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### Architecture of the Mind : Narrative Time and Mental Space in The Graduate, Catch-22, and Carnal Knowledge

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores three of director Mike Nichols's films produced during the New Hollywood period—*The Graduate* (1967), *Catch-22* (1970), and *Carnal Knowledge* (1971)—in an effort to trace Nichols's auteur signature as it relates to the depiction of the protagonist's subjectivity and renders post-war male anxiety and existential dread. In addition to discussing formal film technique used to depict the mental space of the protagonist, how these subjective sequences are implemented in the film bears implications on the narrative form and situates Nichols alongside other New Hollywood directors who were influenced by art cinema. This analysis, like those posited by other critics influenced by film theorist David Bordwell, distinguishes the term "art cinema" as employing a range of techniques outside of continuity editing that are read as stylistic, and because of this it entails specific modes of viewership in order to find meaning in style. Because of the function of style, the thesis posits thematic kinship among *The Graduate*, *Catch-22*, and *Carnal Knowledge*, which enriches the film's respective meanings when viewed side by side.

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

Architecture of the Mind:

Narrative Time and Mental Space in *The Graduate*, *Catch-22*, and *Carnal Knowledge*

by

Monica Cecilia Winston

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

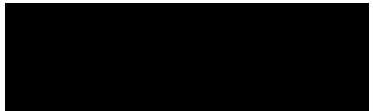
For the Degree of

Master of Arts

August 2020

College: College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department: English

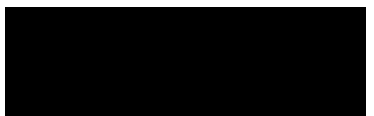
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ARCHITECTURE OF THE MIND: NARRATIVE TIME AND MENTAL SPACE IN *THE GRADUATE*, *CATCH-22*, AND *CARNAL KNOWLEDGE*

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of the Arts

by

MONICA CECILIA WINSTON

Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

2020

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend the deepest gratitude first and foremost to my thesis sponsor Dr. Art Simon, and committee readers Dr. Alex Lykidis and Dr. Adam Rzepka for their support, guidance, and invaluable resources throughout this process. I also must acknowledge Dr. Janet Cutler, without whom the completion of this degree would not be possible.

Due to the duration of my tenure in the graduate program, it feels most appropriate to thank the colleagues and guides who have fortified me throughout this chapter of my life and have reminded me that, though we may stray, we are never truly “off” of our path:

Angel Tuohy, MA, Jordan Mangloña, Michael Traynor, MFA (and the Owl’s Roost), Sharon Kenney Rudy, MA, Dr. Paul Muller-Ortega, Dr. Harsha Patel, Rev. Steffanie Black, and Elliot Negron Black.

Last but not least, I am grateful for the lineage of storytellers and cinema-lovers from which I come. I thank my mother Janet for her understanding, support, and companionship during the writing process, and my brother Joseph for being my sounding board and humoring me with countless hours of conversation about character, narrative, and the nature of storytelling over the years. Please remember anything is possible.

Monica Cecilia Winston

August 2020

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## Architecture of the Mind:

Narrative Time and Mental Space in *The Graduate*, *Catch-22*, and *Carnal Knowledge*

## Introduction

Since his passing in 2014, director Mike Nichols has reemerged as a figure of interest to film scholars who have assessed his Hollywood career spanning over forty years in an effort to define his auteur signature. Taking a long view of Nichols's career, J.W. Whitehead's book, *Mike Nichols and the Cinema of Transformation* (2014), finds that the common thread in his oeuvre is a "thematic rather than stylistic constancy" (4). It is my position that a stylistic consistency can be found in three of his films produced during the New Hollywood period—*The Graduate* (1967), *Catch-22* (1970), and *Carnal Knowledge* (1971)—in which film technique is used to depict the internal subjective experience and render the "mental space" of the protagonist, as well as explicate themes of paralysis, numbness, and anxiety while curiously implicating his libidinal desire.

Because film technique refers to the basic components that articulate film narrative, technique's influence on narrative structure must be considered, as well as the influence of art cinema on mainstream filmmaking during the New Hollywood period. While Miklós Kiss and Steven Willemsen point out that the term "art cinema" is tacitly understood to describe post-war auteur films and national cinemas of the 1950s and 1960s, they also point out (citing Eleftheria Thanouli) that "art cinema 'is one of the fuzziest and yet least controversial concepts in film studies'" and prefer to think of the term as "basis of specific narrative strategies" (145).

David Bordwell notes that art cinema narration "defines itself against the classical narrative mode," often requiring viewers to actively participate in decoding the film's meaning (qtd. in Kiss and Willemsen 146). Further, where classical narrative "realism" refers linearity of



plot and sequencing of events to facilitate continuity and clarity, art cinema conceptualizes “realism” in two other ways:

This can be *objective realism*, in the form of de-dramatised plots and episodic stories, which are justified as being ‘truer to life;’ or *subjective realism*, emphasizing psychological or emotional states and trajectories of complex characters who often lack clear-cut traits and undoubted motives of classical protagonists. (qtd. in Kiss and Willemsen 147)

Complementary to Bordwell’s description of the art cinema narrative, Thomas Elsaesser’s essay “The Pathos of Failure: American Films in the 1970s” notes that the hero in the 1970s cinema is largely unmotivated, which results in a meandering, purposeless journey that lacks satisfying resolution. He writes, “if the themes [in Hollywood] remain the same, the attitudes and thereby the forms could not be more different” which lends itself to a “differently constructed architecture of film narrative” (279). The difference referred to here is based on previous Hollywood narrative standards, “where these forms are so embedded in a tradition ... as to be self-evident and invisible;” the shift in cinema of the 1970s, on the other hand, is better understood in league with their experimental and European counterparts (280).

Elsaesser notes traditional heroes are “psychologically or emotionally motivated: they had a case to investigate, a name to clear, a woman (or man) to love, a goal to reach” (281) and that without motivational logic, the hero’s connection to the world itself becomes tenuous, which he argues has further “implications for the narrative form and thereby how one sees the film” (280). Finding directors of the early 1970s “seem unsure of how to objectify into plot or articulate into narrative the mood of indifference,” he posits that if “the lack of direction and purpose” is not “defiantly asserted,” then it “manifests itself in stories that do not have a linear

plot structure, and in situations that live from a kind of negative, self-demolishing dynamic” (282).

