerous thief who has outsmarted male law enforcement officers and is on the run. The film's male characters doubt her ability to bring the villain to justice, but she proves them wrong. She outsmarts the sly villain with no help from anyone, and, the villain having surrendered to her power, returns to town victorious. Made in 1912, this film demonstrates feminist views in a bold manner. How irregular to see not only the lead character portrayed as a woman, but to also see such a character engage in masculine "duties" and perform better than the male characters! Here is but one example of hundreds where Blaché provides public representation for women and presents the female point of view to both genders.

Another feminist narrative, The Two Little Rangers, consists of two lead female characters who entrap and eventually kill the male antagonist after having suffered at his hands one too many times. The Two Little Rangers could be classified as a western. The film, having been released in 1912, was quite advanced for its time in terms of the plot structure consisting of a lead heroine, not hero. It was unusual for women to play the roles of rangers policing the wild frontier. Blaché portrayed female characters that did not stand to be trivialized and abused by the men in their lives, but rather confronted and challenged them in bold ways.

Blaché continued making her films until around 1920, when the five “major” studios, Famous Players (Later Paramount Pictures), RKO, Fox Film Corporation (later 20th-Century Fox Productions), Warner Brothers, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), were taking big bites out of the film industry leaving few crumbs for the smaller, independent companies to fight over. The Solax Company did not do well, and Blaché eventually left America to start afresh in France. However, French cinema did not give her the warm welcome she was hoping for, and Blaché returned to the United States in 1927 (<http://www.reelwomen.com/blachebio.html>). Tragically, after the fall of her company and after returning to France, many of Blaché’s films were lost. So, upon return to the U.S., she instead began voicing her feminist beliefs by speaking on feminine psychology and filmmaking at various universities (<http://www.reelwomen.com/blachebio.html>). Blaché continued her art by passing what she had learned on to the next generation.

Blaché changed women’s role in film. She opened gateways to women that were unattainable, impossible dreams before her time. Unfortunately, there is a deep sadness

that goes along with Blaché's film career. Louise Heck-Rabi discusses this injustice bluntly:

Many of her films were cited as works by others. No one realized and tried to correct published errors more assiduously than Mme. Blaché herself. She anticipated that directing and producing credits for her films would be falsely assigned to her co-workers. She knew that her name, unintentionally or purposefully, would be omitted, or ignored, or demoted in the histories of French and American film (<http://www.reelwomen.com/blachebio.html>).

Blaché fought these errors in citations and was able to correct some of them, though never all of them. Even though Blaché was a pioneer of feminism and an advocate of traditional norms as well, she herself was not exempt from the injustices society dealt to women. She was not a bystander looking from the outside in on a society where women deserved more; she was a part of that society. She did not remove herself from the society she was trying to change; she was all too familiar with the system of patriarchal control and she lived its shortcomings firsthand. The fact that she was not given accurate credit or recognition for her work is exactly the kind of injustices she had struggled to change.

However, Blaché did receive some of the kudos that she deserved when, at 78, the French film industry recognized her as the first female filmmaker in the world at the Cinematheque Francais. She was also declared a knight of the French Legion of Honor (<http://www.reelwomen.com/blachebio.html>). Whoever thought that the knight in shining armor most women dream of would be, above all else, a woman? Blaché is a knight that made the art of cinema accessible and attainable to women worldwide.

Alice Guy-Blaché lived until her 95th year having paved the way for female filmmakers to follow. She set a heavy precedent for female filmmakers to use as inspiration, motivation, and encouragement, but these women must search if they wish to find the true story of Blaché and her pieces of work.

Dorothy Arzner: Feminism and Gender Representation

Dorothy Arzner began her career in the world of cinema shortly after Blaché commenced her work. Arzner pushed her feminist views boldly without endorsing current female stereotypes, unlike Blaché. Arzner characteristics were largely masculine, or at least androgynous, and her female characters were intense, daring individuals who seem to be slightly altered replicas of Arzner's own personality. She shared her feminist views vehemently, never apologizing for her storylines, conventions, or attributes. She never held back on her beliefs regardless of society's disapproval or apprehension.

In this chapter, I explore Arzner's feminist conventions in her film, Christopher Strong. I find that Arzner's character, Lady Darrington, symbolizes the delicate, yet most difficult, balance women face when trying to have love, family and career. Darrington represents the importance of women not to sacrifice themselves in order to achieve romantic love or family. She takes back her passion for flight in the end, and refuses to continue living if it means not having her career and also causing Sir Christopher the hardship of leaving his wife. Instead of settling, Darrington commits suicide, and dies being true to herself. Arzner demonstrates a woman's capability, independence, and determination through Darrington's actions. Darrington is the epitome of Arzner's idea of feminism.

Biography

Born in 1897 in San Francisco, Arzner was interested in medical science and studied at USC for a few years before realizing her true passion, filmmaking. Interestingly enough, Arzner's parents owned a little café in Los Angeles, so Dorothy was introduced to the world of movie stars at a very young age as many actors and filmmakers ate regularly there. She began her work at Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, which later became Paramount Pictures, as a typist, much like Blaché's early career. However, she quickly proved herself capable of much more. She was promoted up the ranks from screenwriter to editor and had a tremendous breakthrough on the film Blood and Sand in 1922. According to the film studies journal, Senses of Cinema, Arzner devised a budget miracle when she saved the corporation thousands of dollars by "intercutting stock footage with original material in several scenes, impressing director James Cruze..." (<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/03/arzner.html>). Arzner began working as a writer and editor for James Cruze and continued climbing the male-oriented ladder of success.

Arzner directed her very first film in 1927, entitled Fashions for Women and hence began her career as a successful film director. Also, Arzner directed Paramount Pictures first film with sound, The Wild Party, in 1929, which is a testament to Arzner's talent. Paramount Pictures gave their first "talkie" to Dorothy Arzner because they believed in her skills. Paramount trusted Arzner to make the transition smooth as she carried the company into the sound era. And she did. Arzner made sound technology appear effortless as she expertly crafted the very first "boom mike" which is a

microphone at the end of a long rod. This rod extension allows the camera to stay out of the picture completely while still picking up all the sound. It aids filmmakers greatly as it doesn't require the close proximity of bulky cameras.

Arzner focused her films on female characters and the struggles they encountered as women in society. She used these storylines to push her feminist convictions and portray her female characters as capable, underestimated women. Her film, Working Girls (1931) reflects the challenges of women who must do whatever it takes in order to survive during the Depression. Arzner obviously was not afraid to test the waters as she gave audiences unexpected doses of female reality through plot structures that centered on women, their views, lifestyles, and hardships. Male characters and issues took a backseat in Arzner's films; she presented her cinema so that audiences experienced and read her films through the eyes of women. She left Paramount Pictures in 1932 and set off on her own. Her films such as Christopher Strong (1933), Craig's Wife (1936), and Dance, Girl, Dance (1940) are among her most famous films. Yet another great contribution Arzner provided the film industry through her films were several budding actresses that were born into stardom like Katherine Hepburn (Christopher Strong), Rosalind Russell (Craig's Wife), and Lucille Ball (Dance, Girl, Dance).

Christopher Strong

Katherine Hepburn's first starring role was as Lady Cynthia Darrington in Christopher Strong (1933) in which she played an ambitious pilot who gained international recognition as the first female pilot to set world records. The backside of the videotape's cover describes the plot using the term "aviatrix" for Lady Darrington. This description of the film highlights the fact that the lead star and pilot of the storyline is a

woman. This term calls attention to the protagonist's gender to emphasize the infrequency and distinctiveness of such a plot line. This film was set apart due to the lead female character and her non-traditional, typically masculine traits. The word "aviatrix" captures the attention of female audiences because this character can step outside of society's expectations while perhaps they cannot, and it also captures the attention of male audiences because it is always interesting to see something rare. This film would not have necessarily encouraged women to go out and become pilots, or to begin taking daring risks, but it does offer food for thought. It is thought-provoking and encourages women to never underestimate themselves, but rather to take their dreams, skills and talents seriously. It offers women an outlet; a way to think outside of the constricted box society has created for them.

What caught my eye was Hepburn's attire throughout the film. When we first see her, she is wearing men's pants and has a dark brown coat covering her from chin to knee. She wears this outfit often as we watch her take daring risks in her airplane. Her clothing is never suggestive or low-cut; we never see any skin. When Hepburn does wear a gown at a party scene, the dress has literally a hundred or more buttons ranging from throat to ankle. Arzner made it clear that Hepburn's character was not to be seen as a sexual object, but rather as an independent, intelligent character. Film theorist Claire Johnston describes this characterization in Christopher Strong and writes:

The woman in Arzner's films determines her own identity through transgression and desire in a search for an independent existence beyond and outside the discourse of the male...Cynthia achieves her project through role-reversal: by an

over-identification with the male universe, flying planes, breaking records, and living and competing in a male world (Johnston 39).

Arzner was a lesbian and not only her feminist views, but the struggles she endured as a lesbian in a very judgmental industry during a time when homosexuality was so taboo and almost unheard of in the public realm, affected her filmmaking strategies. As Johnston writes, Arzner's female characters search for independence "outside the discourse of the male," and this is so evident with Hepburn's character, Darrington. Darrington has no lovers before Sir Christopher because she doesn't want anything to get in the way of her career. She avoids men at all costs, and even attempts to break things off with Sir Christopher when she feels herself falling for him and their situation seems too impossible. Darrington steps outside of the traditional female role in society in order to satisfy her own desires and dreams. She portrays a rough outer exterior in order to bear the blows of society as she dares to be different. However, the film is entitled Christopher Strong and not "Darrington" to create a sharp irony between title and plot. The title gives the impression that the film will focus on Sir Christopher and the decisions he makes throughout the film. But, the film is quite the opposite. The plot focuses on Darrington and the decisions that she makes that ultimately direct where the story goes and how it eventually ends. It is her decisions to originally break things off with Sir Christopher, fly around the world, not tell him she's pregnant, and eventually take one final flight and commit suicide that determine the exposition, intensification, climax, falling action, and resolution. The irony between title and plot works well for this film.

Continuing on this line of thought, one scene in particular caught my attention when Hepburn's character was getting ready for a masquerade ball. She comes out to see

Sir Christopher Strong wearing a moth costume. Her hair is completely covered, and no skin shows except that on her face. She has pointy antennas and the dress, although conforming to her body shape, was not portrayed as sexual due to the fact she was dressed as an insect. At this point, Darrington even mentions how she is not attractive or thought of sexually, although Sir Christopher quickly refutes that statement making it clear that he finds her sexy as an independent woman.

Darrington goes after what she wants, yet eventually allows herself to be held and comforted by her lover. She lives by the following quote and repeats it throughout the movie “Courage conquers death...but not love” implying that her fearless flying adventures, although invigorating, do not match the risk involved when one falls in love.

Darrington begins as a solid character that doesn't rely on a man for shelter, protection, or financial security. This is most obvious when she wins the scavenger hunt at Sir Christopher's sister's party. She announces to everyone that she is quite older than 20, has never had a lover, and may never have one in the future. This highlights her purity and independence from men, and is juxtaposed against Sir Christopher's daughter, who is just 20 and thinks of nothing but dating, falling in love, and getting married.

