

Whit Woody Barcelona: Love and Friendship in Walt Whitman's Barcelona and Woody Allen's Vicky, Cristina, Barcelona

By Ann Ward and Lee Ward, Campion College at the University of Regina

This paper compares and contrasts the themes of love and friendship in Whit Stillman's *Barcelona* (1994) and Woody Allen's *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008). While these films both deal with the lives of young Americans in Catalonia, they differ in significant ways. Stillman's film is what we identify as the "male drama." Set during the 1980's the experience of love and friendship for two American cousins, Ted and Fred Boynton, as they interact with a circle of young Spanish women and with each other is deeply shaped and impacted by the Cold War conflict between the liberal capitalist "right" and the socialist or communist "left." It is also shaped by the conflict between European progressives and American conservatives. Stillman represents 1980's Barcelona as a period of transition in which the tension between traditional certainties about political ideology and gender relations, on the one hand, and new ideas of political and sexual freedom, on the other, are at least partly resolved in Stillman's view by the putative triumph of bourgeois American commercial values.

Allen's film is the "female drama." Set in a post-Cold War world in which American global capitalism seems triumphant and on which European high culture now seems to depend, big politics appears to have ended. Yet, for the American and Catalan women and men who inhabit this world the "personal is political," as it were, or questions of justice and freedom have moved into the private sphere. Although completely free to live as she chooses, Vicky's pursuit of sexual fulfillment seems more inhibited by the "social contract" she has made with her American fiancé than if she were to adopt a Catalan identity that views the subject as the pawn of larger forces that one does not control, whether the passions or the opaque source of artistic inspiration. Cristina, choosing to fall into the arms of a Catalan painter whose arms seems large

enough to embrace three women at the same time, nonetheless returns to America apparently suffering from the hypos first identified by Herman Melville's Ishmael. Yet, Marie Elena, the Spanish *femme fatale*, who possesses not just talent but genius and from whom all seem to draw life, would not be the recognized artist that she is without the commitment to sexual equality originally imported to Europe from America. Nevertheless, we conclude that Allen is in fact more critical than Stillman of what America has to offer.

The Male Drama: Whit Stillman's *Barcelona*

The film's plot revolves around the experiences of two twenty-something American cousins Ted and Fred Boynton living in Barcelona in what Stillman describes as the "last decade of the Cold War," i.e. the early 1980's. Ted works as a sales rep for an American firm, the Illinois High Speed Motor Company (IHSMOCO). Fred is a junior naval officer sent to Barcelona to do some PR work in advance of a fleet visit to the city, notorious for its hostility to the American military and to Spain's proposed entry in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The film opens with Fred dropping in on his cousin unannounced looking for a place to stay. Long standing tensions between the cousins are exacerbated by romantic rivalry as the two men battle for the affections of various Catalan women (the "Trade Fair girls") in competition not only with each other, but also with the doyen of Barcelona's anti-American intellectuals, the academic turned journalist Ramon. After a series of plot twists involving Ted's personal and professional travails, and most dramatically Fred's serious wounding in an assassination attempt by leftist guerillas, the film concludes with a putative American triumph as

Fred recovers and the young men succeed in winning the hands of the Spanish maidens bringing them home to suburban life in the Midwest.

From the opening scene with panoramic sweeps of the cityscape the eponymous urban setting dominates the film. Stillman displays the people, culture and politics of this Catalan metropolis in all its glory. The other major films in Stillman's *oeuvre* *Metropolitan* and *Last Days of Disco* were set in his hometown of New York, more specifically Manhattan. But Stillman also has a connection to Barcelona having lived there for a spell. In this sense, *Barcelona* shares a kinship with the venerable genre of American literature peopled by writers such as Ernest Hemingway and Henry James searching for creative inspiration in Europe. There is also, of course, the Englishman George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*, which reminds us that many literary figures in the first half of the twentieth-century identified Barcelona with progressive, even revolutionary, politics. Given these associations it is probably fair to suggest that the significance of Barcelona for Stillman is both as a rich cultural meeting ground for American and European points of view, but also as the particular expression of a minority national culture within Spain and Spanish political history. The Barcelona that inspired Orwell with its resistance to Franco's military dictatorship was the anti-monarchical, anti-clerical and anti-fascist bastion in Spain's brutal civil war of the 1930's. In other words, Barcelona is famed as a classic "Red Town."

It is into a city with this distinct political heritage that Stillman inserts these two American men. But hardly innocents abroad, Ted and Fred represent the twin pillars of American Cold War pre-eminence, that is the economic and military strength of the western superpower (Henrie 2002: 100). Both aspects of American power embodied in the Boynton cousins reflect sharp contrasts with fundamental elements of Catalan identity. In response to

Fred's military service, Stillman shows us the Catalan tradition of anti-militarism. Contra Ted's Franklin, Emerson and Bettger inspired can-do American capitalist spirit, Barcelona evokes memories of the communitarian and socialist ideals of its political history. The importance of the political context for understanding this film is demonstrated from practically one of the earliest scenes in which some Catalan youths accuse the uniformed Fred and business attired Ted of being "*facha*," Catalan slang for fascist.

Fred's query: "What is *facha*?" signifies the first indication of the mutual miscomprehension between the Americans and the Catalans. Ted's response fails to calm his agitated cousin: "Don't worry, they call everybody that. I mean, you comb your hair, or wear a coat and tie, and you're '*facha*'. A military uniform—definitely *facha*." Fred's overdrawn confusion elicits: "So '*facha*' is something good then...Because if they were referring to the political movement Benito Mussolini led, I'd be really offended." This early exchange exposes the competing and distorted historical memory regarding both Spain's history and the 1980's Cold War geo-political reality. Fred sees fascism in terms of the Second World War and is outraged at the insult to the "men in this uniform who died ridding Europe of fascism." For Fred, from the American perspective World War II was the conflict that determined the structure of the Cold War. But for the Catalans, fascism has less to do with the Second World War than with Spain's own civil war. Arguably the Spanish Civil War did not end, or perhaps even begin to end, until the death of the fascist dictator Franco peacefully in his bed in November 1975 just a few years before the time period for the film. Men in US military uniforms did not actually rid Catalonia of fascism. As Ted's allusion to the '*facha*' overtones regarding haircuts or a business suit suggest, the target of anti-fascist sentiment in Barcelona extends to all symbols of bourgeois lifestyle and values. That is to say, the scarring effect of fascist dictatorship extends into fashion

choices even in the 1980's in which wearing a leather jacket hearkens back to Barcelona's anarcho-syndicalist past, while uniforms and suits are a perpetual reminder of the *petit bourgeois* and professional military who triumphed in Spain's civil war.

