INTRODUCTION

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"WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO DESERVE THIS?"

Pedro Almodóvar's *What Have I Done to Deserve This* (1985) begins with a sequence in which a cleaning woman in a gym watches a group of men practicing the martial arts, including Kendo. As she looks at these men costumed in their athletic gear, wielding weapons, and boldly posturing in combat positions (1), desire arises out of her initial curiosity. Cut to the locker room where one of the men enters to take a shower after the workout. She and we see him from behind as he enters the shower (2). He becomes aware of her look, turns, and gestures for her to join him. She approaches, and in one shot we see her glance down directly at his genitals (3). He faces the camera as she walks up to him (4). They immediately begin to make love passionately. As he holds her and enters her standing up, she instructs, "Higher, higher." Seconds later, however, he is done (5), and in a long shot we see her walking away with a disappointed, dissatisfied expression. He walks toward the camera and stands naked, looking after her. Cut back to the empty gym, where she now wields the martial arts weapon.

This brief sequence poses a number of crucial questions surrounding both the conventional sexual representation of the male body and the difficulty of creating significant alternatives. At the simplest level, the sequence reverses the usual structure of looks in the cinema that Laura Mulvey first described in gender terms, arguing in "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema" (1975) that within the classical structure men possess the gaze and women are its object. The male look is powerful, controlling, and desiring, and within point-of-view editing patterns, it creates a circuit wherein the frequently fetishized image of the woman that follows is intensely eroticized. A corollary of Mulvey's main hypothesis is that men cannot bear to gaze on other men who are exhibiting themselves for that gaze and are thus not similarly objectified.

Although I critique the limitations of this perspective, I want to emphasize that there are important contextual reasons for this near-total attention to the woman's body, and as we may expect, this is not unique to film theory; it applies almost equally to literature, art, and photography. With important exceptions, such as Phylis Chesler's *About Men* (1978), feminism's initial agenda put primary emphasis on how patriarchy attempted to regulate women's bodies. Academic feminist film theory and criticism therefore prioritized understanding the alienating ways in which women's bodies were controlled in representation via such devices as fragmentation and fetishism. Politically it was much more important to understand and change the ways in which patriarchy, and primarily men within patriarchy, structured oppressive representations of women's bodies than it was to worry about how the same patriarchal ideology structured representations of men's bodies. Feminists were and still are very concerned that men not set the agenda for women. Issues around the male body may certainly be of more concern to men than women and thus not be a priority for feminists. This context is even more extreme when, as in this book, a man deals with the representation of the male body, appearing to privilege male concerns about the male body and thus raising the specter of the most traditional patriarchal discourse. I suggest, however, that the silence surrounding the sexual representation of the male body is itself totally in the service of traditional patriarchy and that critical work by men can complement, rather than displace or silence, feminist women's voices.

Indeed, we are faced with two highly paradoxical situations. From one perspective, film theory from the mid-1970s through most of the 1980s per-

petuated the dominant cultural paradigm wherein women's bodies are displayed and men's bodies are hidden and protected. Countless pages have been devoted to analyzing how women's bodies are fetishized and controlled via the star system, fashion, lighting, camera position and cutting patterns, narrative structure, and so forth. Thus academics have replicated as well as deconstructed the very sexual ideology they are analyzing. Women's bodies have occupied the critical spotlight in a way analogous to which they have been center stage as a spectacle in the culture in which we live.

Patriarchy benefits from and may even be partly contingent on perpetuating the mystique of the penis–phallus. I employ both the word penis and phallus. The distinction is critical. The penis is the literal organ and the phallus a symbolic concept. As Barbara de Genevieve so succinctly notes while commenting on the double standard of nudity surrounding the male and female body, "To unveil the penis is to unveil the phallus is to unveil the social construction of masculinity. And *that* is a real taboo" (1991, 4). Since it is in the interest of patriarchy to ensure that men's bodies remain what Rosalind Coward has called the "dark continent," it is important to turn the light on those bodies. Only after thus centering the male body will it be possible truly to decenter it, for it is precisely when the penis–phallus is hidden from view in patriarchy that it is most centered. There is no way that we can move beyond the impasse surrounding the male body by simply ignoring it, since that is what patriarchy wants us to do and has, in fact, been quite successful in bringing about.

The following chapters show how both avoiding the sexual representation of the male body and carefully controlling its limited explicit representations work to support patriarchy. It is no coincidence that if scholars in gender studies continue to ignore the male body, arguing that we should neither look at it carefully nor analyze it, they will sound like the most traditional men. Like the congruent positions of antipornography feminists and the religious right, such congruent perspectives should give us pause. No doubt, paradoxes should also give us pause, but the paradoxes that, I argue, surrounded initial work on the female body and surround current work on the male body grow out of the fact that we cannot simply write from outside history and ideology; we must move through phases. The concluding chapters of this book point to some of the changes that may result from analyzing and challenging dominant discourses surrounding the male body. If this seems to place men and their bodies at the center and risks replicating patriarchal viewpoints, it is a risk I must take.

