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REVIEW ARTICLE

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A Study of Representation of Genders and Feminism in Films 1970 Onwards

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THE CINEMATIC CONSTRUCTION OF THE GAZE

The following section looks mostly at two central articles. First, I will look at one of the essays that has been most influential and has been cited the most times within film theory, Laura Mulvey's 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema' from 1975 (Humm, 1997: 14). Secondly, I will deal with E. Ann Kaplan's article 'Is the gaze male?' from 1983. These articles are examples of how psychoanalysis has helped form feminist film theory over time. Maggie Humm explains this connection between feminism and psychoanalysis in terms of what the two fields have in common. They both focus on gender in relation to identification, and also look at the relationship between unstable identity and repression. "Second, both share key methods: analysing texts, whether these are films or the unconscious, in terms of codes and as if texts can represent the 'unsaid' in everyday life" (15). This means that by making use of psychoanalysis in film analysis one can deconstruct the underlying mechanisms that place women in extremely stereotypical forms on the screen.

Laura Mulvey offers as her explicit goal to demonstrate, by use of psychoanalysis, "the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form" (Mulvey, 1975: 133). In patriarchy, women are constructed as 'the other'. A woman is the signifier of something that cannot really be called 'woman', but instead something that should be called 'not male'. This means that man constructs woman as something that has meaning to him. Woman therefore is "bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning" (134).

Kaplan agrees with Mulvey who states that in the cinema, a woman's body is controlled by three gazes. First, there is the gaze of the camera. Secondly, there is the gaze of the audience members which are all constructed as being male, and thirdly, the gaze of the male actors in the film (Kaplan, 1983a: 120). Conventional Hollywood cinema renders the two first gazes invisible so that they are hidden within the gaze of the characters in the film (Mulvey, 1975: 142).

For the male audience member, the cinema constructs two different and simultaneously pleasurable conditions when they look at the screen (Mulvey, 1975: 136). Mulvey takes Freud's notions of scopophilia and narcissism as her point of departure when she explains how the images in the cinema are constructed according to the male unconscious. Scopophilia means to subject others to a controlling gaze and it can, in extreme cases, move into voyeurism where it becomes sexually satisfying to watch others with a controlling gaze (135). The cinema renders the audience as voyeurs because of the way that it is constructed in terms of the audience sitting in darkness looking into 'a private world' (135). Narcissism comes into play when the male audience member goes through something similar to Lacan's mirror phase and recognizes that the screen can function as a mirror where the male star of the film is seen as the perfection of the audience member's own body and ego (136). The male star is therefore an object of narcissism not of an erotic gaze (138). Mulvey states:

As the male spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he projects his look into that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls the events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence (138).

The male star projects activeness and power whereas the female star comes to project what Mulvey calls to-be-looked-at-ness. This female feature is constructed because women on screen are 'designed' to create a response. "The male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure, which is stylised accordingly" (137). The function of the woman on screen, as receiver of the look, is therefore to be sexually attractive. She is a spectacle to be looked at (137).

But the female star is not just pleasurable to look at. She has a threatening feature already incorporated into her body: her lack of a penis. A woman on screen can therefore potentially turn on the male fear of castration (138-139). The construction of the cinematic apparatus makes sure that this fear is controlled and handled by help of scopophilic fetishism and voyeurism. The controlling part of voyeurism punishes the woman for her lack, while the

extreme focus on the female body makes it into a fetish in itself and therefore no longer threatening, but instead reassuring (Mulvey, 1975: 139 and Kaplan, 1983a: 121-122). In the attempt to render the female unthreatening and therefore replacing her lack with a fetish, it is also possible to turn just a part of a woman's body into a fetish object. This could include features such as long hair or high heels (van Zoonen, 1994: 90).

As Mulvey's argument goes, the only one who can gaze is the man and the only one who can be looked at as an object is the woman. But Kaplan has made an investigation into this and she ends up with a result that is at the same time different from and similar to Mulvey's theory. Using Mulvey as theoretical background, Kaplan asks whether the gaze is necessarily always male.

