In the musical film SINGIN' IN THE RAIN the movie queen, Lina Lamont (Jean Hagen) stands as the only center of negative energy. Three men and a woman oppose her: Don Lockwood (Gene Kelly), a matinee idol; Cosmo Brown (Donald O'Connor), a studio musician; R. F. Simpson (Millard Mitchell), the studio boss; and Kathy Seldon (Debbie Reynolds), an ingenue. In the film, these sympathetic characters all have a positive relationship to song and dance, and, as performers, they dissolve back into the actors who play them. Even Mitchell is allowed to participate in a communal dance step with Kelly and O'Connor as they prepare to pull the curtain on Lina Lamont. That curtain's rising will show that Lina is singing without sound. Before, Lina had a habit of calling things "dumb" — she even asks the men around her if they think that she is dumb — and she is now about to be shut up for good. She will be exposed as a dummy whose voice is produced elsewhere, Even O'Connor will stand in briefly as the source of Lina's song, before she finally gets the point and runs off the stage in humiliation.

The filmmakers clearly want me to read Lina as a stupid, egotistical, greedy, and vindictive woman. Yet, if I detach myself from that reading, I find Lina's behavior in the film abstractly commendable. The speech she makes before she takes the stage for the last time even sounds like a feminist declaration of independence. She announces her intention to take back the voice that the company has stolen from her in return for her stardom:

"I'm not so sure! You're the big Mr. Producer — always running things. Running me. Well, from now on, as far as I'm concerned, I'm running things...A speech? Yeah, everybody's always making speeches for me. Well, tonight, I'm gonna do my own talking. I'm gonna make the speech."[1]

The sequence is fulfilled in a way common to Western narrative: that is almost the last thing she says.

I want to read Lina against the men (mainly) who made her; the other star that I will consider at some length is Ginger Rogers. Together, the systems of female economy in SINGIN' IN THE RAIN and SHALL WE DANCE begin to spell out a paradigm: they identify the female star of song and dance as the product of male appropriation and substitution. Feminist film critics have written frequently about male appropriation.[2] I reiterate that thesis here even though (or because) musicals manipulate the female star so shamelessly and in an openly fantastic way. Musicals trade in fictions that have a narcissistic extravagance. Yet those fictions depend upon a ground of rigid, conventional sexual difference. The female star is neither more beautiful nor more talented than the women I can meet and get to know off-screen; but she is so inexchangeably feminine. SINGIN' IN THE RAIN and SHALL WE DANCE express the shape of that fixity.

In SINGIN' IN THE RAIN and SHALL WE DANCE the distance between the female star and woman is maintained by collusion and theft — in the case of Lina Lamont, the theft of her voice; in the case of Ginger Rogers, the theft of her body. Such images seem crucial. Ostensibly, the musical project is devoted to empowering its stars in both voice and body, to presenting us with images of transcendent wholeness. Yet even when sexual difference breaks down or flies apart — as it must, under the pressure of its rigidity — the dominant fictions of male control and desire do not seem eroded but crazily reinforced.
This pairing of Lina and Ginger is particularly neat: the two images of theft align themselves with the satisfaction of Lacan's "pulsion invocante" ("the call to response") and Freud's voyeuristic and fetishistic scopophilia — the perceptual passions that constitute cinematic pleasure, the passion to bind hearing and seeing. Both forms of theft originated in what I take to be the radical story of the female celebrity, George Du Maurier's *Trilby*, in which a charlatan uses hypnosis to fill a beautiful young girl's body and voice with his brilliant performance energy. Without his appropriation and immanence, Trilby cannot perform; when he dies, her talent disappears. The story's fame also depended on gender substitution in its title, on its being made into a movie entitled *SVENGALI*.