It is in this context that the *facha* comment evokes the anti-Americanism in 1980's Barcelona. "Yankee pigs" spray painted on a wall has its roots in the perception of American support for anti-communist military dictators in Chile, Nicaragua and Argentina. Fred's determination to clean up the graffiti stems from his belief that both Spaniards and Americans are guilty of "forgetting too much," that is forgetting the anti-fascist alliance of World War II. Ted's caution that "It's not our country" presents this anti-American sentiment as a product of the internal debate about Catalan identity sparked by Spain's proposed entry into NATO, rather than anything to do with the Second World War. It is Fred who is forgetting that NATO and the anti-fascist alliance of the 1940's are not the same thing. Fred is shocked at Catalan opposition to NATO: "What are they for? Soviet troops racing across Europe eating all the croissants?" He fails to recognize, however, that the Soviets who are now the enemy were key allies in the struggle against fascism. In fact, in alliance with the United States it was millions of men and women wearing the uniform of the Red Army that died ridding Europe of fascism.

Anti-Americanism is personified in the film by the character Ramon, who seems to always be hovering around the same social circle as the Boyntons (Weiner 2002: 27). He is a Svengali figure among the Trade Fair girls, and very much Ted and Fred's rival in love and politics. Stillman presents an unflattering portrait of a lecherous intellectual *poseur* who peddles garbled half-truths and conspiracy theories in order to pass himself off as an authority on American foreign policy. Impressionable young Catalans look to Ramon as a kind of political wizard who, according to Ted (and Fred's) love interest Montserrat, "had read the works of

Philip Agee and so was an expert on the American CIA and its involvement in the internal affairs of every country.” One crucial scene involving Ramon occurs when Ted, Fred, Montserrat and another Trade Fair girl Marta encounter Ramon holding court with a rapt audience at a San Juan Night party. Ramon draws the parallel between the recent terrorist bombing of the USO office in Barcelona (in which an American sailor was killed) and the sabotaging of the USS Maine in Havana Harbour in 1898, which provided the *casus belli* for the Spanish-American War that resulted in the US conquest of Cuba and the Philippines. In response to this tale of American ruthlessness and cynicism, it is the normally unflappable Ted, as opposed to the overtly patriotic Fred, who blurts out: “Those are lies.” Ted later concedes defeat when Montserrat blithely informs him that “all the history books” in Spain teach Ramon’s version of events about the USS Maine.

Clearly Stillman employs Ramon as a vehicle to display the fatuousness of much of what passes for discourse about American foreign policy among many in the European Left. Ramon is prejudiced and uninformed, yet Montserrat and Marta insist that he is correct about the nefarious anti-progressive activities of the “AFL-CIA,” an absurd malapropism for the most important US labor organization. Stillman also reveals Ramon’s comical lack of fluency in English as he intones vatic statements about forthcoming US attacks on Iran and Libya meant to reverse “the reclining popularity of the president.” Ramon’s influence depends upon considerable ignorance about real American life on the part of his Spanish audience. The only perspective many of them have on the United States is filtered through the prism of hostile or misinformed interpreters. Ted captures this aspect of anti-Americanism by analogy to the “disgusting” mock-hamburgers served in Europe, which leads Europeans to believe that Americans, who are known to love hamburgers, are “idiots.” Europeans do not, perhaps cannot,

know that hamburgers in the US are delicious, and this it is “that ideal burger of memory that we crave.”

Ramon’s rant has the paradoxical effect of not only electrifying his Spanish audience with stories about American espionage, but also reminding them subliminally of Spain’s own lost imperial glory. We recall that one of the most famous sights in Barcelona is the monument to Christopher Columbus who docked in the city after his first voyage of “discovery” that precipitated Spanish conquest in the New World. Ramon suffers from confused historical memory at least as much as Fred because whatever the relative merits of Spanish entry into NATO, the US of the 1980’s is not *facha*, at least if the term fascism is meant to have any real ideological content. Perhaps Ramon has a bad conscience not only due to his complicity in the assault on Fred, but also due to the collective guilt (or less charitably envy of America) for Spanish imperialism. Stillman suggests that the Catalans and the Spanish should reconcile their own history of empire and fascism, and resist the temptation to cheap anti-American scapegoating.

Challenging Cold War Assumptions

Ted and Fred reflect ideological certainties of the Cold War that are subject to serious challenge in the closing phase of the conflict. Montserrat reminds us, echoing Ramon, “the old gods are dead.” In this respect at least, Ted and Fred seem to acknowledge Ramon’s insight as they grapple with the sense that the traditional metaphysical support for American commercial republicanism and its claims to human happiness and excellence are no longer as apparent or

persuasive as they once were, even to Americans. In particular, post-war American self-identity rested on certain assumptions about capitalism and US military prowess.

Throughout *Barcelona* Ted offers a running philosophical defence of capitalist economics. Ted's gods preach a gospel of individualism and self-regarding materialism that claims to provide the basis for individual happiness and healthy civic life. The self-help gurus Franklin, Carnegie and Bettger are the "philosophers" of this new age. Ted insists that in sales he discovered not only a profession, but also a "culture" and a "theory of human relations" that offers the utopian prospect of a commercial sphere in which there are no winners and losers and in which businesses make people's "lives more agreeable" to the benefit of the "whole economy." While acknowledging that artists have had a profound impact even on American culture with their mockery of bourgeois values (e.g., Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*) and that the naiveté of much of this self-help lit opens it up to the facile criticism of "half-wits" (such as Fred), Ted's defence of capitalism seems to rely on an idealized version of commerce. He emphasizes the value of earning trust: "Being bluntly honest" about your product "is always safe and best." Ted's ideal of business is a far cry from the credit default swaps and insanely leveraged deals of the post-Cold War Wall Street "casino capitalism" that precipitated the 2008 economic meltdown. He stresses the importance of meaningful consent as seen in his "Maneuver X," a low pressure sales technique that requires a customer to take an affirmative step to assume moral responsibility for one's decision. Maneuver X presupposes faithful transmission of honest and accurate information about the product being sold. But Stillman hints that Ted's idealized version of commerce may be dependent on moral virtues that are not integral to capitalism. It was only under the influence of a charismatic business prof in senior year that the anti-capitalist prejudice of his youth dissipated. But it was to Jack Tyrrell, saviour of

IHSMOCO and Ted's mentor that he owed the most for his career. Tyrrell is a kind of Platonic philosopher king who combined military courage, clandestine cunning, and the ability to read souls in order to determine their true vocation. Tyrrell, however, was also "the last of the greats," one of those "magnetic personalities of the World War II generation," whose formative experiences in life and business were very different from the young men who will succeed him at the firm such as Ted and his colleague Dickie Taylor.

Stillman's mild critique of the commercial spirit may extend further than simply the problem of transmitting values and virtues from one generation to the next. However, he leaves it to Marta, the least intellectually curious of the Trade Fair girls, to give the most elaborate attack on American capitalism when she rehearses for Fred Ramon's account of the horrors of bourgeois life in America: "Ramon is very persuasive and painted a terrible picture of what it would be like to live the rest of her life in America with its consumerism, crime and vulgarity. All those loud badly dressed fat people watching their eighty channels of television and visiting shopping malls. The plastic throw-everything-away society with its notorious violence and racism...And finally, the total lack of culture." The audience is struck less by Marta's hackneyed tirade than by Fred's priceless response: "It's a problem."

