The Death of American Idealism In Postwar cinema and New Hollywood

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

Matthew Ryan

Thesis Advisor
Dr. Kevin Harrelson

Signed

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

July 2014

Expected Date of Graduation
December 2014
Abstract

Peacetime in the wake of the Second World War brought about certain idealism and with it major changes in the lives of American citizens. The idea of the American Dream had a makeover that now included a house in the suburbs with a husband or wife and kids, maybe a dog or a cat. To secure such dreams a growing middle class began to take hold, which along with blowback from the war itself began a population boom through new growing families. A growing backlash to United States involvement in conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and Cambodia along with rejection of post war idealism led to a great renaissance in the arts. Independent cinema in America began to grow and take hold with the New Hollywood movement with small independent production companies like BBS Productions. Along with this renaissance, many men and women in film and theatre emigrated from Europe during the reconstruction period to find jobs in the industry in or around Hollywood. The analysis of three films from this period, *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), *Five Easy Pieces* (1970), and *The Last Picture Show* (1971) embody changes in ways of living and growing disillusionment in individual's lives. I analyze these three films for their aesthetic and cultural value as artifacts of their time period.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my adviser Dr. Kevin Harrelson for his guidance and advice throughout this project. He was very helpful as a professor throughout my college career for which I am grateful.

I would also like to thank Dr. Jason Powell and Dr. Tim Berg for their suggestions and advice for my topic as well as narrowing down my subject manner. There were many films to choose from during this time period as well as many differing aspects of American life to consider.
In the wake of World War II while most of the world was rebuilding, the United States was expanding its infrastructure, and enjoying peacetime. Families were being given the option to move out of the city to its outskirts in the suburbs. It was a decade of prosperity, sunny cars, music, the suburbs, and primetime sitcoms (Bailey et al. 9). The new era brought about a boom in population. New families were growing. The physical landscape of the suburbs and consumer society were proving a challenge. An era of conformity and repression fueled the coming cultural revolution of the 1960s (Bailey et al 11). New technologies from wartime were being implemented in more peaceful settings. What peacetime there was did not last long. In 1950 the United States became engaged in a conflict in Korea. The peacetime back home continued. The Red Scare prompted paranoia and suspicion stratifying a new political vista. The historical context of the 1950s set the stage for the cultural revolution of the sixties. Large social changes in race, sex, gender, families, and politics came about during a lively time in history. Shifts in social equality manifest in mobilization of racial inequality in the form of protest (Gitlin xvi).

Economically things were better in the United States after the war due to all the money made during the war. The world was still reacting to the atrocities of WWII while rebuilding communities and nations. What was seen and had been experienced during the Second World War, much like the First World War, brought about a surge in artistic exploration of the fine arts and entertainment. On and off conflict during the Cold War marked a period of protest and open expression of peace and love against war and hate.
I want to highlight the changes in American film that happened during the New Hollywood era and how those changes expressed themes pertaining to issues of the day. Many New Hollywood films were being done in European styles, produced by independent film studies, utilizing small crews, and casts. Almost all scenes are shot on location. The soundtrack is original music composed for the film. Though not necessarily a novel way of creating films, the blending of trans Atlantic culture and American culture paired with the ingenuity of small studios filmmaker controlled productions led to a renaissance of American film. Due to rebuilding and a lack of proper film studios many European directors emigrated during and after the war from Western Europe to the United States. Here, directors were able to make the films they wanted with less political restriction, more freedom, and myriad of other emigrated film industry workers from Europe.

One such director was Douglas Sirk birth name Hans Detlef Sierck a German director who changed his name when he came to America to avoid any stigma. He briefly returned to Germany after the war but returned to the United States to continue filming. The late 1950s brought about a series of lush, vibrant melodramas for Sirk. Each of these melodramas focuses on upper-middle class families struggling in the community.

In this essay I will analyze scenes from his 1955 *All That Heaven Allows*. I am pulling out thematic elements that lend to Sirk’s expression of the zeitgeist of the Age of Anxiety in his films. In particular, Sirk addresses the patriarchal society’s effect on housewives in the 1950s, in particularly the social pressures
on a widow with two children. Sentiment of classicist prejudice runs through a small community when a widow goes with her gardener, a younger man. The nasty tug-of-war of conformity pitted against repression is illustrated in this film by isolation that grows when a character tries to step out of the paradigm.

About five years later New Hollywood production company BBS productions would put out a short run of iconoclastic movies. The studio was ran by the directors/producers/writers who made films produced by the company and a partner. BBS Productions had a short-lived existence but it was responsible for *The Monkees* TV show. An anarchistic film expressing the spirit of the time while confronting social issues of the era in a unique format titled *Head* a movie about the fictionalized band the Monkees directed by Bob Rafelson. Jack Nicholson's directorial debut *Drive, He Said* was released through BBS. A *Safe Place* a Henry Jaglom movie starring Orson Welles alongside Jack Nicholson in a tragic tale of youth. Two other Bob Rafelson movies *The King of Marvin Gardens* and *Five Easy Pieces* were also done through BBS. An award-winning documentary about the Vietnam War titled *Hearts & Minds* was the only nonfiction film done by the company. The extremely influential and critically acclaimed Peter Bogdanovich coming of age tale *The Last Picture Show* is considered their one of their most successful films along with the Dennis Hopper directed counterculture odyssey through America, *Easy Rider*.

I will analyze scenes from two BBS films: the first being *Five Easy Pieces* and the second being *The Last Picture Show*. In *Five Easy Pieces* I will be pulling out themes about class, sexual expression, and the quest for meaning in
life. Similar themes will be teased out of scenes analyzed from *The Last Picture Show* centralized on themes of sexuality, sex, coming of age, social pressure, nostalgia, love, and revolution. The themes in these two films serve as signposts of the era marking the path that many who lived through it either experienced firsthand or were a witness. The optimism and illusion of the 1950s was crumbling before the 1960s began. By the end of the 1960s cultural unrest began to set the stones for building a new America, an America less caught up in its ideals and more concerned with how to hold what it has while trying to get back what the prosperity and positivity of the Happy Days seemingly provided.

§

*All that Heaven Allows* selected scene analyses

**Scene: “Why don’t you have a television?”**

Sara has come over to Cary’s house for dinner. They greet each other as Sara passes through the doorway. “Hello, Cary!” Sara

“Hello, Sara!” Cary.

“I dropped by to invite you for dinner tonight. Mona and Mark are coming.” Sara walks over to a couch and opens her coat as she sits.
“Mona?” Cary walks over to the couch that Sara is sitting on and sits down on the table in front of the couch facing Sara.

“I know, but I owe them a dinner. Besides, Mona can be amusing unless you happen to be her target.”

“I suppose I should say yes. I haven’t been out since Harvey left town. But Mona—I didn’t mean that the way it sounded.”

“You can’t sit around here with nothing to do. You should at least get a television set.”

“Oh, no!”

“Why? Because it’s supposed to be the last refuge for lonely women?”

“That’s very sweet of you, but I don’t want a television.”

