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Under the Red Light

Images of Prostitution in Klute, Pretty Baby, McCabe and Mrs. Miller, and American Gigolo

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Abstract/Abstrait

This thesis deals with the image of the prostitute in four films: Klute (1971) Pretty Baby (1978) McCabe and Mrs. Miller (1972) and American Gigolo (1980). It includes a review of the image of the prostitute in art and literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These earlier images are compared and contrasted with the images presented in the four films and used to analyze how women are represented through the role of the prostitute in Klute, Pretty Baby and McCabe and Mrs. Miller. American Gigolo presents male prostitution in a manner conventional to prostitution, but unconventional in terms of representing men. American Gigolo provides a contrast for the three other films in terms of both gender and the image of the prostitute.

Cet mémoire est sur l'image de la prostitué(e) dans les films: Klute (1971) Pretty Baby (1978) McCabe and Mrs. Miller (1972) et American Gigolo (1980). Compris c'est un discussion de l'image de la prostitution dans l'art et le littérature du dix-huitième and dix-neuvième siècles. Ces images de la passé sont comparer avec les images dans les quatre films et ils sont utiliser pour un analyse de la rôle de la femme et comment elle est représenter par la prostituée dans Klute, Pretty Baby et McCabe and Mrs. Miller. American Gigolo présent la prostitution mâle dans une manière qui est conventionnel pour la prostitution, mais très différent pour la représentation des hommes. American Gigolo est un contrât pour les trois autres films en fait du sexe et l'image de la prostitution.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The fact was, you could hardly tell a lady now from an actress, or—er—the other kind of woman—Edith Wharton The Buccaneers

The female sexual body reveals nothing of the history of its penetration by men, ... In their physiology, the female genitals are clandestine: no marks of male possession are inscribed on them—Charles Bernheimer "Parent Duchâtelet: Engineer of Abjection"

You can lead a whore to culture but you can't make her think—Dorothy Parker, in a speech to the American Horticultural Society

You do not know much about whores, amigo. They are always most respectable. Except, of course, the very cheap ones—Raymond Chandler, The Little Sister

Prostitution is worth examining because it is a part of urban life and the urban imagery of film. Prostitutes frequently appear as minor characters or even just backdrop to the city, they are so much a part of the filmed urban landscape. How we view prostitution as a society can serve as a rough morality gauge for how we feel about sexuality in general. Consider Victorian England, a time when public morals were never stricter, and prostitution never more rampant. The status of prostitution is a useful guide to the sexual hypocrisy of a culture. Are we open and accepting, or closed and censorious? The occurrence of prostitution is proof that no matter how much we try to control our sexual impulses or regulate them into accordance with what society sees as acceptable (i.e. safe heterosexual intercourse for pleasure between a longstanding couple, or planned sex for procreation,) there will always be something taboo and there will always be people who feel they have to or want to pay for sex. In most countries, with the exception of Holland and certain parts of Asia, prostitution goes on illegally while the authorities look the other way. It only comes into the public eye when there are numerous arrests or a proposal to change the law, usually in favour of legalization because it makes it easier to keep track of the prostitutes in a particular area.

Over the years, prostitutes have ranged from the poorest streetwalker to the richest escort. Their societal position has been variable, making them members of the upper class, or even the religious and intellectual elite. Prostitutes have also been so worthless and invisible as human beings that they have perished alone in alleyways. The image of the prostitute is something

recognizable to most people, but goes largely unexamined in a media studies context. Prostitutes appear in countless films, yet their relation to how we view sexuality, voyeurism, and issues of dress and masquerade are rarely taken up. The prostitutes at the center of Klute, Pretty Baby, McCabe and Mrs. Miller, and American Gigolo are all somewhat enigmatic. In this thesis, I will be drawing mainly on film criticism resources, as well as some pertinent aspects of art history, to bring together ideas about the figure of the prostitute in the four films.

If great artists have painted them and great writers immortalized them in print, there must be more to the humble streetwalker than meets the eye. Some of the most famous novels feature prostitutes as major characters. If a female character was a prostitute, she was already outside respectable society and could therefore express unconventional ideas; this was no doubt an incentive for writers like Dostoyevsky and Zola to make some of their female characters prostitutes.

Prostitutes throughout history run the gamut in their societal function, from the holy temple prostitutes of Babylon, to the refined and educated hetaerae of Ancient Greece, to the geisha of Japan. Prostitutes have often occupied a position in society that was much more than sexual. While they were at the disposal of clients, other aspects of their societal position sometimes permitted them a degree of freedom and autonomy that would not have been possible for a respectable married woman.

On the other hand, I have no wish to fall into the trap of imagining that all prostitutes enjoy what they do. Particularly in the early days of European settlement in North America, many women were imported to the new world and forced into prostitution by slave traders. Thousands of other women became prostitutes because they were poor and had no other way to earn a living. Still others became prostitutes because they were seduced by men who had no intention of marrying them, and having fallen into disgrace, were banished from their families.

In the history of visual culture, the prostitute is an image that warrants close examination. She is a barometer of how we view women and sexuality, and her male counterparts also function in

this way. Stella Bruzzi in Undressing Cinema, states "the underlying rationale for clothing is the discovery of nakedness," (33) and perhaps this is why there is always an importance attached to clothing and image that goes along with prostitution. We always imagine that we know how to spot a prostitute, but fashion likes to confuse us by making acceptable clothing once used to identify someone as a sex worker. Examples of this are black hosiery, especially fishnet stockings; skin tight jeans; tall boots; short shorts; and stiletto heels all items which have enjoyed a vogue in the last fifty years.[1] Up until the late 19th century, it seems almost any unescorted woman could be suspected of prostitution, regardless of what she wore, especially when walking at night in the city. With the advent of film, the prostitute and the wardrobe which identifies her became more codified in the popular imagination.

In recent years, particular attention has been devoted to how cities figure in film. Just as the emergence of the metropolis gave way to new forms of the novel, it also began to take on certain characteristics in film: cities were associated with vice and crime, but they were also places of freedom, glamour and sexual possibility. With the advent of film noir, men were seen to navigate the city with particular confidence. These men, typified by Humphrey Bogart as Philip Marlowe, knew the city and its ways. They knew where to get a stiff bourbon, how to sock a guy in the jaw and how to pick up any woman from the librarian's daughter to the chorus girl. Women also became denizens of the urban landscape, but in different ways. For women, the city was (and often still is) a labyrinth. Walking alone took on a new meaning: you were about to be a victim of a violent crime or you were a prostitute. Feminists have taken up the image of women in an urban setting. The association between the lone female stroller and the prostitute is a long and problematic one that is rarely dealt with in an in-depth manner. I aim to examine some of these images in the context of four specific films.

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[1] Most of the examples apply only to women's clothing, mainly because female prostitution has always been much more visible than male prostitution.

Prostitution has generally been taken up by sociologists and historians interested in the rise of cities and their vice districts, or by activists seeking to regulate and/or decriminalize sex work. It is also discussed peripherally in fairly recent work on the flanêur, or urban stroller. Penelope J. Cornfield and Deborah Epstein Nord both mention prostitution in their respective articles on women's experience of the metropolis "Walking the City Streets The Urban Odyssey in Eighteenth Century England," and "The Urban Peripatetic: Spectator, Streetwalker, Woman Writer." Cornfield specifically mentions the rise of the red-light district:

> In many of the larger towns and resorts, a "red-light" district developed, often located in or near the streets specializing in the entertainments industry, which attracted crowds of people and therefore facilitated meetings between prostitutes and customers. Women of the streets were numerous and were not hesitant to join in the social display. The evening promenade under the Piazza at Covent Garden in London "partook of the splendour of a Venetian carnival" and was attended by crowds of "Love's votaries," as an early nineteenth century writer recalled. While many repaired to nearby brothels and rented rooms, others consummated their encounters outdoors..." (148-9)

Deborah Epstein Nord, in her own article discusses the various images the urban prostitute conjures up.

> ...[T]he prostitute occupies a crucial place in virtually all urban description of the nineteenth century. Her meaning, however, is by no means monolithic. The sexually tainted woman can stand variously as an emblem of social suffering or debasement, as a projection of or analogue to the male stroller's alienated self, as an instrument of pleasure and partner in urban sprees, as a rhetorical and symbolic means of isolating and quarantining urban ills in the midst of an otherwise buoyant metropolis, or as an agent of connection and contamination. Even from the early to middle decades of the nineteenth century the image of the prostitute shifts from the isolated reminder of human alienation to reflector of the social or collective state. Somewhat crudely put, to the Romantic sensibility she signifies the human being alone and separate; to the Victorian sensibility she suggests a flaw in the social system that threatens to implicate all. What remains constant, however, is the prostitute's otherness, her use as a trope, her ultimate transience and disposability. (Epstein Nord 353-4)

Al Rose's book Storyville New Orleans, is a collection of information about the rise and fall of the first legally designated red-light district in the U.S. Timothy Gilfoyle's City of Eros, deals with New York City's various vice districts over an extensive period from the later eighteenth to early twentieth century. Wendy Chapkis' Live Sex Acts: Women Performing Erotic Labor presents verbatim stories of women who have been sex workers.

Many of the books that provide an historical overview of prostitution have male authors, and aim to unify a lot of sporadic information about a particular city or area in which prostitution took place. The later works are largely authored by women, many of whom are or have been sex workers, who are writing in an effort to educate people about prostitution and other forms of sex work. Later urban historians and literary theorists discuss prostitution in a limited way, related to the general image of women in the city.

Of these disparate traditions, my own analysis falls somewhere in between. Little work exists on the filmed prostitute, so I feel very much that I am uniting information from different disciplines, in the hopes of establishing some basic notions about images of prostitution in film. Since I am also conducting my analysis from a decidedly feminist point of view, I identify with the sociological and literary works in their efforts to increase awareness of how women and sex work are perceived culturally.

Printed Prostitutes

I now wish to introduce an art-history based examination of images of prostitution in a particular era. Sophie Carter, in her article "'This Female Proteus': Representing Prostitution and Masquerade in Eighteenth Century English Popular Culture," uses popular prints and engravings to establish how prostitution was viewed at that time, and its association with masquerade, as well as the popularity of public masked balls where prostitution flourished. Her ideas about masquerade as an inherent condition in prostitution will be of particular interest with regards to American Gigolo, but all the films deal with it in some respect.

The prostitute in William Hogarth's The Harlot's Progress is called Moll Hackabout, and a series of engravings narrate her dissipation. From the moment she becomes a prostitute, Moll enters into a world of deception and masquerade:

> [S]he flaunts society's codes of virtue and feminine decorum by appropriating a respectability which is not her birthright and which is entirely at odds with her moral condition. Her sumptuous clothing and surroundings are here equated with the mask which lies on her dressing table, and rendered little more than a façade of gentility.

> Masquerade is at once the condition of the Harlot's existence, and its condemnation (Carter, 58)

Like her filmic counterparts, Hogarth's harlot uses clothing to conceal her real class and profession, while at other times advertising it. The association between prostitution and the public masked balls of 18th century England is due in part to the fact that many prostitutes successfully plied their trade at these events, but also because "masquerade discourses presented so expedient a framework within which to express the social threat that the London prostitute was perceived to pose." (Carter 60) Carter also states that "images of prostitution comprised a significant sub-genre of eighteenth century London's popular print culture, "....from bawdy popular literature to philanthropic essays, legal tracts, and medical treatises." (60-61) While many other scholars feel that the wealth of depictions of prostitution from this era indicate "a tolerant acceptance of the urban sex trade," (61) Carter feels these images represent "an urgent and sustained attempt to grapple with a deeply threatening and problematic phenomenon." (61)

The London masquerades, "commercially mounted masked balls staged at various theatres, halls and pleasure gardens" (Carter 62) were outrageous events where everyone was not only masked, but often in complete disguise. Critics described a ball as "little more than an extravagantly staged and publicly sanctioned orgy." (Carter 63) Prostitution at these events flourished alongside other forms of "sexual deviancy.... [such as] incest, homosexuality, and cuckoldry." (Carter 63) Writers of the time "insisted that hordes of common prostitutes swarmed to these occasions disguised as women of quality and virtue, where they rendered masquerade flirtations inherently hazardous." (Carter 65) Masquerades were very much the sort of environment where, to quote Edith Wharton at the beginning of this paper, "one could hardly tell a lady from an actress, or—er—the other sort of woman." Not only were prostitutes appearing at masquerades to mingle with the middle and upper classes, they were disguising their vocation through dress. By the same token, women who were not prostitutes could easily be mistaken for them, or choose to behave as if they were prostitutes. Because of women's love of fashion and

personal adornment, "eighteenth century commentators recognized that the masquerade represented an unprecedented opportunity for this dubious aspect of female character to be given full reign." (Carter 66)

Carter states that because of the anonymity and heightened sexual atmosphere of the masquerade as described in print, the virtue of any woman who chose to attend was somewhat suspect. (68) "[T]he eighteenth century category of prostitute implied a woman who transgressed the norms of gender construction by trading on her sexuality, and violated principles of social ordering by amassing material profit as a result." (Carter 68) Any woman one met at a masquerade could conceivably be a prostitute. Not only did prostitutes figure as revelers at masquerades, but their entire profession was described as a type of disguise. The prostitute was capable of deceiving a customer through her costume at a masked ball, but also on a daily basis through a mastery of etiquette and decorum. The more sinister aspect of this was the use of cosmetics to disguise the physical ravages of sexually transmitted diseases, such as syphilis. "Masquerade is an integral part of the profession of prostitution: both the venue frequented by the prostitute on the make, and the means by which wealthy clients may be ensnared." (Carter 71)

Carter goes on to say that real London prostitutes hardly led a sumptuous or care-free life in the spirit of their literary sisters. "By representing prostitutes [in popular literature] as astute manipulators of their own market value in an economy of appearance, masculine desire was expediently rendered the object of exploitation, rather than as instigatory in its own right." (Carter 72) There was also "social unease about the blurring of social differential in the emerging metropolis," (72) according to Carter, particularly with regard to the ability to recognize a prostitute as different from other women. This period of popular literature was also fascinated with different classes of prostitutes, everything from the poor streetwalker to the "stylish brothel residents." (Carter 75) Lower class street prostitutes were usually represented as openly degenerate, slatternly in their person and dress. The upper class prostitutes who worked out of brothels hardly looked different from upper class ladies. While the lower class prostitute was

obvious in her occupation, the upper class prostitute frequently masked not only her profession, but she could also "...parade a contaminating body through society undetected." (Carter 75) The idea was that the street prostitute may be easily seen to be infected with disease or not, presumably because she has no refinements at her disposal, while the brothel prostitute would have been able to conceal disease through cosmetics and perfume. (Carter 76)

Much eighteenth century literature enjoyed revealing "the prostitute's manufactured façade," (77) as a moral and physical danger to society. Carter claims that

> ...[T]he prostitute body functioned simultaneously as the paradigm and anathema of the female body—a body whose polarity encapsulated the oppositions of eighteenth century anti-feminist satire in its reduction to a vacuous façade of ornamentation and frippery which overlaid a messy, decaying, and utterly physical body. (79)

While the body of the prostitute "was ever available, obtainable and *material*," (Carter 79) it was also "nothing but a succession of facades." (Carter 79) The figure of the prostitute functioned as a site of the "embodiment of both allure and decay" (Carter 79) through the constant association of the beautiful disguise masking a diseased body.

Sophie Carter's work addresses the theme of prostitution as something prevalent in urban life and as an image that is already highly codified through dress and behaviour. The idea that the prostitute will employ a style of dress or disguise to either pass unnoticed into the upper classes, or to call direct attention to the sexual services offered by the profession, is integral to the filmic images of prostitution that will be examined later.

In his book Figures of Ill Repute, Charles Bernheimer devotes an entire chapter to Edgar Degas' numerous images of dancers and his little seen series of brothel monotypes. While Degas' work is extremely well-known and his images of ballerinas romanticized the world over, many observers are unaware of the following:

> ...[T]he dancers, like all the other female professionals Degas painted, be they laundresses, milliners, or café-concert singers, were known to be involved in clandestine prostitution. Parent-Dûchatelet already associated dancers with prostitutional activity in 1836, and by the 1870s it was common knowledge that the dancers at the Opera were chosen more for their sex appeal than for their talent. (Bernheimer 159)

The dancers of the Opera ballet were favourite subjects of Degas, and Bernheimer claims that the men who subscribed to the Ballet often went to "...the Foyer de la Danse behind the stage... before and after the performance to 'check out' underpaid young working women for a potential rendezvous." (159) Pastel works by Degas, such as The Ballet Rehearsal, and Pauline and Virginie Talking with Admirers "acknowledge the sexualization of the ballerina's profession by representing men in formal attire waiting and observing in the wings." (Bernheimer 160) In The Ballet Rehearsal, the viewer focuses on the ballerina with her arms raised, but at the far right of the frame stands a man in a dark suit, who watches her from the shadows. This shadowy figure contrasts with the more brightly lit man to the left of the frame. While the man on the left appears to be a more gentle admirer, the man on the right takes on a slightly more sinister appearance, as if he were about to select this girl for his pleasure, rather than admiring her graceful dance. Pauline and Virginie Talking with Admirers shows several black-suited men standing around two ballerinas. The men tower over the women and almost block them from the viewer entirely. To the right of the figures stretches a dingy looking hallway, presumably of dressing rooms.

