

OLDER WOMEN IN FEATURE FILMS

A RESEARCH GUIDE ABOUT REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN OVER 60

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
CASE STUDIES	
Central Station.....	5
Driving Miss Daisy	7
Harold and Maude	8
Ladies in Lavender	10
The Mother	12
Tatie Danielle.....	14
Tokyo Story	16
The Trip To Bountiful	17
The Whales Of August.....	19
General references on Ageism in the Film Industry.....	21
Searching For Debra Winger	23
Appendix 1a : Background Research	24
Appendix 1b: References to Background Research.....	27
Appendix 2a : Research Questionnaire	29
Appendix 2b: Questionnaire Results	30
Filmography.....	34
Availability of Films.....	36

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With particular thanks to Dorrie Bancroft, Alan Hooper and David Tinker and to the project steering group, the University of the Third Age, the British Film Institute and not least the members of the many film groups who watched and commented on the films.

This guide was edited by David Sharp with Sean Delaney and designed by Ian O'Sullivan, who also produced the film availability information.

Rina Rosselson
May 2006.

Introduction

by Rina Rosselson
with special thanks to Dr Josie Dolan for her advice.

This guide has evolved from an interaction between the University of the Third Age (U3A) and the British Film Institute (BFI). It has been produced in the spirit of the U3A for the sharing of knowledge.

In 2002 the Brent U3A Film Group decided to devote the year to viewing and discussing films featuring Older Women. The aim was to learn about film language, whilst exploring our feelings and thoughts about the representation of older women like ourselves. We wanted to compare our experiences of life with on-screen accounts. Around the time that we were working on these issues, three films with an older woman as central protagonist were released, IRIS (2001), LADIES IN LAVENDER (2004), THE MOTHER (2003). Our concern and sensitivity to the portrayal of older women in feature films left us asking questions about where and how these films fitted into the general portrayal of older people in the cinema. Consequently, in 2005, under the Shared Learning scheme of the U3A, we met with the BFI's Lifelong Learning team in order to explore the possibility of a joint research project about older people in films. It was decided to hold a Study day at the NFT during Adult Learners Week in May 2006, but beyond that, the nature of the research project was very open.

A research team composed of U3A members of film groups from London Region and the home counties was formed to prepare for the study day. At the exploratory phase it became very clear that, the difference between the representation of older men and older women in Hollywood films was so great that we would be unable to adopt this more inclusive, comparative approach. We therefore concentrated on 'older Women in film'. In order to place further limits on a fast expanding area of research, we also made the decision to confine our interest to feature films only. It was also necessary to define the term 'older women', since we wanted to avoid the connotations created by films like THE GRADUATE. Therefore, we adopted the practice suggested by Age Concern's *Too Old for TV?* (1999), and other research papers which employ the definition of 60+. We felt that the correspondence between this definition and the age range of the research group and the U3A membership was crucial.

In this exploratory stage, we defined the objectives of the project as being:

- to review existing research and published literature about films featuring a woman over 60 as the main protagonist, or playing a significant part of an ensemble;
- to compile a filmography of popular films, that as comprehensively as possible (within the limits of the project) would identify films in which the main character is an older woman, or in which an older woman is a significant part of an ensemble;
- to produce some reviews and case studies of particular films and seek and report feedback from U3A members on these films.

Literature

Research identified several areas of concern, the foremost being the virtual absence of scholarship on older women in film. This is similar to findings made in UN and EU reports on women that recognize the invisibility of the older woman in the media. In terms of film, the invisibility of older women applies to both actresses and characters. As far as older actors are concerned, statistics of actors organisations in the US and UK indicate an ageist bias in the employment of actors, and they also point to a gender gap that gets worse with age.

Women's acting careers seem to suffer from what one writer calls double jeopardy. Not only do actresses receive fewer roles and have less star presence than actors, but this difference increases with age. Contrary to what might be expected following second wave feminism, this pattern has not changed in the US in the period between 1926 to 1999. Since 1927, 58 men and 32 women over 60 have been nominated for the Academy Awards. Correspondingly, overall roles available to older actors far outnumber those for older actresses. This difference has increased remarkably since the 1960s. A similar pattern exists in the UK. An article in Equity magazine called 'Boys Town: Or how the Feature Film Industry Conspires to Exclude Older Women' recounts the experiences of British actors. Overall, a general absence of older actresses in film is compounded by a shortage of roles. This under-representation of older women in films bears no comparison to the pattern of the general population.

Stereotypes of older women

In spite of a huge interest in media portrayals of women by feminist academics since the 1970s, and in spite of demographic changes, the image of the older woman in films has attracted little academic attention. What little research that does exist appears in Sociology and Gerontology publications and only considers American produced films. Worryingly, even in these academic papers an ageist /sexist bias is sometimes present.

Equally, this published work into representations of older women in American produced films highlights a worrying dependence on stereotypical roles.

The stereotypes reported are:

1- The mother¹. Depending on the historical/social circumstances, she can be wise, strong and loyal, tragic and self-sacrificing. But equally, she can be the overprotective, overbearing, repressive, controlling, suffocating Mom. A recent paper shows that in 1990s a new trend seems to be emerging in that the mother is portrayed as suffering some sort of dementia.

2- The rich dowager: often a widow, she can be feather-brained, a figure of fun or powerful figure of inflexible authority.

3- "... feisty grandmothers, ageing careerists and sharp tongued spinsters" of the 1930s.²

4- Servants, maids, waitresses often of ethnic minority background.

Older woman as protagonist

In all films, the function of a central protagonist that is psychologically developed and provides the narrative motivation is crucial. On rare occasions the protagonist is an older woman, although this does not necessarily escape stereotype.

The protagonist is frequently a mother stereotype. Ma Joad in *THE GRAPES OF WRATH* is a good example of the strong mother, whilst *MAKE WAY FOR TOMORROW*

and *LADY FOR A DAY* portray the tragic and self sacrificing mothers.

The menacing 'MOM' is present in *THE ANNIVERSARY*, whilst in *PSYCHO* 'MOM' pervades the film with her controlling tyrannical terrifying presence, even though she is never visibly represented. This last film is interesting in that Hitchcock's downbeat ending reveals the horrific mother to be a construction of the diseased mind of the young man.

From the 50s another type of protagonist appears: the ageing, embittered, sad and grotesque actress. The classic *SUNSET BOULEVARD* (1950) is described sometimes as a metaphor for the end of the studio area in Hollywood but there is also *WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?* (1962) and *FEDORA* (1978). In *WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?*, we have the psychotic ex-child actress, the embittered spinster career woman and 'MOM' in one film.

Two films, *ARSENIC AND OLD LACE* and the cult *HAROLD AND MAUDE* have been identified by some U3A members as standing out: in that they unsettle pervasive stereotypes of defenceless, sexless older women. In the former film, two 'little harmless old ladies' turn out to be serial killers. In the second, 'little old ' Maude is full anarchic energy. She inspires in Harold the will to live life to the full, and at 80 initiates him to sex. Even though she ends her life, it does not diminish the impact of her enduring vitality.

The 1980s are often considered as producing a new era for older women in films because three Oscars for Best Actress in a Leading Role were awarded to Katherine Hepburn (age 74) (*ON GOLDEN POND* 1981), Geraldine Page (age 61) (*THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL* 1985) and Jessica Tandy (age 80) (*DRIVING MISS DAISY* 1989). But even though these films employ an older actress, do they really show any change in the representation of older women? In as much as their main theme is ageing rather than the decaying old age of the 60s they are different. But each one still retains some attributes of previous portrayals. Ethel Thayer in *ON GOLDEN POND* is primarily the supporting wife/mother of the 1930s. Also, in *THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL* the mother/mother-in-law conflict is once again placed under scrutiny. But the new theme of nostalgic need to visit one's past is explored and the obstinate older woman is not rich. However there is a suggestion of early dementia in the acting that deprives the woman of any sort of dignity, and

¹ Philip Wylie, (1955) suggests that 'Mom is a human calamity. She is also, like every calamity, a cause for sorrow, a reproach, a warning siren and a terrible appeal for amends.'

² Walsh

reduces her strength of character to a disease of aging, rather than a trait of feminine strength. Finally the rich dowager is here in DRIVING MISS DAISY although not as inflexible as before as she changes her racist attitudes. In one way it is a new departure in that the female lead is Jewish and the male lead black. They are seen in a social/historical context and are not one dimensional. But the film could well symbolise the double standard in the representation of ageing. The chauffeur who becomes the carer remains competent as he ages while the woman loses her autonomy and control. The film also makes it safe to represent a mixed relationship since the older women is de-sexualised.

Twenty years on from the shifts of the 1980s three British films, IRIS (2001), LADIES IN LAVENDER (2004), THE MOTHER (2003) that provided the motivation for this project were released. The representation of older women in British films has received even less attention than their American counterpart. Indeed, if we take Hollywood as a national cinema, it is the only one to have inspired the kind of research of interest to this project. Existing research on 1930s British films does identify older women as being typed as difficult dowagers who are typically eccentric. They are largely confined to comedies and OLD MOTHER RILEY, a drag performance, is also quoted in this category. Also, in British films, the little old lady in the LADYKILLERS, the eccentric nanny/spy of THE LADY VANISHES and the many impersonations of Miss Marple present us with autonomous older women outside any family relationships. But how far these representations are typical of British films has yet to be explored in the academic context.

Whilst brilliant older women get star billing in films like, IRIS, LADIES IN LAVENDER, THE MOTHER, the roles they perform do no justice to the lives, and aspirations of older women, nor do they represent the contributions they make to society. In these films, there is no sign of our changing world, nor of the diversity of the population of modern Britain. Whilst the proliferation of incidental characters with dementia, and IRIS, a major film showing the descent into Alzheimer disease of a brilliant female intellectual, could be interpreted as a representation of social reality, they can also be seen as expressing a new fear of ageing in the mainly young, male media executives. Consequently, they do little to address the absence of older women's lives on our screens. Similarly, the nostalgic return to a genteel (class bound) idyllic time in 'Postcard' Cornwall of LADIES IN LAVENDER provides

comfortable viewing. The two sisters who live by the sea and the gentle pace are reminiscent of THE WHALES OF AUGUST. But in LADIES IN LAVENDER one of the women is unbalanced by her unfulfilled motherly/sexual needs. In the latter the women are autonomous. THE MOTHER has been hailed as a breakthrough because it depicts an older woman having explicit sex with a much younger man. This time we have a selfish Mother as Victim liberated by having sex with her daughter's lover. A majority of our respondents found the character unsympathetic (see survey comments) and it was the least liked of the eight films of our survey.

In 2005, two films MRS HENDERSON PRESENTS and KEEPING MUM were released. The former features an eccentric rich dowager again. In the latter, a black comedy, a murderous Maggie Smith subverts the mother, grandmother, housekeeper stereotypes.

