CHAPTER ONE

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Introduction:
Gender in Film at the
End of the Twentieth Century

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If the past one hundred years have been the Age of the Electron (com-
puters, microphones, telephones, film projectors and cameras, the chem-
istry of film processing, the elimination of night) and of the Fracture
(Joyce, Godard, the news story, the bureaucracy, the advertisement, cor-
porate diversification, the remote control), they have also been the Age
of the Chromosome (gene-splicing, the clone, the male and the female).
Indeed, social mobility (the need for and possibility of change, rooted in
the post-Feudal division of experience and self), technology, which made
possible both the exploitation of other people's work and the systematic
perusal of their activity, and gender have been deeply interconnected; so
that gender has been established as something to spy on *and* a way of
spying (Mulvey), something to profit by (Armstrong and Armstrong),
and a kit-bag of occupational and recreational tricks as well. Before 1925
it was already not only possible but internationally necessary for men
and women to conceive of themselves in terms of images held up not as
static aesthetic ideals but as a shuttling currency of representation, and
the movie star, originally invented for economic diversification in film
production (Gomery), was both a cause and an effect of this situation.

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Further, in the aftermath of the First World War, the nineteenth-century male was broken, and the nineteenth-century female was obsolete. The change in the structure of labor concomitant with the Second World War produced a state of affairs in which gender identity was only a shard in the ineffable mosaic of the self, when earlier it had been more diffuse and more thoroughly integrated both socially, theologically, politically, and philosophically in a worldview where people were known, if fixed, markers in a relatively predictable scene. Gender had become a mask that could be worn—and taken off—so that by the end of the twentieth century the entity that had once been seen as a solid biological fact was now a matter of cultural, linguistic, dramaturgical, and economic convention, a probability, a ghost.

Seen in the contemporary context, some of the more notable developments in gender portrayal in film from 1960 onward may seem tacit, unremarkable, even regular, not to say "naturalized." The rejection of behavioral conventions that began in many ways with Hitchcock—a flattening of the aesthetic of prudery, a motive toward adventure in women and a comprehending softness in men—was developed by producers and responded to by audiences in terms of comedy (*Cat Ballou* [1965], *The Apartment* [1960]) and serious drama alike (Claire Bloom and Richard Burton in *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* [1965]). By the end of the 1980s the active, protean female was herself so conventionalized that audiences watching *Thelma & Louise* could be astounded only by the sad gravity of the ending, in which it was possible to read the protagonists' adventure as having been brutally curbed. An age of mobility and fracture demanded *moments*: compactions and reductions of experience *between which* it was possible to move; and experience had to be chiseled, battered, exploded in order to seem momentary. So, gender portraits revealed a certain *ad hoc* situational focus, an address to the exigencies of circumstance, even as circumstances—contexts—had to be seen as changeable, as way-stations that could be points of departure and arrival. Gender was *for the moment*, for the scene, and changed with some frequency. And it was to the prison of the nineteenth century—perhaps especially the very late nineteenth century—that we confined those whose gender performance and/or sexual need seemed wearily fixed or obsessive, such as von Eschenbach (Dirk Bogarde) in Visconti's *Death in Venice*.

Similarly, our fascination for telecommunications and electric light made for visions with new kinds of shadow. Darkness now held not the mere scaffolding upon which a perduring gender identity had been built

(on the use of scaffoldings in general, it is helpful to watch Fellini's *8 1/2* [1963]) but also the potential to be transformed instantaneously—shockingly—into highlight. With the telephone, distance could be shrunk, the "here" made instantly into the "there." As with the new light, and with film in general, there were a myriad possible illuminations and visions of the male and the female, and with every new angle, every new cast of light and shadow, every new moment, a new gendered being was possible. So it is that films about gender confusion (*Dressed to Kill* [1980], *The Year of Living Dangerously* [1982]) could proliferate and be read as being sensible, as being features of the given terrain and not obstructive confusions themselves.