Bernheimer says it is the "[u]ncertainty about the sexual status of the women depicted [that] provides Degas's images with one of their most powerful effects of modernity. A hint of prostitution is countered by a suggestion of autonomy..." (163) So, while history tells us that some of these women were prostitutes from time to time, Degas gives his subjects some leeway in their roles. Brothel prostitution was regulated by the French government at this time, but "casual transactions" (Bernheimer 163) or what we might term occasional prostitution, became more and more common. "[V]enal practices became so wide-spread in Paris that almost any woman who found herself 'insuffisament entretenue,' whether by her husband, her lover, or her employer, might contemplate selling herself to maintain her lifestyle." (Bernheimer 165)

Just as Degas chose to paint women whose occupations were associated with occasional prostitution, he also made about fifty monotypes of brothel scenes. Bernheimer notes that Degas's

characteristic "ambiguity" remains intact despite the explicit nature of the brothel monotypes. (166)

> The brutal explicitness of Degas's brothel monotypes does not make the text of female sexuality any more legible than it was when disguised under more acceptable social identities....Degas's representational practice is seen to involve us in a reading experience that vacillates uncomfortably between psychological and social determinants, constructing its viewing subject in terms of male bourgeois hegemony while simultaneously revealing the suspect ideological artifice of that construction. (Bernheimer, 166)

The monotypes are thought to have been made in 1879 and 1880 (Bernheimer 167) contemporary with many famous novels about prostitutes. The monotypes were never exhibited while Degas was alive and art historians can only speculate as to whom he might have shown them. (Bernheimer 167) Traditional analysis of the monotypes and also of his later series of bathers claims Degas as "a voyeur preoccupied with woman's animal nature."(Bernheimer 168) Like Degas's dancers, the bathers were associated with prostitution. Bernheimer relates that this was because:

> ...prostitutes, especially those in regulated *maisons de tolerance*, [government sanctioned brothels] bathed frequently, and tubs were a feature of any brothel bedroom. Indeed, the voyeuristic excitement of observing a woman cleaning herself was no doubt part of the attraction of the bordello experience. (171-2)

Degas's bathers were considered to be voyeuristic and a criticism of "the false idolization of Woman in conventional artistic practice." (Bernheimer 168) Like the prostitute who masks a body riddled with venereal disease, Bernheimer says that Degas's bathers were symbols of "the ineradicable dirt of female sexuality" to many critics of the time. (168)

However, the bathers have been reclaimed in recent analysis as images of independent sensuality. Degas's "...omission of any explicitly sexual gestures...tends to generalize the images to the extent that they could refer to any woman experiencing her body in sensual intimacy." (Bernheimer 173) No doubt this opinion is partly due to the fact that when viewed through late twentieth century eyes, there is nothing about these women bathing that marks them as potential

prostitutes. To a nineteenth century viewer, the only woman who would be depicted bathing at all, (since Degas's bathers are neither mythical nor biblical,) would have to be a prostitute.

With the brothel monotypes, Degas's subjects are obviously prostitutes, rather than possibly or implicitly involved in prostitution. The style in which the monotypes were made "...present[s] crude, scribbled, smudged, murky forms in what are frequently almost illegible juxtaposed masses of light and shadow." (173) Upon first seeing the reproductions I was strongly reminded of the incised lithographs of Edvard Munch, only with less texture and detail. Because the monotype was never a major technique employed by Degas, many of the prints seem like sketches, but there exists no record of whether Degas created these images "...from first hand experience or from erotic fantasies." (Bernheimer 173)

Degas's prostitutes differ from his contemporaries in that they are always naked, even when unengaged, rather than partially clothed, as they would have been in the main rooms of a brothel. The women are not idealized, their limbs are fleshy and rounded and their buttocks and stomachs ample. The smudged outlines and black and white scheme of the monotypes give the impression of grubby, down-at-heel brothels and the prostitutes that work there. Just as the furniture appears to have seen better days, so have the whores. The men who are depicted are always clothed and seem to be middle or upper class. In one monotype entitled The Client the man's legs are hardly more than two vertical wipes of ink. He appears to be wearing a top hat and a jacket while he looks at two naked prostitutes on a couch. The women sit idly, not at all provocative, rather like they were waiting for a particularly tardy bus. In The Serious Client, there are four prostitutes crowded into the left side of the monotype. One has her back to the viewer as she grabs the client's hand, as if to lead him off. The prostitutes all look at the man, two are standing, while the other two sit in a chair and on the end of a couch. The client is dressed in a suit with a bowler-style hat and he carries a walking stick. This monotype is a little less sparse than the other, as the furniture is more clearly delineated and there are indications of a large mirror above the couch.

The women have visible hairstyles which has some hair piled on top of their heads with the rest trailing down their necks.

Bernheimer argues that "the mechanisms of voyeurism and fetishism pervade the culture of late capitalism, of which we, like Degas, are a part, to such an extent that they influence every aspect of spectatorship and of gender relations." (184) The brothel monotypes created by Degas place the viewer in the typically privileged position of voyeur, but then refuse to offer up idealized images of women.

> This is part of what makes looking at Degas's images of prostitution such an uncomfortable experience. The threshold position is familiar to the male viewer as one conventionally adapted to offer him the scary but alluring secrets of female undress. The small dimensions of the monotype, allowing it to be easily held in the hand, further suggest that these are fetishistic images made for a connoisseur's private enjoyment. But it is precisely the fantasy potential of these images of available female sexuality that Degas suppresses. He simultaneously grants the spectator a wish-fulfilling viewpoint and confronts him with images that, by denying his desire, empty his position of its subjective privilege. (Bernheimer 185)

Even though certain aspects of the monotypes suggest that their purpose is pornographic, this is undermined by Degas's ability to make the viewer reflect on the position of the voyeur or the client in relation to "...women who have been denaturalized and marked in an economy of exchange." (Bernheimer 186) Because Degas's prostitutes are not sexy or coy, but rather more often human and bored, the potential sexual function of the images is questionable. Bernheimer feels that the monotypes "address the male viewer's social privilege" (189) and then dismantle that position. (189)

Bernheimer also briefly discusses Toulouse-Lautrec's images of prostitutes and how they differ from those of Degas. It is well known that Lautrec was friends with many prostitutes and "in the years 1893 and 1894, ... he actually lived a good part of the time in two of the most extravagant Parisian *maisons*." (Bernheimer 195) While Degas shows us sparse, anonymous brothels and their unindividuated denizens, Lautrec portrays the world of sumptuous, well-run, profitable whorehouses. Lautrec's friends, lovers, and favourite models among the prostitutes are easily distinguished in his brothel paintings, "he appreciated each of them for her individual

personality, which he tried to capture in numerous sketches made on location." (Bernheimer 196) Bernheimer claims that "Lautrec's prostitutes are not commodities," (198) even in his painting Rue des Moulins 1894. This work shows two prostitutes with their skirts lifted above the waist. They are waiting in line for the medical exam which all registered prostitutes were forced to undergo periodically (usually by the police) to check for venereal disease. This practice was common up until the late nineteenth century in many European countries[2]. Lautrec "shows two women whose stooped posture, pathetic exposure of intimate flesh, and sad expressions reflect their humiliation in this demeaning ritual." (Bernheimer 198)

Degas and Lautrec both depicted prostitutes in their work. Both managed to communicate something to the viewer about the position of the prostitute in society. Lautrec conveyed the individuality of the various prostitutes he knew, while Degas gave us the anonymous female shape that could just as easily be any woman. Both artists interrupt the comfortable pornographic gaze by making the images disturbing. For Degas, it is the anonymity not just of the prostitutes, but of the clients, while for Lautrec it is the individuality of the women that disrupts.

Stephen Kern's book Eyes of Love, deals with the gaze in English and French culture in the latter half of the nineteenth century. His chapter on prostitution reveals an astonishing array of sexual trivia of the time. He states that the nineteenth century saw a considerable increase in prostitution. In turn, prostitutes continued to make appearances in literature and art. Kern reminds us that both Charles Baudelaire and Gustave Flaubert were fascinated by prostitutes. (129) Both men represented prostitutes in their personal and professional writing, as well as frequenting their services. Kern claims that the popularity of prostitutes, especially amongst middle class men like Flaubert, stemmed partially from "[n]ineteenth century sex education [which] was largely *mis*education." (129) One of the more amusing examples was "...spermatorrhoea an imaginary disease that supposedly caused involuntary leaking of sperm." (Kern, 129)

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[2] The chapter on Prostitution in Stephen Kern's Eyes of Love contains some discussion of this and other medical peculiarities of the nineteenth century.

Kern relates the events of Emile Zola's famous novel Nana, and the impact of the eyes of the prostitute. Nana is the story of a famous courtesan who destroys men with her beautiful body and face. Men become completely enthralled with her appearance because "Nana is exquisite and able to show proudly what other women hid in shame." (Kern 131) Nana is also sexually free, unlike other women of the more respectable classes. Kern quotes Zola describing Nana as "'...a force of nature, a ferment of destruction, unwittingly corrupting and disorganizing Paris between her snow-white thighs.'" Nana's main lover in the novel, the Count de Muffat, is utterly under her spell. As Nana requires greater and more elaborate conquests, Muffat continues to worship her. (Kern 131) Eventually Muffat discovers her with "an even more decrepit roué than himself" (Kern 132) and gives her up. The novel ends in a horribly tragic fashion, with Nana dying of "a disease Zola identifies as smallpox (*petite vérole*), but that carries the symbolic meaning of syphilis (*grande vérole* or *vérole*)." (Kern 132) Nana's beautiful face is horribly disfigured by disease and her eyes, once so entrancing, are filled with infection. "Zola concludes his novel with this horrific image of a woman's erotically charged eyes morbidly corrupted by men," (132) says Kern, for the disease that is killing her "...comes not from inheritance or from the gutter but from the men who have had sex with her." (132) Nana presents us with the image of the prostitute whose flagrant ways end in tragedy, a tragedy particular to prostitutes and their clients in times before safe sex practices were the norm. She displays her physical beauty, but in the end it is disease and rot that are brought to the fore, revealing once more the notion of the beautiful woman whose body is a gaping maw of decay.

In contrast to the final image of Nana, Kern discusses Thomas Couture's neoclassical painting, Romans of the Decadence. The painting shows a scene of orgiastic revelry between Roman men and courtesans. Kern notes that the men are frequently facing away from the viewer and are generally less noticeable than the women in the painting. He claims that "...the courtesan's eyes unify the surrounding activity and direct it toward the viewer," (133) and that the other courtesans are depicted as "sexually adventurous and well-lit." The courtesan at the center of the painting

has eyes which are "...the most informed witness to the orgy and the starting point for any viewer's understanding of this moment in the history of sexual indulgence." (Kern 133) The world weary stare of the central courtesan in Romans of the Decadence became a blueprint for similar representations of the prostitute in art, and was satirized by Edouard Manet in his famous painting Olympia. (Kern 134)

Kern feels that the prostitute in Olympia "has penetrating dark eyes that provide no easy access for the conventional male gaze." (134) Like Degas' brothel monotypes, Manet's work disrupts the potential for pure voyeurism in the viewer. Kern interprets Olympia as implying the presence of a male client through the bouquet held by the servant and the male black cat at Olympia's feet. The flowers indicate a sender, while the cat serves as a symbol of aroused masculinity, which "...Olympia disregards with a lofty detachment that justifies her name." (Kern 134) Kern speculates on the influences and origins of Olympia's famous look, with Manet drawing on everything from dirty postcards to the poetry of Charles Baudelaire. (135)
Manet's critics were so deeply offended by Olympia when it first appeared in the Salon of 1865 that "...the painting was moved from eye level to a spot high above the huge door of the last room, where it was difficult to see." (Kern 136) He sees this as evidence of the painting's "challenge to the male gaze" (136) even though he describes Olympia's gaze as "calm, unaggressive, and desexualized." (136) Olympia "addresses the viewer with her basic humanity," (Kern 136) her look is devoid of the characteristics usually associated with the eyes of a prostitute. She does not appear lewd, or frisky, or exhausted from sex. As Kern so aptly puts it,

> [s]he looks straight out at the beholder(s), without a hint of salaciousness, as though someone had asked a simple question of a clothed woman involved in an acceptable profession and was interested in what she had to say. (136)

Kern provides an extremely interesting survey of trends in the surveillance of prostitutes, mostly in France and England, in the nineteenth century. He says that "the viewing of prostitutes sex organs... began in the 1830s" (Kern 140) as a response to growing concern about venereal disease and public morals. "These vaginal exams were supposed to discipline and regulate

prostitutes," (Kern 141) presumably by identifying women who were already diseased and removing them from the practice of prostitution, and acting as a reminder to the women to inspect their clients for any outward signs of sexually transmitted disease. However, these exams were instituted mainly "in order to protect other men from contamination" (Kern 141) and not to encourage any kind of proper sexual education or health in the prostitutes. Kern notes that in addition to being humiliating, exams "...were usually conducted without proper sanitary precautions and led to further contamination of the prostitutes." (142) This practice of police enforced vaginal exams culminated in England with the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869. (Kern 142)

> [These acts] were introduced to control venereal disease among soldiers, and they permitted special plainclothes policemen to identify any woman as a 'common prostitute' and oblige her to submit to fortnightly examinations. If found to be infected with gonorrhea or syphilis, she could be locked in a hospital for as long as nine months. No men or, of course, women inspected the soldiers' penises. All punishment fell on the prostitutes... (Kern 142)

These practices tell us what has been left out of artistic representations of prostitutes. While their eyes look out at us, and their bodies curve beneath the gaze, these realities of nineteenth century prostitution are what we cannot see. Even in the work of Lautrec, we get only a hint of degradation. Kern makes the point that prostitutes, "[i]n symbolizing what women were not supposed to be, they helped define what women were as well as what they were in danger of becoming." (152) This is very much the function of the image of the prostitute in Klute. Made in an era in which feminism was becoming increasingly visible in the media, as well as penetrating mainstream thought, Jane Fonda's portrayal of the prostitute Bree Daniels links the modern career woman and the prostitute.

Before embarking on the analysis of individual films, I feel it is important to define my own theoretical position. I consider Laura Mulvey's notion of the gaze to be of real importance, especially with regard to this subject. One cannot effectively articulate the filmed prostitute without a framework that includes a male gaze, particularly since Klute and Pretty Baby deal

explicitly with voyeurism. The gaze implies a sexualized and often exploitative camera eye, but one that I feel can be confronted, by analysis of the woman who returns the gaze with her own look. The gaze also functions as a female or homosexual male gaze when applied to American Gigolo, a film that blusters in its emphasis on the protagonist's heterosexuality. While Mulvey's gaze has a looker and an object, the relationship between these two positions can depend on who is looking, why, and in what context.

Chapter Two: Klute

Klute begins with the disappearance and murder of a Pennsylvania businessman, Tom Gruneman. When the police want to close the case after it goes unsolved for a year, Gruneman's wife hires a mutual friend who is a private investigator, John Klute (Donald Sutherland). Klute retraces Tom's movements and involvements, which eventually leads him to call girl and sometimes model/actress, Bree Daniels (Jane Fonda). Bree is skeptical and uneasy around Klute at first, since he has tapped her phone and followed her on a trick. Eventually she tells him that she believes she is being stalked, and he begins to feel protective. Klute and Bree become romantically involved as she takes him further into the underworld of New York prostitution, a world she herself is trying to escape from. As Bree becomes the target of more frequent harassment, Klute draws closer to the true identity of the killer. The final sequence is a confrontation between Bree and the killer, the very man who has been helping to continue the investigation into Tom Gruneman's disappearance, his colleague Peter Cable. As Cable delivers a terrifyingly misogynist justification for his multiple murders, he attacks Bree and then falls or jumps out the window as Klute arrives to save her. The film ends ambiguously as Bree quits her apartment in company with Klute, while her voice over indicates that she will not be keeping house with him, and that her analyst will probably see her next week.

