

a threat to the region. The future of the Jämt Liberation Movement is, of course, hard to guess. The success of this endeavor naturally depends on the degree to which it corresponds to the experiences and reflections of the people living in the region. The role of the state as enemy will be crucial, since regional identity is meaningful only when its protagonists actively seek opposition and initiate resistance rather than reconciliation. And as the sense of regional belonging becomes stronger, the mythology of Jämt uniqueness may very well be constructed in ethnified terms.

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## Faces of Modernity

### Men in Films: A European versus an American Model?

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### THE INTERNAL DECONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY

Since the advent of feminist criticism, it has become an incontestable truth in politically correct circles that male domination, which is ultimately the model of every sort of domination, is a social institution that has been inscribed in social and mental structures over the millennia in the European Judeo-Christian cultural sphere. Its basis is, in Bourdieu's terms, the ‘libido dominandi’ acquired unintentionally by men in the course of socialization. It is an ‘innate desire’ to dominate, a sense of responsibility based on internal drives which a man ‘owes himself’, so to speak. This self-evident drive is the belief in the obligation to stress masculinity and performance, and it compels men to defeat other men (and the women belonging to them). This ‘libido

dominandi’ drives men into games, the extreme form of which is war.

If we men are just a little bit sincere with ourselves, we cannot deny that scientists (artists, politicians, priests, moneymakers, communication moguls, showbiz tycoons, etc.) are mostly recruited from the representatives of the first sex even today. That said, it cannot be hard to acknowledge that next to our ‘malestream’ ‘his-tories’ taken as universally valid and self-evident, the ‘her-stories’ – which at times radically deconstruct our image of the world and society – have their place under the sun.

So far, however, the deconstruction of male domination has for the most part become the subject-matter of systematic analysis from the position of oppressed women. The so-called internal deconstruction of this social institution by men is little known outside the walls of the academy. Therefore – paradoxically enough – politically correct western liberal circles are increasingly characterised by the ‘crab inversion’ of the former epistemological state (to open up little gates onto new fields of association with this Schönbergian term). While it was once posited that women were only capable of thinking within the conceptual frameworks elaborated by men, now a growing number of men interpret their own social (dis)positions on the basis of knowledge derived from a female point of view.

It seems therefore justified to reexamine the knowledge men have about themselves. The question might rightly be raised: why are films used for this investigation? And why in particular award-winning films? First, because film – next to popular music – is one of the most influential media of mass culture. Since it has a global effect, a film can be decoded anywhere in the world. Films constitute a common horizon of reference from Helsinki to Kuala Lumpur, from Caracas to Johannesburg. Also, as commodities meant to appeal to

masses of people (as well as their wallets), films must draw on the lives and fantasies of the audience, or else they could not count on sustaining their interest.

At the same time, films do not merely 'mirror' (to use a favorite term not only of Georg Lukács but also of Zhdanov) but also shape the consumer's identity – more or less covertly. This covertness especially applies to the specificities of gender-identity, since connotations of masculinity (and, also, of femininity) exert their moral, social, political, and spiritual meanings behind the aesthetic facade of the visual narrative. They are taken for granted. They are like air. This is where they derive their impact.

This impact is even more effective where award-winning films are concerned, since the experts inevitably create and recreate the legitimate order of aesthetic distinctions. And although the jury of the Cannes Film Festival and the professionals of the American Film Academy seem to decide only upon aesthetic issues, their judgements also legitimate the moral, social and political connotations implied by the gender-dispositioned patterns of a film. This is because aesthetics is often inextricably interlaced with social and political connotations in the phases of planning, production, dissemination, and formal expert reviewing of a film. And this interlacing is hardly ever innocent.

### THE FILMS AWARDED IN CANNES

Taking a bird's-eye-view at the films that earned the two most distinguished symbolic recognitions at Cannes, the Golden Palm as the first prize and the Grand Prix as the second, we bump into men everywhere. Twenty-six of the 27 works were directed by men (the only exception being the Golden Palm-winner *The Piano* in 1993) and in 18 films, the absolute protagonists are men. In these, women play secondary roles or represent secondary problems. No wonder then, that the topic of these films is not heterosexual relationship but some other problem of high priority in male existence.

In two French, an American and a Danish film (*Sous le soleil du Satan*, *Trop belle pour toi*, *Wild at Heart*, *The Best Intentions*), the male protagonists are paired with leading female roles of nearly equal weight. Out of the 27 works, merely four films (three from Britain and one from New Zealand) show men solely in secondary roles around the central female figures. Two of these (*A World Apart*, *Secrets and Lies*) convey female relationships from the angle of the 'objective' camera, and two (*The Piano*, *Breaking the Waves*) depict the realm of female-male relations with a keen awareness of the position of the suppressed woman.

Even this cursory glance suffices to reveal that the jury's seemingly aesthetic judgments are influenced by a great many other factors. Some of the films, for example, earned their prizes for their political messages. These include, first of all, the films exposing communist dictatorships. The subject ranges from the terror of early Titoist Yugoslavia (*When Father Was Away on Business*), through the cruelty of Stalinism (*Repentance*, *Burnt by the Sun*), everyday life during the cultural revolution in China (*Farewell My Concubine*, *Living*), the unification of Germany (*Faraway, So Close*), to the war in Bosnia (*Underground*, *Ulysses' Gaze*). Another subgroup of films that are recognized for their political stature are based on conventional Hollywood dramaturgy, yet they exercise a certain political self-criticism in their message. One (*The Mission*) wishes to lay bare the cruelty of the colonizing white man in a plot set in eighteenth-century Latin America, the other (*A World Apart*) shows everyday heroism during the apartheid in South Africa in a quasi-documentary 'based on real events'.