Situating Bordwell’s “subjective realism” within the conceptual purview of Elsaesser’s “unmotivated hero” helps to underscore the relationship between the gritty realism of New Hollywood films and the significance of psychologically coded sequences found within, as the action of the text is displaced onto the structure of the form. In films where the protagonist remains distant to the audience and the world’s events appear inconsequential, narrative inertia yields to cinematic moments that are dynamic in their abstract representations: the psychological breakdowns in *They Shoot Horses, Don’t They?* (1969), the nightmare flashbacks in *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), the LSD trip in *Easy Rider* (1969). Further, Elsaesser writes that for cinema to “be considered progressive in this context,” there would have to be “signs that the director had thematized in the very structure of the narrative an awareness of the problem he is facing” (283), meaning the film form must gesture towards psychology and emotion in order to render the lack of motivation visible.

The protagonists from Nichols’s three films—Ben from *The Graduate*, Yossarian from *Catch-22*, and Jonathan from *Carnal Knowledge*—all bear similarity to the unmotivated hero to a certain degree: his motivation is unknown to the viewer or he is rendered impotent and without agency by circumstance, yet the film technique foregrounds his psychology and emotion in spite of his inability to articulate these qualities for himself. While I am not arguing that Nichols’s films be considered art cinema, when stylistic elements are considered a crucial, functioning part of narrative mode the similarities among films further illuminate one another: viewed side by side, what appears to be a quality of tone or mood in one film (despondence, foreclosure, impotence) opens to a view of male anxiety in a continuum.

Nichols's visual signature can be regarded as an architecture of the mind, which refers to both the form and function of the film techniques he adopts. In form, its application is literal and refers to the director's implementation of the close up—its specificities in terms of framing, composition, and mise-en-scène—and its ability to gesture towards the mental space belonging to a character. In function, the term architecture connotes structure and refers to the structural component of filmic organization—editing—and how vignettes and scene transitions are used to indicate tone, emotional experience, and associative logic. Finally, this signature includes attention to sound design as it complements the narrative transitions and contributes to an aural rendering of the character's subjective experience.

Kyle Stevens's book, *Mike Nichols: Sex, Language, and the Reinvention of Psychological Realism* (2015), has been instrumental to my study of Nichols's films, and although my interpretation at times runs parallel to his, my thesis is largely adjacent to or opposing his argument. The close up, for instance, is a cornerstone for both of us but for different reasons and with different effect. For Stevens, the close-up is significant because it enables speech and emotional performance as constitutive actions in cinema (17, 31); moreover the duration of the close-up allows for the emotional performance to unfold in real time, making it a "realist" performance (131). This, coupled with the actor's emotionally complex performances (often indicating mixed emotions) and the innate inability to "know" another's mind, constitutes the *reinvention* of psychological realism that Stevens outlines (133, 140).

My conception of the close-up is more loose than the traditional Hollywood definition and the examples I use are targeted with different intent. In lieu of shot duration, my interest is in the shot's use as a transitional element, creating a tonal interlude or serving to propel the narrative. I also use the term more broadly to include shot-sizes that function to display

emotional performance but are big enough so that more of the mise-en-scène is visible. Because I argue the character's emotions are displaced onto the scenery and editing techniques imply an associative logic of the film, my thesis is concerned with the aspects of psychological realism that Stevens's work is defined against, further separating my interpretation from his (14-15).

Because the primary objective of this project is to trace the similarity of technique among the three films, the first three sections are devoted to analyzing each film, the way those techniques depict mental space, and the narrative implications of those sequences. The role that women play within these motifs will also be discussed here as it is relevant to the plot and crucial to the articulation of themes such as agency and paralysis; while the representation of gender and sexuality in New Hollywood is worth considering here, that research falls outside of the scope of this project at this time. The conclusion will consider the following: whether the similarity in visual style indicates a commonality in the psychological condition of the protagonist; to what extent the condition is meant to be generational given the short span of time during which the films were produced; the ability of the filmic form to articulate themes that otherwise may escape the plot and how this contributes to a sense of Nichols's signature.

### *The Graduate* (1967)

Of *The Graduate*, Nichols has said he knew instinctually that he wanted to use a montage sequence to depict what he considered to be the "spine of the movie:" "a boy who was drowning in things and objects, in affluence," who can only "fight his way out of it [through] madness" (McGrath). In one interview, Nichols recalls the process of devising the shot sequence with screenplay writer Buck Henry. Nichols wanted the montage to express Ben like a "zombie going through his regular life at home with his family and everything in a new way," where "he's

getting laid every night, and he's getting anesthetized every night, and he's trying to move *out* of his life into some other place by humping, and it wasn't gonna work" (McGrath).

This montage sequence, which begins immediately after Ben consummates his affair with Mrs. Robinson, I argue, is emblematic of Nichols's ability to articulate the internal subjective experience of a character, and in turn shares certain stylistic elements with *Catch-22* and *Carnal Knowledge* with similar effect. The pool montage is also significant as an example of Nichols's vision and creative instinct as a filmmaker, not only for its ability to reflect Ben's malaise, but because technical components of the montage that indicate Ben's experience likewise articulate the same themes in other parts of the film. In this case, a thorough investigation of the film technique at play within the montage is key to an understanding of the film as a whole.

The pool montage makes use of two kinds of transitions—the cut and the dissolve. Among the cuts there are two tendencies: one is to match the action between shots; the other is to conceal the cut (and the movement between spaces) in a close-up of Ben. In the first instance, Ben getting out of the pool and walking into his home cuts to a medium close up of him walking through a doorway and into the Taft hotel room; or, emerging from his dive, Ben launches himself onto the pool raft which cuts to him landing on Mrs. Robinson in bed. Although this type of editing suggests agency—after all it is predicated on Ben's *action*—the prior shots of him floating in the pool coupled with his blank expression throughout the sequence implies a lack of presence and volition. In the second instance, concealing the cut in a close-up (thus revealing Ben in a new location as the shot continues) has the effect of privileging the film's diegesis as more dynamic than the character: it is the world that moves around Ben. The progression of cuts largely functions to propel the narrative and further the theme of aimless drifting, while the

repetition of dissolves at the beginning of the sequence has more of a tonal effect, imbuing mood and indicating Ben's subjectivity.

At the conclusion of the scene preceding the montage, Mrs. Robinson has charged Ben with being a virgin and fearing inadequacy. Her line, "Just because you happen to be inadequate in one way..." (which he interrupts in defense) situates his sexual experience in contrast to the other markers of achievement his family and society have praised him for, like his college degree and the Halpingham Award. Being considered "inadequate" incites Ben to slam the door, which catalyzes the narrative into the pool montage. The last two shots are close-ups: one of Ben, his face in shadow, the frame lit by the hotel room door that is open behind him; the other of Mrs. Robinson, the closing door plunging her face and the room into shadow.