“All right, but I’ve already spoken to the local television man about you. That charming Mr. Weeks.” A doorbell rings. “You really should get one—“

“Excuse me.” Cary rises to answer the door leaving Sara alone on the couch.
Analysis “Why don’t you have a television?”: prescription of television

*All That Heaven Allows* is a film that presents the struggle created by conformity and the repression of women. The isolating lifestyle of the housewife left little option for a mother's life outside of being a homemaker. Any exploration of the world or self could only come by chance but often not at all. The few women (and men) that broke away from conformity and the repression surrounding it were alien to the populace. They were a minority. Isolation caused by the social climate through pressuring conformity and repression made for a cookie cutter life for many women.

Cary and Sara represent the meeting of the old and the new. Though women of roughly the same age, Cary is different. Cary is not lonely without a television or a husband. Cary is the changing twentieth century woman. She's a widow who is going with a younger man whom she will marry. It is was taboo at the time for a widow to go with a younger man yet alone marrying him. Sara represents upper-middle class values. She is conservative in her ways of preserving a certain way of life. It has not yet been addressed in the film but financially it would appear that Cary is marrying a working class man, a man that could possibly be interested in a better life financially. But this is not the case with Ron Kirby the gardener.

Certainly Sara is admitting in some sense her own loneliness by suggesting a prescription of television to Cary. Sara is suffering from side effects to her own way of life without knowing it but prefers it because she is comfortable.
in it. Sara does not wish to step outside of patriarchal propriety the way Cary
does. Cary suffers through it emotionally but ultimately is fulfilled by the end.

**Scene: Dinner at the Anderson Nursery**

Cary and Ron go to visit friends of Ron at the Anderson Nursery for
dinner. Ron introduces Cary to Mick and Alida. Alida leads her guests into her
home. Inside the home Ron starts a fire in the fireplace. Mick reveals that he
used to work in advertising. Ron and Mick joke about how they spent the war
going from wine cellar to wine cellar.

Mick brings over four Anderson specials, a drink of his own recipe. Alida
brings over a large pot to hang over the fire to cook dinner in. Mick proposes a
toast. Mick asks Ron to help him bring up wine from the cellar and the two men
leave the room house. Alida rises to prep dinner.
Cary finds a copy of Walden on a table and reads from the open pages aloud. Alida tells her that it is Mick’s bible, “He quotes from it constantly. Cary helps Alida set the dinner table.

**Analysis of Dinner at the Anderson Nursery: culture shock**

This scene is pivotal in Cary’s transition from the suburban life to a life in the country. She experiences a culture shock when meeting Mick and Alida along with all their friends. Mick and Alida are former upper-middle class. Mick left advertising for a life closer to nature. Alida cites the American transcendentalist book *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau strived to live a life more in tune with the natural world.

Cary is introduced to a new form of life, a post country club life that looks much brighter to her than her current trajectory. There is less judgment and gossip amongst Ron’s friends than Cary’s friends.

**Scene: Ron proposes to Cary**
The scene opens in snowfall while Ron feeds a deer from a bucket outside of the mill. Cary pulls up in a car honking and he approaches her. “When you called me to hurry, I hurried,” Cary as Ron opens her car door for her.

“Did you have anything better to do on a Saturday afternoon?” They walk together toward the mill.

“No as a matter of fact, the children aren’t, coming up this weekend.”

Ron opens the door of the mill, “After you.”

“Oooh!” Cary wipes the snow off her coat. Ron walks over to the fireplace as Cary looks around the recently worked upon interior of the mill. “What you’ve done to it! And the fireplace! Oh, it’s so friendly. And you put in this big window.”

Cary approaches a large multi-paned window on the far side of the room looking out on a pastoral snowy scene with Ron close behind her. “What a beautiful view of the pond. Why, you can see for miles!”

“Mm-hmm.” Ron helps Cary with her coat off. “The sun comes right up over that hill.”
“Oh!” Cary turns to face Ron.

“Do you like it?”

“Why, it’s unbelievable.”

“Let’s take your boots off, huh?” Cary and Ron walk toward the fireplace.

“Of course, there’s a lot of work to be done yet, but it’ll be worth it.” Ron helps Cary with her boots off while Cary takes off her scarf. “Your feet are cold.”

“I know. They’re frozen.” Cary picks up an antique teapot. “The teapot. You found all the pieces.”

“Mm-hmm. It took days and days.” He chuckles and gets up walking Cary’s coat to a chair to hang it over. “These stairs are moving to the loft. I’ll add the bedroom up there. The old millstone I’m trying to make into a table.” Ron rejoins Cary by the fire placing his hands on her shoulders as she stands in front of it. “You know why I’ve started to fox this place? I didn’t want to say anything until I knew I could make it livable for us.” Cary looks around worried. “Do you understand what I’m saying, Cary?”

“Yes.”

“I’m asking you to marry me. I love you, Cary.” She begins to tear up as Ron kisses her on the side of her head. She walks alone toward the large window looking outward.

“I—I just hadn’t thought about marriage.”

“Why do you think I’ve been seeing you?”

“I didn’t think. Can’t you see it’s impossible?” Cary still standing by the window now faces Ron.
"No. This is the only thing that matters." Ron grabs her by the arms and kisses her in an embrace.

"No. There are other things that matter," Cary says shaking her head. "The children—how could I ask them to give up their home?" Cary turns away but Ron stops her.

"Home is where you are, Cary."

She walks toward the fire, "But the kind of life you lead, I—I don't know that life. How could I make sure it would work out?"

A shot of Ron by himself in front of the window, "You can't, Cary. You can't!" Cary joins Ron by the window again. "Don't you see I'd be turning my back on everything I've ever known? Isn't it enough we love each other?"

"No, Cary. It isn't enough for either of us. You're running away from something important because you're afraid."

"Afraid?"
“Mm-hmm.”

“Of what?”

“Many things.” Ron looks off camera into the room.

“Perhaps you’re right. It’s absurd to think of marriage.” Ron looks at Cary, Cary looks away. “It’s out of the question.”

“Cary!” She walks away from the window. Ron is alone in front of the window watching her walk away. Cary walks toward her coat and puts it on. She looks at Ron standing alone in front of the large window. Grabbing her scarf she accidentally knocks down the teapot. She leans down to pick up the pieces. Ron walks over.

“The hours you’ve spent mending it.” Ron puts his hand out for the pieces.

“Doesn’t matter.” Cary hands him the pieces, he tosses them into the fireplace. Cary walks away out the opening the door to the mill. “Cary.” Ron walks after her. “Don’t forget your boots.” Leaving the door open, he leads her back inside to the steps for the loft where she sits as he puts her boots on her. “I’ll help you. You mustn’t catch cold.” Ron puts Cary’s boots on her feet for her. Cary leans onto the wall and begins to cry. “Darling, don’t cry.” He helps her up holding her by her arms.

“Oh, Ron, I love you so much.” They kiss again in an embrace. A shot of the deer eating from the bucket outside the mill with the mill door still open and the deer runs off. Fade to Cary lying on Ron’s lap in front of the fire.

**Analysis Ron proposes to Cary: Transformation**
This scene is rich in imagery. From the opening shot where Ron is feeding a buck straight from a bucket in his hands to the use of the large window inside the mill facing the pond for framing.

The scene is set with a calm snowfall while Ron feeds a deer. He is a man in touch with nature; he is able to interact with wildlife peacefully. Ron is not the typical man that Cary has known her whole life.