The second group contains works that received prizes chiefly for their timely social messages: *Birdy* elaborates male friendship and male vulnerability, *Barton Fink* exposes

'everyday fascism' in Hollywood, *Stolen Children* calls attention to children prostitution, *The Piano* and *Breaking the Waves* both elevate the female point of view to the level of aesthetic legitimation, and *Secrets and Lies* portrays the reunion of a white mother and her black daughter. (Nor would it be a great mistake to discuss *The Mission* here.)

The films in the next group were appreciated primarily for their aesthetic qualities. These are *Paris, Texas*, *Sacrifice*, *Pelle, the Conqueror*, *Sex, Lies, and Videotape*, *Cinema Paradiso*, *Wild at Heart*, *The Best Intentions*, and *Pulp Fiction*. And finally, it seems justified to differentiate the group of French films which, presumably, earned their distinctions vis-à-vis the French cultural political context. (I admit that the definition of the latter two groups includes far more subjective elements than the rest, to put it mildly. Obviously, some films could be categorized in other groups, while the awarding of some – American – films also depended on their reception at home. Even this rough classification is perhaps sufficient to suggest the parallel presence of aesthetic and non-aesthetic factors in the jury's judgments.)

Taking a closer look at the male protagonists of the 27 films, we find that the overwhelming majority are in subordinate social positions: peripheral, deviant, handicapped, poor, but above all, they are losers. The East European films – almost without exception – expose the man of the street robbed of everything, forced into an absurd, humiliating existence. And when the persons are not simple people (e.g., in Mikhalkov's *Burnt by the Sun*), the men are still losers, the victims of the regime. *Birdy* is about a lunatic of proletarian origin believing himself to be a bird, the leading male figure in *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* is a mysterious, isolated man suddenly turning up from the past (who has serious sexual problems, by the way), *Barton Fink* is a writer exploited, excommunicated, and suppressed by Hollywood, and the figures of *Wild at Heart* and *Pulp Fiction* are also rootless outsiders.

The enumeration could continue: the hero of the film *Paris, Texas* is a peripheral figure, an ex-boozier who arrives on foot at the beginning of the film, walking between rails lost in infinity. While the classic lonely cowboy defeated the wicked and dealt out justice to the needy single-handed, the latter-day quasi-cowboy of Wim Wenders's film leaves as a lonely loser – walking away between the rails leading to infinity. Both Danish films (*Pelle, the Conqueror*, and *The Best Intentions*) depict the lives of men born in the lower classes of society, and in both, the tragedy derives decisively from their low origin of birth. *Cinema Paradiso* centers around a projectionist, *Stolen Children* around a low-ranking policeman, *Breaking the Waves* around an oil-driller who becomes handicapped, and *Trop belle pour toi*, around a perfectly average car merchant.

There are, of course, films highlighting men of authority in dominant positions. These men of power, however, are nearly always repulsive, displeasing. *The Mission* is about wicked and cruel colonizers against whom the massacred Indians – male and female alike – represent a sort of idyllic, pantheistic state. (It is revealing that while the conflicts between the subjugating males of authority are represented in detail, the world of the subjugated remains unelaborated. Indian men and women are exoticized and the relationship between them and the colonizers is ignored. With a grain of malice, one may as well regard the undifferentiated, even perfunctory, representation of the suppressed as hidden racism.) The protagonist of *Repentance* is the allegory of all-time – here Stalinist – (male) totalitarianism whose wickedness is surpassed only by the wild secret agent of *Burnt by the Sun*, who – besides being the former sweetheart of the good man's wife – takes the life of the good man, Colonel Kotov.

At this point, one cannot leave unmentioned that the topos of the Christ-like male sacrifice is featured exclusively in the prize-winning Russian-Soviet films – but in each and every one of them. (I think one can ignore whether the nationality of a film, depending on the producer, was listed as Swedish or French!) Of course, there is no room here to explore

this subject in detail, but let it be remembered that, in Russian culture, scores of works – from *Crime and Punishment* to Larissa Shepitko's *Calvary* – address themselves to this question. In this context, I find it thought-provoking that the protagonist of Tarkovsky's *Sacrifice*, the painter of a Christ-like appearance and fate in Abuladze's *Repentance*, and Colonel Kotov in Mikhalkov's film all sacrifice their lives for the happiness of their closer or broader community. The heroic deeds of these men remind us of the most traditional representational patterns, the most common stereotypes of male characteristics in Judeo-Christian Europe. A man thus represented aspires to omnipotence, confronts evil all alone, wishes to create and achieve better, carries the burden of the entire world on his shoulders, and redeems. Should he perish, or sacrifice himself, the greatness, the moral excellence of his deed elevates him above all other beings. In Russian-Soviet films this traditional male topos is demonstrably embedded in Pravoslaviv mysticism and ethos.

In the rest of the award-winning films, however, one can hardly spot this traditional male figure in power position, endowed with or aspiring after omnipotence. The only exception is Jacques Rivette's *La belle noiseuse* (*Beautiful Troublemaker*). Its protagonist, the painter Frenhofer, is a lonely and mysterious creator, the Lord of Symbols, who is capable of radically changing the lives of people living in his environment. Some films also focus on lonely creators but they, unlike Frenhofer, are silent observers, passive resonanceurs. They are helpless; the documenters of decomposition, decay and destruction. Case in point is the now famous director of Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso* whose power goes so far as to evoke the memory of his childhood, the movies of the Sicilian good old days, expressing with this melodramatic-nostalgic gesture the pain of passing, the alienation of the present. Another example is Angelopoulos's *Ulysses* who is both a film director and an archaeologist of the past. He is not capable of anything other than helplessly confronting the horrors of the current Bosnian war in his encounter with his childhood and the Balkan past.

