

HILARY RADNER

The New Woman's Film



FEMME-CENTRIC MOVIES
FOR SMART CHICKS

ROUTLEDGE

THE NEW WOMAN'S FILM

With the chick flick arguably in decline, film scholars may well ask: what has become of the woman's film? Little attention has been paid to the proliferation of films, often from the independent sector, that do not sit comfortably in either the category of popular culture or that of high art—films that are perhaps the corollary of the middle-brow novel, or “smart-chick flicks.” This book seeks to fill this void by focusing on the steady stream of films about and for women that emerge out of independent American and European cinema, and that are designed to address an international female audience. The new woman's film as a genre includes narratives with strong ties to the woman's film of classical Hollywood while constituting a new distinctive cycle of female-centered films that in many ways continue the project of second-wave feminism, albeit in a modified form.

Topics addressed include *The Bridges of Madison County* (Clint Eastwood, 1995); the feature-length films of Nicole Holofcener, 1996–2013; the film roles of Tilda Swinton; *Rachel Getting Married* (Jonathan Demme, 2008); *Blue Jasmine* (Woody Allen, 2013); *Frances Ha* (Noah Baumbach, 2012); *Belle* (Amma Asante, 2013); *Fifty Shades of Grey* (Sam Taylor-Johnson, 2015); and Jane Campion's *Top of the Lake* (Sundance Channel, 2013–).

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Femme-Centric Movies
for Smart Chicks

Hilary Radner

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For Charlotte and Roy, who gave me a copy of Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape* for Christmas in 1976, the first step in a long journey that eventually led to this volume.



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INTRODUCTION

What Do Women Watch?

This volume evolved as a consequence of my curiosity about the widely held view that the influence of female stars and audiences—though significant within classical Hollywood, a period known as “the studio era”—declined in the second half of the twentieth century.¹ A common assumption among scholars and critics is that, with the rise of the media conglomerates, culminating in the 1990s, resulting in what is now routinely referred to as Conglomerate Hollywood, young male viewers became the primary target for most film productions in theatrical release,² with men and a masculine perspective dominating the film industry today in ways that are well documented, a position with which I have no reason to disagree.³ This volume will argue, however, that the woman’s picture of classical Hollywood did not disappear. Its legacy manifests itself in screen narratives for women produced, distributed and consumed, for the most part, at the fringes of an industry defined by the large, diversified multi-national corporations that control the most profitable sectors of the contemporary entertainment industrial complex. Although some studios have survived into the twenty-first century, they are owned by these multi-national corporations (which I will henceforth designate as “the Conglomerates”), which have investments across a range of subsidiaries, including television networks as well as more recent global distribution franchises that exploit new media platforms and other types of financial interests unrelated to the entertainment industry.⁴

Nonetheless, since the mid-1990s, the independent sector has produced a steady stream of films about and for women, films such as *Walking and Talking* (Nicole Holofcener, 1996) or *Sue* (Amos Kollek, 1997), often helmed by male directors, but including a number of female directors (most of whom do not receive the recognition that they deserve), to an extent that has not been adequately acknowledged until now. Being designed to address an international female

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audience, this impressive succession of creative outputs invites a reconsideration of the woman's film of classical Hollywood, together with its ongoing legacy. Indeed, a number of film scholars—such as Linda Badley, Claire Perkins and Michele Schreiber—have commenced this task; however, much remains to be done, particularly with a view to the ways in which these productions are informed by second-wave feminism as one of the significant cultural forces marking the second half of the twentieth century.⁵ In this book, I shall argue that these “little movies,” which are often produced and distributed below the radar of Conglomerate Hollywood, constitute a genre that might be productively grouped together under the term “the new woman's film.”⁶

The term “the new woman's film” was introduced by feminist film scholars in the 1980s to distinguish films like *An Unmarried Woman* (Paul Mazursky, 1978), as well as what was also designated as women's counter cinema, from the “woman's picture,” or the woman's film of classical Hollywood. It has also been used sporadically by subsequent generations of feminist film scholars to describe contemporary cinema for women in opposition to classical Hollywood cinema for that same audience. What I propose here is both more general and more specific as a means of designating a line-up of films for the female viewer over twenty-five that emerge subsequent to the demise of the studio system, but which, in terms of a focus on a female protagonist and her concerns, continue the tradition of the woman's picture established by classical Hollywood.

