

Julia's Resistant History *Women's Historical Films in Hollywood* *and the Legacy of Citizen Kane*

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In the corner of one of his pages of film notes on *Julia*, Fred Zinnemann wrote “I am in a totally false position,” and then circled it for emphasis. As it is part of a tapestry of sketches for camera set-ups, script jottings, commentary, and phone numbers written in several varieties of his handwriting, it is initially difficult to see the small comment. There are hundreds of pages of the director’s production notes in his archive. But, as with all of Zinnemann’s films, every detail counts.

When Zinnemann signed to direct *Julia*, he had already made two other films about the history of the European resistance to fascism (*The Seventh Cross*, 1944; *Behold a Pale Horse*, 1964), and six others about World War II and its aftermath (*The Search*, 1948; *The Men*, 1950; *Teresa*, 1951; *From Here to Eternity*, 1953; *The Nun’s Story*, 1959; *The Day of the Jackal*, 1973). Alvin Sargent’s adaptation of *Julia*’s 1930s Resistance context was perfect Zinnemann material, and *Julia* itself was destined to become one of Hollywood’s most complex and powerful historical films about women. Zinneman had one problem, however: Lillian Hellman.

Although adapting Hellman’s “memoirs” posed significant difficulties for the film as a traditional Hollywood biopic, Zinnemann’s discomfort, articulated in his production notes, enabled him to explore the very real struggle for historical legitimacy plaguing women’s history in film. Though less studied than masculine biopics, westerns, and period gangster films, Hollywood’s historical films about women explore issues in adaptation, narration, editing, and agency as complex as those found in films about their male counterparts. Historical films about women are often tied to a legacy of historical fiction that has enabled women to appear as active, even transgressive protagonists (*Cimarron*, 1931; *Gone with the Wind*, 1939; *Duel in the Sun*, 1946), while paradoxically trapping them as inaccurate Hollywood kitsch, masscult romanticism, and “women’s” history. The adaptation of *Julia* does in some sense engage Robert Rosenstone’s belief that “invention is key in the formulation of the historical genre,” and, at its best, historical filmmaking provides

“a kind of counter-discourse on the past” (Rosenstone 2004). This essay surveys women’s film historiography in Hollywood, its ties to historical fiction, oral history, and other revisionist trends, and Zinnemann’s commitment to “voicing” the lives of women on screen. Despite *Julia*’s strong connection to studio-era Hollywood’s historical films about women, its deepest links are with the great “revisionist” men’s biopic, *Citizen Kane* (1941). But, while *Citizen Kane* addressed the entrenched tradition of masculine biopics and a historiography founded upon objectivity, careful chronology, and masculine heroism, Sargent and Zinnemann’s adaptation of *Julia* represented a complete and timely redefinition of the content and form of women’s history on screen.

***Pentimento* and Its Production Contexts**

Despite starring two of world cinema’s most prominent and politically engaged actresses – Vanessa Redgrave and Jane Fonda – *Julia* had an even bigger star: its subject, left-wing playwright and screenwriter Lillian Hellman. Cold War revisionism had transformed the formerly blacklisted screenwriter’s public reputation and, by the 1970s, Hellman reinvented herself as a memoirist. Her perspectives on women’s liberation in the 1920s, golden-age Hollywood, liberalism, and the anti-communist witch hunts were constructed as critical correctives of traditional historiography, and they did not go unchallenged by her contemporaries and colleagues. But it was her story of childhood friend “Julia” that raised the most public controversy.

In *Pentimento* (1973), Hellman remembers her childhood best friend as a heroic maverick. Born to wealth and privilege, Julia spurns her family, attends Oxford and later medical school in Vienna, and becomes a committed socialist and anti-fascist leader. Though the two women’s lives diverge, they keep in touch largely through letters. But, while on a trip to Europe in the mid-1930s, Hellman is persuaded to bring some money across the German border for Julia’s anti-Nazi organization. Although terrified, she agrees, and the friends meet once more before Julia’s murder at the hands of the Gestapo some months later in Frankfurt. Hellman’s memory of Julia comprised only one of the several stories in *Pentimento*, but critics focused on it almost to the exclusion of the other stories. Some even argued that she invented the courageous, anti-Nazi heroine and her connection with Hellman (Rollyson 1988: 503–528).

At present, all the evidence strongly suggests that Hellman did invent the friendship, but she patterned “Julia” after the lives of several real women. Dr. Muriel Gardiner, the only known American to work in the Austrian underground during the 1930s, was the primary historical basis for Hellman’s heroine, although one-legged American master spy Virginia Hall was doubtless another source. Alliance chief and divorced mother of two, Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, had Julia’s fabled

Hollywood looks and durability; she also made train journeys through occupied territory wearing a hat stuffed with Resistance money (McCracken 1984; Rossiter 1986; Fourcade 1968). Hellman would “adapt” all of their stories to suit her own ends.