From this dark frame "The Sounds of Silence" begins, and the black frame fades in to a shot of the pool water itself, which then dissolves to a close up of Ben laying on the diving board. His blank expression concealed under sunglasses, Ben turns his head slowly from left to right. The film dissolves to another shot of the water before it dissolves to a medium long shot of Ben floating in the pool holding a can of beer. Another dissolve transitions to a shot of the pool water, which then dissolves to another shot of Ben laying on the diving board, this time on his stomach, which then dissolves to a long shot of Ben getting out of the pool, concluding the pattern of dissolves.

Though repetitive in nature, it is worth noting these shots to see how Nichols established the montage and to what effect. The film alternates between an "empty" frame comprised of water in the swimming pool (we watch light reflecting on the movement of its aquamarine surface) and Ben in close up, suspended above it as he lays on the diving board. As previously noted, between Ben's blank expression and static body, his listlessness is clear. Conversely, it is

the *empty* frame that appears more dynamic—the movement of the water behind Ben’s head has more life and vitality than he does, which furthers the effect of the aforementioned cross-cutting.

The repetition of dissolves, when considered alongside the shots of Ben in and above the pool, however, have a different effect. These shots differ from the rest of the montage because the appearance of the undulating pool’s surface as a backdrop physically positions Ben in abstracted space. The framing around his face and the repetition of the dissolve has a dream-like effect, indicating to the viewer that this segment of the film is representative of Ben’s emotional experience. While we are aligned with his point of view, it is important to note that this section of the film (and arguably the film at large) does not tell the viewer what Ben *thinks*, but rather the way Ben *feels*.

The montage’s music is crucial to the sequence’s ability to impart internal experience registered as mood. The songs “The Sounds of Silence” and “April Come She Will” play in their entirety, which not only underscores the duration of the montage itself, but disrupts the sense of time that has lapsed in the narrative (only later we find out that the affair has been going on for months). In effect, the montage’s soundtrack is capable of characterizing Ben’s ennui as constant and pervasive; stripped of any diegetic sound, the sequence depicts Ben as out of sync with the world around him, furthering the sense of isolation the viewer understands to be his.

When considering sound design of *The Graduate*, the soundtrack provided by Simon and Garfunkel looms large as Nichols utilizes the songs to serve as different motifs throughout the film. “The Sounds of Silence” reappears at the film’s end, while it was first heard during the opening credits as Ben arrived at the airport. It is worth noting, however, that this is the only scene where the song plays over diegetic sound: the prominence of the song in the sound design, paired with Ben’s far-off look, likewise indicates his separation from the environment, though

the ability to hear various announcements in the airport serves to introduce the viewer to the world while privileging Ben's internal experience.

The duo's rendition of "Scarborough Fair" becomes the soundtrack to another montage sequence that indicates Ben's longing for Elaine after she has discovered his affair with her mother. The song plagues Ben as he listlessly pushes cigarette butts around in his bedroom, drives past the Robinson home to spy on Elaine, and watch his father clean out the pool in the backyard; it accompanies him on his drive to Berkeley and his search for Elaine from the campus through the streets—it even returns after Elaine walks off with Carl Smith, leaving Ben with the monkeys at the zoo.

While the tracks that accompany montage replace any diegetic sound, the song "Mrs. Robinson," though non-diegetic, still manages to echo the film's visuals and is worked into the diegetic soundscape. The tune plays for the first time immediately after Elaine agrees that she "*might*" marry Ben; the whistled melody and strum of the guitar suggests a newfound, happy-go-lucky optimism for Ben. In the following shot, Ben exits a jewelry store whistling to himself, a visual mimicry of the whistled melody. In its next rendition, the whistling has been replaced by vocalizations and the guitar is played with more force; the buzzing vibration of the guitar strings functions as a non-diegetic double of the droning engine as Ben races his Alfa Romeo down the highway to stop Elaine's wedding with Carl. The strum of the guitar slows to a stop as Ben runs low on gas and has to proceed on foot, the sound of his feet hitting the pavement in a sprint replacing what remained of the instrumental. Aside from a few resounding strums of an acoustic guitar and a dramatic flourish from the church organ to punctuate Ben's arrival, the next time music is heard is when "The Sounds of Silence" plays as Ben and Elaine ride off on the bus, at which point the song, again, has replaced any diegetic sound.



Although “Mrs. Robinson” plays with the diegetic sound in ways the others do not, it is worth noting the song’s origins and how this may have influenced its presence in the soundscape. “The Sounds of Silence” was already set to accompany the pool montage and as a result Nichols decided to approach Simon and Garfunkel to write a song about Mrs. Robinson for the film. Though Nichols disliked the original track the duo wrote, he pressed Simon and Garfunkel for another attempt, prompting them to play an unfinished song that, until that point, had been called “Here’s to You, Mrs. Roosevelt” (McGrath). According to Nichols, the verses had not been written at the time of recording so only the chorus and other melodic vocalizations of “Mrs. Robinson” are heard in the film (McGrath).

It may simply be improvisation to utilize complimentary diegetic sound within the sound design as a way of compensating for an unfinished song (the chorus plays as Ben is driving to the church after immediately confronting Mrs. Robinson in their family home), but in effect, “Mrs. Robinson” becomes an anthem for Ben’s agency since it accompanies the actions and movements he takes in the world. His desire to marry Elaine mobilizes him. The stasis that marked him before (the visual irony of a celebrated track star embodying stillness) is gone as he drives back and forth to Berkeley, eventually running through the streets to get to the church.

It is ironic, then, that “Mrs. Robinson” aurally complements his place within the world while the affair itself serves to indicate his separation from it. All other songs used in the film, by replacing diegetic sound, underscore a sense of isolation because they are understood as part of his perspective and highlight his inaction. This makes the return of “The Sounds of Silence” at the film’s end so heartbreaking. Just as Ben had found his momentum *and* he has Elaine by his side (the lovers’ union typically signifying rebirth and a new era), the song’s return suggests that

his agency is illusory and the unarticulated fear or anxiety that has created his paralysis will remain with him into his future.

*Catch-22* (1970)

The repeated flashbacks detailing Snowden's death are the scenes most similar to sections of *The Graduate* and *Carnal Knowledge* previously discussed, in terms of both visuals and narrative function: the prominence of the blinding white light in the flashback itself as well as its use in scene transitions; the use of the close up to indicate the character's thoughts and feelings. Yet it is the significance of the sound design that is also surprisingly similar to the scenes from the other films. Where *The Graduate* and *Carnal Knowledge* make use of songs to signify specific emotions, *Catch-22* layers diegetic sounds—that is, some sounds that are conceivably of the scene, and others that do not fit the scene but fit the diegesis of the film, like the use of the skater's waltz in *Carnal Knowledge*—to signify a shift in focus between Yossarian's perspective and the events in the world. In fact, sound design is crucial to the film's opening itself and the introduction of Yossarian as well as his flashbacks.

