

Trudy Gold | The Image of Jewish Women in Film, Part 2

- Well, good evening. Good afternoon, everyone, wherever you are. And now I'm coming onto my second week of frivolity, which is the image of the Jewish woman in film. Now, as I discussed, and I'm sure many of you know, that even though Hollywood, to a large extent, was the brainchild of a bunch of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, for many years, none of the studios really wanted to touch ethnicity, and that applied to every group. The actors changed their names. We were creating an American dream, and I think it's best personified by the backyard movies of Louis B. Mayer with Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney. You know, the picket fences where the father was a judge, the mother was at home making apple pie, and the kids were perfect. That was the kind of world that Louis B. Mayer fostered, and you didn't want all the horrors of the immigrant experience, et cetera. There were a few anomalies, and I talked about "The Jazz Singer" last week because what I thought was interesting was even in "The Jazz Singer," the stereotypical Jewish mother who's going to live in the Bronx, et cetera, et cetera. Now, let me be very careful about stereotypes. Frankly, going back to the Greeks, and I was discussing this with Professor Pima, you can't have comedy without stereotyping. And having said that, are there certain truths about certain groups? That's for you to decide. But going back to the image of the Jewish woman in film, one of the things I pointed out last week was even in the great epics on Zionism, Aryeh Ben-Eliezer still had the Jewish mother who had to overfeed him. Judith, the beautiful kibbutznic, was played by Sophia Loren. The female star of Exodus, of course, was a gentile part played by Eva Marie Saint, and the Jewish girl, the beautiful Karen, was played by Jill Haworth, a real blonde haired, blue eyed beauty. So you can make the case that it was a quite a while before they actually started looking at what it meant to be a Jewish woman in America. And of course, the stereotyping. And I'm going to start by looking at an extract from a 1969 film, "Goodbye, Columbus". Now, "Goodbye, Columbus", of course, was written by Philip Roth. Philip Roth, one of America's greatest writers. The film came out the same year that "Portnoy's Complaint" hit the bookshops. So of course, there was a lot of Ferrari about it. He's written some incredible books like "American Pastoral" "Human Stain", "The Plot Against America". A very serious, very interesting writer. And actually, "Goodbye, Columbus" won the National Book Award for fiction, and he won the Pulitzer with American Pastoral. Now, the film stars Richard Benjamin and Ali MacGraw, and it's the story of Neil Clugman. He's a very intelligent Jewish boy from a poorer background. He's a veteran of the army, and he works as a library clerk. He goes to a swimming club with his wealthy cousin, and there he falls for the beautiful Brenda Patimkin. She's a Radcliffe student. She is Jewish. She comes from an incredibly wealthy background, and she's over loved by her parents. They're very nouveau riche, the family. And I think when you look at the Nouveau riche experience, this is true of most immigrant experiences. In fact, the

father had made his money in the plumbing business. There's a subplot of the film because he wants to sleep with her, of course. And she is so worried about what her family will think. The father is played by the wonderful Jack Klugman, and there is a wonderful sketch. There's quite a lot of Jewish ceremony in the film. There's some wonderful sketches around the theme of a bar mitzvah. Of course, I'm restricted in the clips. I can show you from what is available online, but it's a film that's really worth another look. And Ali MacGraw, who actually was part Jewish, she plays really the image of the Jewish princess, and this wasn't usurped until, of course, Goldie Hawn in "Private Benjamin". So let's have a look at "Goodbye, Columbus" of 1969 with a little bit of nostalgia. Can we go with it? Please?

(A video clip from the 1969 film "Goodbye, Columbus")

- I feel very sorry for their parents.

- Because, I know I how unhappy your mother and I would be if we were in that position.

- I thank God every day, every day that I have children I can trust.

- You do love me, don't you? I mean, I'll let you make, Love me when you do then tell me the truth.

- [Narrator] Paramount Pictures proudly present, Goodbye Columbia. Based on the Novella by Philip Roth. The Stanley R. Jaffe production in Technical. Directed by Larry Peerce. Screenplay by Arnold Schulman. Starring Richard Benjamin, Jack Klugman. co-starring Nan Martin. With new songs by The Association. And introducing Ali MacGraw.

- Now, in that particular scene, she is feeling so guilty because she is beginning to sleep with her boyfriend and her father is telling her how worried he is, and he knows that she's special. And of course he will give her the moon if she asks for it. There's a wonderful line in that film, which my family often repeat. He goes to a lunch at the family home, and remember he comes from a poor Jewish background, she comes from a wealthy Jewish background, and the mother says, "You eat like a bird." And he says, "But a bird eats five times its body weight in any one day." It's worth a revisit, "Goodbye, Columbus".