**SINGIN' IN THE RAIN AND THE SOUND OF MUSIC**

Lina Lamont has only one real problem — she is untalented. This sin of performance becomes identified with her voice. Two male critics explain this with relish: She has "a Brooklyn accent [that]...could stop a beer truck at fifty yards," says John Mariani; while, according to Clive Hirschhorn, she "cannot string two syllables together without sounding like a grinding gear." Lina suffers from this kind of exclusion twice: she doesn't talk like a lady and she doesn't sing like a star. Her voice promises no ecstasy; it cannot be desired as a fetish. In fact, not only does Lina have a voice unacceptable for a musical — it is not even human. In an early version of the screenplay, the script makes an allusion to Lina's future career, that she "is currently appearing in JUNGLE PRINCESS, in which she doesn't say a word — just grunts."

What is wrong with Lina's voice is that it is real: it possesses a noisy grain; it expresses the work of its production. Her voice comes from the audience, from the urban working class: When Lina first uses her own voice at the premiere of *THE DUELING CAVALIER*, she is answered by the voice of a heckler who speaks with the same accent. Lina's voice does not come as the product of money, time, and training; it will never reflect the music of our fantasies. It even resists the efforts of a vocal coach who urges Lina to speak in "round tones" and who stretches the joke by trying to give her fruity British pronunciation.

The film does not seem to notice that Gene Kelly also comes out of his elocution lessons with the voice he had before he went in. The film implies that Kelly's voice was already a commodity, and as such transcended the logic of narrative. Lina, on the other hand, is made fully subject to the narrative, which deals with a crisis in entertainment values (the transition from silent films to sound) and which criminalizes Lina's strong and consistent self-presentation.

The value of Kelly's voice may be one of the reasons why the film was made, but Lina's voice also predates the film and also derives from the voice of a star. Lina's voice has a history:

"For the key role of Lina Lamont...the ideal choice at the time the script was being written was Judy Holliday. The character in the script was modelled on the rendition of the classic dumb blonde that she had experimented with while working with Comden and Green in *The Revuers* years before and developed in the stage version of *Born Yesterday* (1946). But by the time SINGIN' IN THE RAIN was being cast, Judy Holliday had become a major film star following the release of the movie version of BORN YESTERDAY in late 1950."

"Jean Hagen was tested for the part of Lina Lamont because she had played Billie Dawn, the leading character in the play *Born Yesterday*, on the road. Gene Kelly, as director of SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, "just told Jean [Hagen] to act Judy playing Billie Dawn in *Born Yesterday* — and it was easy after that."
Billie Dawn in *Born Yesterday* represents a dumb blonde with a shrill voice. The stage directions describe her as "breathtakingly beautiful and breathtakingly stupid," but she is not stupid. Rather she moves utterly apathetically through a world in which she has no voice. Like Lina, she can also make a pathetic claim to be an entertainer: "I wasn't only in the chorus. In *Anything Goes* I spoke lines." *Born Yesterday*’s script celebrates Billie for what she is and for a new self-awareness that she gains, a self-awareness which, in fact, resembles Lina Lamont's final and only speech. Billie declares,

> "All of a sudden I realized what it means. How some people are always giving it and some taking. And it's not fair. So I'm not going to let you anymore. Or anybody."[8]

Despite the example of Billie Dawn, we all know, as naive film readers, the horrors of the harsh female voice. At an early age, we know how to read the drilling cackle of Margaret Hamilton — its most enduring avatar — against the simpering sweetness of Billie Burke. Hamilton plays the grandest of those bad witches that haunt our childhood, and we know that any work of art that encloses such an image is to extinguish that voice and body. THE WIZARD OF OZ expertly accomplished this, as the bad witch melts into a puddle on the floor. In Judy Garland's next film, the Busby Berkeley musical BABES IN ARMS, Margaret Hamilton returns with the same voice, muted perhaps. She clamors against entertainment, trying to prevent vaudevillians' children of from putting on their show; she demands instead that they be sent to a work farm for the good of the community.