A recurring image in this film is done with a technique called framing. Framing is when a character is shot while standing in a doorway or seen through a doorway, window, or mirror. The image of framing is easy to do in this setting because the film focuses on home life with scenes in living rooms, kitchens, and bedrooms. There are many times when Cary is seen framed in a doorway or window. Framing can signify isolation (Benshoff and Griffin 234-236). Shadows and window frames create bars that almost make it look like she is imprisoned. Her home is littered with artifacts from her past marriage. She doesn’t have room to move. Ron can provide this for her. The large open spaces of Ron’s mill and his friends’ home show the openness and freedom of Ron’s way of life. Cary has an opportunity to escape.

A lot of this scene is done with close up shots many of which are in front of a large window. The close ups create an intimacy on camera between the audience and the scene. Cary’s isolation is transformed in this scene from solitary to a united isolation with Ron. They are breaking a patriarchal norm. The upper-middle class in the film gawk and alienate the couple.

**Scene: Sara react to marriage proposal**
Cary bumps into nosey Mona Plash at the butcher shop where Ron picks her up to take her home. On the car ride Cary says, “Mona Plash is such a gossip. It’ll be all over town by tomorrow, I’m afraid,” referring to her being with Ron. She says she must let the children know and expresses her worries about the townspeople.

At home Sara is in Cary’s kitchen. Sara is casting judgment over Cary for saying she is going to marry Ron. Sara warns that the fact that he is a gardener and that she is a widow is important. People will make rumors about when the affair began and whether it was an affair or not. She warns that people will say it started before her husband died. Sara warns, “Oh, Cary you know situations like this bring out the hateful side of human nature.”

**Analysis Sara reacts to marriage proposal: hateful side of human nature**

After Ron’s marriage proposal, Cary must face her community. The alienation she knows will spread through gossip. The framing in this scene is
done through Cary being shot in front of window frames. Her isolation hits hard when Sara shows up in her kitchen to inquire about the gossip she had heard. Apparently, Kary had been seen driving around with Ron the gardener.

Sara tosses out a rumor of an affair while her husband was alive and another rumor that the gardener is marrying Cary for her money. Sara warns Cary, “You know situations like this bring out the hateful side of human nature.” Though already worried about possible rumors, Cary does not seem to be as worried as she was with Ron. She’s much calmer. The window she stands in front of in the kitchen during this scene is small. It’s the first time she is in a smaller frame. This could mean a possible change in Cary’s isolation.

§

Five Easy Pieces Selected Scene Analyses

Scene: Opening
Late at night a man comes home from work. He works on an oilrig and then drives home from work to a small white house. He enters the house through a back door. Entering the kitchen he grabs a beer off a six-pack of beer. The other five beers still on plastic rings he leaves in a refrigerator. He walks into the dining room and stops under its threshold glaring at a spinning record on a record player. After a moment, he continues walking turning away from the spinning record through a living room and into a bathroom. There he finds a woman in a waitress' uniform sitting on the sink facing the mirror applying makeup. He sighs and walks away from her in the direction he entered.

Approaching the blue couch in the living room the man takes his coat off tossing it onto the far side of the couch. An inch from the couch he stops, turns around, and sinks into the couch.

The woman enters the room from the bathroom, walks toward the man, then bends down and kisses him. The man holds the woman's hand as she walks toward the record player saying, "I'm going to play it again."
Placing his hand on her thigh the man addresses the woman; “If you play that thing one more time I’m going to melt it down to hair spray.”

“Well, let me play the other side then,” says the woman. Facing the man she steps slowly toward the record player. The man tries to grab her arm but misses. She stops and he sits up on the edge of the couch and holds her hand looking up into her eyes.

“No, Rayette. It’s not a question of sides. It’s a question of musical integrity.” Rayette walks toward the couch cushion nearest the man looking at him.

Placing one knee down onto the couch first she sits down, “Well, then let me sing one for ya, ‘When there’s a-’”

The man puts up a finger to Rayette. Rayette, “Hold it. Hold it.” The man picks up a pillow in each hand and uses the pillows to muffle his ears.

Rayette laughing “Oh-ho, Bobby!” pulls a pillow out of Bobby’s hand. Dropping the pillows and sitting up the man smiles looking around starry eyed asking, “What? What?”

“You quit that now,” Rayette interjects.


“You said you were going to help me pick out a song.”

“I did?”

“I’m gonna cut off your damn water, Bobby, I swear.” Bobby shakes his head and taps the mouth of his beer can, opening his mouth like a fish looking at Rayette. She gets up and takes his empty beer walking toward the kitchen. As
she grabs a beer can from the fridge she says, “You can play on the piano and your whole damn family can play on some type of musical instrument. And all I’m askin’ is for you to help me improve my musical talent. And you’d think you would.”

Rayette returns from the kitchen, he takes his beer from Rayette, then lackadaisically points at Rayette’s nametag on her shirt saying, “Dipesto, why don’t you take that sign off your tit and why don’t you and me go out and have us a real good time?”

**Analysis of Opening: Condemned**

In the opening scene the audience learns a lot about Bobby Dupea. He works on an oilrig and lives with his girlfriend Rayette who works as a waitress. Rayette’s mention of Bobby’s genetically inherited musical talent reveals that Bobby comes from a musically talented family. Bobby could have lived a life like the rest of his family together as musicians pursuing a career in fine arts. Instead he has fled his family for a life different from the one he could have pursued along side his family.

During the opening scene the character of Bobby appears to not be very happy. He doesn’t smile much and is annoyed by his girlfriend. Though Bobby may have left his educated family he still exhibits some of their cultural preferences such as an inclination toward (or away) from certain types music. Bobby is condemned to his search for meaning in life.

**Scene: Traffic jam**
Bobby and his friend Elton are turned away from work. They drive off on a freeway. Bobby is driving. Elton is playing ukulele and singing. Bobby says, "'Unfit.' I look unfit to you, Elton? I'm fit! I'm fit." Elton continues to sing and play. Bobby drinks from a pint of liquor in his hand while he drives. "Don't you know no songs about women or nothin'?" Bobby asks.

Elton chuckles, "Yeah, but I'm just too loaded to think of 'em now—Hey, watch out for all of this traffic." Traffic comes to a halt.

"Oh, God!"

"I ain't in no hurry."

"Believe starting off your day like this, goin' to work? Unbelievable. Let me have a drink, will ya?" Elton passes a bottle of dark liquor. "Thanks Elton." Bobby takes a swig. "Ooh, boy, that's tough in the morning. What the hell are these people doing here? Isn't this some goddamn thing, Elton? Jesus Christ!" A car behind Bobby and Elton honks its horn. Bobby and Elton mutter. "What does he want? Boy, I can't stand this goddamn freeway."

More honking, "Oh, yeah, I heard ya!" Bobby sticks his head out and starts yelling behind him, "Why don't you flash your lights so's we can see what else you got for Christmas?" Bobby pulls his head into the car and gets out. There's more honking from behind. "Yeah, yeah, yeah!"

Elton slides over in the front seat. Leaning out the window, "Where you goin'?" Elton bounces the car forward as traffic sledges forward. A dog starts barking in a car behind Bobby. Bobby is walking in between lanes of traffic against the flow.
"Ants! Why don't we all line up like a goddamn bunch of ants in the most beautiful part of the day and gas ourselves!" The dog continues barking. Bobby begins barking and snarling at the dog when the car it is in approaches. Cars continue to honk. Bobby turns around walks past his car. He stops and raises himself on the fender of a car in traffic balancing him on it to get a better view of traffic.

