contrôle inconsciemment le subconscient de Valenze. Leur symbiose est destructrice parce qu'elle est incomplète, il y a une impossibilité de fusion entre ces deux êtres: l'un veut "rentrer" dans le corps de l'autre, et l'autre veut rentrer dans la tête de l'un.

C'est le déroulement soutenu d'action immobile. C'est aussi l'histoire d'une longue agonie sur fond de sado-masochisme. On imagine le lieu comme une salle de torture où l'imposeur se laisse aller à exiger du corps de l'autre, les pires contorsions et douleurs. Le masochisme nous apparaît dans toute sa vérité lorsqu'on apprend qu'en fait la victime contrôle le cerveau du bourreau. Le bourreau ne fait donc qu'exécuter les impulsions et les fantasmes de la victime.

Pendant toute la lecture nous ne pouvons nous empêcher de nous enfoncer avec les deux personnages dans un immense frisson. Nous assistons impuissants à la décomposition de deux êtres: elle est lente, pénible et vouée irrémédiablement à la mort. Il émane de cette énergie destructrice une puissance qui nous garde sous tension jusqu'à la fin.

Quelques éclairs fulgurants sur les supplices de Joarès: retour à l'enfance, manipulations du corps et de l'esprit nous laissent entendre qu'il se complaît dans la passivité. Serait-ce cette passivité féminine tellement décriée? Un malaise presque physique face à des gestes oubliés, anodins, comme prendre un enfant sous les aisselles; et j'ai mal dans mon corps, dans celui de mes enfants. Descriptions minutieuses de cauchemars semi-éveillés, d'engourdissement, de restes d'anesthésie, un long voyage souterrain. L'enfer, ce sont les neurones qui éclatent, la respiration qui s'anime indépendamment de la volonté, le sang qui chemine péniblement dans des méandres sans issue où nous nous tapissons, témoins à corps défendant.

Le terme technique employé par l'auteur pour cette prise de possession que Valenze fait subir à Joarès, c'est l'imposition. A son tour, l'auteur aussi nous fait subir cette imposition, car l'on ne peut s'empêcher de continuer la lecture, de suivre et de précéder ce piétinement de mots, de petites phrases qui nous entraînent dans un tourbillon au fond d'un inconnu visqueux, végétal, non humain.

Et maintenant relisons ces quelques phrases de Danielle Fournier (Arcade No.8. pages 54-55):

> *Si le modèle amoureux, et donc aussi le modèle d'écriture est d'introjecter l'objet, l'autre, le/la mâle ayant enfoui en lui/elle sa mère, le/la mâle se fait mâle-femme, prêt à cracher et à vomir ce que trop souvent il/elle ne peut supporter, le féminin, construit en adversaire, en Autre, une Loi, une Foi, envers qui le rapport deviendra non seulement impossible mais aussi duquel il y aura un vainqueur et un/e vaincu/e.*

Danielle Fournier nous parle ici d'un rapport à l'écriture. Ces méandres, ces souffrances c'est le cheminement de l'écriture et alors qui écrit qui? Qui s'écrit à travers chairs et sang? Valenze? Joarès? Agnès?

CHRONIQUE:

CINEMA

CELLULOID WOMEN: WHO IS IMITATING WHOM?

Claudia Clausius

For centuries woman has been instructed to console herself with her biological heritage as the creator of life. This effectively ignores the fact that, in our culture's dominant creation myth, God is the first creator; woman, so the story goes, was fashioned from Adam's rib, and thus only *recreates*. She isn't so much a creator as she is a perpetuator. Most admirable characteristics have been associated with men: "She had manly courage." Not surprisingly, then, in their strivings to gain equality, some women have tried to recreate themselves in the image of man. Rather than forging uniquely female identities and personalities they perpetuate the male myth. Man strives to be God-like, such a woman to be man-like. Carole Corbeil put it very well: "the shallow values don't change, just the genitals do."[1]

So entrenched is this system of values in the popular imagination that, when movies illustrate women going to absurd lengths to become male-like, the result does not so much travesty the actual male myth, as one would expect, as it succeeds in rendering its female victim ludicrous (even when it might originally have intended to demonstrate her determination and independence). The source of the problem is that the symbols are simply recycled, although the subject is now different. A new symbolic language must be developed before the necessary differentiation between male and female is effected.