Such voices have no right even to exist, or so says Professor Henry Higgins, surely another Svengali-type model for the male producer of the female celebrity. He wrinkles his face in disgust at Liza Doolittle's gutter accents as if they were a bad smell: "A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere — no right to live."[9]

Considering the attitudes expressed by SINGIN' IN THE RAIN's songs, perhaps it is best that Lina not have an acceptable voice and that she not be given any songs to sing. The first song sung by a woman, "All I Do the Whole Day Through," depicts the woman's abject love and dependence upon an absent male:

> "All I do the whole day through is dream of you,  
> With the dawn I still go on, dreaming of you,  
> You're every thought, you're every thing,  
> Every song I ever sing:  
> Summer, winter, autumn and spring."

But even this "feminine attitude" loops crazily back, since a female chorus that includes Debbie Reynolds sings this song at a party, where they perform it quickly and choppy — in low, gum-chewing chorine voices, voices which resemble that of Lina Lamont.

Voice in SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, as in the Hollywood musical generally does not establish a character track or a sound track but is a vocal palimpsest on which many traces touch and overlay in brief substitution. The vocal essence that Lina should have does not exist: in SINGIN' IN THE RAIN voice is very decidedly "written." In the fiction of the film, Debbie Reynolds redeems the studio's investment in Lina by dubbing both Lina's speaking and singing voice as the studio prepares to make its transition to sound. But in the filmic presentation, it seems as if anybody can dub for anybody else. O'Connor dubs for Lina Lamont momentarily; he dubs for Reynolds as he accidentally echoes a particularly resonant line of her earlier dialogue. Reynolds dubs for the villain of THE DUELING CAVALIER, accidentally dubbing for Lina Lamont. In that film-within-a-film, the studio's first sound production, the sound drifts further and further out of synch with the lip movements until, in the rape or conquest scene, the villain's low, "Yes, yes, yes," seems to come out of Lina's mouth, and her shrill, "No, no, no," out of his.

In the production that we don't see, things vary even more. Behind the speaking and singing voice of Lina Lamont stands Debbie Reynolds' voice, yet that, in fact,
becomes technologically replaced by Jean Hagen's real speaking voice and Betty Noyes' singing voice. Because Reynolds' own singing voice was so weak, she had to be dubbed as well in the high notes — and the sound of her tap dancing was dubbed by Gene Kelly.[10]

Early in the film, Gene Kelly himself demonstrates the falsity of voice. Standing at a microphone, he narrates his "biography," a short flashback sequence with music and song. This presentation is doubly false: in the first place, Kelly generates a performance that we are supposed to see and hear through. When asked to "tell...how it all happened," Kelly says, "Oh, Dora, not in front of all these people," in a voice that stimulates the crowd to scream, "Yes!" Kelly also falsifies his life — all in fun, of course — in a speech that invokes the values of family, dignity, and high art to mask a life of delinquency, squalor, and hardship.

However one weighs this, the first "movie" in a film about movies has as its structural message that the Hollywood voice lies. That the Hollywood image lies becomes the message of a later structural inversion of this sequence — a love scene in a silent film played by Kelly and Lina Lamont; it's the third dramatic performance with a disjunctive soundtrack in the film. As they gaze love at one another for the camera, they quietly threaten and curse each other. As they rise for a passionate kiss, Kelly says, "I'd like to break every bone in your body," and Lina replies, "You and who else — you big lummox!"

Debbie Reynolds represents everything that Lina Lamont is not. She is male-identified, completely dependent emotionally on men's action and moods. She is as soft and pliant and girlish as Kelly sings of her:

"Nature patterned you and when she was done,
You were all the sweet things rolled up in one."

Visually, the film presents her as an adolescent girl, while Lina looks like a sexually mature woman; Reynolds wears high necklines throughout the film, while that eighteenth-century gown of Lina's is cut lower than Jane Russell's western blouse in THE OUTLAW. Reynolds seems like a girl doll, and at the party following the premiere, she pops out of a cake as a present for Gene Kelly. Unlike Lina, who matches Kelly as an economic equal, Reynolds provides him the pleasure of a subordinate for whom he can do things.

