'A much-needed addition to the growing body of literature around cinema, costume and consumption, this book adopts a new and radical approach by examining one particular story – that of transformation through dress – which has formed a staple of cinema since its inception. The author traces the reworkings of the theme from Méliès' very first refashioning of the fable to its most recent reincarnation in *The Devil Wears Prada*. This novel methodology means that the book can examine both the cinematic fortunes of the heroines and the extraordinary changes in the lives of their female audiences.

The book is entertaining and accessible while remaining entirely meticulous in its scholarship – a feat as impressive as the sartorial magic woven around its stars. It will be a seminal text for all scholars and students working within the areas of film and fashion while its lively and enjoyable style, and the Cinderella story itself, will surely attract a wider readership.'

– Pamela Church Gibson, Reader in Cultural and Historical Studies, London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London

hollywood catwalk

Exploring Costume and Transformation in American Film

Tamar Jeffers McDonald

I.B. TAURIS
LONDON · NEW YORK

Published in 2010 by I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd
6 Salem Road, London W2 4BU
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010
www.ibtauris.com

Distributed in the United States and Canada Exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010

International Library of Cultural Studies: 12

ISBN 978 1 84885 039 2 (HB)
978 1 84885 040 8 (PB)

A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library
A full CIP record for this book is available from the Library of Congress
Library of Congress catalog card: available

Typeset in Goudy by Dexter Haven Associates Ltd, London
Printed and bound in India by Thomson Press India Ltd

With love, for Paul – the best dressed man I know

contents

acknowledgements

Hollywood Catwalk would not be here today without the inspiration, suggestions, support and kindness of so many people. My heartfelt thanks then to you all, but special mention to: Maureen Humphries at the University of Kent for help in sourcing rareties; staff at the British Film Institute, especially Sean Delaney and Anastasia Keremeos, for their unflagging help; Charles Silver at MOMA, New York City, and his projectionist, for screening de Mille's unjustly forgotten *Forbidden Fruit* for me, and the kind members of the SDFVA Research Committee at the University of Kent who gave me a grant enabling me to get there to view it; Tom Bass and Ella Halfacree for DVD sourcing, and Ella for tea and conversational support. For costume and film discussions, thanks must go to my students on the Special Project course at Oxford Brookes University in spring 2007, especially Riccardo Baciagalupo, Maja Bodenstein and Adam Sharpe. Alisia Chase commented on an early draft of the work on *The Devil Wears Prada*, and suggested the Brenda Weber reading which helped develop it, so many thanks there. Thank you to Richard Dyer, Paul McDonald and Deborah Nadoolman Landis, for inspiring my writing and research in their different, but all inimitably stylish, ways.

In preparing this book I acknowledge the kind support of the Krasna Krausz Foundation for its help with costs associated with photographic reproductions. My admiration and thanks go too to my kind, ever-tolerant and supportive editor at I.B.Tauris, Philippa Brewster, who bore with me while the book I had intended to write transformed itself (appropriately enough) into the one it did.

Finally, of course, I must record sincere and affectionate thanks to my closest support team, Candy, Chloë, Jessica and Paul, for hours of their

patience over losing me to the computer, and for again foisting some bizarre films on our family viewing time (*Mahogany* – please forgive me, gang!)

illustrations

introduction

At first glance, *La Chrysalide et le Papillon d'Or* and *Date Movie* could not be more different. Varying not only in length, sound, colour, 105 years as well as industrial, historical and cultural references also divide them. The former was one of the short films of cinema pioneer Georges Méliès and was shown in France, and then across Europe and America, from 1901, but is only to be found now in film archives or rare collectors' box-set DVD.[1] The latter makes up part of a long-standing if loose series of parodic films which began with *Scary Movie* (2000), and was shown in multiplexes worldwide before transferring to home viewing on DVD. Yet despite their many differences, one key facet remains the same: the transformation story. Forming the central episode of the Méliès short and an early and key sequence in *Date Movie* (2006), the transformation scene links these two films across and despite the other chronological and cultural gaps which separate them.

A man transforms a caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly woman; a team of men work over a fat woman, whittling a slender-limbed individual from the giant bulk. Although separated by over a century, the two filmic scenes maintain the same basic premise: through male agency, an ugly or undesirable creature is turned into a beautiful woman. While *La Chrysalide* evokes Ali Baba and Mozart's *The Magic Flute* in its mise-en-scene, and *Date Movie* draws on MTV show *Pimp My Ride*, both scenes demonstrate how physical and sartorial transformation can change the appearance and the fortune of the unattractive original.