Questions about Hellman's veracity, Julia's identity, women's history, and memory would become more complex with the release of Fred Zinnemann's film in late 1977. With the director's name attached to Hellman's, the story acquired a public patina of historical truth. The worldwide success of *A Man for All Seasons* (1966) made Zinnemann the twentieth-century Hollywood equivalent of its hero, Sir Thomas More. Quite simply, if you worked for an industry that could market your integrity without damaging it, then you had to be Fred Zinnemann. Further, under his direction, Jane Fonda's (Lillian) and Vanessa Redgrave's (Julia) performances helped to make *Julia* one of the few great historical films about women. Julia and Lillian are both articulate, educated, politically empowered, and confident women, without any conventional romantic dependencies. Despite the appearance of Lillian Hellman's lover Dashiell Hammett (Jason Robards), *Julia* focuses on Lillian's emotional and intellectual commitment to another woman.

Yet *Julia* wasn't a feminist version of the “great man” biopics made famous by Jane Fonda's father, Henry. During the latter half of the 1930s, Henry Fonda became one of Hollywood's most popular and critically respected stars, largely through performing in American historical productions under studio head Darryl F. Zanuck (*The Farmer Takes a Wife*, 1935; *Way down East*, 1935; *Jesse James*, 1939; *The Story of Alexander Graham Bell*, 1939; *Drums along the Mohawk*, 1939; *Young Mr. Lincoln*, 1939). While her father had made traditional American heroes such as Abraham Lincoln human and reassuringly flawed, in making *Julia*, Jane Fonda was both historicizing her father's era and creating a new generation of modern American heroines who were successful on their own terms. *Julia*'s protagonists and film style differed fundamentally from traditional Hollywood historical epics, which, even by the early 1970s, still lionized masculine individualism and courageous public lives in a chronological and progressively styled format (*Patton*, 1970; *Dillinger*, 1973; *Serpico*, 1973).

As Zinnemann wrote to cinematographer Douglas Slocombe, he was anxious to avoid making *Julia* seem “slick or manicured or polished” because it was based on one woman's alleged shifting memories of another woman (Zinnemann to Slocombe, in Zinnemann 1976–1977: f. 542). He did not want the film to look like a traditional biopic along the lines of *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), or even of his *A Man for All Seasons*, despite Hellman's frequent public and private assertions that “[t]his is not a work of fiction” and Twentieth Century-Fox's advertisements that it was “Based on a true story” (Zinnemann 1976–1977: f. 491). Regardless of Hellman's inventions, Zinnemann saw *Julia*, more broadly, as a search for women's history and as an opportunity to construct a film historiography that resisted more conventional narrative structures.

A (Film) Historiography of Their Own?

When I tried to convince one prominent British women's film historian of this recently, she shook her head sadly and remarked that women "had no historiography of their own," and that their textual disempowerment was only equaled by their voicelessness on screen. Similarly, in his book about the Hollywood biopic, Dennis Bingham acknowledges that, while the Hollywood biopic is a vital masculine genre, films about men and women are "practically separate genres." He even claims that women's biopics have "intractable" conventions, which have cinematically trapped women for decades "in a cycle of failure, victimization, and the downward trajectory" (Bingham 2010: 22, 28). Bingham joins the many film historians over the years who have been unwilling to see Hollywood's capacity for critical inquiry and for creating powerful historical women who occasionally triumph, even when the social and historical dice are loaded against them.

I think both of them are wrong. Hollywood certainly was capable of authoring powerful historical texts about women. A fair share of research has already uncovered the importance of women's historical fiction to prestige Hollywood cinema, and David O. Selznick's adaptation of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1939) remains one of the most complex historical explorations of female subjectivity in American cinema (Smyth 2006). But *Gone with the Wind* and many other prominent women's historical films of the studio era underscore the paradox of women's cinematic history: while the female protagonists dominate the narratives, motivate camera movement, and change major currents in history, very often they are based on works of fiction authored principally, but not exclusively, by women (*Cimarron*, 1931; *Ramona*, 1936; *Jezebel*, 1938; *Duel in the Sun*, 1946; *Forever Amber*, 1947; *Desiree*, 1954; *Maverick Queen*, 1958). It is almost impossible to separate fiction from history in Hollywood's genre of women's historical films. Adaptations of historical novels (including *Gone with the Wind*) often focus on "fictional" characters who nonetheless represent key but comparatively voiceless groups and minorities, among them white-collar working women, urban, ethnic working-class families, prostitutes, mulattas, mestizas, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans (*Kitty Foyle*, 1940; *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, 1945; *Saratoga Trunk*, 1945; *Duel in the Sun*, 1946; *Forever Amber*, 1947; *Giant*, 1956; *Cheyenne Autumn*, 1964).

While many masculine biopics and historical films of the studio era rely on projected text and document inserts to inject traditional historical prestige and position the subject as a "great man" of history, beginning in the 1940s women's historical films use voice-over as an innovative counterpoint to traditional discourse. The voice-over both situates the protagonists in a broader social milieu and personalizes lives of ordinary women often marginalized in standard historical narratives. A cluster of major Hollywood films – among them *All This and Heaven Too* (1940), *Kitty Foyle* (1940), *So Proudly We Hail* (1943), *Since You Went Away* (1944), *I Remember Mama* (1948), *A Letter to Three Wives* (1949), *Cheaper by the*

Dozen (1949), *All about Eve* (1950), *Belles on Their Toes* (1950), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) – employ the woman's voice as a structuring historical device throughout the entire narrative, rather than as just an introductory historical gloss.