In the sequence in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* described earlier, it is the woman who not only looks but desires the body on which she longingly gazes. Equally obviously, it is the man's body that is graphically displayed, first when he turns to beckon the woman into the shower and later when he stands looking after she has departed; she, in contrast, is fully clothed throughout the sequence. But the scene is not a simple reversal, such as male stripping and *Playgirl*. Simple reversals never address true power imbalances; while masquerading in society as liberating activities, they reinscribe the traditional ideological imbalance in ways that seek to contain any threat posed by the new activity. Almodóvar's scene is a complex reversal; nevertheless, it gets tangled in contradictory issues that it cannot satisfactorily resolve. Before carefully unpacking the sequence, however, I want to return to Mulvey's hypotheses and their impact.

Mulvey's article rightly became a watershed work in the history of film theory and criticism. It managed at one and the same time to be highly provocative and polemical, and its influence directly dominates a decade of work on gender and cinema. Mulvey's insights were astonishing, and like many other scholars, I am deeply indebted to her. Nevertheless, from the beginning I was disturbed by the implications that her argument had for issues surrounding the representation of the male body. It may be no coincidence that in an essay notable for its articulate, clear argumentation the sentences that most directly raise this issue have always struck me as awkwardly worded: "The male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like" (Mulvey 1975, 12). On the contrary, I argue in this book that man not only can but is driven to look at, and talk, and write, and joke about his "exhibitionist like." Similarly, he not only has carried the "burden of sexual objectification" but indeed wants to carry it. In short, Mulvey oversimplified both the history of the sexual representation of the male body and the nature of male subjectivity.

In 1985, Rosalind Coward remarked:

> Under this sheer weight of attention to women's bodies we seem to have become blind to something. Nobody seems to have noticed that men's bodies have quietly absented themselves. Somewhere along the line men have managed to keep out of the glare, escaping from the relentless activity of sexual definitions. In spite of the ideology that would have us believe that women's sexuality is an enigma, it is in reality men's bodies, men's sexuality which is the true "dark continent" of this society. (1985, 227)

Since this observation was published in 1985, things have changed. Feminist scholars such as Miriam Hansen, Sandy Flitterman, and Chris Holmlund have analyzed the particular sex appeal for female spectators of such stars as Rudolph Valentino, Tom Selleck, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Sylvester Stallone. Gaylyn Studlar has challenged Laura Mulvey's reading of the films of Josef von Sternberg by bringing to light the previously overlooked centrality of male masochism in those films. Linda Williams has analyzed hardcore pornography in relationship to the female spectator. In a manner symptomatic of these developments, Constance Penley and Sharon Willis have edited "Male Trouble," a special issue of *Camera Obscura* devoted to masculinity.

In addition to this feminist perspective, important work has been done from the gay male perspective. Richard Dyer's analysis of the male pin-up is a ground-breaking article. Tom Waugh is studying the history of gay male sexual representation and pornography. Steve Neale has analyzed the spectacle of masculinity and Paul Willemen the films of Anthony Mann. Dennis Bingham has analyzed the male spectator and such male stars as James Stewart, Clint Eastwood, and Jack Nicholson. There is also Paul Smith's work on Eastwood. Finally there is *Screening the Male*, edited by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, the first collection of essays on film devoted to masculinity and the male body.*

David Rodowick's *The Difficulty of Difference* supplies a brilliant re-reading of how film theory has misappropriated Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan and bears directly on the following chapters. Rodowick objects to the strong emphasis psychoanalytic film theorists have placed on binary oppositions such as male–female, active–passive, and sadistic–masochistic and attributes this to a misreading of Freud's work. Rodowick demonstrates that Freud saw these as fluid and necessarily related categories. They were not, as they have come to be in film theory, fixed categories associated with one

*As this brief survey indicates, during the 1980s a number of different strands of criticism surrounding the male body emerged, including a range of concerns from the perspectives of female, gay male, and heterosexual male spectators. Not surprisingly, this development has taken place in the other arts as well. Melody Davis has analyzed the male nude in photography. Finally, a whole new field sometimes called Men's Studies has emerged during the past decade, and such books as *The Sexuality of Men*, edited by Andy Metcalf and Martin Humphries, discuss masculinity and the male body in ways that relate to my concerns.

sex rather than the other. In film theory, for example, the psychoanalytic development of the fetishistic structure whereby one balances knowledge with belief is attributed solely to males as a result of dealing with castration anxiety. Relatedly, the ability to believe simultaneously in the reality of the image and distance oneself from it as only an image is attributed to males and a closeness to and overly emotional identification with the image to females. In short, film theory's notion of sadistic men who control a powerful gaze that retains visual distance and is built on a fetishistic regime of balancing knowledge of castration with a belief in the contradictory image of the woman as possessing a penis, as opposed to masochistic women who overly identify with the image and cannot maintain visual distance, is a simplistic, rigidified schematic account based on a misreading of Freud.

