sale as tickets provides a return on investment; second, the mental machine, which spectators have internalized and which adopts them for the consumption of films as pleasurable "good objects." One economy, involving the generation of profit, is intimately linked to the other, involving the circulation of pleasure (the third "machine" is critical discourse about the cinema). Metz in this context psychoanalyzed and institutionalized the underlying springs of cinematic pleasure: identification (first with the camera and then with characters); voyeurism (observation of others from a protected position); fetishism (the play of lack and disavowal); and narcissism (self-aggrandizing sensations of being an all-perceiving subject). Metz thus tried to answer a very important question: Why do spectators go to the cinema if they are not forced? What pleasure are they seeking? And how do they become part of an institutional machine that both delights and deludes them? Answering such questions about the imbricated functions of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic in film reception might even have a feedback effect, yielding a new contribution to psychoanalysis itself.

The psychoanalytic critics also deployed the notion of the Oedipus Complex in the analysis of the cinema. In a Lacanian perspective, the Law catalyzes Desire. The cinema is oedipal not only in its stories—usually stories about a male protagonist overcoming his problems with the paternal Law—but also in its incorporation of the processes of disavowal and fetishism, whereby the spectator is aware of the illusory nature of the cinematic image and yet believes in that image nevertheless. This belief, furthermore, is premised on the spectacle being placed at a safe distance, and in this sense depends on voyeurism (with sadistic overtones). The cinema was clearly founded on the pleasure of looking, conceived since its origins as a place from which one could "spy on" others. What Freud called scopophilia, the impulse to turn the other into the object of a curious gaze, is one of the primordial elements in cinematic seduction. Indeed, the titles of some of the earliest films bear witness to this fascination: *As Seen Through a Telescope* (1900), *Ce que l'on voit de mon sixieme* (What one sees from my sixth floor, 1901), *Through the Keyhole* (1900), and *Peeping Tom in the Dressing Room* (1905). The

cinematic apparatus, for Metz, combines visual hyperperception with minimal physical mobility; it virtually demands an immobile secret viewer who absorbs everything through the eyes. The precise mechanism of gratification "rests on our knowing that the object being looked at does not know it is being looked at" (Metz, 1977). The voyeur is careful to maintain a gulf between the object and the eye. The voyeur's *invisibility* produces the visibility of the objects of his or her gaze. It is the breaking down of these processes, the shattering of an illusory voyeuristic distance, that is allegorically staged in Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, where the protagonist is caught in the act through a series of scopic inversions which turn him into the object of the gaze. Psychoanalysis, as we shall see later, formed part of many subsequent movements such as film feminism and postcolonialism, and certainly inflects the work of later figures such as Kaja Silverman, Joan Copjec, and Slavoj Zizek.

The Feminist Intervention

At its height, the left wing of semiotic film theory hoped for a creative amalgam of the projects of the "Holy Trinity" (or Sinister Triumvirate, depending on one's point of view) of Althusser, Saussure, and Lacan. In an amicable division of labor, Marxism would provide the theory of society and ideology; semiotics would provide the theory of signification; and psychoanalysis would provide the theory of the subject. But in fact it was not an easy task to synthesize Freudian psychoanalysis with Marxist sociology, or historical materialism with a largely ahistorical structuralism. Indeed, the post-1968 period witnessed an overall decline in the prestige of Marxism and the emergence of the new politics of social movements such as feminism, gay liberation, ecology, and minority empowerment. The decline of Marxism had to do not only with the transparent crisis of socialist societies (a point sometimes exploited to obscure the fact that global capitalism was also in crisis), but also with increasing skepticism about all totalizing theories. Gradually, the focus of radi-

cal film theory shifted away from questions of class and ideology toward other concerns.

The move away from Marxism did not necessarily mean the abandonment of oppositional politics; it meant, rather, that the oppositional impulse now animated a different set of practices and concerns. Whereas class and ideology had dominated analysis in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s it began to disappear in favor of the simultaneously diminished (because classless) and expanded "mantra" of race, gender, and sexuality. Much of the discussion now revolved around feminist issues. The feminist goal was to explore the power arrangements and psycho-social mechanisms undergirding patriarchal society, with the ultimate aim of transforming not only film theory and criticism but also hierarchically gendered social relations in general. Film feminism was in this sense linked to the activism of consciousness-raising groups, to theme conferences and political campaigns which raised diverse issues of special importance to women: rape, spousal abuse, child care, the right to abortion, and so forth, in an atmosphere where the "personal is political."