It hardly need be said, indeed, that by the 1990s the screen was teeming with new types. Following Bette Davis (*All about Eve* [1950]) and Barbara Stanwyck (*No Man of Her Own* [1949]), pariahs and paragons in their time, to be sure, the more codified and bourgeois Janet Leigh (*Touch of Evil* [1958]; *Psycho* [1960]) and Jill St. John (*Tony Rome* [1967]) were transmogrified into Jennifer Jason Leigh in *Single White Female* (1992), Demi Moore in *G. I. Jane* (1997), the hyperactive little Dot in *Animaniacs*, raspy Kathleen Turner, the diamond-cold Sharon Stone, the urchinesque Winona Ryder, the statuesque Susan Sarandon (in, say, Mazursky's *Tempest* [1982]), the kingly Vanessa Redgrave, the extraterrestrial Grace Jones. And the blindly self-assured, dignified James Stewart, Cary Grant, Gary Cooper, and John Wayne were shifted by way of the riddling music of first Humphrey Bogart, James Dean, and Montgomery Clift and later John Travolta into the sensitive, all-seeing, intellectual masculinities of Gene Hackman and Johnny Depp.

Of course gender is both an attribute and an experience. It has the characteristic of being structured—through a range of modes from hegemonic imposition to creative performance—from the outside, a topographic field, toward a pose and postulation that can be imagined as "inner"; but also of being felt sublimely and then constrained, an essence upon which, or toward which, conventionalized and conventionalizing rituals of bounding are applied. Butler has become noteworthy for articulating this distinction between the shaped and the expressed as one between "performative" and embodied gender, the former tending toward the space inhabited by Jamesonian postmodernism and the latter originating in the ethnoanthropological metaphysics of Mary Douglas. Her analysis does not make clear how performative gender is an essentially consumerist notion, a form of identification and acquisition through the

agency of packaging, or how experiential gender is propertied. A relatively long history of phenomenological and political-economic consideration precedes Douglas, to be sure, and a substantial body of thought, proceeding through Durkheim and William James to Goffman and the ethnomethodologists—especially Garfinkel's groundbreaking essay on passing—establishes the social character as a performed one.

As a symbolizing attribute, reformulated through staging, gender constitutes one of our many ways of dividing the world and then classifying and ordering the divisions. Resultant from an elaborate and culturally directed project of attribution is a class hierarchy of gender, a system of power, privilege, and past record that differentiates life chances and the quality of socially organized being. Seen from this point of view, gender is the stuff of the patriarchal system contemporary critics (like Firestone, Dworkin, and Modleski) have sensibly seen as an aggression and a hegemony. It is toward the hegemony of male dominance—a dominance, Marilyn French astutely points out, not so much of male persons as of male interests—that the spectral array of feminist argumentation has been aimed. And it is the hegemony of male dominance that critics who take films as representations of the social world in which they have been made claim to see typified, depicted, alluded to, or dismissed in most contemporary motion pictures. In this volume, for example, Gina Marchetti sees Clara Law's migration trilogy as a reference to a tension between patriarchal and traditional Chinese gender codes and the hybridizing pressures in the Chinese diaspora. That tension exists before films show it, as a feature of late-twentieth-century patterns of migration, acculturation, and socio-economic adaptation. The films *Autumn Moon, Farewell, China,* and *Floating Life* reflect it, at least partly. In the same critical vein, using film as reflection, Murray Forman writes about male-male interaction in Cronenberg's *Crash,* basing his argument on a sensitive perception of trends in behavior and lifestyle in the real world, typified and exemplified (directly) in narrative film. Cronenberg is thus shown to be revealing something about masculinity in our culture, masculinity in real lived life, not merely playing a road game with wounded bodies.

Two things can be said broadly about gender as a socially attributed characteristic, at the end of the twentieth century. It looks different than it did before, and its looks, as symbols to be read as verisimilitudinous, are more problematic.

As a mask, or public face—how many genders are there, and what suffices as a presentation of any one of them?—gender is constructed and

disported through the agency of conventions, and as the century has worn on, these have significantly changed. Men have seemed to acquire delicacy, but a sort that lacks maturity; perhaps it could be said they have preserved childish sensitivities—see Ballard in *Crash* by way of Forman, or Ralph Fiennes's performance in Bigelow's *Strange Days* by way of Barry Keith Grant. Women have become more serious, often, in films admired and also loathed by female critics and viewers—such as *Thelma & Louise*—dangerously so (for them and for men they encounter). Janice R. Welsch's discussion of Ridley Scott's important film reveals some of the latent reasons why its audience should have been so split. And Lenuta Giukin's foray into the world of Hong Kong action pictures displays variants of the cross-dressing female action hero, raising the importance of costume in the gender masquerade. Hamid Naficy's eloquent analysis of the films of Rakhshan Banietemad positions her work as a methodical breakout against traditional gender conventions of the Iranian culture in which both the work and the working are embedded. Contrariwise, Michael DeAngelis provides a reading of Johnny Depp's performance in *Dead Man* as a model of a rule-breaking and revolutionary form of manhood. And Kevin S. Sandler's analysis of *Space Jam* and the Warner Bros. cartoon crowd nicely shows that gender can be pinned to the flat surface of animated, as well as three-dimensional, being.