"Hey, get off my car."

Elton honks at Bobby.

Bobby pulls himself up into the bed of a large truck. There he stands on its cargo for a better view. He notices a covered piano. He uncovers the piano and begins playing.

"Shit what's he doing?"

The frequency of cars honking accelerates. Bobby takes his helmet off and sits down to play a classical piece. Elton hums along in the car making piano playing gestures. He claps for Bobby. "Play it!" he laughs wildly. Bobby continues playing as the truck pulls away. "You better quit foolin' around! Come on!" The truck leaves the freeway. "Bobby he's turning—would you hold your horses?"
Bobby stays on the truck until he is in the city. He walks to the restaurant where Rayette works.

**Analysis of Traffic Jam: Temper**

Bobby’s lack of respect for work is revealed in this scene. Deemed unfit, he’s turned away from work. Considering that he and Elton are drinking on their way from work I infer that their boss smelled the alcohol on them. In this scene Bobby’s lack of care for work comes out. It’s appropriate that he plays classical piano on the back of a truck in traffic in the same scene that he starts ranting and raving at drivers in traffic for being inside their cars on the their way to work while missing out on “the most beautiful part of the day.”

Bobby loses his temper and yells at drivers and madly barks at a dog. He is having fun with his outburst; it’s an expression of his anger, possibly his sadness with the world, and his isolation in the crowd of humanity. He wants to stand out but he doesn’t want to be the center of attention. He plays the lead role well but he does not want to follow his path as a performing musician. He is
playing now that he can’t be at work. Yet even when he plays he cannot completely detach from his musical past. Bobby remains apart of his upper-middle class roots even though he has left his family. He yells at those stuck in traffic for lining up like ants. Bobby riding off on the truck playing piano in traffic further exhibits his lack of concern for his job.

**Scene: Having children**

Elton and Bobby are eating lunch on the rig. Elton asks Bobby, “Well, what if she was, Bob? I can’t see nothing so bad in that. Well, what if I were to let you in on a little secret that she is? That’s right. She told me. She’s all torn up about it too, which I hate to see. Oh, hell. Isn’t it something you just have to face up to? I’ll tell ya, somewhere along the line you even get to likin’ the whole idea. When Stoney first gave me the news, I could’ve shit.”

Bobby spits out what he is chewing and puts his helmet on.

Elton, “Well, isn’t that nice?”

“It’s ridiculous! I’m sitting here listening to some cracker asshole lives in a trailer park compare his life to mine.” Bobby spills his drink and gets up throwing his cup into his lunch pail. “Keep on telling me about the good life, Elton, because its makes me puke.”
"Well, if you're sayin' you think you're something better than what I am now, that's somethin' else. But I can't say much of someone who could run off and leave a woman in a situation like this and feel easy about it. And that's all I have to say."

“Well, I'm glad that's all you got to say, Elton because I'm about as goddamned tired of your mouth as I am working this goddamned job!” Bobby storms off away from the machinery of the oil well in which Elton and he had been eating their lunches.

Elton yells as Bobby walks away, “Shit-ass!”

**Analysis for Having children: the good life**

Once again, Bobby is defending his upper-middle class roots. He refuses to take Elton suggestion of trying to have a kid of his own. Bobby gets defensive and shares that he would rather keep his house he lives in than move into a trailer to be able to feed his family. He gets defensive in what he says preferring his own point of view and feelings rather than listening to those of his friend Elton.
I think Bobby’s anger is more than not wanting to live in a trailer park but that he would rather not be a father. Bobby is trying to avoid having a family. He is not concerned with living the good life, "Keep on telling me about the good life, Elton, because it makes me puke." Bobby is rejecting the good life because it ascribes an element of class that he does not want to be a part of and has subsequently ran from most of his life. Yet, he is very unhappy with his working class life. The signs that come along with it are not something that he is interested in attaining or exhibiting. He comes off as a man who is mixed in his feelings of being unhappy with life itself and unhappy with his own life. His unhappiness is often blurred by the lines separating his roots of a lack of fulfillment both contextual to his life and universal to life itself causing him to misjudge what he has the ability to change.

Scene: No substitutions

After picking up a lesbian couple that had been in an automobile accident, Bobby along with Rayette and their passengers stop for food at a diner.
Bobby, "I’d like a, uh, plain omelet, no potatoes, tomatoes instead a cup of coffee and wheat toast."

The waitress said, “No substitutions,” pointing with her pen at the menu.

“What do you mean? You don’t have any tomatoes?”

“Only what’s on the menu.”

“You can have a number two, a plain omelet. It comes with cottage fries and rolls.”

“No I know what it comes with, but it’s not what I want.”

“Well, I’ll come back when you make up your mind.” The waitress turns away from the table.

But she turns around when Bobby says, “Wait a minute. I have maid up my mind. I’d like a plain omelet. No potatoes on the plate. A cup of coffee and a side order of wheat toast."

“I’m sorry we don’t have side orders of toast. I’ll give you an English muffin or a coffee roll.”

“What do you mean you don’t make side orders of toast? You make sandwiches, don’t you?”

“Would you like to talk to the manager?”

Palm Apodaca of the couple from the side of the road, “Hey, mack!”

“Shut up,” Bobby. “You’ve got bread and a toaster of some kind?”

“I don’t make the rules.”
“Okay, I’ll make it as easy for you as I can. I’d like an omelet, plain and a chicken salad sandwich on wheat toast. No mayonnaise, no butter, no lettuce, and a cup of coffee.”

“A number two—chicken sal san hold the butter, the lettuce, and the mayonnaise. And a cup of coffee. Anything else?”

“Yeah. Now all you have to do is hold the chicken, bring me the toast, give me a check for the chicken salad sandwich and you haven’t broken any rules.”

“You want me to hold the chicken, huh?”

“I want you to hold it between your knees.”

The hitchhiker couple snickers.

“You see that sign, sir? Yes, you all have to leave. I’m not taking any more of your smartness and sarcasm!”

“You see this sign?” Bobby clears the waters and placemats from the table onto the floor with one sweep of his arm.

Analysis of No substitutions: helping hand
This is the second scene in the movie where Bobby loses his temper. The last time was when he was told that he was unfit for work and lost his temper in traffic. By this point in the film it's becoming clear that Bobby is unhappy with his world. His search for meaning brings him to walls that he puts between himself and other people; this makes it difficult for him to love. He's cheated on his girlfriend and he's been hotheaded to Elton, his girlfriend, and even complete strangers. Bobby tries to not be mean all the time. He might be unhappy with the world itself. His unhappiness fuels his search for meaning in life. Amidst all of the large cultural revolutions of the 1960s there is also a surge of many people, young and old, leaving their families, jobs, their lives essentially to find something new. Bobby is one of those people. He is ready to leave with just the clothes on his back and leave all the people he has in his life behind. In the case of Bobby he seems only interested in indulging his vices (sex and alcohol) while removing himself from the class of his past (upper-middle) and the class of his present (working). And yet, he doesn't seem to be trying to move up or go down in class. It's the very symbols of class that he resents. His sexual promiscuity maybe a silent protest against the classes he rejects. He does not value monogamy, love, or making a family. The licentiousness of his recreation is the rejection of the values of the upper-middle class. He does not want to settle down. Bobby only wants to reject what he does not want to be a part.