I want to go back in time now because if we're with the image of the Jewish princess, I want to go back to "Marjorie Morningstar." Now, "Marjorie Morningstar" is a film of 1958. It's based on a book by the wonderful Herman Wouk. Herman Wouk was an amazing author. He won the Pulitzer Prize for "The Caine Mutiny." And I don't know how many of you remember the great mini series of the eighties, "winds of War" and "War of Remembrance". Interminable episodes, but incredible story. And he wrote a very, very... He was a modern orthodox Jew, and many of his films and books deal with the dilemma of being a Jew in the modern

world. And he wants to look at Judaism from a modern orthodox perspective. He had a terrible tragedy in his own life when his five year old, his eldest son, drowned when he was only five years old. And it's something that really, he really agonised over the relationship of God and the human condition. And in Marjorie Morningstar, he takes us to the Borscht Belt. And I'm going to show you another film from the Borscht Belt, "Dirty Dancing". Now obviously all of you know in America, the Borscht Belt is where New York used to go on holidays to the Catskill Mountains, to Grossinger's, to some of the great hotels, the bungalow colonies, where many of the great entertainers later on, the names of Hollywood people like Mel Brooks, they earned their bones in the Borscht Belt. And Marjorie Morningstar, it was directed by Irving Rapper who also came from a Jewish family. He in fact was born in London. He had some wonderful films to his credit, like "Now, Voyager" with Bette Davis, "Deception" with Betty Davis, "Glass Menagerie", "Rhapsody in Blue", "The Adventures of Mark Twain". He's a very, very interesting director. Now, the plot, it's a coming of age story. Marjorie Morgenstern. She is a very beautiful, conventional Jewish girl with a wealthy background. Her father is a doctor, the mother is the stereotype Jewish mother who wants the daughter to emulate her. But Marjorie Morning Morgenstern dreams of a life in the theatre. And she actually goes to the Borscht Belt where she falls madly in love with Noel Airman, he is the instructor, the dance instructor. He's in charge of theatre productions, really in arranging the cultural side of the hotel. And she falls madly for him. He falls for her because of her beauty. And she makes him come to a family Seder. And Marjorie Morningstar, remember, it's only 1958, but the McCarthy era is passed, and the the old studio moguls, it's over. And you'll beginning to see much more independence. And you have the first real attempt on American cinema of showing religious practises. So you have a synagogue scene, you have a scene, a bar mitzvah, you have a scene around the Seder service and many of the Jewish artefacts in the home. Now, she falls for Noah Airman. He comes to the Seder, he walks out, but he realises that in fact, he missed that whole Jewish life. He is of course Jewish. Now Interesting, the part was first offered to Danny Kaye, not to Gene Kelly. But Danny Kaye turned it down because he thought it was too Jewish. And in the end, it goes to the non-Jewish, brilliantly talented Gene Kelly, but who I think is terribly bad miscast in this film. And the portrait of Marjorie Morningstar, I think, although Natalie would look the parts, I don't think she really got it. But it's an interesting period piece. And of course, in the end she realises that, because even though he breaks away from his conventional Jewish background, he admires her for a while. He tries to emulate because he loves her. And then he leaves her and she finds him back at the Borscht Belt. And in the end, she goes off with his friend who is going to become one of Hollywood's top screenwriter. So it has, if you like, a happy ending. I'm not saying it's a great movie, but it's an interesting movie. So let's see. And here you have Marjorie Morningstar, her name is Morgenstern, She's called Marjorie Morningstar by the Noah Airman character, played by Gene Kelly. And so

it's a period piece, and it's interesting. Is it anything but a stereotype? Well, probably not. And I'm going to come onto in a minute, a couple of films where I think you have real pictures of real women. So let's see, Marjorie Morningstar.

(A video clip from the 1958 film "Marjorie Morningstar")

- When I called you Shirley, it wasn't to insult you, was to tell you that I know you. I know everything about you. I've gone out with hundreds of Shirleys or a different dress, a different body. But with that one unchanging look, the look of Shirley.

- You know an awful lot, don't you?

- Enough to tell you that you're going to marry some nice young doctor, and with your mother's blessings, help him develop a practise, in New Herschel.

- Well, I'm glad you've got it all figured out.

- It was figured out before I came along. Marjorie, we're an error in matchmaking. You're on a course charted by 5,000 years of Moses and his 10 Commandments. I'm a renegade.

- Why are you telling me all this? What are you trying to prove? If you don't want anything to do with me, then forget about me! Get somebody else!

- I don't want anybody else.

- Oh no, I don't understand you, me, anything.

- You see, in this film, what she's doing is struggling with the issues of autonomy, of Jewish identity, morality. And it's not a great film, but I wanted to show you an extract from it because it's a period piece. See it in the context of really the development of the notions of women, women immigrants, childrens of immigrants struggling. And this can be any kind of immigrant, remember, struggling with maintaining their family identity, but at the same time wanting America. I mean, it goes right back to the "Jazz Singer". Why was the "Jazz Singer" so popular? It's a Jewish story, yes, but it could be any immigrant story, just as "Fiddler on the Roof" is a universal story.