As film historians have noted (Kovacs, 1976; Bloom, 2000; Ezra, 2000; 2006), Méliès was a keen magician and developed his interest in film as an adjunct to the theatrical performance of magic tricks. *La Chrysalide* is similar to other short films in the film-maker's catalogue in referencing this interest in magic, and also makes use of feminine allure and the exotic. In

La Chrysalide this fascination with magic is evident in the stage business performed by the central male figure, played by Méliès himself. The scene, a woodland clearing or jungle glade, is established by the creation of backdrops painted with exotic plants and flowers and arranged direct to camera, as were so many of Méliès' films (Kovacs: 7), so that the viewer is positioned like a member of a theatre audience, looking towards the stage framed by a proscenium arch. Méliès, attired in what would appear to be an attempt at 'Arabian' robes (stripy turban, stripy robe, pantaloons and tights) emerges and produces a large white egg-shaped pod, the chrysalis of the title.

Tilting it towards the audience to prove that it is currently empty – just as a magician displays an empty top hat before conjuring the rabbit – Méliès then fixes the pod so that it hangs in the very centre of the stage. The magician discovers a flute and begins to mime playing it vigorously. A giant stripy caterpillar emerges from stage left and, evidently entranced by the music, makes its slow way over to the player, before rearing its head up slightly, presumably to speak into the magician's ear. Having heard the

La Chrysalide et le Papillon d'Or: The butterfly lady revealed

caterpillar, the magician kisses it benevolently, picks it up and places it in the pod. After a magicianly 'pass' over the chrysalis to work his magic, the conjuror reveals the transformation: a beautiful butterfly woman emerges, revealing her glorious wings and balancing for a moment with her foot on the man's hand. The butterfly then comes down to the stage and dances about. Appearing enamoured of the butterfly lady, the magician tries to catch her with a blanket. Eventually he manages to throw this over her head and it subdues the woman instantly. Two 'Arabian' handmaidens (attired in necklaces and harem pants) enter from stage left and remove the blanket, revealing the second transformation: the butterfly woman has gone, replaced by an 'Arabian' princess. The magician appears even more enraptured by the sight of this version of the woman and, pleading for her love, sinks to one knee before her. She however rejects his love by turning her back on him; he grabs at her veil and she angrily turns, puts her foot on his head and – changes him into a caterpillar! Having trumped his magic with her own, she then walks off stage right, followed by the two handmaidens. The stripy caterpillar remains centre stage as the film fades to black.

The story of this very short film has a neat and pleasing if bizarre circularity. The magician, seeing the caterpillar, wishes to trade up to a more glamorous companion and therefore transforms it into the butterfly lady. Finding her difficult to engage with, he then transforms her again into a human woman, albeit one with the hauteur and poise of a princess. She in turn then finds him lacking as a mate and punishes him for his hubris, by returning him to *her* original state. While we will see similar transformation stories enacted again and again in the films examined in this book, we will never see such a neat revenge repeated. This is perhaps because most frequently the transformation motif has been co-opted for the romantic comedy, where genre dictates that the film should end with the couple together, or the romantic melodrama where separation is possible but the urge to be united remains. The princess's rejection of her would-be lover at the end of the Méliès gives satisfying closure to the short film, but in the full-length narrative, as we will see, the woman is rarely allowed to decline the opportunities that arise for her after, and because of, her transformation.

In pursuing its version of the transformation motif, *Date Movie* provides some moments which are as bizarre and surreal as the Méliès

film. The film's heroine, Julia Jones (Alyson Hannigan) despairs of finding a man to love her; at the film's start the slender actor wears a latex fat suit to illustrate why she is rejected by men. She goes to see a 'date doctor' to help her. In a flurry of television references, the date doctor, Hitch (Tony Cox) finds a reality TV programme on which Julia can meet a man – *Extreme Bachelor, Desperate Edition*. Before she can apply however she has to be rendered 'beautiful'. At first Hitch seems as if he will preach about inner beauty when he tells Julia – 'You are beautiful' but he then changes tack and adds the damning syllable '*ish*'. Julia is fully aware of the magnitude of the difficulty:

> Julia: The only way I would get on that show is if you magically turned me into a princess…
>
> Hitch: (his face registering the dawning of a brilliant idea) Let's roll!