Indeed, it is virtually impossible at the turn of the century to regard gendered portrayals in film—certainly Western film, but increasingly film around the globe, as Naficy, Marchetti, Giukin, and Woodward demonstrate—as straightforwardly prescribed by the Victorian conventions that guided filmmakers even through the refractive 1960s. Walter Bryan had appeared, if only momentarily, as a sensitive flower-sniffing male as early as 1928 (in *Queen Kelly*), but male sensitivity was framed (and closeted) as quirkiness through the 1930s and 1940s (Cary Grant in *Bringing Up Baby* [1938]), emerging in the 1950s as psychopathology (James Stewart in *Vertigo* [1958]). From *Easy Rider* (1969) through the 1970s, with few exceptions, sensitive males were inward and presocial; a nice example is Elliott Gould's chilling portrayal in Bergman's *The Touch* (1971).

And through the history of film, again with only sporadic—even if well-publicized—contradictions, women were emotive and powerless. The image of Monroe on the subway grating from *The Seven Year Itch* (1955) is an icon of self-indulgent, even solipsistic, nervosity constructed as beautiful. Until Jane Fonda's proactive, power-conscious, eponymous performance as Klute (1971), only Hitchcockian female protagonists

could be counted on for intellectual capability (Doris Day in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* [1956]), dramaturgical skill ("Tippi" Hedren in *Marnie* [1964]), and active curiosity (Julie Andrews in *Torn Curtain* [1966]), even if these qualities were camouflaged within the culturally approved rhetoric of home, love, marriage, and motherhood. The purposive woman of the late twentieth century—Louise (Susan Sarandon) in *Thelma & Louise,* the eponymous *Fifth Element,* Leeloo (Milla Jovovich), Luc Besson's Nikita (Anne Parillaud), Lelaina Pierce (Winona Ryder) in *Reality Bites* (1994), Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) in *Alien* (1979)—seems to emerge from the apparently ominous but ultimately vulnerable *femme fatale* by way of the kind of transformation effected upon the "good" woman by Hitchcock, or, say, Samuel Fuller in *The Naked Kiss* (1964): the moral power of the female is stripped completely away from her sexuality and grounded, as men's morality was, in practice, work, socialization, position, class. What is then made possible, late in the 1990s, is the kind of portrait of femininity we see in Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth* (1998): an eager and sensitive yet inconstant female Passion capable of being annealed into a fierce, feelingless female Purpose.

Gender styles, at any rate, have been at least inverted, so that Marilyn Monroe can survive only as a comedic figure, and so that the comedic figure that was once Gloria Swanson in *Sunset Blvd.* (1950) is now hard and practical and utterly real. Mastroianni's Guido in *8 1/2* spawns hundreds of other confused, static, pretty, and manipulable men—from John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) through Will Smith in *Six Degrees of Separation* (1993) to Ethan Hawke in *Great Expectations* (1998)—all of them beginning, as Leslie Fiedler put it in 1965, "to retrieve for themselves the cavalier role once piously and class-consciously surrendered to women: *that of being beautiful and being loved.*" Yet, consistently, beauty is powerlessness, so access to sexual reward meted out by the state as a means of assuring and promoting valued militaristic behavior (see Harris) can now be seen in films as not only the marketing to strong men of gorgeous (read helpless) women but also the marketing to men who can successfully connive and strategize of pretty, and militarily inutile, boys. John Sakeris has explored the disempowerment of the good-looking "sissy" at the hands of the industrial establishment in his study of the gay image, and particularly *In & Out.*