My response to the way in which film theory created the rigid male–female binary oppositions that Rodowick emphasizes was nearly the opposite of his. Rather than emphasize re-reading Freud and Lacan, I turned my attention to a detailed analysis of the sexual representation of the male body in a variety of texts; I closely read and re-read films, novels, paintings, photographs, popular music, and videos with the intention of exploring those texts in a manner that would maximize how they might shed light on the ideology of the representation of the male body. Although I employ Freudian thought and find it an invaluable critical tool, those close analyses, which constitute the following chapters, convince me that our rigid notions of male–female difference are oversimplified and that Rodowick is correct in conceiving of multiple, fluid, and contradictory positions. Men desire and fear, and sometimes desire what they most fear, in ways that confound any simple notions of male subjectivity. Before returning to these issues, however, I return to *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* a film that places the sexual representation of the male body in the foreground.

The film begins with the woman's desire being aroused by a clothed and very traditional image of men. Almodóvar further loads this image by making it athletic and thus competitive, combative and thus heroic—and one that involves wielding a big weapon and is thus overtly phallic. In her initial look, the woman does not see, let alone desire, a particular male body; she sees and is aroused by a highly phallic image of powerful, active masculinity. Part of what makes this sequence so interesting is that this symbolic spectacle and the desire it arouses carries over for the woman onto the literal male body, and here she is eventually disappointed. The way in which she returns

to the gym and assumes the previous male position of wielding the weapon makes explicit the penis–phallus distinction.*

One of the main themes of this book is the way in which the phallus dominates, restricts, prohibits, and controls the representation of the male body, particularly its sexual representation. *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* makes clear that although the penis and phallus may be theoretically separable, they are linked in actuality, and linked in a way that has specific consequences for both the theoretical concept of the symbolic phallus and the literal male body and the penis. Most significantly, the woman can just as readily wield the phallus and its power as the man can. Neither men nor women, however, as Chris Holmlund reminds us, can possess the phallus, and in this sense masculinity is itself a masquerade. This is the importance of the scene in the gym immediately following the sexual encounter. The woman demonstrates that she can occupy what was previously the male position when she picks up the symbolic weapon and postures as the men have done. This in turn initiates a pattern in the film that culminates when she kills her oppressive husband by clubbing him over the head with a ham bone. At the end of the film, the detective assigned to solve the case is foiled by the woman in another scene in the gym where she stands wielding the phallus. Even her elderly mother collects sticks throughout the film, a mysterious act comically suggesting that women can and will occupy the presumed male role of wielding the phallus and its symbolic power.

But what of male nudity and the explicitness of the shower scene? On the one hand, it is a marked departure from the conventions of male nudity found in dominant cinema, photography, social pornography such as *Playgirl*, and hard-core pornography. In those forms, the explicit sexual representation of the male body involves a variety of structures that attempt to make it impressively dramatic. Foremost among these is an emphasis on large penises. Yet the actor in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* is shown with a small,

*Lucy Fischer has brought to my attention some interesting resonances between the gym scene in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* and a gym scene in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) in which Jane Russell admiringly looks at the bodies of Olympic athletes as they exercise. Her desires are unfulfilled, however, by the unresponsive athletes who are entirely self-absorbed in their exercise. In this context, a related gym scene occurs in Jean-Luc Godard's segment in *Aria* (1988) in which nude women dance around a weightlifter, who totally ignores them.

flaccid penis. This may at first appear to be a refreshing departure from the nearly compulsive need to make a powerful, phallic spectacle of the penis, but it works to reinforce that concept when we see that the man has failed to satisfy the woman. Thus his smallness marks his body with what we learn later in the film is his ongoing problem with impotence—the man turns out to be none other than the detective assigned to investigate the murder case involving the woman with whom he has attempted to have sex.

The fact that we later learn he is both a detective and impotent complicates the shower scene further. Originally perceived in a phallically powerful, athletic posture, he also represents the Law. It is precisely this patriarchal Law with which the woman will wreak havoc when she kills her husband and stymies the detective in his effort to arrest her. Thus, if the sight of the small, unerect penis signals the contrast between the penis and the phallus, it also implies that the small penis is somehow a sign of weakness and failure.

If the point of the scene is that the man cannot satisfy the woman because of premature ejaculation or, as we learn later, impotence, then penis size is irrelevant. Indeed, the important point is precisely that all penises are inadequate to the phallus, that none of them can measure up to it. Thus, Almodóvar at one and the same time makes fun of the inflated notion of the phallus and the Law and reinforces one of the most persistent notions about the male body that results from that cultural context. Indeed, Chris Straayer, who brought this film to my attention in relation to my 1991 essay on penis-size jokes in the cinema, noted that the predominantly gay male audience with whom she saw it erupted into laughter at the sight of the penis, which they interpreted as a visual rather than verbal joke. But there is, in her view, another layer of complexity here, since Almodóvar is a gay filmmaker addressing this joke to gay members of his audience. Thus it is not any man, but a man with a "hetero-egotistical" mentality that invests in and relies on a conflation of *macho* style, sexual prowess, and male sexuality who is the butt of the hostile joke. Whether one reads the scene as a joke or a noncomic moment, as I did, the fact remains that it is still caught in the contradiction of both challenging and reinforcing dominant sexual codes.