Anyway, the next film I'm showing you a clip for, I'm jumping onto 1987 to "Dirty Dancing". Now why am I showing it? Because that's also set in the Borscht Belt and the heroine, of course, Dirty Dancing, the Heroine is the wonderful, wonderful daughter of Joel Grey. And it's the story again of... It's written by a Jewish woman and produced by a Jewish woman. So I think the characters are far more, far more clearly

defined. And if you like, there's a real sense of their identity in the film. And of course, she comes to the Borscht Belt with her family. She falls in love with the man who is in charge of all the dancing, Patrick Swayze. There is a story, has he got a girl pregnant? In fact, he's innocent. And of course, in it you have that incredible dance sequence and it becomes one of the greatest Hollywood films of all time. It was the first film to sell more than a million of home videos. And it's got in it, as I said, the wonderful, wonderful Jennifer Grey and the father is played by Jerry Orbach. And many of you will know him from American cop films. He of course plays in Law & Order. He's wonderful. So let's have a look at the story. Now let me tell you just a little bit about Eleanor Bergstein who wrote it. In a way, it's almost biographical. She was born in Brooklyn, obviously a Jewish family. Her father was a doctor, and the family spent their summers at Grossinger's in the Catskill. She herself loved dance and after graduation actually worked as a dance instructor at Arthur Murray. And she became a very good novelist and script writer. So I think this is actually an excellent film. So let's see a clip from the wonderful, "Dirty Dancing". And you can see within 30 years you have a much stronger sense of Jewish identity and the identity in the same location, the Catskills.

(A video clip from the 1987 film "Dirty Dancing")

♪ The night we met I knew I ♪ ♪ Needed you so ♪ ♪ And If I had the chance I'd never let you go ♪ ♪ So won't you say you love me ♪

- [Voice Over] The heat is in the music. ♪ I'll make you so proud of me ♪ The music sets you dancing. ♪ Every place we go ♪ The dancing sets her free. ♪ Be my, be my baby ♪ Vestron Pictures presents, Dirty dancing. She thought it would be just another summer vacation.

- Who's that?

- Oh them. They're the dance people.

- [Voice Over] But it turns out to be the time of her life. ♪ Watch me now ♪

- I can't even do the merengue.

- He teaches her what she can do. ♪ Well, you're driving me crazy ♪ ♪ Work, work ♪ ♪ With a little bit soul now ♪ ♪ Work ♪ ♪ I can mash-potato ♪ ♪ I can mash-potato ♪ ♪ And I can do the twist ♪ ♪ And I can do the twist ♪

- I'm not sure who you are, but I don't want you to have anything to do with those people again.

- Baby, I don't see you running up to daddy telling him I'm your guy.

- Well, with my father, it's complicated. I will tell him-
- I don't believe you baby! [Narrator] She shows him all he can be.
- You got to stop it now.
- I know what I'm doing, Penny.
- I'm scared of everything! Most of all, I'm scared of walking out of this room and never feeling the rest of my whole life the way I feel when I'm with you!
- [Narrator] What they learn from each other feels too good to be wrong. ♪ I have the time of my life ♪ ♪ And I never felt this way before ♪
- [Narrator] Dirty Dancing. Starring Patrick Swayze, Jennifer Grey and Cynthia Rose. Get ready for the time of life.
- Such talent. Unbelievable talent.

Now I want to move on to a couple of my favourite films. And the first one I want to talk about is "Hester Street" of 1975. It's based on a novella by Abraham Cahan. Now he wrote it in 1896. It's called, "Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto". Now of course, Abraham Cahan was a fascinating man. He was the editor of The Daily Forward and incredibly important in the immigrant community of New York. Now, the novella was adapted and directed by Joan Micklin Silver, a fascinating woman. She hasn't got a large repertoire, but the two films I'm going to show you, extracts from "Hester Street" and "Crossing Delancey". She really had a feel for the immigrant Jewish experience and all the dilemmas. But when she wanted to bring this film to the screen, it was turned down by all the major studios. They said it was too ethnic. In fact, with a budget of \$370,000, it was going to become incredibly popular and made over 5 million. She herself was the daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants from Omaha, Nebraska. The family were in the lumber business. A lot of Eastern European Jews who came to America, remember that had been their business back home. So the family moved to Omaha and she went to Sarah Lawrence. She married Raphael Silver, talking of Jewish history. His father was Abba Hillel Silver, the rabbi of course, who was so important in terms of American Zionism towards the years of the creation of the state of Israel. He was one of the key figures in mobilising American support for the founding of Israel. So basically they were a very committed Jewish family. Now the star is a woman called Carol Kane, wonderful, wonderful actress. She was born in 1952. Her grandparents immigrated from Russia and from Poland. She studied theatre. She won a lot of Emmy awards and she was nominated for Hester Street. Now, those of you who haven't seen Hester Street, it's such a treat. Much of it is in Yiddish with English subtitles.