The frequent use of voice-overs in studio-era Hollywood links the women's historical genre to oral history – a mode of social and cultural history that is deeply tied to *Julia*'s subjects of women's historiography and Resistance historiography (Weitz 1995; Thompson 1978). Oral testimony preserves details of the lives of ordinary women who otherwise would never have thought their stories important enough to be written down. While, at least since the nineteenth century, men's historical achievements, particularly in the revered genres of diplomatic and political history, have been measured in the importance of extant documents, the historical traces of women's lives have been more difficult to assess. Oral history is equally essential to chronicles of the Resistance, as historian H. R. Kedward explains, because “[i]t was clearly in the nature of Resistance activity to avoid all paper records which might fall into the wrong hands” (Kedward 1978: vi–vii). Additionally, since women were so central to all levels of Resistance activity – and were particularly “invisible” as couriers and guides – many left no trace of their roles in any historical record.

The interviews conducted by Margaret Rossiter and Margaret Collins Weitz in the 1970s and 1980s only recovered a fraction of these lost heroic lives. But the voices of the survivors acquired a human credibility that no written document could equal. Over the years, however, mainstream historians have often regarded oral history as a poor second to textual sources. It was populist, ambiguous, and it often contradicted conventional chronologies and narratives. Its lack of textual antecedents also laid itself open to charges of fiction and invention, something not new to criticism of women's history and historical films. Lillian Hellman's “memoirs” were particularly controversial with journalists and historians who saw any inventions as personal affronts to the “accuracy” of Resistance history (Gellhorn 1981; McCracken 1984).

Zinnemann was more invested than any other Hollywood director in this form of “resistant” history, which incorporated voices of ordinary or marginalized women caught up in the struggle of World War II. He did not make the standard masculine war-buddy film so dear to fans of John Wayne, but instead he approached the war from the perspectives of military outsiders, civilians, women, and children. His own work from *The Search* (1948) to *Julia* (1977) focuses on female voice-overs to give historical “presence” to relatively unknown women. By 1977 Zinnemann had made several films featuring women protagonists, three of them with extensive female narration and use of voice-overs and based in the period immediately before, during, and after World War II. In *The Search* (1948), Mrs. Stevens (Aline MacMahon), the United Nations Relief and Recovery Administration (UNRRA) director of postwar “unaccompanied” children's services, relates in voice-over much of the story of a lost child survivor of Auschwitz (Ivan Jandl) and attempts to describe the Nazis' horrific treatment of Europe's children (Smyth 2011).

Yet Zinnemann's carefully constructed voice-over acknowledges the inadequacy and fragmentary nature of any third-person narration, whether textual or oral. Instead, the child survivors' diegetic testimonies were the focus of the film. The director's filming of James Jones's *From Here to Eternity* in 1953 gave army wife Karen Holmes (Deborah Kerr) and prostitute Lorene (Donna Reed) the time to tell their own unique stories in a narrative about the pre-Pearl Harbor military and the gender and class inequities rife within American society. Karen describes her horrific marriage and miscarriage, while Lorene explains her decision to become a successful prostitute in Hawaii and return stateside as a "proper" woman of leisure. While most "historical" films about World War II produced in the studio era focus on masculine combat and biopics with text forewords, military documents, and press montages (*The Story of GI Joe*, 1945; *Sands of Iwo Jima*, 1949), Zinnemann's more gender inclusive adaptation had next to no textual overlay, despite its status as a major historical film about the war. Instead, *From Here to Eternity* is composed of outcasts' voices.

Zinnemann's most sustained exploration of women's voices, of the tension between text and voice, and of Resistance history, is *The Nun's Story* (1959), an adaptation of the fictionalized biography of former Belgian nun and UN aid worker Marie Louise Habets (Hulme 1956). Zinnemann's film narrated the experiences of "Gabrielle van der Mal" (Audrey Hepburn) as she failed to reconcile her own need to defend her country from the Nazis with the Catholic church's tolerance of Hitler. Gabrielle's internal and external voice conflicts with the church's demands for women's "silence" and impartiality during the war. Often the freedom of voice is set in opposition to the controlling conformity of text (the "Book"). Sister Catherine (Mildred Dunnock) teaches her novices by writing rules like "Interior Silence" and "Detachment" on the blackboard, things that Gabrielle will never master. The nuns must write all of their faults in a book, and this unique autobiography constitutes a document on the repression of self. When Gabrielle becomes Sister Luke and utters her vows before the Order, she reads from a printed script. Her first voice-over, ironically, is heard when she accuses herself "of breaking the Grand Silence." As she becomes more and more committed to the Resistance, her voice-overs and spoken dialogue increase until finally she breaks with the church.

When Sister Luke refuses to fail an exam unless the motherhouse knows that it was done "to order," she explains to her superiors, remembering her father's words: "Courage needs witnesses" (Hulme 1956: 67; Anderson 1958: 31). Her father would later die helping the Resistance, and Sister Luke remembers how he would "discount all the bemedaled heroes to point out the unknown real one who had died alone, unseen, near the ground." This dictum underscores the distinction between the "recorded" wartime deeds of masculine heroes and the more marginal, often forgotten struggles of women like Gabrielle (and later Julia). While traditional heroic biography and mainstream history ignore their narratives, Zinnemann's at least bear witness to their courage. Gabrielle's words

become a kind of subversive oral history. For, once Gabrielle refuses this pressure from her superiors, we begin to hear her voice either as an interior voice-over, or aloud. If “interior silence” is the key to the law of the religious order, then Gabrielle/Sister Luke’s voice is the epitome of resistance. Zinnemann’s work recuperates the historical importance of a woman through the power of the voice, creating an authentic “oral history” for relatively unknown women. It is crucial to point out that these “resistant” women’s voices appear at a time in Euro-American history when fascism and conflict threatened to undermine the objectivity of text and image through racial propaganda, destroy historical documents, and murder those – like Julia – who had dangerous memories.