If the sexual representation of the male body in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* at least departs from several norms and conventions of the classical cinema, how might we briefly analyze its antithesis? What then lies at the center of classical representations of the male body? The oft-filmed story of *Cyrano de Bergerac* supplies an intense distillation of crucial issues. Although the following analysis centers on the 1950 version directed

by Michael Gordon, the number of versions of this film, the decades during which they were made, and the diversity of the countries in which they have been produced suggests that the story has deep resonance within twentieth-century Western culture. There are, to name just a few, a 1923 silent version made in France by Italian director Augusto Genina, an updated contemporary American version retitled *Roxanne* (1987), and a 1990 French version starring Gérard Depardieu, which shares a sexual ideology remarkably similar to that of the 1950 version. Steven H. Scheuer's capsule summary of the 1950 version calls it "the classic play" and describes José Ferrer's performance as "very moving and makes this perennial well worth seeing." The terms *classic* and *perennial*, along with the proclivity for remaking the film, raise the question of why this drama holds such fascination. Related to this is the question of the "moving" performance. Why does this particular character move audiences so deeply? The answer goes well beyond traditional aesthetics, taking us to the center of cultural assumptions about both the male body and the female gaze at it.

Cyrano de Bergerac tells the story of its title character (Ferrer), a military officer in seventeenth-century France who is equally renowned for his extraordinarily large nose and his prowess as a swordsman and a poet. Although Cyrano falls in love with his beautiful cousin Roxanne, it is William, a soldier assigned to Cyrano's regiment, who has caught her eye. Out of feelings for her, Cyrano determines to help the singularly inarticulate William woo Roxanne by supplying the words that make her fall in love with the handsome young soldier. They are married, but he dies in battle before they consummate their marriage, and she retires to a convent. Cyrano visits her weekly until his death, whereupon she learns the truth.

The opening scene in the film establishes a cluster of conventional associations around the male body. The large nose, predictably, has phallic associations. In a 1950s Hollywood version of the cultural myth that a man with a big nose has a big penis, Cyrano tells a man who stares at his nose that a great nose indicates a "virile" man. He establishes his skill as a swordsman in the same scene when he disrupts a play that the Count de Guiche wants to see and is warned that the count has "a long arm." "Mine is longer by three feet of steel," Cyrano replies. Cyrano may be ugly, but clearly he is to be feared and admired as a fighter whose body is appropriately marked as phallically powerful.

Cyrano's physical power is augmented by his remarkable verbal power. When another man criticizes his nose, he rebukes the man, not for the ob-

servation, but for the mundane wording of the insult. There are many clever uses of language to describe his nose with "wit," Cyrano tells the unfortunate offender before he engages the man in a duel, during which he shows equal skill at fighting and improvising a poem, killing the man as he finishes the poem. This brief dueling scene establishes Cyrano as totally in control of both action and language, the twin domains from which men assert power in a patriarchal culture. Thus the deficiency of his appearance (which, significantly, is marked by symbolic excess rather than literal deficiency) is overcompensated by his powerful actions and use of language. From the beginning, then, his looks seem a negligible component of his character, and in the metaphorical sense of sight in that common expression, he is an "attractive" character.

The remainder of the narrative works both to empower Cyrano further in the realms of action and language and to teach Roxanne that these things, rather than looks, are what really matter in a man. William supplies an extreme counterpoint to Cyrano, telling him, "I am never at a loss for words among men, but with any woman—paralyzed, speechless, dumb. I'm one of those stammering idiots who cannot court a woman." Cyrano not only empowers William with language but, in one exchange, links the images of battle with those of speech: "Those [words] are your weapon. How else do you conquer?" Elsewhere, musing on the desires of his life, Cyrano refers to "a voice that means manhood," while he ponders the dilemma "to fight or write."

How does the woman fit into all this? The first time William tries to woo Roxanne in person, he becomes tongue-tied and tells her that he grows "absurd." To which she tellingly replies, "And that distresses me as much as if you had grown ugly." At this point, Roxanne conceives of ugliness as a source of distress. She will soon learn better. Cyrano devises a way to prompt William as he woos Roxanne from under a balcony, but soon Cyrano, standing in the dark, speaks directly to her. "You need no eyes to hear my heart," he tells her, in what can be seen as a summary of the film's message to women about the role of their sight of and desire for the male body. The beautiful Roxanne learns that the appearance of a man's body means nothing; his power and skill with language and the sword mean everything. She learns her lesson well. "If you were less handsome, unattractive, ugly even, I should love you still," she tells William before he dies in battle.

Cyrano de Bergerac is a variant of "beauty and the beast" narratives, which always deal with an ugly or misshapen man and a beautiful woman. The tele-

vision series aptly titled after the fairytale *Beauty and the Beast* perfectly fits this mold. A beautiful young woman falls in love with a creature who is literally part beast (his face appears catlike) and has special powers: He has both mental telepathy and unusual brute physical strength. In *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), the character played by Winona Ryder falls in love with the title character, a man-made, disfigured creature who has sharp mechanical hands that are powerful tools as well as an unusually adept and imaginative mind that informs his use of the hands.