However, as the film progresses, Darrington and Sir Christopher fall in love and she gives up her passion for flying to make him happy. Yet, she still maintains her sense of style and her serious mannerisms throughout the movie. She is a character to be admired for her grace. Arzner presents Darrington not as a flat character, but yet a round one who changes from beginning to end. Darrington comes round full circle and by the end of the film revises the quote she lives by and decides “Courage conquers even love.” She takes this conviction of hers and uses it to take back what she had relinquished – her

love of flight. Although she loves Sir Christopher more than anything, it is her courage that causes her to take one final flight where she takes control of her life and her destiny by committing suicide. Johnston remarks on Arzner's ending and writes "The 'tragic' type of ending employed frequently by Arzner represents a similar refusal of unification, and closure, and a resolution instead to play out the discourse of the woman to the bitter end" (Johnston 42). The ending of this film exemplifies Arzner's "tragic" type as there is no unification between Darrington and Sir Christopher, there is no closure as she does not tell him about her pregnancy, does not inform him of her decision to take flight again, and they have no final words, but instead Darrington alone finishes her story. Darrington feels this is the only way she can prevent herself from causing Sir Christopher pain by forcing him to leave his wife, and the only thing she can do for herself because she cannot have both Sir Christopher and her career.

The film shows that it is possible for women to have it all, career, love, even children, but only if one puts husband and family above all else. It doesn't demonstrate that you can have it all if you dedicate half of yourself to both family and career, and it most certainly shows that you cannot have it all if you put your career and passion ahead of husband and children. If you want it all, career must come third to husband and family. This message reinscribes traditional female roles in society. Darrington knew she was a pilot at heart, she could not relinquish her first true love, flying, and so she chose to die doing what she loved. I read this film as Darrington taking matters into her own hands; as not settling for a life that will never completely satisfy her. Although suicide is depressing as it finalizes life, it is also liberating in the sense that Darrington is a free woman who decides the path her life will take; no man decides for her. However, it does

also demonstrate that society has restricted women to such limited roles that if a woman desires to “have it all,” she may find that it is nearly impossible to achieve that and survive in society.

Arzner continued making films until 1943 and later produced films for the Women’s Army Corps and commercials for Pepsi. She produced many plays and also taught at UCLA, specializing in screenwriting and directing right up until her death in 1979.

Conclusion

Arzner’s film career (1919-1979) closely parallels that of Blaché (1896-1940s) as they both began as typists, struggled in an industry dense with men and male perspectives, and made films that emphasized women’s issues...the female agenda. Blaché died in 1968 and Arzner only a decade later; even their life spans paralleled one another. Blaché unlocked the world of cinema bringing women into its realm, while Arzner kept running with the keys.

Theresa L. Geller discusses Arzner’s success in Hollywood and her feminist films from an interesting angle when she writes:

Arzner considered herself a Hollywood director, directing what the studio needed, and to which her prolific output at Paramount is a testament. She succeeded in the studio era through her skill and drive, but she was helped by her ‘mannish’ style and appearance (she almost always dressed in men’s suits and ties), which ironically made her stand out less among directors of the day even while she departed from the feminine image. Her ability to defuse her exceptionality allowed her to succeed as a director within Hollywood codes and

expectations...Perhaps somewhat more successful than any attempt to label her as an overtly proto-feminist director has been the movement to categorize Arzner as a director concerned with the cinematic workings of femininity...Her films...fall under the rubric of Woman's Melodrama, and as such reflect paradigmatic women's roles...the thematic of women's private and public lives is clearly evident in the titles of her feature films, Fashions for Women, Sarah and Son (1930), Working Girls, Craig's Wife, and The Bride Wore Red (1937)...A critique of performative female sexuality, often explicitly built into the narrative, and the possibility of women's community emerges in much of her work (<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/03/arzner.html>).

This quote directly relates to Arzner's lesbianism and how it influenced the way she lived as a feminist. Adopting men's clothing and a "mannish style" enabled Arzner to promote her feminist beliefs more easily because her look and mannerisms were masculine which facilitated collaboration with male filmmakers in her field. Her personality enabled her to conform to the male-saturated industry, to a degree, during a time period where the male/female ratio was so disproportional. Yet this also allowed her to push her feminism because if her "mannish" dress and style were accepted so that she was not looked at as being "different" or an "outsider," then she was in essence given just as much reign over her films and their messages as her male colleagues.

Also, when making Craig's Wife, Arzner omitted the anti-feminist tone set in the play and inserted strong pro-feminist messages into the film. Geller writes:

This was common for Arzner to revise original source material to stress the complexity of women's lives. She often worked closely with scriptwriters, almost

always women, keeping them on the set with her as she shot...as Arzner often does in her films, the distancing from the heterosexual romance is coupled with the alternative posited by the possibility of women's community

(<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/03/arzner.html>).

Here Geller analyzes how Harriet Craig, the main character of Craig's Wife, is left alone in her house as other characters leave her one pair at a time. The characters Aunt Austen and Mrs. Harold leave Harriet together as they set off to travel together. Geller goes into much detail about how this "non-heterosexual coupling" defines connection and companionship between women, giving the characters a freedom not found when paired off with male counterparts. I find this interpretation thrilling as Geller expertly outlines Arzner's feminist themes, separating them from their subtly wrapped plot exterior.

Dorothy Arzner brought female characters together throughout her film career, highlighting the heavy bond and understanding between and among women. She worked intimately with female writers to establish prevalent feminist strongholds in each of her films. Arzner knew how to play the game in Hollywood, tirelessly proving herself again and again with successful feature films and a thriving network of connections throughout the industry. She utilized some of her more masculine characteristics to facilitate her work within the film industry and she adamantly endorsed her feminist convictions in every film. Her career provides women and men alike with outstanding craftsmanship in the art of cinema...craftsmanship that should be studied as it sets the precedent for feminism in film.

Alice Guy-Blachè and Dorothy Arzner were pioneers for women everywhere, defining a place for women within the film industry. I wrote about these female

filmmakers consecutively because their films serve as landmarks on the scope of *herstory* and their inspirational characters closely parallel each other. The precedents they set still motivate women today, encouraging us to take fresh steps in new directions and to not be afraid for the consequences will undoubtedly expand women's role in society, erasing the boundaries imposed by challenging gender norms.

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Leni Riefenstahl – Her Recognized Brilliance and Infamous Legacy

The great German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl advanced the art of cinema with her innovative camera techniques, shot angles, and controversial subject matter. In this chapter, I analyze both Triumph of the Will and Olympia I and II, using the above criteria to interpret the messages Riefenstahl conveys through her films. Despite her association with Hitler when making Triumph of the Will, Riefenstahl was not a Nazi Party member and did not make the film based on political convictions. However, she ultimately advanced Hitler's ideologies through Triumph of the Will and Olympia, and therefore her contribution to National Socialism must be acknowledged. At the same time, I support the argument that Riefenstahl viewed the films aesthetically, with the intentions of an artist working to perfect her craft by presenting powerful, poignant imagery. She accepted the offer to make the films to challenge herself artistically, putting all of her efforts and talent into the documentary because she took pride in her work. Riefenstahl's brilliance is evident through the techniques she employs; her work is beautiful beyond words. Yet, her work cannot be separated from the larger context of when, how and why it was made in the first place. Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will and Olympia are problematic in their historical context. In this chapter, I explore these problems, analyze both Triumph and Olympia, and propose a conclusion that resolves the complex questions and issues surrounding Riefenstahl's legacy.

Biographical Background

Born in Berlin in 1902, Helena Bertha Amalie Riefenstahl became immersed in dancing early on and studied ballet at the Grimm-Reiter School. She stopped dancing, however, after a knee injury (Petri Liukkonen 1). One day while waiting for a subway

train that would take her to a doctor's appointment concerning her knee, she was mesmerized by the poster of a new film that had come out, Berg des Schicksals, meaning "Mountain of Destiny." The director was Dr. Arnold Fanck. Not able to contain her curiosity, Riefenstahl went to the movies to see the film. She enjoyed it so much that she returned every night for a week to watch it again and again. After it was determined that she could no longer dance, she went to see Dr. Fanck and asked him for a role in one of his mountain films, classified in the Bergfilm (mountain film) genre. Riefenstahl made a strong first impression, and he cast her in his film. She ended up acting in three of his films and became immersed with filmmaking (<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/liefenstahl.html>).

Riefenstahl soaked up the art of filmmaking, and by 1931 she was making her own films. She paired up with Béla Balázs, a Jewish film critic and playwright, and together they wrote, edited, and produced her first film, Das Blaue Licht (The Blue Light), with Riefenstahl acting as director (Liukkonen 1). Das Blaue Licht also won the Silver Medallion in 1932 at the Biennale in Venice, which is an international art festival that celebrates artists, and in 1932 a cinematography category was added (<http://www.labiennale.org/en/cinema/history/thirties.html>).

Triumph of the Wills: Riefenstahl's and Hitler's

Meanwhile, Riefenstahl met Hitler in 1932, and Hitler, having seen her films, was an admirer of her work. Hitler asked that she document the Nuremberg Party Rally of 1934. Riefenstahl had already made a documentary of the 1933 Nazi party rally for Hitler entitled Sieg des Glaubens (Victory of Faith), but unfortunately this film was lost at the end of WWII. No copies are left today. Following her work on this film, Hitler, believing

in her skill and talent, requested that she make another (Liukkonen 2). Riefenstahl agreed to make the film for Hitler, provided he met three conditions: 1) She wanted her own company, instead of the Nazi Party, to fund the film; 2) No one, including Hitler, was allowed to see footage of the film before it was completed; and 3) She requested that Hitler never ask her to make a third documentary film. Hitler agreed to everything. Hence, Riefenstahl gave birth to Triumph of the Will, also known as Triumph des Willens, which would prove to be the most famous, controversial, and innovative film of her career (Hinton 29). Her contribution to the Nazi Party would be questioned for the remainder of her life.

Triumph of the Will (1935) begins with heavenly images of clouds in the sky. The camera shots are taken from an airplane, so the angle gives the viewer the feeling of being surrounded by clouds. These shots give the impression that what we see next will be something majestic. The next shots we see are of thousands of soldiers marching in perfect formation, seen from the plane above. The plane is so high that the soldiers look like toy soldiers; Hitler's toy soldiers. We then see shots taken from the ground as Riefenstahl shows the mass numbers of people lined up to catch a glimpse of the Führer while he travels by in his motorcade. Close-ups of small children delighted to see the Führer flash across the screen. Riefenstahl's shots demonstrate how every nook of the city is saturated with civilians desperate to see Hitler. "Heil Hitler" is illuminated in bright lights at night, proclaiming his power every hour of the day. These kinds of shots imply the German people's faith in Hitler. However, she did not create or invent this assumed loyalty to the Führer; she filmed the loyalty and discipline that was already present. At the same time, the close-ups and camera angles she employs imply the

people's emotional intensity and connection to Hitler. Her shots are innovative and beautiful, but her filmmaking brilliance inevitably spills into the content of the film, lending the impression of brilliance to Hitler and National Socialism as well.