The research for the filmography which is still work in progress has been instructive. There are some films which are relevant to our times are intellectually challenging or just entertaining. The films listed may not readily available but they have all been seen by U3A members and they can be obtained second hand, or recorded from TV. They usually are broadcast very late at night.

The tragic inability of coping with growing older is the subject of the French classic LE CHAT. There are life review and reminiscence films like FRIED GREEN TOMATOES. Minor comedies ALIVE AND KICKING, MRS CALDICOTT'S CABBAGE WAR show the empowerment of residents of retirement homes. For shocking effect of a sexual nature, Jeanne Moreau in THE OLD LADY WHO WALKED IN THE SEA cannot be surpassed. Two Australian road movies and one Brazilian OVER THE HILL, SPIDER AND ROSE, CENTRAL STATION deal with self discovery, growing friendship with a younger man and faith and change respectively. THE COMPANY OF STRANGERS exposes the diversity of women's background and experience, their friendship and resourcefulness. INNOCENCE and LES TEMPS QUI CHANGENT portray the breakdown of a marriage. UNHOOK THE STARS sees the mother liberating herself from her children. The effect of a mentally disabled woman on her three sisters is told gently in PAULINE AND PAULETTE. The strong, competent and caring matriarch is still present in ANTONIA'S LINE. The controversial TATIE DANIELLE, raises many questions around ageism. In A

WOMAN'S TALE, Sheila Florance, who was dying of cancer herself portrays a woman full of dignity, wit and humour in the face of death. The compassionate, respectful caring of her nurse is also very important and could well be used as a model for trainee nurses. FEAR EATS THE SOUL is considered a classic. The protagonists, a 60 years old cleaner and a younger Moroccan immigrant worker are lovers and get married. They are set against an atmosphere of ageist and racist intolerance. And last but not least the great TOKYO STORY which so delicately portrays the acceptance of the imperfections of family relationships, and the experience of time passing and loss.

While waiting for the establishment of the film industry to discover the richness and diversity of older women's lives we can remain alert to the issues around stereotyping and ageist practices within the film making industry highlighted by existing research into representations of older women and film. At the same time we can enjoy and share the films above so appreciated by some U3A members.

CASE STUDIES

We wished to balance the opinions of reviewers and critics by older people's reactions. The choice was limited because the films had to be readily available. We chose 8 that were easily obtained and asked the U3A membership to choose 3 to view and send back a feedback questionnaire. The response was overwhelming in numbers and appreciation. From Dumfries to Exeter, U3A members formed around 50 groups and sent back 766 feedback forms. The experience was enjoyed by all who took part.

"...we may now start a film group."

"We all enjoyed the activity of watching the DVD's together."

"Each of the films led to discussions lasting at least two hours each time and were thoroughly enjoyed by all of us."

"We felt that all the older women were exaggerated on familiar lines - eccentric, crotchety, nasty, sweetly conventional ...we had little sense of "lived" lives, of any previous experience, rich or otherwise."

The number of people, (647 females, 84 males 34 undeclared) who viewed each film ranged from 183 (LADIES IN LAVENDER) to 42 (THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL). The films in order of preference (percentage of people who enjoyed the film a lot and quite a lot) were DRIVING MISS DAISY (96%), CENTRAL STATION (94%), LADIES IN LAVENDER (94%), TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL (88%), TATIE DANIELLE (81%), HAROLD AND MAUDE (79%), TOKYO STORY (78%), THE MOTHER (62%). There was some correlation between the enjoyment of the film and recommendation to an older audience. DD(95%), LL(95%), TTB (95%), CS (91%), TK(81%), TD (80%), HM(78%), TM (52%). As for recommending to a younger audience, 95% would recommend CS, 69% HM, 63% DD, 57% LL, 55% TD, 50% TK, 45% TTB and 44% TM.

The majority found each of the characters interesting. but not all equally sympathetic. Apart from TATIE DANIELLE the 7 other films were found to deal sympathetically with issues of ageing.

References for further reading

compiled by David Sharp

The following references have been selected to complement the study of the key films that have been chosen for this list, but they will in some cases also serve to reflect wider or different issues that reviewers have raised about the films. Generally much more will have been written about these films, and I have tried to take examples from popular as well as specialist publications.

The fact that some of those picked – as well as many that have not been – fail notably to refer to issues relating to the portrayal of older women, almost certainly backs up the major premise behind this guide, as does recent debate at Equity (see Equity, Winter 2005, in the General Section, p 33 below) to which Rina referred in her introduction.

NB The references are preceded by comments made by people attending U3A film group screenings of the key films.

Central Station (aka Central Do Brasil)

U3A Film Group Members' comments:

I'm sick of films that think older women have to be daft, eccentric ciphers to be at all palatable. This was in no way like that. [FEMALE]

The film was remarkable in its portrayal of this older woman. She is not a static creature whose personality is fixed forever. [FEMALE]

A beautiful production which will stay in my memory for ever. [FEMALE]

..... a rare opportunity to look at the life of an older woman in her particular environment without patronising, sentimentality or stereotyping. She is first and foremost an individual. [FEMALE]

Given the harsh background and life experiences of (Dora), why expect more responsibility, caring

and commitment towards the child than from a man in similar circumstances? Hmm - one does expect women to be nicer.

[FEMALE]

There was no glamourising - expect perhaps for the fairy tale touch that (Dora) had only to wash her hair, put on lipstick and a new dress to be transformed into a desirable woman.

[FEMALE]

I thought that (Dora's) lack of commitment depicted the older woman in a very poor light. It was demeaning to present her as a liar, a thief I abhorred her being depicted as a non-person, unkempt, a victim of the past..... I was happy that she found herself, unbound from memories.

[FEMALE]

I liked this film because the little boy was delightfully natural It would not have worked for me if it had been mainly about the character of the older woman.

[FEMALE]

The depiction of (Dora) pulled no punches, and the viewer felt uncomfortable to see how an ex-member of the respected profession of teaching could behave. However, as this was Brazil do we have to apply different standards? The film posed many questions like this and did it well.

[FEMALE]

This was one of the best parts I have ever seen for a woman of Dora's age.

[FEMALE]

(Dora) needed a local branch of the U3A!

[FEMALE]

In general, reflecting on the three films seen, older women do seem to be shown without context or back story, except perfunctory reference to a dead husband, or

the lack of one. They each exemplify one conventional characteristic - embittered old woman, lonely spinster, dried-up old thing. None is allowed to have any complexity.

[LADIES IN LAVENDER, TATIE DANIELLE, CENTRAL STATION female]

Journal Articles

FILM COMMENT

Vol.34, No.6, Nov/Dec 1998

CENTRAL STATION, by Pat Aufderheide

This is an uncompromising review, which points out what a sour and cynical character Dora is, though she is not without redemption. The reviewer looks more for a relationship between the film and the moral state of Brazil, and waxes lyrical about director Walter Salles. The journey Dora and the boy embark upon to the more rural Brazil, is seen as a "pilgrimage to possibility".

FILM REVIEW

January 1999, p.32.

[Review], by John Binns

Fairly brief but precise review which draws attention to the key relationship between Dora (the letter-writing ex-teacher) and the little boy and the fact that she undergoes some changes in what is a warm-hearted film.

SIGHT & SOUND

March 1999, p38-39

[Review], by Nina Caplan

Detailed analysis which looks at the role of Dora, as an ex-teacher, who in effect assumes a position of power as a letter-writer for less literate customers. The main focus is about the film as road movie and one with a religious centre, but that equals a journey, and one in which Dora is central, like the station of the title, but also in control - she decides what to do with the letters, whether they should be sent or not.

So in that sense she is a powerful figure as an older - and wise - woman.

Newspaper Articles

DAILY TELEGRAPH

12 Mar 1999, p24

In Search of a New Dawn, by Quentin Curtis

Sums up quite pithily what variant strands the film contains, but in a key central paragraph, homes in on a description of the Dora character, and the transition she makes as she passes through the film.

DAILY TELEGRAPH (ARTS & BOOKS SECTION)

7 May 2005 p.20

Filmmakers on Film: Mike Barker on Walter Salles's Central Station, by David Gritten

Though partly a tribute to Salles, and also revealing about Barker, the article has a fair amount to say about the character of Dora, in that she is unsympathetic and unusual, yet – like anyone – needs to be loved and needed.

Driving Miss Daisy

U3A Film Group Members' comments:

Radical changes in the way we (older people) live, travel, the role of male and female, invite comparison with 'then and now' not always for the better, or is that showing my age?

[FEMALE]

Anyone over the age of 60 could probably identify with the character and the fear that comes with loss of independence.

[FEMALE]

..... the treatment of characters was thought provoking, and roused fear for my own future.

[FEMALE]

The fact that at the end she preferred the company of an older black man, rather than her son, was true. You do sometimes (often?) want a friend rather than a relative.

[FEMALE]

It is good to see older women changing and still able to form friendships.

[FEMALE]

It brought it home to me the awful thought (that) going into care (was) very frightening.

[FEMALE]

I felt the older female character was portrayed with insight and understanding of a feisty older woman who is dismayed at finding her faculties failing There was a great deal to dislike about this woman there was also a vulnerability about her which I was able to identify with.

[FEMALE]

It was a deeply moving film and will long stay with me, especially those final moments.

[FEMALE]

Overall it was depressing - the unlikelihood of a happy outcome for elderly women facing a similar loss of abilities and independence is not likely to (be) lessened by this film.

[FEMALE]

Journal Articles

AMERICAN FILM

Vol. 15, No 4, January 1990, p.59

Driving Miss Daisy. Jessica Tandy Keeps on Rolling, by Robert Seidenberg

This review gets to the nub and focuses on Tandy's performance as a strong and interesting character, played by a remarkable, mature, actress and ranging over a 25 year period within the story. There is also a reminder that Ms Tandy was also in other films that portray old age – albeit in a different way – COCOON and it's sequel.

CINEMA PAPERS

No. 79 May 1990, pp.63-64

Driving Miss Daisy, by John Conomos

Conomos picks up on many of the themes in this multi-textured film, and is at pains to ensure it isn't treated as a "syrupy liberal movie". He praises the performances of the three characters, yet at no point does he refer to age in his review, despite inference by the duration of Miss Daisy's employment of her chauffeur.

CITY LIMITS

No. 438, 22 Feb – 1 Mar 1990, p35

Driving Miss Daisy, by Kirsty McNeill

Short review, but points out that the two leads have “meaty roles that rarely go to older actors”.

TIME OUT

No.1019, 28 Feb 1990, p.7

Jessica Tandy, by Colette Maude

Focusing on a brief appearance by Tandy, mid-way through a pan-European publicity visit, where she talks about the role of Miss Daisy. Note that she “had a little map, so that I knew with each scene how old I was”.

Newspaper and other Articles

DAILY MAIL

23 Feb 1990, p.34

Daisy's the pick of the bunch, by Shaun Usher

Notable that it argues that the film is about the way people change over the course of their lives and their histories, rather than about racism.

