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by Miriam Hansen

> Occasionally the movies go mad. They have terrifying visions; they erupt in images that show the true face of society. Fortunately, however, they are healthy at the core. Their schizophrenic outbursts last only a few moments, then the curtain is lowered again and everything returns to normal.
>
> —Kracauer, "The Little Salesgirls Go to the Movies" (1927)[1]

In the context of discussions on cinematic spectatorship, the case of Rudolph Valentino demands attention, on historical as well as theoretical grounds. For the first time in film history, women spectators were perceived as a socially and economically significant group; female spectatorship was recognized as a mass phenomenon; and the films were explicitly addressed to a female spectator, regardless of the actual composition of the audience. As Hollywood manufactured the Valentino legend, promoting the fusion of real life and screen persona that makes a star, Valentino's female admirers in effect became part of that legend. Never before was the discourse on fan behavior so strongly marked by the terms of sexual difference, and never again was spectatorship so explicitly linked to the discourse on female desire. This conjunction was to inform Valentinian mythology for decades to come—as the following cover prose from various biographies illustrates:

> Lean, hot-eyed and Latin, Valentino was every woman's dream. . . .
>
> On screen and off, his smoldering glance ignited fierce sexual fires in millions of hearts. . . .
>
> They breathed the words "The Sheik" like a prayer on their lips. They tried to tear his clothes off when he left the theater. . . .
>
> The studio telephones could not handle the thousands of calls from women. They begged for any job that would permit even a momentary glimpse of Valentino. Gladly they offered to work without pay.[2]

While these biographies rarely agree on any facts concerning Valentino's life, they stereotypically relate his personal success and suffering to the ongoing crisis of American cultural and social values.[3] Valentino's body, in more than one sense, became the site of contradictions that had erupted with World War I. His problematic centrality and violence of impact unprecedented for a film star are inextricably linked to the particular historical constellation that made him as

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well as destoyed him. This constellation I see delineated, tentatively, by developments partly caused by, partly in response to the upheaval of gender relations during the war, such as the massive integration of women into the work force and their emergence as a primary target in the shift to consumer economy; the partial breakdown of gender-specific divisions of labor and a blurring of traditional delimitations of public and private; the need to redefine notions of femininity in terms other than domesticity and motherhood; the image of the New Woman promoted along with a demonstrative liberalization of sexual behavior and lifestyles; the emergence of the companionate marriage.[4]

However one may interpret the dialectics of women's so-called emancipation and their integration into a consumer culture, women did gain a considerable degree of public visibility in those years, and the cinema was one of the places in which this increased social and economic significance was acknowledged, in whatever distorted manner. The orientation of the market towards a female spectator/consumer opened up a potential gap between traditional patriarchal ideology on the one hand and the recognition of female experience, needs, fantasies on the other, albeit for purposes of immediate commercial exploitation and eventual containment.[5] It is in this gap that the Valentino phenomenon deserves to be read, as a significant yet precarious moment in the changing discourse on femininity and sexuality. Precarious, not least, because it sidetracked that discourse to question standards of masculinity, destabilizing them with connotations of sexual ambiguity, social marginality, and ethnic/racial otherness.

Valentino also presents a challenge to feminist film theory, in particular as it developed during the 1970s within the framework of psychoanalysis and semiology. This debate inescapably returns to Laura Mulvey's essay on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) which first spelled out the implications of Lacanian-Althusserian models of spectatorship (Metz, Baudry) for a critique of patriarchal cinema. Whatever its limitations and blind spots, the significance of Mulvey's argument lies in her description of the ways in which the classical Hollywood film perpetuates sexual imbalance in the very conventions through which it engages its viewer as subject—its modes of organizing vision and structuring narratives. These conventions, drawing on psychic mechanisms of voyeurism, fetishism, and narcissism, depend upon and reproduce the conventional polarity of the male as the agent of the "look" and the image of woman as object of both spectacle and narrative. In aligning spectatorial pleasure with a hierarchical system of sexual difference, classical American cinema inevitably entails what Mulvey calls "a 'masculinization' of the spectator position, regardless of the actual sex (or possible deviance) of any real live movie-goer."[6]

Besides its somewhat monolithic notion of classical cinema and provocatively Manichean stance on visual pleasure, Mulvey's argument has been criticized frequently for the difficulty of conceptualizing a female spectator other than in terms of an absence.[7] In the decade since Mulvey's essay was published, however, feminist critics have attempted to rescue female spectatorship from its "locus of impossibility," in particular in areas elided by the focus on women's systematic

exclusion. One such area is the body of films within the Hollywood tradition which are addressed to female audiences and marketed as such; for example, the "woman's film" of the 1940s and other variants of melodrama centering on female protagonists and their world. Another area of feminist investigation, less clearly delineated, is the question of pleasure and attendant processes of identification experienced by women spectators (including feminist critics) in the actual reception of mainstream films, even with genres devoted to male heroes and activities, such as the Western or the gangster film.

With regard to the latter, Mulvey, reconsidering her earlier argument, suggests that the female spectator, "enjoying the freedom of action and control over the diegetic world that identification with the male hero provides," takes recourse to the repressed residues of her own phallic phase. This type of identification, however, requires putting on transvestite clothes, which confirms the dominant polarity of vision by exchanging the terms of opposition for those of similarity. Like Pearl in Mulvey's reading of *Duel in the Sun,* the female spectator ends up being caught in a conflict "between the deep blue sea of passive femininity and the devil of regressive masculinity."[8]

While Mulvey's analysis of spectatorial cross-dressing ultimately upholds the notion of patriarchal cinema as a system of binary opposites, it also demonstrates the necessity to complicate such terms. The female viewer of "masculine" genres does not fit the mold of the spectator/subject anticipated by these films, and in many of them narcissistic identification with female characters is of marginal interest at best, especially when the spectacle is more dispersed (over landscape and action scenes) than in genres like the musical or romantic comedy which concentrate pleasure around the image of the female body. But neither is reception on the woman's part merely accidental, arbitrary, or individual—failing with regard to the meaning-potential of the film. Rather, one might say that the oscillation and instability which Mulvey and others have observed in female spectatorship constitutes a meaningful deviation—a deviation that has its historical basis in the spectator's experience of belonging to a socially differentiated group called women. As a subdominant and relatively indeterminate collective formation, female spectatorship is certainly contingent upon dominant subject positions, and thus not outside or above ideology, but it cannot be reduced to an either/or modality.

The very figure of the transvestite suggests that the difference of female spectatorship involves more than the opposition of activity and passivity, that it has to be conceptualized in terms of a greater degree of mobility and heterogeneity, including a sense of theatricality and selectivity.[9] As I will argue in the case of Valentino, sexual mobility, the temporary slippage between gender definitions, is crucial to an understanding of his historical impact; that sexual mobility is also "a distinguishing feature of femininity in its cultural construction" and that hence transvestism "*would be* fully recuperable"[10] does not seem a sufficient reason for simply dismissing it from the arsenal of a feminist countertradition. The heterogeneity of the female spectator position, moreover, extends not only

to spatial registers (proximity/distance in relation to the screen as Mary Ann Doane proposes) but to registers of temporality as well. For the figure of the transvestite connotes a discrepancy, a simultaneity of unequal psychic developments. Phallic identification, while officially—in the present tense of the film text, as propelled by the linear flow of the narrative—aligned with positions of masculine agency and control, for the woman spectator depends upon a memory (on whatever level of consciousness), and thus may reactivate repressed layers of her own psychic history and socialization.[11]

The structural instability of the female spectator position in mainstream cinema surfaces as a textual instability in films specifically addressed to women, as an effect of the collision between immediate market interests and institutional structures of vision. In her work on the "woman's film" of the 1940s, Doane shows how the ideological crisis precipitated by a female address is contained in turn by scenarios of masochism which work to distance and de-eroticize the woman's gaze, thus restricting the space of a female reading. Linda Williams and Tania Modleski, on the other hand, emphasize the multiplicity of identificatory positions in female-addressed mainstream films (or, as in Modleski's case, TV soap opera), a textual multiplicity which they relate to the problematic constitution of female identity under patriarchy, from patterns of psychic development to a gender-specific division of labor. This difference in emphasis may partly be due to the choice of films—for example, maternal melodrama as opposed to the films analyzed by Doane which overlap with the gothic or horror genre—but it is also, and perhaps most important, a question of reading.[12]

The analysis of positions of identification available to female spectators is inseparable from positions of critical reading, as the recent debate between Linda Williams and E. Ann Kaplan exemplifies.[13] Does the ending of a film like *Stella Dallas* unify the variety of conflicting subject positions mapped out to this point, as Kaplan argues? Does it close off the contradictions in terms of a patriarchal discourse on motherhood, asking the spectator to accept desexualization, sacrifice, and powerlessness? Or do we, as Williams suggests, grant some degree of alterity to the preceding 108 minutes? Are processes of identification necessarily synchronous with the temporal structures of classical narrative, and to what extent is closure effective? How do films construct what we remember of them? How does this memory change over time in relation to the immediate effects of identification?