Why don't we see an enthusiastic defence of American life from the super patriotic Fred? Stillman allows us to suspect that there is some tension between the twin pillars of American Cold War power, between self-regarding commercial values, on one hand, and public spirited military virtues, on the other (Henrie 2002: xi). We recall Fred's own disapproval of bourgeois life when he insists that he quit his Wall Street job to join the Navy because he hated the idea of being "stuck indoors for the next forty years, with two weeks off to go snorkelling annually," not to mention "all the fighting-for-freedom, defending democracy, shining-city-on-a-hill stuff,

which I really buy.” This disdain for the softer mores associated with commercial life perhaps underlies much of Fred’s annoyance with Ted throughout the film, not to mention his general ambivalence toward the concept of private property that prompts Ted—frequent victim of Fred’s insouciance about the fiduciary obligations of borrowers—to observe that there is sometimes “a fine line between borrowing and theft.”

In terms of military might, the fundamental American Cold War assumption is that the Soviets can only be contained (if not actually defeated outright) by US military force either alone or in alliance. The three acts of violence that punctuate the action in the film—the bombings of the American Library and USO Office, as well as the assassination attempt on Fred—expose the negligible impact of low grade indigenous guerilla attacks on US targets. These feeble efforts will not spark a general anti-American revolt or even reverse the course of Spanish entry into NATO. They foreshadow the stunning collapse of the once thought formidable Soviet threat by the decade’s end. But the military assumption that the Cold War will be won or lost by soldiers, tanks and missile systems is challenged repeatedly in the film by Stillman’s subtle exploration of the impact of propaganda. As Ramon reminds us throughout the hearts and minds of potential American allies can be swayed by the anti-American propaganda ever present on the European Left. Admittedly, US Cold War strategy can be self-defeating. In particular, the tension between the goal of supporting democracy and opposing communism often during the Cold War led to counterproductive American interference in the internal affairs of other countries. The cost to American prestige by this containment strategy is highlighted by Stillman’s delightful satire of US policy in Latin America in a scene in which the comically bellicose Fred literally crushes a “cadre” of fierce red ants threatening the peace loving black ants at a picnic to the disgust of the horrified Ramon and other Catalans. Indeed, Stillman makes American complicity

in the phenomenon of anti-Americanism an important sub-theme of the film. Whether it be Fred's careless pillow talk with Marta that first put him on Ramon's radar as a CIA operative, or the US Consul-General's insistence that anti-Americanism originates in the American media (whom he likens to those who report on the world's ant farm, but also happen to hate ants), Stillman seems to identify the source of anti-Americanism as something at least partly within the American soul insofar as this soul finds itself locked in the ideological grip of the Cold War.

The Personal is Political

Despite the undoubtedly durable and well-organized US war effort, Stillman suggests that the deeper challenge to American commercial republican values lies in the private as opposed to public realm. *Barcelona* is a classic comedy in the Shakespearian mold as it concludes with a clutch of happy couples coupling. But it is a comedy in which the theme of romantic love is profoundly penetrated by political concerns. Stillman compels us to reflect upon the question: What does love mean in a world in which "the old gods are dead"? The decline of traditional religion and morality in the modern era also means that American political ideology perhaps lacks the metaphysical supports that it once had. Any discussion of love in the film takes place in a context in which the public dominates the private. It is as one commentator observes a heavily American "guy-o-centric" perspective in which the female and Spanish characters are practically never present on screen without at least one of the American male protagonists (Lyon 2002: 158). In Stillman's *Barcelona* even love, the traditional domain of women, is seen almost entirely from the point of view of men.

The male-driven dialogue of the film includes seemingly endless speculation about the erotic foundations of human happiness. This focus appears most sharply with respect to the idea of beauty. The opening scene witnesses Ramon, seducer of the Trade Fair girls, announcing “perfecto” as he looks at the image of his latest conquest in the mirror. Presumably it is during these sessions that Ramon perfected his argument that “the idea of physical beauty...is the closest thing that remains to divinity in the modern world.” With the passing of the old gods, so too presumably go the old ways. Under Ramon’s influence Marta will insist that the idea of marriage is “extremist thinking.” Ted informs Fred early on that the sexual revolution, which arguably began in the US, “hit Spain later than the US but went far beyond it.” In progressive Barcelona especially “everything was swept aside...The world was turned upside down, and stayed there.” In contrast to Ramon’s divinization of female beauty, Ted offers a jeremiad against the evils of erotic attraction: “the inordinate concern for physical beauty has wrecked...lives.” Following his painful breakup with his girlfriend Betty back in the States, Ted vowed to only go out with “plain or homely women” in order to “free romance from the chains of physical beauty and carnality.” Ted’s rational approach to love results in a curious blindness to one of the Trade Fair girls Aurora’s beauty, and to his unwise attempt to employ Maneuver X with Montserrat. In Ted’s complicated, even contradictory, anti-materialism, Stillman displays the perhaps uniquely American tendency to romanticize commerce, while de-eroticizing romantic love.

As Mary Nichols observes, on the sole question of the idea of beauty, Stillman is somewhat sympathetic to the otherwise repellent Ramon (Nichols 2002: 16). Ramon seeks an ideal of beauty that is universalizable and can inspire devotion. Whereas Ted rejects body purportedly in pursuit of the beauty of soul, Ramon views physical beauty as the conduit to

insight about soul insofar as the beautiful female form is the only thing left in the modern world that can give mere mortals even a dim awareness of perfection. But Ted's anti-materialism produces a curiously unidealistic perception of love. While Fred proposes that it is possible that Montserrat—object of both of their affection—is the “one woman” who can bring him happiness, Ted insists that there is no “one” ideal soul mate for any particular person. Apparently, for Ted, there is at best a range of human types who can more or less satisfy each partner's emotional and erotic longings. In this respect Fred and Ramon are closer to each other than either is to Ted for Ramon's bold inversion of Ted's modern Cartesian dualism advances the proposition that the impenetrability of soul, at least since the demise of the old gods in our cynical materialist age, paradoxically leaves body as the only source of knowledge remaining about the ideal residing in immaterial soul.

Ramon's new age theology is clearly aestheticism masking hedonism, but it reads surprisingly well in comparison with Ted's pragmatic eroticism and utilitarian piety (Ted informs us that he consults the Old Testament “for advice on romantic matters”) or in contrast to Fred's nationalistic “city-on-a-hill” civil religion. The difficulty in the attempted fusion of commerce and romance is represented by the Trade Fair girls who are pulled between two poles—Ramon and the Boynton cousins. Ramon flatters female vanity and skillfully arouses dread about the vulgarity of American life. However, despite their receptiveness to Ramon's anti-American propaganda, Stillman reminds us that the Trade Fair girls are themselves agents of the expansion of American consumer lifestyle to Spain (Henrie 2002: 106). Even here the political context intrudes on the private realm for it is the Castilian Greta, who calls herself “not very Catalan,” who displays an instinctive distrust for the US-bashing Ramon, and seems to find Ted's self-regarding religiosity at the injured Fred's hospital bedside quite charming. Ted

assures us that his future wife Greta is not put off by the purported vulgarity of America: “Actually [she is] looking forward to the eighty channels of television and abundance of consumer products in the US. I mean it doesn’t bother her at all.” That is to say, Greta appears to be attracted to the text of American life, as opposed to the titillating but completely fictional, subtext represented by Ramon’s conspiracy theories and tales about Ted’s fetishistic tendencies lurking beneath his straight-laced bourgeois habits.