It's really a reconstruction of the Jewish experience in America. It's the story like so many others. Yekl, her husband comes on ahead. He comes to America to try and earn enough money to bring the family over. And this was such a common theme. In fact, in the Abraham Cahan's "Daily Forward", many women were deserted back home. There was a lot of horror stories. and he talks about this. But basically Yekl, he makes enough money, but he wants to be an American. He's shaved off his payot, he has a moustache, and he's already got a Jewish girlfriend. He's got a girlfriend. They're still within the ghetto community, but he wants to be an American. And then he's wife, Gitl arrives with her son, and of course she's wearing a sheitel, the little boy with his payot. And she finds it incredibly difficult to assimilate. and there's a huge amount of tension. They live, of course, he boards in a Jewish family and the land lady knows that he's having an affair and she's tried to be protective of Gitl. There's a border or wonderful performance of a traditional Jewish scholar, Bernstein, who obviously admires her and helps the little boy with his reading. So it's the tension. There's the sexual tension of who should he be with, who should Yekl be with, the mistress of the wife? Where does his duty lie. There's also the tension of wanting the old world and the new world. And there's a wonderful reconciliation of this old dilemma in Hester Street. Because what happens is in the end, she divorces Yekl and she marries Bernstein. And he is modern orthodox. He's totally traditional, but she now shows her hair and she's learnt to speak English. That is how she's going to accommodate to America. She is not going to desert the Jewish tradition. We've come a long way from the Jazz Singer. So let's have a look at the clip of the wonderful Hester Street. And honestly, if you haven't seen it, find it. It's brilliant.

(A video clip from the 1975 film "Hester Street")

That's very tempting, isn't it? And of course there's some very moving sequences at Ellis Island and he's waiting for them. And he's so depressed that she comes through with the sheitel. So absolutely exquisite film.

And the next film she made was "Crossing Delancey", again directed by her. The play and screen by another Jewish woman, Susan Sandler, who is actually a professor at New York University in the Tisch School of Arts. Can we talk a little before we show? I'd like to talk a little before I show it. It stars the exquisite Amy Irving, who of course was for a while married to Steven Spielberg. Now the plot. This film, the heroin, Isabelle Grossman has gone much further along the road. She works in a New York bookstore. She wants to be part of the intellectual world of New York. And she wants to get away from her traditional Jewish upbringing. She has a boyfriend who comes around when he wants to. He's the baddie. Played, ironically, by the Jewish Jeroen Krabbe. And she plays... She loves her Bubbie. It's the Jewish mother, isn't in it? It's the Jewish grandmother. And the Jewish

grandmother wants to bring her beloved granddaughter back into the world of Judaism, into the world of the Jewish experience. And she goes to see a matchmaker and she's going to find a match for her granddaughter. And into the picture comes Sam Posner. He's the local pickle salesman. He has inherited the business from his father. But he's always liked her. He's seen her and she is the one he wants. And she says to her Bubbie about the matchmaker, it's not how I do things, it's not how I live. But she adores her grandmother. And gradually she begins to realise that Sam, the pickle seller, has got incredible qualities. He's honest, he's kind, and he's true. And she does date him. But then she passes him on to a friend of hers who's quite keen on him. And she says to the Amy Irving character, don't you realise how difficult it is to find a decent Jewish guy in New York? Anyway, Sam hits back at her. He gets very cross with her, and he says, "You think my world is so small, so provincial, you think it defines me?" He is a good man. He's romantic, he's adoring, he's decent. And he emerges actually as an incredibly positive Jewish man, even though his hands are often in the pickle jar. So he has to put special creams on so that he doesn't smell of pickle, but he lives a Jewish life. But he is part of America. And there's a wonderful scene at the end where her grandmother finally wins and she does finish up with Sam the pickle cell. And it's really about the identity of the modern Jewish American woman. It could be the Italian woman, it could be the woman from any strong ethnic background. How far does she go into America? How far does she remain within her own tradition? Again, it's back to the tight rope of Moses Mendelssohn, how do you walk the tightrope? And as a woman, it's even more complicated. And Joan Micklin Silver does it beautifully, again in "Crossing Delancey". So shall we have a look at the clip, please? Thank you.

(A video clip from the 1988 film "Crossing Delancey")

- I don't know what to do with you. You're a nice guy.

- Oh, what a thing to say. I'm wounded, I'm bleeding.

- It's true. Maybe I just, maybe I just can't handle that.

- Maybe if I abused you, knocked you around a little, I'd have a better chance, huh? If I were married, that's what I'll do. I'll marry your friend, Marilyn, then everybody will be happy. Maybe if I were a mediocre writer sitting around listening to praise from other mediocre writers,

- All right.

- I really want this. I thought, well, this is, this is really going to be great. This is what I'm waiting for. You don't know how nuts I was about tonight. I was off the ground. Nobody could talk to me. I made wrong change all day. I was so happy I was going to see you

tonight. I made a special broker for the occasion. I said the prayer for the planting of new trees. Don't ask me why. How should I talk to Isabel?

- What time is it? You, you let me sleep so long on the couch, I don't even know where I am. Who, who, who is this man? What is he doing in my house?