Julia and Charlie

Though it is easy enough to trace *Julia*’s lineage back through Zinnemann’s women’s narratives and through the voices of other women in Hollywood’s adapted “historical fictions” from the 1940s onwards, *Julia*’s closest Hollywood relation is *Citizen Kane* (1941) – in many ways, the studio era’s most controversial film, which rewrote both the historical rules of the Hollywood biopic and the visual style and structure of the Hollywood narrative film. Though a masculine biopic, *Kane* explores, like *Julia*, similar issues in its opening news “biopic” and in ensuing series of interviews, testimonials, and flashbacks and, like *Julia*, has been plagued by similar controversies about its identity as cinematic art or as a falsified account of the life of media magnate William Randolph Hearst.

Fred Zinnemann and Alvin Sargent shared many of the problems that faced Orson Welles and Herman Mankiewicz when they adapted William Randolph Hearst’s life for the screen – but with key differences. While Hearst and his associates were unhappy with the amount of historical and biographical material in the “fictional” tale of Charles Foster Kane, records reveal that Hellman wanted more historical detail attached to her fictional memoir (Carringer 1985; Smyth 2006; Hellman to Zinnemann, in Zinnemann 1976–1977: f. 491.). Both are films about important but ultimately failed historical searches. The “truth” about Kane’s life is so crucial that Thompson’s editor famously instructs him, “Rosebud: Dead or alive” (Gottesman 1996), yet the film’s final moments witness Rosebud’s incineration as a worthless historical artifact. Thompson’s search for Rosebud resembles Lillian’s fruitless search for traces of Julia and her baby “Lily” in an increasingly fascist political climate.

Despite the film’s “revisionist” elements, Charles Foster Kane belongs to the establishment. He is an international political figure who rubs shoulders with Hitler and Mussolini. While Julia is born to this establishment, she abandons the American social and political system and its ideological hypocrisy to fight against everything Charles Foster Kane stands for in the 1930s. Newspaper inserts avidly document the life and death of media mogul Charles Foster Kane, but

Julia avoids documentation. Zinnemann never even inserts shots of Julia's letters to Lillian. When she dies, only a secret network claims to remember her. And, while Kane's manipulation of his wife Susan's stage career parallels others' view of the dominant Hollywood actress/performer-as-victim biopic (*Love Me or Leave Me*, 1955), in *Julia*, Lillian Hellman authors her own career in Hollywood and on Broadway as screenwriter and playwright.

Critics have long been enthralled by *Citizen Kane* as a stylistic masterpiece and, since film studies' "historical turn" of the 1990s, have been more inclined to see its connections to the more mundane historical world. Yet, while more recently some have argued for *Citizen Kane* as the great revisionist biopic, *Julia* has been comparatively ignored. Unlike Hollywood maverick Orson Welles, Fred Zinnemann never fitted the Americanized auteurism of Andrew Sarris, so making a claim for *Julia's* historical and stylistic equality with Welles' "masterpiece" is no mean feat. And if we are to believe entrenched critical wisdom, *Julia* cannot be compared to *Citizen Kane* simply because men's and women's film histories are inherently different (women "don't have a historiography," remember?). Hellman's historical inventions seem to corroborate this view. Yet Zinnemann's almost illegible comment on his "false position" isn't a historical detail to be tossed into the fire like Charlie Kane's Rosebud.

As they are both films about abortive historical searches, non-chronological narration, and ambiguous flashbacks, it's worth taking a closer look at *Julia's* construction of the past. Alvin Sargent planned Jane Fonda's opening voice-over to begin with Hellman's original introduction to *Pentimento*:

Old paint on canvas, as it ages, sometimes becomes transparent. When that happens it is possible, in some pictures, to see the original lines: a tree will show through a woman's dress, a child makes way for a dog, a boat is no longer in an open sea. That is called *pentimento*, because the painter "repented," changed his mind.

Besides affirming its faithful adaptation of Hellman's memoirs and introducing the narrative's underlying conflict between the accuracy of history and the creative work of the writer, *Julia's* opening foreword recalls the tradition, in studio-era history films, of introducing the narrative with either a text foreword or a voice-over. While text forewords often established a conventional historical period dominated by great men, they were also capable of highlighting a historical controversy or question (*Young Mr. Lincoln*, 1939; *Citizen Kane*, 1941) or of underscoring the film's project to rescue an event or person from obscurity or infamy (*The Prisoner of Shark Island*, 1936; *Blossoms in the Dust*, 1941; *Spartacus*, 1960; *Bonnie and Clyde*, 1967; *The Day of the Jackal*, 1973). But *Julia's* "foreword" is not an impersonal third-person narration by an unnamed journalist or historian as in *Citizen Kane*; it is personal and, most importantly, it is a woman's voice. It introduces not only the film's central questions about authorship and memory, but also those of history and of women's role in writing it. Most importantly, Hellman's voice-over is sustained throughout the film. Oral history is integral to the narrative.