The Spanish women characters in *Barcelona* appear rather unironic and strangely humorless. But then again, the “guy-o-centric” perspective of the male drama is likely too limited by the erotic desires of the men to fully explore the complex question of female autonomy in a time of dramatic social and political change. Perhaps the only glimpse of an authentic, spontaneous moment of life that is not entirely seen through the eyes of young, white American men is the charming scene in which the Catalan women flamenco dance among themselves on a patio unaware of the voyeuristic Ted and Fred watching from the staircase above. It is an episode of simple beauty, but the audience cannot help but wonder if the same scene would look or feel the same set in Chicago or at “the Lake” in cottage country back in the States. Out of its native context, would this elegant, intricate and highly gendered dance appear anachronistic or merely sad nostalgia? Stillman leaves us to ponder whether the romantic flamenco can inhabit the same moral universe as the egalitarian, androgynous and potentially delicious American hamburger.

Whit Stillman’s *Barcelona* concludes with an American triumph. Ted, Fred and Dickie Taylor win the hearts of the Spanish girls who return with them to the States and devour tasty American burgers at the Lake. And as we know, despite the opposition from many on the progressive left, Spain did wind up joining the anti-communist alliance that would soon prevail

over the Soviet Union. This is, however, perhaps a qualified victory. Late-Cold War America faintly resembles Alexander the Great's empire, which famously lost its Greekness as the victorious men took on foreign wives. In this closing scene Stillman brings back the question of the relations of the genders in America, an issue largely suppressed throughout the romantic adventures of the two American lads abroad. Unlike American women who have certain expectations post-sexual revolution about their male partner's role in their personal and professional fulfilment, Ted informs Dickie Taylor that Spanish women "don't take it personally" when their American husbands and boyfriends act like jerks. One suspects that Stillman senses that the cheery acceptance of the excuse "*cosa de gringos*" (a gringo thing) is unlikely to help resolve the problems of strained gender relations that will emerge with such prominence and urgency in post-Cold War America.

The Female Drama: Woody Allen's *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*

The plot of Woody Allen's film, *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, revolves around the experiences of two American women in their late twenties whose first names we learn are Vicky and Cristina. Friends since college, Vicky is working on a Masters thesis on Catalan identity, a subject she has been fascinated with since falling in love with Gaudi architecture as a teen. Cristina is styled a "filmmaker" by the narrator, having completed a 12 minute film which she wrote, directed and acted in, the theme of which being why love is so hard to define. The narrator tells us that the two friends are similar in all things except their views on the important topic of love. Despite Vicky's love for Gaudi and her ability to be powerfully moved in a magical way by Spanish guitar, the narrator claims that in matters of love she is practical and

currently engaged to be married to Doug. Vicky adores Doug because he is decent, successful—professionally and financially we are left to gather—and understands the beauty of commitment. Cristina, on the other hand, is looking for deep passion and accepts that in love there must be pain, having just broken up with a boyfriend back in America. Although she does not know what she wants, she is certain, according to the narrator, that she knows what she doesn't want (see Rapf, 2013: 268).

The two female friends arrive in post-Cold War Barcelona to spend the summer before Vicky gets married to Doug in the fall. They are hosted by a distant relative of Vicky's family, Judy Nash and her husband Mark. Mark Nash is an American businessman located in Barcelona whose wife Judy is a socialite moving in American and Catalan high circles, although she does not appear to be gainfully employed.

Women, Capitalism and Art

Significant differences initially stand out between Stillman's and Allen's characters. First, Catalan men and women will be seen through the eyes of two American women rather than men. These two American women, Vicky and Cristina, are of much higher socio-economic status than the "Trade Fair Girls" of Stillman's Barcelona. Both American women have been to college and Vicky is now pursuing a post-graduate degree while Cristina is very fashionably a "filmmaker" cum "photographer," pursuits that indicate significant leisure grounded in unearned wealth. When Mark Nash first asks her what she does, Cristina responds, "I'm at liberty," giving the impression that she does not have to "do" anything for a living. Vicky is engaged to Doug, a successful young professional in the financial district in New York City, who is looking for

houses in the Hamptons and whose father has friends in the American embassy in Spain who can arrange a snap wedding in Barcelona should Doug arrive their by surprise.

Needless to say, Vicky and Cristina enjoy high social standing and financial security that is always there even if it remains unseen. One commentator accuses Allen of simple racism and blanketing Barcelona in white privilege by having his audience view Barcelona through the eyes of these two wealthy, female American characters (Curry, 2013: 279-81). Yet, I would suggest an alternative interpretation. The economic, social and political security that Vicky and Cristina enjoy gives them the freedom to pursue their sexual desires without inhibition or ulterior motives. They do not have to consider, as most women throughout history have had to do, their male partner's money, social or political status, or even citizenship—can he get me a visa to immigrate to his country—when engaging with him in pursuit of pleasure, sexual or otherwise. As Cristina says to Vicky when the two are debating whether to fly to Oviedo with Juan Antonio: “I’m a big girl. If I want to sleep with him I will, if not I won’t.” This freedom that Vicky and Cristina enjoy, from Allen’s point of view, goes some way in bringing the true nature of female sexual desire and how it is satisfied to the surface. Such desire and the question of how women, mainly American but also Catalan and all women, experience love, sex and pleasure and how this relates to “freedom” is a central if not the central phenomena explored in the film.

Perhaps it should be noted here that there are no children associated with the main characters. All that is said of children is that Judy and Mark’s son Arthur has just gone off to college, and Judy playfully says at lunch when the two woman first arrive that Vicky will marry a man in the fall who will soon get her pregnant and thus resolve all of her contradictions. Yet, as we learn later in the film, Judy and Mark’s marriage has been devoid of erotic love for years. We

do meet Juan Antonio's father briefly, but not his mother, and it appears that Juan Antonio and Marie Elena have no children.