A perfect example of the dislocation between "language" and subject is a recent film called *Wild Rose*. Here a woman miner is among those laid off during a temporary work shortage. During the interval her lover finds work on a fishing boat. When they are recalled by the mining company, she rejects her lover's offer to work with him on the boat and returns to the discrimination and hardship underground. As Corbeil describes it, "The last shots of the movie show her by the log cabin she is building single-handedly. She canoes off into the sunset: a women's just gotta do what she's gotta do." Even the title, *Wild Rose*, with its allusions to courtly love and Harlequin romance, evokes the feistiness of pouted lips, dishevelled hair and besmirched face.

Marcia Pally warns against films that the film industry is calling 'progressive,' but that are in reality conservative, often reactionary: "we can be seduced by the presence of complex, gritty 'truth.' As a film appears to tell it like it is, we come to trust it, to lower our skeptical guard and see it as a reflection of ourselves. Believing it, we're more apt to believe the 'message'

it peddles."[2] Since the Wild Rose herself seems content with her new-found liberation, we do not ask whether or not this Walden-like freedom is the best she could do. The important thing is that she succeeded where many a man would have failed.

Recent popular cinema extends to its female characters a premeditated 'freedom' that ensures a carefully calculated series of implications and reactions. The women recreate themselves according to traditional social prescriptions (*Experience Preferred But Not Necessary*); or they move within a script and among characters that compromise their strength and spirit (*Educating Rita*); or they are set into the masculine world of danger and adventure in which their actions and behavior serve only to give substance to male incomparability (*Star Wars, The Temple of Doom,* and *Romancing the Stone*).

Interesting in relation to this "recreation" idea is the conspicuously large number of current neo-Pygmalian movies. *Experience Preferred But Not Necessary* offers a particularly insidious example. A teenage girl in jeans, sneakers and an old sweater, struggles with her backpack while getting on a bus taking her to a summer waitressing job in a small Scottish hotel. In front of our heroine, a feminine, well-dressed, perfectly made-up young woman is gallantly helped with her suitcase by an admiring young man. The girl in jeans rolls her eyes at his obsequious manners, and we groan inwardly as the two of them spend the entire trip laughing and flirting together.

The cast of characters with whom she works in the hotel dining-room and kitchen are typical movie stereotypes: well-meaning, uneducated, working-class, on the look-out for a man or trying to keep the one they have. In an effort to help our heroine snag her man, the other waitresses "do her over." Her hair is teased into an absurdly large bouffant hairdo; she totters on unaccustomed high-heeled shoes, while looking uncomfortable and ungainly in an ill-fitting tight skirt and blouse. Her overly made-up face resembles a grotesque mask. In the end, she is a walking caricature of these woman's tastes and ideas: nevertheless, she gets her lover.

In the meantime she has also attracted the attention of the hostess of the hotel – an elegant woman of superior accent whose expensive car and clothes testify to her relationship with the hotel manager. She too sees the diamond beneath the rock. Luckily, this woman has style as well as good intentions – intentions that are validated by her own success. While the waitresses worry whether their boyfriends will ever marry them (one of them is even pregnant and contemplates suicide), she has a respectable job and a secure position. We listen with objective sympathy as the women in the kitchen fret over their love affairs; we watch with humorous compassion as they get ready for their dates, squeezing into clothes that are too tight for their fleshy bodies. The hostess, on the other hand, has the money to afford the best coiffeur and couturier in town. She and the girl drive off in her convertible sportscar and have lunch in an intimate little café. This time the cocoon-to-butterfly transformation proves successful; the girl emerges as the beauty we'd always suspected – complete with frilly dress and carefully wind-swept hair.

The heroine's options are thus restricted to two stereotypes which are predominantly based on social class. Armed with new confidence the girl climbs aboard the bus to go home. And this time it is she who elicits second glances and helpful hands. We last see her beside a handsome young man on the bus, laughing and enjoying her new-found "experience." We rejoice in her happiness. Our education has been witnessing the girl's 'education,' so that at the end of the film we applaud that which we laughed at in the beginning. We accept the implicit moral that in this world 'experience' is preferred.