As the character Hellman's older voice articulates the changing nature of memory and intention, Zinnemann shoots her in long shot in a dory, her back to the camera. Only Hellman's outline shows in the shadowy shot. She may be the author of this unusual dual biography, but from the outset, the director projects Hellman's self-reflective distance from her narrative (Dick 1982: 140–145; Prince 1999). Voice and image are separated (that is: we do not see Hellman speaking the foreword or even see her face). Sound cues drift across images; the cry of a gull is echoed by the menacing scream of a train engine at night. Again, Hellman's voice returns: "I am old now, and I want to remember what was there for me once, and what is there for me now . . ." We see her eyes, but not her lips (Figure 5.1).

This disjunction between word and image, history and myth, oral history and visual history is something that *Citizen Kane* explores in an elaborate juxtaposition between the journalistic bombast of the *News on the March* narrator and the ambiguity of Kane's voice. But, while Kane's biopic relies on the contrast between reportage of his public life and private memories of his friends and colleagues, *Julia* explores the memory of a life in the absence of traditional textual documentation. Arguably this is Sargent and Zinnemann's point: Lillian is the hollow Hollywood celebrity, the well-known woman, the (screen)writer, and the embodiment of historical distortion. Julia is the other side of the "great woman," not known to contemporary history, or known only imperfectly. She keeps no written historical records. She is one of the "army of shadows," as Marie-Madeleine Fourcade once put it, "that army [. . .] who shifted and succeeded one another and changed places like images in a film, fading and being replaced by others to ensure continuity" (1968: 16). But, although unknown to history, Julia is the title of Zinnemann's film.

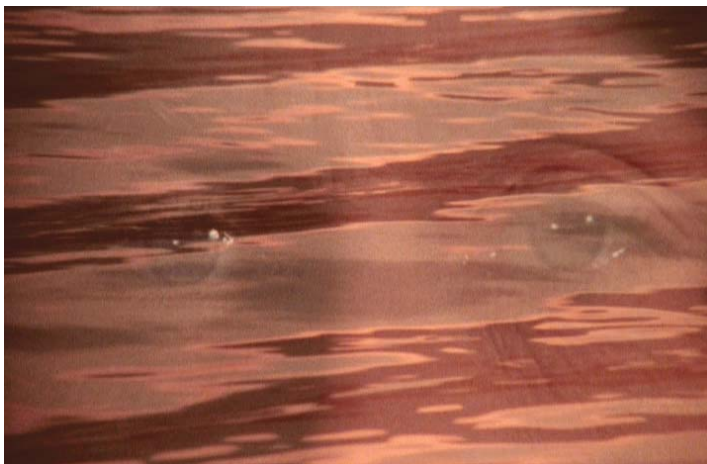


Figure 5.1 *Julia* (1977; 20th Century-Fox). Produced by Richard Roth and Fred Zinnemann; directed by Fred Zinnemann. © Twentieth Century-Fox Pictures

Alvin Sargent's adaptation makes extensive use of Hellman's non-chronological, fragmentary writing. However, while Hellman's narrative contains one large flashback outlining Julia's life in chronological order (roughly from 1905 to 1936), from the outset, Sargent and later Zinnemann splintered Hellman's chronology, creating a complex interplay between Hellman's life in the 1930s and her memories of Julia. This choice replicates Herman Mankiewicz and Orson Welles's decision to insert multiple and contradictory flashbacks of Kane throughout the contemporary hunt for "Rosebud." Hellman's creative life in 1934, when she was in the midst of constructing *The Children's Hour*, triggers memories of her childhood and young adulthood with Julia in New York. Zinnemann pushed Hellman's attitude toward the past still further, accentuating the narrative's refusal to follow a traditional, chronological format in which image and sound work in sync to support and authenticate the truth of the recorded events. The form of traditional (masculine) biography and biopics would not work for the content of women's history, so the filmmakers simply shattered it.

Like *Citizen Kane's* exploration of heroism and relativism, *Julia's* non-chronological format becomes a kind of historical choice, and the film foregrounds the editing of memories – central to the historical process, women's history, and narrative filmmaking – more than any other major feature film of its period. In the script, Sargent and Zinnemann frequently drag sound cues from the past into Hellman's workaday life in 1934, and film editor Walter Murch worked tirelessly with Zinnemann to achieve this tapestry of aural discontinuity. Bernard Dick first noticed one sequence that recalls a scene in *Citizen Kane* in which Thatcher's cold Christmas greeting to young Charlie Kane ("Merry Christmas, Charles") bridges the next sequence, in which Thatcher dictates a letter to his college-age charge ("And a Happy New Year") (Dick 1982: 147). However, while *Citizen Kane's* sound bridge serves little historiographic purpose beyond affirming Charlie's loveless upbringing, Zinnemann and Murch's sound bridges articulate the ways in which history and memory are in constant dialog with the present. Hellman's voice-over in old age comments on sequences from the 1930s, yet historical clarity is rarely given to these earlier sequences.