Feminist theory, as has often been pointed out, is not single but plural. Feminism has millennial roots going back to mythical figures like Lilith, to the fighting Amazons, and to classical plays like *Lysistrata*. But during the century of cinema there have been at least two waves of feminist activism (in the West), the first linked to the struggle for universal suffrage, and the second emerging from the liberationist political movements of the 1960s. The Women's Liberation movement was named in the 1960s on the model of the Black Liberation movement, just as the coinage "sexism" was modeled on "racism." (Black liberationist and anti-colonialist women of color also did feminist work, but not necessarily in the context of film theory.) Many feminists built their analysis of sexism on previous understandings of racism, a move that recalled the earlier parallelism between the first-wave feminist critique of paternalism and the abolitionist critique of slavery. Film feminism, like feminism generally, built on "early fem-inist" texts like Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. De Beauvoir's title implied a rejection of Freud's sexual monism, the idea that there

was a single, essentially masculine, libido that defined all sexuality. De Beauvoir saw both women and blacks as in the process of emancipation from a paternalism that would keep them in their "place" (the formulation overlooked the fact that some of the women were black). Women, she argued, "are made not born"; patriarchal power deploys the brute fact of biological difference in order to manufacture and hierarchize gender difference. There was no "women's problem" but only a men's problem, just as there was no "black problem" but only a white one. (Three feminist classics from the late 1960s, Ti-Grace Atkinson's *Amazon Odyssey*, Shulamith Firestone's *Dialectic of Sex*, and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, were all dedicated to de Beauvoir.) Feminists also built on Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and the work of later feminists like Nancy Chodorow, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde, Kate Millett, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray. The founding in the United States of the National Organization of Women in 1966 and of *Ms* magazine in 1972 were also key events.

The feminist wave in film studies was first heralded by the emergence of women's film festivals (in New York and Edinburgh) in 1972, as well as by popular early 1970s books like Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape*, Marjorie Rosen's *Popcorn Venus*, and Joan Mellon's *Women and Sexuality in the New Film*. Molly Haskell's cautiously feminist book, for example, rejected melioristic assumptions about women's progress in the cinema, tracing instead a zigzagging trajectory from chivalric "reverence" in the silent era, to the "rape" of 1970s Hollywood, with the zenith formed by the spunky heroines of screwball comedies in the 1930s. Haskell criticized both Hollywood anti-feminist backlash films and phallocentric European art films, while crediting the "woman's picture" with giving some voice to women suffering under patriarchy. These books generally stressed questions of representations of women, especially through negative stereotypes – madonnas, whores, vamps, scatterbrains, bimbos, gold diggers, schoolma'ams, nags, sex kittens – which infantilized women, or demonized them, or turned them into rampant sex objects. They showed that filmic sexism, like sexism in the three-dimensional world, was protean: it could involve idealizing

women as morally superior beings, inferiorizing them as castrated and asexual, hyperbolizing them as horrifically powerful *femmes fatales*, envying them for their reproductive capacities, or fearing them as the incarnations of nature, age, and death. The cinema confronted women with a kind of Catch-22. As novelist Angela Carter put it, "In the celluloid brothel of the cinema, where the merchandise may be eyed endlessly but never purchased, the tension between the beauty of women, which is admirable, and the denial of the sexuality which is the source of that beauty but is also immoral, reaches a perfect impasse" (Carter, 1978, p. 60).

Feminism provides a large-scale methodological and theoretical grid which has implications for every facet of thinking about film. In terms of authorship, feminist film theory critiqued the boys'-club masculinism of auteurism while also facilitating the "archeological" recovery of female auteurs such as Alice Guy-Blache (arguably the first professional filmmaker in the world), Lois Weber, and Anita Loos in the United States, Aziza Amir in Egypt, Maria Landeta in Mexico, and Gilda de Abreu and Carmen Santos in Brazil. Theorists thus revisited the question of auteurism from a feminist perspective. Sandy Flitterman-Lewis (1990) examined the "search for a new cinematic language capable of expressing female desire," embodied by such female auteurs as Germaine Dulac and Agnes Varda. Feminist film theory also sparked new thinking about style (the question of *écriture feminine*), about industrial hierarchies and production processes (the historical relegation of women to jobs like editing, a kind of "sewing," and "scriptgirl," a kind of tidying up), and about theories of spectatorship (the female gaze, masochism, masquerade).