DAILY TELEGRAPH TV & RADIO [section]

3 Feb 1996, p.3

Driving Miss Daisy, by Quentin Falk

In a review that relates to a TV screening, Falk muses on the fact that the two stars became Hollywood stars “after the usual sell-by date”, which adds further weight to the argument that the critics, who after all influence the consumer end of the industry, may also be culpable in the process by which older actors find it difficult to get decent roles.

SPARE RIB

Apr 1990, p 30

Driving Miss Daisy, by Esther Bailey

In an acerbic review, Ms Bailey finds this film to be offensive in its portrayal of black people (it sticks with conventional racist stereotypes in her view) as well as pondering on the portrayal of an elderly Jewish woman in this way. Given the constituency readership of *Spare Rib* it is surprising that the reviewer finds nothing to

say regarding the casting of an older woman in the role,

VILLAGE VOICE

19 Dec 1989, pp.98, 104

Driving Miss Daisy, by Gary Giddens

Thoughtful review which does emphasise that both middle-aged black men and elderly white women are habitually underemployed by Hollywood.

Harold and Maude

U3A Film Group Members' comments:

I did not see how this film related in any way to ageing and the idea of a young man (however weird) having an affair with an 80 year-old woman, utterly bizarre.
[FEMALE]

Rubbish.
[FEMALE]

A unique depiction of an older woman on film.
[FEMALE]

I felt annoyed that Maude had decided to end her life on her 80th birthday! Very Bad Idea!
[FEMALE]

I wished it was me sometimes!!
[FEMALE]

I have never seen a film before that portrayed a really older woman in such a way really quite uplifting.
[FEMALE]

A delightful, wild, life-affirming, sensuous woman, full of surprises. An inspiration Maude (on a motor cycle) has been a cult figure for me for 30 years Makes me hopeful that the next 20 years of my life will have fun and opportunities in it.
[FEMALE]

I have a particular aversion to this pastiche of stereotypes to make older women acceptable.
[FEMALE]

I first saw this film at around 40 (hair beginning to turn grey and experiencing intimations of encroaching 'invisibility') and I delighted in Maude's eccentricity and anarchism now, at 65 I think that anyone could be like her - and nothing less than anarchy will have any effect on the negative stereotype of women.

[FEMALE]

I saw this film when it first came out. I was so taken I decided I would end my life at the age of 84. I am still sticking to this.

[FEMALE]

I felt strongly drawn to the vibrant spirit of this extraordinary woman.

[MALE]

Books

SAMUELS, Stuart

Midnight Movies

New York: MacMillan, 1983. 224p., illus.

Pages 175-198 (and part of the immediately preceding "interlude") are essentially a chapter on HAROLD AND MAUDE covering the history of the making of the film, its release, its critical savaging, its immense success in France, its subsequent re-releases in the USA on the repertory and art-house circuits and finally, its success. There is much information for the researcher about the relationship between the characters and about how life-affirming Maude, played by Ruth Gordon, is.

Journal Articles

FILMFACTS

Vol.14, No. 24 15 Dec 1971

Harold and Maude, [Anonymous]

As well as a synopsis and a critique there follows a resumé of reviews which quickly lead you to many of the main points concerning this film, and you can see which (US) critics found it distasteful. Once you see what they pick on, you may say this says more about their attitudes than those of the film-makers.

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

May 1972, p.95

Harold and Maude, by Richard Combs

Makes the point that there is an element of "fairy godmother" to the character of Maude, but also points to some of the Establishment reactions that the relationship between the two leads - and, indeed, Harold's general penchant for macabre, death-related, activity - inevitably explores. Importantly, I feel, Maude is able to get across the richness of her visions, of her life, and Combs has spotted this.

VARIETY

23 Dec 1996, pp.4, 57

A Cult Classic Remembered, by Peter Bart

A useful article 25 years after the original release of the film, recalling some of the history of its initial failure and subsequent success. It gets to the crux of things by reminding us that this is a romance between an 18 year old boy and an 80 year old woman, and most importantly, asserting that the key executives at Paramount decided not to "talk to the advertising mavens until it was finished". This - and the choice of language - may well be revealing of the prevailing attitudes.

Newspaper Articles

DAILY MAIL

25 April 1972

Harold and Maude, by Cecil Wilson

Relatively brief review, but seemingly less reactionary than would be expected from the same paper today. Wilson is clear that this tale of "a woman on her last legs who teaches a man on his first legs to live, love and laugh" is not embarrassing.

NEW YORK TIMES

8 Aug 1983, p C14

After 12 Years, a Profit for "Harold and Maude", by Aljean Harmetz

Detailed analysis of the distribution of the film with some information about the budget and box office take, along with an overview of why it found success. Shrewdly, gives the view of psychiatrists, suggesting that the Maude figure is the fairytale timeless immortal mother-figure, who leads her son into life, and a kind of conquest of death, with Maude leading Harold away from his obsession with dying.

Ladies in Lavender

U3A Film Group Members' comments:

Generally depressing!..... Are there any films about older lesbians?

[FEMALE]

I think it strikes a chord with all of us for things that might have been and certain regrets - looking back at life.

[FEMALE]

The depiction of the two spinsters was excellent and one felt sympathy for them, but we felt (the actors) were perhaps too old to be believable in the parts.

[FEMALE]

Perhaps these two actresses (Judi Dench, Maggie Smith), because of their age, portrayed the yearnings which are dormant in those who are approaching the 'elderly' era, simply because they have personal knowledge of the scenario.

[FEMALE]

To my mind it is a typical male 'take' on older women. (The director) has chosen the period between the wars when women's roles were changing, but it harks back to when men were seen as essential for women to live fulfilled lives The women are defined by the men in their lives. These actresses deserved a better deal.

[FEMALE]

I have met several ladies just like them - rather naive, quite happy in the life they are leading.

[FEMALE]

This is comfort story-telling and does nothing to resolve any of the issues it raises. So, ultimately, a wasted opportunity and a frustrating film.

[FEMALE]

The film answered the question which is often asked re. older women especially, 'Do they still have sexual feelings in old age?' In today's climate of youth culture this is a sadly neglected area of the lives of women, yet there are more women on their own now than ever.

[FEMALE]

.....older women always seem to be old-fashioned.

[FEMALE]

The role of Dorcas (an older woman) is played (and written?) largely for comedy which seems a lost opportunity. This verges on being a stereotypical portrayal.

[FEMALE]

I found the presentation of Ursula's sexual awakening and her fantasies of lovemaking very convincing - a moving portrayal that age does not dim longing.

[FEMALE]

All too sentimental; older women seen through rose-coloured spectacles, endearingly dippy.

[FEMALE]

"Extreme" suspension of disbelief

[FEMALE]

Would an older ACTOR (m) have been treated in a similar fashion? (expressing/implying regret, need, stoicism).

[FEMALE]

More films of this calibre please and I will become a regular filmgoer.

[FEMALE]

Having been a child myself in the 1930's I met many similar women, friends and acquaintances of my mother.

[FEMALE]

Enjoyed watching the film with a group of women more than watching with my husband at the cinema.

[FEMALE]

These two elderly unmarried ladies were very sympathetically and

delicately drawn
Nevertheless, there was something sentimental about the whole film, including the title which was perhaps patronising: after all it is no surprise that someone older is prone to strong emotions like anyone else. There was something a bit stereotypical about the 'spinster' image.
[FEMALE]

The two sister reminded me so much of my three maiden aunts (who lost friends/lovers in 1914-18) and their relationship to each other.
[FEMALE]

Now I should like to see a film about busy elderly people whose lives would barely leave room for the youngster thrown out of the sea. I know many, up to 93 years of age.
[FEMALE]

.....(the) plot where elderly women worship youth, allows the film to emphasise the weak and pitiable aspects of these women.
[FEMALE]

The premise - older women falling for much younger man - had its credulity stretched to the limit with the ages of the actresses playing the two sisters.
[FEMALE]

How good to watch a film without violence, rampant sex and 4-letter words.
[FEMALE]

A gentle, slow-moving, poignant story, entirely suitable for "female" viewing!
[FEMALE]

I thoroughly enjoyed the film.
[MALE]

I felt the film dealt less with age-related issues (than) with class issues. Age differences were superficial and based on the ages and status of the principal characters. A good sentimental wallow in nostalgia!
[FEMALE]

In general, reflecting on the three films seen, older women do seem to be shown without context or back story, except perfunctory reference to a dead husband, or the lack of one. They each exemplify one conventional characteristic - embittered old woman, lonely spinster, dried-up old thing. None is allowed to have any complexity.

[LADIES IN LAVENDER, TATIE DANIELLE, CENTRAL STATION female]

Journal Articles

SIGHT AND SOUND

Vol 14, no 11, Nov 2004, p 34

Ladies in Lavender, by Geoffrey Macnab

Lengthy analysis that deals both with the heritage aspects of the film (the leads of course contribute to these) and the understated passions that are aroused in the two female leads, whilst suggesting that had Dance been a bolder director he might have made more of the latter, and hence a bolder directorial debut. This is a case where it would appear that the original story worked better than the film does, but it is surely important that Dance chose to make the lead characters older than in the book, with the resultant raising of the comedic elements. Ask yourself why on earth should older women be made into figures of fun – and thus made fun of – for having erotic or sexual feelings, or just wanting love.

FILM REVIEW

Yearbook 2005, p.110

Ladies in Lavender, by James Cameron-Wilson

Positive review, suggesting some of the potential pitfalls have been avoided in a story where the contrasting life experiences of two elderly sisters – safely distanced into the 1930s – underpin the action. It must not be overlooked that two senior actresses, in rank as well as years, are, for that very reason, the focus of the film and of the reviews...

Newspaper Articles

THE TIMES

11 October 2004, Section T2, p.12

Ladies In Lavender, by James Christopher

A descriptive review, praising the film for its understatement, and focusing on the main cast, and especially Miriam Margolyes, who is often overlooked in other reviews.

EVENING STANDARD

17 Jun 2004, p.29

Acting The Director, by Sheila Johnston

Whilst to some extent about Dance and his decision to try his hand at directing, and also about the actors' careers generally, this article contains both the suggestion that finding two bankable English actresses in their 40s would have been difficult, and most importantly his defence of older women and their feelings, which has not perhaps transposed itself into the film.