These questions urge us to reconsider the hermeneutics involved in the critical enterprise. Who is the subject of reading? Ann Kaplan points out the necessity of distinguishing between the historical spectator, the hypothetical spectator constructed through the film's strategies, and the contemporary female spectator with a feminist consciousness. But the textually constructed spectator/subject does not have any objective existence apart from our reading of the film, which is always partial and, if we choose, partisan. Therefore, the question of hermeneutics is not only one of measuring historical scopes of reception against each other, but also one of the politics of reading,[14] a question of how to establish

a usable past for an alternative film practice. If all the time, desire, and money spent by women watching mainstream films should be of any consequence whatsoever for a feminist countertradition, then this activity has to be made available through readings, in full awareness of its complicity and contingency upon the dominant structures of the apparatus, but nonetheless as a potential of resistance to be reappropriated.[15]

The Valentino films add yet another angle to these arguments on female spectatorship and a feminist re-writing of film history. While participating in the general problematic of female-addressed Hollywood films, their distinction lies in focusing spectatorial pleasure on the image of a male hero/performer. If a man is made to occupy the place of erotic object, how does this affect the organization of vision? If the desiring look is aligned with the position of a female viewer, does this open up a space for female subjectivity and, by the same token, an alternative conception of visual pleasure?

Feminist theorists like Doane and Kaplan have cautioned against premature enthusiasm regarding such films, arguing that they merely present an instance of role reversal which allows women the appropriation of the gaze only to confirm the patriarchal logic of vision. "The male striptease, the gigolo—both inevitably signify the mechanism of reversal itself, constituting themselves as aberrations whose acknowledgment simply reinforces the dominant system of aligning sexual difference with a subject/object dichotomy. And an essential attribute of that dominant system is the matching of male subjectivity with the agency of the look."[16] Undeniably, the figure of the male as erotic object sets into play fetishistic and voyeuristic mechanisms, accompanied—most strikingly in the case of Valentino—by a feminization of the actor's persona. These mechanisms, however, are not naturalized as they are in the representation of a female body. Rather, they are foregrounded as aspects of a theatricality that encompasses both viewer and performer. The reversal thus constitutes a *textual* difference which has to be considered from case to case and cannot be reduced *a priori* to its symbolic content within a phallocentric economy of signification. It seems more promising, tentatively, to approach the textual difference of a male erotic object as a figure of overdetermination, an unstable composite figure that connotes "the simultaneous presence of two positionalities of desire" (Teresa de Lauretis)[17] and thus calls into question the very idea of polarity rather than simply reversing its terms.

Moreover, as even a cursory comparison of Valentino with more recent stars such as John Travolta and Robert Redford makes obvious, we need to observe historical differences as well. Figures like Travolta and Redford—not to mention performers like Mick Jagger, David Bowie, or Michael Jackson—emerge at the end of an era, if not already in the midst of an altogether different one. Valentino appears at the threshold of what has been termed, for better or for worse, Hollywood's "classical" period. The process by which American cinema became identified with particular conventions of editing and narrative was well under way during the 1920s. But not all of its crucial codes developed simultaneously; some were lagging behind while others were practiced obsessively and pro-

miscuously.[18] This uneven development might account for a certain quality of excess often attributed to films of the 1920s, a quality which could be described more specifically as an unstable relationship between spectacle and narrative, falling back behind an economy already achieved during the mid and late 1910s. Whether a trace of primitive cinema or a mark of contemporary decadence, the peculiar inscription of the spectator in the Valentino films suggests a dissociation of pleasure and meaning which potentially undermines the classical imbrication of the gaze with masculine control and mastery.

From a theoretical perspective, then, this essay on Valentino is motivated by an interest in forms of visual pleasure that are not totally claimed, absorbed, or functionalized by the conventions of classical narrative. The redemption of scopophilia may require a return to Freud without the detour through Lacan, since in Lacanian models of spectatorship scopic desire is conceptually inseparable from voyeurism, fetishism and, thus, the regime of castration. Not that these are unrelated or free of determinism in Freud. The Freudian speculation, however, does not posit earlier stages of psychic development as always already negated by later ones, in a Hegelian sense of "*Aufhebung*" which Lacan assimilated to psychoanalysis. I would argue that Freud's writings still hold a more radical potential of interpretation,[19] in particular a more dialectical concept of regression and subjectivity. The latter might allow feminist film theory to rearticulate the question of aesthetic experience, in conjunction with the question of the erotic, neither of which we can afford to ignore if a feminist counter-cinema is to go beyond the abstract opposition of patriarchal mainstream film and feminist avant-garde.

Valentino. At first sight, Valentino's films seem to rehearse the classical choreography of the look almost to the point of parody, offering point-of-view constructions that affirm the cultural hierarchy of gender in the visual field. Between 1921 (*The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*) and 1926, the year of his premature death, Valentino starred in 14 films, produced by different studios and under different directors.[20] Illustrating the significance of the star as *auteur* as much as the economic viability of vehicles, each of these films reiterates a familiar pattern in staging the exchange of looks between Valentino and the female characters. Whenever Valentino lays eyes on a woman first, we can be sure that she will turn out to be the woman of his dreams, the legitimate partner in the romantic relationship; whenever a woman initiates the look, she is invariably marked as a vamp, to be condemned and defeated in the course of the narrative.

In the opening sequence of *The Eagle* (1925; based on Pushkin's novella *Dubrovsky*), the czarina (Louise Dresser) is about to inspect her favorite regiment, "the handsomest in all Russia," when a run-away carriage nearby prompts the hero into a Fairbanks-style rescue action. The first shot of Valentino shows him from a rear angle, looking through a pocket-size telescope; the first time we see his face, it is framed, medium close-up, within the window-frame of the coach, directing a curious gaze inside. The reverse shot completing the point of view,

however, is illegible, hiding the object under a bundle of fur; only his repeated look makes the image readable, distinguishing the female figure from the setting, literally producing her for the spectator. As the young woman (Vilma Banky) returns the glance, she enters the romantic pact, acknowledging the power of his look(s). Her negative counterpart is the czarina, a stout, elderly woman who is shown catching sight of Valentino independently of his look, her face momentarily transfigured in desire. While she is masculinized by a military outfit and at the same time ridiculed for her lack of masculine physical skills, desire on her part is most crucially discredited through its association with political power. As she continues the inspection of Valentino's body in the privacy of the imperial suite, encircling and immobilizing him (no point of view), the expression of horror in his eyes pinpoints the scandal of the situation, the reversal of gender positions in the visual field, unilaterally enforced by the monarch. As soon as Valentino understands the sexual implications of his position, he decides to restore the traditional (im)balance, risking death as a deserter yet regaining the mastery of the look.

A similar pattern can be observed in *Blood and Sand* (1922): Doña Sol (Nita Naldi), the president's niece, is shown admiring the victorious torero through binoculars before he looks at her; thus, she is syntactically marked as a vamp. His future wife Carmen (Lila Lee), on the other hand, is singled out by the camera within his point of view, similar to the coach sequence in *The Eagle*. A close-up of his face signals the awakening desire, alternating with an indecipherable long shot of a crowd. The repetition of the desiring look, provoking a dissolve that extricates her from the crowd, resolves the picture puzzle for the spectator and, by the same logic of vision, establishes her as the legitimate companion (further sanctioned by the inclusion of his mother in the point-of-view construction that follows). Thus the legitimate female figure is deprived of the initiative of the erotic look and relegated to the position of scopic object within the diegesis. In relation to the spectator, however, *she shares this position of scopic object with Valentino himself.*

Valentino's appeal depends, to a large degree, on the manner in which he combines masculine control of the look with the feminine quality of "to-be-looked-at-ness," to use Mulvey's rather awkward term. When Valentino falls in love—usually at first sight—the close-up of his face clearly surpasses that of the female character in its value as spectacle. In a narcissistic doubling, the subject of the look constitutes itself as object, graphically illustrating Freud's formulation of the autoerotic dilemma: "Too bad that I cannot kiss myself."[21] Moreover, in their radiant pictorial quality, such shots temporarily arrest the metonymic drive of the narrative, similar in effect to the visual presence of the woman which, as Mulvey observes, tends "to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation."[22] In Valentino's case, however, erotic contemplation governs an active as well passive mode, making both spectator and character the subject of a double game of vision.

To the extent that Valentino occupies the position of primary object of

spectacle, this entails a systematic feminization of his persona. Many of the films try to motivate this effect by casting him as a performer (torero, dancer) or by situating him in a historically removed or exotic mise-en-scene; in either case, the connotation of femininity persists through the use of costumes—in particular flared coats and headdress reminiscent of a bridal wardrobe, as well as a general emphasis on dressing and disguises. *Monsieur Beaucaire,* a 1924 Paramount costume drama based on the Booth Tarkington novel, combines both the effect and its disavowal in a delightfully self-reflective manner. Valentino, playing the Duke of Chartres, alias Monsieur Beaucaire, is introduced on a stage playing the lute in an attempt to entertain the jaded king, Louis XV. The courtly mise-en-scene ostensibly legitimizes the desiring female gaze, contained in the alternation of relatively close shots of Valentino and the female members of the audience within the film. Unfailingly, however, this sequence thematizes the paradox of female spectatorship. Seeing one woman *not* focusing her eyes upon him in rapture, he stops midway in indignation and a title redundantly explains: "the shock of his life: a woman not looking at him"—sure enough, this refers to the leading romantic lady.[23] The partial reversal of the gender economy of vision is prepared by the film's opening shot, a close-up of hands doing needlepoint work. As the camera pulls back, those hands are revealed to be the king's. In the effeminate universe of the French court, Valentino succeeds in asserting his masculinity only by comparison, staging it as a difference which ultimately fails to make a difference.