The next sequence of shots we see are of Nuremberg at daybreak, before the city awakes. All is quiet and serene. Next, Riefenstahl shows us shots of German training camps, as images of hundreds of identical army tents parallel one another exactly several football fields. Herbert Windt, who wrote the musical score for both Triumph of the Will and Olympia, accompanies the activities of the soldiers with bouncing, upbeat rhythms that accentuate the enthusiasm with which the soldiers work. The soldiers are shown bathing, working, eating, wrestling, writing home, and having fun. Although training, the close-ups of the soldiers' expressions clearly illustrate their love for Germany. We see smiles and laughter on every face. The soldiers are presented as strong, capable men who gladly serve their country. Riefenstahl represents these men as perfect models of the Aryan ideal. Nationalist films portray soldiers because they exhibit the courage, strength, discipline, and self-sacrifice which enable them to protect their country and national institutions. Not every individual demonstrates these noble characteristics, in fact, many do not. Hence, soldiers are often portrayed as model citizens who set the precedent for civilians. This particular portrayal of German soldiers encourages civilians to serve Germany in their own ways with the same dedication; the film encourages civilians to model themselves after the soldiers in the image of the Aryan ideal. Her portrayal of the soldiers' exquisite fitness and discipline stress such Aryan ideals, emphasizing the significance of such National Socialist beliefs.

Following the soldiers, Riefenstahl captures images of traditionally dressed German men and women in a parade celebrating the fruits of the land. German farmers carry baskets of fruit portraying the bountiful harvest and the fertility of German soil. The women in these shots are dressed as domestic women, wives of farmers who nurture the land in order to reap its great bounty. These women are the opposite in image from the female athletes portrayed in Olympia. These women serve their country by supporting their husbands and the farm life that nourishes and sustains the German people. These images convey the Aryan ideal of femininity as these women are white, with pure German bloodlines, and are willing to sacrifice everything and anything to make Hitler proud.

Riefenstahl juxtaposes these images against shots of soldiers lined up for Hitler's inspection. Riefenstahl is at Hitler's side, filming shots of him interfacing one on one with his soldiers; these images are close-ups of Hitler and his men, and they represent the personal side of Hitler. Traditional farmers are represented in the parade because Hitler advocated socialist values of taking control out of the hands of private companies, and instead having the government control economic activities. He valued the hard work and communal attitude of farming, and these values are represented in the parade. Berthold Hinz discusses National Socialism and its extreme influence over German art in his book Art in the Third Reich. He explains the emphasis on work in the following quote:

We have already noted that in the Third Reich work was not regarded as the creation of material values but as a value in itself. Accordingly, the products of such work could only be regarded as products in themselves, as monuments that were not tainted by utilitarian considerations and that only commemorated the

self-realizing, self-identifying labor invested in them...The worker who is conscious of the exchange value of his labor is looked down on. The one who helps build the “cathedral,” i.e., the “new Reich,” without calculating the value of his labor is “ennobled” but receives no material compensation (Hinz 195).

Although Riefenstahl documented the parade, having no influence over what kind of German people and livelihoods would be represented, she nonetheless chose to capture these images on film, thereby placing emphasis on such National Socialist values in her documentary.

During the rally’s speeches, Riefenstahl quickly cuts back and forth between close-ups of Hitler and his officers as they speak, and close-ups of the audience and their expressions. Her cameras capture the smiles and thunderous clapping as followers drink up every word their leader has to say. She uses wide angle shots to capture the mass gathering of people who have come to hear the Führer and his officers. The amount of German people is so overwhelming that the numbers alone speak volumes about Hitler’s supremacy and dominance over Germany. There are sudden eruptions of “Heil Hitler,” accompanied by standing ovations, and thousands of Germans saluting their leader in unison.

The people represented in this documentary have ideal Aryan characteristics. The article “Community and Triumph of the Will” focuses on the kind of community portrayed in Triumph of the Will and states the following:

First, with few exceptions, no one appears to be over the age of thirty years old. Young men and women populate the film and there are quite a few shots of children in the crowd during the motorcade sequence. Second, all appear to be

healthy. No one is starving but no one appears to be obese. Their skin is clear and the men clearly athletic. There is no sense of poverty here. Lastly, everyone in the film is white and presumably not Jewish

(<https://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/wardin/parte.htm>).

Slavs, Czechs, Ukrainians, Poles, Blacks, Russians, and Jews are omitted from this documentary completely. These ethnicities were considered substandard according to Hitler, and thus only Aryan Germans with pure bloodlines were portrayed.

Riefenstahl's camera work is beautiful, to say the least, but the way in which she introduces each Third Reich officer is stylishly glamorous. Before each speaker begins, Riefenstahl shows his name written in lights. At first, she makes the image of the name fuzzy, but then focuses the camera until the name becomes clear and vivid to the viewer. The dreamy mood attached to these shots, along with the neon illumination of the officers' names, reminded me of Hollywood stars and how their names are flashed in bright lights as well. Riefenstahl introduced the officers as the stars of Hitler's Nazi Party; one by one she filmed close-ups of the officers from low angles so that we see these men on an elevated platform. Riefenstahl's shots literally put these officers on a pedestal to be admired and respected, possibly even feared. Riefenstahl's task in making this documentary was to show the activities of the Nuremberg Rally. She accepted this task, and worked diligently to make the activities and participants appear elegant, strong, and organized. She portrayed them in such a way because as a filmmaker, she wanted her shots to be well-positioned, original, and appealing to the eye. She wanted to make a documentary that people would want to watch.

However, although she may not have intended to spread Nazism with her footage, Riefenstahl's impressive shots end up doing just that. Although not personally political in her convictions, Riefenstahl must be held to the fact that her documentary contributed greatly to Hitler's continued dictatorship over Germany. Her glamorous shots of Nazi officers revere these individuals as people who deserve glorification for their dedication to and love of Germany. The film is so majestic and captivating that one is almost able to forget the true racist message of the film as the shots appear to wash away the negative of such hatred with their exquisite beauty. Riefenstahl's skill makes her shots so beautiful that they actually, in fact, promote the current of racism that runs through the film by making it appear elegant and tasteful. This is where Riefenstahl's extreme talent, while brilliant from a cinematic perspective, is also problematic as it endorses Hitler's racist ideologies.

The next series of shots takes place when Hitler speaks to his S.A. storm troopers, where soldiers shout out every city and town represented amongst thousands of them. Riefenstahl must have had a couple of cameras positioned throughout the sea of soldiers, as she captured a close-up of every soldier that spoke out. Her close-ups of Hitler is shot from low angles, as Hitler is elevated through the eye of the camera. This further serves to illustrate his prowess in leading his armed forces. According to David B. Hinton, who wrote about and interpreted Riefenstahl's life and films, this part of the film was "filmed largely from a specially constructed elevator behind Hitler's rostrum" (Hinton 33). Riefenstahl was dedicated to her filmmaking, constructing makeshift elevators and developing interesting ways to shoot her subjects; she did not simply film her subjects at direct angles, but rather varied her perspectives to emphasize the power and influence of

the Nazi Party. Furthermore, her use of shadows is impressive. In her shooting of the Party's nightly activities, she illuminates the soldiers' profiles and faces with torches of fire against the midnight black sky. The torches of fire, swinging swastika flags, and statues of the national German eagle are icons Riefenstahl frames against the night sky to symbolize German strength. Shots of the fireworks are a stark contrast against the night sky as a backdrop; Riefenstahl's images invite the audience to participate in the festivities of the Nazi Party.

Hitler was an excellent orator, and Riefenstahl efficiently captures the most effective moments in his speeches by zooming in and tightening her shot so that Hitler takes up the whole frame. She cuts between his vehement mannerisms, like shaking his fist as he proclaims national German sentiment, and the crowds of people that gather to listen. She pans across the faces of the masses and across the stages where Hitler and his officers sit. These camera pans demonstrate the power of size, of strength in numbers, because not everything can fit in one frame.

Also, everything Riefenstahl films comes in multiple sets. For instance, there are thousands of soldiers, guns, helmets, and uniforms; the blocks of soldiers are in constant perfect formation. There are also several orators, one after another; everything in this film moves together, the soldiers, the flags, the weaponry, etc. Every formation seems to have a purpose; no movement is wasted. This purposefulness illustrates that Hitler has a reason and plan for every action he takes; for every speech he makes. Riefenstahl films this strict choreography, and cuts from movement to movement. These sharp movements represent the discipline instilled in Hitler's soldiers. Some of the most significant shots, however, are when Riefenstahl frames Hitler against the sky; he is framed against the clouds

presenting a god-like image to the audience. He is portrayed as an idol of enormous proportions. It's as though Hitler is weightless; he doesn't touch the ground as his leadership raises him to a higher level. In the film, Hitler refers to the Nazi Party as a "Holy Order," which carries a supernatural connotation with it. Riefenstahl builds upon this connotation with her extreme close-ups, her wide angle shots, and the way she films Hitler from low angles, propelling his image to icon status.

The film ends with a swastika symbol taking up the entire frame, which fades into marching soldiers shown against the clouds, representing that the soldiers, too, contain extreme power in their loyalty to Hitler. The film is circular in that it begins and ends with shots of clouds in the sky symbolizing a higher power in Hitler and his followers.

Rainer Rother analyzes Riefenstahl's work in great detail in his book, Leni Riefenstahl. I commented earlier on Riefenstahl's quick cutting, and her juxtaposed shots between Hitler and his mass audiences. Rother remarks on these shots in the following way:

The montage technique is also extremely repetitive: in general it consists of an exchange between shots and counter- or reaction-shots...The fact that nearly all the shots actually used in this sequence were taken by moving cameras (mostly from cars), makes the combinations seem even more dynamic. In her montage, Riefenstahl attempted to add variety to the presentation of the bond constructed by virtual eye contacts between Hitler and the cheering crowds. This she achieved by using as many different camera ranges and angles as possible within the superficially uniform pattern. The hierarchy of the eye contacts, however, never changed: the "people" are always shown in high-angle shots, Hitler from a low or

eye-level angle...The shifting points of view in the shot-reaction-shot montage define the relationship between Hitler and the “people.” The crowd jubilantly expresses its support; Hitler is the recipient (Rother 67).

Rother points out how Hitler is always shot from a low angle, although sometimes an eye-level angle, demonstrating his authority over the masses, as the “people” are shot from high angles.

Another analyst and critic of Triumph of the Will, remarks on Riefenstahl’s linear sequence of events as chronology leads the audience through the Nuremberg Rally.

Hinton writes:

Triumph of the Will is structured straightforwardly enough, in the most literal documentary narrative tradition, events proceeding according to strict chronological order, starting with Hitler’s arrival in Nuremberg, continuing through processions, rallies, and speeches in the order that they happened, and ending with the Führer’s final address (Hinton 35).

Riefenstahl’s accurate chronology of the Nuremberg events facilitates the audience’s understanding and reception of the film, as one event leads to another until Hitler’s final speech, which serves as the film’s climactic moment. This significant speech is followed by the majestic shots of Hitler and his soldiers framed against the clouds. The film is epic with Herbert Windt’s score paralleling the vehemence and power radiated from Hitler and his organization.

Olympic Athletes are Likened to Greek Gods: Aryan Ideals are Symbolized

Riefenstahl employs similar camera techniques of high and low angles, and framing the subjects against the sky in Olympia I and Olympia II. Riefenstahl dedicates

equal footage to all Olympic athletes, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender. She equates all the athletes with ancient mythology, as she portrays their strength as almost superhuman.