The Catalan characters in Allen's film are also older and seemingly of higher social status than the characters (with the possible exception of Ramon) in Stillman's film. Juan Antonio (Javier Bardem) and Marie Elena (Penelope Cruz) have already been married and divorced by the time the film starts, and both, like Vicky and Cristina, have been to "college" or the Catalan equivalent, art school. Interesting to note is that while they play a divorced couple in the film, Bardem and Cruz are actually married in real life. Juan Antonio and Marie Elena both seem to be artists of some regional if not national fame, as we learn that their "hot divorce" was a really big deal in the art world. Allen's film, moreover, does not end with the Shakespearean resolution of happy couples tying the marriage knot. Rather, the plot of Allen's film centers around three women and one man in various configurations. We start with the heterosexual threesome in Oviedo proposed by Juan Antonio of Vicky, Cristina and Juan Antonio. Then the film centers around the heterosexual couple of Cristina and Juan Antonio, with Doug and Vicky now as a secondary couple in Barcelona as well. We then move to the sexual reunion of Juan Antonio and Marie Elena, then the lesbian relationship of Cristina and Marie Elena which quickly turns into the (combined lesbian and?) heterosexual threesome of Cristina, Marie Elena and Juan Antonio. After Cristina ends this threesome Judy Nash and Vicky have a brief hope that Vicky can get back with Juan Antonio. But this fails and Vicky returns to New York with the same fiancé now husband that she started the summer with. Cristina returns to New York still empty-handed and searching, as it were. As we would expect, Juan Antonio and Marie Elena's relationship becomes explosive again and they separate. It should be noted that Allen does not explore a gay relationship between two men in the film.

The political context that is the background of Allen's film also differs from that of Stillman's film. In *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, the Cold War is over and American global capitalism, represented by Ted Boynton in Stillman's film and Doug in Allen's film, appears economically and politically triumphant. European, or more particularly Catalan, high culture now seems to depend on the wealth that this triumphant capitalism produces. Vicky and Cristina, and the audience of Allen's film, first see and hear about Juan Antonio at a party thrown for local artists and collectors at an art gallery owned by a friend of Mark and Judy Nash. Moreover, Juan Antonio is initially mistaken for another Catalan artist who has been commissioned by Mark to paint pictures for the walls of his Barcelona office. American multinational corporate wealth, it seems, has become the new patron of European art. Is Juan Antonio attending the party to explore the possibility of his receiving such patronage as well? The first thing Juan Antonio says to both Vicky and Cristina when he approaches them in a restaurant after the party at the art gallery is a one word question: "American?" Juan Antonio is interested, following up with Cristina with: "What colour are your eyes?"

The impact that American global capitalism and the wealth it produces has on European art and high culture is a question, therefore, that Allen's film raises. This question, although for the most part remaining in the background, is prominently brought to the surface in the scene with Juan Antonio's father. Juan Antonio explains to Vicky that his father is a poet who writes the most beautiful sentences in the Spanish language, but that his work cannot be read by Vicky or the public because, hating the world, he refuses to publish. Moreover, his father refuses, unlike himself, to learn English because he does not believe a poet should contaminate his work with a foreign language. Is Juan Antonio's father correct? Juan Antonio admits to Vicky that as an American this may be offensive to her, but Vicky very accommodatingly says she is not

offended and understands. Yet, if his father is right what does this say about the integrity of Juan Antonio as an artist? The latter is obviously learning English and seems eager to improve it, goes to parties thrown and attended by the American business elite in Barcelona, and, as his ex-wife Marie Elena castigates him wrapped in a white towel in the guest room of her former house, “you fell not for one, but for two American tourists!”

The Americans

With the apparent triumph of American global capitalism, called neo-liberalism in Europe, the film suggests (even though Allen may be mistaken) that “big politics” has ended. Yet, for the women and men who inhabit Allen’s post-Cold War Barcelona, the “personal is political,” or questions of justice, freedom, beauty and violence have moved from the public to the private sphere (also see Feuer, 2013: 404-05, and Bergen Aurand, 2013: 433). Perhaps the “privatization” of political questions, as it were, can best be explored through the character of Vicky. Engaged to be married to Doug in the fall but engulfed by her erotic desire for Juan Antonio, Vicky, during her summer in Barcelona, is confronted with a choice between two alternatives. This choice is most aptly expressed by her older friend Judy Nash. Unexpectedly witnessed kissing her husband’s business partner Jay Lewis, Judy denies to Vicky that she is having an affair, although she admits to having had fantasies of someone coming along and “rescuing” her from her “situation” with Mark. Of Mark, who she sees as Doug thirty years from now, Judy says: “I love him, but I’m not in love with him.” Allen seems to say through Judy that American men offer women the emotional stability of *love*, involving economic, social and political security but excluding sexual satisfaction. European men, on the other hand, offer them the adventure of being *in love* that, while entailing emotional, socio-economic and possibly

political tumult, promises to heighten sexual desire and the possibility of its fulfillment. Which one will you choose, Allen seems to be asking American women?

For Vicky the choice between the security of *love* and the adventure of being *in love* comes to her through Doug, her fiancé-husband and young representative of the American capitalism from which she comes, and Juan Antonio, her on-again off-again Spanish lover and representative of the Catalan identity she studies but in the end seems unwilling to embrace. Indeed, Doug and Juan Antonio often present themselves beside each other, on the cell phone or in the flesh, for Vicky throughout the film. For instance, take Juan Antonio's proposal to Vicky and Cristina of a *ménage à trois* in Oviedo and Vicky's attempts to turn him down. In what is surely one of the most erotically titillating conversations between men and women in modern American film, Juan Antonio approaches the two women in a restaurant and, after confirming that both women are American, learning their names and, we think, the colour of Cristina's eyes, he invites both to fly to Oviedo with him for the weekend, closing the initial proposal with a commanding, "We leave in one hour." Vicky pushes back though, and to make the offer more attractive Juan Antonio explains, "I'll show you around the city, we'll drink good wine, we'll make love." Vicky asks, "Who exactly is going to make love?" Juan Antonio: "Hopefully the three of us." Although Cristina cannot repress an excited smile, Vicky says, "Look Signor, maybe in another life." Juan Antonio, though, is persistent and asks, "Why not? Life is short, life is dull, life is full of pain, and this is a chance for something special [...] You are Vicky and you are Cristina, or is it the other way around?" To Cristina, Juan Antonio asks of Vicky and her wordy attempts to reject him, "Does she always analyze every inspiration until its grain of charm is [now struggling for English] uh, how do you say it, eh, squeezed out of it?" All Cristina can say is, "Actually, my eyes are green." Juan Antonio tries to close the deal by saying, "You are

both so lovely and beautiful,” and to Vicky, “What offended you about the offer? Surely not that I find you both beautiful and desirable?” In the middle of Vicky’s final attempt to turn Juan Antonio down, Cristina blurts out, “I would love to go to Oviedo.”