Early film feminism focused on practical goals of consciousness-raising, on denunciation of negative media imagery of women, as well as on more theoretical concerns. As the "Womanifesto" of the 1975 New York Conference of Feminists in the Media put it: "We do not accept the existing power structure and we are committed to changing it by the content and structure of our images and by the ways we related to each other in our work and with our audience" (Rich, 1998, p. 73). Partly reworking and reinvoicing the pre-existing amalgam of Marxism, semiotics, and psychoanalysis deployed

by earlier (largely male) critics, theorists such as Laura Mulvey, Pam Cook, Rosalind Coward, Jacqueline Rose, Kaja Silverman, Mary Ann Doane, Judith Mayne, Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, Elizabeth Cowie, Gertrud Koch, Parveen Adams, Teresa de Lauretis, and many others criticized the naive essentialism of early feminism, moving the focus from biological sexual identity, seen as tied to "nature," to "gender," seen as a social construct shaped by cultural and historical contingency, variable and therefore reconstructable. Rather than focus on the "image" of women, feminist theorists transferred their attention to the gendered nature of vision itself, and the role of voyeurism, fetishism, and narcissism in the construction of a masculinist view of women. This discussion took the debates beyond the simple corrective task of pointing out misrepresentations and stereotypes, in order to examine the way dominant cinema engenders its spectator. In "Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema" – an essay first written for the Women's Event at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 1976 – Claire Johnston called for an analytic focus not only on image but also on the textual iconographic and narrative operations that maneuvered women into subordinate positions. Male characters in film, Johnston pointed out, tend to be active, highly individualized figures, while female figures seem like abstract entities from a timeless world of myth. At the same time, Johnston called for a feminist filmmaking that would mingle both reflexive distancing and the play of female desire.[1]

Theorists such as Johnston, and journals like *Camera Obscura*, called for a radical deconstruction of patriarchal Hollywood cinema, and the elaboration of an avant-garde feminist cinema exemplified by the work of Marguerite Duras, Yvonne Rainer, Nelly Kaplan, and Chantal Akerman. Film feminism was especially strong in Britain, the United States, and Northern Europe. (Despite the importance of women theorists in France – Cixous, Irigaray, Wittig – and despite the importance of French women filmmakers, feminist film theory was not a strong presence there.)

Feminism was also impacted by diverse currents from within psychoanalysis. In *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974) Juliet Mitchell argued that although Freud certainly reflected the patriarchal atti-

tudes of his time, he also provided the theoretical instruments for transcending those attitudes by showing how patriarchy affected his patients. The inaugural text for feminist film theory, at least in its psychoanalytic incarnation, was Laura Mulvey's seminal 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." The essay enlisted (the non-feminist) Lacan and (the equally non-feminist) Althusser into the feminist project by arguing for the gendered nature of narrative and point of view in classical Hollywood cinema. For Mulvey, the cinema choreographs three kinds of "gaze:" that of the camera, that of the characters looking at one another, and that of the spectator, induced to voyeuristically identify with a masculinist gaze at woman. Dominant cinema reinscribes patriarchal conventions by privileging the male in terms of both narrative and spectacle. "Interpellation," for Mulvey, is gendered. The male is made the active subject of the narrative and the female the passive object of a spectatorial gaze defined as male. The man is the driver of the narrative vehicle, while the woman is the passenger. Visual pleasure in the cinema thus reproduced a structure of male looking and female to-be-looked-at-ness, a binary structure which mirrored the asymmetrical power relations operative in the real social world. Women spectators had the Hobson's Choice of identifying either with the active male protagonist or with the passive, victimized female antagonist. The cinema could be voyeuristic *à la* Hitchcock – where the spectator identified with the male gaze at an objectified female – fetishistic *à la* Sternberg, where the beauty of the female body was deployed to stop the narrative in its tracks through close-ups exuding magical, erotic power. While Claire Johnston had argued for the release of the collective fantasies of women, Mulvey argued for the strategic rejection of filmic pleasure.

Mulvey was subsequently criticized (and criticized herself) for forcing the female spectator into a masculinist mold. In 1978 Christine Gledhill questioned the exclusively textual nature of film feminism: "under the insistence of the semiotic production of meaning, the effectivity of social, economic and political practice threatens to disappear altogether" (Gledhill, in Doane et al., 1984). Elizabeth Cowie, in "Fantasia" (1984), called for multiple and cross-

gender identifications. David Rodowick (1991) argued that Mulvey's theory failed to allow for historical variability. A special issue of *Camera Obscura* (1989) featured some fifty responses to Mulvey's essay. Mulvey's model was now regarded as overly deterministic, blind to the diverse ways in which women could subvert, redirect, or undermine the male gaze.