So the masks of gender are different—switched, turned upside-down, dragged inside-out. When I was growing up in the 1950s, however, something could have been said about the way gender identity was

styled and worn that cannot so easily or so unambiguously be said today. Regardless of what it looked like, the mask was sufficiently proximate to the face, and so rarely—if ever—adjusted or removed, that it could be thought to have a genuinely descriptive, even predictive, value. If gender was a performance, it was seamless. To go even further—as far, say, as critics and thinkers tended to go at that time—the mask was sufficiently unremoved from the face as to be equivalent to it; so, at least in everyday life, there was no mask. What we would now quite confidently call the "masquerade"—a scam that no reasonable thinker can take as being *really about* our lives—*did* describe and reflect the social world. As Thomas and Znaniecki put it, things believed to be real were real in their consequences. Though the imagining of some things to be real was one's only available option: women, for example, behaved as though they held positions subordinate to men's, but in the 1950s they had few options to do otherwise; then they were indeed subordinate; their power was mainly the power to gossip, inform, and effect discourse. From the early 1950s onward women did not tend to provide family incomes, and they exercised only as much control as their husbands delegated. Flamboyant contemporary parodies of this era, such as *Pleasantville* (1998) or the somewhat more ancient *Back to the Future* (1985), are very accurate in this respect.

But the masks of gender in the late 1990s may be less rooted in cultural practice, an expression of hope more than social fact; or a clever deception built and re-built to guide us away from the pathway to equality instead of toward it. Surely, much of the critique in this book seems perceptively to note a conservative, atavistic political abreaction beneath the surface of the apparently renovated society of sensitized men and empowered women we see laid before us on movie screens day after day. Liberation is everywhere, *but only as a garb*; and under it is the same old disenfranchisement, the same old inequality, perhaps even more brutal now than ever because painted as something else. Many of these chapters hint at what Barry Keith Grant openly suggests, that "new" filmic treatments are not as new as they purport to be. Sakeris sees the dispersion of homosexual portraiture with suspicion because at the core films continue to place gays in narrative compromise. As much as they claim to be inventing new kinds of stories about new kinds of men and women, Grant and Sakeris both suggest, filmmakers continue the old hegemony, the old domination, the old formula, the old "truths." In her analysis of eating and gender, Rebecca Bell-Metereau wrestles with this analysis,

showing that a certain kind of dependent femininity is preserved in many filmic sequences that purport to adventure into new territory. While we have remodeled the masks and performances, then, we have also loosened the connection between performance and social structure so that what conditions look like matters less and less.

I think no recent film more compactly or more directly exemplifies both what has commonly come to be thought of as the reversal of gender roles and the persisting underlying hegemonic dominion of male control even in the face of it, than Norman René's bizarre and haunting *Prelude to a Kiss* (1992). A twisted Cinder(f)ella/Sleeping Beauty tale, this film centers on a chance meeting, and instant gravitational attraction, of unemployed and adorable Peter (Alec Baldwin) and bartender Rita (Meg Ryan). Discovering that they have much in common, and that they are in love, they fall in with one another and she is soon bringing him home to meet her conventional suburban parents (Patty Duke, Ned Beatty). They marry. In another part of town, however, Charlie, an aging Alzheimer's case (Sydney Walker) wanders away from his home, onto the public transit, and off to suburbia, where the wedding is taking place. Lured by the strains of the music, he finds his way into the party and at a crucial moment asks to kiss the bride. The identities, or personalities, of the two are preternaturally exchanged at this moment, Ryan becoming the old man; and the old man becoming the spirit and essence of Peter's new wife. It is Charlie, for example, in Rita's body, who accompanies Peter on the honeymoon.

This is a profoundly interesting film, for its many plays upon the Shakespearean and the Hollywoodian; but it illustrates my present point powerfully in two moments. First, Peter's and Rita's "new"—that is, 90s—masculinity and femininity are shown very early in the film as they meet at a party given by a mutual friend (Stanley Tucci). Dancing to the Divinyls' song "I Touch Myself," Rita, leonine, Kaliesque, and artfully aggressive, virtually pounces upon Peter, shy, bespectacled, intimidated, and almost literally floored by her. This is a moment that prepares us handily for Peter's journey of self-exploration and self-discovery in this film since Rita and the old man's escapade in one another's bodies will constitute a play-within-a-play in which old-fashioned femininity and masculinity are converted *in extremis*; and it is only by learning to accept the new gender styles, or, as the narrative has it, the transcendence of inner spirit over outward manifestation enacted in this extended charade, that Peter will be able to keep his bearings and love his wife while she

seems to be an old man. Neither Baldwin nor Ryan has ever given a more intelligent and meticulous performance.