- Shh! Don't yell. You were sleeping so peacefully, we didn't want to wake you. This is Sam. You remember Sam?

- No!

- He's a friend of mine. Mrs. Mandelbaum introduced us. You remember?

- No!

- Okay. Okay.

- Go, go! Go get to bed ready?

- Okay, okay,. Relax. Maybe the drink.

- My God.

- You some big time operators, Sam . You'll dance with me at the wedding. I'll make some nice cakes and you'll buy the schnapps, and we'll have such a good time.

- We'll see Bubbie, we'll see.

- Like a piece of furniture here. Do you hear me? Like a piece of-

- Ready, Bubbie? I not so fast. I got to go slow.

- Okay.

- Oh the pain. The pain only my enemies should know.

- Where, Bubbie?

- In my legs, the knees. Do you know this fellow? Who is this man?

- This is Sam, Bubbie.

- He's keeping company with you?

- Could be.

- Oh yeah? He looks okay. You like him?

- Yes, Bubbie.
- He's a Jew.
- I think so.
- You'll bring him with your next time you come.
- I'll bring him with me next time I come.
- He'll buy me Cherry Heering. I love Cherry Heering.
- It would be my pleasure, Mrs. Kantor.
- Take my arm, Sam. It's okay. You can touch me. 120 pounds of pure gold. That's me. Come children, come. Let's put the Bubbie to bed.
- Great fun. Now you do realise that I'm really just skimming the surface because it's our August fun event, and some of these characters we're going to spend much more time on through the year. David Pima was lecturing on Woody Allen last week. But I felt that I couldn't possibly do a session on Jewish women without including at least one of his films. And the one I've chosen is "New York Stories." New York stories, three of America's best filmmakers each had a short film. Woody Allen's was called "Oedipus Wrecks". Spelled, "Wrecks. W R E C K S". And it a very interesting film because in it he of course plays the man but is the neurotic Jewish lawyer. He is dating a blonde, divorced Gentile, which upsets his mother terribly. She embarrasses him all the time. And then finally, somehow she transmogrifies into some spectre in the sky. She is omni present in the sky. He's in a shop, she's disappeared and he's feeling better because all of a sudden his life can be fine. Even his psychiatrist said he's calmed down. But he's in a shop and suddenly he hears a... So this is a real stereotype of the Jewish woman, but it makes you laugh. So let's see the Jewish mother in "Oedipus Wrecks."

(A video clip from the 1989 film "Oedipus Wrecks")

- Sheldon, where have you been? I've been looking all over for you. I was just discussing your problem with these nice people.
- Where are you?
- Do I know? Look, Sheldon, I've had plenty of time to think about it. Don't get married.
- Mom, not here.
- Why should you rush in?

- This is not the place to discuss it.
- Where should I go? I'm here. You think a man his age should get married? They only met six months ago.
- It depends. If she's a nice girl, why not?
- She's nice, but why do they have to rush in? He's still paying alimony.
- Mother, stop!
- Let them lead their own lives.
- I have the same problem with my daughter. They grow up and they think they have all the answers.
- [Sheldon's Mom] How old is your daughter?
- 26.
- You got any pictures?
- Home.
- Home? I always carry Sheldon around wherever I go.
- Oh God, this can't be happening here.
- [Sheldon's Mom] See, here he is.
- I need air.
- I need oxygen. I mean, I got to get out in fresh air. I need Cyanide.
- And isn't he a darling?
- This is my grand daughter.
- My daughter wedding. That's my daughter.
- 20 Minutes of unadulterated humour. And in the end he gives up his blonde Gentile, three children, and he gets involved with a nutty Jewish girl and mother comes back out of the sky.

Now I'm turning to another icon of the cinema and of music. And that's Bette Midler. Just as previously we looked at Barbara Streisand and there's a lot more to say about her. Bette Midler, the incredibly

strong Jewish entertainer. She was born in 1945. She was born in Hawaii, she worked her way through. an incredibly huge personality off Broadway. Then Broadway. She's won numerous acting awards, awards for her music, and in fact, she became a gay icon. The two films I'm showing you extracts from are "Beaches" and "First wives Clubs". Now "Beaches" is the story of two girls who meet. They meet actually at Coney Island. One of them comes from an incredible WASP background. She really is the gentile princess. She's rich, she's beautiful, she's going to be a lawyer. Whereas Bette Midler, the very pushy, very clever, very alive Jewish girl. And they stayed friends all their lives. And tragically in the film, the friend becomes very ill. Her husband has left, her terrible story. It's a tear-jerker. And in the end the daughter is adopted by the Bette Midler character. It's a real schmaltz film. But let's see an extract from "Beaches". A woman called Randy Goldfield. These films are good when they're written by women.

(A video clip from the 1988 film "Beaches")

- [Narrator] Bette Bloom wanted to be a star. ♪ That's the story of ♪ And Hillary Whitney was her biggest fan.

- You're the best thing I ever saw.

- You think I'm really, truly talented.