Significantly, with regard to understanding their place within the media industry, these productions appeared as a consequence of “an independent film movement, which also caught on in 1989–90, just as conglomeration was heating up.” Unlike the blockbuster, however, what film scholar Tom Schatz describes as “the indie surge” was not “a studio-induced phenomenon.”⁷ This surge largely consisted of small productions that fell into what Schatz describes as a “third class of film,” those that are neither “big-budget blockbusters” nor “niche-market fare . . . with the capacity to go wide.” They usually “cost less than \$10 million—frequently less than \$5 million—with minuscule marketing budgets that increase if and when a particular film performs.”⁸ Among the films discussed in this volume, most fall into this category. Exceptions include Clint Eastwood's *Bridges of Madison County* (1995), which benefited from a long-standing “alliance” between “Eastwood's Malpasco Production and Warner Bros., a relationship that dates back to the 1970s.”⁹ *Fifty Shades of Grey* (Sam Taylor-Johnson, 2015), the second pointed counter-example, also distributed in wide release by Focus Features in partnership with Universal Pictures, inspired what was described as “a bidding war,” when the author of the novel on which the film was based and her agent sought to sell the rights. The novel, the first of three, had enjoyed a phenomenal success, while also promising a possible franchise, demonstrating the importance of pre-established awareness and other purely “industrial” considerations in determining the viability of a particular project and its eventual success.¹⁰

These two films constitute, however, important exceptions in a line-up of small-budget “little movies,” a format typically associated with the new woman’s film. These little movies take up many of the issues that had earlier motivated the woman’s film of classical Hollywood. Notably, the new woman’s film shares with the woman’s film of classical Hollywood “its placing of a marginalized social figure (the woman) at the center of the universe.”¹¹ The actress who plays this “woman” will have a crucial effect not only on the success of the film but also on the project’s ability to attract financial backing. The audience’s ability to identify with the world and the protagonist offered by the film, depends crucially upon the female star and her capacity to evoke an emotional response in the viewer.

These films, then, like most independent productions, in the words of film scholar Tom Schatz, “[rely] heavily on the mobility of top stars who are willing to work on indie projects for far less than their studio rates.”¹² Female as well as male stars have sought legitimacy within the indie sector, especially as they have aged, suggesting how Conglomerate Hollywood has neglected older men, and men who do not fit a particular stereotype of masculinity, as well as women over the age of twenty-five, in turn overlooking audiences who might identify with these actresses and actors, seeking a viewing experience that deviates from the rigid formulaic norms promoted by blockbusters. Conglomerate Hollywood understands its audience in terms of coarse and undifferentiated binaries of male and female, and viewers under and over twenty-five years of age, producing screen narratives that in the main reflect these dichotomized categories. In contrast, the “little movie” (little usually in terms of budget and audience) has sought to address and mobilize the shifting terrains of contemporary sexual expectations in various ways, while remaining essentially conservative in its notions of human relations and its emphasis on family and parenthood. The category “little movie” includes not only films that embody a contemporary corollary to the woman’s film of classical Hollywood but also the re-invention of the “male weepie,” in which masculinity, as well as femininity, are frequently called into question.

Although the female directors of these films, as well as the female stars associated with the genre, have often described themselves as feminists, as a rule their perspective avoids the ideological thrust of second-wave feminism. While frequently rejecting the centrality of consumerism, the new woman’s film advocates iterations of feminism that illustrate the provisional and fragmentary nature of human experience in which relationships, attachments, in particular those constructed by family ties, remain a principle concern. Typically, the heroine is not necessarily constrained by the same conventions that defined gender roles before the advent of second-wave feminism, though the patterns established by heterosexual marriage remain the predominant models governing her life, tying her to her forebears in classical Hollywood.