An opening sequence depicting misunderstandings between Kelly and Reynolds (after which she falls submissively in love with him) tells the story of her sexual alienation and bondage to the male star. At the party, Kelly discovers that Reynolds, who pops out of the cake, does not work as a stage actress as she had pretended, and he subjects her to an aggressive train of humiliations. She works as a performer like himself, yet he follows her through her act, mocking and heckling her: he holds her to pull her out of her act. Only at the end of the sequence does the film allow her a brief flash of anger, and the gesture the film gives her to get back at Kelly screams "silent film": she grabs a cake from a tray and prepares to push it in his face. But Kelly ducks and the cake hits Lina instead.

This deflection and displacement is performed by the script as well. Kelly, the dancer and actor, weaves and bobs and ducks, so that Reynolds and Lina become placed as adversaries. The story both registers and forgets the fact that Lina Lamont was originally the established star and that Kelly made it in association with her. The plot shows Lina as a star when Kelly first tried to break into the movies; he got his first role as replacing (dubbing for) the actor, the villain, who clutched her against her will, threatening bodily harm or rape. Now, like Svengali, Kelly gets top billing — in fact the only billing, since the films Kelly and Lina make have titles that point only to him and his erotic adventures: THE ROYAL RASCAL, THE DUELLING CAVALIER, THE DANCING CAVALIER. The story both registers and forgets the fact that Kelly is also Lina's rejected lover.

**SHALL WE DANCE AND BODY LANGUAGE**

We first see Ginger Rogers after the curtain has fallen on the final performance of her show. She and a "Latin" co-star remain frozen in a stage embrace, and then her dancing partner decides to go after a real kiss: "You are so beautiful when you are angry. Pardon, mademoiselle, I cannot help what I cannot help." Rogers wrestles with him and pushes him into a nearby fountain. In a stormy scene with
her producer, Rogers says that she feels humiliated — in a later scene, she tells him she is "tired of being pawed" — that she will quit show business, that she has summoned her sexually anaesthetic, stockbroker beau and accepted his marriage proposal. She wants to leave show business because dancing with a man (or being a dancer) makes him believe he has access to her body. She turns on the men around her and shouts, "Go home, all of you."

Rogers' rejection of the male as an aggressor must give way to romance, however, to clear a path for the musical. She felt humiliated, she says, because she had to dance with a man she did not love. She feels an intensely personal equation between the show and courtship. But that is also the conventional equation of the musical itself, where song and dance can always demonstrate true love. Given this logic, the film should have as its project to measure the distance between Rogers' first partner and her ultimate dancing partner — a sleek-haired, effeminately graceful ballroom dancer, on the one hand, and, on the other, the fabulous Fred Astaire. Unfortunately, the two partners look and act remarkably like doubles. In place of this, we expect the film to at least chart the sequence that shows Ginger Rogers falling in love with Astaire and thereby becoming available to dance with him.

The film does no such thing. It will of course bring Astaire and Rogers together somehow as a fulfillment of their billing. Astaire begins to court Rogers from the moment he first sees her picture; like the Latin lover, he pursues her aggressively. His courtship becomes thwarted by a number of narrative circumstances, but this all seems redundant because of Rogers' presentation. Nothing Astaire can do — and almost all of his energy is devoted to getting and holding her attention — makes an impression on this woman. She does not seem to be in a state where a different man will make a difference. Her mouth generally remains fixed in a frown; she performs silent burns. (On the other hand, it is hard to catch Astaire at a moment when he is not smiling.) She may pause, even seem to smile and assent momentarily, but she soon drifts off into her own private space.

Fortunately for the film, another Ginger Rogers waits in the closet, a life-sized, uncanny replica of the star left over from an old production number, and this Ginger Rogers can appear rampantly sexual. The dummy is carried into Astaire's bedroom at night and posed hovering over his bed. The scene is then photographed and given to the papers. We can read this newsphoto as Astaire sleeping peacefully after lovemaking while Rogers, still excited, seems to sit there wanting more.