When Klute was made in 1971, Jane Fonda was a star many identified as a liberated, modern woman, one who expressed the ideals of the women's movement in that era. For her role as the prostitute Bree Daniels, she won an Oscar. The film itself was hailed by many as a brilliant refashioning of film noir and garnered a great deal of critical attention. Some might ask why examine Klute at all, but the literature deals with the film as a contemporary film noir, or as an example of feminist backlash and the implied hypocrisy of Fonda's image. None of the articles deals with the image of the prostitute at length and what this means both culturally, and within the film itself, and this is why Klute is worth looking at in a new context. One of the more well-known articles written about Klute is Diane Giddis' "The Divided Woman: Bree Daniels in

Klute." Giddis feels that the film "functions on both levels, as a straight suspense story and as a dramatization of intense inner conflict."

Giddis, writing shortly after the release of the film in the early 1970s, notes that the women who had chosen to write about Klute had "failed to see it as one of particular interest to women." (195) She says this reaction may have been due to the following:

> ...[T]he heroine, Bree Daniels, is not self-consciously 'liberated,' or even struggling toward the kind of liberation currently meant by that term. If anything, she is going in the opposite direction: from a brittle but genuine self-sufficiency to love and dependence on a man. (195)

Basically, Klute was not generating sufficient commentary from female critics at the time of its release because the heroine, despite being played by an actress known for her modern image, was failing to tap into rising feminist concerns. Despite this, Giddis argues that the film is important and interesting for women because Bree does express "one of the greatest of contemporary female concerns: the conflict between the claims of love and the claims of autonomy." (195)

Giddis interprets the film's male protagonists, John Klute and Peter Cable, "...as projections of the heroine's psyche." (195) While Klute represents "a different way of life for Bree," (Giddis 196) in the possibility of love and a more settled existence, he also brings "the anonymous threat that stalks her into sudden, palpable life." Giddis notes that Klute and the stalker later revealed to be Cable "are almost always shown in juxtaposition," (196) but that both use similar methods to track Bree's movements. (Giddis 196) Cable stalks Bree: he makes "breather" phone calls, writes her harassing letters and spies on her in her apartment because he is an obsessed voyeur and sadist. His activities culminate with him breaking into her apartment, and vandalizing it, and finally confronting her in the empty garment shop. Klute tapes her phone calls and follows her to an appointment with a john, because he is a private investigator, but he later abandons these tactics after she has given him information.

"Klute can be seen as a projection of Bree's simultaneous need and fear of losing control. Cable can be seen as a projection of the need to maintain control." (Giddis 197) Klute is the man

Bree wants to surrender to, but whose tenderness and acceptance she also fears. In conversations with her analyst she says Klute has seen her worst aspects "and it doesn't seem to matter, and he seems to accept me," but that she constantly fights the urge to destroy the relationship. In terms of Cable, Giddis states "Cable is emotionally numb; Bree tries to be. At the height of her involvement with Klute, she tells her therapist that she would like to 'go back to the comfort of being numb again.'" (197)

Giddis says that in addition to the two men, Bree alternates between her "manipulative or defensive" prostitute persona and the "loving or vulnerable" woman. (198) Giddis uses the example of the scene where Bree cannot sleep and pays Klute a late night visit. Later on, Bree seduces him and they have sex. "But having exposed her vulnerability, she must now reassert her detachment—she informs Klute that, like the rest of her johns, he has failed to satisfy her. As before, she assumes the role of prostitute when threatened." (Giddis 198) The scene actually concludes with Klute sitting silently on a chair looking for all the world like he has just broken a vow of chastity. Bree, reclining on the mattress with a supremely satisfied look on her face, cheerily tells Klute he was great, then asks seriously "Are you upset you didn't make me come? I never come with a john." She then gets up and exits with the line "Don't feel bad about losing your virtue, I sort of knew you would. Everybody always does."

Having admitted her fear and sleeplessness, and in turn her need for comfort and safety in a genuinely frightening situation, Bree then employs her defense mechanism: sex. But, not only has Klute failed to satisfy her sexually by not giving her an orgasm, he has failed to resist her charms. Once she has succeeded in making him want her, Bree asserts control over Klute by making him subject to the sexual desires he has seemed to be without up until this point in the film. When he turned down her previous advances, she replied with "Men have paid $200 dollars for me and here you are turning down a freebie. You could get a perfectly good dishwasher for that." This statement reflects awareness of her commodified status as a prostitute, but also her willingness to

trade on her sexual appeal. This line suggests feminist issues around the value placed upon women's physical appeal to men, but also signals a bitter acceptance of this as a fact of life.

The ending of the film, after Cable has fallen or jumped out the window of the garment shop "...signals the start of a new life for Bree... [who] is leaving New York for a small town in Pennsylvania with Klute, apparently giving up prostitution for good." (Giddis 199) While this is a perfectly viable interpretation of the film's ending, it seems much more open-ended, especially considering Bree's voice-over to her psychiatrist, "you'll probably see me next week." It is unclear whether Bree is really going away with Klute. Despite the final phone call where she turns down her last john, I have trouble believing that an urban dweller like Bree would leave New York forever.

Giddis states that this film "is the story of a woman and her battle not *for* love but *with* love—and as such would seem to have particular relevance for women today." (199) Giddis sees Klute as "a metaphor for the intense struggle many women go through when they find themselves getting involved with a man." (199) Bree's struggle with her own identity, her need for love and whether she is able to accept love from someone else, are things that people go through in the initial stages of a relationship. Giddis feels this is addressed in a meaningful and realistic way through Bree's character and she seems surprised that other female critics have not noticed. Giddis sees Bree's emotional turmoil over her relationship with Klute as essentially common to all women in greater or lesser degrees and that this "possibility of being swallowed up" (200) is something women are aware of when entering a relationship with a man. Giddis claims that a woman's identity is more precarious than a man's and that this is why women may fear losing themselves in a relationship. She also states that "women are more conscious than ever before of the need to redress the balance, of the importance of their commitment to themselves as well as to a man." (Giddis 201) Despite these concerns that are still very timely for women, Giddis does see the film's ending as representing "a man's world" (201) in which the woman follows and the man leads. In the end, "Bree's bare room—totally stripped, except for the telephone" (Giddis 201)

reflects the pared down Bree who goes off with Klute, perhaps still uncertain of her direction in life.

Giddis' article deals more with Bree as woman than as a prostitute, but the different aspects of Bree's personality correspond to her everyday persona and her prostitute persona. Bree prides herself on her ability to control and seduce men, and she even feels good after she turns a trick. As a prostitute her whole attitude is different. The moment that really epitomizes this is Bree unzipping her sequined sheath dress as she looks over her shoulder at Klute, with a gaze that dares him to resist her. As a prostitute Bree knows exactly what her assets are and how to use them, and she is confident in her ability to be sexy. As a single career woman trying to make ends meet through acting and modeling jobs, Bree's unsure of what she has to offer.

Bree tries to model even though she doesn't meet the standards of beauty culture and she tries to act even though she does not have a lot of experience. Even her analyst says to her "you're successful as a prostitute," implying she is not that successful as an actress or a model. The modeling and acting auditions we see her at even emphasize the sexualization of women more than the prostitution scenes. The modeling agency shows a line-up of women being openly commented upon by the anonymous man and woman from the make-up campaign. All they say about Bree is that she has "funny hands." On one acting job she goes to, the director attempts to seduce Bree and when she appears to really only be interested in the acting, he sends her away saying she should notify him if she acts in anything soon. Both scenes call attention to the similarities between prostitution, acting and modeling, unifying the two images of the "working girl": the prostitute and the young career woman.

Christine Gledhill wrote two companion articles on Klute, analyzing it through the lens of feminism and as an example of new American film noir. The first article "Klute 1: A Contemporary Film Noir and Feminist Criticism" deals primarily with Gledhill's tenets for feminist film criticism and what characterizes film noir. Gledhill narrows her focus to five things which make film noir an interesting locus for female characters:

1.The investigative structure of the narrative.
2.Plot devices such as voice-over or flashback, or frequently both.
3.Proliferation of points of view
4.Frequent unstable characterization of the heroine
5.An 'expressionist' visual style and emphasis on sexuality in the photographing of women. (Gledhill 27)

Gledhill, like Giddis, states that films like Klute articulate "a world of action defined in male terms." (Gledhill 28) Men are the ones who seem to move freely through the film and are the characters who seem to know best how to navigate the corrupt world in which they find themselves. Gledhill states that women in film noir fall into two camps:

> ...[T]here are those who work on the fringes of the underworld... barflies, nightclub singers, expensive mistresses, femmes fatales and ruthless gold-diggers... and then there are on the outer margins of this world, wives, long-suffering girl-friends, would-be fiancées who are victims of male crime, sometimes the object of the hero's protection and often points of vulnerability in his masculine armour. (28)

In the case of Klute, Bree begins the film as a member of the underworld, but also as a victim of male crime. She is defined by her continued involvement in prostitution and she seeks refuge at various points in the narrative in the underworld of nightclubs and her old boyfriend and pimp Frankie. But, she also becomes the object of Klute's protection and is constantly the target of Peter Cable's stalking and harassment.

In film noir, women frequently become the central figures, and hence "the central problem in the unraveling of truth." (Gledhill 28) This is very much the case with Klute, which places Bree at the center of the narrative. She becomes the key to finding the killer of Klute's missing friend, and to finding the client who beat her up and is still stalking her. Gledhill also finds that "...film noir probes the secrets of female sexuality and male desire within the patterns of submission and dominance." (28) Issues of submission and dominance permeate Klute. Bree is constantly wrestling for control of her own life and self. As a prostitute she dominates, but she also realizes the lifestyle is unhealthy for her, and so she works to give up the only profession which has ever given her a sense of control. A traditional relationship with Klute requires her submission, or at least that is how Bree perceives it, and she rails against this because it is not what she is used to.

Her chosen (legal) professions of acting and modeling require Bree to give up herself, (she even says "I lose myself when I'm acting,") to submit to someone else's idea of who she should be for a certain amount of time. While she seems to enjoy these pursuits, she never succeeds at them the way she does at prostitution. This may be because Bree feels that prostitution requires her to give nothing of herself. Even though she has sex with strange men for money, she never feels that she has to submit to them. In the first scene between Bree and her analyst, they establish what it is about prostitution that Bree enjoys.

> Analyst: What's the difference between going out on a call as a model or an actress and as a call girl?
> Bree: Because as a call girl you control it, ...someone wants you. Not me, there are some johns that I have regularly that want me, and that's terrific, but they want a woman and I know I'm good and I arrive at their hotel or their apartment and they're usually nervous, which is fine because I'm not, I know what I'm doing and for an hour, for an hour, I'm the best actress in the world I'm the best fuck in the world—
> Analyst: Why do you say you're the best actress in the world?
> Bree: Because it's an act. That's what's nice about it. You don't have to feel anything, you don't have to care about anything, you don't have to like anybody, you just uh, you just lead them by the ring in their nose in the direction that they think they want to go in and you get a lot of money out of them in as short a period as possible and you control it, and you call the shots, and I always feel just great afterwards.

Although she states that she does not enjoy prostitution physically, Bree likes the feeling of control she has over men and over the sexual situation. Since nothing else in her life seems able to provider her with the same feeling of mastery, she returns to prostitution periodically to experience this feeling and to supplement her income.

The other character whose sense of control centers around prostitution is Peter Cable. Cable is a sadist whose only true fulfillment comes when he can physically assault and kill prostitutes. When he confronts Bree in the final scenes of the film, he claims that she and women like her released the sadistic element of his personality, leading him to assault and kill Bree's old friend Arlen Page, and to murder Klute's friend Tom Gruneman because he had discovered Cable's secret. Cable seems to have spiraled down the path of many of the Marquis de Sade's fictions. He states, "I've done terrible things, I've killed three people, and yet I don't consider myself a

terrible man." Cable espouses an attitude directly the opposite of de Sade's, who felt that all the appetites and vices should be explored. (A.Carter 20) Cable says "...that there are little corners in everyone that were better off left alone. Sicknesses, weaknesses, which should never be exposed." Cable, operating in an amoral fashion, applies morality to the actions of others in retrospect. By blaming his first session with Bree, (the recorded voice over we hear throughout the film,) for the unleashing of his sadism Cable absolves himself of blame. However, the recorded monologue delivered by Bree seems to be precisely the sort of thing she might say to coax any reticent customer into telling her what he would really like in the hopes that it will be unusual and therefore more expensive.

The idea that what Bree says to Cable, "nothing is wrong," taps into the disturbed part of his brain depends on whether you believe criminal sadists are made or born. In Klute we only hear Cable's justification for his sadism, where he basically claims that prostitutes, trading on "a man's weakness," convinced him his desires were acceptable (for a certain fee.) This led him to act towards prostitutes in non-consensual, violent ways, eventually culminating in his desire to kill. Looking at Klute as an example of film noir, the mapping of male desire is polarized between the silent tenderness of John Klute and the deadly silence of Peter Cable. Female sexuality is polarized within the figure of Bree as a liberated woman who also has no problem prostituting herself.

Gledhill discusses the role of point of view and how this affects the perception of women in film noir: "Where a single woman is seen from several viewpoints—either by different characters (*Laura*) or at different moments in time (*Double Indemnity, Out of the Past*), what is produced is a fractured, incoherent image." (30) Diane Giddis' article also confirms that Bree is a fractured character, seen through the eyes of two different men at various times. Her image oscillates between hardened urban prostitute and sophisticated modern woman. While I would not classify Bree as an incoherent female image, the ways in which we see prostitution and women's liberation become increasingly complex and intertwined in Klute.

> In the noir thriller, where the male voice-over is not in control of the plot, and on the contrary represents a hero on a quest for the truth, not only is the hero frequently not sure whether the woman is honest or a deceiver, but the heroine's characterization is itself fractured so that it is not evident to the audience whether she fills the stereotype [of the femme fatale] or not. (Gledhill 31)

In the above passage Gledhill describes the type of noir thriller which more or less fits Klute. The film has no male voice-over to speak of, in fact most of the voice-over is the recording of Bree. The hero, John Klute, is on a quest for the truth about his friend's disappearance and is confused about Bree's role in his investigation and his life. As far as fitting the stereotype of the femme fatale, Bree plays it up when it suits her, like when she first tries to seduce Klute into giving her the tapes of her phone calls, and abandons it totally at other points. Bree going about her daily business is hardly Louise Brooks, but when she dons her evening gown or her tall boots and strides through the city, she echoes those sexy vamps.

> The noir heroine frequently emerges from shadows... More crucially, of course she is filmed for her sexuality. ...[S]exuality is often signaled by a long elegant leg... Dress either emphasizes sexuality—long besequined sheath dresses—or masculine independence and aggression—square, padded shoulders, bold striped suits. (Gledhill 32)

Bree often emerges from her shadowy apartment throughout the film. She is also seen in shadow during her session with the elderly client Mr. Goldfarb, during which she tells an elaborate story and slowly undresses. Bree is also filmed for her easy sexuality. Her outfit in the film's opening scenes consists of a turtleneck sweater worn without a bra, a long wrap skirt and tall boots, a very popular look for the early 1970's. There is nothing about these clothes that marks Bree as a prostitute, but her style, especially the bralessness, signals a liberated femininity for the time. On the street her outfit makes her the stylish but anonymous woman. Later, we see her in micro-mini and thigh-high black leather boots, also fashionable for the time, but nonetheless associated more with the apparel favoured by prostitutes. It is also interesting that Giddis mentions sequined sheath dresses, as Bree wears one during the scene with the elderly client when Klute spies on her. This is the same dress she later unzips in her first attempt to seduce Klute. The dress itself is typical of the form-fitting vampy attire of film noir's femmes

fatales: long, dark, sequined and accessorized with a feather boa. It clings to Fonda's compact body and she unzips it one handed with the ease of a born seductress.

Bree's clothing in the beginning masks her profession of prostitute. Unlike such films as Pretty Woman, Bree does not need a man's coat to cover her dress. She can easily make the transition from a john's apartment to grocery shopping in the same clothes. Bree masquerades throughout the film. She hides her nervous feelings behind a tough exterior and conceals her body beneath stylish urban women's wear. Even when she wears more revealing garb, a mini dress and tall boots, it is balanced with a high, closed neckline and trench coat. Her evening gown is also subtle. While body hugging, the dress reveals no flesh stretching from neck to ankle, except when Bree chooses to unzip, revealing her sculpted braless back. Rather than letting her clothes communicate what mode she is in, Bree's attitude is what indicates whether she is assuming her prostitute persona or not.