While Gregg Toland's famous long shots, deep-focus photography, and use of shadow often represent Kane's isolation from family and friends and the anti-hero's elusive personality, Zinnemann's camera is often placed deliberately too close to his protagonists. This distances Hellman and Hammett in their shot-reverse shots while establishing a need for closeness to Julia – a closeness that, paradoxically, separates Hellman and Julia in the frame. Zinnemann heightens Hellman's resentment of lover Dashiell Hammett's literary reputation and dictatorial attitudes by rarely shooting them in a two-shot. Instead he follows a distinct shot-reverse shot format, in both long shot and close-up, which accentuates their personal separateness. Even when Hammett finally approves the second draft of *The Children's Hour*, calling it "the best thing that's been written in a long time,"



Figure 5.2 *Julia* (1977; 20th Century-Fox). Produced by Richard Roth and Fred Zinnemann; directed by Fred Zinnemann. © Twentieth Century-Fox Pictures

Zinnemann refuses to unite them in a single shot. Wooden spars and piling separate them.

This sequence is in stark contrast to the fireside chats Lillian had with Julia at the latter's Park Avenue mansion, where the two are repeatedly framed together in close two-shots (Figure 5.2). The older Lillian's voice-over comments on these sequences: "I think I have always known about my memory . . . But I trust absolutely what I remember about Julia," and later: "I cannot say now that I had ever used the words gentle or strong or delicate, but I did think that night that it was the most beautiful face I had ever seen." While editor Walter Murch believed that the film replicated Zinnemann's "nostalgic" attitude toward Julia and Hellman's material ("The narration here challenges the audience to find Vanessa to be perfect, which I think may be an impossible goal"), Zinnemann was quick to correct him (Murch to Zinnemann, in Zinnemann 1976–1977: f. 487). Zinnemann's film was no eulogy. His visualization of Julia accompanying Lillian's glowing voice-over injected distance between the audience and the protagonist, and is ironic. Julia's face is seen through a nostalgic haze. Cinematographer Douglas Slocombe used special filters on his lenses when shooting the two young girls and, later, Fonda and Redgrave together, precisely because he wanted to emphasize Hellman's nostalgia – even historical fantasy. While the cinematography of Lillian's scenes with Hammett, matters of recorded "history," have a cold clarity, the shots of Lillian and Julia together are misty, glowing, and even blurred.

Yet Zinnemann's close shots of Julia reveal his and Hellman's need to establish and authenticate her historical presence. In many senses they were responding to a public need in popular and academic history. By the 1970s, women's

historiography was becoming increasingly visible, but it was still spurred on in part by the public's interest in historical fiction dramatizing the lives of heroic but relatively "unknown" women. Women's roles in the Resistance, in particular, had captured the public imagination since the publication of the semi-fictionalized biographies of British Special Operations Executive (SOE) agents Odette Churchill (Ticknell 1949) and Violette Szabo (Minney 1956) and escape line leader Andrée De Jongh (Neave 1957). Popular British biopics *Odette* (1950) and *Carve Her Name with Pride* (1957) won multiple awards and media attention. Memoirs of *résistantes* Lucie Aubrac (1954), Jeanne Bohec (1975), and Marie-Madeleine Fourcade (1968) were bestsellers, but women's roles in the Resistance were still marginalized in a historiography preoccupied with masculine heroism. In researching and adapting the "life" of Julia, Zinnemann combined elements of historical fiction, oral history, memoir, and populist feminism that were the basis of women's Resistance historiography.

Zinnemann knew Hellman may have invented her friendship with "Julia" during pre-production. He and associate producer Tom Pevsner conducted many interviews with members of the Austrian underground and with social democrats, and they knew all about Muriel Gardiner. Instead of just cloaking Julia's historical presence in Hellman's complex memories and oral history, they decided to add a series of newspaper inserts and photographs documenting the 1934 riots and fascist takeovers and to insert Julia (Redgrave) into reconstructions of the conflict. Regardless of the fictional elements in *Pentimento*, women were powerful leaders in anti-fascist resistance movements across Europe. And, as much as *The Children's Hour* and her years with Dashiell Hammett are matters of recorded literary history, for Hellman it is Julia's memory that inspires and gives her the confidence to remember the past with personal accuracy and commitment.

Hellman's memories of Julia at Oxford accentuate the latter's connection to the past, but it is a historical reconstruction that Zinnemann deliberately overframes. As Hellman's voice recalls: "There are women who reach a perfect time in life." The director chose to shoot Redgrave moving steadily toward the camera, framed in a succession of Oxford doorways. As she approaches, her perfect beauty and grace and power seem to rival the architecture. She walks closer and closer to the waiting camera, which remains stationary even when Redgrave's luminous eyes threaten to swallow up the screen (Figure 5.3). In this sequence, Zinnemann argued that the camera was not aligned to his perspective as director but was instead replicating Hellman's view: "It is Lillian who remembers Julia as being perfect" (Zinnemann 1976–1977: f. 487). But, as Julia pauses in the final doorway and Hellman stops speaking, Zinnemann's slow dissolve makes her "framed" image look like a superimposed photograph in the Oxford landscape. The sequence has a constructed look, like a photograph superimposed on another. Later, when Julia resists the fascists' attacks on her medical school colleagues in the February 1934 riots, Zinnemann replicates the shot of the overframed colonnade, replacing



Figure 5.3 *Julia* (1977; 20th Century-Fox). Produced by Richard Roth and Fred Zinnemann; directed by Fred Zinnemann. © Twentieth Century-Fox Pictures



Figure 5.4 *Julia* (1977; 20th Century-Fox). Produced by Richard Roth and Fred Zinnemann; directed by Fred Zinnemann. © Twentieth Century-Fox Pictures

the process of prewar nostalgia with that of anti-fascist heroism (f. 529). Hellman, after all, wasn't the only one to construct or reframe "heroic" Resistance history (Figure 5.4).