The Mother

U3A Film Group Members' comments:

Although she (the mother) starts sympathetically, the story descends into melodrama, thereby devaluing her status as an older woman. [FEMALE]

Throughout the film there was a total lack of compassion which gave a very negative impression of the older woman. [FEMALE]

..... how could a family be so INSENSITIVE - unreal and inaccurate. [FEMALE]

What did it achieve by letting the daughter wallop the mother? [FEMALE]

..... at middle age the sexual need was still there for her, which is totally credible. [FEMALE]

I could not empathise with the mother's character in any way She was extremely cold towards her family did not seem to mourn (her husband) To me, as a widow, it seemed incredible that she should

instigate a sexual liaison with her daughter's lover, particularly so soon after her husband's death. [FEMALE]

I found her need for a sexual relationship with the young man and her expressions of it very embarrassing and inappropriate. [FEMALE]

..... the affair between the mother and the younger man is degrading, sexist and ageist with the older woman begging for sex Inter-generational relationships can be successful - sexual or non-sexual. Why choose, in a very rare attempt to deal with this issue, to do so by removing all dignity from the older woman? A wasted opportunity. [FEMALE]

I felt it was a bit offensive to women. [FEMALE]

A sad and brutal film. [FEMALE]

The initial view of the mother was as a subservient wife My thoughts were that as this is a contemporary setting, it is shocking to think that anyone could remain so subservient. [FEMALE]

A great film that probably tells it like it really is! [MALE]

It was so refreshing, and unusual, to see a mature woman having, and enjoying, sex. [FEMALE]

The most poignant moment for me was when the mother said 'I thought no-one would ever touch me again, except the undertaker'. [FEMALE]

The older husband reflects what I have observed in real life: he couldn't dress himself and had to rely on his wife yet was sprightly enough to push himself

on to his (daughter-in-law) and dance with lusting eyes.

[FEMALE]

The mother was unsympathetically portrayed she transgressed seriously against her daughter by sleeping with her daughter's lover, displaying more than just an aroused sexuality but a breaking of taboos. The mother's lack of awareness of her daughter's feelings undermined the credibility of the older woman's role It distracted from the theme of passion and sexual attraction that could have been interestingly explored.

[FEMALE]

I enjoyed (the film) a lot but I was very embarrassed to be watching it with people I don't yet know very well - especially with gentlemen. It was much too sexually explicit - the doors should have been closed sometimes.

[FEMALE]

The behaviour of the characters was alien to my own experience and to any anecdotal references I had heard, which made it difficult to relate to the female older character or, indeed, to anyone else I thought it unlikely that someone recently widowed would hurl herself into a very active physical relationship and, to boot, leave around the house explicit drawings of her sexual activities.

[MALE]

.....the grandchildren not knowing who she was was laughable if it hadn't been so tragic.

[FEMALE]

It is sad that a high proportion of the action relates to the wish/need of the mother to live life through her younger relatives. I hope this is not seen by younger audiences as typical, or to be expected.

[FEMALE]

Older women always appear to be downtrodden. Very few of my friends give this impression.

[FEMALE]

I presume this portrays the life of young people today. Very different from my family life.

[FEMALE]

It came across to me that like many women at that time one would almost have been considered a failure if you did not get married and have children. She conformed when really her heart wasn't in it..... By the time her family grew up and her husband died she had not really lived her life as a person in her own right.

[FEMALE]

I found the fact that an ageing woman showed no embarrassment at stripping off in front of a young virile man quite unbelievable.

[FEMALE]

Journal Articles

VARIETY

2-8 June 2003, pp.48-49

The Mother, by Derek Elley

From an American perspective, it would appear whilst Anne Reid's performance is seen as giving the film a "mature, still center that manages to hold things together", the script and perhaps the direction are seen as uneven, and the reviewer finds the "older woman/young blade" frankly unbelievable. Whilst it is right to describe the family as dysfunctional, is it fair to include Reid's character May in this, given that she is grieving?

SIGHT & SOUND

December 2003, p.46

The Mother, by Vicky Wilson

The reviewer points out that elderly women are rarely represented as sexual beings, and that this makes the sex scenes between May (Anne Reid) and her daughter's lover Darren (Daniel Craig) feel uncomfortably frank. It also draws attention to the "jolting honesty" of the portrayal of female flesh.

There is much much more, of course: the review – and the title – raise questions of motherhood, mother -daughter relationships and there is also the question of the pace of

the film, particularly the contrasting pace that May moves at, almost in opposition to the freneticism of the younger people, which is skillfully essayed via the editing.

Newspaper Articles

OBSERVER

19 May 2002, p5

New Kureishi Film Tackles Sex and the Single Grandmother, by Vanessa Thorpe

A report from Cannes, prior to the film going into production. The reporter refers back to HAROLD AND MAUDE in identifying this as a film about a relationship that is "almost unheard of" in films when compared with relationships in the other direction. The director, no doubt mindful of advance publicity, describes the subject as "risky" (or should that have been risqué)?

Tatie Danielle (aka Auntie Danielle)

U3A Film Group Members' comments:

I have experienced most of her traits in many other elderly women I have seen some of these traits in myself - a frightening prospect!

[FEMALE]

Age with power.

[FEMALE]

..... the character was so unsympathetic that it was irrelevant whether she was female or male and old or young.

[MALE]

The film makes one realise that the older woman is a person who matters, a person who has a past, with thoughts and feelings, and it is insensitive to put her into the category of an Old Lady Who Needs Looking After - which is patronising.

[FEMALE]

Heaven preserve us from ever becoming like, or meeting, someone like Tatie Danielle.

[FEMALE]

(The character's) relentless bullying and cruelty made me upset and angry. Why did the producer choose to depict such an obnoxious older lady?

[FEMALE]

I loved this film - for challenging preconceptions about older women, including that you have to be 'sweet little old ladies' to earn a corner in someone's house. And for taking retaliation against her powerlessness to an extreme conclusion - wonderful! We have so few role models for outrageous older women - Tatie Danielle is definitely one.

[FEMALE]

..... the strength which was portrayed by (Danielle) by achieving her own satisfaction was unbounded growing old very disgracefully.

[FEMALE]

I felt incensed at an older woman being portrayed as an object of derision (and) a selfish, extremely rude and thoughtless old woman I was angry at her depiction as being the norm of an older person, totally dependent on others Also the typical image of the old people's home with women of low mentality 'stinking' I felt it was ungracious to depict other older female characters as silly, subservient, under the control of others, victims of old age.

[FEMALE]

What gems of roles for the more mature actors.

[FEMALE]

..... a dear sweet little old lady's life wouldn't make such a good film.

[FEMALE]

In spite of her manipulation of others I felt a sympathy for (Danielle).

[FEMALE]

..... one of the pleasures of old age is the realisation that

one can at last feel free to behave without inhibitions.
[FEMALE]

To an older person the film was at the same time depressing and fascinating.
[FEMALE]

..... the main character was my mother-in-law, which brought back memories best forgotten.
[FEMALE]

It was interesting to hear in our discussion how many of us had seen "some" of Danielle's social problems in their own families.
[FEMALE]

In general, reflecting on the three films seen, older women do seem to be shown without context or back story, except perfunctory reference to a dead husband, or the lack of one. They each exemplify one conventional characteristic - embittered old woman, lonely spinster, dried-up old thing. None is allowed to have any complexity.
[LADIES IN LAVENDER, TATIE DANIELLE, CENTRAL STATION female]

Journal Articles

SIGHT AND SOUND

Vol.1 No 1, May 1991

Tatie Danielle, by Ginette Vincendeau

In a very thoughtful, and thought provoking review, Professor Vincendeau suggests that TATIE DANIELLE is set in a 'real' France (not the romantic image the British tend to hold), where the provincial bourgeoisie are obsessed with hypochondria, their inheritance, and above all, how an increasingly ageing population is to be "dealt with". Whilst this is a comedy, it is a bleak one, in places evoking emotional isolation. It is also a film which ultimately cannot decide whether Danielle is an unbending virago or a subversive *dame indigne*, an unruly older women who defies convention. It is important to note that this is a film scripted by a woman, Florence Quentin, and yet the women are still the ones who discuss and deal with the issue of caring for

the elderly, and men are absent from the film (or dead).

VARIETY

25 April 1990, p28-9

Tatie Danielle (Auntie Danielle), by "Len"

Very positive review with a lot of relevant and useful cast details, which opens by describing this film as a tart comedy providing "welcome Gallic relief to the saccharine Hollywood-endorsed stereotypes of the elderly as armchair dispensers of love and bromides".

Newspaper and other Articles

SPARE RIB

December 1990/January 1991, pp.28-29

Tatie Danielle, by Carrie Tarr

Ms Tarr points out that the film avoids the standard images, yet is not a portrait of female monstrosity. Tatie is shown to be a victim, a victim of a repressed desire for authentic love, caused by fifty years of lonely widowhood.

INDEPENDENT

5 April 1991, p.18

The Widow's Might, by Adam Mars-Jones

Splendid review which points out the lack of films with comparable portraits in them, though the reviewer does also cite the TV series GOLDEN GIRLS and the character Sofia Petrillo in particular as having relevance. There is an argument he feels that recognises that old age is a cultural prison even if it isn't a physical one, as well as showing that the idea that old age is really an invention is a fantasy. Above all Mars-Jones makes the point firmly that this film is in no way a slight project by virtue of its subject: it takes old age seriously, and uses an appropriate cast to get this over.

SPECTATOR

13 April 1991, p.44

Tortures of Embarrassment, by Gabriele Annan.

Whilst firmly grounding the film as French, Ms Annan's review focuses bluntly on the range of what she describes as 'hard to face' situations, i.e. ones that embarrass the audience who by extension, really do not want to confront them. Old age is one such of these. However the review perhaps places too much emphasis on Tatie's dark misanthropy. There is little doubt that some elements of her character and behaviour are "over the top" but does this undermine any positive representation of older women – indeed, is this a positive image? It is certainly a strong one.

VILLAGE VOICE

21 May 1991, p.58

[Review], by Anon.

The only review I have seen that suggests that the elderly must earn respect just like everyone else, and not expect it just because they are old. The review also picks up on the point that firm parental authority (i.e. love) is what finally Tatie is searching for.

Tokyo Story aka Tokyo Monogatari (aka Their First Trip To Tokyo)

U3A Film Group Members' comments:

..... one of the persuasive, but unstated, messages conveyed by the film was the 'two minds, but a single thought' character of the marriage.

[MALE]

Her stoic acceptance of the increasing void between them is heartbreakingly portrayed, and, as a westerner used to expressing my emotions to my family, this, and the formality of her relationship with her husband is really painful.

[FEMALE]

(the film) covered the global issues of growing old. [FEMALE]

There is no sense of the mother having any individual personality.

[FEMALE]

The mother is calm, accepting, loving, very quiet, uncomplaining, dignified the centre, a unifying strength, of the family.

[FEMALE]

..... it's so rare to see any explorations of what it's like to be an older woman and a parent, how complicated those relationships are to negotiate across distance.

[FEMALE]

A sad, believable story of ageing, of being 'has-beens'. Perhaps a lesson to younger people to appreciate their elders while they have the opportunity.

[FEMALE]

The depiction of the mother was very true, for, apart from the enormous cultural differences, older parents often have to hide their feelings of annoyance or disappointment with their grown-up children to maintain family harmony.

[FEMALE]

The role of the older woman was shared by the older man - I do not feel that she was any more important than he was.

[MALE]

Book

DESSER, David

Ozu's Tokyo Story.

Cambridge University Press, 1997. 173p., illus., index.