But *is* Rita not passive, nor "girlish," as the allegorical structure permits the film to hint? *Does* she participate in the dominant culture that is Peter's by birth and that, indeed, he must work hard to escape even briefly? The narrative requirement, in scenes before the identity exchange, that the two must not only marry but do so in a conventional, bourgeois, even suburban style; or that when they have a fight later on she should "go home to mother"; or that Peter must gain the approval of her parents, but especially her father, before the wedding can take place position this film on one level at least as a conventional gender portrait in an age when Hollywood takes some credit for flaunting conventionality. And old Charlie, as Rita's replacement, is poetic and soft, not muscular (like Rita's dad). The bizarreness of the film not only increases its aesthetic effect (and powerfully) but also aligns it with the project of critical unconventionality Hollywood extends through other "inverted" gender depictions—River Phoenix's many "soft" roles, for example, as in *My Own Private Idaho* (New Line Cinema, 1991) or *Running on Empty* (Warner, 1988) or Keanu Reeves's in *Little Buddha* (Miramax, 1993). The gender portraits are fascinating but also phantasmagorical.

It is, however, hardly necessary to watch films hungrily in order to derive this kind of reportorial analysis of gender as a social fact. If gender is seen as an identifier (of both class and status), it is essentially grammatical, part of a language that bounds, cuts, interrelates, negotiates, contains, and ultimately disperses a socially organized and now typically stratified world. To see this and derive a consistent argument about and against the enormous disparities between men's and women's experience in capitalist society, one need only look at snapshots or advertising photography, as Goffman has nicely shown; read the newspaper to see which articles, about what demographic categories, are placed where (see Miller); simply look around, as Greer did; or examine financial statistics, like Wolf. Berger's ground-breaking *Ways of Seeing* and Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," which followed it, do, in a way, examine and catalog, focusing on pictorial and narrative instantiations of power imbalances taken as reflections of "real" or "typical" conditions in the social world. But one can analyze the turns of plot, character developments, body positions, and narrative outcomes in this way *without* reference to most of what makes film filmic: movement, memory, illumination, harmony, composition, unity, fracture, echo, pulse, uncertainty, need, subjectivity.

Each of us who experiences life, no matter how it is politically organized or culturally constructed for us, knows, too—as much as convention, portrayal, privilege, position, and social form—the facts of embodiment and desire, duration and motion, illumination and enchantment, composition and repose. So it is that we are not only social subjects and constructors of meaning but also speakers with memory. And so it is that we can take films not only as documents but also as expressions, as poiesis. If a film can show us a gendered individual whom we can recognize, and if it can show how social forces conspire to shape and constrain classes according to classifications of gender, it can also narrate a circumstance we apprehend and experience as gendered *viewers*. A history of film as a gendering culture in itself can be written. Without recourse to a group of guyings that affix any given narrative to some typical cultural base in an "actual" world, we can discover in the history of our own observation and response a filmic continuity—indeed, with generations—which culturizes us as a gendered, really generic, audience. As an artistic world, the world of film is far too complex to contain in its surface only males and females, and only one type of each for that matter. What is the diva in *The Fifth Element* (1997), a female? What is Yoda, a male? *The Neverending Story* (1984) has Rolf Zehetbauer's characteristic, generic stone wall, neither male nor female, but rockiness. *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *Star Trek* (1979) have generic spaceships, oddly formed, swiftly and variably— even sexily—moving. If in watching a film we open ourselves to the fully expansive range of stimulation offered; if we listen not only to every line of dialogue but also to every nuance multiply buried in every line—and if we not only watch the objective, commercial content of each shot but also attempt to appreciate the compositional qualities of the surface a shot presents—and if we also take the sorts of pains Michel Chion has taken to hear the reverberations, philosophical and musical, of sounds—and if we then ask, how is this experience apprehended and known as an embodiment for and by ourselves with others, we may come to some approximation of an engendered *experience* of film, an appreciation, that differs from a knowledgeable decoding. Could such an experience be fully and multiply articulated, some attempts at navigation, comparison, and acknowledgment might be made.