Kaplan states that the gender system in patriarchal cultures is so bound up on the difference between male and non-male that the possibility of stepping out of this system is almost non-existent. This is seen in Hollywood films, where she states that there is no need for the gaze to necessarily be male, but if the gaze suddenly belongs to a woman it has some consequences in relation to the roles of the characters. There are films where men are being made into sexual objects for a gaze but that is only possible as long as the female then takes over the looking privilege that was originally his. When a person 'owns' the gaze, that person, no matter if it is a man or a woman, will be placed in a masculine position (Kaplan, 1983a: 129-130). This means that if a woman becomes the holder of the gaze, thus placing the man in the position of a sex object, she cannot remain in her feminine role, and she then loses her motherliness and kindness in exchange for becoming the initiator of the action. Only two roles can exist - the feminine and the masculine. Characters can possibly switch places but only as long as they are both rendered with either masculine or feminine traits (129-130). Even though a woman can look, her look carries no power with it and that leaves the privileged position to men. Kaplan writes: "This positioning of the two genders clearly privileges the male through the mechanisms of voyeurism and fetishism, which are male operations, and because his desire carries power/action, where woman's usually does not" (129).

In connection with feminist psychoanalytical film theory, the image of the mother is central simply because this image is so problematic within patriarchy. Patriarchy has been reluctant to represent the mother at all and she has been marginalized. Kaplan states that motherhood has been repressed "on all levels except that of hypostatization, romanticization, and idealization" (Kaplan 1983a: 133). She views the construction of women on film as an attempt to repress any kind of memories of being mothered and dependent (133). These memories are best dealt with by controlling the woman through the gaze (135). Patriarchy has a hard time relating to the mother because of her 'lack' and that has, according to Kaplan, lead to 4 stereotypes on film regarding the mother figure. There is the good mother who is nurturing and puts herself in the background. She is the angle of the house. Then there is the bad mother who puts her own desires and needs before those of her children. Just as a woman in general must not put herself first, neither must the mother. She is therefore punished. The third type is developed from the first and shows a heroic mother who is more central to the narrative but who is willingly suffering for her children. The last mother type is the silly one who is ridiculed by both her husband and her children (Kaplan, 1983b: 467-468).

SPECTATORSHIP

As shown above, the male audience has an undeniable privilege in relation to being a spectator of films in a cinema. Mulvey has explained how the whole of the cinematic apparatus is constructed to please the male spectator. He has an ideal self on the screen with whom he can identify and he is placed in front of a female spectacle which can satisfy his voyeuristic and fetishistic needs. The situation therefore becomes quite different when the focus falls on the female spectator. For as Mary Ann Doane states:

A machine for the production of images and sounds, the cinema generates and guarantees pleasure by corroboration of the spectator's identity. Because that identity is bound up with that of the voyeur and the fetishist, because it requires for its support the attributes of the 'non-castrated' the potential illusory mastery of the signifier, it is not accessible to the female spectator, who, in buying her ticket, must deny her sex. There are no images *for* her or *of* her (Doane, 1981: 86-87).

Like Mulvey, Doane uses Lacanian psychoanalysis and ends up with the conclusion that a woman cannot be the spectator and that there is no satisfying images for her in the cinema. The building of her argument is different from Mulvey's though. Doane is arguing for the importance of the two concepts 'proximity' and 'distance'. In her theory, voyeurism happens because there is both a psychological and a physical distance between the subject and the object. Man is capable of making woman into the object of a controlling gaze because a boy recognizes his own difference from the mother at the time when he sees her 'lack'. The girl on the other hand must realize that she is 'like' the mother and not different from her. The distance necessary for objectification can therefore not exist between mother and daughter (van Zoonen, 1994: 91-92).

For feminists using psychoanalysis such as Mulvey and Doane, there is really no way in which a woman can find identification or satisfaction in watching films. It is not possible to imagine a female gaze which is able to truly objectify a male star. Scholars

have pointed out weaknesses in the psychoanalytical theories though. One 'problem' for these theories is that when one renders the reason for the construction of film unconscious, it makes the problem somehow difficult to reach (Gamble, 2001: 40). Secondly, the theories take their point of departure in the spectator which the text itself constructs, and in that way, do not make any room for the real female audience member who actually has to admit that she *does* experience pleasure in watching these films (Kaplan, 1983a: 124). I think that Kaplan is right when she states that women like to watch Hollywood films and that means that they must find something on the screen with which they think they can identify. Anyone can see that cinematic images of women are stereotypical, but I think that unless you really know Mulvey's theories, few women are left with the feeling that there are no images of women in the cinema at all. That is why it is important to deal with the actual audience also, and not just the audience which the film constructs.