In chapter 3, (Ozu's Mother, by Darrell William Davis, pp 76-100), after reminding us that the film is essentially a "city-film", the author devotes much of the text to the daughter/mother/widow relationship, and the theme of aging parents.

Journal Articles

CINEACTION

No.60, 2003 pp.34-44

Three Japanese Actresses of the 1950s. Modernity, Femininity, and the Performance of Everyday Life, by Catherine Russell

Much of this article concerns Sugimura Haruko and Setsuko Hara from TOKYO STORY and, of course, many other film roles. What may be significant is that whilst the article is extremely useful regarding the role of women in Japanese society and how that transfers onto film, it almost consciously avoids any engagement with issues of age, by picking the two younger women and that, too, may be worth exploring.

FILMS and FILMING

Vol.11, No.10, July 1965, p32

Tokyo Story, by Gordon Gow

Focuses on contrasts between this and others of the Japanese film canon gradually getting better known in the West at the time. There is some analysis of the form and look of the film (important with Ozu) but with some emphasis on the older characters and the plot, and I suspect that the reviewer may see the content as being part of the apparently unfamiliar, which was a commonly held critical feeling at the time.

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

Vol.32 No 376 May 1965, p73

Tokyo Story, by E[lizabeth] S[ussex]

Detailed analysis of the film centering on the characters in a sympathetic way and there is some reference to the age of some of the characters.

FILM (B.F.F.S.)

No 13, Sept-Oct 1957 pp.20-21

The Tokyo Story, by John Gillett

The reviewer points to the understanding and compassion for people that is inherent in this film, suggesting that the relationship between the older and the younger people is explored with considerable psychological insight.

Newspaper Articles

GUARDIAN (Section 2)

9 December 1993, p.6

Story of Simple Success, by Derek Malcolm

Emphasises the universality of the story, the relationship between the children and their parents. A film which "speaks the truth softly".

EVENING STANDARD

9 December 1993, p.41

[Review], by Neil Norman

At a time when the film was being shown again in the UK, the reviewer is able to focus more on the relationships and the characterisation.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

10 December 1993, p.19

[Review], by Hugo Davenport

Brief review but taking the angle that Ozu's film has been influenced by the fact that his own mother was widowed early and also that he had lived most of his life with her, which inevitably influenced his views on the parent-child relationship.

The Trip To Bountiful

INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONNAIRES - QUOTES

I cheered when she regained a little of her spirit and took off to Bountiful.

[FEMALE]

I may have been influenced by recent experiences with friends but to me the character of Mrs Watts showed early signs of (dementia) As such, the portrayal of a disintegrating personality seemed delicate and believable.

[FEMALE]

I found the female older character slightly depressing as it highlighted the difficulties of different generations trying to live together.

[FEMALE]

..... the older woman portrays some stereotypical characteristics - classic mother-in-law; rival for her son's love with his wife; attempts to

get her own way with flirting/coquettish behaviour towards her son and other men; her irrational behaviour is like the 'second childhood' view of older women; in later scenes she loses all dignity - almost like a 'bag lady'.

[FEMALE]

I thought the film boiled down to a man trapped between two women who both wanted to control him.

[MALE]

I found Mama Watts eminently believable and totally sympathetic. Her flirtatiousness, particularly when talking to the sheriff, was very moving - you realised she had been a very attractive woman - used to charming the opposite sex.

[FEMALE]

It would make an ideal training film for social workers and carers of the elderly - How many points would you score?

[FEMALE]

The film shows in depth the feelings of older people.

[FEMALE]

A film likely to make watchers of all mature ages think carefully about the relationships between the different generations in a family.

[MALE]

Initially I found watching an old woman that I could identify with very disturbing, but once her determination was apparent I felt exhilarated and wanted to cheer her on.

[FEMALE]

Books

CHARLOTTE, Susan *et al*
Creativity in Film: conversations with 14 who excel.

Troy, Michigan: Momentum Books, 1993. 186p., illus.

Pages 131-175 consist of interviews with several of the people involved with the film:

Pete Masterson, Carlin Glynn, Horton Foote, Gary Jones and Neil Spisak. Although some of their discussions look at other aspects of their careers, there is a reasonable amount of coverage of TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL, albeit often from aspects that relate to the creativity that went into the production, rather than the theme of the strong older woman. Nevertheless it is possible to infer something - quite a lot in fact - about the content even though Geraldine Page is not one of those interviewed.

HILL, Geoffrey

Illuminating Shadows. The Mythic Power of Film.

Boston, Mass.: Shambhala, 1992. 319p., illus., bibliog.

In Part 3 "Feminine Monsters", there is a chapter entitled "The Trip to Bountiful Paradise Regained". Hill takes quite simple analysis of the film (with allusion to John Milton), based on oppositions - time and eternity (past-present-future), wasteland and Bountiful; and choices. Though his thesis is around "myth", he gives some clear insight about Carrie Watts and the way her daughter-in-law tries to control her, which may well chime with the viewer as being a recognisable situation.

Journal Articles

CITY LIMITS

5-12 June 1986

[Review], by Amanda Lipman

Rather lukewarm review, focused mainly on the performances and suggesting a fairly uneventful film. It feels as if it may have needed the perspective of an older woman in order to see the nuances of the film.

FILMS & FILMING

No.381, June 1986, p.41

[Review], by Sheila Johnston

Though fairly brief this is a review that refers to the history of the script, the fact that Lillian Gish played the part of Mrs Watts in the original and that it deals with a journey, a return to another place and to one's memories. It also places the film firmly in the 1940s, suggesting that the audience as well as the characters are looking back - something which older people may identify with more readily.

LISTENER

Vol.115, No.2964, 12 June 1986 p.35

Disappearing World, by Clancy Sigel.

A review that actually gets to grips with the issues – the “o” word appears at least half a dozen times, and the reviewer gives a positive and sympathetic review to the film and the portrayal of Mrs Watts by Geraldine Page.

SPECTATOR

14 June 1986, p38-9

Back to Basics, by Peter Ackroyd

Although pointing out the somewhat theatrical nature of the film, this is a relatively sympathetic review, inevitably focusing on Page's performance, but reminding us that the “warm-hearted but slightly dotty old thing” is one of the staples of American cinema. This should provide some food for thought – is this also a trait commonly found in British cinema or television, or is the “old battleaxe”, redolent of music-hall and pantomime dame more familiar? Ackroyd also talks about the old in the presence of the young.

Newspaper Articles

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

8 June 1986, p.16

Walking Back to Happiness, by David Castell

Straightforward review, but with good insight into the character and therefore having something to say about older people: the dignity and indignity of old age, and the authenticity of the performance generally.

Worth remembering that this and other reviews point out that Geraldine Page is younger (at 62) than the character she plays. What does this tell us about the casting of older actresses and the way the age group are represented?

The Whales Of August

[The film screened at the study day in May 2006 at the National Film Theatre]

Journal Articles

FILM COMMENT

Jan/Feb 1987, pp.2,4

Journals: Keeping On...Cain and Able, by Joanna Ney

Much insight into the filming of WHALES OF AUGUST, giving some background plot and some notes on the way Lindsay Anderson has

chosen the cast and worked on the film, and also observing that this film about five elderly people threatened by change, contains its conflicts within the older generation, in contrast to ON GOLDEN POND or COCOON. Anderson also explains that he wanted to show the island and its uncompromising house, where people just keep on keeping on.

FILMS AND FILMING

May 1988, pp 38-9

The Whales of August, by John Russell Taylor

An extremely positive review, in terms of anticipating the success of the film, challenging the notion put to the reviewer by an allegedly sympathetic observer that the film couldn't possibly be of interest to anyone under the age of 50. Of course it is of interest, but perhaps one could also say “so what?” – why can't this large, and growing potential audience have films where they are the main target audience? Taylor describes the cast as “a dream”, and praises Anderson for the way he lets nature, often in the form of sea and sky, make unspoken comment on the action and there is quite a lot about the actors and their interaction as well as some hints of what they bring to the film by virtue of their own key places in the Hollywood pantheon.

Newspaper Articles

DAILY TELEGRAPH

26 May 1988, p.10

Age of Enchantment, by Victoria Mather

A wholly positive review, which focuses on the economy of the piece and makes a virtue of the fact that nothing much happens, whilst the reviewer was moved to tears by certain scenes. I wonder whether any male reviewers could claim that?

INDEPENDENT

26 May 1988, p.17

[Review], by Adam Mars-Jones

Describing the film as an exercise in the pathos of sunset, the reviewer goes on to suggest that “to have old people play old people would seem like the royal road to cinematic authenticity”, but then rather confusingly goes on to suggest that because the audience knows that the actors cannot play characters more able-bodied than themselves, and that they might even exaggerate their own

frailties, this somehow undermines the film. He also suggests that the legendary status they have does outweigh any frailty we observe: I would have thought that, if anything, some people might feel that these actors have been very brave revealing their true selves and others might feel saddened for the same reasons. But this is about the audience, not necessarily the cast.

SPARE RIB

June 1988, p.36

The Whales of August, by Anon.

The unnamed reviewer, aged 62, is exceedingly critical of the whole thing, with the single exception of the performance by Lillian Gish, feeling that the old people portrayed have been ghettoised, and are no longer "one of us", and suggests that it is depressing that such a wonderful opportunity has been lost.

MORE GENERAL REFERENCES ON AGEISM IN THE FILM INDUSTRY

This section is intended to allow those who wish to follow a more general line of enquiry regarding ageism (with a little sexism) in the film industry and moving away from the specific texts used for the U3A research. It includes the film *SEARCHING FOR DEBRA WINGER*.

AMERICAN FILM

Vol.7, No.3, December 1981

Coming of Age in Film, by Stephen Harvey

Inset within an article that suggests that Hollywood is at last moving away from “teen” movies, Harvey, who at the time worked at MOMA New York, identifies some films from the silent era to the 1970s, where older actors (mainly male it has to be said) get decent portrayals or parts on screen though often relegated to what is described as adding “local colour”.

CINEACTION

No.23, Winter 1990-91, pp.70-73

Writing Feminist Histories. The Burning Times and The Company of Strangers, by Janine Marchessault

An analysis of two films from the 1991 Toronto Film Festival, which are seen by the author as highlighting the plight of older women within a patriarchal society, and posits that the relation of ageing and ugliness depends on making older women dysfunctional, inconsequential and worthless; older women are thus “strangers to the screen” and rarely seen as interesting or suitable subject matter.

CINEMAYA

No.14, Winter 1991/2 (Jan-Mar), pp.4-8

The Undesired Ones. Images of the Elderly in Japanese Cinema, by Linda C. Ehrlich

A look from the 1950s up until the time the article was written, with some specific references to *TOKYO STORY*, but much more as well. The suggestion is that Japan’s rapid post-second world war modernisation has hit the elderly hard, and they can no longer expect the respect and support that was formerly the norm. The traditional extended family has been undercut by this change, to the point where the condition of the elderly is identified as the *rojin mondai* – the problem of the elderly. The researcher suggests that Japanese films often

contain at least one elderly character, and that older actors are used in these roles. What is awaited is evidence that more recent films respect the “Vision of the 90s” report that recommends the creation of a mellow society for Japan’s elderly.

