

9.99

Місія Попавіч

WOMEN AND FILM

Both sides of the camera

E. ANN KAPLAN

ROUTLEDGE
NEW YORK AND LONDON

2 DIRECTORS/AUTHORSHIP

- (a) Directors are one variable element in the total Hollywood institution; they are responsible for some of the *contradictions* in the system, since their relationship is not *directly* tied to the commercialism of the whole. However, they are by and large implicated in the system (financially and ideologically), and their ideology reflects this (the ideology works *through* them).
- (b) The concept of authorship implies a certain autonomy to specific directors; it arose in the late 1950s, originating in France (hence often the French word *auteur* is used); a director's work was now analyzed for its common elements, said to reflect the individual's special "world view." Many critics are now questioning the validity of this way of discussing directors because of the special way that cinema works, as an apparatus.

3 THE CINEMATIC APPARATUS

This concept refers to the cinema in its many dimensions—economic, technical, psychological, and ideological. Embedded in a particular social and institutional context, the cinema works to suppress discourse, to permit only certain "speakers," only a certain "speech." What critics call the *énonciation* of the cinema (its processes of saying) cannot be distinguished from the *énoncé* (what is said). Jean-Louis Baudry has argued that the meaning (ideology) that is produced by the cinematic mechanism (projection) depends not only on the content of the images but also on the "material procedures by which an image of continuity, dependent on the persistence of vision, is restored from discontinuous elements" (Jean-Louis Baudry (1974–5) "Ideological effects of the basic cinematographic apparatus," *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 2, p. 42). Other critics have focused on the position of the spectator as that of creating the film as s/he watches it. The meaning established in the interaction between viewer and screen image involves a particular type of pleasure that arises from the cinema's dependence on the psychoanalytic mechanisms of fetishism and voyeurism (see definitions 7, 8 below).

4 IDEOLOGY

While for Marx ideology referred to the ideological components of all bourgeois institutions and modes of production, recent film critics have rather followed Althusser for whom ideology is a series of representations and images, reflecting the conceptions of "reality" that any society assumes. Ideology thus no longer refers to beliefs people consciously hold but to the myths that a society lives by, as if these myths referred to some natural, unproblematic

"reality," (For an interesting discussion of ideology, see Bill Nichols (1981) *Ideology and the Image*, Bloomington, Ind., Indiana University Press, pp. 1–4.)

5 REPRESENTATION

This concept indicates the "constructed" nature of the image (see definition 10 below), which Hollywood mechanisms strive to conceal. The dominant Hollywood style, realism (an apparent imitation of the social world we live in), hides the fact that a film is constructed, and perpetuates the illusion that spectators are being shown what is "natural." The half-aware "forgetting" that the spectator engages in allows the pleasurable mechanisms of voyeurism and fetishism to flow freely.

6 FREUD AND THE OEDIPAL CRISIS

Before going on to discuss the mechanisms underlying pleasure in the cinema, it is necessary to outline Freud's notion of the Oedipus complex, which provided the cornerstone for his (at the time) revolutionary psychoanalytic theory and on which the other phenomena relevant to film theory depend.

Freud took the name Oedipus from classical mythology, particularly the story, dramatized by Sophocles, of how Oedipus unwittingly killed his father and married his mother, a deed for which he was severely punished. The myth represents for Freud the inevitable fantasy of the growing child: first bound in illusory unity with his mother, whom he does not recognize as Other, separate, or different, the child exists blissfully in a pre-Oedipal phase; as he moves into the phallic phase, the child becomes aware of his father. At the height of his positive Oedipal phase, he loves his mother and hates his father who takes mother for himself. Successful resolution of this Oedipal phase takes place on the boy's discovery that his mother lacks the penis, i.e. is castrated (he can only imagine that all people must originally have had penises). This bitter discovery propels him away from his mother, since he fears that by identifying with the one who lacks the penis, he will endanger his own organ. He now identifies with his father, whom he longs to be like, and he looks forward to "finding someone like his mother" to marry.

Freud did not pay much attention to the girl's Oedipal crisis, but post-Freudians have generally agreed that it is a much more complicated one. They argue that the girl turns away from her mother through penis envy and the belief that her mother is responsible for her lack of a penis. The girl tries to get from the father what the mother could not provide, now equating "child" with "penis", and looking to bear the child with a man like her father. The best neo-Freudian analysis of the girl's Oedipal complex can be found in Nancy

Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1978, Berkeley, Calif., University of California Press). Chodorow examines the much more difficult task for the girl in having to turn away completely from her first love-object, her mother, and place erotic interest in her father; she argues that since they cannot "replace" their mothers, as boys do with their wives, girls remain attached pre-oedipally to their mothers throughout adulthood.