Feminists using psychoanalysis would say that the only way women can obtain any pleasure from films is by identification with the submissive position. Women will have to take pleasure in their own objectification (Kaplan, 1983a: 124). Liesbet Van Zoonen and Jackie Stacey have investigated this part of the issue of spectatorship a little further and concluded that women can indeed experience pleasure from identifying with stars on screen without needing to place themselves in a submissive position.

In connection to the situation where a female audience watches female stars on the screen, van Zoonen states that instead of focusing on psychoanalysis one could look at the actual relationship between the women starring in the film. The connection between these women, either in terms of friendship or love, can function as possible sites for female pleasure and identification (van Zoonen, 1994: 95).

Jackie Stacey has also looked into the relationship between the 'real' female audience and the Hollywood starlets. She sees the process as a negotiation that takes place between the self and the other. The audience appreciates stars for connoting both difference and similarity. On the one hand women appreciate the star because she embodies a world that is different and better than every-day life. On the other hand stars also connote similarity and they are appreciated for this because the women can recognize some of their own personality-traits in the way the star is acting in given situations (Stacey, 2004: 126-127).

Stacey is aware that the 'normal' understanding of female pleasure in relation to films is that of the desire to be desired or of willingly subjecting to the will of a man. But the psychoanalytical reading seems too narrow for her (132-133). She finds out, by reading the material from numerous women telling about their relations to Hollywood stars, that the identification process goes beyond that of just wanting to 'look *like her* so that one can be *looked at*'. Female stars are appreciated both for their beauty and for their personality. Confidence and power are key concepts which are valued highly, and the fact that women possessing these qualities often are killed off is overlooked (146-147).

WOMEN ON FILM

There is no doubt that the roles which Hollywood mainstream films offer to women are very limited. During the last couple of decades these roles might have been widened a bit but essentially, they have remained pretty much the same. The stereotypical images of women that we see on film are products of a patriarchal assumption and belief in what a woman should be and what she should spend her time doing. Hollywood cinema has of course gone through development and changes since the early days of the cinema, but the overall opportunities for both men and women are still very much the same. The focus is predominantly still on a male hero and the action he can compel, while women function as helpers and sexual objects. Not even female filmmakers have been particularly successful in changing the overall patterns because films make the most money when they conform to the Hollywood ideal (Benshoff and Griffin, 2004: 289).

Dominic Strinati explains female roles in popular culture as follows:

Women are either absent, or represented (…) by stereotypes based upon sexual attractiveness and the performance of domestic labour. In short, women are 'symbolically annihilated' by the media through being absent, condemned or trivialized" (Strinati, 1995: 162).

This means that what you see on screen are not the real lives and interests of women (166). Wife, mother, and sexual object are not the only possibilities for women in patriarchy. They are stereotypes used to show an ideal world as it 'ought to be'.

Especially two images of women have been very dominant in Hollywood cinema: the virgin and the whore. This binary opposition is one of the most used ways of portraying women and it is still evident even today (Benshoff and Griffin, 2004: 208, 210). The virgin – whore complex as it is represented on film takes the chaste Victorian view of female sexuality as its point of departure. In the beginning of the 20th century, the ideal woman was 'the angel of the house'. She was child-like and pretty, girly and in constant need of protection from her father or husband who adored her and placed her on a pedestal. She was a delicate flower who had staff to tend to house work so that she could spend her time

doing quiet 'naturally' feminine activities such as sewing while a little bird was chirping next to her. This Victorian ideal had no sexuality as such and she only engaged in a sexual relation because it was her duty to raise a big, happy, and healthy family. Benshoff and Griffin point to the fact, that the actresses playing these female characters were even placed with oversize props, so that they would look extra small and vulnerable (208-209).

Naturally, the whore character was the image opposite that of the Victorian ideal. These women were 'bad'. Their morally deprived actions and beliefs were usually associated with a free sexuality - an independence that was not suited for a respectable woman who could by no means engage in sexual relations outside of a marriage bed. Any such activities would inevitably lead to an unhappy life and would often be punishable by death. Rarely did such characters survive to the end of the film (210).