Picking up to the stranded couple and taking them as far as Washington is not something I was expecting out of Bobby. I don't think he is necessarily
heartless but his misanthropy bleeds into every area of his life. Yet every now
and then he lends a helping hand

**Scene: Goodbye**

The scene begins with a wide-angle shot of Bobby pushing his father
along in a wheelchair through a clearing. Bobby stops in the middle of the shot
with his father. Putting the brakes on the wheelchair he proceeds to squat down
in front of his father beginning his monologue. Bobby’s lament about his “Life you
don’t approve of” running away when “things... get bad if I stay.” Bobby
apologizes for his running away from being a musician like the rest of his family.

Bobby’s monologue begins with the camera much closer to him than
before making him and his father in the foreground. After the line, “…most of it
doesn’t add up to much that I could relate as a way of life that you’d approve of,”
Bobby apologizes to his father for not pursuing a career as a musician and the
scene ends.

**Analysis Goodbye: confession**

Near the end of “Five Easy Pieces” Bobby Dupea confesses to his father
Nicholas Dupea. The scene is encapsulated between shots of Bobby speaking
and shots of his father silently listening in his wheelchair. In the opening shot of
this scene, Bobby stops with his father in the center of the shot. Symmetry can
allude to the unnatural. Here, the filmmaker is giving the audience a cue for what
is coming next: a conversation that does not happen everyday between father
and son, a confession.
Cast in shadow Bobby and his father enter the scene in the clearing as silhouettes on the horizon. The clouds are pierced with rays of the setting sun. A sunrise/sunset can symbolize a new life or a new phase of life. Bobby is about to head off toward a new horizon very shortly when he leaves Rayette at a service station to hitch a ride with a trucker to Alaska. Bobby squats off to the side of his father. Bobby is lowering himself in stature so that he must speak up to his father.

Bobby's body language during his confession is very revealing of his character and how much his life away from his family has hurt him. The scene reminds me of the Catholic sacrament of Reconciliation. Bobby is squatting, nearly kneeling, and asking for forgiveness from his father who is seated. This scene in many ways mirrors a confession.

§

The Last Picture Show selected scene analyses

Scene: Lois Farrow talks to her daughter Jacy
Jacy is lying on her bed reading a magazine petting her cat when her mother enters her room. Lois sips her drink in the doorway and looks her daughter in the eye. Jacy rises and moves to her vanity table. Lois, "I guess you hate me tonight, huh?"

"Oh, Mama, you know I love you. But I love Duane too, even if you don't like it."

"I don't care. I'd just hate to see you marry him. That's all. You wouldn't be rich anymore, and in about two months—"

"I don't care about money. Not at all."

"—he'd stop flattering you. Well, we're pretty stupid then." Lois walks from behind Jacy and Jacy faces her mother from her vanity table.

"Well, you married Daddy when he was poor, and he got rich, didn't he?" Lois looks at the objects on her daughter's dresser.

"Scared your daddy into getting rich beautiful."
“Well, if daddy could do it, Duane could too.”

“Not married to you. You’re not scary enough.” Lois walks away from the dresser another dresser on the other side of the room.

“Well, you’re rich and you’re miserable. I sure don’t want to be like you.”

“Not much danger of that.” Lois rests her arm on the dresser. “Have you slept with him?”

“Mama!” Jacy exclaims while washing her face.

“Well go to the doctor sometime and arrange something so that you don’t have to worry about babies. You do have to be careful of that, you know.”

“But, Mama, it’s a sin, isn’t it? Unless you’re married? You know I wouldn’t do that.”

Lois rolls her eyes and scowls, “Oh! Don’t be so mealy-mouthed. I thought, if you slept with him a few times you might find out that there isn’t
anything magic about him. Then we can send you away to a good school and you can marry some wealthy boy." Lois approaches her daughter from behind.  

"But I don't want to leave. Why can't I just stay here and go to college in Wichita Falls?"

Lois rests a hand on the back of the chair that her daughter is sitting in facing the wall speaking toward the floor, "Because everything is flat and empty here. Ain't nothin' to do. Can I have some of that?" she reaches for a bottle of perfume.

"Help yourself. Don't you have any?"

"Well, yeah, but I feel like smelling good right now." Lois puts sprays perfume on her wrist, rubs it onto her hand lathering her neck. "Don't you ever feel like doing anything right now? You ought to leave your face like that. All you really need now is a little eyebrow pencil."

Jacy exhales looking down at her vanity table while her mother looks at her through the mirror.

"Okay. Good night." Lois walks out and as she is shutting the door behind her says, "Just remember, beautiful everything gets old if you do it often enough. So if you want to find out about monotony real quick marry Duane." Lois shuts the door and Jacy plops herself on her bed almost landing on her cat.

Analysis Lois talks to her daughter Jacy: Christian traditions

Coming of age during any time period is always a little bumpy. In the case of the youth of small town Anarene, Texas in their salad days nearing the end of high school they revolt and express their sexuality however they see fit. There is
a wide range of sexuality and sex thematic throughout *The Last Picture Show*. The meaning of sex seems to always be a large concern whether the sex is for love, social standing, happiness, or fun. The optimism of the postwar period seems to be not as large of a focus as is the close-knit network of small town America in the film. There are changing roles of women and men throughout. The girls and mothers are not passively sitting by while they are repressed. They take opportunities for themselves sometimes without considering consequences. Conformity can and is openly followed but behind closed doors or parked in a remote area a little protest occurs.

Lois is a strong mother. She is raising her daughter in a single parent home. She is not afraid to talk straight to her daughter about sex. Many think of the late sixties being the time of free sex however free sex came about greatly to the advent of the birth control pill in 1960. Though this film is set before 1960 sex is still being done freely in and out of relationships.

Part of the scene is done in front of a mirror. The mirror acts as a framing device for the girl and her mother. As young women in a patriarchal society they are isolated. However, Lois suggests to her daughter that she has sex with Duane to find out that there "isn't anything magical about him." Jacy tries to sound innocent referring to religion for responses to her mother's questions about sex. Lois knows that her daughter knows what sex is. Lois is disregarding the Christian traditions opting for a more responsible path for her daughter using birth control and encouraging sexual experience.

**Scene: Naked indoor pool party**
Jacy accompanies Lester Marrow to a naked pool party after the Christmas dance. Bobby Sheen, a wealthier student whose home they are in, greets Jacy and Lester, “Hi, Jacy.”

Jacy averts her gaze from the naked teenage boy in front of her. Quietly she says, “Hi.”

“Glad you could make it. We’re dressed informally as you can see.”

A girl leaves the water greeting Jacy, “Hi, Jacy.”

Bobby, “You know Annie Annie.”

Annie, “Want to join the club?”

Jacy, “Sure.”

Annie, “Well, you gotta get undressed out there on the diving board.”

Bobby, “So everybody gets to watch.” The group in the pool cheers and someone wolf whistles.

Annie, “We all do it the first time.”

Bobby, “That’s the rule.”

Lester interjects, “Yeah. I did it last Easter.”