7 FETISHISM

Another Freudian term, fetishism refers to the perversion whereby men strive to discover the penis in the woman in order to grant themselves erotic satisfaction (e.g. long hair, a shoe, or earrings stand in for the penis). Fear of castration underlies fetishism in that sexual excitement is impossible with a creature who lacks the penis, or something that represents it. In the cinema, the whole female body may be "fetishized" in order to counteract the fear of sexual difference, i.e. of castration.

8 VOYEURISM AND EXHIBITIONISM

Pleasure in the cinema is created through the inherently voyeuristic mechanism that comes into play here more strongly than in the other arts. A Freudian psychoanalytic term, voyeurism refers to the erotic gratification of watching someone without being seen oneself, i.e. the activity of the Peeping Tom. Exhibitionism refers in psychoanalysis to the erotic gratification derived from showing one's body – or part of it – to another person, as in the pleasure of being seen, or seeing oneself on the screen. Voyeurism is an active perversion, practiced primarily by men with the female body as the object of the gaze, while exhibitionism is its passive counterpart.

9 THE GAZE: THE THREE "LOOKS" IN THE CINEMA

- (a) Scopophilia, or sexual pleasure in looking, is activated by the very situation of cinema: the darkened room, the way the gaze of the spectator is controlled by the aperture of first, the camera and second, the projector, the fact that the spectator is watching moving images rather than either static ones (painting) or live actors (theatre), all help to make the cinematic experience closer to the dream state than is possible in the other arts. Psychoanalytic critics argue that a kind of regression to the state of early childhood happens in the cinema.
- (b) The act of gazing is played upon in dominant cinema, creating the pleasure that, in this argument, has ultimately erotic origins. The gaze is built upon culturally defined notions of sexual difference. There are three looks:

- (i) within the film text itself, men gaze at women, who become objects of the gaze;
- (ii) the spectator, in turn, is made to identify with this male gaze, and to objectify the women on the screen; and
- (iii) the camera's original "gaze" comes into play in the very act of filming.

10 THE IMAGE

The image can be discussed, broadly, in two main ways:

- (a) Sociological critics discuss the image in terms of the types of role characters play (e.g. the image of the housewife, the macho male (hero), the homosexual, the villain (anti-hero), the prostitute, etc.). They compare the representation of these roles in film to people in these roles in society. The problem here is that such analysis ignores the *mediation* of film as an art form (i.e. that these images are constructed).
- (b) A cinematic analysis keeps in mind the construction and talks about distance of subject from camera, point of view, editing, place, function of a character in a narrative, etc.

11 SOCIOLOGY AND SEMIOLOGY

These two ways of thinking about the image are reflected in two main approaches in feminist criticism: first, the *sociological* method refers to a study of people in society; film critics here use the terminology of sex roles, e.g. Virgin, Vamp; second, the *semiological* method refers to a science of signs; critics here use a terminology from linguistics, discussing film as a signifying system, in which woman functions as "sign."

The sociological approach was the one the early feminist film critics used, and it continues to be an important method. Concepts such as the distinction made between the domestic (private) sphere of the home, where the wife and/or mother is positioned, and the work (public) sphere, where the husband belongs, are useful but limited. They do not tell us *how* meaning is produced in film, and tend to blur distinctions between the realm of lived experience (the social formation) and that of representation (images on film).

Semiology, applied to film, attempts to explain how film communicates, how its meaning is produced in a manner analogous to the way a sentence in written language communicates meaning. Ferdinand de Saussure is credited with introducing semiology or the science of signs. The meaning of language, he said, is found not in the words or thoughts of an individual speaker, but in the relation of elements within the sign system itself. He used the word *langue* to refer to the whole complex language system with its structure of relationships, and *parole* to refer to the level of speech, where the abstract rules of the larger system are put into operation.

The basic level for Saussure is that of sounds made by the human voice (i.e. the phonetic level). Here items gain their significance only from their relationship to other items in the system, which are signalled by *difference*. The level of recognized difference is called the phonemic level. As Terence Hawkes puts it: "This is to say that the meaning of each word resides in a structural sense in the difference between its own sounds and those of other words. . . . The English language has registered the contrast or sense of 'opposition' between the sound of /t/ in *tin* and the sound of /k/ in *kin* as significant, that is, as capable of generating meaning" (*Structuralism and Semiotics* (1977) London, Methuen, pp. 22–3).