Watching film from this phenomenological perch, it is possible for the gendered viewer to acknowledge that gender is everywhere. And perhaps at the end of the century the examples of it that seem the most interesting are those that cannot claim to reflect sociologically upon the cul-

ture we live in: Scott's (Keanu Reeves) strange fear of Mike (River Phoenix) in *My Own Private Idaho,* his frantic sexual confusion: this is not mere homophobia, this is anxious attraction recognizing itself as such; or the awkward and beautiful mix of violence and innocence in the protagonist of *La Femme Nikita* (1990); Leonardo DiCaprio's stunning, electric presexuality in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape?* (1993); Winona Ryder's shocking vitiation in *The Age of Innocence* (1993); the combination of fragility and sophistication in Betty Buckley's Sondra Walker in *Frantic* (discussed in detail in this volume by Woodward); the limpid purposelessness of Vince Vaughn's Norman Bates in Van Sant's *Psycho*; or the frank centrality of the Lady Chablis (Frank Devau) in Eastwood's *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* (1997) to point at just a few. A paradigm deserving of serious attention, indeed—and studied in these pages by Gaylyn Studlar with an exceptionally sensitive and precise approach—is Tom Cruise, whose gendered presence is exemplified as a kind of paragon of capability. In his performances, a dance of skilled energy and focused intent preoccupies him from savoring his experience as we do, looking from outside and far away.

As we experience gender—as film, indeed, reflects and generates our experience of gender (over and above our recognition and observation of it)—we apprehend it as being to some degree mechanistic or wild, shared or private, expressive (musical) or withheld (pensive), bonded (to products, places, codes), or free. And in all of these dimensions, it unfolds, *pli selon pli.* A nice illustration of mechanized gender is given by both Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sharon Stone in Verhoeven's *Total Recall* (1990)— but indeed, Schwarzenegger can be counted on always to exemplify the gendered body that operates according to a blueprint. In the same way, the diabolical giant spider in *Wild Wild West* (1999) is a male aggressor, supplanting with its pistons and hydraulics the device of gender missing in the evil genius (Kenneth Branagh) who controls it. On the contrary, the gender of Edward Scissorhands (Johnny Depp) is wild, sweet because unsystematized. His flair for haircutting, for example, is naturalized, unpredictable, auteurist. Cruise's agility seems both mechanical and prodigious, but his smile and twinkly eyes are wild, animal, seductive. I think it can be argued that more and more films are curtailing this wildness, showing us mechanizations of gender.

We see gender privatized, internalized, made arcane and, in Brown's term, undemocratic (1961) if we consider Nikita in Besson's *La Femme Nikita.* A similarly arcane, because excessive and almost masturbatory,

femaleness is Bette Midler's in, say, Mazursky's *Down and Out in Beverly Hills* (1986). But gender is transacted and shared in the filmic work of Roman Polanski, as we see in Steven Woodward's keen analysis, and indeed transacted in terms of the space of social activity. Gender is also a transacted, rather than an internalized, self-referential feature in the case of the motorcycle girls Frances Gateward discusses, and her analysis, indeed, while being both critical and sociological, suggests a culture in which gendered experience has no private component at all. David Desser's discussion of the neurotic Jewish screen male of *Deconstructing Harry* (1997), *Shadows and Fog* (1992), or *Oedipus Wrecks* (1989), now repositioned in prime time network television as a significant sex object, openly poses the self-referential against the public face of masculinity: self-referentiality, inwardness, and ultimately pensive maleness are the key features of the new media character that interests him. It is especially fascinating to see that this newly inward male inhabits television screens even more comfortably than film ones. We can see in Desser's essay, then, not only precisely how television is recasting the sexually alluring male in relation to Jewish intellectualism, but at the same time how this striking trend is *not* being widely echoed in film. Other scholarship might well explore this territorializing of "personality."

For expressive gender, projecting itself outward, we need look no further than *Basic Instinct* (1992) or *Saturday Night Fever*, while Clint Eastwood's *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* is a pensive, even meditative, treatment of cases themselves organized around inwardness and gendered thought. As we moved to the end of the century, perhaps filmic gender was increasingly privatized and pensive, departing from a set of earlier conventions that called for openly displayed and even sung gender, the essence Garth Jowett discusses in his autobiographical treatment of the American film musical. Certainly we are seeing more screen cues about gender as self-absorption, self-manipulation, self-pleasuring, self-consciousness, and antisociality. Almost never sung about, gender is now coded (for the internet). Gender as withdrawal is also a latent analytical theme in Krin Gabbard's analysis of jazz nerds, who experience themselves as gendered beings (and invite us to share in their experience) by retreating into desire, memory, feeling, and aesthetics. What they know of jazz is only an index of what they feel.