- You're truly talented. I've told you this at least 8 million times.

- [Narrator] And with a friendship that began 30 years ago at the beach.

- You happened to be the most fantastic person I've ever met in my entire life.

- I am?

- [Narrator] They shared good times.

- The times says C.C. Bloom's performance is both promising and purposeful.

- [Narrator] And bad times.

- Mark, have a drink on me, I was a big hit.

- [Narrator] Through it all, Hillary stood by her side.

- Guess who got the lead and the falcon players New-

- [Presenter] I want to congratulate you for winning a Tony. Did you see those two other broads smashing their team.

- Yeah.
- Ha ha, it was great, wasn't it?
- [Narrator] Through marriage.
- I now pronounce you man and wife.
- What did you do that for?
- The happiest moment in my life, I don't ever want you to forget it.
- [Narrator] Through breakups.
- You caught Michael with another woman.
- Yes.
- And now you're going to have a baby all on your own.
- Having a baby without a father, ain't that being selfish.
- All great love is selfish.
- [Narrator] And through their differences...
- You did everything you said you were going to do! Everything!
- You're smart, you're beautiful, you have hair that moves.
- [Narrator] Their friendship would last forever.
- You're going to be my partner-
- [Narrator] Touchstone Pictures presents, Academy Award nominee Bette Midler.
- But enough about me, let's talk about you. What do you think of me .
- [Narrator] Academy Award nominee Barbara Hershey.
- Go maniac!
- Are you always like this?
- No.
- Good. Then you can stay.

- [Narrator] In a motion picture about relationships. I'm a womaniser, you see. I'm not a liar. I'll see you back home on Monday.

- You're lucky.

- About laughter.

- Go back you brain damaged bag of bone or I'll have you gag! Hi March. How's life treating you.

- [Narrator] About life.

- Could be dead.

- Nah, if she was dead she would've dropped the bottle.

- [Narrator] Beaches. What up Carol.

- [Narrator] Once in a lifetime you'll make a friendship that lasts forever.

- The next one I'm going to show you of Bette Midler is "First Wives Club". Again, it was panned by the critics, but it was incredibly successful. It's written again by a Jewish woman, Randy Oakfield, who was divorced and it made her consider this story. It's the story of four friends who knew each other at college. One of them in a very unhappy marriage, commits suicide. And she sends letters to the other three Diane Keaton, Goldie Hawn and Bette Midler. And the three of them get together and all their marriages are falling apart. Goldie Hawn, who is Jewish, plays the great actress, the selfish actress involved with this terrible director character. The Diane Keaton character is married to a advertising man who's having an affair with his psychiatrist. The Bette Midler character is married to the Jewish man who is now having an affair with a much younger "Stick insect", quote, unquote. And in the end, the three women get together with lots of problems on the way and they decide they're going to get even. And what they do is they take their husbands to the cleaners, but they set up the First Wives Club for women who are abused, women who are in trouble. It's a fun film in many ways. And Bette Midler's performance is absolutely hysterical. And again, a real film written by a Jewish woman, Bette Midler's part slightly stereotypical. There's a scene when she's with her son. She's the only one who has children. Sorry, no, the Diane Keaton one also has a child. She's the only one who has a son. And of course there's bar mitzvah scene and it's a riot. So let's see a clip from the wonderful, Bette Midler's, "First Wives Club". And also the wonderful Diane Keaton and Goldie Hawn.

(A video clip from the 1996 film "First Wives Club")

- Do it Morris, do it to me now. I need it. You're the only one who

does it the way I like it.

- If I give you any more collagen, your lips are going to look like they got stuck in a pool drain.

- Morning Marvin morning miss Elliot.

- Leave me alone, I'm very fragile right now.

- What's that fragrance? Mean to Milano? Chipsa Ahoy?

- Hm, mellow musk.

- [Woman] Hi, sweetie.

- Hi.

- Hi.

- You know you're in a gay bar?

- I know honey. I know, and that's what's so great. There's just so many nice lesbians. Just everywhere you look there's lesbians.

- What's the matter? She's-

- Come on Elise, you can tell me. The cheek bones, the jawline. Did you just have a little bit of the full evana.

- Okay? All right. I have been freshening up a little bit.

- What do they do with the stuff they take off. You get to keep it? I had gay man in a home. I washed the shorts. I ironed them and I starched them.

- Oh, you did?

- You did?

- Yeah. Well, I mean I supervised.

- Hello? What's the matter, Morty? Can't you buy her a whole dress?

- Elise, hi. I'm Phoebe. I've seen all your movies and I want to be just like you.

- Only me.

- He brought her.