While we are "moved" by the apparent humanistic message of these tales, it is a gendered message. Men, not people generally, should be valued and loved for attributes other than their bodies and appearances. Furthermore, the important character traits given to the misshapen man involve an intensification of traditional male patriarchal attributes, mental and physical powers, command of language, and so on. Thus, this supposedly universal tale cannot be reversed so that a handsome man learns to love a powerful, ugly, or misshapen woman. The ideology of these "beauty and the beast" narratives, moreover, sets up an extreme gender imbalance by making the woman particularly desirable for her beauty. This surfaces in a bizarre manner in *Edward Scissorhands*, which has a frame story in which the Ryder character is an old, shriveled woman who will not see Edward because she wants him to remember her as an attractive young woman. Similarly, in Jean Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast* (1946), as a form of punishment, a young woman sees herself reflected in a mirror as an old woman who has lost her beauty. While the film audience desires the woman precisely because of what they see of her conventional beauty, she must learn quite literally not to see, or to see only with her heart. A man's appearance does not matter if he is overly endowed with substitute phallic powers. Indeed, *Cyrano de Bergerac* goes so far as to tell us that a woman must learn to stop looking at and seeing the male body while falling under the sway of powerful words and actions.

By way of contrast, it is instructive to shift attention away from the female gaze at the misshapen male body to the female gaze at the alluring male body. In *American Gigolo* (1980), a rather startling scene of a similar type to that in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* occurred in the Hollywood cinema and shows just how contradictory and difficult such disruptions are.* *American*

**American Gigolo* received an R rating. Since frontal male nudity is rare in Hollywood films, many presume its absence is a simple ratings issue. Showing the male genitals does not mean an automatic X or NC-17 rating, and nearly all the Hollywood

Gigolo is one of the few Hollywood films that overtly disturbs central classical tenets about how the nude male body is shot, edited, and narrativized. Near the beginning, we see Richard Gere exercising in his apartment. There are three brief shots of views of the apartment, then a shot of two dumbbells lying on the floor. Gere walks into the frame, but we see only his legs from the knees down. He is wearing ankle grips, which he bends down and adjusts. Cut to a shot of a bar mounted on the ceiling as Gere's hands grab it, and we see him swing his ankles up and lock them onto the bar. Cut to a medium shot of Gere hanging upside down. He is wearing no shirt, and his upper body is visible. He engages in strenuous arm exercises with the dumbbells, and we hear his heavy breathing. Cut to a side-view mid-shot as we see his muscles straining from the exertion. He listens to a record designed to teach Americans to speak Swedish and repeats some of the phrases. Cut to an extreme long shot of his entire body. The camera slowly moves in as he continues exercising, breathing heavily, and repeating Swedish phrases. Cut back to the previous mid-view side shot. The phone rings. Cut to a shot of his forearms as he drops the dumbbells on the floor. Cut back to a full-body shot as he swings up to the bar, releases his ankles, and drops to the floor. The camera pans right as he answers the phone; he is still breathing heavily. He exercises and moves about as he talks on the phone. He walks away from the camera and looks at himself in a mirror as he continues exercising his upper torso and neck muscles. He walks toward the camera, then left, and the camera pans to follow him. He does two strong leg kicks. Only at the end of the shot does he very briefly stand still and then the camera frames him in a conventional head-and-shoulders close-up; none of his body is on display.

All the fragmented body shots emphasize the muscles either poised for action or in action. There is an emphasis on the athletic equipment characteristic of the props analyzed by Richard Dyer (1982) in photographs of male pin-ups. Even when he is talking on the phone, there is a need to show him

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films that contain frontal male nudity are R-rated. Such noncontroversial films as *Drive, He Said* (1972) and *Buster and Billie* (1974) included full male nudity, as did such later mainstream films as *The Little Drummer Girl* (1984). Although Hollywood films include more frontal female nudity than male nudity, it is important to recognize that entirely different issues are at stake. In accordance with common patterns of male fetishism, Hollywood female nudity avoids the genitals and dwells on breasts and buttocks as a source of visual pleasure.

in constant action. The audible foregrounding of his breathing enlists the soundtrack in the service of stressing his exertion and activity. This scene can be read as a hysterical preparation and overcompensation for the static, passive display of Gere's body in a later lovemaking scene.

After Gere and Lauren Hutton make love, we have the seeming reversal of the classical Hollywood pattern. They are lying in bed talking when we see Gere in a medium shot. He is on his back looking up at the ceiling, then he sits up and gets out of bed. As he stands up, there is a cut to a previous extreme, high-angle, long-shot view of the room, which shows the entire bed toward the left of the frame and the wall and windows at the right. Naked, Gere walks across the room to the window, opens the venetian blinds, and looks out. Cut to a medium shot of him from a frontal angle as he continues talking (6). Except for briefly turning to look at Hutton, he looks out the window. The light from the window casts a strong bar pattern over his body. Cut to a medium shot from an angle behind Gere. We see the upper half of his body, and the camera is now positioned along an axis that approximates Hutton's view (7). The shot cannot be read as a point-of-view shot, however, since the camera is much closer to Gere than to Hutton. Cut back to the previous extreme long shot. As Gere talks, he turns toward his right, repositioning his body so that we now have an angled but full frontal view with his

penis visible (8). Hutton, who has been lying on her side while looking at him, now rolls over on her stomach. She continues to look directly at him as he finishes talking. The scene cuts abruptly to the next scene.