During the following decades the female characters were altered a little but they were still based on the original virgin – whore stereotypes. From the classical Hollywood era to the end of the 1950s the cinema audiences saw the rise of the glamour girl, the femme fatale, the blonde bombshell, and the virgin housewife. The glamour girls, as I have chosen to call them, were the female stars of the 1930s who were overly stylized in dress, hair and make-up. These women were spectacles to the very end, both on and off screen. They might have been provocative but their primary concern was still to find a suitable husband (217-218, 240-241). The femme fatale stereotype built on the whore character from the 1920s. The femme fatale was extremely dangerous because she was intelligent and alluring. She would trap a man and maybe end up killing him instead of being the passive object that would support his role. Again, such a character would be punished (222-223). The blonde bombshell, perfectly personified by the characters played by Marilyn Monroe, was an attempt to negotiate between an ideal woman and the more sexually liberated real American public in the 1950s. The bombshell was very sexually attractive to men, but the problem and fun of it was that she was often to naïve to realize it (223). The virtuous housewife type was the ideal partner for the working male breadwinner. She would, despite of many advances from men around her, remain a virgin until she got married, and after that she would tend to house and children. She was the woman you could see cleaning the house while wearing a huge dress, high heels, pearl necklace, and bobbed hair (224). Doris Day and Audrey Hepburn are good examples of actresses playing this stereotype.

MEN ON FILM

As pointed out above, the female characters on film fall into certain stereotypes, but it is not only women who are faced with unobtainable ideals on film. Even though the concept of gender is often perceived as having to do with women, the patriarchal notion of 'the real man' also constructs stereotypes that can leave men with a feeling of inadequateness (249-250). There are probably few men that can live up to, for example, the physical appearance that Sylvester Stallone masters in *Rambo*. Patriarchal ideology constructs the ideal male just as much as the ideal female, and just as the female stereotype has not changed all that much over the decades nor has the male one.

The masculine ideal is built on those traits which are 'not feminine'. This means that men are supposed to be strong and aggressive. A man must be able to work hard, provide for his family, and not show any emotion apart from the absolutely necessary. This has been the stereotypical image of the male almost all through Hollywood history – the ideal male, that is. Because just like there are female characters who are 'bad' and must be punished, so too has Hollywood tried to picture the 'feminine' male as wrong, unnatural and something to be laughed at (254-259).

THE BLACK MALE STEREOTYPE

Hollywood has always had a reputation for representing whiteness as the overall norm. Not least because of this, Hollywood representation of 'raced' people has been problematic and stereotypes of race are marked by white patriarchal assumptions and fears. Here, I will only look at the images of the black male since the black female figure is actually missing in both Shakespeare's and Taymor's version. This is a fact that will be discussed further on in the analysis.

The stereotypes of the black male on film have changed some over time due to historical developments and changes in society in general. In early Hollywood films the dominant representation was either that of the lazy simpleton, the nice and colored house slave, or the brutal, hypermasculine 'black buck' (Benshoff and Griffin: 2004, 74-76). Mostly, it has been the images of the black buck and the nice slave that have survived into contemporary filmmaking. The two images have of course been altered to fit more present circumstances. According to bell hooks, today, the most seen image relating to the 'nice slave' stereotype is the representation of black males as wanting to do anything to win "daddy's love" in order to fit into a white male world (hooks, 1994: 86). Benshoff and Griffin point out how the hypermasculinity of black males has been very present in the so-called 'blaxploitation' genre of the 1970s and 1980s. The image of the gangster or the gang member/leader testifies to the perception of the black male as dangerous and violent (Benshoff and Griffin, 2004: 86-88).

It is in connection with this view of the black man as violent and dangerous that the myth of the black rapist occurs. The black buck stereotype is a projection of white men's fears. White patriarchy is afraid what black men might do to 'their' women. A white woman was always thought of as in danger of

black men's potential sexual attacks (Benshoff and Griffin, 2004: 76). According to Angela Davis, this is an image that stems all the way from slavery and it was an image that was used to justify both white racist attacks on black men and at the same time white men's rape of black women. The entire black race was 'equipped' with an animal-like sexual appetite that white men could use to their advantage (Davis, 1981: 173, 182).

The white male fear of miscegenation is also related to the notion of the black man as rapist. The mixing of races was a huge threat to the stability of the white patriarchy and had to be evaded at all costs. As Benshoff and Griffin point out, in early film production, to be a mulatto was always punishable by death (Benshoff and Griffin, 2004: 76). All in all, it is stated that the stereotypes of blackness used in American filmmaking have suffered severely from a production industry dominated almost entirely by white males (92).

RAPE

I will now turn to the theme of rape which is a very important aspect of *Titus*, both in the play and in the film. When Lavinia appears again after this crime has been committed to her, she stands as an emblem of one of the most violent parts of the story. To discuss Taymor's coding of the rape of Lavinia the following section will look at representations of rape on film, the myth of Philomela, and rape legislation in Renaissance England.