However, all of the athletes represented are competing in Nazi Germany, under the German flag, and under the torch of Olympus, which represents German power. The Third Reich literally means the “third empire,” as Hitler planned to build an empire just as powerful as the first, the Roman Empire. Both Greek and Roman mythology included gods and goddesses with superhuman capabilities and strength. Riefenstahl compares the Olympic athletes to such gods and goddesses, emphasizing their almost unbelievable human strength and endurance. The Olympus torch represents supreme power, and this torch that was once associated with an ancient empire, is in this film associated with the German empire as it hosts the Olympic Games. This association and the comparison of the athletes to gods convey Aryan ideals as all of the seemingly immortal athletes compete in Nationalist Germany. So, although various races, ethnicities, and both genders are portrayed with equal footage, Riefenstahl still conveys Aryan ideals due to the associations in Olympia.

According to Riefenstahl’s A Memoir, Professor Carl Diem, who served as the secretary general of the organization committee of the Eleventh Olympic Games, persisted that she make an Olympic documentary film until she finally accepted his offer. He offered her special authorizations to shoot the events, and the more she thought about it, the more Riefenstahl could see the film coming together in her mind’s eye. She writes:

The possibility began taking shape. In my mind’s eye, I could see the ancient ruins of the classical Olympic sites slowly emerging from patches of fog and the

Greek temples and sculptures drifting by...I dreamed that this statue changed into a man of flesh and blood, gradually starting to swing the discus in slow motion...the Olympic fire igniting the torches to be carried from the Temple of Zeus to the modern Berlin of 1936 – a bridge from Antiquity to the present. That was my vision of the prologue to my Olympia (Riefenstahl 171).

Riefenstahl took these mental images and transformed them into actual footage.

Olympia I begins exactly as she described, with low camera shots rounding the thick columns of ancient Greece. There are first statues of the male and female forms, until Riefenstahl settles on the male statue of the discus thrower. Slowly and steadily, the statue becomes real, as his arm begins to swing into motion. The man twists his body in slow motion until the disc is thrown. Riefenstahl's use of lighting and shadows is again employed here as we see only the dark outline of the man's body; there is not enough light to see his face. Following this image, we see a woman's body, natural without clothing, begin to move. Riefenstahl imposes images of flames over the female outline. Riefenstahl then shoots the ceremonial lighting of the torch in Greece, and suddenly, one right after another; she splices shots of torch carriers together. We see runner after runner carrying the torches to Berlin. Herbert Windt wrote syncopated marching band music to accompany shots of the athletes as they enter the arena in Berlin. Riefenstahl films athletes' shadows as well, portraying the power of nature; even the shadow of the Olympic athlete is strong, powerful, and graceful. Her shots are so close to the athletes; she got as close as possible without hindering the athletes' performances.

Riefenstahl zoomed in to get close-ups of the athletes' faces before, during, and after their events, along with close-ups of measurements taken by Olympic referees. She

even had trenches dug so that her equipment could better capture close-ups, while remaining on the sidelines. In particular, Riefenstahl spent a lot of time shooting Jesse Owens, capturing close-ups of him as he set new world records. This is evident of her non-biased approach toward filming the athletes, because Hitler was racist and did not want any black people competing at Berlin's Olympic Games. Hitler did not approve of Jesse Owens, or his participation in the Olympic Games. Riefenstahl writes on his reasoning, or rather his racism, in her book:

To my surprise, he (Hitler) said, "I myself am not very interested in the games. I would rather stay away..." "But why?" I asked. Hitler hesitated. Then he said, "We have no chance of winning medals. The Americans will win most of the victories, and the Negroes will be their stars. I won't enjoy watching that. And then many foreigners will come who reject National Socialism. There could be trouble." He also mentioned that he didn't like the Olympic Stadium: the pillars were too slender, the overall construction not imposing enough (Riefenstahl 179).

This quote struck me as very indicative of Hitler's fears concerning the 1936 Olympic Games. He was racist against black people, of course, so he disapproved of the Games in this way. Also, he did not want to deal with anyone who rejected National Socialism; he especially did not want anyone rejecting National Socialism in his home, his German nation. His line "There could be trouble" sounds reflexive; could it be that Hitler was afraid that he would not be able to control his disapproval and rejection of such different races and ideologies than his own? I read this statement as implying that trouble could erupt, especially if Hitler himself attends the Olympic Games because his extreme leadership and professed ideologies spark severe contrast with the rest of the international

Olympic participants, especially America and Great Britain. Furthermore, the fact that he felt that “the overall construction was not imposing enough,” signifies Hitler’s need to build great creations that match his power in size, strength, and style. He associated size with strength, dismissing the arena in one short statement. He felt that the Olympic Games should be held in an arena worthy of Olympic power, regardless of how strong the arena actually was, or how much character the architecture really had. But, Riefenstahl went ahead with her vision of how Olympia should be made; she did not cut the close-ups of Jesse Owens, and she gave American athletes abundant coverage, just as much as German athletes.

Continuing on, when showing the various events, Riefenstahl does not follow the sports gear with her camera. For instance, during the discus throwing, the shot put, and the javelin competitions, when an athlete throws the item out of the frame of view, Riefenstahl does not follow where it is thrown; her cameras stay with the athletes. She conveys the message that the significance lies within the athletes themselves; not how far they throw the javelin, or how well they actually perform. By filming the athletes throwing their gear outside the frame, she emphasizes that the strength of the athletes cannot be contained within the shot; their power and ability cannot be restricted and cannot be fully understood, even through the camera’s eye.

Some of her most provocative shots are when she is filming a runner; she gets an extreme close-up of his profile, and then the camera turns upside down, and the athlete’s moving legs and feet are seen as if the camera is mounted on to the runner himself. The camera captures shots of where the athlete’s power stems from, his legs, and goes against traditional techniques by turning the camera upside down and shooting the ground. Here

again, Riefenstahl uses light and shadowing to mark the contrast of the dark athlete pitted against the bright pavement.

Olympia II begins with low angle shots that gaze upward at the morning sunlight streaming through the trees. All is quiet as Riefenstahl shoots close-ups of insects on flowers, birds, and spider webs. Then suddenly, literally out of the sunlight, athletes are born, shown on their morning run. Quite shocking for 1936, Riefenstahl films inside a male athletes' locker room; we see the men showering, and Riefenstahl pans up and down their bodies, careful to cut at exactly the most private areas. Herbert Windt's score once again matches the tempo with the action of the athletes; for example, a female athlete is shown hopping while Windt's tempo bounces excitedly. His score parallels the movement of the film as Windt alters the rhythm, syncopation, and tone, while using crescendos and decrescendos to mark the athlete's anticipation.

Once again, as in Triumph of the Will, Riefenstahl frames her subjects against the clouds, as if they truly are superhuman mortals from the tales of ancient Greece. She often begins with shots of shadows that tell us what event is taking place, then slowly pans upward to show the actual athletes at work. She also once again employs her sets of multiples, as the athletes are shown training in groups. Here, as in Triumph, the movement is choreographed as athletes from around the world prepare for competition. She also takes her cameras under water, which was very innovative for her time. We see male and female divers under water as they sink to the pool floor; also Riefenstahl gets facial close-ups and underwater shots as swimmers race. She got close-ups as well in the rowing event, with shots of the coxon's close-ups juxtaposed against rowers' close-ups. Her camera is actually shooting from *inside* the boat as the athletes race. Her shots are

beautiful, elegant, and amazingly performed. She finished the second part of the film by cutting from diver to diver, one coming quickly after the other, as they jump off the diving board. She cuts so fast that we never see the divers fall to the water; instead, we see them jump against the sky, twisting and turning, but never falling. Their Olympic status jumps off the screen, as these athletes are framed within the clouds in the sky. At least half of the swimmers are women, and they are given the same amount of camera time as their male counterparts. Riefenstahl uses the same elegant style when portraying these female athletes; she presents their strength and skill equally with the strength and skill of the male athletes, illustrating that they are just as significant as the men. The female German athletes represent strength and dedication, much like the German soldiers in Triumph of the Will. They make their country proud not through nurturing the land and looking after their families, like the women in Triumph of the Will, but by excelling in something so physically challenging that they become almost superhuman in power. All of these athletes convey god-like qualities, and are associated with ancient mythology that went along with the Roman Empire. When this film was made, the new, imposing empire was Hitler's empire. These associations, therefore, still convey Aryan ideals, regardless if this was Riefenstahl's intent or not.

Finally, just as Riefenstahl began Olympia with the lighting of the Olympic torch, she ends the film with the Olympic fire dying out, signaling the end of the Olympic Games. In this way, Olympia, like Triumph, is circular as the film's ending matches the beginning. Throughout Olympia, she evenly acknowledged the athletes that won events, regardless of their race. Yet again, in order to represent the complete picture of Riefenstahl's controversial work, I must acknowledge the fact that although she dedicated

equal camera time to all the athletes, her supernatural representation of them can be interpreted as representing the Aryan ideal. This is problematic as the stigma of Hitler's association takes away from the natural beauty seen in Olympia, along with the detriment caused to Riefenstahl's reputation, as both a person and an artist.

Riefenstahl's Lack of Political Intent vs. Extreme Consequences of her Films

Riefenstahl explores her artistic power to the fullest while making both films. Her natural eye for film, and the kinds of conventions she employed, earned her much respect and recognition. Olympia won the grand prize at the International Film Festival in Venice in 1938, and was proclaimed as "the world's best film of 1938" (Hinton 80). However, her association with Hitler and his Nazi Party did not serve her best interests following the making of her two documentaries. The stigma of Socialism stayed with Riefenstahl for the rest of her filmmaking career. Wolf Donner wrote an article criticizing the post-war attitude towards Riefenstahl. Rother explains how Riefenstahl's association with Hitler proved troublesome in the following words:

Only after his (Donner) article, did people in Germany really begin to look at Riefenstahl's work in a way which attempted to do justice to its stylistic brilliance whilst also taking its political function into account...Before the 1970s, if only because of the lack of opportunities to see the films themselves, examinations of her work rarely went beyond the comforting but false assertion that both Riefenstahl as a person and the films she made were infected by the same disease: National Socialism. Only when the example of Olympia brought the formal quality of her work to people's attention and when Riefenstahl ceased to be dismissed without further ado as a fascist did other, more troubling questions

emerge. These concerned the relationship between art and ideology, between artists and morality. Could there really be such a thing as Nazi art which was not downright bad and unspeakably kitschy? Could there be such a thing as a work of art which was also Nazi propaganda? And how should an artist who achieved such a thing be regarded? (Rother 162-163).

These questions make sense because artist and art piece are inextricably tied together; therefore to make the case that Riefenstahl knowingly and willingly worked to progress Nazi ideology is an easy argument to wager. However, Riefenstahl's work is much more complex an issue. She was not political in her beliefs. Hinton supports the claim that Riefenstahl had no political agenda in the following argument:

She was not interested in making another documentary and suggested that Walter Ruttmann, the maker of Berlin – Symphonie einer Grosstadt (Berlin – Symphony of a Great City), make the film instead...Her suggestion that Ruttmann make the film is indicative of Riefenstahl's lack of political sophistication at the time.