Giving the two women space to think about his offer, Juan Antonio backs away from their table. The debate between the two women, like the debate between Just and Unjust Speech in Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, begins. Cristina excitedly says, “Oh my god this guy is so interesting.” Due to some confused and mistaken whispering by Judy Nash in the art gallery, Vicky responds, “If I heard right, he was violent with his [ex]wife.” Although for Cristina this means that Juan Antonio is not one of those factory made zombies, Vicky declares, “I’m not going to Oviedo with this charmingly candid wife-beater. You find his aggressiveness attractive but I don’t, and he’s certainly not handsome.” Cristina: “I think he’s very handsome, he’s sexy and you have to admire his no bullshit approach.” Now, for the first time since the opening scene in the taxi from the airport, Doug makes his way into the plot. Vicky’s cell phone rings and she answers it: “Hi, I can’t talk right now, I have to save Cristina from making a potentially fatal mistake. I’ll call you back. I love you too.” We know it’s Doug calling from New York, the heart of American global capitalism. Cristina insists: “I took a liking to this guy in an instant. He’s not one of those cookie cutter molds. He’s creative, artistic.” Vicky, angry, says: “Cookie cutter molds! Is that what you think of Doug?” Cristina: “Doug, who said anything about Doug?” Of course it is Vicky who is saying something about Doug. With Doug’s cell phone interruption, Vicky now contemplates the factory made zombie, cookie cutter mold Doug, with the interesting, handsome, sexy, no bullshit, creative, artistic, but perhaps wife-beating Juan Antonio. Vicky and Cristina fly to Oviedo.

In Oviedo Cristina, trying desperately to go to bed with Juan Antonio at the end of the first day, goes to his hotel room and admits that he is “home free” to have his way with her. Unfortunately, just before Juan Antonio can address her on his bed, Cristina becomes nauseas due to an ulcer that we now learn plagues her, interrupting the rendezvous. Cristina, obeying doctor’s orders, recuperates in bed, leaving Vicky and Juan Antonio alone together in what Juan Antonio has characterized as her “last days of freedom” before her marriage. Telling Vicky he was born in Oviedo he proposes that they visit his father who still lives there. Vicky accepts and through the visit begins to soften up toward Juan Antonio. Perhaps it is seeing him in a family setting that domesticates or conventionalizes him enough, as it were, that allows Vicky to let her feelings for Juan Antonio emerge. During a romantic, candle light dinner that evening and after Vicky has drunk much wine and is enjoying the conversation with this intriguing Catalan artist, Doug inserts himself for the second time. Vicky picks up her ringing cell phone and this time we actually see Doug in New York talking to her through the phone. He has found a great house in the Hamptons with tennis courts and a swimming pool. Pretending that she can’t hear him because of a bad connection, she hangs up and returns to Juan Antonio. Going to listen to some beautiful Spanish guitar music after dinner, Vicky is moved in that magical way again while she and Juan Antonio observe each other’s faces. On the walk back to the hotel through the park, and after Vicky pressures him to say he is no longer in love with Marie Elena and that he finds her, Vicky’s, face very beautiful, she and Juan Antonio kiss and, although we do not see it, make love. Thus, despite all of her efforts it is not actually Cristina but Vicky who has sex with Juan Antonio first, and out in the open air like a “femme sauvage” that Rousseau of the *Second Discourse* would be proud of.

Forty-eight hours after the return flight from Oviedo, Juan Antonio phones Cristina, *not* Vicky, to invite her to a wine tasting the next afternoon. Vicky tries hard not to show her jealousy and disappointment, telling Cristina she's happy Juan Antonio phoned her. Later that night, in bed and lost in memories of her night of pleasure with Juan Antonio, Vicky receives a call on her cell phone from Doug, the third time he manages to insert himself into the plot. Seeing him again talking into his phone in New York, Doug excitedly tells Vicky that he plans to arrive in Barcelona shortly and that his Dad's friends in the Spanish embassy will arrange a snap wedding for them, repeating the big formal ceremony in the fall when they return to America. Vicky's tepid, stuttering response says it all: she is not happy with this proposal. Doug, knowing what her response conveys, says, "You don't sound bowled over [...] You sound a bit reluctant." Vicky, lying in bed, finally brings herself to say this is a "fine idea" and then a "great idea." Doug tells Vicky he loves her and all she can do is hang up the phone.

Some commentators have been very hard on Doug, characterizing him as an, "endless walking, talking concatenation of consumer and entertainment diversions ranging from sports and electronics to suburban housing, all for the purpose of shielding him from a meaningful interior life or challenging personal relationships" (Girgus, 2008: 57). I think this is not quite fair to the character. As this exchange between Doug and Vicky indicates, Doug knows that Vicky is distracted if not actually having an affair in Barcelona. Yet, he never confronts her about it and does not break off with her. Although wanting to ensure that Vicky becomes his wife, he seems remarkably tolerant of her sexual wanderings with other, foreign men before their marriage but during their engagement. Perhaps this is the space he believes American men must give American women so that American women can make a meaningful "choice" after exploring all the options, as it were, when they marry.

Soon after this phone call Doug arrives in Barcelona and he and Vicky marry in the American consulate. The question Allen provokes his audience to ask is: Why does she do it? Why does Vicky go ahead and marry Doug even though we know from the scene between her and Juan Antonio in front of the library and after lunch at the old amusement park that Vicky is jealous of the relationship that has flowered between Juan Antonio and Cristina? It seems that despite being completely free to live as she chooses Vicky feels obligated to Doug because she has already agreed to marry him prior to arriving in Barcelona; she has made a “social contract” with him, as it were, and she feels bound to fulfill its terms. Although Americans may view the “social contract” as the basis of their *political* freedom, what good is it in our private world if, for women at least, it means a life devoid of sexual pleasure? Indeed, it would seem that Catalans, who are seen sometimes as mere pawns of larger forces beyond their control—the throne and altar of the old Spain, the historical materialism that lay behind the communist ideology of civil war Spain and the Soviet era, or the passions that are the opaque source of artistic inspiration in modern Spain and that Allen explores—are less inhibited in their pursuit of sexual fulfillment than Americans such as Vicky who understand themselves as rational, autonomous agents making and therefore being bound by their own choices. Is Allen suggesting that the conditioning of character necessary to produce political happiness in the form of stable democratic processes that secure civil rights and liberties, is actually damaging to or destroys our chances for private happiness?

Cristina, apparently less inhibited than Vicky, unabashedly strikes out to be *in love* rather than merely to love. It is in Cristina, therefore, that the unadorned nature of female sexual desire and how it is fulfilled, as Allen sees it, will be most directly brought to the surface. This desire is clearly aroused by physical attractiveness, made obvious by the handsome object of its attention,

Juan Antonio. Cristina and Juan Antonio are alike in this in that both are aroused by, pursue, and appreciate physical beauty. However, physical beauty is not all that recommends Juan Antonio to Cristina's desires, but it is that beauty's suggested connection to violence—perhaps correctly noticed by Vicky—that really grips Cristina. At the party thrown for local artists and collectors in the art gallery owned by a friend of the Nash's, Cristina first *sees* Juan Antonio. Immediately attracted to him, she asks Mark Nash if he is the painter commissioned to do a series of pictures for his office wall. Upon *hearing* from Mark Nash that he is not, but rather that he, Juan Antonio, is that artist who had a fiery relationship with that violent woman who was nuts, Cristina cannot repress a smile and her eyes are full of desire. She then hears from Judy Nash that Juan Antonio and his violent, nutty wife, "had this really hot divorce; she tried to kill him or he tried to kill her." With Cristina's "What!?" we know that she is only further enticed with such rumours of attempted killing or nearly being killed. Judy concludes with, "It was a really big thing in the art world. We don't move in those bohemian circles, so I don't know."