Another specificity of these prize-winning films is that practically no seducing-conquering male figure can be found in them. There is no amoroso, no knight or galant adventurer, no successful beau, Latin macho, French belamie, no charming bonvivant. Love itself, perhaps the main theme of European art for a millenia, only crops up in a few films. For want of female protagonists, of course, a film director stands little chance of representing love. Love consummated – though far from being void of conflicts! – is the central topic of only two films, Bertrand Blier's *Trop belle pour toi* and Bille August's *The Best Intentions*. (The emphasis is on centrality, for the motives of more or less consummated heterosexual love, sentiments or sensuality also appear, though relatively peripherally, in films like *Pelle, the Conqueror*, *Repentance*, *The Mission*, *Cinema Paradiso* or *Burnt by the Sun*.)

Strangely enough then, it is one of these love stories that undertakes the most sincere and merciless deconstruction of a paradigmatic western male type. Had Max Weber had a chance to see *The Best Intentions*, he would surely have applauded in delight. The film was shot from Ingmar Bergman's biographic scenario (the story of his parents' marriage). The director Bille August, a graduate of his master's psychological school with honours, represents the figure of the husband (Bergman's father) suiting the traditions. He sets before us a pastor whom his wife describes as 'hard and clear-headed', who sticks to his principles and ideals tooth-and-nail, who is joyless, rigid, intransigent, prone to cruelty and self-hatred, who is governed even in love by the puritanic-plebeian Protestant ethic of responsibility. He is born low, but does not yield a bit of his faith, his sober and ascetic principles, for he is totally incapable of envisioning the possibility of stepping beyond predetermined fate and the boundaries set by these principles. He is a person who was not born to triumph and conquer, but who is weak, vulnerable, fragile, and lonesome. In other words, August deconstructs socially, historically, and psychologically the ideal-typical male figure governed by Protestant ethic.

Such psychologically elaborated deconstruction, however, is exceptional among the

prize-winning films. It is far more common that love and sexuality are presented as basically and originally problematic, perverted, deviant, alienated, or satanic. The almost autistically introverted, lonely wanderer in *Paris, Texas* does not even show his face when, after a long search, he can have a conversation (or parallel monologue) with his ex-wife-turned-peepshow girl, looking at her through a one-way mirror. The metaphor of the one-way mirror is platitudinary: there can be no mutual relationship between man and woman. The young man in *Birdy* is also at a loss with women: for him, the sex act is only possible with birds. Typically enough, the only lasting relationship which evolves in his life carries latent homosexual connotations: the friendship of a man during his childhood. The female protagonist of *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* is (quasi)frigid, while the male protagonist is functionally impotent, only able to reach ejaculation through self-satisfaction – and that in a single situation: watching videotapes he has made of women talking about their sexual life. Here is another metaphor of the impossibility of harmonious heterosexuality.

In the rest of the awarded American films, sexuality is a component of cruel, aggressive, surrealist (or hyperrealistic) existence. Although Sailor and Lula, the protagonists of *Wild at Heart*, make love throughout the film, in David Lynch's world their relationship is depicted at a distance, with irony, in a context of all-inclusive violence, witchy cruelties, dire murders, heaps of carcasses and paid murderers shown on the verge of hyperreality and stylisation. Barton Fink had a single sexual experience in the film of the Coen brothers, but when he wakes up, he finds a brutally maimed bloody female corpse by his side. From this moment on, the realistic and surrealist threads of the film become inextricably entangled. In *Pulp Fiction*, where Tarantino shows a similar world to Lynch's with similar tools, there is only one actual sex scene. A fat old black maffia chief is raped anally with extremely cruel sadism by two perverted homosexuals before the scene winds up in a gush of bloody massacre. (Compared to these films, the sophisticated artistic-poetic-heroic world of the travestites, gays and prostitutes in the Peking Opera – *Farewell My Concubine* – during the years of the Chinese revolution is a peacefully serene sight.)

Interestingly enough, the picture of the emotional-sensual heterosexual relationships in the so-called 'female films' is similar in many regards. In *A World Apart*, director Chris Menges (the ex-cameraman of *The Mission*) practically ignores the man-woman relationship. (The militant white representatives of apartheid power, on the other side, display all the well-known stereotypes of wicked oppressive males, similarly to *The Mission* and the East European political films.) The director of *The Piano*, Jane Campion, exposes the cruel white man going as far as maiming his wife (while she shows the powerless non-white men in a far more favourable light). In *Secrets and Lies*, Mike Leigh describes an everyday unhappy marriage burdened with the secret of sterility. In the Grand Prix winner *Breaking the Waves*, Lars von Trier speaks about an oil worker paralyzed after an accident, and his god-fearing Scottish wife. The wife becomes a prostitute and a stigmatized pariah as the victim of the perverted sexual fantasies of her husband.

The central male figures of the prize-winning films differ from the traditional European male model in several other ways as well. The attraction of regularity and power is replaced by the charm of irregularity and deviancy. The seductive Gerard Philippe and Alain Delon give way to the teddybearish Gerard Depardieu with his big nose and ass, young Marcello is replaced by the old Mastroianni. Old or middle-aged men are more and more often cast in central roles: Erland Josephson (*Sacrifice*), Max von Sydow (*Pelle, the Conqueror*), Philippe Noiret (*Cinema Paradiso*), Michel Piccoli (*La belle noiseuse*), Nikita Mikhalkov (*Burnt by the Sun*), Otto Sander and Bruno Ganz (*Faraway, So Close*), Harvey Keitel (*The Piano*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Ulysses's Gaze*), Lee Ross (*Secrets and Lies*). Among the younger, many are asymmetric or irregular, similarly to Depardieu: e.g., Harry Dean Stanton (*Paris, Texas*, *Wild at Heart*), Nicolas Cage (*Birdy*, *Wild at Heart*), John Turturro (*Barton Fink*), Samuel Froler (*The Best Intentions*), Stellan Skarsgard (*Breaking the Waves*).