Saussure called the two aspects of the linguistic sign *concept* and *sound-image*, the *signified* and the *signifier*. The signifiers in the language system are phonemes which can be made up into words to represent certain objects in the world, i.e. the signified on the level of *denotation* (see definition 12 below). Thus, the sounds r-o-s-e make up the word *rose*, which is the *sign* for a flower that looks a certain way. But there is no inherent relationship between this sign and the flower. It is only an *arbitrary* connection and thus can never be questioned in terms of its fitness or suitability to anything in the sensual world. Furthermore, all that we can think and know is conditioned by the language system we must use; ideas and concepts do not exist outside of the system, but are bounded by it, shaped by what the sign system permits. Critics thus do not simply *use* language (discourse) but are positioned *in* discourse (see definition 14 below).

Important here is the decentering of a hitherto unquestioned, autonomous and individualistic Cartesian "I." "I" is now simply the subject in a subject-predicate linguistic system. Far from being the central actor, man is controlled by the laws that govern the language system in which he lives.

Such a position clearly undermines the whole tradition of thought introduced by Descartes; this tradition was first questioned in the international Romantic and Post-Romantic movements by the thinkers who most influenced the early twentieth century: Rousseau, Darwin, Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud. These thinkers represent a variety of discourses which all, in one way or another, began to question the unproblematic self; but the full force of their work was not generally felt in the culture until the impact of the First World War made many of their theories suddenly relevant.

Semiology needs to be placed in the line of reaction against nineteenth-century humanist habits of thought which remained despite the inroads made by the thinkers named above. The earlier thinkers did not question their own ability (methodologically) to analyze their subject matter "objectively," and it is this examination of the very tools of analysis (*signification*) that characterizes semiology and puts the nail in the coffin of the unified self.

Relevance of semiology to the analysis of women in film

Christian Metz extended Saussure's theories about language to film and wrote a semiotics of the cinema (Metz (1974) *Film Language*, trans. Michael Taylor, New York, Oxford University Press). For Metz, cinematic discourse, like that of language, entails a source of articulation ("I"), a speaker, and a person being addressed (spoken to), a "You." But, as in the language system, this "I" and this "You" are structured in relation to one another in filmic discourse: "I" is the subject (like the linguistic subject in a sentence), and "You" is the object (again, like the object position in the sentence).

The rules and conventions that structure a particular discourse are called *codes*; Roland Barthes established a series of codes which literature uses (Barthes (1975) *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller, London, Cape), and film critics began to apply them in film analysis. They took the concept of "code" to analyze how a film works (see definition 15 below). Barthes is further important for film theory because he revealed that we live in a world comprised of a whole series of signifying systems of which language, while dominant, is only one. Sign systems range from clothing, eating habits, sexual habits, to the construction of photographs, advertisements, film images. For Barthes, film is a sign system that functions largely on the level of *myth* – it has lost its connection to any tangible reference, any object in the real world. (Barthes (1975) *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers, New York, Hill & Wang). A sign (for example, the sign "rose") can be emptied of its denotative meaning and a new connotative meaning piled onto it. Thus "rose" becomes a signifier for "passion" (a signified), making a totally new sign, a sign on the second level.

Now, on this secondary level of significance it is *culture* that provides the new meanings, that drains original signs of their denotation and lifts them into a connotation that is culture-specific, fitting a certain *ideology*, a certain set of values, beliefs, ways of seeing.

Thus, Barthes (in *Mythologies*, p. 116) gives the example of a photograph in *Paris Match* of a black soldier saluting the French flag. On the denotative level, that is the meaning of the photo: the soldier is saluting the flag; but on the secondary level of signification, that of culture, ideology, connotation, we know that the meaning has to do with celebrating French colonialism: we are to praise the fact that the colonized people love their governors and willingly fight for their cause.

Or take the example that Godard uses in the film *Letter to Jane* of the *Life* front-page photograph of Jane Fonda with the Vietnamese. This photograph too is full of connotation (i.e. ideology); it is emptied of its denotative sign, a white woman with some Asian soldiers in a jungle setting, and built up into the second level that Barthes calls "myth". Fonda, with connotations of both filmstar and radical activist, is in the front of the photograph – large, important, given status – while in the rear are the anonymous Vietnamese – small, bunched together, with connotations of inscrutability, foreignness, the

Other. The photograph thus praises the liberality of Jane Fonda, with her position in American culture as sex object and star, in going to visit the "enemy," who is racially stereotyped.