Many feminists pointed to the ideological limitations of Freudianism, with its privileging of the phallus, of male voyeurism, and of an oedipal scenario which left little place for female subjectivity, quite apart from such subtly gendered concepts as "analytic neutrality." Freud, it was pointed out, was concerned with the oedipal trajectory only of the male child. Mary Ann Doane argued that the overwhelming presence to itself of the female body made it impossible for women to establish the distance from the image necessary for voyeuristic pleasure and control. The whole concept of fetishism, Doane pointed out, had little to do with a female spectator "for whom castration cannot pose a threat" (see Doane, in Doane et al., 1984, p. 79). Furthermore, there were other options available. The female spectator, Doane argued, could identify, transvestite-like, with the male gaze, thus paradoxically empowering herself while disempowering her gender; or identify in a masochistic way with her own stigmatization as lack (ibid.). In her study of the woman's film, Doane (1987) distinguished three subgenres – maternal, medical, and paranoid – emplotted by scenarios of masochism and hysteria.

In her study of the woman's films, *The Desire to Desire* (1987), Doane argues that these films, although they foreground women characters, ultimately circumscribe and frustrate their desire, leaving them with nothing to do but "desire to desire." The various subgenres within this larger field work in parallel but different ways to achieve this effect. In those films revolving around illness, female desire is coopted by the institutional relation between doctor and patient. In family melodramas, it is sublimated into motherhood. In romantic comedy, it is channeled into narcissism. And in gothic horror films, desire is undone by anxiety.

Gaylyn Studlar, meanwhile, countered Mulvey (along with Baudry and Metz) by suggesting that the key to spectatorship might lie less

in voyeurism and fetishism than in a masochism rooted in the archaic memory of a powerful mother. The male reaction to the spectacle of sexual difference, for example, might be more masochistic than sadistic: "The cinematic apparatus and the masochistic aesthetic offer identificatory positions for male and female spectators that reintegrate psychic bisexuality, offer the sensual pleasures of polymorphous sexuality, and make the male and female one in their identification with and desire for the pre-Oedipal mother" (Studlar, 1988, p. 192). Books like Carol Clover's *Men, Women and Chain Saws* shifted the ground of debate by suggesting that spectatorial positions can oscillate between the active and the passive, the sadistic and the masochistic. Contemporary horror films, she suggested, do not position the male spectator toward sadism; rather, they prod male spectators to identify with the female victim (Clover, 1992). Rhona J. Berenstein (1995) further complicated the analysis of spectatorship in the horror film by advancing a performative view of a genre marked by role playing and disguise, and where spectators adopt and discard fixed gender and sexual roles. Teresa de Lauretis, for her part, argued that the spectator was positioned bisexually, since the daughter never fully relinquishes her desire for the mother. Calling for an "Oedipus Interruptus" which opted out of masculinist models, de Lauretis suggested that the cinema should move beyond sexual difference to explore differences among women. Gender, de Lauretis (1989) argued, was produced by various social technologies, including that of the cinema. Complex social technologies – institutions, representations, processes – model individuals, assign them a role and function and place. Men and women are solicited differentially by these technologies, and have conflicting investments in the discourses and practices of sexuality.

In the wake of all the criticism, Mulvey made a kind of autocritique in her "Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure," where she acknowledged that she had neglected two important issues: melodrama and the "woman in the audience." In her later work, Bakhtinian hybridism offered a way out of the binaries of Lacanianism. Kaja Silverman (1992), meanwhile, turned her attention to "perverse," non-phallic, para-oedipal masculinities that say "no" to power, while

arguing that the concept of ideology remained an "indispensable tool not only for Marxist, but for feminist and gay, studies." Psychoanalytic feminist theory argued for an understanding of femininity and masculinity as cultural constructs, the result of processes of discursive and cultural production and differentiation. Identification, once seen as monolithic, was dispersed across a broad, changing field of positionalities. An exclusive concern with sexual difference gave way to ramifying differences among women. De Lauretis spoke of the "productive heterogeneity of feminism" and asked feminists to think about issues of enunciation and address: "who is making films for whom, who is looking and speaking, how, where, and to whom?"[2]

The period of feminist film theory has also been the heyday of filmmaking by women. In an attempt at schematizing this variegated production, Ruby Rich (1998) proposed an experimental taxonomy of descriptive categories:

1 Validative (legitimating films about women's struggles, e.g. *Union Maids*).
2 Correspondence (avant-garde films such as *Film About a Woman Who . . .*, which inscribe their author into the text).
3 Reconstructive (formally experimental films such as Sally Potter's *Thriller* that reinvoice conventional genres).
4 Medusan (films like Nelly Kaplan's *A Very Curious Girl* which celebrate the potential of feminist texts to "blow up the law)".
5 Corrective realism (feminist features aimed at a wide audience, such as von Trott's *The Second Awakening of Christa Klages*).