The plot's surface logic claims that this trick of using the dummy for publicity photos is motivated by affection, that Astaire wants to prevent Rogers from making a bad mistake and leaving the entertainment world. But that device of the dummy symbolizes how the narrative manipulates her body in other ways. The scene described above is preceded and followed by narrative sequences in which Rogers must be manipulated into dancing. She does not dance voluntarily until the very end of the film and then under bizarre circumstances.

The final show in SHALL WE DANCE is woven around the motif of the theft of and substitution for Rogers' dancing body. Astaire appears with a musical comedy chorus all of whom carry casts of Ginger Rogers' face. Ginger Rogers is lured into this number along a devious path. She comes to the nightclub in order to serve Fred Astaire with divorce papers. When Jerome Cowan tells her of Astaire's cry "from the heart" — that if he can't dance with her, he will dance with images of her — her face softens and she smiles fully for the first time in the film. The camera returns to the production number, and as it pans through the line of blondes holding masks near their faces, we see that one of them is Ginger Rogers twice over. The chorus girls move back into their niches and Astaire dances through them, pulling each one out, unmasking her, moving along the circle, until, almost without registering it, he has confronted his destined dancing partner.

Ginger Rogers is thus made to join the show as a chorus girl whom Astaire elevates to become his partner, although originally she was the musical comedy star. The ending here corresponds to SINGIN' IN THE RAIN's move from Lina Lamont to Debbie Reynolds.

Ginger Rogers joins the dance holding an entertainment image of her face up to her real face — a fulfillment of her initial framing in the film. At the beginning, SHALL WE DANCE makes two preliminary passes before we finally see Ginger
Rogers. Her first appearance comes through her image on a billboard in front of the theater; we see her through her glossy life-sized photo — standing out in the street to lure passersby to the entertainment bliss that awaits within.

Critics have isolated and praised the second image, but they do not mention its pornography. Ginger Rogers appears in the pages of a flip-through picture book which Astaire, who has not even met Rogers yet, shows and gives to Edward Everett Horton. It delights Horton. As Horton flips the pages, Rogers performs the dance. Horton can make Rogers dance forward and backwards; he can make her stop and start. It is an image of male control of the female body, of the male as the producer of the dance. The song, "They Can't Take That Away From Me" with its inventory of female parts — "wear your hat," "sip your tea," "sing off-key," etc. — correspondingly belongs in such a film that acts out fetishization.

Similar images of the appropriation and control of the female body occur in other Astaire-Rogers musicals. The first production number in THE GAY DIVORCEE involves a revolving wheel of chorus girls. They stand behind a circular glass counter like shopgirls demonstrating some new item of fashionable luxury. What they are demonstrating are their bodies. As if to deny that they are demonstrating their bodies or that they have bodies, they all have miniature gauze tutus around their hands. The dance, the number itself, becomes their dancing hands and fingers as the rest of the set remains blacked out. We cut to a table in the nightclub where two other hands, those of Astaire and Horton, are performing their female dance. Horton says he can't do his dance properly; his fingers have "housemaid's knee." He uses a phrase like "Adam's rib" to remind us that women have always been subject to male metonymy. In the big production number at the end of the film, "The Continental," one of the spectacular images is of members of the female chorus standing in a revolving door which exhibits them as it turns — a second image of women attached to a display mechanism.

Fred Astaire dances the culminating "Change Partners" number in CAREFREE with a hypnotized Ginger Rogers. In that film, he plays a psychoanalyst and she a patient under the influence of a mistaken program he gave her not to love him, to think of him as a beast, and to shoot him on sight. The premise of hypnotism makes no difference to the presentation of the dance; if anything, it makes the dance even lovelier. The female dancer can perform awake or asleep. Astaire begins by freezing her with a hand pass; he moves his hands slightly and she sways. He dances both his own and her dance: he makes her stop, go, lift her arms, etc.. In THE PIRATE as well, Judy Garland can enter the world of the musical only after she has been hypnotized by Gene Kelly.