Now, in cinema woman is likewise, as her actual self, a real woman, lifted onto the second level of connotation, myth; she is presented as what she represents for man, not in terms of what she *actually* signifies. Her *discourse* (her meanings, as she might produce them) is suppressed in favor of a discourse structured by patriarchy in which her real signification has been replaced by connotations that serve patriarchy's needs. For example, the sentence "A woman is undressing," or the image of a woman undressing, cannot remain at the denotative level of factual information, but immediately is raised to the level of connotations – her sexuality, her desirability, her nakedness; she is immediately objectified in such a discourse, placed in terms of how she can be *used* for male gratification. That is how our culture *reads* such sentences and images, although these meanings are presented as *natural*, as denotative, because the layering of cultural connotation is masked, hidden. Our task, then, in looking at Hollywood films is to unmask the images, the *sign* of woman, to see how the meanings that underlie the codes function.

(See the bibliography for a list of works about structuralism, psychoanalysis, and semiology relevant to film studies.)

12 DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION

On the level of the sign (image, word), ideology works by a sliding between connotative and denotative usages of words or images. The strict, literal definition of an expression (word, image, sign) is not always easy to distinguish from its connotative uses (i.e. the suggestive and associative levels). What passes itself off as denotative "natural" meanings may already carry a number of implicit connotations. (See the discussion of semiology in definition 11 above.)

13 ICONOGRAPHY

Another way in which ideology is communicated in film is through the specific properties of the shot; i.e. its iconography, which include *mise-en-scène*, composition, dress, gesture, facial expression, focus, and lighting.

14 NARRATIVE: DIEGESIS, AND DISCOURSE

The film narrative combines diegesis and discourse and represents a chain of events occurring in time, in a cause-effect relationship. The diegesis is the denotative material of film narrative (the story, i.e. actions, happenings, characters, items of setting), while the discourse refers to the means of expression (i.e. the use of language and other sign systems in a spatio-temporal

order) rather than to content. Discourse also contains, as its points of reference, the conditions of expression, a source of articulation ("I") and an addressee ("You").

15 CODE

The discourse is structured through a set of rules or conventions that semioticians call the code. The cinema employs a complex system of codes pertaining to its heterogeneous levels of expression: codes of representation and editing, acting and narrative, sound, music, and speech. Some of these codes are specific to the cinema (e.g. editing), while some are shared with other forms of art and communication.

16 LACAN'S IMAGINARY AND SYMBOLIC

Some aspects of Lacan have been useful in film theory because he combined Freudian psychoanalysis with semiology, thus offering a means for linking semiotic and psychoanalytic readings of films. Lacan's insight was to rephrase Freudian theory by using a linguistic model for the movement between different stages, as against the non-linguistic, essentially biological and developmental Freudian model. Lacan's concept of the imaginary corresponds (roughly) to Freud's pre-Oedipal phase, although the child is already a signifier, already inserted in a linguistic system. But the world of the imaginary is nevertheless *for the child* a prelinguistic moment, a moment of illusory unity with the Mother, whom he does not know as Other. The Lacanian child is forced to move on from the world of the imaginary, not because of the literal threat of castration but because he acquires language, which is based on the concept of "lack". He enters the world of the symbolic governed by the Law of the Father and revolving around the phallus as signifier. Here, in language, he discovers that he is an object in a realm of signifiers that circulate around the Father (= phallus). He learns discourse and the different "I" and "You" positions. The illusory unity with the Mother is broken partly by the mirror phase, with the child's recognition of the Mother as a separate image/entity, and of himself as an image (ego-ideal), creating the structure of the divided subject; and partly by introduction of the Father as a linguistic Third Term, breaking the mother-child dyad. Although the child now lives in the symbolic, he participates in the world of the imaginary; it is this world that the experience of the cinema partly recreates, particularly in the sense of providing the more perfect selves (ego-ideals) evoked by the mirror phase and facilitating a regression to that phase. (I have deliberately used "he" here since both Freud and Lacan assume a male subject. Part of my task is to make sense of the systems for the female. For more complete summary, see Bill Nichols, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-4.)

17 CINEMATIC VERSUS THE EXTRA-CINEMATIC

Keeping this distinction clearly in mind prevents us from falling into the trap of sociological critics, and linking screen image and lived experience too simplistically.

- (a) The *cinematic* refers to all that goes on on the screen and to what happens between screen image and spectator (what results from the cinematic apparatus).
- (b) The *extra-cinematic* refers to discussion about, for example:
 - (i) the lives of the director, stars, producers, etc.,
 - (ii) the production of the film in Hollywood, as an institution,
 - (iii) the politics of the period when a film was made, and
 - (iv) the cultural assumptions at the time a film was made.

PART I

The classical and contemporary
Hollywood cinema