Although Allen suggests it may be easy to arouse feminine sexual desire with a masculine beauty clandestinely associated with a violent temperament, the difficulty in actually satisfying it is suggested in the "gentle violence" or "consensual force," as it were, that characterizes the lovemaking we see between Cristina and Juan Antonio. It is the second lovemaking scene in particular that brings these contraries in the feminine libido to the fore. The first scene occurs after Doug's phone call to Vicky proposing that he come to Barcelona to marry her. Right after this Cristina, who "kept her food down" unlike in Oviedo, makes love to Juan Antonio in his house. This scene is very erotic and passionate, and the audience sees much skin and kissing. Soon after, when Juan Antonio and Cristina are taking a stroll through the old town of Barcelona, we learn from the narrator that Juan Antonio was friends with all the "whores."

After Vicky and Doug marry, the second scene occurs. Cristina has been out on a bike ride with Juan Antonio during which the narrator tells us that she was getting used to the idea of being an ex-pat, believing herself to have a European soul with a romantic, tragic, free-thinking view of life. Cristina seems to have adopted the Catalan identity that Vicky can only study. We soon see her on Juan Antonio's kitchen floor, he making love to her while pinning her hands to the floor behind her head.

Despite hobnobbing and holding her own in bars and cafes with the creative Catalans of all sorts who formed Juan Antonio's circle of friends, Cristina is as quintessentially American as Vicky is. Like Ted Boynton she has an attachment to private property and the character traits that it entails. This comes to light at the offense she takes upon learning that Marie Elena has rifled through her luggage. This is despite the fact that such disrespect for Cristina's privacy leads to Marie Elena's discovery of her beautiful pictures and, with Marie Elena's help, the flowering of her gift for photography. Eventually Cristina, Juan Antonio and Marie Elena become a circle of three lovers in which Marie Elena is calm and Juan Antonio goes through a very creative period. Yet, the narrator tells us that Cristina soon began to feel a growing restlessness that she recognized but dreaded. Unable to stop this restless feeling, Cristina breaks off with Juan Antonio and Marie Elena, tells Vicky, goes to Paris for a few weeks, then comes back and returns with Vicky to New York, empty-handed or "mateless," as it were. Cristina, therefore, like Ishmael in Melville's *Moby Dick*, suffers from a recurring case of the hypos. Moreover, despite some commentators who say that Vicky adopts Allen's diction when attempting to turn Juan Antonio down, it is Cristina who seems in many respects to be the Allen figure in the film (see Romney, 2008: 69). If we recall, she is a writer-director-actor-filmmaker who has completed a 12 minute film on the difficulty in defining love. Also, in developing her talent for photography,

Cristina captures in pictures the people and places of Barcelona before returning to America, as Allen does in his film (but see Romney, 2008: 68).

The Catalans

Juan Antonio is the handsome, on the surface sensitive, Catalan painter who attracts and whose arms, figuratively speaking, seem capable of holding three women at the same time. It also becomes clear that Juan Antonio takes or absorbs from the women around him. As one commentator suggests, one of the key attractions that the two American women hold out to Juan Antonio in addition to their beauty is their language: Juan Antonio wants to improve his English and spending time with either Vicky or Cristina or both will further this goal (see Romney, 2008: 68). This would explain Juan Antonio's hilariously funny habit of insisting that Marie Elena speak English in Juan Antonio's house when they are with Cristina. Perhaps more significant is Juan Antonio's taking of his artistic style and vision of the world from Marie Elena. As Marie Elena says in Juan Antonio's garden, "He stole everything from me, his whole style [...] Your whole way of seeing is mine." Upon being questioned on this point by Cristina in his house, Juan Antonio admits, "I took more from her than I like to admit, that's why I'm always so sensitive when she brings it up."

Is Juan Antonio, seemingly always with or wanting more than one woman and taking from them at the same time, actually a "Ramon" twenty years later, but this time seen through the eyes of two American women rather than men? Juan Antonio does share Ramon's attraction to and respect for the beauty of the female form, a form that seems to give him artistic inspiration and creativity when, of course, he is not taking such from Marie Elena. Yet, unlike Ramon, Juan Antonio connects such beauty to violence. Contemplating a crucifix in Oviedo, Juan Antonio

tells Vicky and Cristina that he was in love with a most incredible woman, but “she put a knife into me.” Juan Antonio clearly has a “Christ” complex, it seems, being victimized by the dazzling but brutal Marie Elena. Confronting Marie Elena in the guest bedroom of the house that they used to share together, Juan Antonio denies her contention that despite her mood swings she always has his best interests at heart. “Not when you try to kill me” he says. “Oh that,” Marie Elena responds with a whiff of her hand. “Yes that, that small detail,” Juan Antonio whines. Marie Elena, the beautiful woman of artistic genius, as we shall see below, is also the tyrant who can end his life at any moment if he is not careful. This seems to be comically reiterated at the end of the film when, after Vicky and Juan Antonio contemplate a “frightening,” “chaotic” and “erratic” painting of Marie Elena’s, the artist herself storms in shooting a gun, nearly killing Vicky and Juan Antonio in the process. To be fair though, it is actually Juan Antonio who in the end accidentally shoots Vicky in the hand. Perhaps he shares some of Marie Elena’s violent streak that Cristina seemed to sense and found so attractive.

Marie Elena is Juan Antonio’s ex-wife whom he cannot seem to get out of life. She is, according to Juan Antonio’s (perhaps mistaken) characterization, the “antithesis” of Vicky. Thus, unlike the rational, autonomous moral agent that her dark-haired rival Vicky seems to be (whom Marie Elena does not appear to meet until her last, gun-wielding scene), Marie Elena initially appears as the high-strung, chain-smoking, European sex-goddess subject to her overly charged emotions and violent mood swings that all American women are ready to hate. However, we soon discover that Marie Elena is much more than this caricature suggests, and much more beautiful. In Juan Antonio’s garden we learn that in art school she was discovered not just as a talent, but as a “genius.” As the plot unfolds it becomes apparent that a key aspect of her genius

is an overflow or emanation to those around her that makes Marie Elena the most giving character in the movie.