- To my son's bar mitzvah.
- Is she a gift?
- [Woman] What are we talking? Are we talking about revenge?
- No, I am talking about justice. Put it in there.
- Okay, First Wives Club, welcome to order.
- Be afraid. Be very afraid.
- Don't you touch that. Drop it you hate stinking hair tan.
- Come on!
- Stop it! ♪ You don't own me ♪ ♪ Don't try to change me in anyway ♪
- This is about justice.
- Hello sunshine. Wake up and smell the audit. Happy days. ♪ That's all I ask of you. ♪
- Bette Midler, Goldie Hawn, Diane Keaton.
- We're so nineties.
- If we can help them rise, we can help them fall.
- [Narrator] The First Wives Club.
- Ladies, remember.
- What?
- Don't get mad, get everything. ♪ You don't own me ♪
- There's some fun cameos, of course. Ivanka Trump is in it. So of course is the wonderful Maggie Smith. And in many ways I think it's her story.

Now, I'm going to conclude with a clip from "When Harry Met Sally", which was a romantic drama. A comedy really. It was written by the wonderful Nora Ephron, and directed by Rob Reiner. Can I talk before we show the clip? Nora Ephron was a journalist, unfortunate she died of leukaemia quite young, in 2012. She was a writer, she was a filmmaker, and she won the BAFTA for this particular film. She had three husbands. Her second husband was Carl Bernstein, who of course committed adultery with Margaret J. He was Carl Bernstein of Watergate fame, the journalist. And of course she knew who "Deep throat" was .

And after the divorce she told everybody, and it was a horrible breakup. But she wrote about it. It was actually made into a play and later on into a film. But "When Harry met Sally", as I said, it's directed by the amazing Rob Reiner, who is real American showbiz. His father was Carl. Now Carl Reiner, and I promise you sometime next year we're going to have to do a real session on Carl Reiner. He was partners with Mel Brooks. He won 11 Grammys. He was an actor. Those of you who remember the "Ocean" series. He was in that. He was in "The 2000 year old man" with Mel Brooks. He wrote for the "Show of Shows", the "Sid Caesar" show, The "Caesar's Hour". Just think that was Neil Simon, Woody Allen, Carl Reiner, just to name, but a few. And Mel Brooks, of course. Can you imagine what it was like? Now his son directs this film. And I want to show you the famous orgasm scene, which is of course filmed in Katz's in New York. And I'm showing it to you because of the comment at the end. And the comment is made, I think it's one of the great lines of the movies, that's why I want to finish on that, is made by the Jewish actress Estelle Reiner, who happens to be Carl's wife and Rob's mother. And she gets, I think, the best line in the movie. Now the story, it's a light New York story. Of course Billy Crystal is the Jewish character. They have been friends for years. They are best friends. They tell each other everything. And the story is about their various relationships one to the other. And this particular scene where she tells him that men never know when women are having orgasms. So I hope you'll bare with it because I'm showing you this because I want you to get the last line. So can we see the famous, "When Harry Met Sally" scene in Katz's? One of the best delis I've ever been to in my life. Thank you. Thanks a lot.

(A video clip from the 1989 film "When Harry met Sally")

- You know, I'm so glad I never got involved with you. I just would've ended up being some woman you had to get up out of bed and leave at three o'clock in the morning and go clean your andirons. And you don't even have a fireplace. Not that I would know this.

- Why are you getting so upset? This is not about you.

- Yes it is. You are a human affront to all women, and I am a woman.

- Hey, I don't feel great about this, but I don't hear anyone complaining.

- Of course not. You're out the door too fast.

- I think they have an okay time.

- How do you know?

- What do you mean, how do I know? I know.

- Because they...
- Yes, because they...
- How do you know that they're really?
- What are you saying? That they fake orgasm.
- It's possible.
- Get out of there.
- Why? Most women at one time or another have faked it.
- Well they haven't faked it with me.
- How do you know?
- Because I know.
- Oh, right. That's right. I forgot, you're a man.
- What was that supposed to mean?
- Nothing. It's just that all men are sure it never happened to them. And most women at one time or another have done it. So you do the math.
- You don't think that I could tell a difference?
- No.
- Getting out of here.
- Oh Are you okay?
- Oh God. Oh. Oh God! Oh Oh God. Oh yeah, right there. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh God! Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, yes! Oh, oh yes, yes, yes! Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, yes! Oh, oh, oh God. Oh.
- I'll have what she's having.
- Anyway, thank you all very much for, I hope or frivolous but interesting, jaunt into film.

So let's have a look at questions.

Q & A and Comments

Oh, this is from Marilyn who is talking about Leopoldstadt, which when we were studying the Jews of Vienna, and of course that's Tom Stoppard's play.

Adrian Banks is talking about Herman Wouk. Of course he wrote, "This is My God", is about his view of Judaism and it's a very, very good book.

Oh my goodness, this always happens. I love Lockdown.

This is from Susan. "Herman Wouk was a friend of mine and he told me that Ali MacGraw was a horrible actress in "Winds of War." I love the aside that you can never find in the books. Grossinger's just burnt down, yeah. It must have been extraordinary to have been there. And so many of the great comedians and actors and actresses of Broadway and of the cinema came from it.