This physical transformation of men suggests that these heroes appear in new relations and new roles. In the traditionally male-dominant societies of Judeo-Christian Europe, the representatives of the 'stronger' sex are typically active in the public sphere: they serve their nation, work for the betterment of the world, and in order to attain power, they struggle, fight, wage wars, hunt women – to the detriment of other men. In the prize-winning films, however, the share of publicly active males seems to be decreasing, and relations of various kinds established between men in the private sphere are becoming a focus of interest. Such relations used to belong almost exclusively to feminine gender roles. (This statement only partially applies to the films prized for political reasons – most of them East European and Chinese.)

The lonely character of *Paris, Texas*, for example, tries to restore his relationship with his deserted son at first, and then with his wife. Not without success, either. (It is another matter, that at the end he chooses solitude again.) The father-son relationship is also decisive for Kusturica in his 1985 film (even if the fundamental goal is naturally the exposure of the political system). Actually, it is the father's story told from the viewpoint of the son. The father-son relationship is the focus of *Pelle, the Conqueror*, and a quasi father-son relationship is shown by *Cinema Paradiso* in the contact of the old projectionist and the boy siding with him, as well as in the paternal attitude of the policeman towards children prostitutes in *Stolen Children*. It is possibly justified to mention the male hero of *Secrets and Lies* here, too, since it is he – and not the female members of the kinfolk – who takes effective steps for the restoration of family unity.

A fundamental feature of the male roles in the latter films is taking responsibility or sacrificing ourselves for others. But the actively and effectively caring male figure – one featuring a truly traditional female role – appears in extreme form in *Birdy*. It is not only about a deviant bird-man but also about a great friendship in which one of the friends, less handicapped than the other, sacrifices everything – even pushing aside the nurse – to save his friend who is under psychiatric treatment. But this is the only case when 'nursing' care by men is represented.

What has been said so far of the films decorated with the Golden Palm or the Grand Prix applies even more emphatically to the films whose actors won the awards for best actors. (Three of these – *Sex, Lies, and Videotape*, *Barton Fink*, and *Living* – were also acknowledged with one of the two top prizes.) It is possibly not unfounded to assume that the acknowledgement of an actor might often be a hidden acknowledgement of the role he is cast in. The films awarded for the actor's performance also show losers, deviant, or handicapped persons clearly devoid of power. This person can be gay (*Tenue de soiree*, *Carrington*), imprisoned and homosexual (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*), old and embittered (*Dark Eyes*), addicted to drug (*Bird*), impotent and sexually perverted (*Sex, Lies, and Videotape*), humiliated, exploited, and lonely (*Barton Fink*), ugly (*Cyrano*), peripheric, homeless (*Naked*), suppressed, deprived of everything (*Living*), mentally ill or deserted by his wife (*The Eighth Day*). The only cuckoo's egg is the Hollywood studio script screener acted by Tim Robbins who has power and is rotten to the core (*The Player*).

The absence of a love thread is typical of these films, too. Though the twelve works include two that elaborate some heterosexual love story (*Dark Eyes*, *Cyrano*), both are removed from here and now, taking place in the last century, and in both, love remains unfulfilled and ends in tragedy for the men. Sexuality, if addressed, is in most cases problematic or deviant. Sexual deviancy appears at its extreme in Mike Leigh's *Naked*, in which both male protagonists have a brutal, one of them even an extremely sadistic, attitude towards women. (The sexual aspect of *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* and *Barton Fink* has been mentioned earlier.) Another connecting link is that no traditionally male handsomeness can

be found among the twelve award-winning actors, although their average age is far below that of the actors in the prize-winning films. And finally: this group also includes a film which, similarly to *Birdy*, is about a caring man shown with almost comic didacticism. This is *The Eighth Day*, telling of the friendship between a young man suffering from Downs syndrome and an overworked marketing executive.

While in nominating films for the main awards, current political considerations also played a role (thus, it cannot be accidental that men represented in Eastern and East European films are multiply different from their western counterparts), this factor was normally insignificant when selecting the best actors. (The exception to the rule is here the Chinese film *Living*.) In this sense – accepting that the prizes are not only meant for the actors but also for the roles they represent – it can be contended that the symbolic recognition they bestow says much about the male-related expectations and stereotypes which are 'in the air'.

## THE OSCAR WINNERS

If we said of the films awarded prizes at Cannes (the 'first group', for the sake of simplicity) that men are everywhere in them, this is multiply true of the films prized with the Oscar (the 'second group'). None of the films receiving the awards for best picture, director, and actor between 1984–1996 were directed by women. Three of the 24 works have female protagonists (*Out of Africa*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Silence of the Lambs*), but in all three the leading male roles are of almost equal weight. Besides, in all three the central question of these women's lives is their relationships – in love, friendship and struggle, in that order – with men. Thus, no Oscar winning film highlights female problems or relations between women.

The films in the second group received their prizes chiefly for their social relevance. The aesthetic aspect of these films is fairly conventional: they are mostly built on the time-tested visual and structural stereotypes of Hollywood dramaturgy (respecting, of course, the different traditions of the various subtypes such as the thriller, western, historical drama). The professional application (and possible moderate renewal) of the traditions is a decisive aspect in nominating a film for the award. At the same time, current political implications may only exceptionally and indirectly play a role (such exceptions may be, if one tries to find any, the two Oliver Stone films, *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July*, as well as *Kiss of the Spider Woman*) – as compared to Cannes where this consideration has a relatively greater weight, as we have seen.