Readers of Hollywood musicals have found fault with SHALL WE DANCE for its perfunctory rendering of Astaire's desire to merge ballet and jazz. The final show, which should embody this secondary marriage, divides its time and spectacle between the two but not its energy. According to Arlene Croce, the ballet sequence is a "nightmare...Harriet Hoctor (the lead dancer), can be taken for nothing human. She was a contortionist whose specialty, a horseshoe backbend on points, was already known to movie audiences. (In this position she would kick herself in the head)."[13]

Within the film's presentational logic, it is a perfect finale. The female star collaborates in her own dismemberment, and she caps her act by kicking herself in the head. (When Gene Kelly rejects the advances of Lina Lamont, however, she kicks him in the ass — but then Lina is excluded from the finale).

Another image of the dancing female belongs to the intersection of ballet and musical comedy: Moira Shearer's dancing herself to death in THE RED SHOES. That film's success was responsible for the gala ballets in film musicals, like the "Broadway Ballet" number in SINGIN' IN THE RAIN; both are thematically similar. Both are devoted to a compulsion to dance. Kelly identifies his madness through the repetition of the lyric phrase, "Gotta sing, gotta dance."

Impulsive or compulsive dancing is also Fred Astaire's trademark. In TOP HAT, Astaire says to Ginger Rogers, "Every once in a while I suddenly find myself dancing." In the "Shoes With Wings On" number in THE BARKELEY'S OF BROADWAY, animated shoes coerce Astaire to dance. And in FINIAN'S
RAINBOW he tells Petula Clark that he "can't stop dancing." The point is a simple one: the men become fulfilled by their runaway feet. They are lifted into harmony with the Platonic music that always plays from behind or below the sets of this everyday world. Shearer, on the other hand, ends up depleted, exhausted, ravaged, and finally destroyed by her dancing shoes.

"BROADWAY MELODY" DREAMS OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE

SINGIN' IN THE RAIN tells the story of Gene Kelly a second time, in a very different register and on a terrain where sexual difference breaks down, mapping but never really acknowledging its own construction of sexuality. The culminating "show" in SINGIN' IN THE RAIN is a long dance and ballet sequence — "The Broadway Melody" and "The Broadway Ballet" — folded into the film as a projected number for the musical remake of THE DUELING CAVALIER.

The sequence has two fictions — the creation of the male star and the conquest of Broadway — and it bursts with color, music, and activity. It seems to have a central importance but nevertheless, it remains framed by a series of marginalizing gestures; it literally has no place in the film. And it represents an alternate sexual series: other positions taken by Hollywood in its own past, usually in a comic or surreal mode; the positions of minor characters like Donald O'Connor or Edward Everett Horton; the positions of the stars in their own minor keys. In it, the Kelly figure desires but does not get the girl, and he has to find solace in his commitment to entertainment. Singing and dancing here stand as a consolation prize (although this heresy, the disjuncture of the values of love and entertainment, will not enter musically fully until A STAR IS BORN, two years later).

In this dance's story, a "feminine" Kelly has a desperate emotional dependency on a strong woman who does not speak and who exploits and rejects him. The woman, Cyd Charisse, presents an image that seems hard and unfeminine because overly feminized. A woman enacts revenge who is as fixed in her feminization as multiple layers of personal, spectacular, and narrative cosmetics can make her. She is also fixed in her identification with and narrative dependence upon an intensely male image, the gangster who lets her go for the length of the sequence and then pulls her back in. Her make-up evokes the predatory females of the silent screen, Pola Negri or Louise Brooks. Like Ann Miller, she has a glossy, over-cosmeticized surface.