Oh, this is from Elaine who's saying, "Would you like the real backstory of "Goodbye, Columbus"? It's a true relationship." Yes, please! Thank you, Elaine. This is from Joni. "I've just binge watched "Winds of War" and "Wars and Remembrance", love music signature tune. We will use it in next seeker on the show.

Ali MacGraw was very different to the actress that took over the role in "War and Remembrance". Yes. Yes, I dunno if you can get them or anymore. I enjoyed them. Adrian read the book. And Tim is remembering Jerry Orbach from "Law & Order". And Carol says, Jennifer Grey went and had a nose job. Ay yai yai. I still think that Joel Grey was one of the greatest performers of all time. His performance in "Cabaret" was minds blowing. And of course he became an overnight success. He was asked about it. He said, "Sure, it's takes me 40 years to be an overnight success."

This is Paula. "I was fortunate enough to spend two weeks at Grossinger's, one in 1962 and again on my honeymoon in 64. "Dirty Dancing" is very accurate, even down to the character of the summer bunnies who stayed for the summer where their husbands come for the weekend.

This is from Elaine. "Where can you find Hester Street to watch online?" I don't know. I have a copy of it. I've been talking about... I dunno what the copyright issue would be, whether we can show these films online. That's the problem. But we are hoping to resolve that.

This is from Lynn. "A distant relation of my father's family had a deli on Delancey Street." Yeah, I was in New York recently and it was so wonderful around there, and of course going to Katz's.

This is from Professor Loot. "I'm not sure, I think Hester Street is on Apple TV, but might be on Amazon depending on where you are based.

Not in the UK, sadly." I wonder if everybody writes to them asking for it. If they get films in.

"Within the context of Jewish women in film and particularly in these current times of equality between the sexes, would you include and comment on Dustin Hoffman playing Tootsie in the film of the same name in order to obtain acting roles as a female?"

That's fascinating, Neville. Isn't it? I'm certainly not going to comment on grounds that it could easily incriminate me.

Wasn't Beaches Mayim Bialik's first movie as the Younger Bette Midler?"

I'm not sure. I'm not sure about that, Paula.

Vivian is saying First Wives Clubs was on UK TV last weekend. So it's available.

Oh, Karen's correcting me. Carl Reiner won 11 Oscars. He was incredibly talented. And evidently he.. 'Cause he only died recently, and Mel Brooks, of course is still alive. And they would meet up most weeks just to talk. A lot of you seem to have liked the likeness.

And this is Rose saying, "I carry pics of all my kids in my wallet, ha ha." Yes, well, so do I. Actually, no, I carry them on the phone and depending on one... Oh, this is terrible. Depending on who's in favour, I put that one to the front.

"Is it true that Natalie Wood was Jewish?"

No, she wasn't, Gilda.

Susan's telling us Hester Street is available on Prime. That's good news.

This is from Jean. "We were immigrants in New York City in the seventies, and I would shop on the Lower East Side and go to Katz's and get pickles from the Pickle Seller. We were like outsiders looking into this aspects of New York City life and also part of it. We brought it back."

Barry, this is the problem. "Will many of the movies beyond the website?"

Certainly clips can be on the website. You can use 10% of any book or any film as long as it's for educational purposes. The question is, can we show the whole films? And that's what we will be finding out.

Ashley is telling us you can get Hester Street on "Yes Movies".

Oh, and this is Ronnie. "I've just found Hester Street on YouTube, so it is available." That's wonderful.

Oh, and Joanie's saying that she found the Herman Wouk series on YouTube. That's very good. As well as Hester Street. It was Mayim Bialik's first movie. When she plays the young Bette Midler in "Beaches." Right.

And Janice is saying, you can get Hester Street on Netflix.

And this is Claire. She's saying, "Spent time at Grossinger's in the fifties and these clips are so accurate. Met Jerry Lewis, et cetera."

Playing Simon says, "Yes, of course, Jerry Lewis. So many of the comedians were in Hester Street." My partner, who unfortunately died, was American. He came from religious background. They used to go to a religious bungalow colony in the Catskills.

And this is Cynthia. "My parents went to Grossinger's with friends for many weekends. Always dressed up. My good friend's grandmother was Jenny Grossinger and her mother Elaine ran Grossinger's until it was sold. My friend grew up there."

Oh, this is extraordinary. You know, it's wonderful. "Carl Reiner won Emmy Awards." Would somebody check that please?

This is from Vilma. "Marjorie Morningstar was filmed on Schroon Lake in Scaroon Manor. I spent my belated honeymoon there in 1961."

That's from Vilma in Toronto. Anyway, I think that's it. Thank you Lauren. And thank you Lauren for working everything for me.

And also from Romey if she's listening, because Romey put the clips together for me. My nine year old grandson tells me he knows how to do movie clips. He said they're taught it at school. Makes our generations seem almost redundant technologically.

Anyway, I wish you all a good evening, and have a good weekend. Oh no, it's only Tue- I've lost track of time. I've lost all track of time, haven't I? It's only Tuesday today. We must be in call more. Anyway, God bless everyone. And I'll see you all soon next week.