Annie, “Okay?”

Jacy, “Okay.”

Bobby, “Everybody out for the strip show.” The group cheers.

Jacy walks to the diving board, takes off her shoes, steps onto the diving board, and pans the room.
Bobby, "Don’t pay attention to Sandy. He’s my little brother." referring to a boy in the pool wearing goggles. "If he gooses you or anything, I’ll make him go to bed." The spectators laugh as the boy swims off underwater.

Jacy, "Goodness. I hope I don’t fall off this thing."

Bobby, "Sandy can fish you out if you do," more laughter and whooping from the spectators.

Jacy takes off her dress slowly, cautiously. Once she is down to her underwear the crowd grows quiet. Struggling with her bra, Jacy slips on the diving board and almost falls off. She tosses her bra next to the pull on the ground and while sitting on the edge of the board takes off her panties and tosses them onto Sandy’s head. The crowd laughs, Jacy jumps in, and the party continues.

Analysis Naked indoors pool party: revolution

The pool party scene is an example of free sexual expression. It’s an entire party of naked teenagers swimming together and likely fooling around at some point or another. Jacy is meek and timid when she enters the poolroom.
She's very quiet and speaking in short sentences, not very characteristic of the Jacy from earlier in the film.

A party like this is the kind of thing that got people talking about free sex and using the term sexual revolution. Open relationships are common in this film. Many of the teenager characters have two or more partners throughout the duration of the film. There's not much persecution of anyone for his or her sexual expression except Joe Bob when he takes a little girl with the supposed intention of molesting her.

**Scene: The tank**

Sam the lion takes Sonny and his brother Billy to a pond, referred to as the “tank” to go fishing. Sonny and Billy are skipping stones while Sam sits on a piece of driftwood smoking a cigarette.

“I thought you boys wanted to fish,” Sam. “Come on keep and eye on them corks, Billy.” The boys run over to their poles. The camera zooms on with a
wide angle on Sam. Billy watches the corks in the water and Sonny sits next to Sam on the driftwood.

"I don't think there's anything in this tank 'cept turtles," Sonny proposes.

"That what I like about it, tell you the truth. Want to try one?" Sam offers Sonny a cigarette.

"Sure."

"I never liked to clean fish or eat them either. Spend half your time picking out bones. Yeah, I just come out here to get a little scenery. Too pretty a day to spend in town." Sam looks up from his cigarette over the water. The camera pans over the open water. "You wouldn't believe how this country's changed."

The camera returns to Sam, Sonny, and Billy. "First time I seen it, there wasn't a mesquite tree on it or a prickly pear neither. I used to own this land, you know. First time I watered a horse at this tank was more than 40 years ago. I reckon the reason why I always drag you out here is probably I'm just as sentimental as the next fella when it comes to old times. Old times. I brought a young lady swimming out here once. More than 20 years ago." The camera begins a steady zoom in on Sam's face. "It was after my wife had lost her mind and my boys was dead. Me and this young lady was pretty wild, I guess. In pretty deep. We used to come out here a-horseback and go swimmin' without no bathin' suits." Sam chuckles. "One day, she wanted to swim the horses across this tank. Kind of crazy thing to do, but we done it anyway. She bet me a silver dollar she could beat me across. She did. This old horse I was a-ridin' didn't want to take the
water. But she was always lookin' for somehtin' to do like that. Somethin' wild. I'll bet she's still got that silver dollar." Sam chuckles again.

Sonny as the camera begins to zoom out, "Whatever happened to her?"

"Oh, she growed up. She was just a girl then really." Sam sees that Sonny is struggling to roll his own cigarette. "Here let me help you with that."

"Why didn't you ever marry her after your wife died?"

"She was already married. Her and her husband were young and miserable with one another like so many young married folks are. I thought they'd change with some age, but didn't turn out that way."

The camera switches to shot of the tank, "Is being married always so miserable?"

The camera switches back to a wide shot of all three characters. "No, not really. About 80% of the time, I guess. We ought to go to a real fishing tank next year. Nah, it don't do to think about things like that too much. If she was here, I'd
probably be just as crazy now as I was then in about five minutes. Ain’t that ridiculous? No, it ain’t really ‘cause being crazy about a woman like her is always the right thing to do.” Sam chuckles. “Being a decrepit old bag of bones that’s what’s ridiculous. Getting’ old.” The camera zooms out and Sam exhales. The shot fades.

**Analysis the tank: lovers**

Sam the Lion shares his nostalgia for days gone by. Though he does not say it explicitly, the woman he knew when he was younger was someone he was in love with and likely an out of wedlock sexual relationship. Surely, premarital sex is not unique to this time period but changing expectations as well as experiences of young people were. Sam speaks of one particular love yet Sonny, Jacy, Duane, and Bobby have many lovers in throughout the film. Sam’s younger years are probably similar but different than the Sonny’s and Duane’s.

**Scene: Bobby grabs Jacy in his kitchen**

Lestor is attempting to take Jacy’s shirt off but is struggling. Jacy leaves him and heads into a kitchen. Bobby is making a PB&J sandwich at the counter.

“Hi,” Jacy as she walks through the door growing ever closer to Bobby. “I wondered where you went. Annie Annie asleep?”

“Yeah.” Bobby puts his hand out touching Jacy in between her legs. Close up of Jacy; she exhales deeply. Close up of Bobby leaning in to kiss Jacy. They kiss. “Nice. You a virgin?”

“Guess I am.”

Close up: Bobby raises an eyebrow with a frown, “Too bad.”
"I don’t want to be though."

"I don’t blame you. Come see me when you’re not."

**Analysis Bobby grabs Jacy in his kitchen: voyeuristic**

This is another scene where sexual openness is matched with the audacity of one teenage boy. Jacy’s openness is peculiar in that she can go from necking with one boy in a room to the next room with a different boy. The reversed value of virginity of the youth is shared in this scene. A girl who is not a virgin is more desirable than a girl who is a virgin to Bobby. The patriarchal norm is that a virgin is more desirable but as along with open relationships and free sex the norms begin to change.

The close-ups of this scene give a voyeuristic view of the encounter between Jacy and Bobby. The close up of Bobby’s hand in between Jacy’s legs timed with a close up of her look of surprise and pleasure. The close ups during conversation and kissing embraces are integral to the unnaturalness of the scene. Sex is not an everyday common thing especially in the kitchen. The close up right angle symmetrical shots exhibit the unnaturalness of Jacy’s interaction with Bobby. Though it happens it is not an everyday event to be shown in this close of quarters from an outsider’s perspective, that of the camera, a voyeur.

**Scene: Duane and Jacy try to have sex at a motel**

Duane drives to a motel to meet Jacy. He knocks on the door of a room with the number 8 on the door. "Come in," Jacy.

Duane kisses Jacy and embraces her, "I love you."
"I love you too." They continue to kiss until they are sitting on the bed. They stop to look at each other. Duane begins to undress Jacy. The camera becomes Duane's point of view. The camera cuts right before Jacy's breasts are revealed. Jacy with her nightgown open lies down on the bed, "Oh, Duane, hurry."

Duane frantically undresses then lay down over Jacy. Duane looks distracted. Jacy asks, "What's wrong, honey?"

"I don't know."