It is rare to find 'average' people of a miserable fate who are the protagonists in the second group (except for some figures in the two Stone films and the alcoholic who drinks himself to death in *Leaving Las Vegas*). Deviant cases, however, can be listed. First of all, the homosexuals in the *Kiss of the Spider Woman* and in *Philadelphia*. Their fall is conceived in a way that it generates moral catharsis, hence the negatively judged deviancy is to be seen in a positive light. (It makes one ponder, however, that homosexuals often die whereas the rest of the deviant figures very rarely do so. In this regard, these politically more or less correct films also take on the tradition of American film to condemn the gay person to death, but now, the viewers are allowed to empathically experience the position of the portrayed person.)

Oddly enough, a part of the deviant figures prove to be successful. The driver of Miss Daisy, who is triply 'different' (old, black and low-born), for example, is not only able to make Miss Daisy – and the viewers – understand the cause of the blacks in the South, but he can establish a sincere friendship with the old woman. (Miss Daisy, by the way, is also triply 'different', at least as a protagonist of a Hollywood movie: she is old, Jewish, and female.)

The main characters in *Rain Man*, *My Left Foot* and *Forrest Gump* are also handicapped: the first is autistic, the second paralyzed, the third mentally retarded. Yet, all three prove to be extraordinary, even ingenious in some sense. One may risk going as far as saying that their male omnipotence triumphs despite their handicap. Another subgroup of men represented in these films deviate from the average in being extraordinary – again in contrast to the Cannes prize-winners. These great figures may be historical personalities: Mozart (*Amadeus*), Chinese emperors (*The Last Emperor*), Germans who saved Jews in World War II (*Schindler's List*), Scottish freedom fighters (*Braveheart*), or ingenious pianists (*Shine*).

In nearly half of the Oscar-winning films, the basic pattern of the lonely cowboy crops up, duly changed, of course. These heroes are strong, clever, merciless, lonely, successful, self-contained, they have a conquering disposition; they are also self-evidently white and heterosexual men who arrive from nowhere with an irresistible appeal for women. Instead of on the grasslands of the Wild West (exceptions: *Dances with Wolves*, *Unforgiven*), they appear in the endless savannah (*Out of Africa*), the deserts of Africa (*The English Patient*), on Wall Street (*Wall Street*), at a posh seaside villa (*Reversal of Fortune*), or in the poolrooms of the USA (*The Color of Money*). And even if some of these men are represented from a critical distance or are 'deconstructed', their mysteriousness, their masculinity, imply the need (and desire) for omnipotence – which ranks them among the kinfolk of the national prototype of the lonely cowboys, as their grandsons, so to speak.

It can no longer surprise us that the films in the second group differ from those in the first in several other respects. Men in power positions, for instance, are not necessarily repulsive in the Oscar-winning films. Of course, some sorts of power (e.g., when one tries to impose his will upon others via physical force or annihilation) are shown in a negative light (e.g., in *Dances with Wolves* in which violent white colonization is deemed condemnable). The almost divine male perfection of the protagonists (which enables them to attain charismatic authority in the Weberian sense) is not only not repulsive but is a well-nigh obligatory central feature of the male identity conveyed by the films honoured with the Academy Award. These men, the personifications of some divine gift, are extraordinary or ingenious in something. This extraordinary trait may as well be wickedness (*Silence of the Lambs*), cruelty (*Wall Street*), or self-destructive aggressivity (*Leaving Las Vegas*). It is no accident, then, that the best actors of four films represented negative heroes (the fourth, besides the aforementioned three, was *Amadeus* in which the actor playing the intriguing Salieri was granted the prize instead of Mozart's portrayer). There is no corresponding case among the Cannes prize-winners: the award-winning male actors all played 'positive roles'.

Again, if we stated about the first group that they hardly feature seductive-conquering men, the opposite of this statement applies to the second group where we find members of different generations of the most attractive (by consensus) male filmstars – from Paul Newman and Clint Eastwood through Robert Redford, Kevin Costner and Mel Gibson to the Toms, Cruise and Hanks. And it is not alien to these charming males, with their sex appeal, to get entangled in love affairs – dissimilarly to the Cannes films again, although it must be admitted that the heterosexual love line (in all the ten films in which it occurs) is not the main plot of the story.

In certain cases, the under-representation of the love line can easily be explained. The simplest is that the central male figure is not heterosexual (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Philadelphia*). Sometimes, the represented (historical) life situation forestalls the involvement of a love plot, since in filming a Vietnam war or World War II story (*Platoon* and *Schindler's List*), the directors have more at stake than a love line. The male figure may be deviant in some way and thus not liable to become the target of female attraction: either he is old (*The Color of Money*, *Miss Daisy*, *Unforgiven*), he is handicapped and unsuited for

love (*Rain Man*), or else, a love story is irrelevant for a thriller (*Reversal of Fortune*, *Silence of the Lambs*). Interestingly enough, however, the completely paralyzed hero of *My Left Foot*, the simple-minded *Forrest Gump*, and the alcoholic in *Leaving Las Vegas* all get involved in love affairs – similarly to the outstanding males acting on the stages of history (e.g., in *Dances with Wolves*, *Braveheart*, *The English Patient*). The difference from the first group is further underscored if you consider that in the second group, male impotence or the problematic nature of heterosexual affairs is hardly ever shown. In these movies, men have no sexual complexes, nor are they perverts. And whenever the topic of love or sexuality crops up, even an utterly wrecked boozier proves to be potent on the verge of death (*Leaving Las Vegas*).