The apparent role reversal privileging the female gaze and objectifying the male body has to be qualified in several significant ways. In the full-body

long shot, there is an unexpected cut back to an extreme distance from Gere. This obscures Gere's body at precisely the moment when it is most fully on display. This cutting pattern removes the view of Gere's body from being relayed through the woman's eyes, as the view of the woman's body is so frequently relayed through the male gaze. In fact, the camera has been placed so far back that Hutton's body is well within the shot near the left middle of the frame. In a traditional cutting pattern, her body would be absent or, at most, suggested by a neck-and-shoulders outline that would then mark the shot as a point of view. Furthermore, traditional spatial logic is broken in the extreme long shot, since earlier in the scene the cutting pattern has established an axis of cutting back and forth between the characters. Since neither character has moved, it is surprising to be pulled out of the established space. The added space is not necessary, in other words, to keep a character's actions in the composition. The cut back simultaneously denies the woman's point of view and deemphasizes the man's genitals.

What Gere is saying also deserves detailed analysis. After the lovemaking scene, Hutton initiates conversation with a reluctant Gere, who is looking out the window in a preoccupied manner that recalls another feature of male pin-ups analyzed by Dyer (1982). She asks him about himself; clearly uncomfortable with the subject, he is evasive. She then asks him, "Why do you sleep with older women?" "I prefer older women," he replies. "Why?" she persists. "What's the use of bringing some high-schooler to climax . . . some silly teenager that gets wet in the movies and goes home to masturbate? No challenge, no meaning." At the window, he recounts the following story:

> The other night, that night I met you at the hotel, I was with a woman, somebody's mother, her husband didn't care about her anymore. This woman hadn't had an orgasm in maybe ten years. Took me three hours to get her off. For a while there I didn't think I was going to be able to do it. When it was over, I felt like I'd done something, something worthwhile. Who else would've taken the time, enough to do it right?

Far from being reduced to an object here, Gere is in many ways the subject. The look of the woman, which the scene denies to the spectator, gets lost in admiration for male subjectivity. Gere delivers the lines, however, without a hint of braggadocio. Thus his sincerity can be read as articulating his true desire to bring sexual satisfaction to women. It can also be read as an affirmation of an extraordinary phallic male sexuality that is necessary for a woman's pleasure. Gere, then, is offered up and offers himself up as a gift to

women. A mere man presumably could not have or would not have lasted the necessary three hours.

This structure, as we later see, may be extremely appealing for women. The man is offering up his body for the purpose of satisfying women, yet the film profoundly equivocates as it offers up Gere's body. It is no coincidence that Gere delivers this particular speech precisely at the moment in the film when the representation of his body momentarily and radically breaks with the usual codes of representing the male. Regardless whether one reads Gere as smugly offensive in his assertion of his sexual prowess or as attractive in his concern for women's pleasure, the fact remains that the speech foregrounds the male character's subjectivity even as the logic of the scene seems to objectify him and foreground the woman's subjectivity and her look.

Finally, the preceding lovemaking scene helps contextualize our response to the scene analyzed here. Gere actively makes love to Hutton. The scene is structured around very formally composed tight shots of the lovers' fragmented bodies. In nearly all the shots, Gere is actively moving over Hutton's body, kissing and stroking it. She is merely fetishized in the manner described earlier. Thus the reversal that takes place after they make love is extremely brief and atypical.

If the exercising scene can be read as a hysterical overcompensation and preparation for the later passive nude shot, the structure of the scene can be read as equally hysterical. This hysteria can be most simply seen in the cut back to the extreme long shot that follows no formal logic in this scene and that has no rhyme elsewhere in the film. It is a troubled moment resulting from the contradictory impulses of wanting simultaneously to show Gere's body and to cover it up.

Other signs of textual disturbance in the film result from the display of Gere's body. Julian, the character Gere plays, is identified with the traditional feminine position constructed by Hollywood and is frequently called "Julie." "Julie" is a prostitute, practicing a profession identified almost exclusively with women. He places an extraordinary emphasis on fashion; his closet is full of beautiful clothes. Perhaps most significantly, he is a victim who has to be saved at the end of the film—by a woman. A weak, out-of-control character for much of the film, he constantly asks women for help. He pleads with the older woman he was with at the time of a murder he is suspected of committing to be his alibi. He asks help of the woman who runs the prostitution service for which he works.

He begs Leon, a powerful black man who heads another prostitution ser-

vice, to help him, and here the film reaches its logical extreme in Julian's character development. Leon, after refusing to help Julian, steps out on his high-rise balcony. Julian rushes him from behind and pushes him over the balcony, catching him by the legs as he is about to fall. Julian wants to scare Leon, but instead he panics about his inability to control the situation. Julian begs Leon not to fall, pleading that he needs him. Little by little we see Julian losing his grasp on Leon until the final horror—the sight of Julian clutching the empty boots as Leon falls to his death.

Here Julian fails at a moment of typical masculine action. Such a failure is unimaginable in a John Wayne or Clint Eastwood film. There are, of course, countless Hollywood films in which a male character risks the life of another character in order to get that character to do or say the desired thing, but I can think of no other such gruesome instance of a powerful male character failing so totally. The only other scene of typical masculine behavior by Julian occurs when he catches a senator's spy who is trailing him. He scares and humiliates the young man by violently writing a message on his forehead. The whole point of the scene, however, is that the senator has sent a comically inept kid who seems qualified to be a page but not a spy. But when faced with a real threat, Julian himself becomes almost comically inept. The image of him clutching the empty boots borders on grim comedy. Julian has been losing control throughout the movie, a loss that becomes explicit in this image. His powerlessness is the price he pays for standing nude while a woman and we, the spectators, look at him.

In the few instances when Hollywood shows the fully nude male, he is usually involved in action. In *The Deer Hunter* (1978), for example, Robert De Niro tears off his clothes and runs down the street. We see rear, frontal, and side shots of him; however, the camera distance and lighting in the frontal shot obscure his genitals. Just after he drops to the ground, a friend who has been following him catches up with him and throws a piece of clothing over his groin. Perhaps the most noted example of this pattern of male nudity occurs in the British film *Women in Love* (1969) when Alan Bates and Oliver Reed wrestle in the nude. Although their genitals can be seen, the male body is, using John Berger's distinction, naked rather than nude in both these films. In *American Gigolo*, Gere is nude rather than naked.

Referring to the male body in *American Gigolo*, Teresa de Lauretis has observed: "The body of John Travolta in *Moment by Moment* is not disturbing or exciting, but merely another pretty body on the Malibu scene; it even lacks the imaginary possibility, explicitly contained in the narrative of *American*

Gigolo, that the function of a man's body may be nothing more (and nothing less!) than to give pleasure to women" (1984, 83). Despite de Lauretis's enthusiasm, *American Gigolo* is intensely disturbed in its representation of Gere's character and body, perhaps precisely because of positing the function of the male body as being for the pleasure of a woman.

Until very recently, the notion that women should not look has been as entrenched at the level of critical intervention as it has been in artistic practice. This convention may seem somewhat surprising considering the importance of feminism in film theory during the past fifteen years, but feminist theory has been focused almost exclusively on the female body, leading Suzanne Moore to remark, "When I sought material on how women look at men, I discovered instead a strange absence" (1989, 45).

Laura Mulvey's work was primarily concerned with women and the representation of the female body, but it had strong implications for understanding the male body. For Mulvey, the male did not serve an erotic function but served as an active point of identification (the ideal ego, the more perfect body resulting from the misrecognition of the Lacanian mirror phase) for both male and female spectators; the male advanced the narrative, in the process demystifying, controlling, containing, and fetishizing females.* Even if true, the theory short-circuits questions about how powerful, active male characters are represented because Mulvey's explicit claim is that visual pleasure for both men and women spectators comes from the display of the female body; women are put in the position of adopting the male gaze. This argument, of course, relates to cultural arguments—put forward by John Berger (1972) and others at about the same time—that in our patriarchal culture women are brought up to survey their own bodies in comparison to the bodies

*Linda Williams's "When the Woman Looks" is an important exception, though in many ways it proves the rule (1984). Williams analyzes the look of the woman at the monster in a variety of horror films and concludes that the look creates a bond between the two; both the woman and the monster are the "other" of patriarchy, which uses the male body as the norm. Far from emphasizing a woman's desiring look at a beautiful body, the object of the look on which Williams focuses is deformed. Whereas in this genre, according to Williams, women see themselves mirrored in the monster, I argue elsewhere in this chapter that in various versions of *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *Beauty and the Beast* women must learn to ignore the outward appearance of the deformed male in order to love him for his inner qualities.

of other women and that this process is controlled by a male standard of desire. Thus, women derive pleasure from looking at other women's bodies, not from looking at men's bodies. Cultural evidence for this can be found in the fact that many women report pleasure in looking at *Playboy*. Once again, even if true, Berger's theory is inadequate to explain the complex issues of pleasure in cinema. Even if women are successfully enculturated to blind themselves to the male body—and I do not think they are—such cultural conventions cannot be applied to the cinema for the simple reason that all men and women are in some way objectified in the cinema. All of us, men and women, lesbians, gays, and heterosexuals, must look at the bodies of these represented men, even if only that we may identify with the male characters.