Date Movie's transformation sequence now begins. Rather than spoofing the makeover programme alluded to in the title of the reality show Julia wants to join, *Extreme Makeover*, which in each episode plucks a self-confessed unattractive nobody from obscurity and family, secretes them away for weeks of extensive diet, exercise and cosmetic surgery, before returning them, Cinderella-like, in a ballgown and limo, to a huge party of admiring family and friends for their 'big reveal', *Date Movie* chooses to mock a different type of makeover show: MTV's *Pimp My Ride*. This show plucks an unattractive *car* from obscurity and owner, secretes it away for extensive tuning and bodywork, before returning it for a similarly shocking reveal of the difference between 'before' and 'after'. Using tactics from *Pimp My Ride* rather than from *Extreme Makeover* to change Julia allows the film to produce several moments of surreal and gross-out humour while – perhaps despite itself – also permitting it to suggest the dehumanising effect of these TV makeovers on their subjects.

As Hitch and Julia arrive at a garage, mechanics are seen working on the bodies of vehicles; the logo on the back of their overalls clearly reads West Side Custom Shop, directly referencing the location of the original series of *Pimp My Ride*. As the crew go to work on Julia, each of their various techniques is visually paired with shots of its effect on the woman (varying from screams, to giggles, to embarrassed shrugs) and corresponding shots of Hitch shaking his head sadly at the amount of work Julia requires. For

example, when a mechanic approaches her with a whirring electric sander, and then tackles her clawed toes, Julia first screams as the sparks fly, but then giggles as if being tickled, while Hitch holds his nose at the smell of her feet. This pattern of action and paired reactions from Julia and from Hitch continues throughout the segment.

The transformation scene in *Date Movie* concludes with Julia, like a newly 'pimped' car, hidden under a tarpaulin ready for the 'big reveal'. In

Date Movie 1: 'Before'…

a manoeuvre reminiscent of the Méliès film, where the blanket over the butterfly woman is taken away to show the new 'princess' form, the tarp is removed to disclose the new Julia; the camera tracks up her body beginning at her feet and newly slender ankles, showing off her now-trim hips and torso, then sleekly coiffed hair and a face devoid of the extra chins leant by the fat-suit. Not only has Julia's body changed, however: significantly her costume has also. In the 'before' segment, Julia wore a long pink top over a

Date Movie 2: …and 'After' Julias

flowery skirt. 'After' Julia, by contrast, is dressed in classy black from head to shapely toe, in a close-fitting two-piece skirt suit, black tights and shoes. Her new image bespeaks sophistication, furthered by her French manicure and elaborately curled hair. Just as the caterpillar was rendered glorious as a butterfly, and the butterfly made desirable as a princess, Julia is transformed from a 'fat' girl in jolly but un-slimming pink to a thin one in glamorous black.

The bathetic humour operating within the transformation scene in *Date Movie* may well be there to signal the film-makers' awareness of the cliché status of this filmic trope, but also seriously taps into the anxiety of rejection which became a motif in the Méliès film. Both caterpillar and fat Julia have been rejected by men they desire: a physical change is deemed necessary in order to attract a mate. While it mocks other texts employing the transformation device, *Date Movie* preserves without questioning the idea, which we will see across a range of films which employ the cosmetic transformation, that the improved exterior will achieve two things: it will attract a man; and it will somehow reflect more 'truly' than the old unattractive exterior the 'real' person within. Julia's transformation has removed the negative 'ish' from her description and rendered her beautiful. She now looks like the 'princess' that will attract the prince she has always deserved.

In both the Méliès short and the feature-length spoof, then, the female's exterior is changed, rendering her desirable. This theme recurs frequently in Hollywood cinema, and its perennial use as a filmic topic prompts a series of questions: what is the assumed connection between the internal and external form? Is male agency always necessary to effect the transformation, or can the woman change by her own volition? Can the woman ever change the man? How do these transformations themselves transform as time passes and cultural assumptions about female beauty modify? And most pressingly, what do these images of change and transformation, of improvement and transcendence tell *us*, the viewers, about what we should be doing?