Before considering the possibilities of identification implied in this peculiar choreography of vision, I wish to recapitulate some thoughts on female visual pleasure and its fate under the patriarchal taboo. Particularly interesting in this context are certain aspects of scopophilia that Freud analyzes through its development in infantile sexuality, a period in which the child is still far from having a stable sense of gender identity. Stimulated in the process of mutual gazing between mother and child, the female scopic drive is constituted with a *bisexual* as well as an *autoerotic* component. While these components subsequently succumb to cultural hierarchies of looking which tend to fixate the woman in a passive, narcissistic-exhibitionist role, there remains a basic ambivalence in the structure of vision as a component drive. As Freud argues in "Instincts and their Vicissitudes" (1915), the passive component of a drive represents a reversal of the active drive into its opposite, redirecting itself to the subject. Such a contradictory constitution of libidinal components may account for the coexistence, in their later fixation as perversion, of diametrically opposed drives within one and the same person, even if one tendency usually predominates. Thus a voyeur is always to some degree an exhibitionist and vice versa, just as the sadist shares the pleasures of masochism.[24]

The notion of ambivalence appears crucial to a theory of female spectatorship, precisely because the cinema, while enforcing patriarchal hierarchies in its organization of the look, also offers women an institutional opportunity to violate the taboo on female scopophilia. The success of a figure like Valentino, himself

overdetermined as both object and subject of the look, urges us to insist upon the ambivalent constitution of scopic pleasure. Moreover, as one among a number of the more archaic partial drives whose integration is always and at best precarious, scopophilia could be distinguished from a socially more complicit voyeurism, as defined by the one-sided regime of the keyhole and the norms of genitality.[25]

Equally pertinent to an alternative conception of visual pleasure appears the potential dissociation of sexual and survival instincts, which is implicit already in Freud's notion of "anaclisis" but explicitly discussed with reference to the scopic drive in Freud's analysis of cases of psychogenic disturbance of vision. The eye serves both a practical function for the individual's orientation in the external world and the function of an erotogenic zone. If the latter takes over, if it refuses to accept its subservient role in forepleasure, the balance between sexual and survival instincts is threatened and the ego may react by repressing the dangerous component drive. The psychogenic disturbance of vision in turn represents the revenge of the repressed instinct, retrospectively interpreted by the individual as the voice of punishment which seems to be saying: "Because you sought to misuse your organ of sight for evil sensual pleasure, it is fitting that you should not see anything at all any more."[26]

While the psychogenic disturbance of vision, in the context of psychoanalytic theory, clearly functions as a metaphor of castration,[27] the potentially antithetical relationship of sexual and survival instincts could also be taken to describe the cultural and historical differentiation of male and female forms of vision. Although the neurotic dissociation may occur in patients of both sexes, the balance effected in so-called normal vision appears more typical of the psychic disposition by means of which the male subject controls the external world as well as the sexual field. Suffice it here to allude to the historical construction of monocular vision in Western art since the Renaissance, the instrumental standards imposed upon looking in technical and scientific observation and other disciplines, areas of cultural activity from which women were barred for centuries; on the flip-side of this coin, we find a variety of social codes enforcing the taboo on female scopophilia, ranging from makeup fashions like belladonna through the once popular injunction not to "make passes at girls who wear glasses."

The construction of femininity within patriarchal society, however, contains the promise of being incomplete. Women's exclusion from the mastery of the visual field may have diminished the pressure of the ego instincts towards the component drives, which are probably insufficiently subordinated to begin with. Thus the potential dissociation of the scopic drive from its function for survival may not be that threatening to the female subject, may not necessarily provoke the force of repression that Freud holds responsible for certain cases of psychogenic blindness. If such generalization is at all permissible, women might be more likely to indulge—without immediately repressing—in a sensuality of vision which contrasts with the goal-oriented discipline of the one-eyed masculine look. Christa Karpenstein speaks in this context of "an unrestrained scopic drive, a

swerving and sliding gaze which disregards the meanings and messages of signs and images that socially determine the subject, a gaze that defies the limitations and fixations of the merely visible."[28]

If I seem to belabor this notion of an undomesticated gaze as a historical aspect of female subjectivity, I certainly don't intend to propose yet another variant of essentialism. To the extent that sexual difference is culturally constructed to begin with, the subversive qualities of a female gaze may just as well be shared by a male character. This is precisely what I want to suggest for the case of Valentino, contrary to the official legend which never ceased to assert the power of his look in terms of aggressive mastery. Hollywood publicity persistently advertised the state of bliss in store for the woman who would be discovered by his magical gaze—in the measure that he himself was becoming an erotic commodity of irrestible cash value for the studios.[29]

The feminine connotation of Valentino's "to-be-looked-at-ness," however, destabilizes his own glance in its very origin, makes him vulnerable to temptations that jeopardize the sovereignty of the male subject. When Valentino's eyes become riveted on the woman of his choice, he seems paralyzed rather than aggressive or menacing, occupying the position of the rabbit rather than that of the snake. Struck by the beauty of Carmen, in *Blood and Sand,* his activity seems blocked, suspended; it devolves upon Carmen throwing him a flower to get the narrative back into gear. Later in the film, at the height of his career as a torero, Valentino raises his eyes to the president's box, an individual centered under the benevolent eye of the State, when his gaze is side-tracked, literally decentered, by the sight of Doña Sol in the box to the right. The power of Valentino's gaze depends upon its weakness—enhanced by the fact that he was actually nearsighted and cross-eyed—upon its oscillating between active and passive, between object and ego libido. The erotic appeal of the Valentinian gaze, staged as a look within the look, is one of reciprocity and ambivalence, rather than mastery and objectification.

The peculiar organization of the Valentinian gaze corresponds, on the level of narrative, to conflicts between the pleasure and the reality principle. Whenever the hero's amorous interests collide with the standards of male social identity—career, family, paternal authority, or a vow of revenge—the spectator can hope that passion will triumph over pragmatism to the point of self-destruction.[30] As the generating vortex of such narratives, the Valentinian gaze far exceeds its formal functions of providing diegetic coherence and continuity; it assumes an almost figural independence. Thus the films advance an identification with the gaze itself; not with either source or object, but with the gaze as erotic medium which promises to transport the spectator out of the world of means and ends into the realm of passion.

The discussion of gendered patterns of vision inevitably opens up into the larger question of identification as the linchpin between film and spectator, the process that organizes subjectivity in visual and narrative terms. It seems useful at this point to invoke Mary Ann Doane's distinction of at least three instances

of identification operating in the viewing process: (1) identification *with* the representation of a person (character/star); (2) recognition of particular objects, persons, or action *as* such (stars, narrative images); (3) identification with the "look," with oneself as the condition of perception, which Metz, in analogy with Lacan's concept of the mirror phase, has termed "primary."[31] These psychical mechanisms and their effects can be traced through the various levels of enunciation which structure cinematic identification, interlacing textual units such as shot, sequence, strategies of narrative, and mise-en-scene.[32]

Most productively, feminist film theorists have taken up the debate by insisting on the centrality of sexual difference, questioning the assumption of a single or neutral spectator position constructed in hierarchically ordered, linear processes of identification. While Mulvey initially reduced cinematic identification to a basically active relationship with a protagonist of the same sex (i.e., male), she subsequently modified this notion with regard to the female viewer who may not only cross but also be divided by gender lines (which in turn deflects identification from the fictive telos of a stable identity). As outlined above, the difficulty of conceptualizing a female spectator has led feminists to recast the problem of identification in terms of instability, mobility, multiplicity, and, I would add, temporality. Likewise, a number of feminist critics are trying to complicate the role of sexual difference in identification with the differences of class and race, with cultural and historical specificity. This might make it possible to rethink the concept of subjectivity implied, beyond the commonplace that subjects are constructed by and within ideology. The question of who is the subject of identification (so eloquently posed by Tonto) is also and not least a question concerning which part of the spectator is engaged and how: which layers of conscious or unconscious memory and fantasy are activated, and how we, both as viewers and as critics, choose to interpret this experience.[33]

I am not claiming that Valentino will answer all or any of these questions, but he might help articulate some of them a little more clearly. The first form of identification discussed by Doane, identification with the integral person filmed (Metz's "secondary" mode of identification), engages the female viewer transsexually insofar as it extends to the Valentino character; thus, it raises the problem of spectatorial cross-dressing—unless we consider other possibilities of transsexual identification beside the transvestite one. The alternative option for the woman spectator, passive-narcissistic identification with the female star as erotic object, appears to have been a position primarily advertised by the industry,[34] but it appears rather more problematic in view of the specular organization of the films.