This volume does not seek to offer an exhaustive survey of the new woman’s film. Rather, it proposes to look closely at the genesis and the evolution of the woman’s film in the twenty-first century by focusing on a select number of case

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studies that represent the variety of different categories of film that constitute the phenomenon. Chapter one addresses the nature of the new woman's film and its relations to the chick flick, laying the ground for a discussion of the new woman's film as an emerging cycle that continues the concerns of the woman's film of classical Hollywood. Chapter two identifies the defining characteristics of the smart-chick film, a new cycle, or variation on the new woman's film, that appeared in the mid-1990s and continues to develop in the twenty-first century, positing *Rachel Getting Married* (Jonathan Demme, 2009) as its exemplum. This chapter explores how a noted male *auteur* director exploits an established "chick flick" formula and star to create a personal film that nonetheless appeals to female audiences, underlining the contributions of male directors to the genre. *Rachel Getting Married* illustrates how an old guard *auteur*, Jonathan Demme, has turned to a version of the new woman's film as a means of making a movie that falls outside the purview of mainstream Hollywood, capitalizing, in particular, on the reputation of a "chick flick" star, Anne Hathaway, whom he casts against type. It thus offers a template for a mode of production that characterizes the new woman's film.

Chapter three shows how the new woman's film emerges as a continuation of the woman's film of classical Hollywood, while foreshadowing its hybridization into the smart-chick film described in chapter two. An analysis of *Bridges of Madison County* (Clint Eastwood, 1995) demonstrates how such hybridization was already beginning to take place in the later stages of the twentieth century. Although in terms of its date of release *Bridges of Madison County* comes prior to *Rachel Getting Married*, I have chosen to place this discussion after the examination of Demme's more recent film, given that it is easier to understand the nature of the synthesis between the woman's film of classical Hollywood and the smart-chick film once the lineaments of the latter have been clearly identified. As a contemporary romantic melodrama, *The Bridges of Madison County* takes up a theme (adultery) that has preoccupied the woman's film throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. The success of the film suggests both the vitality of the woman's film at the end of the twentieth century and the directions that it would take in the twenty-first century. Exploring this highly popular film and its production context clarifies and adumbrates the characteristics of the new woman's film as it emerges in the twenty-first century, building on the success of releases such as *The Bridges of Madison County* that sit in between what has been termed mainstream and independent cinema.

Chapter four looks, in contrast, at the itinerary and corpus of a female *auteur* director, Nicole Holofcener, who, unlike her male counterparts such as Demme and Eastwood, remains uniquely tied to the "little movie" as a form of filmmaking. Her career testifies to the rigidity of Conglomerate Hollywood as a whole, but also to the way that it has offered uneven support to a mode of production that runs counter to its larger policies. Chapter five points to the importance of the star, as well as the *auteur* director, to the new woman's film as a genre through an analysis of the persona created by Tilda Swinton, one that

is largely positioned outside the arena of the blockbuster and wide-release films more generally, similarly to Holofcener as a director. Swinton as an actress actively seeks projects that promote her brand of stardom most obviously through little films, among which *The Deep End* (Scott McGehee, David Siegel, 2001) is a literal re-make of a classical woman's film, *Reckless Moment* (Max Ophüls, 1949).

The subsequent three chapters look closely at a series of 2013 releases: *Blue Jasmine* (Woody Allen, 2013), *Frances Ha* (Noah Baumbach, 2012, released 2013) and *Belle* (Amma Asante, 2013).¹³ The concluding chapter looks at another 2013 production, that of noted *auteur* director Jane Campion's television series *Top of the Lake* (Sun-dance Channel/BBC UKTV, 2013–) and the 2015 female event film *Fifty Shades of Grey* (Sam Taylor-Johnson, 2015). Looking at a range of films within a restricted time period, including a television series, draws attention to the lineaments of fiction screen narratives—their function and form—that address a female audience over twenty-five at a particular moment in history within a specific cultural context.

Blue Jasmine (Woody Allen, 2013), the topic of chapter six, demonstrates the complexities of gender that surround the new woman's film, particularly with regard to Allen as a misogynist who writes roles that repeatedly earn Oscars for female stars, while operating exclusively within the arena of the little movie. In the following chapter, chapter seven, my discussion of *Frances Ha* (Noah Baumbach, 2012) highlights how the new woman's film in the twenty-first century has the capacity to create new stars and new alliances within the independent sector. In contrast with the two preceding case histories that offer markedly American examples of the new woman's film, chapter eight examines the international scope of the cycle, particularly with regard to the proliferation of biopics in which women's lives have been systematically re-interpreted, in a variety of ways. The latter chapter incorporates an analysis of *Belle*, a biopic focusing on the life of Dido Elizabeth Belle, the illegitimate daughter of a British naval officer and a slave from the West Indies, as the occasion for a discussion of the very limited diversity that marks the general corpus of the new woman's film.