Ruttmann was well known to have communist sympathies and was no friend of the Nazis. Riefenstahl was a good friend of Ruttmann but obviously had only concerned herself with his artistic beliefs and not his political philosophy (Hinton 27).

Riefenstahl was not concerned with political associations or beliefs; she saw Triumph of the Will as an opportunity to challenge herself as an artist. To her, it was art, her passion. Riefenstahl writes of the conversation she and Hitler shared before she made Triumph of the Will:

“That is not all, my Führer. I am afraid I cannot make this film.”

“Why not?”

“I am completely unfamiliar with all the subject matter. I can’t even tell the SA from the SS.”

“That’s an advantage. Then you’ll see only the essentials. I don’t want a boring Party rally film; I don’t want newsreel shots. I want an artistic visual document. The Party people don’t understand this. Your Blue Light proved that you can do it.”

I interrupted. “That wasn’t a documentary. How am I supposed to know what is politically important or unimportant, what should or shouldn’t be shown?”

(Riefenstahl 158).

Riefenstahl clearly knew nothing of, nor cared about, politics. She was an artist, a filmmaker, through and through. Nonetheless, although she personally had no political convictions, her work in Triumph of the Will carried political significance.

At the same time, Riefenstahl’s incredible filmmaking talent was used in a documentary requested by Hitler; a film that was born to show the strength, legitimacy, and power of Germany. However, Hitler’s ideologies, parades, rallies, and speeches all emphasized the strength, legitimacy, and power of the ideal Aryan Germany. He omitted many different people who were Germans as well, and Riefenstahl’s shots clearly illustrate this omission as these people are not represented. Hitler’s National Socialism omitted the Slavs, Czechs, Ukrainians, Poles, Russians, and Jews. His racist ideologies left no room for anyone not capable of being “Germanized,” and unfortunate though true, Riefenstahl did play a role in spreading Hitler’s racism through Triumph of the Will (http://www.dac.neu.edu/holocaust/Hitlers_Plans.htm#selection%20tests). Hitler would

have inevitably found another filmmaker to make the documentary if Riefenstahl had refused his request, however it is questionable as to whether that filmmaker would have made the film with the same skill and elegance as Riefenstahl.

Riefenstahl's Legacy: Idealized Representations of Aryan Masculinity and Femininity

Triumph of the Will and Olympia both exhibit Riefenstahl's innovative techniques with her low and high angle camera shots, her makeshift elevators and trenches, her close-ups, juxtapositions, and remarkable editing. She went on to make more documentaries, not at the request of others, but because she took a particular interest in the situations she documented. Riefenstahl became interested in Africa, and traveled throughout East Africa and the Sudan. She even spent six months living with the Nuba tribe, studying their culture and documenting their lives. She kept working until the very end, even writing her memoirs and publishing them in Germany in 1987 (Hinton 132-136).

Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will furthered Nazi power and National Socialism. The consequences of her documentary were horrific and calamitous. Although she was not a Nazi, or an artist with a political agenda, Riefenstahl should have given more thought to the consequences her documentary would have. It was irresponsible of her to make the film without completely understanding the political arena she was entering and becoming associated with. Riefenstahl should have given more thought to the greater movement that her film would become a part of; this is her mistake. We are all presented with moral dilemmas on a daily basis, but the majority of us do not carry the heavy burden that our actions, and more specifically our mistakes, will affect countless others

with grave consequences. Riefenstahl forgot to consider this burden when she agreed to make this documentary.

However, despite this mistake, Riefenstahl filmed Triumph of the Will as a beautiful, telling film of a strong German nation. Riefenstahl, having no prior political associations, agendas, or previous knowledge on the subject, saw this as an opportunity to challenge herself artistically. The consequences of her documentary were not intended, which does not nullify the role Riefenstahl played in the advancement of National Socialism, but does, however, allow us to think critically about her work, making judgments based on aesthetic criteria. Knowing that Riefenstahl documented the activities and participants, emphasizing their organization and power to create cinematic appeal, not to reinforce racist ideology, enables us to read and analyze her work much more objectively as we can view her films from an artistic perspective.

In conclusion, Riefenstahl was a pioneer, being the only female director in Germany for decades. She stood her ground, despite Hitler's opinions, in Olympia with her recognition of Jesse Owens and non-Socialist nations. She fought to make her films on her terms, and this passionate vehemence and strength was innate for Riefenstahl. She dreamt of dancing and acting from a very early age, and her passion grew into a love for cinema and filmmaking. Her will to create art brought her both incredible respect and infamous blame. Riefenstahl was a brilliant filmmaker, but this did not make her exempt from facing moral dilemmas, and occasionally falling prey to them. Her work on Triumph of the Will was, and remains to this day, highly controversial, but Riefenstahl's innovative filmmaking techniques deserve to be recognized as well. Once all the positive

and negative aspects of her career are openly acknowledged, then her talent and overall contribution to women's place in film history can be fully recognized.

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Lina Wertmüller: The Strong Political Voice and Gender Representation in her Films

Critics vary in their opinions of Lina Wertmüller and the messages that her work communicates to audiences worldwide. Some claim she is misogynist, or that she doesn't care about her characters. I disagree. Wertmüller's films convey messages of strong characters who challenge the oppressive stereotypes imposed on them. Her characters are strong because they refuse to conform to society's norms; they refuse to limit themselves to the traditional roles offered them by the world in which they live. Stereotypes such as the domestic wife, the family caretaker, woman as nurturer, and the respectful woman who obeys her husband along with the rest of patriarchal society, are all stereotypes applied to women. These stereotypes are represented and revered in Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will with the German women. Later, Riefenstahl represented another kind of female identity, the female athlete, which was celebrated in Olympia. Wertmüller's female characters are not domestic, traditional, or athletic in the least. They oppose Riefenstahl's representations greatly, as she challenges traditional roles similar to those conveyed in Triumph of the Will, and portrays the opposite of the athleticism and physical beauty shown in Olympia. Wertmüller's female characters range in their beauty, as some are lovely while others are grotesque and unattractive. They are bold women that do not adhere to society's norms. Wertmüller's women are not in ideal physical shape, and do not portray traditionally accepted feminine behavior. Wertmüller's work is interesting because it goes against Riefenstahl's political effect in Triumph of the Will. Riefenstahl presents Aryan ideals in this film, furthering the spread of Fascism and National Socialism with her captivating shots and brilliant talent. The question here is not whether she intended such political consequences to her film (I already discussed that in

the previous chapter), but that the fact of the matter is that her film had such consequences regardless. These political consequences are in direct opposition to Wertmüller's political convictions. Wertmüller advocates anarchism in Love and Anarchy, displaying her extreme rejection of Fascism.

Wertmüller's female characters demonstrate integrity, especially in Love and Anarchy, which this chapter assesses. Her writing is original and her talent stands apart from other directors I have written about because Wertmüller's political convictions come to life in her films through her characters and their dilemmas. In Love and Anarchy, for instance, the Italian Fascist government is suffocating the Italian people. Anarchists like Salomé and Tunin take it upon themselves to go against the tremendous force of Fascism in hopes of destroying it bit by bit, each anarchist chipping away a piece of it at a time. Salomé's profession as a prostitute places her outside of mainstream society, a society that advocates a strict Fascist image. She refuses to conform to traditional roles that society has allocated women, and her prostitution grants her a kind of freedom because she is not bound by a traditional female role. She is an individual who stands apart due to her profession and her anarchism which works against Fascism. Wertmüller's characters are not always well-rounded and do not always develop throughout the film, but they each represent some significant quality, conviction, or aspect of society.

Biography

Lina Wertmüller was born in 1932 (although some sources declare 1928) in Rome. Her family was Swedish but resided in Italy. From an early age, Wertmüller was inquisitive and bold. She challenged the nuns at the convent school she attended,

questioning teachings about God's ways. She left the Catholic Church, and began exploring the art of cinema. She taught herself the various conventions and technologies involved with filmmaking, until she was completely immersed in it. She joined Maria Signorelli's puppet troupe and traveled throughout Italy, expanding her artistic skills (Ferlita and May 9).

Wertmüller joined some friends in 1951 and opened a small avant-garde theater, which was more of a personal milestone than an actual success. Meanwhile, she began to write for radio, television, and theater. Wertmüller soon seized the opportunity to join Garinei and Giovannini, an extremely talented writing team who created musical comedies for Italian television programming. She worked with them for a number of years, contributing her artistic style to more than a dozen shows. During this time, a friend introduced Wertmüller to Federico Fellini. He invited her to work with him on his film, 8 1/2 (1962), which enhanced her networking capabilities and her reputation in the Italian film industry. Soon afterwards, Wertmüller began work on her first film entitled I Basilischi (The Lizards). She explains that the title emphasizes “the reactionary apathy of some zones of southern Italy in analogy with the typical immobility of lizards in the sun,” (Ferlita and May 10). This film was released in 1963, and was the first political statement of Wertmüller's career.

She also wrote two plays for the theater during this time, one of which, Two and Two Are No Longer Four (1968), was a huge commercial success (Ferlita and May 10). During the production of this play, Wertmüller met her Enrico Job, who she ended up marrying. She also worked with Giancarlo Giannini, who starred in the play. Wertmüller and Giannini had been friends for quite some time, and their professional work together

continued for years to come. Enrico Job, Wertmüller's husband, believes that it was Giannini himself who gave Wertmüller her start in the film industry, saying "More than anybody, it was Giancarlo who helped Lina to launch into films, introducing her to producers, backers and so on. Without him, she would probably still be waiting for a chance," (Ferlita and May 10). Following, Two and Two Are No Longer Four, Wertmüller made Love and Anarchy (1973) which was stunning in its bold portrayal of hard characters attempting to change the world in which they live from the margins of society. Then, she made Seven Beauties (1976), which won her an Academy Award nomination for "Best Director." Wertmüller was the first woman to be nominated for this honor. Seven Beauties was commercially successful as well as intense in its storyline (Erickson 1).

Love and Anarchy

Wertmüller's characters are anarchists in both love and politics; can love and anarchy coexist for these characters? Let us explore this question in depth. Some critics accuse Wertmüller of having no compassion or empathy for her characters. However, I found that it wasn't that she doesn't portray a sense of empathy for her characters, because the emotion evoked in Love and Anarchy, for example, moves one to understand the characters' motives; to understand the source of their pain. One can identify with her characters and what they are trying to accomplish. Instead, I found that this empathy is present, but not overindulged. Wertmüller doesn't make excuses for her characters, their positions in society, their mistakes, or their downfalls. Her portrayal of the characters is real and without sugarcoating. Wertmüller explains just enough of the characters' backgrounds to give the audience an understanding of their motives, yet she allows room

for various interpretations of why the characters do what they do. It is the story of Tunin, a young farmer, who inherits the mission of assassinating Mussolini after officers murder his anarchist friend. Salomé is an extreme anarchist already and Tunin visits her at her residence, a well-known brothel, so that she can help him prepare for the assassination. While at the brothel, Tunin meets another prostitute, Tripolina, and falls madly in love with her. He then is caught between his original mission and selfish desire as Tripolina offers him a reason to forget his radical mission, thereby saving his life so that they can be together. Wertmüller's portrayal of the characters is balanced and raw as their conflicted interests weave together a story of love, lust, sorrow, anger, and the will to go beyond one's own destiny in order to change society. Her characters' marginalization from society is due to Salomé and Tripolina's prostitution; while Tunin's simple ways are judged as stupidity. Nonetheless, these characters portray integrity and courage, showing that an individual does not need to conform to society or believe in certain political ideologies in order to have worth in this world. They demonstrate the strength needed to be able to make a difference in society, regardless of their alienation from it.