If we can isolate an instance of "primary" identification at all—which is dubious on theoretical grounds[35]—the Valentino films challenge the assumption of perceptual mastery implied in such a concept by their foregrounding of the gaze as an erotic medium, a gaze that fascinates precisely because it transcends the socially imposed subject/object hierarchy of sexual difference. Moreover, the contradictions of the female address are located in the very space where the

registers of the look and those of narrative and mise-en-scene intersect. In offering the woman spectator a position which is structurally analogous to that of the vamp within the diegesis (looking at Valentino independently of his initiating of the look) identification with the desiring gaze is both granted and incriminated, or, one might say, granted on the condition of its illegitimacy. This may be why the vamp figures in Valentino films (with the exception of *Blood and Sand*) are never totally condemned, inasmuch as they acknowledge a subliminal complicity between Valentino and the actively desiring female gaze. In *The Eagle,* for instance, the czarina is redeemed by her general's ruse of letting Valentino escape execution under an assumed identity; the closing shot shows Valentino and the czarina waving each other a never-ending farewell, much to the concern of the respective legitimate partners.

The least equivocal instance of identification operating in the Valentino films is that which feeds on recognition, the memory-spectacle rehearsed with each appearance of the overvalued erotic object, the star.[36] The pleasure of recognition involved in the identification of and with a star is dramatized, in many Valentino films, through a recurrent narrative pattern, which in turn revolves around the precarious cultural construction of the persona of the Latin Lover. Often, the Valentino character combines two sides of a melodramatic dualism, which he acts out in a series of disguises and anonymous identities. Thus, in *The Sheik* (1921), the barbaric son of the desert turns out to be of British descent; in *Moran of the Lady Letty* (1922), the San Francisco dandy proves himself a hearty sailor and authentic lover; the Duke of Chartres in exile becomes Monsieur Beaucaire; and the Black Eagle pursues courtship instead of revenge under the assumed identity of Monsieur LeBlanc.[37] The spectator recognizes her star in all his masks and disguises—unlike the female protagonist whose trial of love consists of "knowing" him regardless of narrative misfortune or social status.

Like most star vehicles, Valentino films have notoriously weak narratives and would probably fail to engage any viewer if it weren't for their hero's charisma. Many of his films are adapted from well-known popular novels, preferably costume dramas.[38] While there is some delight in action, in the sense of activity, physical movement, and gesture, there is very little suspense, very little of the game of concealing and revealing, of the dialectic of desire, knowledge, and power that has led theorists like Barthes, Bellour, and Heath to define all narrative as predicated on Oedipus. Identification in terms of narrative movement is likely to fall short of the plot in its totality, while closure tends to reside in smaller units, cutting across visual and narrative registers, defined by the succession of masks, disguises, milieus, and scenarios.

The emphasis on costumes, disguises, on rituals of dressing and undressing, undermines, in tendency, the voyeuristic structure of spectatorship in that it acknowledges the spectator as part of the theatrical display. This is emblematic in the famous dressing scene in *Monsieur Beaucaire,* during which Valentino punctuates the exercise in procrastination with occasional asides in the direction of the camera.[39] Such mutual recognition, in conjunction with the viewer's epis-

temological superiority over the female protagonist, encourages identification via a fantasy in which the spectator herself authorizes the masquerade; the publication, as late as 1979, of a Valentino paper-doll book would testify to the persistence of this phantasy in popular iconography. If there is any prototype for such a fantasy—and this is merely autobiographical speculation—it might be the penchant of prepubescent girls to dress up their younger brother as a little sister.[40]

But this is not the only type of scenario which organizes identification in the Valentino films. Pervasively, in these films, spectatorial pleasure is imbricated with self-consciously sadomasochistic rituals.[41] It may still be within the parameters of the vamp cliché when Doña Sol, holding on to the torero by the muscles of his arms, expresses the desire, according to the intertitle, one day to be beaten by these strong hands—and nearly bites off his thumb in the following shot. Here the sadomasochistic proclivity underlines the general perversity of a woman who dares to appropriate the privilege of the first look. The more interesting instances of sadomasochistic role-playing, however, take place in the context of the legitimate, romantic relationship. In *The Eagle*, Mascha, the young woman from the first sequence, turns out to be the daughter of the odious landowner against whom Valentino, in his persona as the Black Eagle, has pledged revenge on his father's deathbed. At one point, his men kidnap her and proudly present the catch to their leader. As he gets off his horse and steps toward her with a whip ready to lash out, the genre seems to slide into porn: the masks, the whip, phallic hats—insignia of anonymous lust, traces of the search for nonidentity in eros.[42] That Valentino actually directs the whip against his own men is the alibi the narrative provides for a kinky shot, the *défilement* into propriety; yet it does not diminish the subliminal effect. Valentino recognizes Mascha and, protected by his unilateral anonymity, continues the game in a more or less playful manner. As she rejects his horse and proudly embarks on her journey on foot, he follows her, mounted on the high horse—a constellation the camera exploits in straight-on backtracking shots. When she finally gives in, forced down by the obligatory fainting spell, Valentino reverses the spatial hierarchy by installing her on the horse, thus making her an involuntary accomplice in the dominance/submission game. This game is accomplished within the legitimate relationship only by means of the mask which temporarily suspends the mutuality of the romantic gaze in Valentino's favor.

The emphasis on the sadistic aspects of the Valentino persona echoes the publicity pitch advertising him to female audiences as the "he-man," the "menace," reiterated, as late as 1977, by one of his biographers: "Women were to find in *The Sheik* a symbol of the omnipotent male who could dominate them as the men in their own lives could not."[43] And, when in the film of that title the son of the desert forces the blue-eyed Lady Diana on his horse, ostensibly for her own pleasure ("lie still you little fool"), millions of women's hearts were said to have quivered at the prospect of being humiliated by the British-bred barbarian. Despite the display of virility in *The Sheik* (1922; based on the novel by Edith

Maude Hull), however, this film initiated the much publicized rejection of Valentino by male moviegoers, which had more to do with the threat he presented to traditional norms of masculinity than with the actual composition of audience.[44] Not only the stigma of effeminacy but also, equally threatening, a masochistic aura was to haunt Valentino to his death and beyond. There were widespread rumors about his private life—homosexuality, impotence, unconsummated marriages with lesbians, dependency on domineering women, the platinum "slave bracelet" given to him by his second wife, Natasha Rambova. More systematically, the masochistic elements in the Valentino persona were enforced by the sadistic placement of the spectator in the films themselves. There is hardly a Valentino film that does not display a whip, in whatever marginal function, and most of them feature seemingly insignificant subplots in which the spectator is offered a position that entails enjoying the tortures inflicted on Valentino or others.[45]

The oscillation of the Valentino persona between sadistic and masochistic positions is yet another expression of the ambivalence that governs the specular organization of the films. As Freud asserts in the "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," "a sadist is always at the same time a masochist, although in one case the active and in another case the passive aspect of the perversion may be more pronounced and may represent the predominant sexual activity."[46] But the question of the origin and economy of masochism troubled Freud over decades and led him to revise his views at least once.[47] Among post-Freudian attempts to theorize masochism, that of Gilles Deleuze has recently been put forward as an alternative model of spectatorship.[48] Deleuze challenges the conceptual linkage of masochism with sadism and the Oedipal regime; instead he proposes a distinct origin and aesthetics of masochism located in the relationship with the "oral mother." While the revisionist impulse to emphasize pregenital sexuality in spectatorship can only be welcomed, Deleuze's model seems somewhat limited by the parameters of his literary source—the writings of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch—and thus to an elaboration of the masochistic scenario within a basically male fantasy.[49] Therefore, I wish to return to Freud's essay, "A Child Is Being Beaten" (1919), not only for its focus on female instances of sadomasochistic fantasy, but also because it elucidates a particular aspect of the Valentino figure as fantasmatic object.[50]

The formula, "a child is being beaten," which, regardless of any actually experienced corporal punishment, may dominate masturbation fantasies of the latency period, is remarkable in that it stereotypically reiterates the mere description of the event, while subject, object, and the role of the person fantasizing remain indeterminate. On the basis of jealousy feelings aroused by the Oedipal constellation, Freud proceeds to reconstruct three different phases with explicit reference to female adolescents: (1) "My father is beating the child that I hate" (presumably a younger sibling); therefore, "he loves only me"; (2) "I am being beaten [therefore loved] by my father" (the regressive substitute for the incestuous relationship); (3) "a child is being beaten." While the second, sexually most threatening phase succumbs to repression, the first phase is reduced to its merely

descriptive part and thus results in the third, in which the father is usually replaced by a more distant male authority figure. Thus the fantasy is sadistic only in its form—but grants masochistic gratification by way of identification with the anonymous children who are being beaten. This series of transformations reduces the sexual participation of the girl to the status of spectator, desexualizing both content and bearer of the fantasy (which, as Freud remarks, is not the case in male variants of the beating fantasy). Just as important in the present context, however, is the observation that in both male and female versions of the sadomasochistic fantasy the children who are being beaten generally turn out to be male. In the case of the female fantasy, Freud employs the concept of the "masculinity complex," which makes the girl imagine herself as male and thus allows her to be represented, in her daydreams, by these anonymous whipping boys.