In order to investigate these questions, this book will examine a key but frequently overlooked aspect of film style: the costume. In both the Méliès short film and feature-length *Date Movie*, costume and the body it covers becomes the crucial element in the transformation scene,

exemplifying the 'before' and 'after' of the successful change. For the transformatory power of costume is such that Julia's metamorphosis can be read just in the alteration between her oversize pink floral outfit and the chic little black number which replaces it. Through changing her clothes in this way Julia's character changes from a shy clumsy spinster to an outgoing sexually liberated 'babe'. This alteration in sexual status and sexual agency is a recurrent theme that will be traced throughout this book's exploration of costume and transformation.

Following on from this introduction is a theoretical overview, and then a section which lays out in detail the motifs and tropes of the theme of sartorial transformation, tracing their longevity as recurrent elements within film. This is followed by case studies of individual films which show the effect of costume changes on the identity, personality and sexual status of their central characters. Throughout, the book attempts to situate its film examples in their historical and cultural contexts: thus the explorations of the transformations variously at work in the films explored relate the changes pressed upon the heroine to contemporary social and cultural assumptions and expectations about femininity, female agency and desire.

In the conclusion I finally reverse this preoccupation with the female and look briefly at a film which deals with the male sartorial transformation. Male metamorphoses have been very much neglected in the few critical works that have looked at transformations (see Ford and Mitchell, 2004); while not as prevalent as the woman's transformation in film, the symbolic costume change for the man can be found. In films as diverse as *Aggie Appleby, Maker of Men* (1933), *A Place in the Sun* (1951), *Lover Come Back* (1961), *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *Grease* (1978) and *Earth Girls are Easy* (1988), the male protagonist experiences a revolution in his wardrobe. Interestingly, however, in the men's cases, the transformations themselves are often played down, do not always feature the same recurrent tropes as found in the female transformations, and are often employed pejoratively by the narratives, as will be seen.

Noting that the male-centred alterations are found in a variety of films raises another important point about the transformation trope: its cross-generic nature. Although the female transformation is most often used in genres traditionally associated with female audiences, like the romantic comedy and the melodrama, the woman's sartorial revolution and its

internal changes can be found across a range of other genres, including the thriller, neo-noir and war film. The musical also employs the transformation trope, frequently as the occasion for a musical number, as in *Cover Girl* (1944), *Silk Stockings* (1957) and *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (1967). While the pleasures of the musical number – movement, music, emotion – are designed to beguile the viewer rather than to prompt analysis, these numbers frequently overtly expose the transformation's connections with identity, agency, sexuality and consumerism in ways which may be more easily *glossed-over* in more straightforward narrative segments.

As a final point of discussion in this introduction, I want to consider the title of this book: why 'Hollywood Catwalk'? I employ this term firstly because the films dealt with in this book are all from mainstream American cinema; secondly, I believe that the use of costume in the Hollywood films of self-transformation is so crucial that its significance goes beyond the characters and frequently becomes a message to the audience. This book is therefore called *Hollywood Catwalk* to reflect the way in which mainstream American cinema acts as a catwalk to audiences around the world, a staged event exhibiting for an audience appearances and behaviours we are exhorted to emulate.

This is not to suggest that the theme of transformation cannot be found in films made outside the States – amongst many others, *Princesse Tam Tam* (France, 1935), *Muriel's Wedding* (Australia, 1994), *The Full Monty* (UK, 1997) and *8 Femmes* (France/Italy, 2002) clearly demonstrate otherwise. But while the use of the Cinderella and Pygmalion stories may be common across cinema, there are recurrent motifs and tropes present in the American films which link them beyond their obvious subject matter and differentiate them from similar films from other places. If not the tale, then the means of its telling is different in Hollywood films; there seems to be a system of visuals, an aesthetic, which is employed when dealing with the transformation theme.

A cross-national example demonstrates this point: let's compare the transformations in *Nikita* (1990) and its 1993 American remake, *The Assassin/Point of No Return*. The story remains the same, since the Hollywood film fairly faithfully remakes the French original. A young woman Nikita/Maggie (Anne Parillaud/Bridget Fonda) is a drug addict apprehended in a violent robbery. She appears to be punished with the

death sentence for her part in the attack, but actually is passed to the secret service which trains her to become an assassin. The woman initially fights against this recruitment and her mentor Bob (Tcheky Karyo/Gabriel Byrne) but eventually is told further insubordination will result in execution. At this point she yields to the teaching of a nurturing older woman, Amande/Amanda (Jeanne Moreau/Anne Bancroft) and her transformation from malnourished, badly dressed, unattractive, and angry woman to a poised, chic, graceful and gracious one is achieved. Now humanised and attractive, she is released into the outside world under an assumed name to make a life for herself until needed as a contract killer.