In *Educating Rita* the heroine acquires an education that apparently takes her full circle. Rita, a hairdresser played by Julie Walters, gains admission to university in order to further her education. Her tutor, an English professor named Frank Bryant, played by Michael Caine, is at first irritated with her; but her naivety and enthusiasm soon disarm him. He begins to look to her to restore his mis-spent life. The esteem Rita evokes in the professor is essentially narcissistic. The prototypical Pygmalian story has not been updated.

The film balances precariously on its sets of stereotyped characters and incidents. Beside a wedding buffet a litle boy sneaks a drink while a little girl stuffs herself with cake. In the pub Rita's father and her husband Denny, with their heads together, join in singing an old song. Rita's mother sits by crying silently and says quietly: "There must be a better song to sing." Rita hides her birth-control pills

under a loose floor board so she can educate herself. During his remodelling of the house Denny finds Rita's hiding place; the couple's final fight occurs in, of all places, the kitchen, where Denny makes a bonfire of Rita's Ibsen and Chekov books. While he tries to improve their living conditions she connives to limit them.

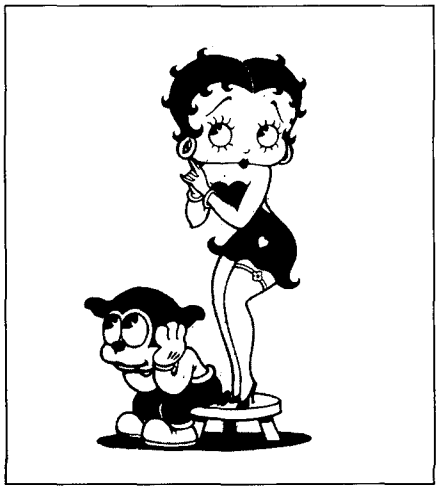
These scenes are intended to persuade the audience that the scriptwriter and director appreciate Rita's difficulty, that they are keenly aware of the obstacles working-class women encounter when they attempt to better their lives. But to balance a film on juxtaposed clichés is neither to offer insight into the obvious nor to imply any resolution, however tenuous. Indeed, the factual exposition often falls short of objectivity by interpreting the facts *for* us and directing us to a predetermined diagnosis of the problem.

Both Rita's mentors – her alcoholic tutor and her cultivated (if suicidal) room-mate Trish – ultimately serve her only as negative role models. More significantly, Rita herself, despite her infectious vivacity and quick intelligence, effects little change in either of her friends; she fails to temper their feelings of worthlessness. She refuses, though, to allow her determination to be undermined. This "carry-on-regardless" attitude simultaneously inflates and deflates her image as a strong woman because the film fails to elucidate any *real* recognition on Rita's part. Trish's suicide attempt and her tutor's alcoholism alert her to the discontent and cynicism of

the class to which she aspires, but insufficiently to penetrate her basically naive idealism. Rita's muttered avowal to Frank at the end of the film that she knows her high grade in the course "doesn't mean anything" sounds more like a modest disclaimer than an acknowledgement of the complexity of life. Nor do we feel that she ever comes to see that education represents the *means* of understanding life: she carries her books – Shaw, Lawrence, and Blake – in her mind, but not in her heart. We never witness Rita applying her knowledge to practical reality.

Nevertheless, in the end we do feel that Rita's final test of strength lies in her rejection of her tutor's invitation to accompany him to Australia. Yet her refusal coincides with the audience's moment of greatest sympathy – with *him*. The true source of this scene's impact resides in our unconsciously evaluating his personal loneliness higher than her personal independence. In identifying so strongly with Frank, we take a small step away from Rita; although we never seriously considered the possibility of a diferent ending, our feelings at the end are rather more wistful than joyful.

Today's adventure genre suggests a second kind of neo-Pygmalianism. In *My Fair Lady* Henry Higgins moans "Why can't a woman be more like a man?" Movies like the *Star Wars* epic, *The Temple of Doom* and *Romancing the Stone* depict women who have accepted the "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" principle. Here again the woman must proceed through male self-regard, self-love, and distrust of women before she can put herself forward without fear of rejection. The traditional values of courtly love are hereby inverted: now the woman must prove herself worthy of the man's attention. Courtship becomes a rite of passage through which



the woman's mettle is tested. The common ground upon which the sexes meet is not the magnetism of attracting opposites, but the comfort (for him) of the familiar and unthreatening. Although the woman reminds him of himself, she is never allowed to outgrow the resemblance sufficiently to undermine his superiority. No matter how feisty she is, the struggle against evil remains essentially his territory.