The deepest, most effective layer of the Valentino persona is that of the whipping boy—in which he resembles so many other heroes of popular fiction devoured by adolescent girls (one of the examples Freud cites is *Uncle Tom's Cabin*). Freud's analysis of the sadomasochistic fantasy suggests that we distinguish between the sadistic appeal articulated in point-of-view structures on the one hand, and the masochistic pleasure in the identification with the object on the other. Transsexual identification, instead of being confined to simple cross-dressing, relies here as much on the feminine qualities of the male protagonist as it does on residual ambiguity in the female spectator. This simultaneity of identificatory positions is enabled by an interactional structure, a scenario whose libidinal force, protected by a series of repressive/rhetorical transformations, can be traced back to the nursery. (Given the amount of detail that Freud devotes to reconstructing the various stages of this scenario, it is indeed curious—and here one might concur with Deleuze's critique—how briefly he dismisses the role of the mother, especially in view of his emphasis on sibling rivalry.)[51]

Unlike the one-sided masochistic identification with a female protagonist encouraged by the "woman's film," female identification in Valentino films could be construed to entail the full range of transformations proposed by Freud. As Valentino slips into and out of the part of the whipping boy, intermittently relegating the woman to the position of both victim and perpetrator, he may succeed in recuperating the middle phase of the female fantasy from repression ("I am being beaten—and therefore loved—by my father") and thus in resexualizing it. This possibility is suggested above all by the unmistakable incestuous aura surrounding the Valentino persona; however, the appeal here is less that of a relationship between father and daughter than one between brother and sister, which turns on the desire of both for an inaccessible mother.[52]

The interchangeability of sadistic and masochistic positions within the diegesis potentially undercuts the a priori masochism ascribed by current film theory to the female spectator of classical cinema. In making sadomasochistic rituals an explicit component of the erotic relationship, Valentino's films subvert the socially imposed dominance/submission hierarchy of gender roles, dissolving subject/

object dichotomies into erotic reciprocity. The vulnerability Valentino displays in his films, the traces of feminine masochism in his persona, may partly account for the threat he posed to prevalent standards of masculinity—the sublimation of masochistic inclinations after all being the token of the male subject's sexual mastery, his control over pleasure.

Sadomasochistic role-playing most strikingly intersects with the choreography of vision in *The Son of the Sheik* (1926; based on another novel by E. M. Hull), Valentino's last and probably most perverse film. Due to a misunderstanding that propels the narrative, Yasmin (Vilma Banky) represents a combination of both female types, vamp and romantic companion. Although transparent to the spectator, the misunderstanding on Ahmed/Valentino's part—that Yasmin lured him into a trap, thus causing him to be captured and whipped by her father's gang—has carefully been planted early on in the film by means of an editing device. The film's first close-up shows the face of Yasmin, lost in erotic yearning, which dissolves into a matching close-up of Valentino; a somewhat mismatched cut in turn reveals him to be looking at her legs as she is dancing for a crowd. A dissolve back to Yasmin's face eventually confirms the status of the sequence as a flashback which stages the usual discovery of the woman through Valentino's look; the objectification here is compounded by the demeaning situation, the fragmentation of Yasmin's body as well as the emphasis on money in the deployment of the romantic gaze. The potential misreading of the flashback as a point-of-view shot on the part of the woman falsely implicates Yasmin as a transgressor, thus supporting her double inscription as victim later on in the film, as both scopic and masochistic object. Herself ignorant of her lover's misunderstanding, Yasmin is kidnapped by him and imprisoned in his tent. His revenge accordingly consists in refusing her the mutuality of the erotic look and culminates in a veritable one-eyed stare with which he transfixes her to the point of rape. Valentino's unilateral transgression of the romantic pact is supposedly vindicated by the powerful image of him crucified, humiliated, and whipped earlier on in the film. This image of Valentino as victim, however, erroneously ascribed to Yasmin's authorship and not even witnessed by her, is primarily designed for the benefit of the spectator. No doubt there remains an asymmetry in the sadomasochistic role reversal on the diegetic level: a female character can assume an active part only at the price of being marked as a vamp; sadistic pleasure is specularized, reserved for the woman in front of the screen.

The multiple ambiguities articulated on the specular level of *The Son of the Sheik* contrast with the more flatly patriarchal discourse of the narrative, not to mention the simple-minded sexist and racist title prose. As if to conceal—and thus inofficially to acknowledge and exploit—this gap between narrative and visual pleasure, the Oedipal scenario is overinscribed to the point of parody. Valentino's private love/revenge affair meets with strong resistance on the part of his father who bends an iron rod with his mere hands in order to demonstrate his paternal power; Valentino, a chip off the old block, responds by straightening it out again. Only when his understanding mother, Lady Diana (Agnes Ayres),

invokes a flashback to her own kidnapping in *The Sheik* does the father recognize and accept his successor. They reconcile in the course of yet another kidnapping scene, this time rescuing Yasmin from her father's gang: in the midst of tumultuous swashbuckling father and son shake hands, temporarily losing sight of the woman, the object of their endeavor.

Beneath this Oedipal pretext, as it were, the film offers a connotative wealth of deviations which radiate in a dialectic of repression and excess from the Valentino character to all levels of mise-en-scene and cinematography. Exotic costumes, oriental decor, and desert landscape provoke a sensuality of vision which constantly undermines the interest in the development of the narrative. Extreme long shots show Valentino riding through a sea of sand shaped like breasts and buttocks; he prefers the skin-folds of his tent to the parental palace, and he experiences in the allegorical moonlit ruin the pitfalls of adult sexuality, the threat of castration. Though concealing dangerous abysses, the eroticized landscape becomes a playground of polymorphous desire, in which the signs of virility—sables, pistols, cigarettes—remain phallic toys at best. The screen itself becomes a maternal body, inviting the component drives to revolt against their subordination. These textured surfaces do not project a realistic space which the hero, traversing it, would be obligated to subject. Rather, they construct an oneiric stage which cannot be bothered with perspective and verisimilitude. With a degree of irreality of which the silent screen was yet capable, Valentino's last film admits to the reality of a fantasy that assimilates the Oedipal scenario for its own purposes. Not only does it force the father to identify with the phallic caprices of his youth, but it even more thoroughly subverts the Oedipal script in its casting: Valentino himself plays the role of the father in whose mirror image the son achieves a presumably adult male identity which inevitably—and barely masked—reveals itself as both narcissistic and incestuous.

The appeal of the Valentino fantasy is certainly regressive, beckoning the female spectator (to revise Mulvey) beyond the devil of phallic identification into the deep blue sea of polymorphous perversity. Such an appeal cannot but provoke the connotation of monstrosity—which the films displace onto figures like the vamp or the sadomasochistic dwarf in *The Son of the Sheik*, a vicious caricature of Orientalism. The threat posed by Valentino's complicity with the woman who looks, like the affinity of monster and woman in Linda Williams's reading of the horror film, is not a threat merely of sexual difference but of a different *kind* of sexuality, different from the norm of heterosexual, genital sexuality.[53] While playing along with narrative conventions that assert the latter (e.g., the figure of couple formation), the Valentino films allow their spectators to repeat and acknowledge the more archaic component drives, reminders of the precarious constructedness of sexual identity. Moreover, in locating pleasure in the tension—if not excess—of partial libido in relation to genitality, they project a realm of the erotic as distinct from the socially cultivated ideal of a "healthy sex life."[54]

To claim a subversive function for polymorphous perversity as such is highly problematic, as Foucault asserts, given the degree to which disparate sexualities

themselves have been appropriated by a discourse binding pleasure and power. It is therefore all the more important to reconsider the historical moment at which Valentino enters that discourse, marking its conjunction with other discourses, in particular those of social mobility and racial otherness. In a liberal gesture, Alexander Walker ponders the paradox of the Valentino craze; that is, that it took place alongside the progressive liberation of American women from traditional roles: "It was a perverse way of celebrating your sex's emancipation."[55] Perverse, yes, but not so paradoxical. As revisionist historians have argued, the New Woman was usually not as emancipated as her image suggested, and her access to consumer culture often entailed an underpaid job, loneliness, and social insecurity or, in the case of married women, the multiple burdens of wage labor, housework, and childrearing.[56] The period's demonstrative obsession with sexual reform may well confirm Foucault's argument on sexuality as discourse at large; still, this discourse must have had different implications for women than for men, or for single working women as compared, for instance, to upper-middle-class housewives.

However complicit and recuperable in the long run, the Valentino films articulated the possibility of female desire outside of motherhood and family, absolving it from Victorian double standards;[57] instead, they offered a morality of passion, an ideal of erotic reciprocity. Moreover, unlike the feminine reaction to sexual liberation in the shape of Elinor Glyn (the Edwardian novelist who invented the "it" girl), Valentino did not render the erotic a matter of social etiquette to be rehearsed by the aspiring female subject.[58] Rather, in focusing pleasure on a male protagonist of ambiguous and deviant identity, he appealed to those who most strongly felt the effects—freedom as well as frustration—of transition and liminality, the precariousness of a social mobility predicated on consumerist ideology.

If the Valentino films had no other critical function, they did present, by way of negation, a powerful challenge to myths of masculinity in American culture between the wars. The heroes of the American screen were men of action, like Douglas Fairbanks or William S. Hart, whose energy and determination was only enhanced by a certain lack of social graces, especially toward women. Even the more romantic stars, like Richard Barthelmess or John Barrymore, seemed to owe their good looks to a transcendent spirituality rather than anything related to their bodies and sexuality. Valentino not only inaugurated an explicitly sexual discourse on male beauty, but he also undercut standards of instrumental rationality that were culturally associated with masculine behavior; his resistance to expectations of everyday pragmatism, his swerving from the matter-of-fact and reasonable, may after all account for his subterranean popularity with male moviegoers, whether homosexual or heterosexual.