Finally, chapter nine examines two different twenty-first century reincarnations of the woman's film. In the first of them, *Top of the Lake*, director Jane Campion created an acclaimed series that continues the exploration of the concerns animating her very significant cinematic corpus. In the second, a television executive turned novelist, E. L. James (Erika Leonard), produced a female event film based on her enormously successful pornographic e-novel *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the initial installment in a highly anticipated franchise.¹⁴ These two productions show how, while the "little movie" continues to be a vital form for female directors and female audiences, the new woman's film is also seeking to find new avenues for expression facilitated by, and exploiting, new media platforms such as e-novels and VOD.

The account of the new woman's film that I elaborate in this book attests to the complicated itinerary of its evolution, resulting in a diffuse and multi-faceted set of screen narratives. The new woman's film is not a coherent cycle, or even

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a formula. Rather, it displays a variety of different types and manifests itself in a number of different forms that reflect its resilience in finding ways to reach its audience. Perhaps most remarkably, as I demonstrate, the new woman's film continues to flourish within an industrial context that is largely unfavorable, and even hostile, to its goals and ambitions, thus attesting to the ongoing desire of women to see stories represented that hold up a mirror to the conditions of their lives.

Notes

- 1 Melvyn Stokes, "Female Audiences of the 1920s and Early 1930s," in *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and Movies*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 42–60.
- 2 Peter Krämer, "A Powerful Cinema-Going Force? Hollywood and Female Audiences since the 1960s," in *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and Movies*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 93–108.
- 3 For example, see Emanuel Levy, *Cinema of Outsiders* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 348; Maureen Dowd, "The Women of Hollywood Speak Out," *nytimes.com*, 20 November 2015; Brent Lang, "Women Comprise 7% of Directors on Top 250 Films (Study)," *variety.com*, 27 October 2015.
- 4 Tom Schatz, "The Studio System and Conglomerate Hollywood," in *Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*, ed. Paul McDonald and Janet Wasko (Malden, MA/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 13–42.
- 5 For example, see Linda Badley, Claire Perkins, and Michele Schreiber, ed., *Indie Reframed: Women's Filmmaking and Contemporary American Independent Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).
- 6 For example, see Charlotte Brunson, ed., *Films for Women* (London: British Film Institute, 1986); Roberta Garrett, *Postmodern Chick Flicks: The Return of the Woman's Film* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire/New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007); Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (London/Boston/Melbourne/Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982); Diane Negra, "Romance and/as Tourism: Heritage Whiteness and the (Inter)national Imaginary in the New Woman's Film," in *Keyframes: Popular Cinema and Cultural Studies*, ed. Matthew Tinkcom and Amy Villarejo (London/New York: Routledge, 2001), 82–97.
- 7 Schatz, "The Studio System and Conglomerate Hollywood," 29, 34.
- 8 Schatz, "The Studio System and Conglomerate Hollywood," 31.
- 9 Schatz, "The Studio System and Conglomerate Hollywood," 33.
- 10 Joshua L. Weinstein, "'Fifty Shades of Grey' Trilogy Rights Go to Universal," *thewrap.com*, 26 March 2012; Sharon Waxman, "Why Hollywood Is Hot for '50 Shades of Grey,'" *thewrap.com*, 22 March 2012.
- 11 Jeanine Basinger, *I Do and I Don't: A History of Marriage in the Movies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), xix; see also Jeanine Basinger, *A Woman's View: How Hollywood Spoke to Women 1930–1960* (Hanover/London: University Press of New England/Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 15.
- 12 Schatz, "The Studio System and Conglomerate Hollywood," 34.
- 13 *Frances Ha* was initially screening in 2012 but not released until 2013. All release dates, unless otherwise indicated, are those listed in *imdb.com*.
- 14 "E.L. James," *biography.com*, accessed 23 July 2018.