"That tickles. You know I can't stand to be tickled." Duane hovers over Jacy. "What's the matter? Aren't you gonna do it?"

"I don't know what's wrong."

"What do you mean? How could anything be wrong? Just go on and do it."

Jacy closes her eyes and braces herself. "Oh! What's the matter with you?"

"I don't know. I don't know. Something's happened."

"Well, get off a minute, for goodness sake. You might fall and mash me."

"I don't know what happened."

"It was Mexico. No telling what you got down there. I just hate you! I don't know why I ever went with you."

"I don't know what happened." Jacy angrily exhales. She is pacing back and forth. "Well, put your clothes on. You think I wanna sit around here and look at you naked?" Jacy throws Duane's shirt at him then stomps away. "I might have known you couldn't do it. Now I'll never get to not be a virgin. What'll we tell
everybody? The whole class knows. I just wanna cry. I think you’re the meanest boy I ever saw. My mother was dead right about you.”

“I don’t know what happened,” Duane as he buttons his shirt looking at the floor. He puts his hand on the doorknob preparing to open it.

“Don’t go out there. We haven’t had time to do it. They’d know. I don’t want one soul to know. You’d better not tell one soul. You just pretend it was wonderful,” Jacy spits.

“Hell, I’m sorry. I don’t know what happened.”

“Oh!” Jacy throws her underwear at Duane’s face. “If you say that one more time, I’ll bite you.”

Duane walks out a moment later smug walking past a car with two girls in it on to the next car where Sonny is waiting.

The girls in the parked car rush into the motel room. One of them asks, “Oh, gee, tell us about it, Jacy. What was it like?”

The camera cuts to Jacy with a halo of light around her sitting cross-legged in her nightgown on the bed. “I just can’t describe it. I just can’t describe it in words.”
Analysis Duane and Jacy try to have sex at a motel: pressure

The first time having sex for anyone is an awkward and uncomfortable experience. When Duane and Jacy try to have sex for the first time in a motel, it does not go so well. The close up shots give voyeuristic intimacy like you were in the room and a little too close. This gives the intimacy of the interaction between Duane and Jacy. It is interesting to note that regardless of the truth Jacy prefers to skirt embarrassment and tell classmates that her and Duane did have sex and that it was indescribable. The public pressure of her peers gets to Jacy.

Scene: Joe Bob molester?

Joe Bob, the preacher’s son, was seen kidnapping a little girl, Molly Clarg. A deputy comes to report it, rather publicly, to the sheriff at the pool hall. There was suspicion by the girl’s mother that the boy may be intending to molest her. A caravan of vehicles head out on a road leaving town and find Joe Bob parked with the little girl.
The mother runs and grabs her daughter from the car. "Get him! Ain't you going to?" She condemns the boy and the sheriff and his deputy take the boy out of the car. The mother smacks Joe Bob over the head with her hat.

The townsfolk are split between the hearsay of Mrs. Clarg and what Joe Bob admits he's done.

**Analysis Joe Bob molester?: accusation**

This is scene is an example of small town hearsay growing into a mob. Though it's not clear what exactly Joe Bob's story is he claims that he did not do anything to the little girl. It's another example of a young person trying to express his or herself sexuality. The accusation by Mrs. Clarg that Joe Bob was intending to molest her daughter barely gets the police to take Joe Bob into custody with lackadaisical effort. Mrs. Clarg is so charged up that the police get a little rough with Joe Bob as they put him in the car. The close-ups of character's faces in this scene give fervor to their emotions whether they are confused, apathetic, or worried.

**Scene: Lois and Sonny talk about love**
After being picked up by Oklahoma Highway patrol, Jacy and Sonny are separated. Jacy’s father chews out Duane. Lois, Jacy’s mother, gives Sonny a ride home. Lois gives Sonny a flask of bourbon to drink on the ride home. When they arrive in town they stop in front of the pool hall.

“Sure weren’t out of Texas very long,” Sonny.

“Well, Oklahoma’s not much of an improvement,” Lois.

The camera slowly zooms in on the passengers from a diagonal behind the car on the street side. Sonny takes a drink. “It’s not the same now. Nothing’s really been right since Sam the Lion died.” Camera angle switches to Lois from the backseat passenger side panning.

“No. No, it hasn’t.” Lois tears up. “Oh, God.” She laughs and smiles with tears in her eyes, “I get sad if I think of Sam for long. Did you know he had beautiful hands?”

“I guess you liked him didn’t you? I guess everybody did.”
"Well, I'll tell you. It was different with me, Sonny. I loved him. He loved me too."

"Are you—" Sonny chuckles. "Are you the one he used to take swimmin' out in the tank?"

"He told you about that, huh? Yeah, I was the one. I guess if it wasn't for Sam, I'd—," she sniffs, "just about have missed it whatever it is. I'd have been one of them Amity types that thinks that playin' bridge is all about the best thing that life has to offer." She chuckles still sniffs. "Old Sam the Lion. 'Sam the Lion.' You know, nobody knows where he got that name. I gave it to him. One night, oh, it just came to me. He—he was so pleased. I was 22 years old then. Can you imagine?" She laughs, "I'll tell you Sonny it's terrible to only meet one man in your whole life who knows what you're worth. Just terrible. I've looked too. You wouldn't believe how I've looked." Lois raspberries and laughs.

"Well, now I know why Sam liked you."

"Loved me!"

"Loved you, I mean."

"Do you?" Lois strokes Sonny from temple to cheek with her fingertips.

"Well, I can kind of see what he saw in you too." A pause, "Nope, I'll just go on home. Go on, get out." The engine starts. Sonny leaves the car with the flask.

"Think I could—think I could learn to drink?" Lois laughs at Sonny.

"You might. You better keep on practicing."
Analysis Lois and Sonny talk about love: end of an era

The subject of this film is the coming of age of a few young people in Anarene, Texas. The common theme between all of these stories of youth both acted out and retold on screen is love. All of the characters are looking for love in one form or another. Romantic lovers, friends, mother figures, and father figures are desired and sought by the young and old alike in Anarene. The movie ends and begins with Duane and Sonny going to the picture show together. The closing of the picture show happens around the closing of their teenager years. In the beginning, in the middle, and in the end they all continue to look for love.

Lois comforts Sonny like a son after she and Mr. Farrow pick up Sonny and Jacy from Oklahoma highway patrol. She shares a story of the love of her youth: Sam the Lion. The camera angles of the conversation begin from angles behind the driver and passenger switching cameras every time the speaker changes. The camera pans from behind Lois to her right side while she tears up
over Sam the Lion. Sam the Lion is another piece of the puzzle for coming of age for Duane and Sonny and the end of an era for the inhabitants of Anarene.

§

The scenes and films I have selected were done so in an effort to take a cultural artifact (a film) and argue that themes of social change are much more important in the context of the time period they were released. Many social issues that are still highly debated went about large public changes creating a new society out of the old. Much of this change I believe was due to the hopeful wishes of those living through it juxtaposed with the rage and violence meeting all and any opposition to change.

Art is one form of human communication and expression that has a low amount of restrictions. The films that I am analyzing as well as others mentioned in this essay are art films in the sense that they have a beauty to their execution of plot, character, scene, use of cinematography for effect, location, and direction. These films explored the taboo in both cautious and rebellious manners. These films themselves were a revolution on screen.