The film opens with a tonal juxtaposition<sup>1</sup>. Sounds of nature (birds chirping, a dog barking) play over a black screen as the opening credits fade in and out. The black screen then fades in to a shot of a placid body of water, the fade itself simulating daybreak as the shot reveals a sunrise over the mountains. An airplane engine starting is heard and the initial shot dissolves to thick gray clouds of dust and smoke that belong to the aircraft about to take off. The sound of jet engines, whirring turbines, and sputtering exhaust dominate the soundtrack over the course of

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<sup>1</sup> Elsaesser notes this technique as well, but in *Thieves Like Us* (1974) and *Sugarland Express* (1974). He describes silent, idyllic scenes that are “suddenly torn apart by a furious exchange of gunfire” as exposing a “hidden anxious wariness for clues” that could explain the violence and paranoia in the United States during the 1960s (291, 290).

several shots that show the planes in close up as they dominate their surroundings: a wheel rolls through tall grass crushing it; a plane disperses a flock of small birds, their chirping no longer audible in the soundtrack.

A shot of planes taking off from the tarmac tracks left to reveal more aircrafts, their blades producing noise though they remain immobile, and continues tracking to eventually reveal the remains of a bombed-out building where Yossarian is talking to Colonel Cathcart and Lieutenant Colonel Korn, craning forward to frame them in the crumbling architecture. Though the significance of this scene is one source of irony revealed at the film's end, it is also ironic that this long take serves to introduce characters, though we do not know their names and their conversation is largely inaudible over the sounds of the engines.

The shot continues as we follow Yossarian walking through what remains of the building and down the stairs. Although the deafening sound of tarmac traffic persists in the soundtrack, before Yossarian has finished descending the stairs, a rake can be faintly heard scraping off-screen, alerting the viewer to another person; as Yossarian walks through an opening in the crumbling wall and forward towards the camera, the figure raking is now visible. This long take finally cuts after Yossarian is stabbed by the figure later revealed to be Nately's whore. The next shot of Yossarian gasping for breath, clutching his side, and eventually falling to the ground dissolves into the first flashback scene.

The scene is worth noting in detail in order to render the nuances of the sound design and how it is used in the transition to the flashback. When Yossarian falls, gasping for help and revealing the bloody wound on his side, his voice is still drowned out by the sound of the airplanes taking off nearby. Dust clouds form around his body lying on the ground; as the camera moves in for a close-up, however, the sound of tarmac traffic gives way to that of gusting wind.

The shift from industrial to natural sound indicates a shift within character. Juxtaposed with a motionless, mute Yossarian, the sound of wind is suggestive of breath: one cannot help but wonder if he is still breathing. The gusting wind serves as a sound bridge for the fade to his flashback and dominates the soundscape of the sequence that follows. The close up of Yossarian with his mouth open fades to a white frame. A black plume of smoke erupts with a low bang suggesting an explosion and the control tower radio is heard in the first of many iterations of the exchange between Yossarian and the dispatch.

In response to the radio dispatch, the profile of Yossarian's face leans into the blinding white frame in a tight close-up. The sound of wind and jet turbines continue as other explosions erupt low in the background of the soundtrack. As the off-screen voice implores Yossarian to "help *him*," Yossarian slowly takes the headphones off. In the following shot, he cautiously turns around to face the camera, and then crouches down beyond the frame, revealing the stripped interior of the cockpit set against the blinding bright background. The shot ends in a dissolve to another close up of Yossarian laying down in the back of a medic van, the ambient sound of jet turbines turns into the rumbling of the van's engine. Dialogue between two medics in the back of the van finally introduce Yossarian by name; their conversation, used as a sound bridge to the following scene in the mess hall, establishes Yossarian's reputation as "crazy." Of course, the main joke of *Catch-22* and all of its circular logic is that the world itself is so absurdly chaotic one must be crazy in order to exist within it, let alone survive it, but there is an added irony for introducing a character via traumatic flashback and then questioning his sanity throughout the rest of the film.

Like *The Graduate* and *Carnal Knowledge*, the bright white dissolve paired with the close-ups of Yossarian indicate that this scene takes place in a mental space; unlike the other

films, the mise-en-scène within that space is highly abstract. Each occurrence of the flashback begins later in the timeline of Snowden's death so the recurrence of the scene has a cumulative effect revealing more of the mise-en-scène: broken windows, pulled wires and a general assemblage of plane wreckage set the scene. The blinding white light behind the wreckage and the gusting wind Yossarian has to shout over remain a dominant presence in all of the scenes. Though the flashbacks are the only depiction of Snowden's death that the film offers (or representation of Snowden's presence at all—elsewhere, he is either forgotten or another body in a coffin), the flashbacks are presented in subjective terms rather than as an event that transpired within the film's diegetic reality.

As such, *Catch-22* is an example of Janet H. Murray's multiform narrative; as opposed to a classic unified narrative structure or a multi-strand narrative where multiple protagonists are followed in separate but intersecting storylines, a multiform narrative depicts storylines across "mixed and multiple ontologies," where one storyline may take place in a parallel, alternate, or imagined (whether fictitious or remembered) universe (Campora 6, 28). Although the flashbacks are an ontological shift in the narrative, the shift is cued in the use of the close up and the use of sound, abstracted space and bright light underscores the subjective nature of those scenes.

The transitions to and from Snowden's death operate under an associative logic scriptwriter Buck Henry describes as similar to a hallucinatory fever-dream (qtd. in Whitehead 55, 56). In general, the film utilizes wordplay, either in a perceived exchange from scene to scene or visual response to a line uttered in a previous scene, in order to transition between vignettes. While some transitions from the Snowden flashbacks serve to indicate the harshness and unfeeling nature of the world by juxtaposing these scenes with other ones of senseless death and

loss (albeit rendered in absurdist dark comedy), the film also uses associative edits that relate sex and trauma which bears further investigation.

The second time that the Snowden flashback occurs, the sequence is triggered when Yossarian is wounded by shrapnel in the leg while on a mission with Aarfy. In this flashback the scene continues with Yossarian turning around. More of the plane wreckage is exposed as he moves over to tend to Snowden, who keeps repeating that he is cold. When Yossarian takes off his jacket to warm Snowden, however, the film dissolves to yet another ontological shift within this flashback.