In his script, Sargent also highlights the problem of historical translation, and Zinnemann would pursue it as one of the film's key themes. As Lillian tells of

her gradual understanding of Julia's warnings about fascism, the camera pulls into a crane shot, following the two as they cross the quad to Julia's rooms. Yet, paradoxically, we cannot hear what Julia says and what Lillian claims she now understands. There isn't even an illusion of historical unity between evidence and interpretation. Hellman's "historical" voice has obliterated Julia's original voice. In one sense, this sequence evokes *Citizen Kane's News on the March* biopic, in which Kane is accused of being both a communist and a fascist. Ironically, when Kane attempts to define himself ("I am, have been, and will be only one thing – an American"), this is rendered as a silent intertitle. Voice, text, and image are separated; we never hear his own voice articulate a personal statement.

But Zinnemann and Sargent push the idea of translation further in *Julia*. When they are children, Lillian cannot comprehend Julia's frustration with her wealthy family's refusal to help the poor, and, later, Julia's enthusiasm for socialism and Vienna's Floridsdorf district in the 1920s. Hellman also reveals that she cannot understand the threat of Hitler, despite Julia's early warnings. When she visits Julia in a Vienna hospital, Julia tries to communicate silently, with her hands, that Lillian must go and seek someone; Lillian replies despondently: "I don't know what you mean." Zinnemann follows this scene with a silent shot of the two sailing in upstate New York. Again, we cannot hear their words. When Hellman returns to consciousness, Julia has disappeared. A note related in voice-over makes nothing clearer to Lillian. As Hellman wrote in *Pentimento*, Julia's note included the phrase "[s]omething else is needed," something she realized only later related to their school days, when they were translating Latin and missed a word (Hellman 1979: 427–428).

History, regardless of whether it's written or filmed, involves tricky editing and attempts at authenticity. Unlike the neat chronology and careful presentation of the 1930s' masculine biopics (*Clive of India*, 1935; *Sutter's Gold*, 1936; *The Story of Alexander Graham Bell*, 1939; *Wilson*, 1944), *Julia's* narrative is neither perfect nor polished. It, like Hellman's *Children's Hour*, and even like Thompson's search in *Citizen Kane*, is mostly a work in progress. *Julia's* refusal to go in chronological order, to separate time and space into distinct sequences, to invest the narrator with omniscience, are all choices that break down traditional boundaries between history, fiction, and memoir. Arguably Welles and Mankiewicz did this for Charles Foster Kane/William Randolph Hearst. Yet the stakes are arguably higher for revisionist women's history and its narratives of resistance to traditional "heroic" ideals and methods for adapting and valorizing their lives. Working closely with Alvin Sargent's script, Zinnemann went further, casting his film loose from the corrupted text of Hellman's "biographical" Resistance tale, blurring his focus, muting dialog, separating sound and image. Late in the film, Julia's murder is juxtaposed with Lillian's bored response at a Moscow performance of *Hamlet*. As the assassin drives the knife through Julia's body, applause erupts, waking a sleepy Hellman. For Zinnemann, Hellman's Julia, her heroic life and death, and "History" itself are staged events, like *Hamlet* or *The Children's Hour* (Figure 5.5).



Figure 5.5 *Julia* (1977; 20th Century-Fox). Produced by Richard Roth and Fred Zinnemann; directed by Fred Zinnemann. © Twentieth Century-Fox Pictures

“The Year of the Woman”

Zinnemann and Sargent’s exploration of women’s memory and voice-overs was arguably the most ambitious intervention in a growing historical interest in women’s oral history during the 1970s. Though oral histories had long been a staple of Resistance historiography and Holocaust survivor accounts, by the late 1970s historians and cultural critics began to discuss the historiographic consequences of joining oral history with women’s history. Paul Thompson’s *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* was a product of that era, and proceedings of women’s resistance conferences revealed the importance of documenting oral testimonies. Sherna Berger Gluck’s oral history of American suffragettes was received with great acclaim in 1976, but it was her classic article, “What’s so special about women? Women’s oral history,” that focused the debate. As Gluck summarized:

Women’s oral history, then, is a feminist encounter, even if the interviewee is not herself a feminist. It is the creation of a new type of material on women; it is the validation of women’s experiences; it is the communication among women of different generations; it is the discovery of our own roots and the development of a continuity which has been denied us in traditional historical accounts. (Gluck 1977: 5)

Julia also emerged in a year that Hollywood critics called “The Year of the Woman” (Cuskelly 1977). While *Annie Hall*, *Three Women*, and *An Unmarried Woman* played in theaters across the country, the public awaited the first National Women’s Conference in November, the first and only one sponsored by the

federal government. Part of the United Nations' creation of an international day of women's rights (March 8) and of a celebration of "International Women's Year," the conference addressed issues in childcare, financial and educational inequities, and human rights.