In Love and Anarchy, Wertmüller presents Tunin as a simple, good man from the countryside who becomes an anarchist not because of political convictions, but to avenge the death of his friend. The measures that Tunin goes through to save his friend's legacy are astounding. Wertmüller's close-ups of Tunin focus on his striking green eyes and his tentative expressions, which represent his inexperience in political affairs. Tunin is the antithesis of Riefenstahl's strapping Aryan soldiers in Triumph of the Will, as his shabby clothes and rather ugly features mark him as someone who does not fit Mussolini's Fascist image. Wertmüller sets Tunin up against society in this manner. Instead of

conforming to the masses of the poor who follow Fascism, Tunin chooses to stand apart, to stand out, as he accepts the belief that he has the power, within himself, to challenge and change the society in which he lives. He decides to seize this power in the end, defying the Fascist government and working towards the liberation of the Italian people. Tunin *is* society; society lives through him as it lives through all of us. He is a part of it, and chooses to work against it for his political cause.

One scene in particular highlights Tunin's inexperience in political affairs when he is explaining his motives to assassinate Mussolini to Salomé. Wertmüller films Tunin's reflection in the mirror as he sheds tears over the loss of his daring friend to Mussolini's officers. The mirror classically represents the conflicted duality of characters as they struggle to determine which course of action they should choose. Tunin is conflicted because he is a simple farmer, yet he feels driven to complete his mission and assassinate Mussolini to finish what his friend started. His loyalty and dedication to his friend's memory are endearing, yet Wertmüller illustrates his lack of political knowledge and aggression by the way she often frames him between women. There are several scenes where Wertmüller places Tunin in between Salomé and other various prostitutes, and between Salomé and Tripolina to demonstrate the influence these women have over Tunin due to his meek manners and his quiet ways. Salomé is highly extroverted and seemingly fearless in her vehement determination to bring Mussolini down, and this representation coupled with Tripolina's sincere, limitless love for Tunin appear to overpower Tunin and his ability to think for himself.

Tunin and Tripolina are anarchists in love as their romantic relationship is highly unconventional and is considered taboo according to the norms of Italian society.

Tripolina's profession as a prostitute alienates her from mainstream society, and Tunin is, by association, alienated when he falls in love with her. Meanwhile, Salomé and Tunin are both political anarchists, Salomé because she is determined to help destroy the Fascist control Mussolini has over Italy; Tunin because he has inherited the political mission of his late anarchist friend. Salomé has dedicated her life to her political conventions, and this is evident as her vehemence pushes Tunin to complete his mission with courage. She does not allow her fondness of Tunin to distract either of them from the mission at hand: assassinating Mussolini. Salomé realizes that Tunin must die for the cause, and she is prepared to accept that throughout the whole of the film, until the very end when Tripolina's inexhaustible love for Tunin sways Salomé's decision. Wertmüller's non-traditional portrayal of her female characters suggests that women do have the power to stand up and apart from the stereotypical roles society expects of them. They have the opportunity to choose something different for themselves, even if that decision puts them at odds with mainstream society. Wertmüller also conveys through Tunin the message that a man can possess great strength and depth of character regardless of his bloodlines, his shabby appearance, or his profession in life. These gender representations directly oppose Riefenstahl's representations of masculinity and femininity in Triumph of the Will and Olympia, which conveyed Fascist ideals. Wertmüller's political message also opposes the political messages conveyed in Riefenstahl's films, as Wertmüller advocated anarchism over Fascism.

Wertmüller's ending proves that love and anarchy cannot coexist for these characters; they must choose between the two and ultimately leave one behind. Tunin cannot choose his love for Tripolina and still carry out his anarchist mission; he must

choose between running away with her or sacrifice his life for the good of his political cause. Salomé must also choose; for the majority of the film she chooses anarchy over love, loving Tunin but also realizing she cannot distract him from his mission. In the very end, however, Salomé cannot deny her empathy for Tripolina's love for Tunin, and so she begs Tunin to run away. She realizes that Tunin cannot have both love and lead the lie of an anarchist, just as she cannot. Her lover was murdered by fascists, and she turned to prostitution, working for the anarchist cause in secret. She turned away from the love and adoration she felt for Tunin, knowing that it was either the path of anarchy or the path of love, but never both.

Prostitution: A Metaphor for Fascism

Wertmüller isn't saying that women who do not resist Fascism are resigned to being prostitutes. Instead, she is making the comparison between the kind of work prostitutes deliver, serving men sexually, and the kind of work individuals are resigned to when under the rule of Fascism. Prostitutes earn their living by satisfying the needs, wants, and desires of men. They must put these men's needs ahead of their own in order to survive. It is the same with individuals living under Fascist rule as the well-being of the State means more than individual well-being. These individuals are under complete control of Fascist ideologies, forced to put the needs of the Fascist government ahead of their own needs and beliefs. Wertmüller is comparing the negative, restrictive aspects of prostitution to the controlling ways of Fascism, showing that prostitutes must adhere to the requests of their clients, while people living under Fascist rule must adhere to the desires of their government. Riefenstahl's representations of strong German women are, in essence, no better off than Wertmüller's prostitutes, as both must ignore their own

desires in order to appease someone else. It can be suffocating for one to live like that, but it is deserved if the individual accepts such politics by refusing to stand up and work for change. Salomé refuses to accept Fascism, yet her ultimate choice is to try and convince Tunin to abandon his political mission. In this way, Salomé will have to continue living under Fascist rule because she has chosen to empathize with Tripolina instead of remaining devoted to the mission at hand.

The prostitution also represents a kind of ugliness that traditional society often tries to ignore, a marginal part of society that Mussolini's Fascist government would rather not exist. This ugly, grotesque piece of Wertmüller's film conveys Salomé's already ostracized role and her desire to stand apart from Fascism. Wertmüller is making the point that seemingly grotesque people still retain invaluable worth as individuals, as human beings, and they still contribute tremendously to society and the world in which we live. They deserve equal respect regardless of their station in life or their political beliefs. Women who fall outside the narrow realm of feminine stereotypes can still portray heroic qualities and live courageous lives.

Wertmüller vs. Riefenstahl

Wertmüller's work clearly goes against the political significance and messages conveyed in Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will. Riefenstahl juxtaposes images of Aryan soldiers against cloudy backdrops, insinuating the soldiers' ideal form and almost superhuman strength. Her female and male representations in Olympia portray the physical fitness and strength of such disciplined athletes, whereas Wertmüller's characters display an inner strength that serves to defy, rather than reinforce, Fascism. Riefenstahl's portrayals are of female athletes who demonstrate the same strength, vigor,

and capabilities as their male counterparts in Olympia. In this way, these female athletes hold their own and can compete with the athletic performances of males. Wertmüller's female characters compete with their male counterparts by going against traditional patriarchal order. Their strength creates defiance of societal mores and of the government. Her characters challenge ideologies similar to those reinforced in Triumph of the Will.

Wertmüller describes some of her political beliefs in her words during an interview with Ernest Ferlita. She says

An imposed order is stifling. We have some terrible proofs of this. I've always been a person of the left...What I hope to express in my films is my great faith in the possibility of man becoming human. I have to set man up against society because I believe that the concept of the masses is a dangerous thing. It frightens me. The masses live according to the law of the anthill. I believe the greatest danger for man lies in this kind of anthill existence. Therefore the greatest defense for man, with all his intelligence, is to understand that *he* is society (Ferlita and May 79-85).

Wertmüller set Tunin up against society, demonstrating his will to change society and the inner strength that gives him such courage. Tunin is part of society, regardless of how he doesn't portray Fascist ideals, and he bravely works to overturn such ideals through his anarchist mission.

Salomé

An interesting fact is that Salomé, historically, was Herod's stepdaughter. In exchange for performing a dance for him, Herod promised Salomé anything she

requested. Her mother, Herodias, was angry at St. John the Baptist for speaking ill of her marriage, so she encouraged Salomé to request his execution. Salomé followed her mother's orders and requested the head of St. John the Baptist be brought to her (http://womenshistory.about.com/library/bio/blbio_salome.htm).

This is a very negative and suspicious historical connotation of the name "Salomé." Wertmüller named her lead character after this historical figure to draw a parallel between Salomé's request for St. John the Baptist's head and her character's request that Tunin complete his assassination of Mussolini, killing him and thereby sacrificing his own life for the political cause that was Salomé's sole interest. Salomé's dedication to the political cause was portrayed as her sole purpose in life throughout the film, and even when she begs Tunin to change his mind, she does this only for Tripolina, not because of her own love for Tunin. Wertmüller's naming of this character is not representative of Salomé's evil nature, or some kind of comparison between St. John the Baptist and Tunin, or St. John the Baptist and Mussolini, but instead is a parallel between two significant requests. Both Salomé figures request the death of a man in power, St. John the Baptist and Mussolini, and Wertmüller's Salomé is also requesting the death of an innocent, unknown man, Tunin. Yet Salomé's character differs significantly from the historical figure because her request that Tunin assassinate Mussolini and sacrifice his own life is made based on her belief that it is for the greater good of Italy, whereas the historical figure requests St. John the Baptist's head on a foolish whim, not a significant political conviction.

Wertmüller's Film Techniques and Meanings

Wertmüller's use of color in Love and Anarchy emphasizes Tunin's plight, along with Salomé's sorrowful past. The dining room of the brothel is painted blood red, not only foreshadowing Tunin's future bloodshed in the end, but also representing the love and lust present throughout the film. The color red is overwhelming in the dinner scene with Tunin amongst all the prostitutes, so much so that it drowns out the characters themselves. Wertmüller is making the point that the characters are involved in something much larger and more significant than themselves. The color red in this scene contrast sharply with the easy, appealing colors of the countryside as Salomé, Tunin, Tripolina, and Spatoletti (a high-ranking officer for Mussolini) take a drive outside the city so that Salomé can gather information on Mussolini's whereabouts during the public parade. Wertmüller presents the countryside as Tunin's safe haven, while the brothel and the city represent the stifling entrapment of Tunin as he must choose one of two destinies.

Wertmüller also frames Tunin against overbearing sculptures and buildings, and even against Spatoletti himself, to emphasize Tunin's small role in society versus his massive undertaking of Mussolini's assassination. Tunin develops throughout the film as he begins by avenging his friend's death, but eventually completes his anarchist mission to avenge his friend but *also* to do something great in his life. As Salomé and Tripolina fight over Tunin's possible life or definite death, Salomé screams "Tunin would rather die as a dog, than live as one!" This statement accurately summarizes Tunin's motives in the end as he dies, but does so having attempted to change the world in which he lives. He dies not having settled for the injustices served him by society and by the government. Wertmüller demonstrates his dignity in dying this way.