Jowett's memoir brings another feature of gender to the fore. It is not always a presence, aesthetic and political, but is sometimes—indeed chillingly—a memory. His reflection on the present in terms of the past

makes it especially poignant, perhaps, that much theoretical reflection casts the past in terms of the present. In this time of news bites and relentless demands for propriety, it can be a serious moral challenge to consider sexual morality and gender definition, as they were constructed in the past, as responses that were typically treated as serious and sensible at the time. Jowett's excursion also shows how present-day social construction can be rooted in prior assumption, how analytical scholarship about film can be rooted in personal experience and feeling rather than suavely disconnected from it, and how film theory in general must make sense of actual personal audience reception in a language also sensitive to cultural construction and politically biased interpretation. That many of the films written about in his essay were made earlier in the century than most of the other films referred to in this volume has only a surface bizarreness: by carefully reading Jowett in the context of the other pieces, we see with a newly enriched clarity what contemporary filmic gender constructions *are not*.

"Bondedness" is a way of seeing the manifestation of gender as a function of an object (product), place (system), or idea (ideology) systematically operated as a basis for performance. The gender of athleticism, for example, exists in the context of the playing field and its associated venues, a theme touched upon as Sandler discusses the marketing synergies that lay at the basis of the affiliation between Michael Jordan and Bugs Bunny. The gender of stardom, as Gaylyn Studlar's intriguing treatment of masculinity shows, is linked to a production system and its economic need to maintain public appeal. While all gender construction relies upon bonding to some degree, some is noteworthy because beyond the bonding there is little or no experienced identity. Movie stars of the golden age give an extreme example, retreating, as they often did, into unfamiliar status as gendered beings when they existed in the depths of their personal privacies. The "starlet" *was*, both in terms of production and experience, the pose, the makeup, the setting, the costume, the light by means of which she was built in the studio. A delightful and interesting limiting case of bonded gender is that experienced in the face of animated cartoons, which are, after all, as Sandler suggests here, nothing but lines inside a frame.

That screen gender should now address our knowledge of the social world, our labeling and our power structure and our systematic social and cultural analysis, is one of its dominant features, then. Another is its call to us as experiencing beings with an aesthetic sense and a feeling of

being in the world. While all of the chapters in this book address one or the other, or both, of these features, I have chosen to organize them somewhat loosely into three groupings. The first, "Screened Gender beyond the Hollywood Hills," gathers analyses of film outside the dominant, conventionalizing North American scene which will have shaped the experience of most readers of this book. While it cannot represent all of what was going on in film production around the world at the end of the century, it does nicely suggest the range of activity one can find and imply that there is use in looking for such a range of activity. These essays, along with those in the second section, "Genders and Doings," articulate together a cultural and structural approach, concentrating on gender identity as a known and knowable organized entity, a status, an aspect of the social world. Then, in "Paragons and Pariahs," come discussions of exemplifications of gender as an extremity, an infraction, a violation, a disturbance—all of which are intended to provoke thought about gender as a facet of experience. By closely examining what paragons and pariahs are, we may come to understand ourselves as readers and viewers who approach the world through gendered, but perhaps even marginalized, sight.

A final word. All of these chapters reflect in some touching depth not only the professional but also the personal concerns and fascinations of the authors. These are the pieces the writers have been wanting to write, but holding back, now offered as a contribution to a kind of statement about where film is, and where we are as watchers of it, at a significant enough point in history. Much care has been taken to ensure that the chapters are widely accessible, and that they reflect a broad spectrum of analytical approaches, theoretical backgrounds, and filmic concentrations. By and large, they deal with film from about 1980 onward. And they should interest students of gender, popular culture, visual theory, history, politics, culture, and language; and, above all, lovers of film.

André Bazin wrote that cinema gives us a world that accords with our desire. The films discussed here, and others like them, should be taken seriously: as evidence about the kind of world we live in; as a reflection of, or at least a hint about, what we wish our world to be. If gender is inescapable, it is also not fixed. May the reader take pleasure and find illumination in these discussions of the gendered images that flicker on our screens and wonder, perhaps, what the screen *is* that it should query us precisely in this enchanting, yet perturbing, way.

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