Gledhill feels that Klute's overall look comes "from a Europeanised Hollywood which, while it seeks stylishness, also eschews the notion of the conventional, the stereotype, and looks for a contemporary authenticity and psychological truth." (33) Basically, Klute looks somewhat European, but is really just an expatriate American. Gledhill sums up her argument with the notion that "...the contradictions around woman animated by the dislocated world of film noir are thematically relocated and made amenable to resolution in the name of contemporary authenticity." (33) Film noir reconfigured for the 1970s works for women because of the contradictions frequently present in images of women within the conventions of film noir as a genre. Klute is a famous and sterling example of this, as it presents a woman of the early 1970's struggling to know herself and find independence, who is also a participant in the world's oldest profession.

Gledhill's second article on Klute, "Klute 2: Feminism and Klute" criticizes Diane Giddis for "ignor[ing] the conventions of film noir" (99) in her analysis of the film. Gledhill also points out

that while the film modernizes the femme fatale "in more upfront sexual terms as the prostitute" (99) it also attempts the following:

> ...to articulate, within the ambience of the thriller, a modern version of the independent woman, conceived of as the sexually liberated, unattached, hip woman and so without mentioning feminism or women's liberation [is] arguably trying to cash in on these concerns to enhance the modernity of the type."(Gledhill 99)

She goes on to say that Klute stereotypes women because "however fascinating, different and admirable the would-be emancipated woman is—struggling to assert her own identity in a male world, and professing a new, non-repressive and sexual morality—in the end she is actually neurotic, fragile, lonely and unhappy." (100)

Gledhill disagrees with Giddis' reading of the two male protagonists as extensions of Bree's personality, as "it is difficult to see how this relation between the two men is established in the filmic organization of the text as the expression of Bree's subjectivity." (101) Gledhill's analysis relies heavily on the established conventions of film noir and the stated intentions of director Alan J. Pakula, who was interested in making a film in the noir tradition, but with a contemporary twist. (Gledhill 102)

Of particular interest are the ways in which Gledhill says sexuality and the place of the woman are shifted from their traditional meaning in film noir. For one thing, Bree "is not the instrument of Tom Gruneman's fate, but a clue on the way to its discovery" (Gledhill 103) and because she is not the criminal element, " the relationship between the detective and the heroine... is freed of the psychopathic quality it has in the 40s thriller." (Gledhill 103) Traditional film noir places great emphasis on "...the reliability or otherwise of the woman, the degree of fidelity or treachery inherent in her sexuality." (Gledhill 103) but in Klute, the stereotype of the femme fatale is not always present and is frequently associated with Bree's tough prostitute persona that she takes on and off like her vampy dress. Another difference between Klute and its filmic forebears is that the hero "...develops a protective attitude towards [the heroine] and far from seeking to expose the evil of her sexuality, his desire is to save her." (Gledhill 103)

Gledhill carefully delineates the patterns of investigation in Klute. She begins with the most important triangle of Klute and Cable, watching Bree for their own reasons. Cable obsessively stalks Bree "because it was his encounter with Bree and her permissive counter-culture philosophy—'nothing is wrong, let it all hang out'—which first led him to locate all the evils of the world and male backsliding with women." (Gledhill 104) Klute also watches Bree, "first as a detective, because it is only through Bree's work as a prostitute that he can hope to trace the client, known for beating up call girls, who is reputed to be Tom Gruneman; later however, he keeps watch as a protector, wanting to save Bree from unknown intruders." (Gledhill 104) The next pattern that emerges is that of Cable employing Klute to find out what happened to Tom Gruneman. Cable "initiates an investigation into himself, an investigation which forces him to hasten the completion of his work," (Gledhill 104) ensuring that his crimes will be discovered.

The third pattern of investigation is the dynamic of confession and investigation between Bree and her psychotherapist, where "Bree recognizes her sexual activity as a prostitute as a kind of sickness, wishes to find its origins and effect a cure." (Gledhill 104) Gledhill feels that these scenes between Bree and her therapist "...draw attention to the psychotherapeutic discourse as the key to the other investigatory structures, demanding they be read in psycho-spiritual terms." (104) She also feels that this particular pattern "...rearticulates the *femme fatale* stereotype of film noir to bring it in line with contemporary female stereotypes and in doing so, I would argue, contributes to the neutralization of the female threat to patriarchy." (Gledhill 104)

Gledhill also notes the way in which the city of New York becomes an element of Klute's investigation. "It is a city located not in a socio-economic system but in a moral sphere, and condemned for its abandonment to desperate hedonism, material acquisition, indulgent self-expression and perverted pleasures." (Gledhill 105) Most of what we see of the city Bree inhabits are its brothels, nightclubs and tenement apartments, as well as the rarified (and possibly more corrupt) atmosphere of Cable's office and the auditions that Bree goes on. The underside of New York and Bree's connection with it, are exposed simultaneously.

Gledhill states that the image of the prostitute in Klute effectively replaces the traditional femme fatale. (107) The prostitute image has "journalistic appeal as a topic made acceptable for public discussion at the time of the film's making and therefore can be used to evoke references to the world of contemporary reality," (Gledhill 107) a notion that both Gledhill and Giddis seem to be concerned with. Both critics seem to feel that recasting the femme fatale as a woman who openly prostitutes herself is far more realistic and interesting if one is striving to rearticulate film noir for the early 1970s. The authenticity associated with the image of the prostitute automatically lends the film grittiness. In 1940s film noir it is usually the hard boiled detective that gives the story its low down quality, but in Klute, it resides with the woman and aspects of her life.

Although John Klute undoubtedly retains the coolness of his film noir predecessors, he lacks the hardened glaze of the urban private eye. He evokes none of the unshaven, chain-smoking, fedoraed charm of the Philip Marlowes of this world. Klute stands alone as a new breed of tough guy: the stoic and carefully controlled suburban PI infiltrating the city, while remaining untouched by its decayed morality.

Gledhill also credits the prostitute image with "...the metaphoric power to refer to deeper issues of morality and personal relationships: here [in Klute] it represents alienated sexuality, which in turn represents the alienation at the heart of our society." (108) Bree Daniels is a prostitute who is also a sexually emancipated woman, portrayed as being alienated from the traditional female urge towards nesting and monogamy. Despite her gestures towards feminism and independence, she is also locked into the cycle of wanting to destroy a stable monogamous relationship and even the ending of the film does not provide definite closure on the direction of Bree's life. As to the 'alienation at the heart of society,' Klute shows us an urban sprawl populated by the alienated, and it isn't just the prostitutes. Bree is the key to an underworld of people who are running by different rules than the ones John Klute is accustomed to. The madams and their girls, the nightclub goers, all have a surreal quality which separates them from

what we see of Klute's society in Pennsylvania and Klute himself is an alien in New York, unaccustomed to the pace and qualities of urban living.

> [T]he prostitute, as an independent woman, working with other women to make a living out of men, offers a figure—especially when played by Jane Fonda, known for her supposed 'liberation'—which can accrue to itself some of the trendy modernity of the bachelor girl stereotype, and some of the more popularized aspects of the image of the liberated woman without having to stray too far from territory familiar to audiences and actually broach feminism. (Gledhill 108)

Gledhill confirms my previous assertion that the image of the prostitute in Klute becomes mixed up with the image of the liberated modern woman, especially when played by Jane Fonda. The prostitute replaces the femme fatale of film noir as "a more defined sexual role," (Gledhill 108) but (according to Gledhill) without the latter's strength. As an independent woman making her living out of sex with men, Bree operates as a call girl. She uses a service where she calls in to get information on the location of a client and then goes to his apartment or hotel, where they negotiate the price for the type of sex. In the opening sequence, Bree attends an unsuccessful modeling audition and calls her service from a payphone saying she "needs a quick fifty." We next see her entering the hotel of a businessman. They discuss the sort of "party" he'd like to have. She tells him they can have "a nice half and half party," which means she'll spend half the time going down on him and the other half having intercourse, but she encourages him to whisper in her ear what he would really like. Whatever it is, she tells him it sounds great but it's going to cost more.

The union of the prostitute and 'bachelor girl stereotype' is a good one in Klute, it suits the era and the style of the film. While the film does not mention feminism, Fonda's style and image carry certain signifiers: sexual frankness, and self-assurance despite Bree's statement, "I'm a nervous broad." Bree's concerns, her confusion over Klute and the strange direction her life has taken over the years are not uncommon or hollow, and something about these scenes gives an importance to her voice, and by extension, the female voice in cinema. But Klute is not a lost work of feminism that needs to be reclaimed, and has its share of unnerving imagery. Gledhill

astutely points out "Bree's voice has been stolen by her aggressor, Cable, and turned against her. Words uttered in one context are in another turned into indices of the evil which female sexuality incites in men." (109) She feels that "...the female voice that speaks of a struggle for control, for independence, ... that falteringly speaks some of the themes of feminism—is undermined and contradicted by the image." (109) Gledhill cites the ending particularly, with Bree's voice-over indicating she has no desire to "be setting up housekeeping in Tuscorora," while she is simultaneously seen leaving her empty apartment with Klute. (Gledhill 109) The ending is not so closed to my mind, and it leaves me wondering where Bree is going, whether she is moving to another apartment, going away somewhere by herself, or whether she really is going to Pennsylvania with John Klute. I do not feel we can be sure of her actions and the conclusion of the film remains open-ended for me.

Gledhill stresses the style in which director Alan J. Pakula films Jane Fonda. According to her, it walks a fine line between female subjectivity and woman as object. Gledhill says the style is "candid" and suggests "social documentary" (110) while at the same time establishing Bree as the object of a gaze. Considering the nature of the film and the fact that the plot revolves around the female character being stalked and observed, it is difficult to imagine how or even why Pakula would have shot Fonda in another way. Gledhill discusses how the nature of the opening shots makes viewers feel "...that we have come closer and closer to the heroine's subjectivity, while at the same time the moral structures of the film are being set up to leave little room for a female point of view." (110)

"The basic threat to patriarchy which the film deals with is the possibility of women asserting their sexuality independently of men, using it to their own ends and deserting their succouring role to the male in order to gain control over him." (Gledhill 111) This is how Cable perceives the prostitutes: they prey upon his "weakness," his sadism, and gain some sort of control over him by knowing about this and telling him "nothing is wrong." By offering an aspect of their sexuality in

exchange for money, the prostitute in Klute does raise the issue of women using their sexuality for their own gain. However, within the structure of the film this notion is a double-edged sword.

> The prostitute's attempt to control her sexuality, her claim to wield the normally male prerogative of words, leads her to actively engage with male sexual fantasy, instead of passively being its object. In offering the male knowledge of his own sexuality, instead of helping him maintain a veil of secrecy over it, she releases all the repression on which patriarchal civilization is popularly based and for this she must be punished and destroyed. ...[T]hus she comes to fill the place of the noir heroine, responsible for murder even if she has not actually sought harm to anyone. (Gledhill 112)

Gledhill concludes her rigorous dissection of Klute with the notion that the structure of the film contains "fragments that refer forcefully to the images and problems of a struggling feminism." (113) The contradictory image of the prostitute/liberated woman, and the silent virginal hero (Gledhill 113) inhabit a world which echoes the film noir of the past, while incorporating modern images.

Maggie Humm devotes part of a chapter to Klute in her book Feminism and Film. She tackles the film from a largely psychoanalytic point of view, drawing heavily on Laura Mulvey's notion of the gaze.

> *Klute* is a film in which the gaze imposes itself with particular force, through a continuous series of camera oppositions and strategic points of view which identify a (male) spectator with male characters. ...The narrative of *Klute* involves the gradual exposing of Bree Daniel's career of prostitution by Klute, an ex-policeman hired by Cable (finally revealed to be the psychopathic killer), in order to solve a mutual friend's murder. On one level *Klute*, like many *film noir*, shows, step by step, how men are free to violate those women who have placed themselves outside conventional family life, and finally impose on them a heterosexual monogamous sterility where patriarchal control is more certain. (Humm 49)

Basically, she sees Klute as a film in which Mulvey's notion of a possessive male gaze is constantly felt. This feeling of being watched permeates the film and gives it much of its suspenseful, thrilling quality. Viewers can easily begin to sympathize or even empathize with Bree's nervousness as she is stalked more and more frequently, and Cable's tactics escalate from breather phone calls to full fledged vandalism and home invasion. Mann identifies the freedom allotted to women in film noir, which often comes with a price. While these women are often

unconventional, they are frequently preyed upon or seen as possessing destructive qualities. Bree Daniels is seen easily making her way around New York. Her stylish clothes and hair mark her as being at the forefront of fashion and sexual liberation circa 1971, while at the same time trying to make a professional living as an actress and model. Cable perceives all prostitutes, and specifically Bree, as possessing the power to make men sexually dependent on them, and because of this he seeks them out and kills them. Because Bree is a character 'outside conventional family life,' the narrative is constantly trying to bring her back into the folds of convention by having her try to cure herself of prostitution through psychoanalysis and by paring her off with Klute in an ambiguous ending.

Mann asserts "it is the tape recordings [of Bree's voice] not the camera, which is the apparatus which controls, manipulates and objectifies women." (52) She states that " I would argue that Klute horrifies female spectators not only because we are 'framed' in Bree's journey from prostitution to monogamous suburbia but also because in her silenced voice we hear her sexuality repressed." (Mann 52) As a female spectator, I was certainly frightened by the film at various points and I do find the scenes with Cable creepily Sadeian, but whether this has more to do with noir techniques and an eerie soundtrack, I'm not sure. The way in which the tape of Bree's voice is used throughout Klute is terrifying and indicates the killer's desire not just to repress her sexuality, but to pervert it and use it against her, and this is more disturbing than the drive to sexual repression.

Mann's article is a call to place equal emphasis on the woman's voice, as well as her image. Due to the contradictory way in which Bree's voice is used, we cannot just examine her image. Klute is a film which shows the prostitute as any woman, a woman whose lifestyle makes many gestures towards feminism, but who prostitutes herself like her painted forebears in Degas, to supplement her income. She also claims sexual liberation, which the film hints is the reason why she finds it empowering to get her johns to tell her what kind of sex they would really like. Bree Daniels is not so different from other women. She wants love but does not always know what to

do with it, she wants independence but cannot always reconcile that with her fears and the need to be cared for. In a way, Klute is a film that equalizes: prostitutes do not always look the way we think they will and any woman could be one.

Chapter Three: The 'Brothel' Films: Pretty Baby and McCabe and Mrs. Miller

Stella Bruzzi in her book Undressing Cinema, examines the place and symbolism of clothing in films. In her analysis she comments extensively on costume dramas and historical romances: "A charge frequently leveled at historical romances is that (unlike, presumably, comparable pieces of men's cinema) they sideline history and foreground far more trivial interests in desire, sex and clothes." (Bruzzi 35) Bruzzi is of course being ironic with this statement as these interests cannot really be classed as trivial when so many people find them fascinating, and when they are clearly an important component of film making.

Pretty Baby and McCabe and Mrs. Miller are also costume dramas and romances that transcend the qualities generally attached to such films. Pretty Baby recreates an almost mythical time and place, managing to evoke an entire vice district by taking us inside the daily life of a partly fictionalized Storyville brothel. It also deals sensitively with the sexuality of children and young girls, putting it on par with Stanley Kubrick's Lolita. By locating prostitution in the body of a child and the sexualized environment in which she grows up, Pretty Baby delivers a unique perspective on the film image of the prostitute. McCabe and Mrs. Miller is a western, a genre never discussed in terms of costume drama, but always in terms of the values of the American frontier it mythologizes. This film gives one of the most honest portraits of a prostitute. Mrs. Miller has no illusions when it comes to her profession or her environment. Both these films will be dealt with in their own right in this section, but I have grouped them together because they are both period films and deal with whorehouses rather than individual prostitutes, as do Klute and American Gigolo.

Pretty Baby

Louis Malle's Pretty Baby, revolves around the figure of a barely pubescent Brooke Shields as Violet, the twelve-year-old prostitute who is born and raised in an elaborate brothel in the old New Orleans red light district of Storyville. This film, made in 1978, is often acknowledged as one of Malle's poorer works. It was also his first American effort. Marsha McCreadie, in her

synopsis of the film in The Casting Couch and Other Front Row Seats, says that many of Malle's most compelling films center around adolescents, (one of the more well-known examples being Au Revoir les Enfants). But, because Pretty Baby deals with explicit sexuality, it is most often noted for the fact that Shields was actually twelve when she made it and that she appears fully nude.

Pretty Baby is set in 1917, and opens with Violet watching her mother Hattie (Susan Sarandon) give birth. At this point, Violet is still very much a child, but with full run of the brothel, doing errands and peeking into bedrooms. She is friendly with all the other prostitutes and the black piano player. As the film progresses, Violet grows more curious about participating in prostitution. When the photographer Ernest Bellocq arrives, she tries to get his attention as he takes her mother's picture. It is at this point we discover that Hattie frequently claims Violet as her sister, rather than her daughter.