But Valentino's otherness cannot be explained exclusively in terms of masculinity and its discontents. Beyond the feminine connotations of his persona, his appeal was that of a "stranger." Whatever distinguished previous and contemporary male stars from each other, they were all Americans; that is, they did

not display any distinct ethnic features other than those that were already naturalized as American. Valentino, however, bore the stigma of the first-generation, non-Anglo-Saxon immigrant—and was cast accordingly. He began his career as a seducer/villain of dark complexion, male counterpart of the figure of the vamp. When female audiences adopted him, despite the moral/racist injunction, he developed the persona of the Latin Lover, marketed as a blend of sexual vitality and romantic courtship. It is not surprising, then, that the paragons of virility responded to the threat he posed in a strongly nativist tone.[59] Yet more systematically, the films themselves both thematized and contained the scandal of his otherness through a recurrent pattern of the double identity mentioned earlier—a pattern which has to be read as a textual symptom of the repression of racial difference.

Valentino's darker self is ostensibly Southern European, somewhat redeemed by a veneer of French manners; in the context of American cinema and American culture, however, he could not have escaped the discursive economy of race and sex, encapsulated in the fear and repressed desire of miscegenation.[60] Sexual paranoia toward black men, rampant since the mid-1890s, reached a new pitch during the 1920s, precipitated by the imagined effects of women's sexual liberation. In terms of this economy, Valentino would have thrived on the fascination with the mulatto, a figure notoriously inscribed with sexual excess (cf. *The Birth of a Nation*), while historically inseparable from the white masters' abuse of black women. Whether or not Valentino touched upon that particular nerve, the connotation of racial otherness was masked by a discourse of exoticism—the Arab sheik, the Indian rajah, the Latin-American gaucho—allowing the female spectator to indulge in the fantasy at a safe distance. Sure enough, the respective narratives reveal the passionate Arab to be of British descent, like Tarzan, just as the lascivious gaucho in *The Four Horsemen* proves himself worthy of his French blood by dying on the field of honor. In such operations of fascination and disavowal, the Valentino films illustrate the ambivalence and fetishism characteristic of all racial stereotypes, the interdependence of racial and sexual difference.[61] At the same time, they mark a historical shift—if not, considering the force of repression provoked, an accidental leap or lapse—which enforced a transvaluation of the taboo and thus its partial recognition, albeit under the guise of the exotic.

Postscript. Some afterthoughts on the psycho-social enigma posed by the cult of Valentino seem appropriate here. While we may speculate on the appeal of the Valentino persona for both a textually and historically constructed female spectator, the massive impact of this appeal and the social forms it assumed remain quite mysterious. Roland Barthes speaks of the cult of the Valentinian face: "truly feminine Bacchanalia which all over the world were dedicated to the memory of a collectively revealed beauty."[62] Inevitably, however, such Dionysian rites are contaminated by the mechanisms of the mass media; the voyeuristic and fetishistic aspects of the Valentino excesses cannot be explained away.

How could millions of women have indulged in such specifically male perversions? Barthes may ascribe the cult of Velentino to the aura of his face (*"visage"* vs. *"figure"*); yet for Valentino himself and his female admirers it was certainly no less a cult of his body. In scores of publicity stills Valentino posed working out seminude, and in *Blood and Sand* and *Monsieur Beaucaire* he insisted on dressing scenes that would display individual parts of his body (note the close-up of his foot in *Blood and Sand*). Such exhibitionism, given the mechanisms of the apparatus, cannot escape fetishization: the male body, in its entire beauty, assumes the function of a phallic substitute. The more desperately Valentino himself emphasized attributes of physical prowess and virility, the more perfectly he played the part of the male impersonator, brilliant counterpart to the female "female" impersonators of the American screen such as Mae West or the vamps of his own films.

For the history of American cinema, on the threshold of its classical period, Valentino represents a unique instance of subversive irony—in that the commodity marketed as an idol of virility should have proven its success in the shape of a phallic fetish, a symbol of the missing penis. Valentino's miraculous career as a male impersonator illuminates the basic discrepancy between the penis and its symbolic representation, the phallus, thus revealing the male subject's position within the symbolic order as based upon a misreading of anatomy.[63] If women's fascination with Valentino, on whatever level of consciousness, expressed a recognition of that discrepancy, their massive and collective identification with this peculiar fetish also, and not least, asserted the claim to share in the reputation and representation of phallic power.

In the interaction with female audiences, moreover, the fetishization of Valentino's body assumed forms of theatricality which tended to subvert the mechanisms of separation intrinsic to cinematic voyeurism and fetishism. His female fans actively assailed the barriers that classical cinema was engaged in reaffirming, taking the star system more literally than the institution might have intended, while the media on their part shortcircuited the dialectics of public and private for the narrative of Valentino's life. Once women had found a fetish of their own, they were not content with merely gazing at it, but strove actually to touch it. Moreover, they expected him to reciprocate their fetishistic devotion: Valentino received intimate garments in the mail with the request to kiss and return them (which he did). The cult of Valentino's body finally extended to his corpse and led to the notorious necrophilic excesses: Valentino's last will specifying that his body be exhibited to his fans provoked a fetishistic run for buttons of his suit, or at least candles and flowers from the funeral home.[64] The collective mise-en-scene of fainting spells, hysterical grief, and, to be accurate, a few suicides, cannot be reduced to a mere spectacle of mass-cultural manipulation. It may be read, among other things, as a kind of rebellion, a desperate protest against the passivity and one-sidedness with which patriarchal cinema supports the subordinate position of women in the gender hierarchy. In such a reading,

even the commercially distorted manifestation of female desire might articulate a utopian claim—to have the hollow promises of screen happiness be released into the mutuality of erotic practice.

Notes

1. Siegfried Kracauer, "Die kleinen Ladenmädchen gehen ins Kino," in *Das Ornament der Masse* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 293. The following essay is a revised and expanded version of "S. M. Rodolfo," *Frauen und Film,* no. 33 (Oct. 1982): 19-33. For critical comments and shared enthusiasm, I would like to thank Serafina Bathrick, Atina Grossman, Gertrud Koch, Sally Stein, Maureen Turim, and, above all, Sandy Flitterman. All translations mine, unless otherwise indicated.
2. Brad Steiger and Chaw Mank, *Valentino: An Intimate and Shocking Exposé* (New York: MacFadden, 1966); Vincent Tajiri, *Valentino: The True Life Story* (New York: Bantam, 1977); Irving Shulman, *Valentino* (1967; New York: Pocket Books, 1968); also see Noel Botham and Peter Donnelly, *Valentino: The Love God* (New York: Ace Books, 1977). Tajiri's book contains a relatively detailed filmography and bibliography.
3. Valentino came to symbolize the failure of the American Dream, especially to more highbrow critics of culture like H. L. Mencken (*Prejudices, Sixth Series,* 1927) and John Dos Passos (*The Big Money,* 1936). Ken Russell's film, *Valentino* (1977), based on the Steiger/Mank biography and starring Rudolf Nureyev in the title role, articulates this theme through its pervasive references to *Citizen Kane,* such as the use of *post mortem* multiple flashback narration and other corny allusions.
4. Among the many reassessments of the period, see Estelle B. Freedman, "The New Woman: Changing Views of Women in the 1920s," *Journal of American History* 56, no. 2 (Sept. 1974): 372-93; Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America,* second ed. (New York: New Viewpoints, 1979), ch. 5; Julie Matthaei, *An Economic History of Women in America* (New York: Schocken, 1982), especially chaps. 7-9.
5. This hypothesis implies a concept of the public sphere, in particular that of an alternative or counter public sphere as developed by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge in *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung/Public Sphere and Experience* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972). For a review in English, see Eberhard Knödler-Bunte, "The Proletarian Public Sphere and Political Organization," *New German Critique,* no. 4 (Winter 1975): 51-75; and my own paraphrase of Negt and Kluge in "Early Silent Cinema: Whose Public Sphere," *New German Critique,* no. 29 (Spring/Summer 1983): 155-59. The role of the cinema for women during this period of transition is discussed in Judith Mayne, "Immigrants and Spectators," *Wide Angle* 5, no. 2 (1982): 32-41; Elizabeth Ewen, "City Lights: Immigrant Women and the Rise of the Movies," *Signs* 5, no. 3 (1980): S45-S65; Mary Ryan, "The Projection of a New Womanhood: The Movie Moderns in the 1920s," in *Our American Sisters: Women in American Life and Thought,* second ed., Jean E. Friedman and William G. Shade, eds. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1976): 366-84.
6. Laura Mulvey, "Afterthoughts . . . Inspired by *Duel in the Sun,*" *Framework,* nos. 15-17 (1981): 12; "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" originally appeared in *Screen* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1977): 6-18.
7. For a still useful discussion of Mulvey in a larger context of directions of recent theory, see Christine Gledhill, "Developments in Feminist Film Criticism" (1978), rpt. in *Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism,* Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, Linda Williams, eds. (Los Angeles: AFI monograph Series, 1983), 18-48. Among articles devoted primarily to a critique of Mulvey, see David Rodowick, "The Difficulty of Difference," *Wide Angle* 5, no. 1 (1982): 4-15; Janet Walker,

"Psychoanalysis and Feminist Film Theory," *Wide Angle* 6, no. 3 (1984): 16-23. For discussions challenging the Metzian/Mulveyan paradigm of spectatorship altogether, see Gaylyn Studlar, "Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of the Cinema," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 9, no. 4 (Fall 1984): 267-82; Gertrud Koch, "Exchanging the Gaze: Re-Visioning Feminist Film Theory," *New German Critique*, no. 34 (Winter 1985): 139-53.