Feminists have, especially during the 2nd wave in the 1960s and 1970s, struggled to change the view on rape. In patriarchy there were, and surely still are, a lot of assumptions made about women and rape which are constructed to men's advantage. Rape is still a huge problem in the West. Every two and a half minute a woman is raped in the US (Projansky, 2001: 2). Feminists have worked hard to convince the public that rape is an act of violence and power – not sex, that women are not responsible for rape, and that no matter how she behaves or what she wears, she is not inviting rape. According to Marion Wynne-Davis, rape can be viewed as men's primary weapon against women when it comes to controlling them. Rape then functions as to deprive the victim of her subjectivity. Especially if a woman's subjectivity is closely related to her sexuality, rape is a serious repression of her person as a whole (Wynne-Davis, 1991: 132).

In relation to rape on film, Sarah Projansky points out that even though there might exist a myth of a black rapist it is not something that is or have ever been particularly common in rape narratives on film. In the beginning of movie history, men of all colors and types could just as well be the rapist as the hero who saves a woman from rape (30). And in newer films, from the 1980s until today, race is generally just avoided as an essential topic in rape narratives (119). She adds though, that films that *do* link race and rape explicitly together connote an anxiety about racial issues. Even if they presume to be anti-racist, they function to keep up racial boundaries (45).

But as Projansky points out, rape narratives can function in many ways and have many purposes and these narratives do not always center on the female experience. In narratives where a male character is revenging a rape of a woman, she is often put to the side in favor of masculine aggression (60). Overall though, it is a problem that even though films that contain rape might try to enact a message against rape and violence against women, the fact that they represent rape so explicitly only contributes to the vast amount of violence against women on TV and film (21). Pascale Aebischer has much the same thoughts about rape on screen. She states that a director will have to choose one of two options when representing rape. The first option is to represent rape realistically, as Projansky mentions, and thereby subjecting women to too much unnecessary violence. The second option is to not represent the rape by for example letting it happen off-screen and thereby run the risk of diminishing the horrors of the victim (Aebischer, 2002: 138).

The rape plot that Shakespeare drew his inspiration from can pretty safely be said to be that of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Ovid was a Roman nobleman who lived around the year when Christ was born. He originally studied rhetoric but he felt a much deeper interest for writing poems or verses. He is mostly known for his epic poem *Metamorphoses* which consists of 12000 lines. The general theme is that of people's relationship to the gods of that time ("Ovid." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 27 Feb. 2008). In this poem there is a telling of rape which is quite similar to the one Shakespeare wrote. Philomela, who was a princess of Athens, was going to visit her sister in Thrace. Her brother in law, the king Tereus, travelled to Athens to escort Philomela on her way. The king found Philomela very attractive and on the way to Thrace he forced her into a cabin where he raped her. She threatened to tell everyone who would listen what the king had done, and that made him cut out her tongue so she could not tell on him. But Philomela found a way of her own. She made a tapestry for her sister who then understood what had happened. The queen then killed the son she had born to the king and made him into food which the king ate without knowing what had happened. When he found out, he chased the sisters with an ax but the gods wished to save them and turned all of them into birds. Philomela was turned into a nightingale and her voice was thereby restored ("Tereus." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 29 May 2008).

Rape was a crime in the 16th century but the definition was different than the one we understand today. Anna Swärdh gives a discussion of the laws concerning rape at the time when Shakespeare lived. First of all, rape was not considered to be a crime against women. Women were of cause the ones who suffered rape, but the crime was really against her father or which ever other man who was 'in charge' of her. Rape was stealing. When a woman was raped it meant that she had lost her value as a commodity. The men of the family had lost some of their property, or they now had a property that was worthless (Swärdh, 2003: 71). Secondly, there was a linguistic confusion about the exact meaning of the word rape. To be raped could mean to be forced to sexual relations, to be abducted or to be robbed. The three meanings interrelate because in any sense a man lost some property. To be sexually raped and to be abducted was treated as much the same crime (69).

There were some changes in the rape legislation around Shakespeare's time. Some laws acknowledged a difference between sexual rape and abduction. And others guaranteed that the clergy could not avoid a secular punishment if they were convicted of rape. It has been discussed whether these laws were an expression of a changed view on rape. Some scholars have argued that the changes in the laws were an indication of a bigger understanding of the crime being against the woman and not her family. According to Swärdh, this cannot be said to be the case. Even though the laws were at times separated it did not mean that sexual rape was not considered theft of a man's property or that the situation for women became better in any way (70-73).