If it were not the mixing of ideas and techniques for creating a film, there may not have been a New Hollywood era. This era marked the beginning of a larger independent film audience and in preceding years more independent film studios.

Final thoughts: *All that Heaven Allows*

This film is the story of a woman facing the repression of her sex. A widow falls in love with a younger man but everyone around her is trying to steer her
away from him because he is younger than her. Ultimately, the isolation experienced by Cary is overcome and she is able to persevere to do what she wants.

Classicist fears manifest in the small New England environment of *All That Heaven Allows*. Cary is isolated as a woman in a patriarchal society but she is even more imprisoned as a widow in love with a younger man. Cary’s friends and children try to steer her toward a continually bourgeois life rather than marrying her gardener.

When Cary does meet others from outside of her community she experiences culture shock. She is happy but all the same in a new world not her own. Yet Cary transforms when she says yes to Ron’s marriage proposal: she steps away from her suburban community for country life with Ron, the man she loves. Cary is no longer isolated alone she now must face a new hardship together with Ron. She is choosing her own life to live.

Gossip spreads throughout Cary’s community but her and Ron don’t let it get to them. The busy bodies from the country club gawk at Ron and Cary when the couple arrives at a dinner party. As a widow Cary is isolated without her husband. Her children encourage her to marry a man from the country club but Cary does not want to be with any man from the country club. Her own children push her toward the expected and financially safe life but Cary follows her heart and goes after the man she loves. The patriarchy has set circumstances that make it hard for Cary to do and be with whom she wants without social outcry. She must subvert the norm to get what she wants.
Final thoughts: Five Easy Pieces

Bobby Dupea is a man both unhappy with himself and the world he inhabits. He hasn’t completely given up but his experience continues to fuel his own self-alienation. He has condemned himself to search for meaning in life. He has ran from the life he was born into as much as possible but can’t separate himself from his roots. He treats his girlfriend with little consideration or love but tries to keep her in his life until the end of the film when he finally walks away for good.

When Bobby loses his temper in traffic he is reacting like a spoiled child not getting what he wants but taking his temper tantrum too far. After yelling at those seated in their cars in crawling traffic and barking at a dog Bobby seizes the moment to play some music. Bobby wants to play instead of work. He rides away on the back of a moving truck playing a piano!

The good life though not pursued or directly referred to more than once in the movie is central to Bobby’s wandering self. He seems to straddle his identity between lower class and middle class by choice while not completely giving into one over the other. Using his knowledge and pride Bobby puts himself above Elton by yelling at Elton for his good life in a trailer park with a baby and girlfriend when Bobby barely wants to be with his girlfriend. Not only that but as seen later in the film, Bobby’s hatred of fathers puts enmity between himself and being a father.

Bobby seems to continually lose his temper throughout the film. He’s rather calm after picking up a lesbian couple that had gotten in an accident. It’s
not until he is ordering food at a diner that he loses his temper over no menu substitutions. Bobby seems okay but the walls he puts between himself and other people are heightened in his interaction with the waitress.

The confession scene further drives home the father-estranged son narrative. Bobby tries to confess to his father for his transgressions begging for forgiveness but it’s too late: his father cannot speak any longer. I think Bobby is sharing himself so openly with his father because he truly feels the need to for his own well-being. It doesn’t seem to lift him up but it certainly affects him deeply.

Bobby continually throughout the film defends his upper-middle class roots while remaining askew from any symbol of the class. Any talisman of his past is reduced to an action for instance his musical abilities only come out when he chooses to show it in front of certain people. He does not share much of himself musically with Rayette even though she wants to be a singer with the help of his musical knowledge. I think Bobby eschews music in front of Rayette because of its place in his place. I would say that Bobby hides from his past because he does not like the meaning it creates for his life. He is condemned to search outside of the context of the life he was born into. He strives so hard to find meaning that he removes all he can of his upper-middle class life but he hates the path he has chosen as a working class man living off of his vices and few moments of joy.

Final thoughts *The Last Picture Show*
The female characters in this movie are interesting in their atypical non-archetypal to film characters that are being portrayed. This film shows early stirrings in a small town amongst mothers and daughters and young women. Sexual liberation is a way forward out of the patriarchy’s paradigm. But the isolation of these women is still evident. The framing with doorways and mirrors during Lois’ conversation with her daughter Jacy timed with subject matter of the conversation create an interesting context to the scene. The disconnect between mother and teenage daughter is not atypical between Lois and Jacy. However Lois is a supportive and realistic woman. She suggests her daughter have sex and be safe about it when she does. Jacy acts innocent about the subject matter.

Revolution in the pool is certainly nothing too crazy or violent but the act of a group of teenagers gathering for a party to skinny dip together is unique. This party is an expression of free and open sexuality. The awkwardness of coming of age and being a teenager is still present but with kids that are being more adult than teenaged.

Sam the Lion shares his nostalgia for the tank with Sonny and Billy to reminisce but also to share a positive story about love. Love and free expression of love is a common theme in the movie though an outside or interested party often meets love with conflict.

The voyeurism of the film is both experienced by the audience but also by teenage boys in the film. The scene in which the boys get a prostitute for Billy to lose his virginity to shows the perversion of peering into the physical intimacies of Anarene romances. Though unnerving or uncomfortable to see sex scenes the
voyeur element is an important allusion to the theme of sexuality. It is a part of sexuality to watch and/or be watched certainly while young and coming of age.

Lois's and Sonny's big talk about Sam the Lion and love ties the movie together, a mark for the beginning of the end. An end of an era is coming or already has and even in a small isolated place like Anarene it can be felt. Sonny's youth is fading into adulthood. Lois is going to have to send her daughter off to school soon to be on her own as an adult. Lois is growing older and not with the man she loved most. Missing him she appreciates him but struggles to live without him. Sonny has almost lost friends over love and hurt lovers out of carelessness or naïveté.

§

An important shift in the dying idealism of the 1950s is the acceptance and open practices of differing lifestyles many of which could be argued as a way to cope with a world shaking with anxiety. With a constant threat of nuclear destruction it's not all that surprising in hindsight that a sexual revolution happened. I think it is important to connect the shifts from decade to decade and how they affect each other. Certainly one single element does not fall away and become replaced by another. The climate of culture and society brews together so many factors with history to create a new different world from year to year. It just so happened that after the war, this period really picked up in pace and scope.

There is not one historical event or any social inequality or the increase in consumerism to blame for the extreme highs and bummer lows of the 1960s
period. They shaped the world very much so into the global community it is striving towards today. Certainly there are still wars and social injustices but this period was a revolution around the world. It brought people together and brought together what at the time was the largest generation.

As it did after the war and continuing to this day, independent cinema pushes the limits of what can and has been said on screen. The rebuilding and every increasing connectedness that was brought about by the Cold War have made independent cinema a global phenomenon. Though many independent films abroad are categorized under foreign it does not changed the independent film studios that support and house the auteur his or her huge crew that help to make the films that make us feel, empathize, think, laugh, cry, and smile. The continuous themes of social change will always supply a primordial level of connection between the audience and the film, which is our human experience, life itself. The magic of the silver screen may create an escape from our lives but ultimately they bring us closer together not as film lovers or critics but as homo sapiens sapiens, the being that thinks about itself thinking.
Reference:


