



Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman

By Stanley Cavell

University Of Chicago Press. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 272 pages. Dimensions: 8.8in. x 5.9in. x 0.6in. What is marriage Can a relationship dedicated to equality, friendship, and mutual education flower in an atmosphere of romance What are the paths between loving another and knowing another Stanley Cavell identified a genre of classic American films that engaged these questions in his study of comedies of remarriage, *Pursuits of Happiness*. With *Contesting Tears*, Cavell demonstrates that a contrasting genre, which he calls the melodrama of the unknown woman, shares a surprising number and weave of concerns with those comedies. Cavell provides close readings of four melodramas he finds definitive of the genre: *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, *Gaslight*, *Now Voyager*, and *Stella Dallas*. The women in these melodramas, like the women in the comedies, demand equality, shared education, and transfiguration, exemplifying for Cavell a moral perfectionism he identifies as Emersonian. But unlike the comedies, which portray a quest for a shared existence of expressiveness and joy, the melodramas trace instead the woman's recognition that in this quest she is isolated. Part of the melodrama concerns the various ways the men in the films (and the audiences of the films) interpret and desire...



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