To do them justice, we must admit that in five Academy-award films some American national myths are deconstructed. In three of these five, however, a single person, Oliver Stone, is the director or scenarist (*Platoon*, *Wall Street*), and also the producer of the film (*Born on the Fourth of July*). The fourth, Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* destroys the widespread stereotypes of the lonely cowboy and Wild West myths with astonishing rigor and consistency. The dramaturgical machinery is set into motion by a prostitute ridiculing a cowboy as she finds his sex organ too small. The protagonist is an old and impotent cowboy hardly able to mount his horse. The other main character is a cross-eyed, short-sighted cowboy unable to hit his foe from a distance beyond a yard – and when he does, the foe is just making stool. But he is so terrified of having become a murderer that he runs off in panic, foregoing the money offered for the killing (which makes his act truly senseless, for he killed to be able to buy a pair of glasses for himself!). All the murders shown or revealed by the stories told by the characters are awkward, cowardly, brutal, and senseless.

Nevertheless, no matter how hard Clint Eastwood tries to expose the weaknesses and cruelty of men in his film, at the end of *Unforgiven*, his character suddenly becomes extremely effective as an old cowboy and puts down all his foes single-handed. Thus he joins the line of film heroes who involuntarily illustrate that their god-given male (omni)potence enables them to overcome their handicaps. Thus, despite all seeming deconstruction, the male myth remains eternally valid. Similarly, though Kevin Costner exposes something at an abstract, collective, and ideological level when he depicts the faceless (!) white colonizers as evil and abhorrant, the viewers nonetheless perceive an amiable, attractive, brave, outstanding white man, a genuine hero, who is capable of representing the right cause individually – even by sacrificing himself when need be in a Christ-like manner. Therefore, it does not apply to the films in the second group that the attraction and appeal of regular men in power positions give way to the lure of irregularity and deviance. In American movies, Gary Cooper steps aside for Clint Eastwood, whose place is then taken by Tom Hanks. This is far less significant a change than, say, the replacement of Gerard Philippe by Max von Sydow, who is then replaced, in turn, by Gerard Depardieu.

It can also be stated that the male Oscar winners far less frequently appear in the private sphere than the protagonists of the Cannes awardees. Typically enough, the father motive only appears once in all the films, and then, only as an ironic appendix to *Forrest Gump*. Though the master-pupil, that is, the quasi father-son relationship appears more often (*The Color of Money*, *Wall Street*, *Unforgiven*). The relation is not that of the master in dominant position selflessly taking care of the subordinated pupil, but of a rivalry between a young man and an old man. And most remarkably, the elder man is never subdued in this contest: he can preserve his potency throughout. Although the figure of a caring friend or brother also comes up (Stone's films, *Rain Man*) (which is no novelty, since in the traditional representation of the masculine world, there is often a loyal close friend side by side with the hero, fighting for the same cause), it is still paradigmatic that the par excellence main solicitous roles are always acted by women (*Leaving Las Vegas*, *The English Patient*).

There are two additional features beyond gender-specificities which can be used to clearly illuminate the differences between the two groups. It is conspicuous that a relatively large proportion of Oscar-winning films are not content with immersion in the details of a life, a relationship or a fate, but wish to present the whole, an entire life-course with encyclopaedic aspirations (*Amadeus, The Last Emperor, My Left Foot, Forrest Gump, Braveheart, Shine*). (The visual specificities of the cameramen's performance, the central component of cinematographic representation, is also worth contemplation. It would be most instructive, for example, to see a comparison between the rate of monumental tableaux versus the minutely elaborated shots of microscopic detail in the two groups.) Even more weighty than the intended (quasi!) encyclopaedism is the intention of the producer and director to legitimate a film by branding it with the mark of 'true story'. There is a conspicuous number of Academy Award winners which are based on a historical person or event (*Amadeus, Out of Africa, Platoon, The Last Emperor, My Left Foot, Reversal of Fortune, Schindler's List, Braveheart, English Patient, Shine*).

On the basis of the aforementioned, one may say that the male protagonists of Oscar-prized films are basically different from those of the works distinguished at Cannes. It is, however, probably true that had we taken our sample from unrewarded works, the differences would have been even sharper. Everyone knows that mass films made by the dozen perpetuate the figure of the lonely cowboy in far more brutal reincarnations. Films aspiring for prizes and hence belonging to the 'elite' category have been increasingly obliged to comply with the expectations of political correctness (avoiding racist texts, representing people of various skin colour proportionately with their weight in the population, showing formerly discriminated groups, namely blacks and gays in a positive light). It is also indisputable that the obligation of destigmatization draws on newer and newer minorities (AIDS patients, drug-addicts, boozers) in the row of compassionately depicted groups. At the same time, the cowboy of feeling, who is punctilious to the point of honour, who pays his last respects to his killed foe, or the courageous James Bond, appear as picnickers with airguns compared to the callous killing machines producing heaps of corpses per film, the Terminators and Rambos. It will hopefully not pass as a piece of demagoguery in this context if some much-cited figures are quoted here: Saturday morning, when most children sit in front of the television in America, an average 25 killings can be seen an hour (i.e., about a hundred thousand till the age of 14!). And one of the best-known fallible males of the American elite films of the past decade, the short, ugly, bespectacled, liberal Jewish intellectual figure of Woody Allen exposing his (male) complexes, is a comic character who does nothing but contextually reinforce the mythic qualities of the traditional masculine heroes.