A FEMINIST/POSTFEMINISM FILM

After having discussed feminist film theory and stereotypical representations on film, I will now look at the concept of feminist films which should be able to change conventional ways of representing. If the structure of the cinema, according to feminist film theory, is so bound up on patriarchal ideologies, unconscious or not, how does one make a feminist or postfeminist film?

Teresa de Lauretis states that there has always been a contradictory feeling and discussion within feminist theory. On one hand, there has been a desire to redefine the notion of the feminine, and on the other hand, feminists have stated that it is difficult, if not impossible, for a woman to speak within patriarchy. De Lauretis quotes Bovenschen for writing: "we are in a terrible bind. How do we speak? In what categories do we think? Is even logic a bit of virile trickery?" (Bovenschen, 1977, cited in de Lauretis, 1985: 193). The same debate has flourished within feminist film theory and filmmaking. Here the question has been: "How does one formulate an understanding of a structure that insists on our absence even in the face of our presence?" (Rich, 1978, cited in de Lauretis, 1985: 195). There are two problems which arise in feminist film theory and filmmaking. Just as with all feminist strains of thought and all art produced by women, you encounter the question of how a woman can speak within patriarchy when she makes a film. And how do you construct a film with images of women, when according to psychoanalysis, women as such cannot be present neither in films nor in the audience? Doane notes that "the simple gesture of directing a camera against a woman has become equivalent to a terrorist act" (Doane, 1981: 86). This is why feminist filmmakers must seek new ways in which to work with women on film, unless they want to just leave them out altogether (87). To leave 'woman' out of films would save her from objectification but it would not change the negative construction of her and would leave no possibility for positive female identification. This is why films without women are no solution in relation to feminist concerns.

When Mulvey wrote her famous 'Visual pleasure' article she believed that one could not just step outside patriarchy and start to criticize it, but one could make use of the tools which patriarchy itself provided and then begin to examine the representations that were put forth (Mulvey, 1975: 134). To Mulvey, this is a way in which women can speak. I believe that women can indeed speak within patriarchy. There is too much contradiction in saying that they cannot, because they *do*. Women might speak differently because they want to stress something different from men, but to say that patriarchal ideology cannot be transcended would leave female authors and filmmakers in a deadlock.

According to de Lauretis, Mulvey identifies two periods within feminist filmmaking. In the first one, directors were concerned with the content of the film. Directors and filmmakers concentrated on representing women differently and on giving room to the real lives of women. In the second period, filmmakers experimented with the cinematic apparatus. Here it was important to raise awareness of the artificial process of filmmaking (de Lauretis, 1985: 194). Mulvey points out that to analyze pleasure is to destroy it (Mulvey, 1975: 135). By making the audience aware of the camera, one can destroy the male-oriented pleasure produced in normal filmmaking (142). Doane also takes this position when she states that the neutrality of the camera must be denied in order to make a feminist film (Doane, 1981: 86). A feminist film must speak the female body differently (97).

Feminist films have been successful in destroying male visual pleasure by avoiding objectification of the female form with the camera and by making camera presence clear to the spectator. But according to Kaplan and de Lauretis, the female spectator is really what should be at the center of the discussion here. Kaplan states that there is a need for films which construct a female spectator and

which do not only offer repressive identification for women (Kaplan, 1983a: 124). De Lauretis notes that:

The project of women's cinema (…) is no longer that of destroying or disrupting man-centered vision (…). The effort and challenge now are how to effect another vision: to construct other subjects and objects of vision (…). The idea that a film may address the spectator as female, rather than portray women positively or negatively, seems very important to me in the critical endeavor to characterize women's cinema as a cinema for, not only by, women. (De Lauretis, 1985: 200)

The spectator has become an important part of feminist filmmaking and this means that a feminist film is one that renders all identifications female, feminine and feminist in terms of characters, image and camera (198). This can be done by a female director because, as Maggie Humm states: "Gender shapes signature and (…) there is an aesthetic difference in the way in which gendered signatures write" (Humm, 1997: 110).

To de Lauretis it is important to remember differences as well, though. Identification and feminist filmmaking depends on recognition of difference. This means that there is a difference among women and that race, class, sexuality and even differences among white women are all important. Women are different from 'woman' and there are differences within each woman as well (de Lauretis, 1985: 201). Different groups must find themselves equally addressed by a feminist film (208).

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