At one point in the number, a familiar set of male gestures comes from Charisse as she tosses Kelly's hat away and takes off his glasses, twirls them, and lets them fly — she brings him out sexually. And then she devours him; the most resonant images in this number are the twin images of Charisse staring down at a kneeling Kelly with her leg stretched out across his chest as she balances his Harold Lloyd hat on the end of her foot; and that same leg stretched upwards with the hat perched on top. It is a sequence of sexual conquest that is both phallic and vaginal. She has not only skeletalized and replaced Kelly; she has also absorbed and ingested him.

The "second-man" position in both of these films is, as is usual, an affectionate but bracketed homosexual ideal. In SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, O'Connor is the third celebrity to arrive at the premiere, following two couples. He arrives alone in a snazzy white roadster; his broad smile tells us that he is unaware of anything peculiar in this; and the film moves, without punctuation, to the arrival of another couple. Yet his solitude is telling: the film does not try to pair him up with anyone in a realm where success seems measured both by applause and by love.

In a publicity still from the "Good Morning" number, Kelly and O'Connor lean forward, hands on their knees, gazing into one another's eyes. Reynolds seems shut out, repeating the same gesture in an unidentified and disconnected space. O'Connor always accompanies Kelly, is always available to him. In two numbers, "Fit as a Fiddle" and "Moses Supposes," through the passes of the dance, the two men are depicted in startling intimacy: Kelly sits on O'Connor's lap, O'Connor rides Kelly, etc. One of O'Connor's functions, more elaborated by Edward Everett Horton, O'Connor's counterpart in SHALL WE DANCE, is to denigrate women, to express mindlessly and instinctively a misogyny which the narrative continually reinforces. In the "Make 'Em Laugh" number, O'Connor beats off and then strangles a "forward" love partner, who is also a dummy.
Ultimately, gender reversal becomes the secret of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers' wonderful fit; we read their gender in waves that reverse themselves: their identity as male and female, their appearance as female and male, their semantic content as male and female, their expressions as female and male, and so on up and down the line. Currently, the construction of sexuality seems overtly to preoccupy "Hollywood" film plots — in movies like TOOTSIE or COME BACK TO THE FIVE AND DIME, JIMMY DEAN, JIMMY DEAN — as if film has suddenly registered with conscious delight the game that actually constitutes the secret history of its appeal — as well as its most scandalous ruse.

NOTES


3. See Christian Metz, The Imaginary Signifier (Bloomington: Indiana University Press; 1977), p. 58. Lina may also be read to signify the silencing of the female spectator; see Doane, p. 77.


7. Hirschhorn, p.211.


11. Mariani, p. 10.

12. This is a descriptive and not an affective statement, for Lina who is made up to be sexual does not hold our erotic fantasy, while Reynolds, who is not, does. While Laura Mulvey can write, with general force, that "in their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance ceded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" [p. 418], the extreme edge of feminization is far radical in its effects. Witness the absolute contrast between the images of Lina and Cyd Charisse in this film.

12. Compare Lucy Fischer on Busby Berkeley's DAMES: "Thus what emerges in DAMES is yet another sense of woman as image. For it is not so much the physical feminine presence that is celebrated in DAMES as her synthetic cinematic image. And ultimately the privileged status of that image and its mode of presentation propose it as a virtual substitute for woman herself" (83-84).

[Lina believes the tabloid reports of a romance between her and Don] Now Lina, you've been reading those fan magazines again. Now look Lina, you shouldn't believe all that banana oil that Dora Bailey and the columnists dish out. Now try to get this straight. There is nothing between us. There has never been anything between us. Just air. Ladies and Gentlemen. Stop that girl. Lina Lamont gets a lot of shit in Singin' in the Rain. She is the villain of the movie, mostly because she is a beautiful, talented silent movie actress who can't seem to make the transition to sound because of her voice and because of her generally unpleasant personality. It's so easy to hate Lina: she's annoying, flamboyant, exaggerated, and dramatic. She schemes to keep her job and is willing to sacrifice others in her way. She dares to dream that her working relationship with Don Lockwood could become a real relationship.