#### THE CONTEXT OF MODERNITY/POSTMODERNITY

The films honoured with the Oscar are – with few exceptions – box-office hits. Were it not so, were their premiere not preceded by wide publicity campaigns, were they not shown successfully for weeks in hundreds of movie-theaters, and were this all not followed by (preliminarily orchestrated) television broadcasting on a variety of channels, they would never be nominated, since they would be unable to trespass the threshold of attention of the colleagues doing the evaluation. In other words: the overall structure of the movie industry ensures that the differences between the economic and the cultural spheres, and between elite and popular cultures, are blurred. A film recognized by an Oscar, that is, held in symbolically high esteem, can only be made by an artist who is successful in the market as well. The fate of an American film at the Academy Award depends, first and foremost, on the judgment of the purse and not on the evaluation of path-setting intellectuals. It falls

under the laws of market demand and supply. In other words: in the American movie industry, the stakes of the economic sphere subordinate those of the aesthetic ones.

It is obvious that modernity and market economy mutually postulate one another, significantly interpenetrate, and also constitute part of each other's definition. But it is not enough to propose that the institutions of the free market and modern society partly overlap (a thesis like that would carry few innovations). We have to add that this interpenetration can concern the (dis)positional structures of male domination as well. I am not suggesting that male domination cannot exist without modernity and the free market. The structures of libido dominandi may constitute – and here I agree with feminist deconstructivists! – the basic social relations decisive for the reproduction of society in a variety of places and times (provided, of course, that we accept the marxist and/or structuralist thesis that such an essential relation exists at all). A considerable part of premodern societies can be differentiated from modern societies precisely by taking into account whether or not the instinctive drives of male domination are superimposed on them by the dispositional patterns of rational calculation.

The Oscar-winning American films reflect the distinctive system and dispositional structures of a particular historical moment of modernity when the traditional forms of male domination co-exist with the institutions of free market and modern society. American society is so thoroughly imbued with masculine norms that the archaic behavioral patterns of male domination remain practically unnoticed by both producers and consumers. That may explain why the internal deconstruction of male domination cannot take place in these films. And, for one thing, the producers are keenly aware that their products must be disseminated in the American markets in the first place where an extreme case of male self-criticism would in no way meet the expectations of the consumers.

The case is different in Europe. It would of course be silly to state that European film makers ignore the economic aspect when shooting a film. However, it is for the time being unquestionable that in the majority of the European countries the aesthetic sphere has far greater autonomy than in North America – even if this autonomy is partly due to state-intervention. But the fact itself, that such an intervention is not only possible but widely accepted and expected, shows that, in Europe, the relationship is different between the economic, political, and cultural spheres. (In the film industry, it is easy to measure the weight of the aesthetic and the economic spheres by focusing on the power relations between director and producer. It is revealing that the Oscar for the best picture is granted to the producer, the person in charge of the marketing of the product, while the Golden Palm is due to the director, the expert responsible for the aesthetic execution. It is also noteworthy that in the studied period there was only one year when Oscar for best picture and best director did not go to the same film (in 1989, *Driving Miss Daisy* earned the best picture prize and *Born on the Fourth of July* the award of the best director).

The films of the second group are carriers of unchangeable male gender-identity, while the works appreciated with awards in Europe are centered around changeable male gender-identities. To put it differently: while on the one side male sameness is represented, on the other side, male otherness is shown. The modern ego is in a power position, respects time and aspires to alter the world, while the post-modern ego has lost its power, it exists in a timeless world and hence can please itself by (self)deconstruction. Accepting this, we can state that the films rewarded in the United States represent the modern masculinity of the young man in a power position, as against a European post-modern androgyny of the mature man who has partly lost his power.

I might as well end here. Of course, were we in a playful mood (and why wouldn't we be), we could place the male representations of the first and second groups differently in the context of the modernity-post-modernity discourse. We might argue (by subtly modifying

the former statement) that the European representation of masculinity uses the historically conditioned (dis)positional specificities of femininity to reconstruct the male ego, acting on a sort of organic post-modern strategy. Against that, one might set the virtual post-modern strategy typical of the American prize-winners, which creates the simulacra of (dis)positional specificities via the cannibalization of the historical fiction of masculinity. Or, finally, Oscar-winning films can be interpreted as post-modern products constructed from non-moral sets of simulacra, as against modern European gender-representations based on the reality principle and on the ethic of responsibility. And so on and so forth.

Yet such conceptual plays are not redundant for several reasons. The interpretation of an empirically constructed subject can be done in more than one way. The boundaries of modernity and post-modernity, especially high modernity and post-modernity cannot be clearly designated, since there is a fuzzy zone between them that resists conceptual formulation. Secondly, while the concepts (or the paradigmatic embeddedness) of modernity and post-modernity developed by different social scientists vary, quite different features of the studied subject-matter may be highlighted. Third, and irrespectively of the above-said, the examination of any subject is determined by the position of the examiner and the tools of observation he applies.

While, for example, many feminists consider male domination as something to be abolished, men may see it as a changing historical manifestation of the specific male existence. Or, *Wild at Heart* and *Pulp Fiction* can be interpreted differently depending on whether they are considered in the context of the Cannes prize-winners or in that of the Oscar holders. Acknowledged in Cannes, Lynch and Tarantino appear to stress that by making a post-modern gesture, heaping quotation upon quotation, recreating the 'simulacra of simulacra', they can aestheticize violence and make their works ready for decoding as sophisticated fiction. Movie aficionados are of course crazy about this 'hyperrealistic aesthetic quality'. At the same time, were *Pulp Fiction*, for example, set in the group of Oscar winners (which is not too far-fetched since in 1994 it was nominated for six Oscars including one for best picture and one for best director, and eventually it was awarded an Oscar for best screenplay!), we could not help realizing that the aesthetic bravura stunts of the film are built of the aggressive dispositional structures of everyday virility, and that it ultimately centers around the violent and cruel male world so typical of American movies. In other words: what is a sophisticated postmodern aesthetic quality from one angle, is a brutal modern identity-claim from the other.

