

MEDIA RELEASE
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WHAT IF JEFF BRIDGES WERE A WOMAN? *Where are the "Dudettes"?*

AUSTIN, TEXAS, January 24, 2011 -- "Jeff Bridges has not aged all that well. The face is puffy. The jawline has slackened. The eyelids hang limp. And is that an age spot on his cheek? Despite all that, at 61, he is still magnificent," wrote feminist commentator Ann Daly PhD in her Huffington Post blog, *4G Feminism*.

"That's certainly what the recently-released 'American Masters' documentary on Bridges wants us to conclude: that he remains 'the most natural and least self-conscious screen actor that has ever lived.' As the PBS season-opener is aptly subtitled, 'The Dude Abides.'

"It wasn't hard to get on board with all that. And then his co-stars began weighing in. Cybill Shepherd, Mercedes Ruehl, and Karen Allen. I noticed that they, too, are still magnificent. And yet I haven't seen them starring on the big screen lately."

An expert on women's changing lives and a former women's studies professor, Dr. Daly goes on to ask:

"Then again, in what roles could a woman possibly be 'natural' and un-'self-conscious' in later life? In what roles could she sympathetically present herself as puffy, slackened, and limp?"

The rest of Dr. Daly's column raises questions about the lack of narratives for older women:

"Hollywood narratives simply cannot accommodate women beyond the marriage plot. Once she passes Dora the Explorer age, at puberty, a woman's story (note the singular) revolves around sex and romance. She is handmaiden to heterosexual men. When Clint Eastwood reinvented himself in "Unforgiven," her territory suddenly expanded. Lucky her, now she can serve as savior to the washed-up, burned-out anti-hero seeking redemption-whether he is a country singer (like Bridges in "Crazy Heart") or a wrestler (like Mickey Rourke in "The Wrestler"). The Dude gets to grow up and take on the serious stuff. Our cultural fascination with adolescent boys now extends to his late-life meditations on mortality. Or else, what would Clint and Mickey and Jeff do?

"Even today, in our supposedly 'post-feminist' age, this entrenched storytelling tradition appears impossible for women to buck. When Ulysses set off on his epic quest, Penelope sat home weaving, diligently putting off those annoying suitors. And then, when from Tennyson the aged king received his best role ever, Penelope was nowhere in sight.

"Hollywood acting 'masters' can snag Academy Awards for their *memento mori* ("remember you shall die") roles of Shakespearean magnitude, while 'middle-aged' actresses face a choice between comic sex stories or the asexual matriarch. The Dude does indeed abide in our cultural imagination, and the best we can manage for his leading lady is a cameo appearance in his PBS documentary.

"There have been notable exceptions to the script, of course, but it didn't end well for Thelma and Louise. Helen Mirren is taking her shot at it, but by appropriating the male lead in Julie Taymor's gender-bending remake of Shakespeare's 'The Tempest.' Hollywood still hasn't been able to provide Mirren with a magnificent female role equal to the Jane Tennison she portrayed on British TV's 'Prime Suspect' series.

Alas, if Jeff Bridges were a woman, there would be no late-great roles to play, no Oscar to win, and no PBS documentary to film."

To read this and other of Dr. Daly's *Huffington Post* columns:
<http://budurl.com/4ahq>

Dr. Daly is available for media commentary on this and other topics. To schedule an interview, contact Ann Daly at: 512/454-0531 or media@anndaly.com

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