Many of the films by women had a feminist-theoretical thrust, as in the films of Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, Yvonne Rainer, Marleen Gooris, Su Friedrich, Sally Potter, Julie Dash, Chantal Akerman, Jane Campion, Mira Nair, Lizzie Borden, and many others.

At the same time, in the 1980s and 1990s, feminists began to be more respectful of the *pleasures* of mainstream cinema. In *The Women Who Knew Too Much* Tania Modleski pointed to the remarkable ambivalence of Hitchcock's regard on/for women, arguing that male

characters in his work project their own suffering onto the women characters in a "dialectic of identification and dread." Feminists also turned their attention to popular genres, as in Kaplan's (1998) anthology on film noir and Christine Gledhill's (1987) work on the melodrama. Some feminists lauded the carnivalesque incarnations of the "unruly woman," who proudly makes a spectacle of herself as a way of negotiating invisibility in the public sphere. Drawing on Bakhtin and Mary Douglas, Kathleen Rowe (1995) lamented the focus on melodrama and female victimization, and lauded instead the comedic transgressions of excessive women – "too fat, too funny, too noisy, too old, too rebellious" – who unsettle social hierarchy. (Molly Haskell had partly anticipated this move by her valorization of the feisty heroines of screwball comedies.)

Feminist film theory was also criticized for being normatively "white" and for marginalizing lesbians and women of color. Alice Walker found the term "feminism" unattractive for blacks and coined the term "womanist" to designate black women's writing and criticism. Black feminists complained that the "Woman as Nigger" formulation failed to acknowledge that "niggers" could also be women. As Barbara Christian put it, "If defined as black, her woman nature was often denied; if defined as woman, her blackness was often ignored; if defined as working class, her gender and race were muted" (quoted in Young-Bruehl, 1996, p. 514).

Poet Adrienne Rich (1979) acknowledged the critique by excoriating "white solipsism," the "tunnel-vision which simply does not see nonwhite experience or existence as precious or significant, unless in spasmodic, impotent guilt-reflexes, which have little or no long-term, continuing momentum or political usefulness." Ella Shohat in "Gender and the Culture of Empire" pointed to the colonial undertext of some of Freud's writings[3] and lamented the limitations of mainstream feminist analysis when dealing with Euro-colonialist films like *Black Narcissus*, which provisionally grant the power of the gaze to white female characters but only as part of a colonial civilizing mission (Shohat, in Bernstein and Studlar,1996). Jane Gaines also pointed to the ethnocentrism of some feminist theory. bell hooks argued that black female spectators were almost

necessarily oppositional in ways that went beyond the critical gaze of black male spectators (see hooks, 1992, pp. 115–31).

The achievements of feminist film theory retroactively exposed the masculinist underpinnings of theory itself: the eroticized misogyny of the Surrealists; the heroic (oedipal) masculinism of auteur theory, the supposedly genderless "objectivity" of semiotics. Feminists discerned sexism in the subliminal tropes that undergirded such theories. Tania Modleski pointed out the ways that Frankfurt School theory, for example, feminized mass culture by linking it to qualities stereotypically associated with women – passivity and sentimentality. Through a gendered division of symbolic labor, women are held accountable for the pernicious effects of consuming mass-culture, while men shoulder the responsibility for generating a socially critical high culture.[4]

The Poststructuralist Mutation

In the late 1960s the Saussurean model and the structuralist semiotics derived from it came under attack – most notably from Derridean deconstruction – and thus led to poststructuralism. The poststructuralist movement shares the structuralist premise of the determining, constitutive role of language, and shares the assumption that signification is based on difference, but it rejects structuralism's "dream of scientificity," its hopes of stabilizing the play of difference within an all-encompassing master-system.

Drawing on the work of Friedrich Nietzsche and the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger, poststructuralism saw that the drive toward systematicity typical of structuralism should be confronted by everything that it excluded and repressed. Indeed, many of the seminal texts of poststructuralism (for example, Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, *Writing and Difference*, and *Speech Phenomenon*, all published originally in 1967) comprised explicit critiques of the central figures and cardinal concepts of structuralism. Derrida's paper at the 1966 "Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man" Con-