Meanwhile, Wertmüller challenges traditional male and female roles in Love and Anarchy as she presents prostitutes as hardcore, working women who enjoy their work and take pleasure in the fact that they're good at what they do. She dismisses society's norms as her characters push the boundaries of what is deemed appropriate. Wertmüller includes a sequence of shots in Love and Anarchy where she juxtaposes various shots of the prostitutes when they first go to work in the morning. Her editing here is rapid, as the shots follow one right after another with few seconds in between. The prostitutes are shown laughing and having a good time getting ready for their clients. The quick successions of shots along with the positive expressions of the actresses give the impression of an adrenalin rush as excitement builds throughout this sequence.

Wertmüller does not judge her characters here; she shows instead that they are not ashamed of their work, but rather prepare for their day with smiles. At the same time, she is not condoning the lives of these prostitutes, but rather she is conveying their independence from traditional female roles in society. She does not sugarcoat the hard lives they lead, but equally represents both the advantages and disadvantages of their profession. Her film doesn't question the morality of these prostitutes, but rather accepts them. This doesn't mean that their roles in society don't come with a painful price or that there are no consequences, because there are. But, Wertmüller doesn't present judgments of these characters; she doesn't have them develop throughout the story so that by the end they are changed, reborn women. They remain the same throughout the whole of the film, each of them worthy of freedom and respect from society. Wertmüller presents their story as though they are real people with both positive and negative aspects to their role in society. There is truthfulness to Wertmüller's film as there are positive and negative

aspects to everyone's role in society; prostitutes are no different. These are the strong impressions that come across as one watches the film.

Feminist Ellen Willis remarked on Wertmüller and her work saying that Wertmüller "is not only a female woman hater – a type that has actually surpassed the Jewish anti-Semite in popularity – but a woman hater who pretends to be a feminist...she has what amounts to an obsessional conviction that women have no souls," (Ferlita and May 26). Willis is suggesting that Wertmüller doesn't give her female characters any sense of depth, and like other critics, that she doesn't portray any compassion or empathy for them. I didn't see this kind of representation at all in Love and Anarchy. Wertmüller doesn't create excuses for her characters, but she doesn't leave them hanging high and dry either. She represents who they are in a straightforward style without telling the audience we should judge her characters, the choices they make, or the lives they lead. Perhaps Willis feels this way about Wertmüller's work due to the stark reality of her portrayal of the brothel and the women in it. These women are raw, and some very disgusting not only in mannerisms but physical appearance as well, and Wertmüller isn't afraid to show these sides of prostitution. These aren't always appealing women and lifestyles, but she provides a complete picture for the audience to consider. And grotesqueness can be beautiful in its own right; there is a freedom that comes with individuality and not conforming to mainstream society. There isn't any character development for Salomé and Tripolina, they end as they begin. Wertmüller portrays both women's sentimental sides as they each do everything in their power to save Tunin's life and turn his destiny around. The kind of emotion evoked does not represent soulless

women, but rather hard women who lead hard lives, but have depth of character nonetheless.

Wertmüller spoke of the female characters in Love and Anarchy and said “These are very strong women; they instinctively rebel against militarism and the patriarchal order. Why are these women never mentioned by the feminist critics?” (Ferlita and May 26). This parallels what I discussed earlier. Wertmüller’s women are symbols of strength and integrity as they refuse to limit themselves to the rules imposed on them by society, the government, and above all else, men. These women are not domestic cutouts representing Italian norms and traditions, but rather defy these norms in search of freedom and purpose. These female characters must submit to the needs and desires of men in order to make their living, and in this way are similar to how individuals must submit to Fascism if they are not willing to challenge it. On the other hand, these female characters rebel against patriarchal order by refusing to be some man’s wife, by refusing to be domesticated, and by refusing to accept the roles offered them by society. Salomé rebels against militarism and exerts her feminine attributes over Spatoletti’s character to get the information she needs to support her political cause. She outsmarts Spatoletti and really is the one controlling him, although she leads him to believe that he has control over her. Her sense of justice leads her character to fight for her political beliefs; she fights passionately, her convictions stemming from a strong sense of self. Salomé knows who she is and what she stands for, and does not relinquish this knowledge. This is how Salomé is a symbol of strength and integrity.

Love and Anarchy is just one example of Wertmüller’s expressive films and the way in which she portrays her characters. She writes her films with pointed political

reasons and displays her convictions for people to view around the world. Although intense, her films are not overbearing in the sense that, although they stand to move audiences emotionally and psychologically, they do not force Wertmüller's political convictions upon the viewers. She leaves room for audience members to consider the presentation of her film and to decide what they think about it.

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Penny Marshall: Shooting Gender Stereotypes

Penny Marshall is a contemporary film director with years of experience acting and directing. Her films challenge gender stereotypes with female characters that live non-traditional lives. Her characters do not conform to domesticated versions of how women should act or what kind of work they should do. At the same time, Marshall sometimes uses female stereotypes to reinforce the idea that women are expected to look and act a certain way, even when they challenge female stereotypes. In this sense, she shoots her characters portraying female stereotypes, while shooting these stereotypes down. As a director, Marshall knows how to effectively work with actors to get tremendous performances from them because she's been in their shoes before. Her films aim to entertain. They are direct, charming, and intensely funny as Marshall's personal sense of humor is inserted into every one of her films. Her filmmaking techniques are easy to process because she takes things as they are, presenting her stories logically without a lot of fuss or special effects.

In this chapter, I offer a reading of Awakenings as I discuss my disagreement with the criticism that the film oversimplifies the patient's illness, and that Marshall sugarcoats the seriousness of the disease. Marshall's film is honest and compassionate as emotions emanate from the core of this story. Marshall does not misrepresent the main character's illness, nor does she sugarcoat the harsh realities of the disease. Her film recognizes the agony patients with this disease go through, and she presents the perspective of these patients to her audience. These patients are viewed as lifeless, soulless, non-gendered beings when they are in catatonic states. They are not treated as people with gendered identities. Marshall allows her audience to experience what it feels

like to be one of these patients, as their pain and entrapment is illustrated through the delicate musical score, significant close-ups, and tremendous acting. Marshall represents the differences between able bodies and disabled bodies, and how disabled people are not really seen for the individuals they are. Marshall also recognizes how male patients react differently when they awake compared with female patients. Female patients are devastated about their appearances, and feel an extra sense of loss because of this, while the male patients are not concerned over their looks. Marshall conveys subtle meaning here about society's expectations of women, and how they are expected to always age with grace and beauty.

Also, Penny Marshall is significant because she is a recognized, well-respected film director in Hollywood, and she belongs to that relatively small group of successful female film directors. Her representations of women challenge feminine stereotypes and societal boundaries in her films A League of Their Own (1992), and Riding in Cars with Boys (2001). These films contain women who go against society's expectations of them by relinquishing traditional female roles, and instead create new roles for themselves. Both films contain female characters that disappoint family and society by taking alternative life paths. Marshall displays female stereotypes in A League of Their Own in order to show what society expects of women. She portrays these stereotypes and rejects them simultaneously. I shall explore these films and their meaning in this chapter as well.

Biography

Carole Penny Marshall was born on October 15, 1942, in the Bronx, New York. Her father, Tony Marshall, made industrial films (film is in the family). Apparently, Marshall was a little rascal as a child, always sneaking into movie theaters desperate for a

chance to see the latest flick (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001508/bio>). This was in between the dance lessons she took from her mother. Her mother formed a group entitled the “Marshalettes,” and they won a competition on Ted Mack’s television program, The Original Amateur Hour. The group then went onto appear on the Jack Gleason Show in 1956 (Current Biography Yearbook 1980 242). Her secondary education was at a private all girls’ high school in New York, and she went onto higher education at the University of New Mexico for a period just short of three years. Marshall got pregnant and left school to marry Michael Henry in 1961. Marshall gave birth to a daughter, Tracy. They were eventually divorced and Marshall moved to Hollywood in 1967, where she began work performing secretarial duties by day, while taking acting and improvisation classes at night (Current Biography Yearbook 1980 243).

Her older brother, Garry Marshall, cast her in his movie How Sweet It Is! (1968) where Marshall acted in her first real role (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001508/bio>). Around this time, Marshall met her future husband, Rob Reiner, at The Committee, which was a Los Angeles repertory theater group. Surprisingly, the two had actually lived across the street from each other in the Bronx as children, but never realized it. They were married in 1971, and both continued their work in the television and film industries.

A few years later, in 1975, Marshall appeared on the popular television show, Happy Days. Laverne and Shirley began shortly after this appearance as the American audience became smitten with Marshall and Cindy Williams. They had a cute, comedic image, and their characters’ youthful independence stirred laughter in households throughout the nation. The show continued for seven and a half years (Current Biography Yearbook 1980 242-245).

Marshall began directing in 1983 with Jumpin' Jack Flash, which didn't receive incredible reviews, and wasn't a box office hit (<http://www.tribute.ca/DIRECTORS/BIOS/4854.htm>). However, her next film, Big (1988), was the first film directed by a woman to ever make more than \$100 million at the box office (Current Biography Yearbook 1992 381-384). This was Marshall's breakthrough into the world of recognized film directors. Tom Hanks' character is fun-loving and unforgettable as the young boy who wished he was big, and then got his dream. It is the epitome of "Be careful what you wish for, because it just might come true."

Marshall's films, like those mentioned above, appeal to a wide audience as her material is suitable for all ages, and her variety of characters covers such a range that every audience member can relate with at least one of them. As for film techniques, her shots are direct, usually framing the lead actor or actress in the center of the shot. She relies on shot, reverse-shot, and over the shoulder shots to convey the characters' perspectives and emotions. She uses key lighting on her lead characters to illuminate their face and features, and she doesn't use shadows often.

Awakenings: Individuals and the Objectified/Dehumanized Body

Before the patients in Awakenings come out of their catatonic states, they are not treated as human beings by the doctors and nurses. They are not given individual attention, and no one speaks to them with any sort of dignity or respect. They are treated as nothing more than immobile bodies that sit lifeless in wheel chairs. They all wear plain clothing, which is not designated as feminine or masculine, and they wear no gendered accessories. These patients have no gendered images whatsoever; they are all viewed the

same, regardless of sex, as lifeless, disabled beings who really do nothing more than take up space in a hospital ward. Marshall is conveying the message that these patients have lost out not only on years of their lives, but also have missed out on society's acknowledgement of them, which includes their gendered images. They have been denied gender identities for the majority of their lives, and so it is shocking when they suddenly come out of their catatonic state and must learn what it means to be a man or woman alive and living in society. Marshall's representation of the lack of gender identities for these individuals is painful to watch, as something as intimate and personal as what it truly means to be a man or a woman is denied to them.

Awakenings endured some severe criticism when it came out. For example, film critic Janet Maslin of the New York Times wrote an article that was released on December 20, 1990, which criticized Marshall and Steven Zaillian, who wrote the screenplay, "for prettifying many of the uglier aspects of Leonard's real life 'awakenings,'" (Current Biography Yearbook 1992 383). Maslin continued on, writing

If Dr. Sack's descriptions make impossible-sounding transformations sound real, Ms. Marshall's film very often has the opposite effect. Her Awakenings is a fairy tale forged uneasily out of facts, despite the facts' overwhelming strangeness and weight. Awakenings both sentimentalizes its story and oversimplifies it beyond recognition (Current Biography Yearbook 1992 383).