In other words, even if a case can be made culturally and psychoanalytically that women do not derive pleasure visually from objectifying male bodies in the way men do women's bodies, such a paradigm cannot be transferred to cinema because while watching a movie everyone is looking at representations of bodies in ways that include, but are not limited to, objectification. The cultural phenomenon surrounding the star system, for example, clearly indicates this. Even from the limited perspective of seeing the male protagonist as an active point of identification, features involving the objectification and eroticization of his body are not minimal. Marsha Kinder's personal response to Mulvey's argument makes this very clear:

> Despite the power of Mulvey's argument, I knew there were examples within Hollywood cinema of men functioning as the erotic object of the female gaze—not only Valentino in *The Shiek* or Gary Cooper in *Morocco*, but even John Wayne in *Stagecoach*. . . . I had experienced erotic pleasures at the cinema that were not explained by Mulvey's model and was unwilling to give them up. (1989, 201)

Mulvey makes an equally serious mistake in her theorization of the male spectator; she presumes that visual pleasure in the cinema for men lies exclusively in fetishizing the female form, in bringing the guilty woman under the control of the powerful male in the narrative, or both. But this is an error even from Mulvey's psychoanalytic perspective, since a male's development through the mirror stage establishes a powerful mechanism for pleasure in looking at the male body. I would argue that film theory has not only drastically underestimated the pleasure afforded women in looking at male bodies in the cinema but has also falsely presumed that, for the male spectator,

issues of representation of the male body are the exclusive domain of gay theorists and critics. And while very important work has been done in that area by such critics as Richard Dyer and Robin Wood, this merely demonstrates an open acknowledgment on behalf of some gay men of their interest in representations of the male body. It tells us nothing about the viewing mechanisms of heterosexual men. As Scott MacDonald has admitted in his remarkably candid account of his experience with hard-core pornography as a heterosexual male, there is a "simple curiosity" for men in looking at erect penises: "In this particular context one of the primary functions of the female presence is to serve as a sign—to others and to oneself—that looking at erections, even finding them sexy, does not mean that the viewer defines himself as a homosexual" (1983, 14).

Left to their own devices, most heterosexual male theorists and critics may go merrily on their way forever minutely analyzing the representation of women's bodies. This may involve not only repression but also homophobia. Similarly, heterosexual men are not likely to acknowledge looking at other men in locker rooms. I am simply making the point that if we pay attention only to what most men say and write about these kinds of issues, we will be very much misled, since repression and homophobia play an important part in those articulations. A major premise of this book is that the sexual representation of the male body profoundly affects all men and women in our culture.

Indeed, Freud's work on paranoia and homosexuality implicates all heterosexual men in issues central to this study. Freud claimed that a man can transform the initial proposition "I love him" into four different variations: "I do not love him—I hate him"; "I don't love men—I love women"; "I don't love at all—I love only myself"; and "It is not I who love the man—she loves him." These variations deny and repress the original love for the man and ultimately replace it with hatred for the man, womanizing, self-love, or jealousy. All those forms of behavior repress homosexual love, and if Freud was right, all heterosexual men have repressed such love. This results from the passage through the stage of autoeroticism to object love, which includes a period of narcissism "which may be indispensable to the normal course of life" (Freud 1963, 163). This stage places particular emphasis on the penis: "The point of central interest in the self which is thus chosen as a love-object may already be the genitals. The line of development then leads on to the choice of an outer object with similar genitals—that is, to homosexual object choice—and thence to heterosexuality" (Freud 1963, 163).

Heterosexual men, therefore, do not simply bypass fascination with male genitals, although homophobia may make them characterize such interest as belonging exclusively to homosexuals.

Since this book is written from a heterosexual male perspective, it undoubtedly emphasizes some things that are totally alien to some heterosexual female perspectives, for example. Those concerns are not necessarily of interest only to heterosexual men, but some male concerns about the male body are exclusively the province of men. Tom Ryan, a practicing psychotherapist, notes that many men have concerns about their masculinity and that "one frequent manifestation of this is a preoccupation with the size of their penis" (1985, 16). Ryan argues that this is a symbolic as well as an anatomical concern and that many men exaggerate their smallness in accordance with their deflated masculine self-image. One of his patients "experiences his penis as small and shrivelled" (1985, 17). Clearly such perceptions of the penis are alien to women, who do not "experience" the penis in this way. Yet such male experiences seem to me not only to play a major role in the way in which men structure sexual representations of the male body but also, at times, to the way in which women respond to those representations or even create representations of their own.

The amount of fear and anxiety that I have found in a variety of forms among nearly all sexual representations of the male body might also be totally alien to women, but its pervasiveness certainly implies that all of us should attempt to understand it. As I argue in Chapter 8, however, there is a female flip side to the coin of these male preoccupations. Precisely because there is a symbolic dimension to the penis, as Ryan argues, the dominant patriarchal sexual ideology may have a pervasive impact on how some women respond to and create images of male sexuality. Although the experiences of the penis that Ryan describes are part of male subjectivity, they may very well be related, perhaps unconsciously, to female perception. Robert E. Becker, writing in *The Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality*, claims that "myths and misinformation" about penis size are shared by many females in our society, who "find a small penis to be less psychologically arousing" (1974, 170). Likewise, psychologists have claimed empirical evidence that both men and women respond to penis size similarly in ways that comply with cultural stereotypes (Verinis and Roll 1970). Although in the following chapters, I caution against the conclusions frequently drawn from this kind of medical discourse, it indicates how men and women may share the same ideological assumptions about sexuality and the male body. If this is true, we may ex-