

When Sally Met Frannie: Feminist Filmmaking vs. the Patriarchy

Juliette Zygarowicz

Instructor's Name: Dr. S. Park-Primiano

What exactly is a women's cinema? Is it a genre that follows female leads and encompasses women's interests, such as the romantic relationships found in *When Harry Met Sally...* (Rob Reiner, 1989)? Or is it an art cinema by a woman director made directly for the female audience that change expectations on romantic relationships? And what if the film is made by a woman but diverts from genre expectations whilst maintaining the female perspective? One such film, the erotic thriller, *In the Cut* (Jane Campion, 2003), has been largely dismissed as misogynist despite its credentials as a female-directed and led production that explores the female gaze and expectation of romance in women's cinema.

This essay compares *When Harry Met Sally...* and *In the Cut* by applying Laura Mulvey's canonical essay, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, as well as incorporating Naomi Uman's feminist art film, *Removed* (1999) to investigate why *In the Cut* was largely dismissed by feminist critics. In this essay, it provides a rereading *In the Cut* as well as providing a historical context to understand the evolution of the western women's role in society through the 1950s until the late 1970s. The argument of how this film deconstructs the male gaze and the romantic comedy genre to challenge the audience and its expectations leads into a dissection of genre confines. Lastly, it analyzes how Campion offers a counter-cinema in which Mulvey promotes in her essay that refuses to fetishize women for male pleasure, and more importantly exposes the limits of our understanding of true women's cinema, both independently and in Hollywood.