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF FILM STUDIES

Vol.5, No.2, Fall 1996, pp.51-66

Hags, Nags, Witches and Cronos: Reframing Age in The Company Of Strangers, by Angela Stukator

A detailed study of the 1990 film, which is described as a disquisition on female ageing, personal histories, memory, life and death, which it maps onto the aged female body. In what is an academic text, a number of issues are discussed, including significantly, the representation of old women (and men) in mainstream cinema.

PREMIERE [UK ed]

Vol.2, No.10, November 1994, pp.80-84

Hollywood Menopause, by Ed Sikov

No surprises but a straightforward look, with plenty of examples, at the different treatment that Hollywood bestows upon male actors and female actors when they turn 40.

INTERVIEW

July 2004, p44

Shots in the Dark, by Graham Fuller

A brief overview under the strapline “even though in real life older women and younger men seem to be doing just fine, in the movies they’re still doomed”. Includes *THE MOTHER* and identifies some other titles that Fuller feels serve to exemplify his argument.

EQUITY

Winter, 2005, pp.12-13

Boys Town or How the Feature Film Industry Conspires to exclude Older Women, by Jean Rogers

The Vice-President of Equity reports on an event held at BAFTA in October 2005 with Women in Film & Television, where an industry debate was held following a screening of The Rosanna Arquette documentary film *SEARCHING FOR DEBRA WINGER*. Though this isn't strictly about how older women are portrayed, this is helpful in broadening out the debate a little and revealing different industry viewpoints – many from older women – and differing perspectives in Europe, the UK and the USA.

Newspaper Articles

INDEPENDENT

20 April, 2006 pp.44-45

Charlotte's Web, by Sheila Johnston

Whilst this article is relevant it is a publicity interview during the course of which Charlotte Rampling's career is ranged over, with particular reference to the film *LEMMING*, which is released in the UK on 28 April 2006. Ms Rampling apparently espouses the view that it is quite moving to see time turning when catching sight of one's ageing self in the mirror or via an unusual camera angle... but in the context of remaining absolutely beautiful it is up to the individual to make it happen.

Searching For Debra Winger

Documentary made by Rosanna Arquette, in which she sets out to challenge Hollywood.

Journal Articles

SCREEN INTERNATIONAL

No 1367, 9 Aug 2002, p.20

Arquette lifts Lid on Tinseltown Sexism, by Sheila Johnston

Johnston's review reminds that "even the buffer of fame does not stop stars facing much the same problems as all working women", though one might argue that status and its accoutrements can help. Essentially this documentary was made to raise issues about how to sustain a career in an industry which is obsessed with youth and beauty, is dominated by sexist attitudes, and increasingly stalked by the media. Some of the cast were interviewed, some were filmed socialising, and the results are revealing, if serving to underpin what we already know. The reviewer hints that the audience may reveal their own attitudes in wanting to catch stars seemingly off-guard and in some cases looking natural rather than groomed.

VARIETY

10 Jun 2002, pp.33-34

[Review], by David Rooney

A detailed review of the content of the film, which in itself is revealing. There is a suggestion that the film might have been stronger had it been directed by a more probing interviewer, that a trick or two has been missed by not interviewing the mothers of at least two of the stars, who had been in the industry themselves; and Ms Winger's reasons for retiring are bizarrely criticised for being universal rather than personal! The film is perhaps more useful as evidence towards an argument rather than conclusive in itself.

Newspaper articles

DAILY TELEGRAPH

17 May 2002, p.5

It's no Fun Being a Millionaire Hollywood Star, says Arquette, by Nigel Reynolds.

The headline for the review is disappointingly likely to make the reader side against the film and unsympathetic towards the content, but

once again the meat of the review does actually help to get the point across that the image of the older woman is not sought after in Hollywood.

INDEPENDENT

17 May 2002, p.11

Fortysomething Actresses hit back at Hollywood, by David Lister

Lister gives a good account of the film, suggesting it includes rather poignant moments, despite the "faintly ludicrous" element of some of the most pampered women in the world bemoaning their fate, as well as revealing that one actress suggested that there would be good roles for 54 year olds(!) coming along soon and there would be no-one to play them if everyone approaching that age tried to look younger by using cosmetic surgery ...

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

18 Jan 2004, p.3

[Review]

Again a great deal of the argument of the film is revealed through this descriptive review, though the reviewer pulls (his?) punches a little by suggesting that Hollywood has long been accused of discriminating against women for their age and beauty: being accused of it is not the same as saying that Hollywood actually has and does discriminate.

GUARDIAN

22 Jan 2004 p.2

Legally Grey? No thanks, Rosanna, by Catherine Bennett

A very flip consideration of the film: the writer challenges a remark by Diane Lane that "Women want to watch other women of their own age sometimes" by suggesting that in fact women can look at themselves (ageing) constantly, and actually go to the cinema to look at young stars instead.

APPENDIX 1a: Background Research

Compared with research on the representation of older women on Television or other mass media the research on older women in film is very sparse (Blaikie 1999, Markson 2000). In spite of a huge interest in the media portrayal of women by feminist academics since the 70s, the image of the older woman has attracted little interest.

'Vesperi in 'Forty-Nine Plus: Shifting images of ageing in the media' (2004) considers the changes that have occurred in the media in response to demographic changes in American society. She cites a number of studies of the representation of older people in entertainment, advertising, print and broadcasting but the references on feature films are few. The negative stereotypes of the older women of the 50s and 60s and the often quoted *ON GOLDEN POND*, *HAROLD AND MAUDE* and *THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL* of the 80s are mentioned. She does not analyse these films in terms of the characters portrayed and whether they do conform with or challenge ageist prejudices. Her assumption that 'contemporary film offers many outstanding examples of complex older characters who play meaningful social roles and much potential for expanding this platform further.' (*sic*) is not backed by specific evidence. In fact, Roth (2005) quotes at least 6 films in the 90s alone where the mother of an adult child is incapacitated by some Alzheimer-like disease.

Two papers illustrate that ageist and sexist outlook are still current in the last decade, even in academic papers:

'The ageing woman in popular film: Under-represented, unattractive, unfriendly and unintelligent' is the title of a paper in *Sex Roles*. Bazzini et al (1997) define the ageing woman in this paper as 35+. In 'Exploring ageist stereotypes through commercial motion pictures', Fisher selected four films, of which only one (*ON GOLDEN POND*) features an older woman.

A few film studies do look at older women. In a historical overview of the treatment of women in films, Molly Haskell (1973-1987) does mention the older woman. She talks about *LADY FOR A DAY*, *WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?*, *SUNSET BOULEVARD*, and calls *PSYCHO* misogynistic. Of Joan Crawford in *WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?*, she sees a caricature of the actress's previous roles. About *SUNSET BOULEVARD* and *ALL*

ABOUT EVE: 'He (the director) projects onto her (the actress) the narcissism, the vanity, the fear of growing old, which he is horrified to find festering within himself. A grotesque mirror image of his own insecurity, the actress becomes the painting to the director's Dorian Gray.' In these three last films, Brooks (1999) sees a metaphor for the end of the Hollywood studio era.

'*Saints and Shrews*', the only book dedicated to the image of older women in films was published in 1983. Stoddard takes a historical perspective and relates the changes in the portrayal of women to the socio-economic factors in American society. For her research Stoddard looked at 200 films from 1930-1981. She examined 64 films in more or less detail. She focused on 'the incidental appearances of older women on the screen, as well as on those older characters who are major components of a film's continuity'.

She found that in the period 1930-1945 older women were portrayed as mothers, selfless and strong 'presented as characters to be admired rather than pitied, savoured more than thrust aside as anachronisms.' (p79). Some witches and cruel mothers are the exceptions.

In the post war films, Motherhood again is the main function of the older woman, but this time the mood is darker. Childlessness can drive women to become psychologically unbalanced and the career woman is detrimental for family and children. The 50s sees a growing trend of negative images of growing old that culminate in the 60s in the three iconic films mentioned earlier and *PSYCHO* (1960), *THE ANNIVERSARY* (1967), *WILD IN THE STREETS* (1968). In this context she mentions the author Philip Wylie whose "Generation of Vipers" contains a vitriolic attack on older women.³ He coined the word 'momism' defined in OED as 'excessive attachment to or domination by one's mother'⁴. Although first published in 1942 this book had 20 reprints until 1955. Stoddard connects it with the wave of negative stereotypes of mothers in the 60s. For the 70s and beyond, Stoddard's analysis is

³ 'Mom is a human calamity. She is also, like every calamity, a cause for sorrow, a reproach, a warning siren and a terrible appeal for amends.' Philip Wylie, (1955)

⁴ Philip Wylie, (1955) suggests that 'Mom is a human calamity. She is also, like every calamity, a cause for sorrow, a reproach, a warning siren and a terrible appeal for amends.'

less clear and she cannot describe a definite trend.

Although her filmography is useful, the choice of films as she herself admits is a personal, subjective one.

Walsh (1989) in a paper refreshingly called 'Older Heroines in American Popular Cinema of the 30s and 70s/80s' takes a sociological approach. She sees in the two periods a change in the public perception of older women. In the 30s due to the depression's social awareness of deprivation and later due to the development of organisations dedicated to promoting 'later life as a time of growth, creativity and physical beauty' (p.81). She notes that older actresses like: Beulah Bondi, Jane Darwell, Maria Ouspenskaya, May Robson, Dame May Whitty appeared in small parts as 'wise, sometimes feisty grandmothers, aging careerists, and sharp tongued spinsters'. (p77). The role as noble, strong, sacrificial mother is also very prominent in films like PUBLIC ENEMY (1931), OVER THE HILL (1931), THE MIRACLE WOMAN (1935), THE LITTLE MINISTER (1934), MOTHER CAREY'S CHICKENS (1938).

She cites and analyses briefly MAKE WAY FOR TOMORROW (1937) LADY FOR A DAY (1933) and one of the episodes of IF I HAD A MILLION as films featuring older women in major roles. For the 70/80s the films she chooses are ON GOLDEN POND (1981), THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL (1985) and THE WHALES OF AUGUST (1987). She theorises that there is a cultural undercurrent against the dominant youth culture that has given rise to these films. There is little critical approach in this choice and no serious analysis of the roles portrayed. It is debatable whether apart from the fact that in the three films older women have major roles, these portrayals equally challenge the stereotypes.

There certainly is an undercurrent of resistance to the dominant youth culture but it is expressed in shorts, documentaries, educational videos and also maybe on television but not in Hollywood popular films. According to Blaikie (1999) resistances in the older population '... happen in the private sphere of the home or institution and are thus unlikely to demand mass public recognition'.

In the 90s more systematic studies started to appear in Sociology, Psychology and Gerontology publications demonstrating that in the sphere of Hollywood films there has been

no change in the representation of the older woman.