The real Ernest Bellocq spent most of his life as commercial photographer. The only examples of his personal work known to still exist are the photographs he took of the Storyville prostitutes. Very little is known about him and the plates that survive are rumored to be a fraction of his oeuvre. (Rose 59-60) The photos themselves are remarkable. Some are hypnotic, others more documentary, artistic, candid, or erotic. It is really Bellocq's vision that informs Malle's film.

As Bellocq becomes more of a fixture at the brothel, Violet is integrated further into prostitution, going from a child in her nightgown or frilly dress to a young girl in bloomers, camisole and stockings, an ensemble worn by many of the other prostitutes. Finally the madam, Nell Livingston, decides it is time to auction off Violet's virginity. Violet is fitted with a special white dress, almost as if for her first communion, and brought in on a platter with sparklers, as the final course of a dinner for the brothel's preferred clients. Bidding goes high and she is sold "to the man with $400 cash."

Once Violet loses her virginity, she becomes one of the most popular prostitutes in the house and makes a lot of money. Violet moves in with Bellocq after she has a falling out with Nell and

the brothel housekeeper, when she is caught seducing boys her own age in the barn. As much as Bellocq loves Violet, she is still a child, with a child's artless irresponsibility and whimsy, and this angers and frustrates him. He photographs her as a child in a flowered hat and dress holding a doll, and naked on a fainting couch, making a record of Violet's polarities. Violet runs away from Bellocq after a fight and returns to Storyville to find it being picketed by religious reformers (the district was shut down in 1917).

At this point, the other prostitutes decide to remove to Chicago and Violet prepares to go with them. Bellocq reappears and asks her to marry him. They return to New Orleans as man and wife and during a scene in which it is implied that Violet may be pregnant, her now respectable married mother returns to claim her. The film ends with Violet dressed in age-appropriate clothing, being photographed by her step-father as they stand on the station platform bound for St. Louis.

Neil D. Isaacs wrote a brief article entitled "Malle's Eye for Rose's Storyville," dealing with one of the film's major sources, Al Rose's book Storyville New Orleans. The book is most often cited for Storyville's association with the rise of jazz, as many of the black musicians at that time could only get work "in saloons and whorehouses," (Isaacs 223) but is, in fact, a loose and spirited collection of anecdotes, photographs and facts compiled by people who still remembered "the District." (Rose 1) Isaacs remarks "Malle's main focus rested... on the accompanying illustrations, especially on several taken from the surviving plates of Ernest J. Bellocq." (223) It is not just Bellocq's aesthetic that informs the film, but several of his actual images "...serve as models for tableaux imbedded in the texture of Malle's film," (223) and I have noted at least two of these. One is the scene in which Bellocq photographs the naked Violet on a dark leather fainting couch. The original (plate 8 Storyville Portraits) displays a similar looking girl with a small build and long dark hair, but clearly more physically mature. The other is a fleeting shot of a prostitute posing in a body stocking. The first photo of Hattie, taken against a tapestry backdrop in the brothel's back yard, echoes several of the original plates.

Isaacs mentions that Malle based the character of Violet on the experience of a woman who worked as a performer and prostitute in Storyville at a young age. The real-life "Violet" had a life far more sexually diverse than Malle's Violet, since she informs Rose that while she remained a virgin until she was twelve, she started turning tricks when she was ten. To put Malle's child prostitute in perspective, Rose's Violet lost her virginity at the famous brothel run by Emma Johnson, a famous madam mentioned in the film. Violet and her friend had been performing in Emma's "circus" which she held several nights a week, and the details are sketchy, but everyone seems to agree that this was the height of debauchery available in Storyville. On this particular night, Violet and her friend were both auctioned off to the same man for seven hundred and seventy-five dollars each. (Rose 150) So while Malle recreates a virginity auction in Pretty Baby, it seems the historical example was far more racy.

In Pretty Baby, Ernest Bellocq is played by Keith Carradine as "a man of repressed sexuality, but reasonable attractiveness, accepted by the women primarily because they enjoy his pictures and posing for them." (Isaacs 224) Indeed, when he comes to show Hattie her print, the other women surround him exclaiming how beautiful Hattie looks and begging him to photograph them next. Isaacs says that Bellocq's photos "suggest the sensitivity, the rapport, the unqualified aesthetic delight Bellocq brought to his subjects and their environs," (224) which is something Malle captures in the scenes between Bellocq and Hattie. Since he begins by paying for her time like any other client, Hattie does what Bellocq asks of her, but later begins to make suggestions. At their first session, Hattie has been dragged from the side of her regular john, whom she eventually marries. She is hung over and her son William needs to be breast-fed. Bellocq arrives early in the morning and because Hattie happens to be awake, he pays the madam for her time. Hattie is tired, cranky and does not even particularly want her picture taken. After she sees how nice the picture turns out though, she begins to enjoy it. Hattie serves as Bellocq's main model until he switches over to Violet. Violet begins by being jealous of the attention Bellocq lavishes on her mother with his camera. She hangs around, prying into things because she is curious about

how the photos are made. She and Hattie pose together in identical outfits at one point, as if they really were sisters, but Violet never seems to fully enjoy having to hold still for Bellocq's lens. After she goes to live with him and he photographs her constantly and exclusively, she always becomes restless and angry.

Isaacs claims "the subject [of Pretty Baby] is not, as the flacks would have, child prostitution, but voyeurism." (224) So while Klute is about a prostitute subjected to an insidious voyeurism, Pretty Baby seems to be about a more benevolent asexual voyeurism, that of the photographer Bellocq. The photographer as voyeur, and as a highly sexualized one, is a fairly common idea, reinforced by the work of men like Helmut Newton and David Bailey. Films like Antonioni's Blow-Up, articulate the intense sexual atmosphere that can occur when men photograph women. One need only think of the clichéd epithet 'make love to the camera!' that fashion photographers say to models. Pretty Baby differs entirely from this tradition. Some of Bellocq's Storyville portraits are highly erotic, but these are not present in Malle's film. Within the context of Pretty Baby Bellocq is an artist of desire who lacks it himself. Even when Violet throws herself at him and jumps all over his bed, he seems to be indulging her child's exuberance rather than surrendering to a sexual passion.

> [Malle] has made the 'innocent' observation—whether from Bellocq's hooded lens, Violet's unblinking eye, or the mischievous spying of Bellocq's young neighbors, whether curious or prurient—the focus of his attention. That is why when Violet's virginity is sold at auction, so many of the shots draw attention to the younger children at the house who will take over Violet's role as pure watcher. And that is why, in the closing shots, when a former client who has married Hattie poses mother and daughter for a snapshot before the train takes them to their new straight life upriver, the ironic parody of Bellocq's mother-daughter portrait and the frozen frame of Violet's innocent close-up are slightly out of focus and overexposed. (224

The prostitutes who posed for Bellocq, "...were models free of inhibition and affectation," (Isaacs 224) not unlike Degas's milliners and laundresses. The prostitutes of Pretty Baby, while free of inhibition, are certainly full of affectation. The amusing thing about this is that we are constantly seeing the difference between how they act with each other, and how they act with

clients. In one of the opening scenes in the brothel, we see a man who has paid for two girls and wants to get on with his evening. The prostitute by his side placates him saying "we're going to have ourselves a time!" and then quickly leans over the banister and says to Violet "Go and fetch Agnes yonder, will you baby? Tell her to haul it up to the blue room," after which she reverts back to a high-pitched coquette voice as she leads her client upstairs. This sort of episode occurs throughout the film, exposing the masquerade techniques regularly employed by the prostitutes. Frieda, the German prostitute, has a regular elderly client who lavishes gifts on her, but she confides to Violet that she 'doesn't give a damn for him' but continues to keep him because he is rich and may take her away from the brothel. Violet's own mother, Hattie, is one of the most popular prostitutes, but says she's terrified she'll get "little casino" (gonorrhea) and wants nothing more than to get married and become respectable. Hattie was born into prostitution and her craving for respectability drives Violet to embrace the only life she's ever known.

The importance of how to act with a client becomes especially clear when Frieda and another prostitute debate how Violet should behave when she loses her virginity.

> Freida: You've got to give him the idea that you don't know nothing. It should be like a rape.
> Other: You don't know. Could be a different kind of guy. Someone who wants her to act like she wants it.
> F: The main thing is to whimper and cry at first, but then you got to act like it feels good.

This scene makes clear the fact that prostitution entails elements of disguise, and even when Violet does something for the first time, her experience is already codified for her.

Varda Burstyn, in her article "Of Movies and Models: Girls in Hollywood," discusses the sexualization of young girls in mainstream cinema. Written in 1982, the article focuses on Brooke Shields because it was the height of Shields' modeling career for Calvin Klein. Burstyn sees Pretty Baby as "at times, a brilliantly conceived metaphor of the way that young girls are raised to become men's sex objects at the expense of their own feelings, desires, intellects, and spirits." (51) Violet is raised in an environment that is completely sexual, in which she knows her future will be prostitution. Even the voodoo woman who comes to tell the women's fortunes predicts

that Violet will have "so many men you won't know what to do with 'em." Violet's desire is to become a prostitute. She's so eager that she doesn't even want advice from the other women, she insists "I know all that!" When Bellocq tries to intervene with Nell, insisting Violet is just a child, Nell replies, "she's very good, she's made a lot of money." Violet's age and maturity are of little consequence because she is fulfilling the only role she has ever known how to play and doing it successfully.

"Malle makes clear that what is not permitted—the real taboo—in this culture is *love*, not sex." (Burstyn 24) This may be why all four films being examined here are love stories. These are films about sex that are really about love and the difficulty of finding it. Violet is raised in a world in which seeing people have sex is as much a fact of daily existence as having a meal. Love is much rarer, and entails leaving the brothel. Real love, it seems, unmakes a prostitute. Klute functions on a similar premise, that real love between Klute and Bree will eradicate the prostitute in Bree. In Klute though, prostitution symbolizes Bree's independent streak and her sexuality, which are being quelled in the confines of a traditional heterosexual relationship. Pretty Baby shows us a glimpse of love, of Hattie and her beau who marries her, giving her the respectability she has always wanted. The love between Bellocq and Violet is much more problematic. Not only is there the taboo of Violet's extreme youth in relation to the older Bellocq, there is also a kind of incest/pedophilia barrier that is transgressed by their relationship. Bellocq regards Violet as a child, but one with whom he also has sex. He meets her before she becomes a prostitute and even when they live together he buys her a doll, because he says "every child should have a doll." Violet's reply is "I'm a child to you?" and in this squeaky, girlish voice we hear all the anguish of budding sexuality, frustrated by a body not yet mature enough to be called womanly. This is one of the moments Burstyn says makes Pretty Baby a metaphor for the sexual enculturation of girls.

Burstyn also discusses the scene in which "Violet is whipped for sexual games with lads her own age, ...underlin[ing] the point that girls (and by extension, grown women) are not permitted their own freedom and sexual self-definition." (24) This scene precedes Violet's departure from

the brothel, because she dislikes being disciplined for going her own way. She is also punished because one of the boys she fools around with is black and the son of the brothel housekeeper. Turn of the century New Orleans, despite a huge population of mixed race people, still considered interracial sex a huge taboo. Historically, there was even a separate red light district for black prostitutes and clients, and Storyville was segregated in the sense that "white and black prostitutes could not live or work in the same house," (Rose 67) and black men were not permitted as clients in any of the Storyville brothels. (Rose 67)

Burstyn is particularly full of praise for Malle's rendering of the madam, Nell Livingstone (Frances Faye), "an old woman who must kill her pain with cocaine and opium, whose polished vocabulary barely covers the rotten fabric of her anguished soul."(24) Nell is quite a figure. She needs absinthe just to get out of bed, sports a succession of bad wigs, and has her cocaine delivered. She is a crumbling masterpiece, a grotesque who keeps the gates of her palace of sin. In the course of research, Stephen Longstreet's book Sportin' House came to my attention. Interviewed in a chapter entitled "The Girls" about the prostitutes of Storyville, was one Nell Kimball, who stated "I ran a good old-fashioned whorehouse," (Longstreet 203) just like Malle's madam Nell says to Bellocq.

Nell Kimball also had a great cook in her brothel and served good meals to her girls and their customers. Judging from the dinner scenes in Pretty Baby, especially the dinner preceding the auction where Nell says "this is the last good dinner you'll get from me" this holds true for the film. Kimball had "a handyman and coachman"(Longstreet 167) who also tended bar, named Harry, just like the handyman and bartender in Pretty Baby, who also serves as bouncer. Kimball mentions that if any of her prostitutes "got real out of line I'd have Harry work them over, but not bruise them," (Longstreet 167) just as Nell has Violet whipped.

Some of the conventions of brothel dressing are also mentioned, examples of which also appear in Pretty Baby: "Most of the girls were dressed in evening gowns I had approved of. ...Some of the girls would dress as jockeys in tight white pants, caps and patent leather boots or

as school girls in buckle shoes, big blue hair bows." (Longstreet 172) Freida and Hattie often appear in evening dress, while a minor character, Agnes, appears first dressed in blue hair bows, and later as a jockey when she hits Hattie's drunken beau with a hammer. One final detail of similarity was that Nell Kimball "never counted the take until the next day... [and] soaked my feet in hot water." (Longstreet 175) In the early scenes of the film, just as Bellocq arrives, there is a shot that focuses on Nell soaking her feet, and later counting money at her desk. While Malle's film cites Rose's book as a source, there are also a startling number of similarities between Malle's Nell Livingstone and the real madam Nell Kimball.

"Lo-li-ta..."[3]

> Ever since Lewis Carroll desired Alice, Freud talked about incestuous fantasy, and Nabokov wrote *Lolita*, we have had literary reference points for the idea of the "woman-child," a particularly masculine construction. A product of a man's imagination brought to life from books or films, she is young, naieve, malleable, adoring, and entirely sexually available. Her youth renders her non-challenging, unable to question or reject ideas intellectually, without power to contest socially. (Burstyn 24)

Who cannot be struck by the opening lines of Lolita? A book that glories in this idea of the "woman-child" giving her the far more poetic name of "nymphet," but also exposing the bizarre nature of the dirty old man. Lolita horrified many critics when it appeared, but is now generally acknowledged as a brilliant work with two excellent screen adaptations. Judging by the few amateur reviews I was able to garner from the Internet, many people take the narrow view of Pretty Baby, as a showcase for the sexualization of a young girl. This no doubt accounts for the lack of academic literature on the film, as well as the small number of people who actually cared enough to post a review that did not include the word 'disgusting'.

The idea of the nymphet is a compelling one, and all the traits Burstyn ascribes to her generally apply, at least as far as the male lover is concerned. Certainly some of these apply to Violet, who is totally illiterate and whose knowledge encompasses only the world of Storyville. The fact that she has been schooled in all the wiles of harlotry means she is capable of appearing

[3] Vladimir Nabokov. Lolita. New York: Vintage Press, 1994. p.1.

"malleable, adoring and entirely sexually available" to a client, but in reality is none of these things. Her sexual availability is related more to the fact that she is a prostitute than to her youth.

I wonder about this notion of Violet's youth 'rendering her non-challenging,' as she is nothing but a challenge to Bellocq. She questions his chastity, his sexuality, and his art. She is hardly the silent artist's model: she fidgets, becomes impatient, gets up and yells at him for always wanting to take her picture and smashes glass negatives. This behaviour finally provokes the normally gentle Bellocq to anger, to the point where he slaps Violet and yells "So this how you repay me?"

Violet's lack of power comes into play at the end of the film, when her mother comes to retrieve her. Although Violet is married and likely pregnant, she is still a child under the law and Hattie informs Bellocq that the marriage is illegal without her consent. Unable to do as she pleases, Violet is taken away and dressed respectably according to her age. While she is a prostitute and after she marries Bellocq, Violet displays willful behaviour, the only time she seems completely adoring is on her wedding day. While she ought to be an uncontesting doll, Violet never is and she displays all the complexities of adolescence. Malle's nymphet is one that should not be underestimated.

Pretty Baby is a disturbing film at times, particularly the virginity auction and the scenes that follow it. According to Rose, these auctions were common from the mid to late 1800s, with prices ranging from 100 to 800 dollars. (15) The film is remarkable partly because it would be difficult to make it today. The laws and the mothers of young actresses are quite vigilant. No one would permit their nubile twelve year-old to be depicted spread-eagled on a bed draped only in a sheet and seemingly dead from her first experience of sexual intercourse; but this is what follows the furtive departure of the man who pays four hundred dollars for Violet. The unengaged prostitutes dash up the stairs to Violet's room, and discover her in this state, causing them to think she has been murdered. Hattie rushes to her daughter's side, and Violet stops faking and exclaims "Well I like to know where the hell y'all been? I've been lyin' here for hours!" They all laugh and when Violet doubles over with a cramp they hold her and massage her legs. The auction calls attention

to everything that is odious about the sale of flesh and its favours. The men are old and strange looking, and Violet is heavily made up for the occasion. The camaraderie of the women following this is touching. They have all been through a similar experience and they know that it hurts, but that the pain goes away. It also makes one realize that this is not the way most girls part with their virginity. It is usually a far more secretive affair, which certainly does not include a laugh with your mother and her friends afterwards. In Pretty Baby, the brothel is a place where exploitation and tenderness can co-exist.

There are many moments throughout Pretty Baby that emphasize the 'home' aspect of the house. One is the dinner scene in the kitchen, with the prostitutes and their 'fancy men.' It is the women's day off and the men want to play cards. Bellocq offers to escort them all to the theatre or cinema, but they decide to play "sardines," a version of hide and seek, instead. The film is filled with the daily details of brothel life, such as Nell soaking her feet and counting the linen, Hattie nursing William in the kitchen, and Violet skipping in the front hallway. It is these details that give the film its balance of tenderness.

Pretty Baby recreates a time in which prostitution was legal and even somewhat socially acceptable. To choose a child prostitute as its focus lends the film a controversial edge, making a debauched era that much more so, with the promise of stolen innocence. But Violet is never a child in many ways. She does not know how to read, but she knows all about sex, how she is expected to behave and what she is expected to say. Violet retains the quality of trying on adult behaviour to see how it fits, especially in her scenes with Bellocq. When he admonishes her for pouring out some of his photographic chemicals she starts to cry, and when he asks why, she replies with utter sarcasm: "For joy! To amuse myself." This delicate balance between grown up airs and child-like behaviour are what make Violet the luminous center of Pretty Baby, and the performance is without a doubt the best work Brooke Shields has ever done.

Pretty Baby acknowledges prostitution as a set of behaviours and scripts, which the women endlessly recycle. It is also something women do because they have never known anything else,

and they struggle to overcome it or they accept it. Prostitution is something of a tradition, passed from mother to daughter until one decides to break with it. Just as Klute shows us the liberated woman may prostitute herself by choice, Pretty Baby shows us that women did and may prostitute themselves out of a lack of choice.

McCabe and Mrs. Miller

McCabe and Mrs. Miller is a period piece like Pretty Baby. This film received a lot of critical attention due to the fact that it was directed by Robert Altman, has a soundtrack by Leonard Cohen, and stars Warren Beatty and Julie Christie in the title roles. The film is also heavily discussed in film genre circles in the classic vs. anti-western debate: does the film uphold the conventions of the Western? Or is it a satire of the brave loner taming the frontier, and in turn being tamed by the forces of civilization and the love of a good woman? McCabe and Mrs. Miller tells the story of a small-time gambler and pimp, John McCabe (Beatty) and the madam (Christie) who strikes up a partnership with him in a bleak frontier town. Mrs. Constance Miller is played as a broad cockney by the usually elegant Julie Christie. A significant departure from her roles in Darling and Dr. Zhivago, she mucks in as a determined, experienced madam who is prepared to start up a "first class sportin' house" in the middle of nowhere, if McCabe puts up the money. Warren Beatty as John McCabe is an endearingly "lovable fool" (Merrill, 84) who tries to outsmart a lot of lawyers and their hired guns, and ends up dying alone in the snow, while Mrs. Miller seeks refuge in her opium pipe.

McCabe and Mrs. Miller offers an interesting example of the filmed prostitute mainly because it is so far from the majority of depictions of prostitution, which tend towards the image of a glamourous, sexy and tenderhearted whore. The anti glamour of Julie Christie's role is accomplished not just by her surroundings of a barren, mud filled landscape, but by her coarse accent, dull brown hair and worn out, slush coloured clothes that reveal nothing of her body. Mrs. Miller is in business for money, not because she cherishes some notion that she must tend sexually to the unfortunates of the world. She is considerate of the women who work for her, but

it is more a matter of good business practice. Mrs. Miller does have real feelings for McCabe and she is genuinely kind to Ida Coyle, the young widow she takes in, but her kindness has more to do with her personality than with the fact that she is prostitute. Unlike the kindness of the prostitute in American Gigolo, that of Mrs. Miller is not directly linked to her prostitution.

The typical role of women in westerns is to represent the force that tames the frontier and its male inhabitants. (Engle 281) Women and their association with religion and wholesome living represent the civilization that is either embraced or rejected by the men. Prostitution also represents civilization, but in its negative, corrupting aspects. Prostitutes are often held up as a highly visible marker of urban decay and the failure of civilization to bring legitimate prosperity. The whorehouse in McCabe and Mrs. Miller is the center of the community of Presbyterian Church and symbolizes the corrupt entrepreneurial spirit. Prostitute characters like Mrs. Miller are created in the same spirit as great 'lone wolf' male characters in westerns. Mrs. Miller is tough and determined, with all the necessary skills to survive in a frontier town. She frequently veils her emotions behind a coarse façade, speaks plainly, and when faced with defeat she withdraws completely into herself; all qualities she shares with the legendary drifters, gunfighters and cowboys of the genre.

Gary Engle's article deals comprehensively with McCabe and Mrs. Miller as an anti-western. The typical western includes the "use of a frontier setting, both in terms of geography and historical period costume and dialect." (Engle 268) There is also " a tension... between the values of society and the destructive nature of savagery, with a resolution in favor of society." (Engle 269) The western deals with ideas of "social progress and heroism" (Engle 269) Engle divides McCabe and Mrs. Miller into two storylines, "the founding and growth of a frontier town... [and] McCabe's personal struggle for survival." (269)

Altman is intentionally using western conventions "to systematically undercut the meanings traditionally associated with them." (Engle 270) In contrast to the lighter colours of more classic westerns such as Sergio Leone's Once Upon a Time in the West, McCabe and Mrs. Miller opens

with "Altman's expression of a feeling of gloom" (Engle 270) emphasized by Leonard Cohen's moody soundtrack. Engle aptly describes Presbyterian Church as a place that "gives the impression of being run down without ever being built up." (270)

The first scenes of prostitution in the film show McCabe negotiating the purchase of three prostitutes in Bear Paw. He arrives in Presbyterian Church with the women, giving rise to "increased socialization." (Engle 271) The women work out of tents and they are seen in their underwear, coats thrown over their shoulders as they throw out dirty water. One of the girls, the youngest one, tries to stab a customer and McCabe pulls her off. Something has obviously occurred in this scene, as the girl is hysterical and crying, but McCabe is just as confused by this as by her earlier statement upon arrival in Presbyterian Church, that she has "to go to the pot."

Engle sees the steam engine that brings Mrs. Miller and the mail order bride Ida (who later becomes one of Mrs. Miller's prostitutes) as the arrival of technology and further civilization to Presbyterian Church. (272) He also points out that "Mrs. Miller's sporting house, with all its imported finery, hygiene, business organization, and genuine Seattle whores, is the true source and symbol of community spirit." (Engle 272) The whorehouse in the film serves a purpose usually reserved for the church. This is an early indicator that all is not as it should be for McCabe and Mrs. Miller to be a traditional western. The trappings of civilization, such as running water, come from the bathhouse, the building of which is instigated by Mrs. Miller. She knows that bathing is essential to any good whorehouse's clients and denizens, along with proper inspection for the clap, to keep a house disease free. The brothel along with the bathhouse, are two of the first buildings to be fully complete structures in the town, while the church remains unfinished inside, unable to house parishioners.

This contrast between the efficiency with which the bathhouse and whorehouse are erected, and the lackluster work on the church is brought sharply into focus near the end of the film, when the minister is killed and the church catches on fire. While they rush to extinguish the flames, "the townspeople are insensible to human suffering," several deaths having passed virtually

unnoticed in Presbyterian Church, "they are only interested in celebrating the preservation of the form rather than the substance of morality." (Engle 274-274)

Altman disrupts the traditional western's notion of heroism with the character of John McCabe, "a gambler and an operator." (Engle 275) Altman instead places all the right survival skills and instincts in Constance Miller, a prostitute who has the tenacity of a pioneer woman, without reflecting the western's association of women with church, family, home and civilization. Constance brings certain aspects of civilization to Presbyterian Church, but in the company of prostitution, something generally considered a social ill. McCabe tries to portray himself as a "fancy dude" with his suits, cigars, and affable humour. Mrs. Miller sees through his façade immediately, but the rest of the town does not catch on until he is in over his head, refusing to make a deal with the mining company. The keenness of Mrs. Miller's insight into McCabe is apparent the first time they meet:

> She tells him quite bluntly that he has neither the practical knowledge of hygiene necessary to prevent disease, not the psychological insight necessary to deal with the emotional idiosyncrasies of prostitutes, nor a true perception of people's sexual appetites, nor the taste necessary to satisfy these appetites profitably." (Engle 278-9)

Mrs. Miller demonstrates her expertise and ambition in the face of McCabe's inexperienced, shoddy operation that she dismissively refers to as "crib cows."

Engle cites a previous study by John Cavelti, which says "...women are the primary symbols of civilization in the Western. As such they almost exclusively serve as spokesman for the traditional American cultural institutions of Education, Church and Marriage." (282) This is certainly not the symbolic value of Mrs. Miller, who cares for her girls by ensuring they have a proper house to live in, bathing facilities, and, as she tells Ida Coyle, allowing them a small personal income. Engle points out that Mrs. Miller is in competition with the forces of church and marriage (282) throughout the film. She tells McCabe early on that when prostitutes are allowed to sit around when business is slow, "nine times out of ten they turn to religion 'cause that's what they was born with."

Marriage is not so much of an issue in McCabe and Mrs. Miller as it is in other westerns. There are hardly any couples in the town to begin with, with the exception of the barber and his wife who help the prostitutes arriving from Seattle, and Sheehan and his wife who keep the saloon, hotel and general store. Ida Coyle, still young and lately widowed, becomes a prostitute. Engle sees the scene of Bartley Coyle's funeral as "a graphic portrayal of the frailty of marriage as an ideal in these characters' lives." (282) While Engle views the exchange of glances between Ida and Constance as that of a madam coldly recruiting a "nervous and pliable" (282) woman into prostitution; I believe the intent is much different. Mrs. Miller's stare is one of compassion, an almost guilty gaze that lets Ida know she can come to work for her so she will not starve. The reality of a dead husband in a place like Presbyterian Church could mean a fate far worse than working in the brothel. The scene that follows the funeral is the one with Constance preparing Ida for life in the brothel. She is having Ida try on camisoles, and she comments "you really are small, just like me" as she carefully pins and adjusts the clothing to fit Ida's petite frame. She then gives her advice on how to make sex easier, saying she might even get to like it.

"Mrs. Miller is simply not the typical Western woman. Nor does she perform the expected woman's function of taming the central male figure by bringing him, through love, into harmony with accepted cultural values." (Engle 282) Mrs. Miller does care for McCabe. She tries to warn him about the mining company's hired killers, she cooks for him near the end of the film and demonstrates sincere emotion when she says "they'll get you McCabe! And they'll do something awful to you." Despite her hard exterior, softened only by opium or a night off, and as much as she punctures McCabe's ego for his lack of business sense, she cares enough to urge him to get out before the killers come for him.

> Mrs. Miller is in many respects the standard against which McCabe's character is to be measured. Her ambitions are greater than his. Her knowledge exceeds his. Her judgment is keener, her view of her prospects more realistic, and her sense of detachment from the community more profound." (Engle 283)

Mrs. Miller's survivalist instincts are complemented by her sensitive core, which we see revealed only briefly to McCabe, and yet neither of these things prevent her suffering and defeat. While she is not the prostitute with a heart of gold, she is capable of human compassion. Constance realizes in the end that not only will McCabe never make a deal, (Engle 284) but that "[h]e, blind to the assured loss of her dream of owning a boarding house in San Francisco, interprets her anguish only as evidence that she loves him" (Engle 284) So, Mrs. Miller must bear the knowledge that not only has she developed feelings for a man who is about to die, but her dreams of legitimacy have been hopelessly dashed by the same lover's ineptitude. This is no doubt what drives her to the opium den, and it is her pixilated gaze that closes the film.

Robert Merrill takes up the cause of fitting McCabe and Mrs. Miller into the mold of the classic western in his article "Altman's McCabe and Mrs. Miller as a Classic Western." He sees the film as "...that rarest of western subgenres, a genuine love story, ... [and] a moving tragicomic tale of star-crossed (if extremely fallible) lovers." (Merrill 79) Merrill cites Engle's article and even agrees with him on certain points, but seems to have a lot more genuine affection for the film and its characters. Merrill and Engle converge on their perception of Presbyterian Church: "...not the lawless frontier town of so many standard westerns,... but it is raunchy and amoral, the sort of place that has no lawman and whose leading citizen is a pimp," (Merrill 80) whose inhabitant "are far more interested in McCabe's whorehouse than in Mr. Elliott's church." (80)

Merrill makes the interesting observation that "[t]he only communal ties that seem to matter in Presbyterian Church are economic." (80) It is economics that leads Mrs. Miller to tie herself to McCabe in the first place, and it is the profitable running of the whorehouse that chiefly occupies her. But Merrill also notes that the brothel is portrayed in a homey, sympathetic manner (81) and the prostitutes that work there are human and rather gentle with one another, as can be seen from the numerous scenes of shared grooming, and the birthday party. "Altman is sometimes criticized for sentimentality in handling the whores and their clientele, but I think he means to honor the

human desire for *connection* even at its most primitive manifestations." (Merrill 81) This notion of connection is key to learning to appreciate McCabe and Mrs. Miller, but it is unclear what Merrill means by 'primitive manifestations.' The most likely meaning is that fulfilling the need for connection with another person by paying for sex with a prostitute is rather shallow, but fitting considering the unsophisticated nature of the community.

Many theorists, notes Merrill, see the characters of John McCabe and Constance Miller as "comic variations on the typical western hero and heroine." (83) But he feels Mrs. Miller is, in fact, a very tragic character, more so than even John McCabe. Mrs. Miller sees the realities of life in a way McCabe never will, and it is her very perceptiveness that drives her to escape in an opium haze.

> Yet, Mrs. Miller is more sensitive than McCabe, no less loving, and finally even more painfully the victim of her own dreams. If she cannot learn to trust McCabe, as he has asked her to do, she can learn to love him. And loving him, she must suffer the terrible pain of separation and loss when McCabe dies defending his conception of what her lover should be like. (Merrill 85)

Mrs. Miller's practical, business-like exterior is a legitimate part of her character. She knows the importance of running a successful, clean house in order to make a profit. But the private self that McCabe comes to know as their relationship progresses reveals a more human aspect. "Mrs. Miller knows all too well what happens to those who fail to protect themselves against an unfriendly world," (Merrill 85) which may be the very reason she takes Ida under her wing, and why she impatiently tries to tell McCabe how much danger he is in. Merrill says "...Mrs. Miller's real feelings are everywhere apparent. The care that goes into her transformation of the whorehouse and her treatment of her 'girls' points to Mrs. Miller's true character." Rather than interpreting her retreat to the opium den as uncaring, "her expression as she walks away suggests that she cannot stand to see him killed." (Merrill 85) Merrill also suggests Mrs. Miller's withdrawal during the final scenes as McCabe and the hired killers track each other through town, "is the act of someone who knows the tactics of survival, but also the immense pain that will visit the survivor." (86)

Merrill appreciates the film because "[u]nlike the anti-westerns, McCabe and Mrs. Miller presents characters to whom we respond with sympathy if not full approval, people who elicit those comic and tragic responses...." (86) Prostitution in McCabe and Mrs. Miller is presented sympathetically. The women obviously get along with one another, as is apparent in the bathing scene after they first arrive in Presbyterian Church. They splash one another, sing and laugh, establishing a casual camaraderie, and the scene is shot to portray the realness of the women's bodies (there are no sculpted gym figures here). Altman even sets up a contrast with the men's voice-over telling stories about the supposed qualities of a Chinese girl's genitalia, juxtaposed with these very natural, seemingly unselfconscious images of the naked prostitutes.

The other major scene in which prostitution is given a sympathetic slant is the scene between Ida and Constance. Rather than portraying it as a shameful step down for the young widow, Constance advises Ida about the similarities between prostitution and marriage. When Ida complains that sex is painful for her, but that it was her "duty" to accommodate her husband, Constance makes this analogy:

> It weren't your duty Ida. You did it to pay for your bed and board. And you'll do this to pay for your bed and board too. And you get to keep a little extra for yourself and you don't have to ask nobody for nothing.

We know from other instances in the film, that Mrs. Miller is as good as her word, since the other women receive packages of dresses they have ordered, implying they have some money of their own. Later in the film, after the young cowboy comes to stay for a week, Ida seems quite cheerful in her new line of work, as she gaily waves goodbye from the brothel porch, wearing the unofficial period drama prostitute uniform: camisole, bloomers, black stockings and a shawl.

McCabe and Mrs. Miller is generally acknowledged as a film that explores or upholds the myth of the American west. It portrays a corrupt frontier town easily absorbed by the larger forces of capitalism. The only place where people seem to really connect is the whorehouse, not the unfinished church. While the treatment of prostitution can be looked on as sentimental or sympathetic, the fact that the town is supposed to be a kind of pacific northwest Sodom and

Gomorrah, diminishes the positive image of the prostitutes. They themselves are friendly and kind, but they are performing their duties in a moral wasteland.

McCabe and Miller is also a love story between the foolish smalltime crook McCabe and the smart, potentially hugely successful madam Constance Miller. Their love elevates McCabe's character, making him seem more sympathetic, and his death more saddening. Mrs. Miller's love for McCabe makes her a more human character, but also proves to be the weakness that prevents her from ever realizing her dream of retirement to a respectable existence.

As with Pretty Baby, this film deals with prostitutes who want respectability. While none of the other women are portrayed in enough detail to discern their future desires, Constance is remarkably confident in her abilities as a prostitute and madam, while also dreaming of a respectable retirement. In Pretty Baby, Hattie dreams of getting married and then actually succeeds, returning at the end of the film to claim Violet, all the while looking and acting very middle class. There are also similarities between the home-like atmosphere of the brothels in Pretty Baby and McCabe and Mrs. Miller. While we are not treated to as much detail of daily brothel life as in Pretty Baby, Mrs. Miller's brothel serves as a home and workplace to the women, and as a gathering place for the men. There is an atmosphere of mutual care among the prostitutes in both films, underpinned by scenes of shared grooming and general camaraderie.

As with all the films presented here, McCabe and Mrs. Miller is partly the story of a prostitute who falls in love. Like Klute and Pretty Baby, McCabe and Mrs. Miller ends sadly, with the end of the love affair. Rather than choosing to leave, Constance can only choose not to watch her lover die, and this is the only way she can potentially survive.

McCabe and Mrs. Miller toils under the banner of an artistic western, made by a director known for trying his hand at various genres. Altman, by his own admission, (Merrill 79) set out to make a Western in his own way and was not particularly interested in conforming to the conventions of the genre except in a very cursory manner. Whether he made an anti western or a classic is a decision for other theorists. One thing which is certain is that, in his representation of

prostitution, Altman creates a decidedly unglamourous madam, gives her all the characteristics of a top notch cowboy, and surrounds her with plain featured, conventionally good natured prostitutes, with a taste for religion and new dresses.

Chapter Five: American Gigolo

American Gigolo was regarded as piece of noir-styled fluff with more Armani than you could shake a stick at when it debuted in 1980, albeit one with a killer opening sequence sound tracked to Blondie's "Call Me." While the film is hardly carried by Richard Gere, in the title role as the gigolo Julian Kaye, it provides an interesting contrast to the image of the female prostitute and opens up new ground in the presentation of male sexuality for a heterosexual female or gay male spectator. As an overall image of prostitution, the film makes it seem both lucrative and glamourous. Gere is dressed head to toe in Armani, (Bruzzi 32) drives a Mercedes, and caters only to rich older women. He also, more than any of the female prostitutes in the other films, has a heart of gold. He has an entire philosophy about why he prostitutes himself and prefers to define what he does as "giving pleasure to women," never as selling his body. We also rarely see any difference between Julian "at work" and Julian in the rest of his life. While filmic female prostitutes are seen to employ clearly defined actions and attitudes that separate their prostitute persona from the rest of their personality, Julian does not do this. While he poses as a chauffeur or translator, it is always at the request of the client, in order to mask his presence from others or to make the client feel as if she is seducing someone, rather than paying for him.

Richard Dyer and Steve Neale both contribute thoughts on the masculine image. Dyer in his article "Don't Look Now: The Male Pin-Up" points out that images of men designed to be viewed by women depict men looking "either off or up ... [at] something else that the viewer cannot see." (267) Dyer suggests this pose exists in contrast to the female model's averted gaze that acknowledges the viewer. (267) This distinction between the two images, neither of which confront a viewer with a direct gaze, is made possible by the societal convention of "how in a public place... men could look freely at women, but that women could only look back surreptitiously, against the grain of their upbringing." (Dyer 265) While this is becoming less of a convention in reality, it is often maintained in film. Dyer also mentions that even when the male gaze does confront the viewer, he "stares at the viewer." (269)

> The idea of looking (staring) as power and being looked at as powerlessness overlaps with ideas of activity/passivity. Thus to look is thought of as active; whereas to be looked at is passive. In reality, this is not true. The model prepares her- or himself to be looked at, the artist or photographer constructs the image to be looked at; and, on the other hand, the image that the viewer looks at is not summoned up by his or her act of looking but in collaboration with those who have put the image there." (Dyer 269)

Even while the male image is being looked at by a spectator it "must disavow this element of passivity" (Dyer 269) by appearing to ignore the viewer, or by staring the viewer down. Dyer also points out that images of men are often active, if not directly related to sport. While the active male figure helps negate the passivity of the looked at image, it also represents "the relative affluence of Western society where people have time to dedicate themselves to the development of the body for its own sake." (Dyer 271)

American Gigolo is an exercise in the contradictions of displaying the male figure to a desiring viewer, whether male or female. The first scene in which we see Julian naked except for his underwear is not (as is typical with female subjects,) while he is undressing, but while he works out with weights and gravity boots in his apartment. Even the pure voyeurism of this scene is undermined by the fact that Julian is practicing his Swedish while he works out. When Julian rights himself to answer the phone, we are treated to a somewhat amusing sequence in which he does some high kicks and a few pelvic thrusts while checking himself out in the mirror. While this could be interpreted as a satire of male vanity, it seems unlikely judging by the overall tone of the film, as a review of the film says "[t]o Paul Schrader, being an American gigolo isn't a nightmare—it's a pipe dream." (Schiff, 53)

Steve Neale's article Masculinity as Spectacle attempts to apply Laura Mulvey's notion of the gaze to images of men in film. Neale summarizes an argument of John Ellis' on the multiple possibilities of identification:

> ...identification is never simply a matter of men identifying with male figures on the screen and women identifying with female figures. Cinema draws on and involves many desires, many forms of desire. And desire itself is mobile, fluid, constantly transgressing identities, positions and peoples. (Neale 278)

This idea of a variety of viewing positions is part of what makes psychoanalytic film criticism applicable to more contemporary cinema. However, Neale also states that "in a heterosexual and patriarchal society the male body cannot be marked explicitly as the erotic object of another male look: that look must be motivated in some other way, its erotic component repressed." (280) This ties in with Dyer's notion of the active male body displayed under the guise of sport for a desiring audience, the activity or upward gaze acting as a repression of potential sexualization. This theory, of course, does not really deter a viewer from viewing a male image sexually if they wish, it merely reasons why images of men are presented in a certain way.

American Gigolo presents the image of a male prostitute, but most often shows him picking out clothes, flirting with women, and behaving in a superior manner. The film constantly exaggerates and stresses Julian's masculine heterosexuality, perhaps because how he earns his living is considered morally wrong or demeaning. His entire outward appearance is a contrast to the underworld he is implied to have come from. Julian wears exquisitely tailored Armani suits, has a tastefully decorated apartment, and can get into any good restaurant, while the underside of male prostitution is represented by the pimp Leon, who wears garish suits, whose apartment displays Andy Warhol posters of male buttocks, and who hangs out in gay discos. Throughout the film there is a distinctly gay undercurrent to Julian's immaculate world: that of the male hustler and gay sex, as most male prostitutes who work the streets cater to male clients. Neale even states "male homosexuality is constantly present as an undercurrent, as a potentially troubling aspect of many films and genres, but one that has been dealt with obliquely, symptomatically, and that has to be repressed." (286) This part of Julian's world and the people who inhabit it are portrayed as degenerate, and even though Julian takes a job from Leon, he stresses that this is a singular favour. The mere fact that he and Leon appear to have known each other quite well for years implies that Julian has paid his dues as a prostitute who did not always have the privilege of choosing his clients.

Neale's comments on the image of Rock Hudson in certain films fit Gere's image in American Gigolo:

> There are constantly moments in these films in which Hudson is presented quite explicitly as the object of an erotic look. The look is usually marked as female. But Hudson's body is *feminized* in those moments, an indication of the strength of those conventions which dictate that only women can function as the objects of an explicitly erotic gaze. Such instances of 'feminization' tend also to occur in the musical, the only genre in which the male body has been unashamedly put on display in mainstream cinema in any consistent way. (286)

. This idea of the 'feminized' male body seems to stem largely from ideas of fetishism, claims Neale quoting Mulvey: "[the woman] whose body, stylized and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look." (285) The feminized male also stems from popular notions about what women generally prefer men to look like: a fit and defined physique where the muscles are not exaggerated. While there is little precedent for the male body being filmed consistently in this way, American Gigolo engages in this type of representation, presenting the male image to a desiring audience in much the same way women have been since the inception of popular cinema.

The moments in American Gigolo that stand out as those where Gere is the object are the workout scene and the love scene. The workout scene, while undermined by the fact that Julian is doing something intellectual (learning a language) while being eroticized is still effective in presenting the male body in a stylish, revealing way. The love scene, oddly, does not follow on the heels of Michelle's (Lauren Hutton) initial arrival at Julian's apartment. When she comes by a second time she tells him she cannot stop thinking about him and he refuses to take money from her. The love scene that follows shows the perfect, tanned flesh of Hutton and Gere segmented into torsos, legs, and hands against pale grey sheets. The love scene breaks up the bodies in the spirit of fetishism, but rather than heightening eroticism, this technique deflates it in this instance. The images themselves lack warmth and even the section that mimics deep penetration during sexual intercourse looks totally mechanical. While shooting sex to look both natural and sensual without getting slapped with an NC-17 or X rating is difficult, other films have done it

successfully. The love scene wants to make Gere and Hutton the objects of an erotic gaze, but the montage serves only to emphasize the rote-like motions of on-screen coupling.

After they have finished, Michelle asks Julian to tell her about himself and he replies "we just made love didn't we? Then you know everything there is to know." I'm not sure if this is meant to imply a kind of 'unspoken language of love' intimacy, or whether Julian honestly believes that everything about him worth knowing is imparted while having sex. When Michelle asks why he only has sex with older women, he lies in bed, then gets out and stands naked fiddling with the blind while he imparts his reason for prostitution:

> What's the use of bringing some highschooler to climax? Some silly teenager who gets wet in the middle of things and goes home to masturbate? No challenge. Has no meaning. The other night, the night I met you at the hotel, I was with a woman, somebody's mother. Her husband didn't care about her anymore. This woman hadn't had an orgasm in maybe ten years. Took me three hours to get her off, for a while I didn't think I was gonna be able to do it. When it was over, I felt like I'd done something, something worthwhile. Who else would've taken the time, cared enough to do it right?

While he says this, Julian rises from the bed, and goes to the window. The camera draws back from his nudity, revealing a lean, tanned body and stark white buttocks, but at a distance. So, while the viewer can easily see Julian's body, it is turned away from the viewer and from Michelle lying on the bed, and not featured in close-up. These sequences mark Julian as the object of an erotic gaze, but the ways in which the film tries to make him erotic are not always effective.

Neale concludes his article with the assertion that " [m]asculinity, as an ideal at least, is implicitly known. Femininity is, by contrast, a mystery. This is one of the reasons why the representation of masculinity, both inside and outside the cinema, has been so rarely discussed." (286-7) This idea that we know what men are permeates some more simplistic arguments, but Neale is quite right to imply that masculinity is just as complex and warrants as much discussion and analysis as femininity in cinema. American Gigolo presents the male prostitute as someone who cares about his clients, who is solicitous of their pleasure and who is also conscious of being an engaging companion. All this he does out of his feeling that what he is doing is "worthwhile"

and that he likes the challenge older women provide to his mind and body. While Julian is something like the idea of the sensitive man, it is tainted by the fact that he provides pleasure and companionship in exchange for money implying women could never expect these things from their husbands or even from other young men.

Before moving into a discussion of the film as viewed by more recent theorists, let us examine Stephen Schiff's review of the film from when it debuted in 1980. He calls American Gigolo " a new, passive version of the male bimbo: man as plaything." (Schiff, 52) While he acknowledges that the film has a "cool, glassy and elegant" (Schiff, 53) visual appearance, and that director Paul Schrader has developed his style since his previous efforts, Schiff still pans the film's plot as "the work of a man unwilling to look his subject in the eye." (53) Schiff seems to object mostly to the fact that, in his opinion, the film tries to be more than it is. Schrader wants Julian Kaye to be " a superior man who believes himself above the law, above illogical and outmoded morality," (Schiff, 54) when his greatest asset is really "his *savoir faire* and his impeccable taste in clothing and décor." (Schiff 54) Schiff also dislikes the film's "myth-crazy paean to the culture of Jacuzzis and rollerskates" (55) and laments the selection of Richard Gere for the title role, as a replacement for original choice, John Travolta. (55) Schiff demands more from the film about what actually goes through the mind of Julian Kaye: "what he feels when he's escorting a lady around town or convincing her she's desirable." (56) While Schiff's comments are largely appropriate, the demand to know more about Julian Kay almost sounds as if he would prefer a male version of Bree Daniels, in which viewers would be treated to Julian's intimate thoughts. Of course, it is entirely possible that Julian Kaye has nothing to tell, so absorbed is he in the work of maintaining his glossy magazine image.

The recent film Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo, takes the opportunity to spoof some of the elements of Schrader's film. It is the story of a fish tank cleaner, Deuce, who turns to prostitution in order to make repairs to the expensive apartment of a Julian Kaye-esque male prostitute. We first meet the gigolo Anton as he drives up to his apartment building in a silver convertible to the

strains of "Call Me" by Blondie. Rakishly tossing his dark hair, he allows himself to be led inside by his gorgeous blonde client. Anton is played as an affected piece of euro-trash who collects antique weapons. He wears loose pale suits in the manner of Julian Kaye, and works out with gravity boots, a device used to comic effect later in the film when Deuce gets stuck in them while the kitchen catches on fire. Anton needs someone to care for his ailing lionfish while he is away in Europe, and Deuce accepts. He ends up ruining Anton's fish tank and must come up with the money to replace it before he returns. What ensues are a series of attempts at prostituting himself, during which Deuce actually manages to not have sex with any of the women he goes out with.

Like Julian, police trail Deuce throughout the film. Of course, Deuce's police adversary differs considerably from Detective Sunday, appearing as an exaggeratedly hostile, insecure man who insists on showing Deuce his penis and speculating on its various ailments. Deuce finally takes one last job as a prostitute, and discovers it is the cop's wife he has been entertaining with his striptease. When the cop confronts Deuce again, it is revealed that he wants to arrest Anton because his wife was a client, and her behaviour was due entirely to the fact that his penis is too thin. In American Gigolo, Julian Kaye and Detective Sunday have a relatively cool relationship. Sunday implies he wants to know how Julian manages to be so successful with women, and Julian accedes only that Sunday ought to start dressing better, revealing none of his secrets. Deuce actually gives his adversary advice on how to treat women, and tells him to stop obsessing about the size of his genitals.

The film constantly converts all feminine terms related to prostitution into masculine ones: "man-whore," "mangina," "male madam," etc, in order to emphasize the heterosexual nature of the prostitution taking place, distinguishing it from the homosexual associations of the term "hustler." It is interesting to note that the terms "hustler" or "gigolo" are never applied to Julian Kaye, but that Anton calls himself a gigolo. The word gigolo is fairly comic, given the associations it has with the song "Just a Gigolo" and that it is not the sort of word anyone would use to actually describe a man who prostituted himself.

Deuce refuses to turn in his "man-pimp" T.J., and is brought up on charges of prostitution. Fortunately, all his clients like him so much that they testify in his favour, saying that while they paid him, it was not for sex. Deuce reconciles with the girl he truly loves (an amputee whose sorority sisters paid for him to take her out), and order is more or less restored. Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo presents prostitution as a joke. It hinges on the idea that an average guy who is underpaid can make it as a prostitute without having to have sex, but gets paid anyways by being silly, amusing and nice to women who suffer from unusual illnesses or are physically different in some way.

Peter Fraser is one of the many critics to take up the cause of giving American Gigolo "a better reputation" (91) in his article "American Gigolo and Transcendental Style." He claims that because the film's ending "prompted laughter for original audiences" (Fraser 91) it was subsequently given poor reviews. It was accused of everything from sexism to simply conforming too closely to Schrader's own theoretical ideas about filmmaking. (Fraser, 91) However, its style was frequently praised, especially the use of colour and the noir style it shares with Klute.

"Noir claustrophobia and neurosis are present in the film through lighting and camera work creating vertical planes, brooding shadows and compositional tension," (Fraser 92) in much the same way as Klute. The two films share a similar pretension to European art cinema, as well as muted colours, and noir conventions set on either end of an influential decade in American cinema. While Klute was praised for its style and compelling plot, American Gigolo was ignored despite the fact that it shares many of Klute's good qualities. Fraser points out that the plot is a classic example of film noir " Julian Kaye (Richard Gere) is a self-governed protagonist surrounded by duplicitous women, implicated in a crime of theft and murder, closed in by a corrupt city." (92)

Fraser stresses the falseness of the glamourous atmosphere created by the opening shots of American Gigolo. "...[T]he style of montage typical of fashionable advertisements," he adds, emphasizes that "this world has stability only through artifice, not substance." (Fraser 92)

Julian's entire image is just that. His upper class behaviours are learned expressly to pass into the realm of the Los Angeles elite. At one point, his madam, Anne, is berating him: "I made you Julian. I taught you everything you know. How to dress, how to act, how to treat women, how to make love." Julian's image is contrived so he will never be suspected of being a prostitute upon first inspection. He masquerades as a translator, a chauffeur, a decorator; whatever is necessary to conceal his true profession from his clients' peers. While this works most of the time, as Julian's life spirals out of control, Michelle's jealous husband reminds him of the precarious social position he occupies as a prostitute to the wealthy, "You live off the good graces of a small number of people."

American Gigolo quotes several noir films directly, "the most dominant and suggestive being... the Robert Bresson film Pickpocket." (Fraser 92) The ending in particular is taken almost directly from Bresson, according to both Fraser and Schiff. Fraser also notes that Schrader is "imitating the camera style of fixing upon those parts of his protagonist's body which are the tools of his illicit trade, particularly his profiled face and torso." (93) Schrader's quoting of Bresson leads Fraser to identify "the fundamental tension of the narrative; not, will Julian get out of the trap set for him, but will Julian recognize the disparity between his self-perception and the way others perceive him." (93) Despite all the efforts made to disguise Julian's real profession, people like Michelle's husband have no trouble identifying him, "I know a whore when I see one." Julian is the only one who seems entirely convinced by the image he projects.

Where American Gigolo really starts to redeem itself is in "an attempt to create an American version of the transcendental style manifest in the films of Robert Bresson, Yasuhiron Ozu and Carl Dreyer." (Fraser, 93) Schrader studied this style closely in his own analytical work:

> Schrader defined transcendental style in film as a technique that strips away conventional interpretive devices or "screens" used by filmmakers to conform their narratives to higher ideas and replaces them with narratives that reduce to simple ritualistic formulas which open to large transcendent ideas when seen in pure form. He compares this film style to medieval church iconography: a sparse surface made flat and typical comes to evoke a rich spiritual dimension that inspires awe in the observer sensitive to it. (Fraser 94)

Although the style claims to do away with interpretive devices, transcendental style has its own conventions. Schrader defines these conventions in an unsatisfactorily loose manner as "...irrationalism over rationalism, repetition over variation, sacred over profane, the deific over the humanistic, intellectual realism over optical realism, two-dimensional vision over three-dimensional vision, tradition over experiment, anonymity over individualization." (Fraser 94)

There are three parts to a film made in the transcendental style: "recognizable person(s) in a recognizable situation with a few options and a predictable future," followed by "the entrance of the some element of disparity in this common world," until finally "a climax occurs which focuses the everyman into participation with the disunity in the world." (Fraser 94) This in turn produces "a moment of unresolved but recognized disparity... allow[ing] for an embrace of both the commonplace and the tensions built into it and so projects both the film subjects and spectators to a position that transcends the initial position, ...compress[ing] the entire film into a single, profound frame." (Fraser 94)

American Gigolo conforms perfectly to this pattern. The opening sequence presents a flat, shiny montage of Julian's glamourous life. We see immediately that most of what Julian owns is bought for him by the rich women he has sex with. The element of disparity comes from Leon when he phones and asks Julian to cover a trick for him, which turns out to be the kinky Rymans. Mrs. Ryman later turns up dead, and Julian, having made love to her the night she was killed, is the main suspect. The climax where Julian is forced to participate in disunity occurs when he accidentally kills Leon. Julian confronts Leon in his apartment, and Leon confesses to the set up because he never really liked Julian in the first place. In a fit of rage, Julian rushes at Leon and hoists him over the balcony, holding him upside down by his feet in the hopes of intimidating him. Leon slips out of his boots and falls to his death. The film's real transcendental moment occurs in the final scene where Michelle tells Julian she has given him an alibi and he will be free. Julian presses his forehead against Michelle's hand through the glass. The prostitute is

redeemed through the pure love of a woman, and the commonplace jail cubicle becomes the confessional in which the sinner is cleansed.

Fraser confirms the idea that Julian "is always an object of curiosity and desire, but never a knowable human being." (95) He says that Michelle "loves his soul, but we have seen him primarily as a body." (Fraser 95) This echoes Schiff's complaint that we get very little of what makes Julian Kaye tick. He has a female love interest willing to jeopardize her not inconsiderable social position to save him when others have refused, and yet there is so little of his personality on screen that it becomes difficult to understand why Julian Kaye warrants such care. Possibly Schrader wishes to make the point that everyone deserves love, even prostitutes, even those who reveal little of themselves.

However, Fraser also notes the "antiseptic" (96) quality of Julian's existence, calling him "flawless and boring." (97) Michelle's character gives credence to this when she complains about Julian's approach to sex: "when you make love you go to work," implying a certain mechanistic technique. Julian is handsome and, judging by his repeat business, an accomplished enough lover, but what has satisfied other women when they pay for him, frustrates his girlfriend. Julian can imitate physical intimacy to such an extent that he is incapable of making his body react differently to the authentic situation.

> Love has been reduced in the early part of the film to sexual gratification, and this is condemned in Julian's experience; yet, the relationship between Julian and Michelle has never been defined apart from sexual gratification. In the final union of the lovers, there is no indication of deep pain and humility for either. Julian goes free, apparently back to prosperity, and he gets the girl. (Fraser 99)

The relationships that Julian cultivates with his clients are based on sexual gratification in exchange for money and do not preserve him in the face of persecution. No one wants to provide him with an alibi because none of the women want to admit to being with a prostitute. Julian and Michelle become involved initially as prostitute and client, but then as lovers when Julian tells her he does not want her money. Although they spend time together, the only time we really see them talking is in the Chinese restaurant where Michelle tells him about her unhappy marriage,

but Julian remains silent about his own life. Because of the absence of details of the relationship, the reunion of the lovers at the end does seem lacking in depth of emotion. Michelle appears happily serene at the sacrifice she is making, and Julian seems nothing so much as relieved and resignedly grateful that someone has freed him from this inexorably well-laid trap.

Fraser concludes with the assertion that "it is Schrader's search for a unified vision that has become the source of his intensity." (100) Fraser feels that while Schrader strives to emulate the "transcendental" directors he so admires, his filmic vision of the world is not yet fully formed and this, if anything, is what mars American Gigolo for Fraser. "*American Gigolo* may not succeed as a complete statement, but the depth of vision, technical skill, and sincerity of interest that it underlines compels attention and promises a fulfillment. (Fraser 100)

Sharon Willis contributes a chapter on both American Gigolo and To Live and Die in L.A. in the anthology Seduction and Theory. Her focus is "framing the male body as spectacle... [and the] inversion of traditional cinematic codings of sexual difference." (Willis 48) For Willis, sexual difference is represented on film "...in spaces coded to represent culture, high art, and good taste, which are established by contrast to the menace of the common, the vulgar, the popular, and the lower class." (48) American Gigolo illustrates this with its juxtaposition of Julian's high class, designer label, antique buying, white heterosexual realm and Leon's lower class, street fashion, mass produced pop art, black homosexual world, or as Willis later puts it "the character with the best taste is the good guy." (56)

"*American Gigolo* is explicitly structured around the male body as a feminized display, exchange object, in the figure of a male prostitute." (Willis 55) Willis notes that when Julian is framed for murder, it comes with "the implicit threat of a social fall back into the world of the streets and gay discos." (55) When Julian first arrives at the Ryman house, he is immediately on the offensive because he only sees the husband, "Look Mister, someone's made a mistake here. I don't do fags." He takes the trick for Leon, even though he knows that most of Leon's prostitutes and clientele are homosexual, and then is surprised at the possibility that the trick might involve

gay sex. Julian seems to have escaped from the streets, having moved up the prostitution echelon enough to choose his clients. He is offended at being reminded of the time when he worked for Leon exclusively and had to do what was asked of him by the client.

Harkening back to comments on the feminized male, Willis shares this opinion of Julian Kaye.

> At the same time as the character is being cast in a feminine pose (in his work as a prostitute who circulates among wealthy female clients, in his feminized name, changed from Julian to Julie, and in his ritualistic relation to costuming and display), his efforts to avoid being framed for the crime engage a vigorous effort to ward off feminization. Because he resists domination by female procurers, he falls out of the relay of power and influence that could protect him from false accusation. (Willis 55)

Willis links feminization with Julian's prostitution, acknowledging that it is primarily women who have sex for money. The fact that Julian fits the most stereotypical image of the hooker with a heart of gold, also goes towards his feminized character. The assertion of his male independence by refusing the help of women, when he would be better off allowing himself to be protected in this case, makes his criminal conviction that much easier for his enemies. While he does kill his enemy Leon, asserting a traditionally male right in the narrative, he is still finally preserved by the actions of a woman.

To return to the association of aesthetics and sexuality, "Julian is coded as a connoisseur; in one sequence he accompanies a date to Sotheby's and advises her on purchases." (Willis 56) In the same sequence, Julian adopts a silly German accent and foppish mannerisms pretending to be her gay friend or decorator, when he and his date run into an acquaintance of hers. Willis also notes the marked contrast between the apartments of Julian and Leon:

> At the final confrontation between Julie and Leon, Leon's apartment is presented as garishly and vulgarly decorated (in contrast to Julie's tastefully sparse, gray-walled, track lighted home). Further, Leon is seated on a couch in front of a painting that dominates the screen, and which represents a series of men's buttocks, thus emphasizing his deviance. It is as if he is incriminated by his taste in art. (56)

The painting, incorrectly identified by Fraser as the image of a flexed arm (96), is in fact a triptych of silk-screened Andy Warhol posters of men's buttocks. By art standards Leon's taste is curiously good, (and Julian's rather bland) in contrast to the other visual details. But, Warhol was

a gay artist fascinated by the male posterior, and therefore the art is definitely shorthand for Leon's "deviance."

American Gigolo not only presents Julian as an object to be admired and fantasized, "an element in a still life," (Willis 59) but his "clothing is monumentalized in a way that suggests advertising." (57) Julian's apartment is filled with drawer upon drawer of shirts and ties. In the dressing sequence, different combinations are displayed on the bed, as if in a store display. Because Julian's clothing is what shields or identifies him, it is given a fetishistic importance. (Willis 57) The film "reduces all objects—including human ones— to the same status," (Willis 60) an object that can be purchased for the right amount of money.

American Gigolo shows us the male prostitute body, but rarely gives us his thoughts. We are only treated to his benevolent 'whore with a heart of gold' philosophy, that he enjoys giving pleasure to women who cannot get it anywhere else. Like other prostitutes, his image is vitally important, perhaps even more so. Julian is threatened by homosexuality and strives to escape from any hint of it in his life. Unlike the female prostitutes examined in this thesis, Julian is the only one preserved by love and whose relationship is implied to continue successfully. American Gigolo gives us the image of a prostitute who has sex for money only incidentally, who is driven by his desire to give pleasure.

Conclusion

The image of the filmed prostitute is identified first by clothing, then by behaviour and attitude. Sometimes clothing is meant to disguise the prostitute. This happens in Klute and

American Gigolo. In Klute, Bree Daniels is trying to stop being a prostitute and frequently wears fashionable clothes of the era whether she is working as a prostitute or not. This allows her to move through the city as an anonymous citizen. Bree alternates quite clearly between a tough, streetwise prostitute persona and a more nervous, gentle persona. In American Gigolo, Julian Kaye masquerades as a member of the leisured class. He dresses in designer suits until the end when he is trying to elude his pursuers, and he adopts casual, unremarkable clothes. Julian's suits allow him to be seen in expensive restaurants, but they also identify him to the women he services as a particularly high priced prostitute. Julian's personality is something of an enigma, leaving us in the dark. He appears totally open, yet reveals hardly anything of himself and he does this consistently whether he is working or not. In Pretty Baby and McCabe and Mrs. Miller, prostitutes are identified by their state of undress and their simpering attitude towards male clients. Prostitutes wear camisoles, bloomers and black stockings, slips, short robes and sometimes evening gowns. They talk, laugh and flirt constantly with the men and all the sexual activities take place inside brothels. The prostitutes tend to employ highly identifiable phrases and sets of behaviour when they are with clients, differing considerably from how they act with one another.

Three of the films contain elements of voyeurism. Klute, Pretty Baby, and American Gigolo focus on the bodies of prostitutes. Klute and American Gigolo both take their cue from film noir, creating a claustrophobic atmosphere in which the prostitute is watched by police and criminals. These two films also focus on their respective stars' bodies. Jane Fonda in Klute is a braless urban woman of 1971 with feminist leanings. Her taut body is glimpsed several times, set off by form fitting sweaters and dresses. American Gigolo displays Richard Gere's lightly muscled torso repeatedly to the viewer. He works out in his underwear, walks around his apartment without a shirt, and wears tight jeans. Pretty Baby has elements of voyeurism through the presence of photography. While the film is set in a whorehouse and naturally shows women partially naked in

the course of the story, it is the re-staging some of the photos of Ernest Bellocq, that focus on the body, particularly those of Hattie (Susan Sarandon) and Violet (Brooke Shields)..

All these films are love stories. The protagonists find love with difficulty and often have trouble really connecting with the person they love. They must eventually break down the façade they have erected (usually in order to divide the private person from the prostitute) in order to realize love. Klute ends ambiguously. We never get to find out if Bree and Klute end up together, since Bree's voice over undermines the image of her leaving with Klute. In Pretty Baby, Violet is forced to leave her husband. Violet is a minor and has no choice but to comply with the wishes of her newly respectable mother, even though she loves Bellocq. McCabe and Mrs. Miller sees McCabe killed trying to stand up to the bounty hunters while Mrs. Miller dulls her pain with opium. American Gigolo is the only one of the films that ends optimistically. Michelle gives Julian an alibi and he gratefully bows his head to her hand. One assumes he will go free and they will be together.

All these films have urban settings except McCabe and Mrs. Miller. The natural setting for the prostitute is the city and even though McCabe and Mrs. Miller places them in a rural setting, the whorehouse attracts people to Presbyterian Church because it is in the style of a big city brothel and is staffed by prostitutes from Seattle. The idea of the filmed city as a place of dissolution, excess and sexuality allows for the existence of the prostitute. Only in a city is the anonymity or discretion required for sex workers and their clients possible. The city in Klute and American Gigolo provides the necessary anonymity to the prostitute, but also makes Bree and Julian easier targets for crime. Pretty Baby shows little of New Orleans, but it is the city's decadence that permits the existence of the red light district where Violet lives.

All the films attempt to give reasons for why the characters prostitute themselves. Klute gives economic reasons, as well as ones related to Bree's self-esteem. Bree is a prostitute because she feels it is a good way to make fifty dollars quickly, and because she enjoys the attention and sense of control. The prostitutes of Pretty Baby represent an era and location in which it was common

to be born into prostitution. They have never done anything else and they have no support system aside from the brothel, which becomes like their home. McCabe and Mrs. Miller's Constance Miller is a madam because she hopes to make enough money to leave prostitution, but like Bree, she excels at her profession. American Gigolo gives no other reason than that Julian Kaye loves pleasing women, and the money is almost incidental to his sense of accomplishment.

There are certain commonalities when examining the image of the prostitute in film and I have identified some of them in this thesis. Within the limited scope of a few films I have tried to bring out what is interesting and telling about the prostitute characters in these four films. I hope that my research will serve as a starting point for more work in this area, as I feel the image of the prostitute has a great deal to tell us about how we view sexuality, particularly women's sexuality, as a society.

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