Marie Elena's giving nature is first brought to light when we learn that she gave Juan Antonio his whole style and vision of the world. As Marie Elena says, "You [Juan Antonio] adopted my vision as your own." Yet, Marie Elena guides not only Juan Antonio in being the artist he eventually becomes, she also stimulates and gives gentle direction to the artistic talent of her light-haired American rival, Cristina. To Cristina, who believes that she just has to come face to face with the fact that she is not gifted, Marie Elena says she takes beautiful photographs. From here, Cristina's love and talent for photography grows and flourishes. Marie Elena advises her to take pictures with an antique rather than a digital camera, and has a dark room set up for her in Juan Antonio's basement so Cristina can experiment with developing her own film. Of course, Marie Elena herself, smoking cigarettes, becomes Cristina's best subject. The relationship between Cristina and Marie Elena becomes so good that on a trip the three of them—Cristina, Marie Elena and Juan Antonio—take back to Oviedo to visit Juan Antonio's father, Marie Elena confides to Cristina that she, Cristina, is the "missing ingredient" that can briefly allow the love between Marie Elena and Juan Antonio to achieve completion. (Does Cristina become the "child," as it were, of Marie Elena and Juan Antonio, perhaps another relationship Allen suggests and explores indirectly or under the surface?). Marie Elena even goes so far as to say, "I get this warm feeling when I hear you both (Cristina and Juan Antonio) locked in passion every night. I listen, and I'm happy." Such happiness has allowed Marie Elena's feelings for Juan Antonio to come back in a deeper and better way. Is it possible for one woman to be so devoid of jealousy for another woman having passionate sex with the man she loves? Or is this just the fantasy perfect woman conjured up by a male director such as Allen?

The narrator tells us in the next scene that Marie Elena and Juan Antonio make love one afternoon with Cristina's blessing, although Cristina, unlike Marie Elena, did feel bothered by "the thought of the two of them in bed and full of intensity." Yet, she then relaxed and let herself go with the flow of things. Unlike the lovemaking between Cristina and Juan Antonio but like that between Juan Antonio and Vicky, we do not see in motion the lovemaking between Marie Elena and Juan Antonio. Yet, as their lovemaking continued, the latter pair must have let Cristina snap a picture of them as we see a still shot of Marie Elena and Juan Antonio in bed together just behind the heads of Cristina and Marie Elena when the two women are locked in a kissing embrace in the darkroom. This brings us to the second way in which Marie Elena gives to and nurtures Cristina. She expands Cristina's knowledge of her body and how she relates to others through it by silently initiating and then engaging in lesbian sex with her. Cristina tells Vicky and Doug this happened once, that she enjoyed it, and has since slept with Juan Antonio and enjoyed that too. Listening to Cristina, it seems that Marie Elena expands not only her awareness of her body but also gives her a deeper sense of herself or who she is as a person. In response to Doug's judgmental question. "Would you say then that you are a bisexual?" Cristina, seeing no need for labels, says, "I'm me."

To book end this exploration of Stillman's and Allen's films, we should note that in dividing our discussion into the "male drama" and then the "female drama," we have clearly borrowed language and concepts from Plato's *Republic*. Moreover, for Plato it is in the "female drama" that the philosopher kings and queens are introduced. So, is there a philosopher in the films who can learn to read souls and then order the regime to allow for human flourishing? This brings us back again to the last scene in Allen's film with Juan Antonio and Marie Elena. Having learned that Cristina has left Juan Antonio and Marie Elena, Vicky confesses her "affair" and

feelings for Juan Antonio to Judy Nash who immediately sets about to bring Vicky and Juan Antonio back together. The narrator tells us that without Cristina the relationship between Juan Antonio and Marie Elena went back to its old destructiveness and Marie Elena leaves Juan Antonio once again. Having been told by Judy Nash that Vicky is unhappy with Doug and is really in love with him, Juan Antonio phones Vicky and, despite his protests that, "I'm not the kind of man to come between a husband and a wife," implores her to spend the next afternoon with him. She agrees, and the next morning after excited preparations as to what blouse she will wear, Vicky, with that erotically anticipatory music in the background, finally finds herself alone again with Juan Antonio. They kiss, this time in the art gallery of his home after much wine and good food in his garden, but they do not actually manage to make love again. As mentioned above, Marie Elena bursts in firing a gun. *After* wrestling the gun from her hand, Juan Antonio tries to comfort the hysterical Marie Elena with a gentle voice and in the Spanish language she loves: "Listen to me my love. It's okay my love." The gun in his hand, it goes off and Vicky is accidentally shot in her hand. She cries out, "You're both crazy. This is not my life."

On the surface one can say that Vicky cries out because she is in physical pain from the bullet wound. Yet, I think Vicky's anguished cry actually represents a deeper spiritual pain; she realizes looking and listening closely to the pair in this scene, that Juan Antonio will never love her or Cristina as much as he loves Marie Elena, and this hurts. Yet, Vicky also learns that love between a man and a woman can be for a lifetime, even if the marriage that encloses it cannot. Thus, we can agree with Nichols that beneath it all, Allen, "shows that human life is good only because it is not perfect," and that he "affirms the goodness of life; he searches for a reason to hope" (Nichols, 1998: 11, 17). Yet, if Vicky is finally able to read Juan Antonio's soul, as it were, whether or not she can order a regime to allow for human flourishing is less clear. In the

last scene of the film, having returned to New York we see the American friends coming down the escalator in the airport. At first Doug is in front of the two women, but then he moves out of the scene and the two women are walking side by side looking straight ahead. The narrator tells us that Vicky went home to have her grand wedding and lead the life she had planned for herself before her summer in Barcelona, and that Cristina continued searching, certain only of what she didn't want.

Bibliography

- Bergen-Aurand, Brian. 2013. "Barcelona: City of Refuge." In *A Companion to Woody Allen* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell). Pp. 424-40.
- Curry, Renee R. 2013. "Woody Allen's Grand Scheme: The Whitening of Manhattan, London, and Barcelona." In *A Companion to Woody Allen* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell). Pp. 277-93.
- Feurer, Menachem. 2013. "The Schlemiel in Woody Allen's Later Films." In *A Companion to Woody Allen* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell). Pp. 403-23.
- Girgus, Sam B. 2008. "Vicky Cristina Barcelona." *Cineaste* 34/1: 55-57.
- Henrie, Mark C. 2001. "At Whit's End" and "Text and Subtext in *Barcelona*." *Doomed Bourgeois in Love: Essays on the Films of Whit Stillman*. Mark C. Henrie, ed. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books. Pp. xi-xvi and 99-115.
- Lyon, Donald. 2002. "Places in the Heart." *Doomed Bourgeois in Love: Essays on the Films of Whit Stillman*. Mark C. Henrie, ed. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books. Pp. 154-60.

- Nichols, Mary P. 2001. "Whit Stillman's Comic Art." *Doomed Bourgeois in Love: Essays on the Films of Whit Stillman*. Mark C. Henrie, ed. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books. Pp. 1-17.
- Nichols, Mary P. 1998. *Reconstructing Woody: Art, Love, and Life in the Films of Woody Allen*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Rapf, Joanne. 2013. "It's Complicated Really: Women in the Films of Woody Allen." In *A Companion to Woody Allen* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell). Pp. 257-76.
- Romney, Jonathan. 2008. "Vicky Cristina Barcelona." *Film Comment* 44/4: 68-70.
- Weiner, Lauren. 2001. "Whit Stillman's Restorative Irony." *Doomed Bourgeois in Love: Essays on the Films of Whit Stillman*. Mark C. Henrie, ed. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books. Pp. 19-37.