Pittman (1999) warns 'Beware Older Women Ahead'. He categorises Movie Myths about sexy older women in the four archetypes of Warrior, Queen, Wise Woman or Witch and Lover and considers older women/ young men liaisons. One lover over 60 is represented by Maude. (Ruth Gordon)

Lanzen found among other age group analysis that in the available 88 top grossing films of 2002, 8% of the male and female characters were over 60 compared to 18% for males and 22% for females in the general population. For men the number of leadership and power roles increased with age while the opposite was true for women. She also found that older men had goals and remained purposeful whereas women did not.

Lincoln *et al* (2004) describe an effect of what they call 'double jeopardy' in the careers of film actors from 1926-1999. Not only do women receive fewer roles and have less star presence than men but this difference increases with age. Moreover they conclude 'Altogether, these results suggest a relatively stable pattern over the past several decades in which female stars have more modest careers than their male counterparts and that this gap increases as they age'

Markson's two papers, in 1993 and 2000, also indicate that there is little change in the portrayal of older women in the film world. In a first paper looking statistically, decade by decade at Academy Award nominations, from 1927-1990 she addresses her findings to a readership of therapists. Spurred by the fact that in the 1980s there were 3 Oscars awarded to Actresses over 60 (Katherine Hepburn, Jessica Tandy and Geraldine Page in ON GOLDEN POND, DRIVING MISS DAISY and THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL) she asks whether there have been changes in film to mirror the changes in the demographic profile of American society. Her conclusion is that apart from the above exceptions there has been no change in the age distribution of actors nominated for an Award. Since 1927 only 27% of women over the age of 39 have won the Oscar for best actress and 67% of men in the best actor category. Older women remain invisible or when portrayed are stereotypically 'argumentative, incompetent, suspicious and stubborn or powerless and ill or all accepting and self sacrificing'. She concludes: "Therapists working with midlife and older

women face the challenge of deprogramming their clients from the cultural messages that increasingly devalue them as they age”.

In her later paper, Markson and Taylor (2000) taking the Academy Awards as benchmark again, identify 336 actors who have been nominated for an Award. There were 124 female and 212 males. Of these 32 women were over 60 when nominated against 58 males. They then looked at 3038 films decade by decade where these actors appeared in 3622 roles of people aged 60 and over. As expected the number of female roles were smaller than males’ but the difference increased remarkably since the 60s.

Of these films they chose a random sample for a content analysis. They found that ‘Regardless of the decade, films convey the message that the power and the success of men is likely to continue uninterrupted into old age, unaffected by physical decrements that might alter their ability to manifest action-based, task oriented ‘masculine behaviour.’ and ‘Older women ... are more likely to embody ageist stereotypes, mirroring the still persistent cultural belief that a woman’s essence lies in her youthfulness- itself a symbol of her procreative potential’.

All of these studies consider only Hollywood films. Other films are neglected. Are films from other countries similarly biased against the older woman? What is the role of older women in children films? We would like film academics to consider the older woman as a film subject worth studying. We would like film studies to analyse critically films featuring older women in a way relevant to older women. It is important for students of film theory to consider this aspect. Roth (2005), argues “despite these films’ phobic and sexist representations of the mother of adult children as incapacitated, this figure nonetheless resonates in disruptive ways and threatens the films’ ideological stability” (p189). But what effect has this figure on the self -image of older women in the audience?

Although few, films where older women appear in their own right are seldom considered: THE LADY VANISHES , or THE LADYKILLERS for example.

Highly regarded films like TOKYO STORY and FEAR EATS THE SOUL remain unseen by a potential large audience of older people. Some recent Australian films A WOMAN’S TALE, SPIDER AND ROSE, OVER THE HILL are

sometimes relegated unseen or noticed very late at night on television. Paul Cox’s A WOMAN’S TALE is not available. Minor, gentle, films like MRS. CALDICOTT’S CABBAGE WAR get slated by critics⁵. Non Hollywood films depicting older women shown at the London Film Festival do not get distributed⁶.

In Sally Potter’s YES there is a very moving death-bed monologue. She is quoted as saying ‘The financiers were very worried about that scene as well’. ⁷ As Vesperi (2004) points out if different attitudes are to be promulgated the research should also concentrate on the seats of power of the film industry. Lanzen (2005) articulates: “Future researchers should look behind the scenes to determine whether a relationship exists between the age and gender of key executives and creative personnel, such as writers, directors and producers and the age and gender of on-screens characters. Researchers should also investigate the relative contributions of various market forces such as reviews and movie tickets sales on the films studios choose to make and distribute.’

But also older women themselves should make their voice heard and demand of the film industry that they be recognised both as a subject for films but also as an intelligent audience. Older women have diverse and complex lives, dreams and fantasies. Older actors deserve to play characters that challenge the Hollywood stereotypes.

We hope that this guide will be helpful to researchers but also to an audience disaffected by the youth-oriented general release films. We hope that it will be made available to film groups and some of these films used as educational tools. We hope that film writers, directors, producers and distributors are made aware of the missed opportunities of portraying and targeting a big section of the population.

Rina Rosselson, 2005.

⁵ http://film.guardian.co.uk/Film_Page/0,4061,-91500,00.html

⁶ Babusya (2003)

⁷ <http://www.filmfocus.co.uk/lookat.asp?FilmbaseID=309&FeatureID=29>

Appendix 1 b:

References for Background Research

AGE CONCERN

Too Old for TV?: The portrayal of Older People on Television. A report for Age Concern England. Guy Cumberbatch, Sally Gauntlett, Victoria Littlejohns, Samantha Woods and Cheryl Stephenson.

Autumn 1999, The Communications Research Group. Aston Science Park. Love Lane, Birmingham B7 4BJ

BAZZINI, Doris G., William D. McIntosh, Stephen M. Smith, Sabrina Cook, Caleigh Harris.

Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, April 1997

Springer Science+Business Media B.V., Formerly Kluwer Academic Publishers B.V.

BLAIKIE, Andrew

Ageing and Popular Culture.

Cambridge University Press 1999

BLAIKIE, Andrew

Can there be a Cultural Sociology of Ageing?

Education and Ageing Vol 14, No.2, 1999 pp 127-139

Triangle Journals Ltd. www.triangle.co.uk

BROOKS, Jodi

Performing Age/Performing Crisis (For Norma Desmond, Baby Jane, Margo Channing, Sister George and Myrtle).

In **Figuring Age: Women Bodies, Generations.** Ed. Kathleen Woodward. Bloomington, Indiana University Press. 1999 pp.232-247

COYLE, Jean M.

Handbook on Women and Aging.

Greenwood Press

Westport, CT 1997

FISHER, Bradley J.

Exploring Ageist Stereotypes through commercial motion Pictures

Teaching Sociology. Vol 20 1992 October pp.280-284

A Quarterly Publication of The American Sociological Association

GALLAHER, Margaret: Women, Media And Democratic Society: In Pursuit Of Rights and Freedoms.

United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) Expert Group Meeting on "Participation and access of women to the media, and the impact of media on, and its use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women"

Beirut, Lebanon 12 to 15 November 2002 .p.13

HARPER, Sue

From Wholesome Girls to Difficult Dowagers: Actresses in 1930s British Cinema

British Cinema Past and Present ed. Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson
Routledge.

HASKELL, Molly

From Reverence to Rape: The treatment of women in the movies.

The University of Chicago Press Chicago and London 1973,1974,1987

LANZEN, Martha M.

Maintaining the double standard: portrayals of age and gender in popular films.

Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, April 2005
Springer Science+Business Media B.V., Formerly Kluwer Academic Publishers B.V.

LINCOLN, Anne E. and Michael Patrick Allen

Double Jeopardy in Hollywood: Age and Gender in the Careers of Film Actors, 1926-1999

Sociological Forum, Vol19, No.4, December2004 pp 611-631
Springer Science-Business Media Inc.

MARKSON, Elizabeth, W. and Carol A. Taylor
Real versus Reel World: Older Women and the Academy Awards

Women and Therapy 1993 vol 14 pt 1/2 pp 157-172

MARKSON, Elizabeth, W. and Carol A. Taylor

The mirror has two faces

Ageing and Society 20, 2000 pp137-160
Cambridge University Press

PERRY, Merry, G.

Animated Gerontophobia: Ageism, Sexism, and the Disney Villainess

in Aging and Identity: A Humanities Perspective. Sarah Munson Deats ed.

Praeger Publishers Westport,CT 1999 pp200-211

PITTMAN, Frank

Beware older women ahead

Psychology Today January 1999

<http://cms.psychologytoday.com/pto/home.php>

ROTH, Elaine

Momophobia: Incapacitated mothers and their adult children in 1990s films.

Quarterly Review of Film and Video. Vol.22

No.2 April June 2005 pp189-202

STODDARD, Karen, M. Saints and Shrews: **Women and Aging in American Popular Film.**

Contributions in Women's Studies, Number 39. Greenwood Press. 1983

VESPERI Maria, Ph.D

Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement.

Center for Health Communication, Harvard School of Public Health, 2004. Boston MA pp125-158

WALSH, Andrea

"Life Isn't Yet Over": Older Heroines in American Popular Cinema of the 1980s and 1970s/80s

Qualitative Sociology March 1989 Volume 12, Number 1, pp72 - 95

Springer Science+Business Media B.V., Formerly Kluwer Academic Publishers B.V.

Websites

www.europarl.eu.int/hearings/20030910/femm/mcphail.pdf

www0.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/waa/

www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/media2002/reports/OP3Sanders.PDF

www.europarl.eu.int/hearings/20030910/femm/mcphail.pdf

www.sag.org/pr/pressreleases/pr-la020701.html

www0.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/aging.htm

Appendix 2a: The Research Questionnaire

U3A/BFI FILM PROJECT – OLDER WOMEN IN FEATURE FILMS

FORM A (Individual)

Name of Film.....

Please answer the following questions on the depiction of the main character(s) as the older woman (where more than one, identify each one).

- 1 Did you enjoy the film? *Please tick one -*
- | | a lot? | quite a lot? | not much? | not at all? |
|--|---------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|
|--|---------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|
- 2 Did you take part in a discussion after the film? **yes/no**
- 3 Did the character of the older woman encourage you and/or the others to contribute to the discussion? **yes/no**
- 4 Did you find the older woman character –
- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| believable? | yes/no | sympathetic? | yes/no |
| stereotypical? | yes/no | interesting? | yes/no |
- 5 What themes relating to older people/ageing do you think the film deals with? Please list a few here:
- | | | |
|--------|---|--------------------------------|
| a..... | Does it do this – sympathetically?
..... credibly? | yes/no
yes/no |
| b..... | Does it do this - sympathetically?
..... credibly? | yes/no
yes/no |
| c..... | Does it do this - sympathetically?
..... credibly? | yes/no
yes/no |
- 6 Would you recommend the film to - older people (aged 60 +)? **yes/no**
a younger audience? **yes/no**

7 In no more than 20 lines (*please use the reverse side of this sheet or separate page*) could you express your thoughts/feelings about the depiction of the female older character(s).