After he removes his jacket, Yossarian's head turns to look behind him so he is facing away from the camera. Off-screen, the voice of Nurse Duckett is heard calling to him: "Over here. Hurry up! Hey!" The camera zooms in to Yossarian's face, then the shot dissolves to Nurse Duckett in a long shot climbing onto a dock in the middle of the ocean, waving him over. The soundtrack maintains a constant presence of wind gusting punctuated by low explosions from bombings. The film cuts to a reaction shot of Yossarian in another example of abstracted space: though it is identifiable that he is in the ocean, his head and shoulders seen above water in a long shot, the lighting is such that there is little contrast between the sky and the surface of the water that gently ripples, rendering a bright gray and blue canvas that covers the screen; if the horizon line is visible, it is blurred and out of focus.

In a series of shot reversals, Nurse Duckett is seen undressing and throwing her white nurse's dress to Yossarian, who frantically swims towards her. He reaches the floating dress and the film cuts to a shot of him as he sinks underwater, still clutching the white dress above his head as he moves down and out of frame; the constant gusting wind in the soundtrack furthers the surreal quality of the scene given the juxtaposition of natural elements. This shot of sinking

Yossarian clutching the white dress dissolves to a shot of his hand clutching the white sheets of his hospital bed. Within this larger sequence that depicts the events of Yossarian's injury and its subsequent treatment, the association of undressing links the traumatic flashback to Yossarian's memory or daydream.

This is not the only time that Snowden's death is intercut with a scene involving Yossarian's libidinal desire. One scene of Snowden's funeral is book-ended by scenes of Yossarian in bed with Luciana. Another scene of the pair dancing transitions to a flashback: the camera moves around the pair as they slow dance, seen in a close up of their two heads as they move in and out of shadow. The music gives way to the sound of gusting wind and the frame begins to lighten to dissolve into a bright white screen. This fades in to Yossarian moving Snowden's hand and turning his body, and then calling the control tower. Snowden complains of pain and Yossarian moves to retrieve morphine from the first aid kit. He finds the supplies have been removed from the kit and replaced with a voucher for M&M Enterprises. Yossarian bellows Milo's name and the scene cuts to Yossarian confronting Milo for usurping his parachute. While the associative logic for the later transition is clear, the significance of the morphine to the flashback suggests that Yossarian's interest in Luciana is palliative in nature. Whether related to Luciana's storyline or the Nurse Duckett memory encapsulated within the earlier flashback sequence, the internal logic of the film points to an association with sex and death—or at the very least fear—that is thematically in keeping with the depiction of abstracted mental space and emotional distress Nichols depicts in *The Graduate* and *Carnal Knowledge*.

#### *Carnal Knowledge* (1971)

Stevens and Whitehead have pointed to the whiteout transitions that conjoin the three narrative sections in *Carnal Knowledge* as sharing stylistic kinship with the pool montage in *The*

*Graduate*. Whitehead notes a thematic similarity but distinguishes one from the other in terms of lighting. He notes the transitions in the pool montage are “punctuated in black, the ‘darkness’ of Simon and Garfunkel’s ‘Sounds of Silence’” (81), while the transitions used in *Carnal Knowledge* are a blindingly bright white. He concludes, “The essential similarity is that these transitions [...] demarcate an intensifying alienation in the protagonist, as they do, in white blankness, in *Carnal Knowledge*” (81). While I acknowledge the significance of darkness in Whitehead’s assessment of *The Graduate* (especially given the song used during the montage), I would argue that it is one of many other factors—namely, the use of dissolves and cross-cutting, the close up of the actor’s expression, the non-diegetic music—that contribute to a sense of alienation, and are also found in the blinding white transitions in *Carnal Knowledge*

Where the opening dissolves of Ben’s face surrounded by pool water implies that the following montage is indicative of his internal state, the whiteout transitions in *Carnal Knowledge* are abstract renderings indicative of Jonathan Fuerst’s consciousness. However, because the pool montage from *The Graduate* and the flashback scenes from *Catch-22* are sections of the narrative proper, narrative meaning of the whiteout transitions cannot be interpreted without also considering the scenes that precede and follow. Additionally, their status as transition and not part of a narrative strand poses a greater question about what constitutes a narrative event, which will be considered later.

The whiteout transitions are used to conjoin three distinct narrative sections: the first section introduces Jonathan and Sandy in college, each trying to lose his virginity to Susan; the second (taking place in adulthood, signified by their respective professions) serves as a point of comparison between Sandy, who married Susan, and Jonathan who prefers the bachelor life as a lothario; the final section shows both men divorced in middle age, though Sandy is dating a



much younger woman he refers to as his “love guru” and Jonathan has fallen into routine as a john. Although the narrative sections seem to center on the two men, the whiteout transitions are linked solely to Jonathan’s experience—usually signaled by a close up of Jonathan as book-ends—thus the internal logic of the film is deeply linked to his subjectivity.

The first transition occurs after Jonathan has ended the secret relationship he had with Susan because she would not leave Sandy for him. In the following scene, comprised of one long take, the camera remains focused on Jonathan in close up. Though he stares forward, he is witness to a lover’s quarrel that takes place off-screen between Susan and Sandy as they pack for a camping trip. Susan can be seen briefly, fragmented in the foreground as she packs and invites Jonathan to enter their disagreement (“Isn’t he being silly, Jonathan?” “Isn’t he a nut, Jonathan?”); he remains unresponsive and unmoved. Jack Nicholson’s performance is best described as showing ambivalence: not quite blank in expression, it is apparent that whatever he is thinking weighs heavy on his mind, but he remains inexpressive and unreacting, suggesting numbness or paralysis.

Eventually, the volume of the dialogue decreases as the ice-skater’s organ music enters the sound design. Similarly, Jonathan’s face (in shadow in a predominantly dark frame) dissolves to a bright white that fills the frame for ten seconds. The camera focus shifts and we can see a blonde skater in a form-fitting white outfit twirling on the ice, the sound of her skates can be heard faintly under the music. For a brief period, the film appears to have abandoned the established narrative. This world is dream-like. The predominance of the white frame, in transition as well as *mise-en-scène* for the skater, establishes the same kind of abstracted space that the shimmering water and series of dissolves indicated for Ben.

The camera follows her movements and eventually zooms out revealing a man skating after her. As the camera follows them and other skaters still, the back of Sandy and Jonathan's heads are revealed in medium close up in the foreground as they watch the man skate after her. The ice rink sets the stage for a conversation between Sandy and Jonathan that echoes the one from the college mixer where Sandy met Susan ("You want her?" Jonathan asks Sandy). The men appraise her body and judge the "schmucks" like the older guy who is "trying to keep up" with her. The conversation evolves to cover Sandy's assessment of married life and Jonathan's disappointment with his current sexual conquests. Throughout this exchange the organ music can be heard. Before this scene concludes the film returns to a visual of the skater's performance, underscoring her significance, as the organ music fades and this section of the film continues.