My reading of Awakenings disagrees with Maslin's point of view. Marshall doesn't prettify the uglier aspects of Leonard's "awakenings," but rather shows the pain and horror of such a debilitating disease. In the scene where Leonard insists on taking a walk on his own, Marshall portrays Leonard vehemently resisting security by engaging in

physically violent acts of defense. Leonard is held against his will, and becomes extremely defensive. This scene coupled with the following scene where Leonard gets the other patients wound up and working against the doctors clearly illustrates this man's intense pain as thirty years of his life have been stolen from him. He has every right to be angry, and Marshall doesn't sugarcoat this anger. Leonard even becomes violent with Dr. Sayer (Robin Williams), pushing him to the ground.

Leonard's relapse is real and painful, and the audience is shown this bitter fall into catatonia through Marshall's close-ups of De Niro's eyes and facial expressions. His will to stay mobile and awake can't possibly win out against this eventual relapse.

The patients that awaken out of this catatonic state have all lost years of their lives, and some have lost family members, spouses, and even children. This pain of loss is portrayed differently for men and women. The female characters are upset and angry, as are the male characters, but the women are also devastated about their looks, their old appearances. One older female patient begs for some hair dye and makeup. She can't believe how old she has become, waking up with a head full of grey hair and wrinkles. Another older woman remarks that she doesn't know how to act as anything other than a twenty two year old, since that is when she entered a catatonic state. She says "I have no experience being any older than that," and this statement is poignant and touching as Marshall pulls in for a close-up of the woman's bewildered facial expression. One of the male patients remarks that he feels old, but this is more in reference to the fact that while he has been sleeping his parents have died and his wife has become very ill. Appearance seems more important to the female patients. Marshall is conveying some important messages about female images in society. She's saying that women's appearances are

emphasized in society; women are supposed to keep up their beauty to the very end, regardless of old age. This goes along with the old cliché that a woman's hair is her "crowning glory." Marshall portrays this with the old woman asking for hair dye. Marshall reminds her audience that society places incredible expectations on women and the way they *should* look, while these expectations are much lower and more realistic for men.

As the film progresses, Leonard's health once again begins to deteriorate. Randy Newman, the composer, uses soft piano music to accentuate the fragile moments left to Leonard before he resumes immobility. This soft piano music accompanies the goodbye scene between Leonard and Paula, as he informs her not to visit him anymore to save her from seeing him fall apart. He realizes he will never be with her, physically or as companions. This is a highly emotional scene as Marshall relies upon the identification between the audience and Leonard's character. The audience wants Leonard to not only succeed in his medical treatment, but to also receive the love he has been denied his entire life because he has been catatonic. As this opportunity for love finally slips from Leonard's grasp, becoming unattainable, his inevitable catatonic fate is sealed, and Marshall's slow pans and close-ups, Newman's music, and De Niro's acting all come together beautifully as Leonard's pain transcends the movie screen to touch the heart of every audience member.

Maslin might have thought that Marshall oversimplifies the story because key events do happen quickly in the film. For instance, as soon as Leonard wakes up, he is moving, speaking, and writing; he is communicating well at once, and his recovery seems a bit rushed since he has been catatonic for thirty years. I can see how Maslin might have

judged these scenes to be oversimplified and unrealistic, yet although I can understand *how* she might have thought this, I do not agree with her reading of the film. Marshall, like any director, is faced with the challenge of editing; fitting the real time into reel time. This compression must be accomplished without losing the essence and flow of the storyline. Marshall may have quickened Leonard's "awakening," but she did it well, giving her audience a complete version of the story while cutting the reel time to 121 minutes. One can follow the story easily, and although Maslin thought that Marshall oversimplified the facts, I believe Marshall actually presented her audience with an accurate description of the facts. The truth is that the medical reasons for why patients having suffered from encephalitis later suffered in catatonic states, and why the medication used on Bells Palsy patients was able to "awaken" these individuals for short periods of time, were not completely understood. Doctors wrestled with medical explanations, searching for connections that might link one disease to another. The "why" of such catatonia was not understood completely by doctors in reality, so how could Marshall propose medical explanations beyond their expert findings in her film? How could she present this story in medical terms and still expect a layman audience to understand it and relate with the characters? She couldn't have, so she presented the facts as accurately as possible considering that even doctors cannot completely explain such happenings. When medical occurrences cannot be fully explained, some choose to call these events "miracles" or "miraculous in nature." The audience is able to take this hopeful perspective from the film, as Marshall balances the emphasis on both Dr.Sayer and Leonard's characters. As Dr.Sayer gave Leonard his life back, even for a short time,

Leonard showed Dr.Sayer how to really live, how not to take things for granted, and how to be close with other people. Marshall's film defines compassion.

Film critic Stanley Kauffman from the New Republic wrote a review of Awakenings on January 7th and 14th in 1991. His review was positive saying "She (Marshall) cares for nothing but presenting her story straightforwardly, without tricks or adduced 'style'...And, quite obviously, she knows how to work with actors," (Current Biography Yearbook 1992 383). Also, Pete Travers from Rolling Stone wrote "and yet Awakenings works. With Dr.Sacks as technical advisor, the film stays devastatingly true to the nature of the illness. Marshall's direction shows the patients' situation...with pitiless clarity. In only her third film, Marshall joins the front ranks of directors. She draws exceptional performances," (Current Biography Yearbook 1992 383). My reading of Marshall's film coincides with both Kauffman and Travers. As I said earlier, Marshall's film is very compassionate, and Travers is accurate when he says the film does not pity the patients. Marshall encourages her audience to identify with these patients as she shows the lives they led, the people they were, the family they had, before becoming ill. There is no pity for these patients as Marshall's representation of such an illness forces the audience to ask themselves, "How would I react if decades of my life had been stolen away from me?" Awakenings challenges the way society often ignores disabled people, reminding us that every individual has something unique to contribute to society. Marshall shows that disabled bodies are not lifeless and that the person inside that body cannot be forgotten about or pushed aside. She reminds us that regardless of their bodies' limitations, these individuals retain gendered identities and personalities that should be recognized and appreciated by society.

Awakenings (1990) is based on Oliver Sack's book. The film is based on the true story of a man trapped in a catatonic state, after having survived encephalitis as a child. The film was nominated for three Academy Awards: Best Picture, Best Actor (Robert De Niro), and Best Screenplay. Robert De Niro (Leonard) and Robin Williams (Dr. Sayer) are nothing short of outstanding; their performances will you to believe in the power of the human mind and what it can overcome. Marshall was not nominated for Best Director, and although she wasn't troubled by this, others in the industry questioned why she hadn't been nominated. Some even suggested that Marshall had been discriminated against because of her gender. Marshall, however, disagreed. She reminded people that Steven Spielberg wasn't nominated for Best Director in 1986, for The Color Purple, even though the film itself was nominated for eleven Academy Awards, including Best Picture, just like Awakenings. Marshall said "I'm not saying I wouldn't have liked to be nominated. It would have been neat, but I'm not going to kill myself. Maybe it was because I'm a woman, but I don't know, and I'm not going to take up the cause," (Current Biography Yearbook 1992 384). By pointing out that Spielberg, a man, wasn't nominated for Best Director for his film that was nominated for more awards than Awakenings, Marshall proved her belief that not being nominated had nothing to do with gender discrimination.

Marshall Uses Stereotypes to Criticize Society's Expectations of Women

Following Awakenings, Marshall made A League of Their Own, which some criticized as being anti-feminist and condescending to women. Critic David Denby from New York magazine wrote an article that came out on July 20, 1992. He wrote "Marshall has revived women's baseball...only to condescend to it," (Current Biography Yearbook

1992 384). A League of Their Own does rely on some feminine stereotypes, such as the lead characters Dottie and Kit, played by Geena Davis and Lori Petty, being not only talented athletes, but also portraying Barbie doll figures. The female characters in this film manage to maintain their cute, sassy appearances, regardless of skinned knees and dirty elbows. Marshall portrays these female characters as stereotypically beautiful in their cute uniforms, because she is showing how society still expected women to be pretty, even when they were covered in dirt. In this sense, Marshall is disagreeing with society's expectations of women by illustrating feminine stereotypes. Marshall appeals to her audience through the big picture – the fact that women are playing baseball, and they're extraordinary at it. She challenges traditional female roles through her characters by having them assert their physical prowess and domination on the baseball field. Marshall's female characters prove their worthiness in skill and determination, as they surpass society's expectations of them, creating new roles and goals for themselves. Instead of staying in the kitchen, or even finding jobs in factories while waiting for their men to return home from war, Marshall's female characters make room for themselves in the world of sports dominated by men. And, when their husbands do come back from war, these women still fight to play ball. They fight to retain their place in sports, refusing to be pushed aside by men. Marshall's biography from MSN says "Marshall offered up a sentimental, funny, and ebullient look at the women who kept professional baseball alive when all the young men were off fighting during WWII in A League of Their Own (1992)" (<http://movies.msn.com/celebs/celeb.aspx>). I agree with this film review, yet Marshall goes beyond the representation of women keeping baseball alive during the war. She shows their desire to keep it alive *after* the war, which proves to be

much more difficult as men expect her female characters to move back into the home once the war is over. The film is true to the way things were during and following WWII.

Riding in Cars with Boys (2001) is another of Marshall's films that takes a hard look at society's expectations of young women in the 60's and 70's. The lead character, Beverley, gets pregnant at fifteen and is made to feel like a failure from her disappointed father. Beverley begins her family early in life, taking a very different path than most other fifteen year old girls at that time. She also kicks her husband out of the house because of his drug use, and chooses to be a single mother, working full-time, which goes against society's idea of the domestic housewife and the age that society deems appropriate for motherhood. Throughout all of this, Beverley remains determined to get her college degree and write her book one day. Society's odds are bet against Beverley, and Marshall accurately portrays the intense hardships she goes through trying to raise her son on her own, while still managing to accomplish her own dreams.

Films such as A League of Their Own and Riding in Cars with Boys work to broaden the scope of women's roles in society, giving women greater freedom to take alternate life paths without being constricted or judged by society.

Conclusion

Penny Marshall's main purpose is to entertain her audience. She shoots her films using female stereotypes in order to show the restrictions these stereotypes place on women. She portrays them while simultaneously subverting them. This is evident in A League of Their Own. She focuses on images of the able vs. disabled body in Awakenings, illustrating that all bodies are special and should be acknowledged and appreciated. Society should not confine people to societal expectations. These individuals

should never be judged based on their physical limitations. Marshall works to disable gender stereotypes and broaden the scope of what is deemed acceptable to society.

Her films cover a wide range of subjects and issues with both male and female characters, each one different from the last. Marshall isn't an auteur with an obvious, recognizable style. She simply makes good films that are extremely entertaining. Marshall's gift is being able to find the sweet moments of laughter in any situation, and this simply wonderful comedy can be found in all of her films. Anton Furst, the production designer on Awakenings, speaks highly of Marshall and described her personality as the "wonderful insecurity of a truly creative person," (Current Biography Yearbook 1992 384). This quote tells us that Penny Marshall is always thinking, constantly trying new things with her filmmaking. She plays with various subject matters, drawing heartfelt performances from her actors in every film she makes.

Marshall's films speak for themselves as one can identify with her contemporary characters and their lives. Her films are not far-fetched by any means. Her films are always, undoubtedly entertaining with moments of laughter sure to cause belly aches.

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