By its very nature the typical adventure story usually speeds along its story line at a precipitous pace. The main characters, who involve themselves in destroying the enemy and discovering the gold, are too occupied to indulge in soul-searching. The dramatic tension depends on plot rather than character development. When the man and woman are paired up as "Buddies" fighting a common foe, even the most basic potential sexual tension dissipates since she functions as a surrogate male.

Precisely this neutral 'transvestism' successfully suspends their sexual awareness of one another. The ambiguous enticement of Dietrich's husky voice, her trousers and trenchcoat, and the unapproachable aloofness of Garbo's femininity, were both essentially sexual in nature. Perhaps this "masculine" aspect made their allure more challenging than the predictable "sexiness" of the stock pin-up girl or sex-pot. Couples like Hepburn and Tracy, Bacall and Bogart, or Bergman and Bogart, create their own electricity because they sense the powerful sexual attraction they exert on one another. They may suspect it or circumvent it; but they do feel it and their eroticism charges us as well. The basically adolescent male characters who populate the adventure tales feel only the peevish irritation of a young boy for his baby sister or, worse yet, the neighbourhood girls who get in his way and spoil his fun. Princess Lea and Han Solo of *Star Wars* fame behave in a ludicrously pubescent fashion while trying to conceal their true feelings. Unlike the couples of earlier film history, where the central tension was generated at least as much by their conflicting faults and strengths as by their mutual admiration, today's couples adopt an adolescent plan of attack dictated solely by the dramatic exigencies of the script. In films like *Star Wars* and *The Temple of Doom* the personal animosity between hero and heroine evaporates the moment the enemy is vanquished. Far from providing a backdrop for their growth and change, today's films merely use the characters in the service of plot. Their story becomes subordinate to adventure.

The critics were unanimously disappointed in *The Temple of Doom* (the sequel to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*). The film fails to convey its parodistic intent, a fault that surely must be laid at the feet of its depiction of the central male character. Harrison Ford's Han Solo, whose ironic self-awareness endows him with both humanity and humour in *Star Wars*, plays Dr. Jones, savior of the starving Indian village, with a studied seriousness – thereby passing squarely onto the shoulders of the traditionally subordinate woman the entire burden of what parody there is. Exempting the hero/adventurer from the general caricature leaves his heroic stature intact.

The famous bug scene in the dungeons below the temple demonstrates how the film's parody functions on a selective basis. Dr. Jones and Short Round are just about to be perforated by a descending ceiling of giant spears; Willy, standing on the other side of the wall, must put her hand into a crevice full of spider webs and giant insects in order to activate the mechanism that will stop the ceiling's descent. Tense moments pass as Willy seems too squeamish to insert her hand into the bug-infested opening. In establishing a relation between Willy and the empathetic audience on the parodic level, the film saves the hero and his mission from derision; the myth of man as hero and savior, aloof and separate, remains intact.

In accordance with tradition Dr. Jones gets the girl at the end – the same girl he held at knifepoint as a hostage in the beginning of the film. Willy's final attempt at self-assertion, a classic case of the lady protesting too much, plays a crucial role in the romantic climax of the story in which the man demonstrates his superior knowledge of what is good for both of them. Dr. Jones literally whips Willy into shape as she submits, smilingly, amidst a bevy of grateful children.

Romancing the Stone is a brilliant mélange of traditions – a modern adventure tale with parodic elements in a Harlequin romance framework. A plain-Jane, pop-romance writer (played by Kathleen Turner) flies to Columbia to aid her kidnapped sister who has become embroiled in the criminal underworld. Upon her arrival in South America, she takes the wrong bus and soon finds herself on a deserted jungle road in the

middle of nowhere. Here she meets the hero (played by Michael Douglas), who lives a hermit-like existence and scours the rain forest for rare tropical birds he sells in an effort to save enough money to buy a yacht. Their first meeting on the road is, conventionally, less than auspicious. He blames her for the loss of an entire carload of full cages, but as soon as the shooting starts they join forces and flee the bandits. Unlike *The Temple of Doom*, here the heroine occasionally outwits her male protector – often at the most crucial moments. Nonetheless, she ultimately loses him to his yacht dream (after he has rescued her from an alligator and other antagonists).