Within this widespread atmosphere of intellectual and social expectation, *Julia* emerged as a hugely popular film. Women viewers in particular loved *Julia* and viewed its historical content and approach on several historical levels. Zinnemann's complex narrative structure and interplay of sound bridges and non-chronological flashbacks were potentially confusing for mass audiences, but the director approached the film as both a development of themes in his Resistance works and an alternative form of narration for women's history. His post-production audience research contributed yet another facet to women's film history. In a series of unique interviews with the New Haven preview audience, the production staff probed women's reactions to the film. Many highlighted *Julia*'s flashbacks, voice-overs, and complex narration, and some of the interviewed female spectators were surprised that women actually participated in the Resistance, let alone led a *réseau*. But most of those women loved the film for precisely these reasons. Kate Sonderegger was delighted that finally there was "a strong woman's film" based upon real women's lives. A number of women like Leslie Blake were fans of Hellman and read women's fiction and history regularly; but even women who had just come to the film on the spur of the moment, like Olympia Delaci, responded to the material and its complex presentation: "I liked [. . .] the way that the war was seen through a woman's eyes and not like movies through the man's eyes as in John Wayne pictures on the battlefield. This role showed two women's roles during WW2" (Zinnemann 1976–1977: ff. 506, 507). While John Wayne's *They Were Expendable* (1945), *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949), and *The Longest Day* (1962) might be one way of entering the historical world of World War II, *Julia*'s focus on women's history and on alternatives to traditional military heroism broadened women's understanding of the era. Jill Greengrove went further, arguing that to know that *Julia* and Hellman were real women living through this era changed people's overall perspective on the film. *Julia* was not a conventional suspense narrative or war film, and, while others might find its pace and complex narration confusing or "irrelevant as a piece of fiction," its historical complexity "gave it depth, meaning." *Julia*'s unique material and narrative structure encouraged not only alternative understandings of the resistance to Nazis and of women's history, but also a different way of viewing Hollywood cinema.

In a year that Hollywood heralded as "The Year of the Woman," *Julia* stood out as the major women's historical epic. One argued: "*Julia* does for women what Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* and Zinnemann's own *A Man for All Seasons* did for men" (Baltake 1977). But, while audiences and many small-time reviewers loved *Julia*, major film critics Andrew Sarris, Vincent Canby, Pauline Kael, and Molly Haskell disliked it. Popular auteurism, championed by Sarris since the late 1960s, had always snubbed Zinnemann's work. But Sarris also loathed Hellman and what he

perceived to be Hollywood's project to heroize her. Though the revelations about Hellman's historical inventions were in the future, Canby (1977) poked fun at the "conventional" soft-focus flashbacks of Julia and complained that the film was "an illusive narrative fragment in desperate need of further amplification," little realizing that Julia's shadowy, ambiguous historical presence identified a central problem in rendering the history of women by traditional means. Its fragmentary oral history couldn't trumpet the great success/backstory of *Young Mr. Lincoln*, or even of *Citizen Kane*; it amplified only what was marginalized, undocumented, and historically "imperfect." Kael, a long-time defendant of *Citizen Kane*'s screenwriter Herman Mankiewicz, and the film's status as a Hollywood biopic in a tradition developed from the 1930s, almost perversely ignored Alvin Sargent's innovative script with its complex meditations on women's history and memory. Haskell, whose much-quoted *From Reverence to Rape* (1977) lambasted Hollywood's alleged stereotyped portrayal of women (in the days before feminist film criticism transformed the study of Hollywood cinema), also resisted *Julia*'s obvious appeal as a prestige film about two American women and the way important women have been lost to the historical record (Haskell 1977).

For some, *Julia* would be a frustrating enigma, which fell short of the standard impressive historical epics – *A Man for All Seasons* and *Lawrence of Arabia* – and lacked the "auteurist" complexity and critical accolades of *Citizen Kane*. For others, its portrait of female heroism was too impressive to be credible. To a certain extent, this was true: Hellman, who had made a career of not naming names, was eventually discredited by her former public virtue in refusing to identify Julia. But, had Hellman written truthfully about American heroines Muriel Gardiner and Virginia Hall or French *résistante* Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, would Twentieth Century-Fox have filmed the property as a major historical film? Would these women's lives have been "appropriate" and "believable" historical subjects for Haskell and Kael? Would the lives of truly heroic women always be too unbelievable for film critics?

In the early 1970s, several prominent feminist historians had written that traditional explorations of women's history, which heroized the individual, did so because they resembled men in their public achievements (Gordon, Buhle, and Schrom 1971). They argued, to paraphrase Julia, that something else was needed. The exploration of formerly unknown women needed a new content and a new form of historiography. In *The Long Road of Women's Memory*, originally published in 1916, Jane Addams looks at the pasts of poor immigrant women and focuses on the impact a spurious tale has on prompting the revelation of women's stories that otherwise would have been lost to posterity. Regardless of their accuracy, Addams believed, memory and oral testimony were key to both "interpreting and appealing life for the individual, and [...] its activity as a selective agency for social reorganization" (Addams 2002: 5). Is Zinnemann's *Julia* another such paradox: a text that soothed Hellman and Hollywood with a sense of political self-righteousness and historical worth, but one that gave audiences a new content, form, and social meaning for women's historical cinema?

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