The next whiteout appears after Jonathan discovers his girlfriend Bobbie's suicide attempt. Prior to this, Jonathan initiated an attempt at swinging, which Sandy's girlfriend Cindy declined. Upon Cindy's departure, Jonathan walks back to the bedroom and finds Sandy calling an ambulance to send Bobbie to the hospital. The camera follows Jonathan's reaction as he runs through the apartment to the front door, opens it as if to leave but does not. Instead he slams the door and charges back into the living room, where he is framed in the foreground in medium close up: "Very slick," he shouts, enraged, "Very clever. Well it's not going to work, Bobbie!" With his head in his hands, a hyperventilating Jonathan holds his face, as the organ music motif begins to play softly underneath his cries. In a white button-down shirt, he blends into the neutral white tones of the living room as the scene fades into a blinding white light, which suddenly cuts to a black screen. Clicks can be heard indicating the change of slides on a slideshow as white text appears: "Jonathan Fuerst Presents," "A Jonathan Fuerst Production," "Ball-Busters on Parade!"

The organ music can be heard accompanying the first three slides of Jonathan's childhood paramours, after which point the music stops and the sound design is reduced to the clicking of the slide projector and Jonathan's narration. The clicking from the slideshow is visually punctuated by quick cuts to the audience: first a long shot of Jonathan, Sandy, and his girlfriend Jennifer. A close up of each individual cycles in rotation—they appear in profile, face in shadow, backlit by the apartment window. The brief shot of Susan and the subsequent shot of Eileen, shown hastily in an effort to cover the evidence of his college affair with Sandy's ex-wife, were followed by close-ups of Sandy reacting to Jonathan.

After Susan, the photos transition from black and white to color. Following Bobbie's photo and subsequent diatribe, a photo of their daughter Wendy appears by accident and underscores the irony of his chauvinism. Jonathan confesses to calling her Princess and asks the room, "Isn't she a dreamboat?" For the remainder of the slideshow, he can no longer remember the names of his conquests and he refers to them in epithetic signifiers—"Nazi," "cunt," "slob," "Jap," "some sixteen-year-old." The clicking of the slideshow is still punctuated by reaction shots of his audience, though they are a complete reversal of the earlier ones in this sequence. Previously, the silhouettes of their heads facing an off-screen slideshow were backlit by daylight; with the camera now positioned in front of them, their faces are illuminated by the slideshow, their dismay and disgust, sadness and disappointment on full display, the darkness in the room indicating how much time has passed in a noxious vacuum. The last slide is white against a black screen, reminiscent of the whiteout transition that started this sequence.

The living room lights come on and reveal the three of them in a pristine white room. The couple leaves quickly and the film cuts to a conversation between Jonathan and Sandy walking through the streets. In the film's last scene, Jonathan arrives at Louise's apartment and we

witness his routinized encounter with the prostitute, complete with admonishment for not performing her lines the way she usually does. The last few shots are an exchange of Jonathan's blank expression as he watches Louise perform her monologue, which is tailored to overcome the impotence he struggled with in the latter two sections of the film.

Paradoxically, Louise's speech is able to arouse Jonathan by celebrating his impotence: she lauds his strength and power which is based in his ability to "den[y] himself to her . . . because he has no need for any woman, because he has himself." During this scene Indian music can be heard in the apartment, which builds during her monologue. After she concludes, affirming Jonathan's erection, the sound of the music intensifies but then transitions to the organ music as Jonathan's sweaty, vacant face dissolves to a bluish-white shot of the figure skater twirling, at first out of focus before gaining clarity. This shot fades into a flash, the white screen serving as the backdrop for the black text of the film's credits.

Though I have referred to the transitional sequence as a figure-skater motif, she does not appear in the second transition, yet her presence is perceived in the blank frame and the organ music. Described as "burbl[ing] maddeningly," Whitehead observes that the music "compels gaiety and that has no cultural meaning outside of performance. . . [the ice skater] is emblematic of all the narrative's various performers aware of their desirability and consumable status" (81). While this is certainly true of the film's end, I would argue that not all performers are aware of their consumable status, itself a result of objectification and requiring an objectifying gaze.

Throughout the film, Jonathan and Sandy have had rather cool and calloused conversations about sex and women's bodies. The conversations in their dorm room entail comparison of opinion and result in competition for who can explore more sexual territory and faster. Though they point to chauvinist tendencies in society, their discussions are also about

their lack of experience and so indicate their youth. In the privacy of their dorm room, Jonathan and Sandy expound their ideals; those ideas become enacted in public spaces, like the college mixer and the ice rink.

Perhaps what makes the slideshow scene the most disturbing example of Jonathan's chauvinism is its conflation of public and private space. In the privacy of his home, Jonathan makes a display of his misogyny for his friends. The photos in the slideshow do not depict active participants and performers, but read as keepsakes or memories that Jonathan conceives of in ways that are based on an exchange of power qua sex that only ever comes up short and lacking fulfillment. *He* reads them as consumable, and the music's return merely reminds us that the film takes his perspective. Where the ice-skater's first appearance seemed dream-like in the way it interrupted the narrative, the slideshow reads as a nightmare the viewer wishes to be metaphoric but the scene reveals to be diegetic.

Though Susan's body is the first depicted in the film, the camera does not frame her in an objectifying way. We are aware that Sandy and Jonathan are watching her, but the camera does not take the place of their gaze. The initial shot of the figure-skater, however, serves as an example of objectification on three levels: first at the level of narrative, where Sandy and Jonathan appraise her body; second, as a point-of-view shot, which functions to make Jonathan's objectification of her body visible; third, the film itself utilizes her performance as a transitional element, encoding her as symbolically crucial to the narrative itself and emblazoning her presence within Jonathan's subjectivity.

As noted at the onset of this section's analysis, although *Carnal Knowledge* shares similar techniques with *The Graduate* and *Catch-22*, the transition between narrative is functionally different from a storyline; however, in the repetition of lighting, sound, and dissolve

over a close up, these transitions go beyond separating parts of the story and instead indicate *some* type of narrative event has occurred. In the article “Memories, Dreams, Screens,” Ruth Perlmutter analyzes films that “make use of dreams and memories to express the tension between remembering and repressing an unacceptable past” (125), and notes “the aptness of cinema as one of [psychic trauma’s] primary expressive modes” as the form has the ability to raise “questions of memory and identity” and depict “concomitant maladies like amnesia and muteness” (129).

In one instance she writes, “The text itself may respond to repression and the denial of reality by collapsing; that is, suffering a textual trauma that parallels a mental breakdown” (126). I would not go as far as to say that the whiteout transition is the equivalent of a mental breakdown, but they do stress the events’ significance to Jonathan’s experience, the bright light and close up connoting his memory and emotions. Stevens likens the whiteout to Jonathan’s consciousness and the passage of time “in a flash,” and reads his “catatonia” in the preceding close up as “evince[ing] heartbreak” (124). Whitehead writes that, where in the first whiteout Jonathan “obliterates [Susan] from his consciousness” (81), subsequent transitions indicate that “in the internal logic of the film, more time will have passed, and with it, another illusory attempt by Jonathan at redeeming the time via wiping the emotional slate” (86). Because the transitions are a classic signifier for time passing and their abstract nature is coupled with dramatic twists in Jonathan’s love life, their presence implies the relationship between the lifespan of emotion and the passage of time. While it is tempting to read the blank screen as Jonathan’s willful attempt to deaden his own emotions, that would suggest that these relationships were emotionally significant to Jonathan which the film does not fully support.

His infatuation with Susan was generated from competition with Sandy and his interest in Bobbie is aligned with his quest for a woman whose body meets his meticulous standard of perfection. The emotions that Jonathan registers clearly are anger, disgust and mistrust. When he is not cynical, his expression is somehow blank but weighty—we infer thoughts but the expressions themselves do not indicate a clear emotion. His only motivation appears to be libidinal desire, though the film more often depicts his sexual impotence and inability to express himself. In this sense it is fitting that Jonathan's internal experience, in all of its emptiness, is marked by blankness. I do not disagree, however, that the whiteout transitions do carry an emotional implication. Viewed alongside *The Graduate* and *Catch-22*, that significance may become clearer.

### Conclusion

In tracing the common stylistic elements that contribute to a sense of paralysis and impotence in *The Graduate*, *Catch-22*, and *Carnal Knowledge*, it would stand to reason that there is a similar psychological disposition or trauma affecting the films' protagonists that perhaps takes root in a generational concern. In a 2011 interview conducted by director Jason Reitman after a screening of *Carnal Knowledge*, Reitman asked Nichols if Sandy and Jonathan were fundamentally the same type of man but presented themselves differently to society. Nichols agrees that there is an essential similarity to them and continues to say that the dialogue between Jonathan and Sandy throughout the film is very similar to the comic strips written and illustrated by the film's scriptwriter Jules Feiffer:

It's a dialogue between the two guys not unlike this. Very many different characters, in different places, and different kinds of people, but it's guy-to-guy and that thing that starts for you in high school, or for me in college, for some guys in the army, where in

some weird way you and the other guys become each other for a while—try out being each other. It's somehow plugged into that, I think. I think it's, in a really strange way, something that had to do with the war. That these guys *did* come out of the war. And they depended on each other in a way that not only excluded women but was *obsessed* with women simultaneously, and then they kept that going. There was no way to get them out of that particular straightjacket because that's where they had lived, under *enormous* pressure and terror and it in some way annealed them into this relationship with each other, and with women, and this particular kind of cruelty, callousness, blindness has been transformed into other far subtler things. (Film at Lincoln Center)

While his answer is, of course, relevant to the discussion of identity within *Carnal Knowledge*, it is worth quoting at length because it details Nichols' perspective on issues that are present within all three films. The notion of identity taking place as a social act is meant in broad terms, citing its application to the student, like in *The Graduate* or *Carnal Knowledge*, and the army recruit, like in *Catch-22*. The pressure self-actualization in maturation creates an identity crisis that is then compounded by the pressure of war still felt in the post-war period. As articulated by these films, this pressure causes existential dread and has devastating emotional repercussions, while it is also channeled into sexual pursuits that have the secondary benefit of affirming masculinity, contributing to a sense of identity and achievement, along with the relief of sexual release.

In terms of cinematic technique, each film relates the generational trauma and crisis of masculinity in psychologically coded sequences—comprised of close ups, abstracted space, and with keen attention to sound design—that implicate the protagonists' sexual experience. Where I have argued that the stylistic design and subsequently psychological themes like paralysis and anxiety are shared among the films, they do understandably diverge at the point of plot. With



Elsaesser in mind, differences between the protagonists' fears, motivations, and desires can be considered in an effort to see where they converge and diverge and gain a greater understanding of the male existential dread that Nichols so often pairs an alternating obsession-with/repulsion-by women.

In Ben's first scene with dialogue, he attempts to explain why he does not want to attend his own graduation party because he would rather "be alone for a while." Ben's statements trail off in an exchange with his father who identifies his son as worried, though he cannot see the cause. Ben hedges, "I guess about my future," and, when pressed for details, he continues, "I don't know. I want it to be... different." By stating that he wants his future to be "different," it is inferred that Ben rejects what his parents represent: middle-class suburban domesticity and careerism. Immediately after the pool montage, his father confronts Ben in an effort to address his son's immobility and spur action: "Would you mind telling me, then, what those four years of college were for? What was the point of all that hard work?" "You got me." In this instance, Ben does more than reject the future expected of him. By affirming his ignorance, he acknowledges that he followed social expectations blindly, and while it is known that he wants a "different" future the fact that he finds "all that hard work" pointless suggests he cannot envision an alternate future for himself. This despondence propels him into the affair with Mrs. Robinson.

Unlike the skater in *Carnal Knowledge* or Nurse Duckett in *Catch-22*, the pool montage does not cut to shots of Mrs. Robinson that are sexually objectifying. If these scenes signal the mind, then Jonathan and Yossarian are perceived as actively engaging in sex in order to anesthetize themselves, just as Nichols described of Ben; yet because the montage does not objectify Mrs. Robinson's body in its depiction of Ben's perspective and overall numbness, it can be inferred he is more resigned to the affair than actually desirous of her. In fact, it is the

people around Ben who emphasize the significance of his sexual experience. Mr. Carlson remarks that the Alfa Romeo will help Ben pick up “the girls, the chicks, the teenyboppers.” The first time that Mrs. Robinson is alone with Ben in his room she asks if he is upset about a girl, to which he clarifies, “Oh no, I’m just sort of disturbed about things [in general].” In comparison to all of the other markers of achievement and status conferred upon Ben (“Captain of the cross-country team, head of the debating club, editor of the college newspaper”), the film positions the sexual arena as another realm in which Ben must prove himself.

In some ways, *Carnal Knowledge* is the inverse of *The Graduate*. Ben, who is initially averse to both Mrs. Robinson and her daughter, is goaded into an affair but then falls in love with Elaine. Jonathan is misogynistic towards all women while being sexually desirous yet impotent—both his libidinal desire and chauvinism are two traits that depict his attempts to claim power and assert dominance over women. While the plot of *The Graduate* is overtly about an affair, the film spends more time attending to Ben’s experience within the world, even if that experience is malaise. *Carnal Knowledge* treats sex in a much more explicit way, both in visual terms and in the recurring, frank conversations between Jonathan and Sandy. Their relationships and marriages serve as examples of contrast but do not contribute to a more intimate understanding of Jonathan, despite the film’s transitions representing his perspective.

The identity crisis Ben experiences after graduation is articulated by Sandy in different terms when he speaks to Jonathan after the slideshow scene. Sandy claims, “I found out who I am” as a result of his new relationship:

All those games. You don’t need those games, Jonathan. I know. I’ve played more games than anyone: The obedient son game. The bright student game. The cocksman’s game.

The respectable husband game. The good father game. The specialist game. Games don't impress Jennifer. Just life. Just love.

Here Sandy is rejecting all of the roles in which society has cast him, in an effort to find out who he is outside of those terms; Jonathan does not have the same desire for self-knowledge, but he has also rejected half of the roles in the games that Sandy played. Towards the end of the conversation at the ice rink, Sandy asks Jonathan if he wants a family. Jonathan replies, "I don't want to put it down, but who needs it?" The shot cuts to Sandy looking at him in disbelief: "You can't make fucking your life's work." The following shot is of a stone-faced Jonathan, who defiantly says, "Don't tell me what I can and can't do." Sandy's wry comment condemns sexual conquest as vocation, and while Jonathan's reply specifies a broad need for control, the exchange places it in interchangeable terms with man's status in career and family thereby making his sexual prowess a marker of identity and masculinity.

Where Ben and Jonathan contend with societal expectations in the negotiation of their identity, *Catch-22* turns the notion on its head by asserting that identity is meaningless, as the film reiterates that "one dead boy is as good as another" and Snowden's accident remains forgettable to everyone except Yossarian. Where the other films offer commentary on the marriage plot and coupling, *Catch-22* barely makes a pretense of it. Yossarian's relationship with Luciana is not privileged against other vignettes and their discussion of marriage serves as another joke in circular logic. As previously discussed, the associative editing that bridges Luciana with the morphine is in keeping with the anesthetization Ben pursues with Mrs. Robinson and the emotional deadening Jonathan experiences in tandem with his sexual conquests.

In light of the similarity of generational trauma evidenced among the protagonists, it is worth reconsidering the emotional implications of the whiteout transitions. As previously discussed, I agree with the emotional implications of the whiteout transition but find it hard to believe that Jonathan is brokenhearted in these instances: If Sandy admitted to playing many of society's games, Jonathan made sport of his relationships as evidenced by his flirtation at the expense of (or because of an inability to) engage in a meaningful exchange. A new interpretation may be determined, however, if we consider Jonathan Fuerst to be a product of the postwar pressure that also created that misogynistic obsession. Jonathan's impotence and dead-eyed stare is the natural result of the postwar pressure Nichols characterized as a kind of straightjacket that resulted in blindness. The coldness of the whiteout transition is correctly attributed to his emotions, but in this context the condition is pre-existing and existential rather than the result of heartbreak.

Yossarian's emotional performance is distinct from that of Ben and Jonathan: while the latter appear numb and despondent, Yossarian is expressive but the comedic frenzy is arguably still response to the anxiety of the war. Reading the whiteout transitions of *Carnal Knowledge* as emotionally numbing suggests that the bright lighting of Yossarian's flashback sequences also indicate numbness that can be inferred as a side effect of intrusive traumatic memories. Similarly, the ending of *Catch-22* is different from the other films although it has the same overall effect. In the final shots of *The Graduate* and *Carnal Knowledge*, the protagonist and his internal experience is positioned as central to the film's narrative by way of an emotionally static close-up and the music associated with their emotional paralysis. Although the long shot of Yossarian paddling out into the ocean on a raft set to a kazoo rendition of *Stars and Stripes Forever* carries a different tone from the other films, the ending remains less than reassuring.

While Ben and Jonathan suffer under an undisclosed sense of anguish that appears inescapable, the logic of *Catch-22* itself operates on foreclosure of opportunity or escape, thereby situating Yossarian as a victim of a similar, if not the same, existential condition.

Further, the endings of all three films meet the structural qualifications that Elsaesser points out when it comes to the “indeterminate narrative: pathos provides the emotional closure to an open-ended structure” (287). Where Nichols locates a specific dissociative feeling for a generation of young men, his films render this state in stylistic terms in line with Elsaesser’s observations of the shift in New Hollywood. Although “The Pathos of Failure” is primarily concerned with action-oriented genres like the road movie, *The Graduate*, *Catch-22*, and *Carnal Knowledge* adhere to the trend Elsaesser locates in early 70s cinema in both narrative (the protagonist’s lack of purpose, detached from a world that lacks sense and causality) and structural (experimental, abstract, open-ended) terms.

Viewing *The Graduate*, *Catch-22*, and *Carnal Knowledge* from the perspective of Nichols’s signature goes beyond positioning Mike Nichols as an auteur; by highlighting the similarities in technique, these three films illuminate one another, fleshing out an understanding of a post-war masculine identity crisis, as well as contributing to the image of that crisis during the New Hollywood period. Furthermore, when art cinema is considered to be a narrative mode, Nichols’s signature raises additional questions about the role of filmic form in its ability to explicate plot itself. For as much as the same techniques elicit a sense of stress or anxiety in the films, they perform different roles within the narrative: the pool montage serves as a tonal interlude that conveys Ben’s emotional subjectivity and the non-diegetic musical motifs underscores Ben’s relationship with his agency; *Catch-22*’s narrative strands include ontological shifts that take depict Yossarian’s memories, or take place within his mind; the whiteout

transitions in *Carnal Knowledge* suture the film at large to Jonathan Fuerst's consciousness, memory, and emotional experience, yet any deeper indication of his psychology remains unknown to the audience. This points to a specific quality of Nichols's narrative films where manipulation of the form itself speaks to an event at the level of narrative and is capable of articulating components of the theme that otherwise may escape the plot. By viewing *Carnal Knowledge* alongside the other films, Jonathan Fuerst's character can be seen as suffering from a generational trauma and crisis of masculine identity similar to Ben and Yossarian, and the role of Nurse Duckett and Luciana gains more significance in the associative logic of *Catch-22*.

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