What interests me here is the different treatment of the transformation. In the French original Nikita is introduced to her mentor Amande whose room, up a spiral staircase from the main headquarters of the training facility, is filled with shabby furniture, old books and a dressing table with theatre-style lights round the mirror. Amande tells Nikita that she must first learn to be a human before she can tackle the next, more tricky, stage of evolution, woman. After Bob has delivered the ultimatum from the bosses to conform or be killed, Nikita returns up the spiral stairs of her own volition. Handing her a lipstick, Amande urges Nikita to apply it with the following homily:

> Amande: Let your pleasure be your guide. Your pleasure as a woman. And don't forget there are two things which have no limit: femininity and the means of taking advantage of it.[2]

The image of Nikita hesitantly using the pale pink lipstick fades into another of her applying mascara in a more controlled and confident manner. Her eyes and cheeks are made up and her hair is noticeably styled in a much more chic and becoming fashion. Nikita now seems not resentful or confused about her female identity, as before, but enraptured by her own image. As the camera pulls back to show Nikita in her underwear at the dressing table, Amande bustles in, mildly berating her for being slow getting ready. A newly poised Nikita responds that 'waiting sharpens the appetite', as she continues to apply mascara to her eyelashes. Nikita has clearly embraced her feminine side, as Amande has instructed her. The scene changes, and Nikita is found at a PC terminal as Bob approaches her. He tells her, appreciatively, that she looks very beautiful. It is time for their

dinner. Bob puts on his overcoat: they are having 'dinner out', the first time she has been allowed into the outside world since her training began. 'Shall I go?' Nikita asks Amande. The older woman smiles and gives her black gloves and a black evening bag to complete her outfit. The couple leave the building and the film then moves to Nikita's first challenge as an assassin.

The American version of the transformation borrows many of the elements laid out here: the introduction to the experienced female teacher, the protagonist's initial lack of confidence in the lessons of beauty, the ultimatum that she must conform or die, and the decision this prompts, to seek the older woman's help in changing. The emphasis given these elements and the setting and camera work which highlight them, however, differ greatly in the American remake. The training sequence is much more protracted in the later version; Maggie is shown at first more resentful and angry than just confused, as Nikita was, about how overt feminisation can help her. Much more time is also devoted to showing Maggie learning the behaviour of a respectable middle-class woman as well as the appearance of one. The mise-en-scene varies too, as Amande's garret has been replaced by Amanda's opulent apartment, hung with tapestries and furnished with a grand piano and antiques. Again, the news that the bosses' patience and Maggie's time are nearly exhausted prompts the young woman to return to her mentor, but this time the request for help is made explicit. Sitting on the wide, metal staircase up to Amanda's quarters, Maggie waits for her and, on her return, asks desperately 'Will you help me?' Amanda agrees, telling Maggie to 'come upstairs … all you need is balance'. The camera shows Maggie's legs, bare of stockings and topped off with clumpy boots below a drab short-legged jumpsuit, begin to ascend the stairs. The music swells as the scene fades to black; the scene fades in again on the stairs, and the new Maggie descends. Just as her legs were the focus of the camera as she ascended, now as she comes down again they are the focus too: sleeker, swathed in black stockings, finished with black high-heeled shoes. As Maggie walks down the stairs she has her back to the camera: the viewer notes her newly elegant form, black halter-neck dress, and red, artfully styled hair. She is transformed, and not just in appearance; when Bob delivers the news that they are dining out, Maggie embraces Amanda for helping her achieve this success and kisses her on both cheeks, not with an excess of

warmth, more rather in the manner of a polite and grateful debutante signalling her pleasure with air kisses. Her manners have been perfected along with her new sleek exterior: formerly wild Maggie can now move amongst polite society without fear of embarrassing herself or her masters.