8. Mulvey, "Afterthoughts," 12.
9. This theoretical endeavor would greatly benefit from a more historical perspective taking into account the discourse on female reception during the formative decades of the institution, in particular the rejection of mass culture in terms of femininity. For German cinema, see Heide Schlüpmann's suggestive essay, "Kinosucht [Cinema Addiction]," *Frauen und Film*, no. 33 (Oct. 1982): 45-52; and my own "Early Silent Cinema": 173-84. Patrice Petro draws an impressive parallel between the German debates on "distraction" and American discourse on television in "Mass Culture and the Feminine: The 'Place' of Television in Film Studies," *Cinema Journal* 25, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 5-21. Significantly, in both American as well as German sources of the 1910s and 1920s, "distraction" and "absorption" are more often perceived in a relationship of affinity and simultaneity, than in one of opposition (as Brechtian film theory of the 1970s would have it). On the trope of transvestism, in particular its different uses by male and female writers, see Sandra M. Gilbert, "Costumes of the Mind: Transvestism as Metaphor in Modern Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 391-417, especially 404ff.
10. Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator," *Screen* 23, nos. 3-4 (Sept./Oct. 1982): 81 (emphasis added).
11. The question of temporality has been raised as a crucial aspect of female spectatorship by Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 96ff.; also see Tania Modleski, "Time and Desire in the Woman's Film," *Cinema Journal* 23, no. 3 (Spring 1984): 19-30. Modleski refers to Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, *Signs* 7, no. 1 (Fall 1981): 13-35. For a discussion of the conflicting temporal registers of individual life history and social experience, see Negt/Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience*, 45-74.
12. Doane, "The 'Woman's Film': Possession and Address," in *Re-Vision*, 67-82; Linda Williams, "'Something Else Besides a Mother': *Stella Dallas* and the Maternal Melodrama," *Cinema Journal* 24, no. 1 (Fall 1984): 2-27; Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass Produced Fantasies for Women* (1982; New York: Methuen, 1984).
13. Williams's "'Something Else'" in part responds to E. Ann Kaplan, "The Case of the Missing Mother: Maternal Issues in Vidor's *Stella Dallas*," *Heresies* 16 (1983): 81-85; Kaplan's reply appeared in *Cinema Journal* 24, no. 2 (Winter 1985): 40-43.
14. See Jürgen Habermas's critique of Gadamer, *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 174ff.; "Der Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik," *Kultur und Kritik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), 264-301.
15. This project obviously involves some "reading against the grain" but ultimately has a different objective: rather than merely to expose, from film to film, the textual contradictions symptomatic of the repression of female subjectivity under patriarchy, a rewriting of film history in a feminist sense seeks to discover traces of female subjectivity even in the most repressive and alienated forms of consumer culture. The paradigm I have in mind is Benjamin's huge work on the Paris Arcades which Susan Buck-Morss (in a forthcoming book) reads as a dialectical *Ur*-history of mass culture. Also see Habermas, "Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism: The

Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin" (1972), *New German Critique,* no. 17 (Spring 1979): 30-59.

16. Doane, "Masquerade," 77; Kaplan, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York and London: Methuen, 1983), 29. In the context of this problem, a number of critics have recently focused on the representation of the male body and the question of masculinity, among them Pam Cook, "Masculinity in Crisis?" (on *Raging Bull*), *Screen* 23, nos. 3-4 (Sept.-Oct. 1982): 39-53; Richard Dyer, "Don't Look Now: The Male Pin-Up," ibid., 61-73; Steve Neale, "Masculinity as Spectacle," *Screen* 24, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1983): 2-16.
17. Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't,* 83.
18. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). Thompson, chap. 18, sees the basic narrative and stylistic premises of the classical system in place by 1917; the technological changes that gave 1920s films their distinct visual texture are described in chap. 21.
19. I feel supported in this contention by Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't,* 125, 162; she also shares my skepticism concerning the Hegelian premises of Lacan, 128ff., 189 (n. 31), 205 (n. 32). By the same author, see "Aesthetic and Feminist Theory," *New German Critique,* no. 34 (Winter 1985): 154-75.
20. A more consistent trait in Valentino's history with the industry is the high number of women in the production of his films, although this was generally more often the case before 1930. His most important films had scripts written by women, in particular June Mathis who "discovered" him, but also Frances Marion; *Blood and Sand* was brilliantly edited by Dorothy Arzner; Alla Nazimova and Natacha Rambova, a designer and also his second wife, exerted their artistic and spiritual(ist) influence on many productions, with or without credit.
21. Sigmund Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905), *Standard Edition* 7: 182.
22. Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure," 11.
23. A more misogynist version of the same pattern occurs in *Cobra* (1925) when a friend advises the unhappily courting but as usual much pursued Valentino, "look at the woman with the torch: she is safe!"—cut to the Statue of Liberty. For an excellent reading of these "duels" and "ballets" of the gaze, see Karsten Witte, "Rudolph Valentino: Erotoman des Augenblicks," in *Die Unsterblichen des Kinos* 1, ed. Adolf Heinzlmeier et al. (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1982), 29-35.
24. "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," *Standard Edition* 14: 128ff.; "Three Essays," *SE* 7: 156ff., 199f. and passim.
25. I am much endebted here to the work of Gertrud Koch; for essays available in translation, see "Why Women Go to the Movies," *Jump Cut,* no. 27 (July 1982); and "Female Sensuality: Past Joys and Future Hopes," *Jump Cut,* no. 30 (March 1985). Also see Christian Metz's distinction between cinematic and theatrical voyeurism, in *The Imaginary Signifier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 64-66, 91-98.
26. Freud, "The Psycho-Analytic View of Psychogenic Disturbance of Vision" (1910), *Standard Edition* 11: 216f.
27. For an elaboration of this aspect of Freud's essay, see Stephen Heath, "Difference," *Screen* 19, no. 3 (Autumn 1978): 86-87.
28. Christa Karpenstein, "Bald führt der Blick das Wort ein, bald leitet das Wort den Blick," *Kursbuch,* no. 49 (1977): 62. Also see Jutta Brückner's important essay on pornography, "Der Blutfleck im Auge der Kamera," *Frauen und Film,* no. 30 (Dec. 1981): 13-23; Brückner links the historical "underdevelopment" of women's vision with the modality of dreams, as a more archaic form of consciousness: "This female

gaze, which is so precise precisely because it is not too precise, because it also has this inward turn, opening itself to fantasy images which it melts with the more literal images on the screen, this gaze is the basis for a kind of identification which women in particular tend to seek in the cinema" (19).

29. The discrepancy between advertising pitch and Valentino's actual lack of orientation and focus is obvious in the promotional short, *Rudolph Valentino and His Eighty-Eight American Beauties* (1923), which shows him as a somewhat half-hearted arbiter in a beauty contest. Even in Roland Barthes's compelling reading of the Valentinian face, the emphasis is on the aggressive aspect of his gaze: "The face is mysterious, full of exotic splendor, of an inaccessible, Baudelairean beauty, undoubtedly made of exquisite dough; but one knows all too well that this cold glistening of make-up, this delicate, dark line under the animal eye, the black mouth—all this betrays a mineral substance, a cruel statue which comes to life only to thrust forth." "Visages et figures," *Esprit*, no. 204 (July 1953): 7. ["Le visage est arcane, splendeur exotique, beauté baudelairienne, inaccessible, d'une pâte exquise sans doute, mais on sait bien que cette froid luisance du fard, ce mince trait sombre sous l'oeil d'animal, cette bouche noire, tout cela est d'un être minéral, d'une statue cruelle qui ne s'anime que pour percer."] The metaphor of piercing or thrusting, however, would only confirm the suspicion that the Valentinian gaze is ultimately a substitute for phallic potency, hence the fetishistic cult surrounding it.
30. Two of Valentino's most popular films, *The Four Horsemen* and *Blood and Sand*, actually culminate in the protagonist's death, bringing into play the deep affinity of eros and death drive which Freud observes in his fascinating paper on "The Theme of the Three Caskets" (1913), *SE* 12: 289-301. According to Enno Patalas, Valentino himself identified much more strongly with these two roles than with the superficial heroism of the Sheik, *Sozialgeschichte der Stars* (Hamburg: Marion von Schröder Verlag, 1963), 96f.
31. Doane, "Misrecognition and Identity," *Ciné-Tracts* 3, no. 3 (Fall 1980): 25; Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, 46ff., 56ff and passim.
32. For example, the work of Stephen Heath, Raymond Bellour, and Thierry Kuntzel; also see the section on point of view in *Film Reader*, no. 4 (1979).
33. See Janet Walker, "Psychoanalysis and Feminist Film Theory" (note 7), 20ff.; de Lauretis, "Aesthetic and Feminist Theory" (note 19), 164ff.
34. This option actually prevails in contemporary statements of female spectators; see Herbert Blumer, *Movies and Conduct* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 69-70. In retrospect, however, as I frequently found in conversations with women who were in their teens at the time, the female star has faded into oblivion as much as the narrative, whereas Valentino himself is remembered with great enthusiasm and vividness of detail.
35. Doane, "Misrecognition and Identity," 28ff.; Doane's major objection to Metz's concept of primary identification is that, based as it is on the analogy with the Lacanian mirror stage and thus the hypothetical constitution of the male subject, the concept perpetuates, on a theoretical level, the patriarchal exclusion of female spectatorship.
36. See Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI, 1979).
37. This pattern of combining dark and light oppositions in one and the same character must have been perceived as typical of the Valentino text; see the change of Dubrovsky's alias in *The Eagle* from Pushkin's Monsieur Deforge to Valentino's Monsieur LeBlanc.
38. Alexander Walker, *Rudolph Valentino* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 54f.
39. As Tom Gunning points out, such instances of direct address were rather common in erotic films before 1908, but thereafter persist only in the pornographic tradition—"the seeming acknowledgment of the presence of the spectator-voyeur gives

these films much of their erotic power." "An Unseen Energy Swallows Space: The Space in Early Film and Its Relation to American Avant-Garde Film," in *Film Before Griffith*, John Fell, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 359.