1

AFTER THE WOMAN'S PICTURE

The New Woman's Film and the Chick Flick

The Survival of the Woman's Picture

While female viewers were important to classical Hollywood in terms of determining the wider array of films that it would offer in any given year, it also made films for that particular audience that have been retrospectively described as “woman's pictures” or the “woman's film.” This cycle (defined by its intended audience and a loose set of attributes) dominated screen narratives for female audiences during the studio era, from about 1925 to 1950. It made way in the 1960s and 1970s for the new woman's film, and a series of sub-genres: the independent woman's film (associated with the 1970s), the female friendship film (emerging in the 1970s and fading from view in the late 1990s), and the chick flick or girly film (marked by the success of *Pretty Woman* in 1990 [Garry Marshall] and largely disappearing after 2010). While the chick flick in the form of the “girly film,” following upon the 2007–2011 global financial crisis, has literally disappeared from view, the new woman's film has continued to develop in the independent sector, including re-workings of girly film formulas, producing what might be termed “smart-chick films,” which begin to appear in the late 1990s.

These shifts in nomenclature point to a parallel transformation in the preoccupations of these films, which have in common that they primarily target a female audience, revolve around a female heroine (or two) as the primary focalizer, and are concerned with guiding a woman toward a path of self-fulfillment. In film scholar Karen Hollinger's words, “The genre is defined by the centrality of its female protagonist, its attempt to deal with issues deemed important to women, and an address to a female audience.”¹ In its early phase, the woman's picture upheld a fundamentally masochistic vision of feminine fulfillment.² It was succeeded

by the “independent woman’s film”—a variation on the new woman’s film of the 1970s—which introduced uncertainties and experimentations that questioned this masochism, questions that were carried over into the female friendship film. The independent woman’s film, in turn, was replaced by a frenzied fantasy of self-gratification in the form of the 1990s girly film, which also incorporated many themes from the female friendship film, during the height of the popularity of the so-called “chick flick.”³ Finally, the new woman’s film of the twenty-first century, most clearly exemplified through the smart-chick film, promoted an ironic vision of the woman’s fate, sharing a sense of uncertainty about the possibilities for fulfillment that contemporary society offers to women with its twentieth-century progenitors. This evolution reflects changes in the organization of the industry and the development of new technologies, such as television and later new media, but also significant culture shifts, with second-wave feminism becoming an important social influence and women increasingly holding full-time jobs, and generally pursuing lives in which “wet, wasted afternoons”⁴ that might be devoted to a cinema matinée no longer figured.

The Woman’s Film

The event film and action franchises, directed at young males under twenty-five, have increasingly dominated theatrical releases over the last two decades, since at least the 1980s. Does this mean, as so many have proclaimed, that we are witnessing the death of cinema⁵—or, at the very least, the end of cinema for women? While viewing habits have changed significantly in this same time period—changes inaugurated in the decades following the demise of the studio system in response to new geographies of access to screen narratives—the film and television industries have also responded in kind, modifying the type and location of available material. The scope and shape of these transformations are perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the ways in which the film industry has responded to female viewers, who, in spite of the complaints of many film critics, remain significant and influential consumers of these new screen narratives, if not necessarily in theaters.

During Hollywood’s classical era, women were considered the most important and most powerful group of film viewers. In a widely quoted article, film scholar Melvyn Stokes comments:

During the 1920s and early 30s, a substantial body of evidence suggested that women dominated American movie audiences—either numerically or because, by nature of their influence on their menfolk and children, they effectively decided which films would be most successful.⁶

In contrast, twenty-first-century Conglomerate Hollywood ignores women, especially women over twenty-five,⁷ with the result that contemporary cinema

is routinely derogated for its sexism, as when it depicts the female body with a view to the preferences of a young male audience, the demographic most likely to support a blockbuster success. While the family film often outdoes the male-oriented action movie or gross-out comedy at the box office, this genre must negotiate a number of different groups (including parents), in which, however, the tastes of the young take precedence over those of the older generation. In each case, whether with respect to the action movie or the family film, the woman's vote is not considered to be decisive in determining a box-office success. Thus, though routinely classified as a creative industry in the twenty-first century, countering its designation as a "business, pure and simple"⁸ at the beginning of the twentieth, cinema today in the form of theatrical releases is increasingly the consequence of the economics of global Hollywood and the domination of young males as the most profitable audience.

