



Creating the Couple

Virginia Wexman Wexman

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Who decides how, when, and where Americans fall in love and get married? Virginia Wexman's acute observations about movie stars and acting techniques show that Hollywood has often had the most powerful voice in demonstrating socially sanctioned ways of becoming a couple. Until now serious film critics have paid little attention to the impact of performance styles on American romance, and have often treated "patriarchy," "sexuality," and the "couple" as monolithic and unproblematic concepts. Wexman, however, shows how these notions have been periodically transformed in close association with the appearance, behavior, and persona of the stars of films such as *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Big Sleep*, *Way Down East*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *On the Waterfront*, *Nashville*, *House of Games*, and *Do the Right Thing*.

The author focuses first on the way in which traditional marriage norms relate to authorship (the Griffith-Gish collaboration) and genre (John Wayne and the Western). Looking at male and female stardom in terms of the development of "companionate marriage," she discusses the love goddess and the impact of method acting on Hollywood's ideals of maleness. Finally she considers the recent breakdown of the ideal of monogamous marriage in relation to Hollywood's experimentation with self-reflexive acting styles. *Creating the Couple* is must reading for film scholars and enthusiasts, and it will fascinate everyone interested in the changing relationships of men and women in modern culture.

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