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Becoming Jack Nicholson: The Masculine Persona from Easy Rider to The Shining

Shaun R. Karli

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One of the most celebrated figures in the world of cinema, Jack Nicholson has appeared in more than fifty films, stamping each with his larger-than-life presence. Because Nicholson brought a set of traits and attitudes with him to his roles that the actor and filmmakers variously inflected, audiences associated certain characteristics with his screen identity. At times his rebelliousness was celebrated as an act of self-expression against an oppressive system (*Five Easy Pieces*, *The Passenger*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*), and at others it was revealed as an absurd masculine fantasy (*The Last Detail*, *Chinatown*, and *The Shining*). In each, the actor embodies an inherent tension between a desire to make authentic choices and a pressure to conform to societal expectations of manly behavior.

In *Becoming Jack Nicholson: The Masculine Persona from* Easy Rider *to* The Shining, Shaun Karli looks at the actor's on-screen presence in eight key films between 1969 and 1980. Karli explores how in each of these films, the actor and the filmmakers played upon audience expectations of "Jack Nicholson" to challenge prevailing attitudes about masculinity and power. Focusing on the actor's image in a string of counterculture films that spanned the 1970s, Karli argues that audiences created a composite "understanding" of the Nicholson persona in these movies.

Examining both the actor and the on-screen version of the Nicholson character, this book offers a fascinating look at one of the major screen figures of the past forty years. *Becoming Jack Nicholson* will appeal to scholars of cinema, but also to those interested in gender studies, American studies, and sociology.

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