In the past few years there has been a growing overlap between films rewarded in Europe and those prized with Oscar. Every sign suggests that nearing the end of the millennium, the United States has become the center of the world – and not only in a (military) political and economic, but also in a cultural sense. Billions know the megastars of pop music and the superstars of success stories. The values, connotations, ideologies they carry have become references for hundreds of millions for all over the world. This fact may inspire anxiety in many Europeans. Nevertheless, this global cultural predominance may appear even more menacing seen from the third or fourth (etc.) world, since these regions are far less protected than the European from American patterns and values. This is especially true if the main dispositional tradition accumulated in their own society, the machismo of premodern origin, and the modern American masculinity do intersect. But that is another story.

TABLE 1. AWARDS IN CANNES (1984–1996)

	<i>Golden Palm</i> (Name of director)	<i>Grand Prix</i> (Name of director)	<i>Best Actor</i> (Name of actor)
1984	Paris, Texas (Ge, Fr) (Wim Wenders)		
1985	When Father Was Away on Business (YU) (Emir Kusturica)	Birdy (USA) (Alan Parker)	Kiss of the Spider Woman (Brazil) (William Hurt)
1986	The Mission (UK) (Roland Joffé)	The Sacrifice (Sv, UK, Fr) (Andrei Tarkovsky)	Tenue de soirée (Fr) (Michel Blanc)
1987	Under the Sun of Satan (Fr) (Maurice Pialat)	Repentance (SU) (Tenghiz Abuladze)	Dark Eyes (Italy) (Marcello Mastroianni)
1988	Pelle, the Conqueror (Den, Sv) (Bille August)	A World Apart (UK) (Chris Menges)	Bird (USA) (Forest Whitaker)
1989	Sex, Lies, and Videotape (USA) (Steven Soderbergh)	Nuovo cinema Paradiso (Italy) (Giuseppe Tornatore) Trop belle pour toi (Fr) (Bertrand Blier)	Sex, Lies, and Videotape (James Spader)
1990	Wild at Heart (USA) (David Lynch)	Shi no toge (Jap) (Kohei Oguri)	Cyrano de Bergerac (Fr) (Gerard Depardieu)
1991	Barton Fink (USA) (Joel Cohen)	Beautiful Troublemaker (Fr) (Jacques Rivette)	Barton Fink (John Turturro)
1992	The Best Intentions (Eu) (Bille August)	Stolen Children (Ita) (Gianni Amelio)	The Player (USA) (Tim Robbins)
1993	The Piano (Aus, NZ) (Jane Campion)	Farewell My Concubine (China) (Kaige Chen) Faraway, So Close (Ge) (Wim Wenders)	Naked (UK), (David Thewlis)
1994	Pulp Fiction (USA) (Quentin Tarantino)	Burnt by the Sun (Fr, Russia) (Nikita Mikhalkov) Living (China, Hong Kong) (Bin Wang)	Living (China, Hong Kong) (You Ge)
1995	Underground (Eu) (Emir Kusturica)	Ulysses' Gaze (Gr, Fr, Ita) (Theo Angelopoulos)	Carrington (UK) (Jonathan Price)
1996	Secrets and Lies (Fr, UK) (Mike Leigh)	Breaking the Waves (Eu) (Lars von Trier)	The Eight Day (Fr, Bel) (Daniel Auteuil, Pascal Duquenne)

TABLE 2. ACADEMY AWARDS (1984–1996)

	<i>Best Picture</i>	<i>Best Director</i>	<i>Best Actor</i>
1984	Amadeus	Amadeus ( <i>Milos Forman</i> )	Amadeus ( <i>Murray Abraham</i> )
1985	Out of Africa	Out of Africa ( <i>Sydney Pollack</i> )	Kiss of the Spider Woman ( <i>William Hurt</i> )
1986	Platoon	Platoon ( <i>Oliver Stone</i> )	The Colour of Money ( <i>Paul Newman</i> )
1987	The Last Emperor	The last emperor ( <i>Bernardo Bertolucci</i> )	Wall Street ( <i>Michael Douglas</i> )
1988	Rain Man	Rain Man ( <i>Barry Levinson</i> )	Rain Man ( <i>Dustin Hoffman</i> )
1989	Driving Miss Daisy	Born on the Fourth of July ( <i>Oliver Stone</i> )	My Left Foot ( <i>Daniel Day-Lewis</i> )
1990	Dances with Wolves	Dances with Wolves ( <i>Kevin Costner</i> )	Reversal of Fortune ( <i>Jeremy Irons</i> )
1991	Silence of the Lambs	Silence of the Lambs ( <i>Jonathan Demme</i> )	Silence of the Lambs ( <i>Anthony Hopkins</i> )
1992	Unforgiven	Unforgiven ( <i>Clint Eastwood</i> )	Scent of a Woman ( <i>Al Pacino</i> )
1993	Schindler's List	Schindler's List ( <i>Steven Spielberg</i> )	Philadelphia ( <i>Tom Hanks</i> )
1994	Forrest Gump	Forrest Gump ( <i>Robert Zemeckis</i> )	Forrest Gump ( <i>Tom Hanks</i> )
1995	Braveheart	Braveheart ( <i>Mel Gibson</i> )	Leaving Las Vegas ( <i>Nicolas Cage</i> )
1996	The English Patient	The English Patient ( <i>Anthony Minghella</i> )	Shine ( <i>Geoffrey Rush</i> )