While, then, these two paired sequences deliver the same narrative information and advance the story to the same point, the visual methods they choose differ greatly. Nikita's change is encompassed through a superimposition, as she looks at herself in the mirror: this self-regard indicates that the alteration has been internal, that Nikita has embraced Amande's injunction to let her 'pleasure in being a woman' be her guide in preparing her appearance for external viewing. In the American remake, however, the transformation is accomplished and symbolised by movement: Maggie ascends the stairs as a badly dressed hoyden, but descends a graceful young debutante. As shall be seen, stairs are a very frequent staging place for actions of this kind in the Hollywood films which employ transformation as a motif: the sense of aspiration – wishing to better oneself, attain a higher status – maps easily onto the physical geography of the staircase. The descent of the stairs by the finished product, by contrast, does not carry the charge of lowering oneself, but takes on other connotations of the model, the princess, making a grand entry.

We can also compare the reactions of the two Bobs in the different scenes. In the French original Bob walks up to Nikita as she sits working at a computer. He delivers his compliment seeming sincere but calm. In the American version of the film, however, Maggie is enjoying the attentions of Amanda (and the audience) in her newly transformed state as Bob walks in. He seems astounded at the improvement in the young woman; the same line – 'You look beautiful' – is now delivered as an exclamation of amazement rather than a polite compliment. As we will see, within the Hollywood transformation, the success of the alteration is frequently judged by its effect on a man.

While the two film versions of the scene thus share certain factors, the American remake is also linked to other versions of the transformation scene within Hollywood cinema. There appears to be a visual grammar of such scenes, an aesthetic of transformation that film-makers find appropriate and satisfying to employ. These tropes will be examined in detail in the next section.

Returning to the use of the catwalk notion as an organising metaphor in this book, I see these films offering a runway down which beautiful people move wearing beautiful clothes – in order to sell. What is on sale is frequently not only the style of clothes but also their behaviour. Such films advance the idea of buying things – including movie tickets – to improve oneself. One young woman in the 1930s studied Joan Crawford: 'I watch every detail of how she's dressed, and her make-up, and also her hair' (Fischer, 2003: 114); but it is not only costume that is highlighted on the cinematic runway. Film has always been a place for audiences to see how to behave as well as to dress. The author of a prize-winning letter from a 1939 issue of *Silver Screen* testified that films were to her 'a finishing school in modes and manners' (Levin, 1970: 93). Ironically, Joan Crawford, herself a model for women's dress and deportment, confesses in *The Bride Wore Red* (1937) to a rich count that she has learnt her table manners from society women portrayed in the movies, a self-reflexive moment when the film comments on its own status both as artefact and as 'conduct guide'. As Deborah Robertson Hodges notes, conduct literature as a branch of journalism especially flourished in America from the beginning of the twentieth century; with the fluid social boundaries that immigration and mass travel permitted allowing much personal mobility, an individual could hope to transform herself into what she desired by assuming the right costumes and behavioural modes (1990). Conduct literature thus provided, whether through question and answer columns in the newspapers or whole books of etiquette, information and guidance on polite manners and demeanour. Hollywood films became a visual extension of this branch of literature, teaching audience members how to hold their cutlery, as well as how to stand, walk, dress, dance, flirt and kiss.

Noticeably the catwalk concept is useful not merely outside the narrative world, to describe what the film is doing, but within it, inside the diegesis also. As shall be considered more fully in the chapter on recurrent tropes, the catwalk/runway/model moment is used as the highlight of the transformation, and as confirming its occurrence. As seen in the American version of the Nikita story, where the stairs act as Maggie's runway, Hollywood transformations reward the woman for altering her appearance with a moment where she is praised and adored, held in close-up for both on-screen characters and audience. In both the Méliès short film and the

Date Movie sequence the transformed woman has a moment where she strikes a model-like pose for a moment and seems to bask in the ocular attention of the implied audience. Other catwalk moments present the woman in motion, as with *The Assassin*, often, as noted, on stairs, so that they can geographically re-enact their journey from the before to after.

Films thus act as the 'Hollywood catwalks' that we the audience sit and attentively watch, like customers attending a fashion show. We are watching not just the clothes but the attitude of the models wearing them and the appropriate moments for wearing this or that outfit, being sewn into the overall narratives. Just as so many Hollywood films have finished with the wedding, or the couple in a clinch as the promise of one to come, couture shows traditionally end with the wedding dress, the supposedly ultimate symbol of what a woman can transform herself into: a bride. Both the catwalk shows and Hollywood films are interested in fantasies of transcendence and transformation, as well as in selling the idea that purchasing power can assist us all to partake of the changes we desire.