8 Have you got any additional comments to make?

9 Are you - **male/female?**

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS FORM – *have you completed question 7 on the reverse side or separate page?*

Appendix 2b: The Results of the Questionnaire

(nb see also viewers' comments under each film title, above)

DRIVING MISS DAISY

MALE.....8
FEMALE.....100
NOT STATED.....3
TOTAL.....111

ENJOYED THE FILM

A LOT.....60%
QUITE A LOT.....36%
NOT MUCH.....4%
NOT AT ALL.....0

DISCUSSION.....YES 86%

CHARACTER

BELIEVABLE.....95%
SYMPATHETIC.....58%
INTERESTING.....99%

AGEING THEMES

SYMPATHETICALLY TREATED.....YES 99 %
CREDIBLY.....YES 97 %

RECOMMEND FILM

OLDER AUDIENCE.....YES 95 %
YOUNGER AUDIENCE.....YES 63 %

CENTRAL STATION

MALE.....10
FEMALE.....81
NOT STATED.....5
TOTAL.....96

ENJOYED THE FILM

A LOT.....55%
QUITE A LOT.....39%
NOT MUCH.....5%
NOT AT ALL.....1%

DISCUSSION.....YES 97%

CHARACTER

BELIEVABLE.....91%
SYMPATHETIC.....68%
INTERESTING.....97%

AGEING THEMES

SYMPATHETICALLY TREATED.....YES 91 %
CREDIBLY.....YES 95 %

RECOMMEND FILM

OLDER AUDIENCE.....YES 91 %
YOUNGER AUDIENCE.....YES 95 %

LADIES IN LAVENDER

MALE..... 17
FEMALE 158
NOT STATED.....8
TOTAL..... 183

ENJOYED THE FILM

A LOT 68%
QUITE A LOT 26%
NOT MUCH 5%
NOT AT ALL.....<1%

DISCUSSION YES 90%

CHARACTER

BELIEVABLE..... 94%
SYMPATHETIC..... 95%
INTERESTING 93%

AGEING THEMES

SYMPATHETICALLY TREATED YES 98 %
CREDIBLY YES 98 %

RECOMMEND FILM

OLDER AUDIENCE..... YES 95 %
YOUNGER AUDIENCE..... YES 57 %

THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL

MALE..... 9
FEMALE 33
NOT STATED.....0
TOTAL..... 42

ENJOYED THE FILM

A LOT 48%
QUITE A LOT 40%
NOT MUCH 10%
NOT AT ALL..... 2%

DISCUSSION YES 92%

CHARACTER

BELIEVABLE..... 95%
SYMPATHETIC 79%
INTERESTING 100%

AGEING THEMES

SYMPATHETICALLY TREATED YES 94 %
CREDIBLY YES 100 %

RECOMMEND FILM

OLDER AUDIENCE..... YES 95 %
YOUNGER AUDIENCE..... YES 45 %

TATIE DANIELLE

MALE..... 18
FEMALE 89
NOT STATED..... 3
TOTAL..... 110

ENJOYED THE FILM

A LOT 46%
QUITE A LOT 35%
NOT MUCH 11%
NOT AT ALL..... 8%

DISCUSSION YES 95%

CHARACTER

BELIEVABLE..... 71%
SYMPATHETIC 7%
INTERESTING 87%

AGEING THEMES

SYMPATHETICALLY TREATED YES 54 %
CREDIBLY YES 84 %

RECOMMEND FILM

OLDER AUDIENCE..... YES 80 %
YOUNGER AUDIENCE..... YES 55 %

HAROLD AND MAUDE

MALE..... 6
FEMALE 60
NOT STATED..... 4
TOTAL..... 70

ENJOYED THE FILM

A LOT 46%
QUITE A LOT 33%
NOT MUCH 14%
NOT AT ALL..... 7%

DISCUSSION YES 95%

CHARACTER

BELIEVABLE..... 59%
SYMPATHETIC 84%
INTERESTING 96%

AGEING THEMES

SYMPATHETICALLY TREATED YES 94 %
CREDIBLY YES 74 %

RECOMMEND FILM

OLDER AUDIENCE..... YES 78 %
YOUNGER AUDIENCE..... YES 69 %

TOKYO STORY

MALE.....6
FEMALE.....60
NOT STATED.....4
TOTAL.....70

ENJOYED THE FILM

A LOT.....36%
QUITE A LOT.....43%
NOT MUCH.....19%
NOT AT ALL.....2%

DISCUSSION.....YES 85%

CHARACTER

BELIEVABLE.....96%
SYMPATHETIC.....94%
INTERESTING.....74%

AGEING THEMES

SYMPATHETICALLY TREATED.....YES 88 %
CREDIBLY.....YES 96 %

RECOMMEND FILM

OLDER AUDIENCE.....YES 81%
YOUNGER AUDIENCE.....YES 50%

THE MOTHER

MALE.....9
FEMALE.....84
NOT STATED.....8
TOTAL.....101

ENJOYED THE FILM

A LOT.....25%
QUITE A LOT.....37%
NOT MUCH.....32%
NOT AT ALL.....6%

DISCUSSION.....YES 94%

CHARACTER

BELIEVABLE.....62%
SYMPATHETIC.....46%
INTERESTING.....81%

AGEING THEMES

SYMPATHETICALLY TREATED.....YES 68%
CREDIBLY.....YES 62%

RECOMMEND FILM

OLDER AUDIENCE.....YES 52 %
YOUNGER AUDIENCE.....YES 44 %

FILMOGRAPHY

This is in effect a “work in progress’. The criteria of 60+ was not always easy to apply since chronological age is not a good marker, so we used our discretion.

After Life Japan (1999)
Alive and Kicking (1959)
Alphabet Murders (1965)
Anima (1998)
Antonia’s Line (1995)
Arsenic and Old Lace (1944)
Babushia (2003)
Ballad of Narayama (1983)
Batteries not included (1987)
Cemetery Club (1993)
Central Station (1998)
Le Chat (1971)
Children of Nature (1991)
The Company of Strangers (1990)
Conversaciones Con Mama (2004)
Dim Sum: A Little Bit of Heart (1987)
Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood (2002)
Dreamchild (1986)
Driving Miss Daisy (1989)
Enchanted April (1992)
The Evening Star (1996)
Familia Rodante (2004)
Fear Eats the Soul (1974)
For The Love of Ada (1972)
Fried Green Tomatoes (1991)
Granny get your gun (1940)
Grapes of Wrath. (1940)
Guarding Tess (1994)
Harold and Maude (1971)
Here’s to Life (2000)
How to make an American Quilt (1995)

If I Had a Million (1932)
In Her Shoes (2005)
Innocence (2000)
Iris (2001)
Keeping Mum (2005)
The Ladykillers (1955)
The Lady Vanishes.(1938)
Ladies in Lavender (2004)
Lady For a Day (1933)
Love (1971)
Madame Rosa (1978)
Madame Sousatzka, (1988)
Make Way for Tomorrow (1937)
Mama Turns 100 (1978)
Min and Bill (1930)
Mother (1996) dir.Albert Brooks
Mother (Pudovkin)(1926).
Mother and Son (1997)
The Mother (2003, Roger Michell)
Mr. and Mrs Bridge (1991)
Mrs Brown (1997)
Mrs. Caldicott Cabbage Wars (2000)
Mrs. Dalloway (1997)
Mrs.Henderson Presents (2005)
Mrs Palfrey at the Claremont (2005)
Murder Ahoy (1964)
Murder At the Gallop (1963)
Murder Most Foul (1964)
Murder She Said (1961)
Night Must Fall (1937)
None But The Lonely Heart (1944)
The Old Lady Who Walked in the Sea (1991)
On Golden Pond (1981)
One True Thing (1998)
Over the Hill (1992)
Pauline and Paulette (2001)
Psycho (1960)

Rachel Rachel (1968)
Rebro Adama (1990)
Requiem for a Dream (2000)
Rhapsody in August (1991)
Rosie (1967)
A Rumor of Angels (2000)
Shameless Old Lady (La Vieille femme Indigne) (1965)
Solas (1999)
Spider and Rose (1994)
A Smaller Place (2000)
Starukhi (2003)
Steel Magnolias (1989)
Sunset Boulevard (1950)
Tatie Danielle (1990)
Tea with Mussolini (1999)
Tell Me a Riddle (1980)
Les Temps Qui Changent (2004)
Tokyo Story (1953)
The Trip to Bountiful (1985)
Unhook The Stars (1996)
An Unremarkable Life (1989)
Voyages (France 1999)
The Whales of August (1987)
Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?
(1962)
Where's Poppa (1970)
Widows Peak (1994)
The Winter Guest (1997)
A Woman's Tale (1991)

AVAILABILITY OF FILMS

This is availability as at May 2006

KEY TITLES

CENTRAL STATION Buena Vista Home Entertainment BED 888494

DRIVING MISS DAISY Universal Pictures Video 8233452 (DVD)

HAROLD AND MAUDE Paramount Home Entertainment PHE8224 (DVD)

LADIES IN LAVENDER Entertainment in Video EDV9282 (DVD)

THE MOTHER n/a

TATIE DANIELLE C'est La Vie CLV666 (DVD)

TOKYO STORY Tartan Video TVD 3454 (DVD)

THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL Prism Leisure Corporation PPA 1695R (DVD)

THE WHALES OF AUGUST Deleted. Previously Video collection Int. CC7063 (Cinema Club/1st Independent)

OTHER IMPORTANT TITLES

(see also filmography p47)

THE GRAPES OF WRATH 20th Century Fox Home Video 0102401009 (DVD)

LE CHAT n/a

THE COMPANY OF STRANGERS (dir Cynthia Scott) n/a

FEAR EATS THE SOUL n/a

PAULINE AND PAULETTE Sony Pictures Home Ent. UK CDR33538 (DVD)

OVER THE HILL Deleted. Previously Video Collection Intl [Rank] VC3414

SPIDER AND ROSE n/a

A WOMAN'S TALE n/a

INNOCENCE (dir Paul Cox) n/a

ANTONIA'S LINE (dir Marleen Gorris) Deleted Previously Pathe P907401000

MRS DALLOWAY (dir Marleen Gorris) Artificial Eye ART157DVD (DVD)

MRS CALDICOTT'S CABBAGE WAR n/a

KEEPING MUM Entertainment in Video EDV9389 (DVD)

There are a number of routes to obtaining videos and DVDs where a title is NOT currently in commercial distribution. These are listed on the BFI main website via the Film Links Gateway. The move towards web-based information means that users of a hard-copy version of this guide may have to resort to either an internet café or a public library to access the web. It may also be worth checking the small ads at the back of Empire magazine, which does identify some specialists in this area.

Where a title had been in distribution it may still be available via high-street video shops (including rental shops) and public and university libraries that have loan collections.