40. Dressing up Valentino is a major theme in *Rudy: An Intimate Portrait of Rudolph Valentino by his Wife Natacha Rambova* (London: Hutchinson, 1926). Given his own sartorial extravagance as well as his being himself a phenomenon of fashion, it is actually curious how little the films participated in the promotion of contemporary clothing styles; only three of his major films, as far as I can tell, cast him in modern dress. In this context, without presuming too preposterous a parallel, one might remember the link between transsexual and trans-historical changes of costumes in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928); also see Gilbert, "Costumes of the Mind" (note 9, above), 406.
41. A number of critics have recently commented upon the role of sadomasochistic structures in cinematic identification: Rodowick, "The Difficulty of Difference" (note 7, above); Doane, "The Woman's Film" (note 12, above); Kaja Silverman, "Masochism and Subjectivity" (on Cavani's *Portiere di Notte*), *Framework*, no. 12 (1980): 2-9. Also see Jessica Benjamin, "Master and Slave: The Fantasy of Erotic Domination," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow et al. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 280-99.
42. Koch, "Schattenreich der Körper: Zum pornographischen Kino," in *Lust und Elend: Das erotische Kino* (München: Bucher, 1981), 35; English trans. forthcoming in *Jump Cut*. The investment in eros as a negation of the principle of social identity is, of course, a topos of the Frankfurt School, especially in the work of Adorno; see his and Horkheimer's critique of the subject under patriarchy and monopoly capitalism in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1947), his aphorisms and fragments, dating back to the period of exile, in *Minima Moralia* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1951), as well as later essays in cultural criticism such as "Sexualtabus und Recht heute," *Eingriffe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1963): 104.
43. Tajiri (note 2), 63.
44. The male contingent among Valentino fans is not to be underestimated, including Elvis Presley, Kenneth Anger, and other luminaries; see Kenneth Anger, "Rudy's Rep," in *Hollywood Babylon* (1975; New York: Dell, 1981); and his contribution to a catalogue of the Berlin Film Festival retrospective of Valentino's work, "Sich an Valentino erinnern heisst Valentino entdecken," discussed by Karsten Witte, in "Fetisch-Messen," *Frauen und Film*, no. 38 (May 1985): 72-78. Ken Russell's film (see note 3) both exploits and disavows Valentino's place in the homosexual tradition. More important than biographical fact is the question of how Valentino challenged dominant standards of masculinity, which is also a question of their social and historical variability and changeability.
45. The sadistic spicing of cinematic pleasure (far from being the exclusive domain of Von Stroheim) is still rather common in pre-Code films, though seldom with such strong effects on the sexual persona of the protagonist. Consider, for instance, a sequence early on in the Pickford vehicle *Sparrows* (1926) in which the villain (Gustav von Seyffertitz) crushes a doll sent, by an absent mother, to one of the children he keeps as slaves; the camera lingers, close-up, on the remnants of the doll as it slowly disappears in the swamp. The fascination deployed in such a shot far exceeds narrative motivation; i.e., its function for establishing Mr. Grimes as irredeemably evil.
46. Freud, "Three Essays," *SE* 7: 160; also "Instincts," *SE* 14: 126.
47. Most notably in "The Economic Problem of Masochism" (1924), *SE* 19: 155-70, where Freud develops the notion of a "primary" masochism linked to the death instinct; this notion is already present though rejected in "Instincts and Their Vi-

cissitudes" (1915), 127, but resumed as early as 1920 in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, *SE* 18: 55.

48. Studlar, "Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of the Cinema" (note 7); Deleuze, *Masochism: An Interpretation of Coldness and Cruelty* (French orig. 1967; New York: George Braziller, 1971).
49. Deleuze, *Masochism*, 21, 37f. Studlar acknowledges this problem in passing, "Masochism and Perverse Pleasures," 270 and her note 27. The reason why Deleuze's model seems to work so surprisingly well for the Sternberg/Dietrich films might have less to do with the validity of the model than with Sternberg's indebtedness to the same cultural background that gave us *Venus in Furs*.
50. The essay has been much discussed in recent film theory; for example, Rodowick, "The Difficulty of Difference," and Doane, "The Woman's Film."
51. Freud, "A Child Is Being Beaten," *Standard Edition* 17: 186.
52. This incestuous-narcissistic aura is encapsulated in a portrait showing Valentino and Rambova in profile and, obviously, in the nude; rpt. in Walker, 73; and Anger, *Hollywood Babylon*, 160-61.
53. Williams, "When the Woman Looks," *Re-Vision*, 83-96. The point Williams makes with regard to a number of classic horror films also elucidates the function of the dark/light split in the Valentino character: "the power and potency of the monster body . . . should not be interpreted as an eruption of the normally repressed animal sexuality of the civilized male (the monster as double for the male viewer and characters in the film), but as feared power and potency of a different kind of sexuality (the monster as double for the woman)" (87).
54. Adorno, "Sexualtabus" (note 42), 104-5; the phrase is used in English and without quotation marks; also see "This Side of the Pleasure Principle," *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (London: New Left Books, 1974). Marcuse's plea for polymorphous perversity in *Eros and Civilization* (1955; Boston: Beacon Press, 1966) is more problematic, especially in light of the Foucauldian analysis of the "perverse implantation" (*The History of Sexuality* 1), but Marcuse himself takes a more pessimistic view in his "Political Preface 1966," while maintaining a utopian distinction between sexual liberty and erotic/political freedom (xiv-xv). Already during the 1920s, the prophets of a "healthy sex life" were numerous, drawing on the essentialist sexual psychology of Havelock Ellis, on the newly discovered "doctrine" of psychoanalysis, as well as libertarian positions developed among the Greenwich Village boheme although not necessarily all that liberating for women; see writings by Hutchins Hapgood, Max Eastman, V. F. Calverton and—probably the single most repressive instance of sexual hygiene—Floyd Dell, *Love in the Machine Age: A Psychological Study of the Transition from Patriarchal Society* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1930).
55. Walker, *Rudolph Valentino*, 8, 47 and passim.
56. See works cited above, note 4.
57. *Blood and Sand*, closest to the melodramatic matrix, is the only film that makes Valentino's mate a mother; by contrast, most other female characters opposite Valentino have tomboyish qualities (especially Moran in *Moran of the Lady Letty*), an air of independence, owing to either a superior social status or work, and, above all, a certain "mischievous vivacity" (Ryan) that was associated with the New Woman.
58. Glyn actually endorsed Valentino's sex appeal, and he starred in *Beyond the Rocks* (1922), based on one of her novels. Still, the focus on a male star distinguishes the Valentino films from films that more immediately functioned to train their audiences in "fashionable femininity"; Ryan, "Projection" (note 5), 370f.
59. See the notorious "Pink Powder Puff" attack in the *Chicago Tribune*, July 18, 1926, reported in *Hollywood Babylon*, 156-58.

60. For this aspect of the Valentino persona I am indebted to Virginia Wright Wexman as well as to Richard Dyer's work on Paul Robeson; Winifred Stewart and Jane Hady, who remember the Valentino cult during their teenage years in Martinsburg, West Virginia, further encouraged the following speculations. Also see Jacqueline Hall, "'The Mind that Burns in Each Body': Women, Rape, and Racial Violence," in *Powers of Desire* (note 41), 337.
61. Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse," *Screen* 24, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1983): 18-36.
62. Barthes, "Visages et figures" (note 29), 6.
63. Richard Dyer suggests that all representations of the male body, especially however, of male nudity, share this fate, since the actual sight of the penis, whether limp or erect, is bound to be awkward, thus revealing the discrepancy between it and the symbolic claims made in its name, the hopeless assertion of phallic mastery; "Don't Look Now" (note 16), 71-72.
64. Any Valentino biography will elaborate on these events with great gusto. For the most detailed account, including an astonishing chapter on Valentino's afterlife ("Act V: Cuckooland"), see Shulman's book (note 2).