Notwithstanding, the rise of feminist film scholarship beginning in the 1970s has generated a substantial body of scholarship around popular films understood as directed at a female audience. This interest in films for women has produced two different bodies of scholarship. The first looks backward at the films of the classical Hollywood era (grouped together under the term "the woman's picture" and to some extent "family melodrama"), which extended into the early 1950s and the twilight of this system. These films were produced during the period in which female audiences and female stars were seen to dominate the cinematic landscape. The second focuses on films, often referred to as "chick flicks" by the industry and reviewers, released after 1990. The films appearing between 1960 and 1990 have been unevenly explored by feminist scholarship, with a few notable exceptions, as a period in which young male viewers achieved canonization as the primary cinematic tastemakers on a global scale.⁹

Initial feminist film scholarship focused on what was retrospectively dubbed the "woman's picture," a term that genre specialist Rick Altman describes as "a notion" that "was originally assembled out of female-oriented cycles within a variety of genres."¹⁰ According to Altman, "the woman's picture" as a generic category was primarily generated by feminist film scholars rather than the industry itself, which tended to be much more informal in designations, using terms as varied as "hanky pics" and "femme fare." The woman's picture as a recognized genre emerges, then, in Raphaëlle Moine's terms, "*a posteriori*," as a consequence of the development and propagation of feminist criticism.¹¹ The woman's picture functioned as an "interpretive category," "when generic readings" of a set of films revolving around a central heroine and her concerns "became established as a fact of reception,"¹² notably within academia, as a consequence of second-wave feminism.

The debated status of the woman's film, or woman's picture, led some scholars to claim that the genre is not specific to classical Hollywood, and not properly a genre at all.¹³ Periodicity has proven to be a significant problem, with the genre exhibiting a general unevenness of development peppered with exceptions,

without for that matter encouraging feminists to abandon the concept of the woman's film as a productive heuristic device. One unresolved methodological problem revolves around definitions of gender itself, with Hollywood conventions predominating, in which notions of male and female (or the quadrants: males under twenty-five, males over twenty-five, females under twenty-five, females over twenty-five) function as coarse categories of analysis, with a disregard for any potential challenges to their validity. Concomitantly, notions of feminine subjectivity, drawing upon psychoanalysis and its relations to the woman's film, which animated discussions of the genre in the 1980s, have enjoyed less importance in subsequent decades.¹⁴

From Classical Hollywood to New Hollywood

In defining the woman's film as an interpretive category, the work of groundbreaking feminist critic Molly Haskell, writing in 1973, proved formative; indeed, she is largely credited with establishing the category "the woman's film," its attributes (in particular its portrayal of female desire as essentially masochistic)¹⁵ and its sub-genres, which would be taken up by influential feminist film scholars such as Mary Ann Doane, Annette Kuhn and Jeanine Basinger.¹⁶ Haskell is in fact responsible for underlining the following notion: "In a woman's film, the woman—a woman—is at the center of the universe," an idea that would become central to the work of later scholars such as Jeanine Basinger. Haskell notably points out: "Best friends and suitors . . . live only for her pleasure, talk about her constantly, and cease to exist when she dies."¹⁷ She also isolates four principle themes related to the over-arching masochistic drive of the woman's film: "sacrifice, affliction, choice, competition," with "sacrifice" largely informing the other themes.¹⁸

Haskell is also responsible for introducing the view, upheld by feminists such as *New York Times* reviewer Manohla Dargis in the twenty-first century, that, with the demise of the family melodrama at the end of the 1950s, film roles for women from the 1960s onward took a turn for the worse. Haskell maintained: "With the substitution of violence and sexuality (a poor second) for romance, there was less need for exciting and interesting women; any bouncing nymphet whose curves looked good in catsup would do."¹⁹ Even Haskell admitted to the existence of an occasional woman's film that escaped this general trend, such as Paul Newman's *Rachel, Rachel* (1968), a vehicle for Newman's wife, Joanne Woodward.²⁰ Feminist scholarship, following suit, in dealing with films produced in successive decades tended to focus on individual productions that were treated as exceptions, rather than attempting to codify persistent genres or cycles.

Karen Hollinger's influential study of what she names the female friendship film constitutes one of the few sustained analyses of film genres for female audiences from this period,²¹ in which she identifies issues that predominate in what she calls the "new woman's film of the 1970s," including "the independent woman" and "female friendship." She maintains, however, that "[f]ilms dealing with