She returns to New York and submits the entire story in book form (complete with happy-ever-after ending) to her publisher, who extols it as her best work to date. Plain-Jane who now stands transformed before us, with her curled hair loose and cascading down her shoulders, beautifully made-up and dressed. She replies languidly, "I was inspired." Her make-believe world of unfulfilled dreams has been lifted off the page and transferred to her reality – with the exception of a real-life unhappy ending. She then looks wistfully out the window and sadly makes her way home. In the street in front of her home she finds an enormous sailboat, high as a skyscraper. The hero raises one foot onto the side of the boat to show her his alligator-skin boots. Like the Neanderthal with his bear-skin, or the warrior with his eagle feathers, he must bring back from his quest a symbol of victory. She hands him her grocery bag and he helps her aboard their boat. Reality has improved upon art. The woman's previous existence – alone in her apartment with her hair tied back, in comfortable old clothes, in the company of her cat and her typewriter – has been vindicated as a *temporary* phase. Her lonely dreaming was only the trial period prior to her salvation by a hero who was previously only imaginatively alive. Long before the story begins she creates the man of her dreams; when she finally meets him, she fashions herself into the counterpart she so often has put into her novels. She only has to wait for her fiction to come true. He, on the other hand, must actively pursue his dream and cannot think of returning to claim her until his battle has been won.

The common denominator in all these films is comedy. Precisely *because* the central challenge is couched in comic terms are the means often mistaken for the end. Marcia Pally warned us against being influenced by the "gritty truth" of some movies; we must also be on our guard concerning the subject matter of comedies, and not let ourselves be fooled into believing that everything within the comic structure is allotted equal criticism. In typical comic fashion the films end with a couple as a symbol of balance, if not of equality. All problems are forgotten; everyone, on the screen and in the theatre, is in high spirits. And no one can argue with a happy ending.

[1]*The Globe and Mail* (6 September 1984).
[2]Marcia Pally, "Fool's Gold," *Film Comment* (May-June 1984), p. 28.

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CHRONIQUE:

MUSIC

"OUR TIME IS NOW" – THE CANADIAN WOMEN'S MUSIC AND CULTURAL FESTIVAL

through the eyes and ears of Heather Menzies

The man beside me was affable. A senior bureaucrat with CMHC en route to Winnipeg on business, he exercised the easy assumption that attends anyone flying at full fare on a weekday: he treated me as an equal – that is, to borrow from Virginia Woolf's brilliant observation, as an honorary male.

"Let's face it," he began expansively. We were discussing women's advancement, or lack thereof, into senior managerial ranks – whether in government or industry mattered little, for the plain truth in his view was that "most women still aren't prepared to make the sacrifices required to make it in the business world. Most women really want to be housewives," he said.

I asked why it should be an either/or affair for women when, as his boast of two children attested, it isn't for men. He said that business demands sacrifice, in the form of twelve to fourteen-hour days. I suggested it was time for a shorter work week. He said that international competition forbids this self-indulgence. I pointed out that less than 40 per cent of Canada's GNP is sensitive to foreign competition. He ignored me. I turned away, my spirits drooping, and knew once more why I was on my way to the first women's folk festival in Canada.

The women's movement is not a single-issue crusade, nor is it short-term. Its agenda is long: not only equal access for women to all opportunities in our society, but also the transformation of that society by bringing into all our institutions the feminist values and heritage which have been excluded so much in the past. This will take many lifetimes and, in each, will tax every one of us to the point of burnout. So we need events like the women's literary conference ("Women and Words/Les femmes et les mots," held in Vancouver in July, 1983, and reviewed in this issue of CWS/*cf*) and the women's folk festival ("Our Time is Now," held in Winnipeg over the Labour Day weekend, 1984) to restore our souls. They also stretch our minds and hearts to a larger